

by Sophfronia Scott

Got a closet full of clothes that clash? Don't despair-just follow the leads of Sela Ward, Jenna Elfman, Susan Sarandon and other stars who are making mismatched ensembles a fashion statement. Today's unlikely combos "add character and dimension" to a woman's look, says L.A. designer Libbie Lane, Katie Wagner likes the style too. "It was fun to sparkle and be colorful," says the TV Guide Channel host, of the green sequined pants and hot-pink coat she paired for a recent fiesta. "You might think my outfit was mismatched, but it matched the party."

The jumbled look is hot, explains designer Michael Kors, because "it represents the new offhanded luxury, allowing a woman to mix patterns and textures in a tonal way." But make sure there's method to your madness. "Balance is the key," advises Lane, "If the top has 3-inch roses and the bottom has tiny paisley, that doesn't work." New York City celeb dresser and mismatch critic Ann Caruso agrees: "I was styling a TV actress recently and she said, 'Why don't we put these polka-dot pants with this floral top?' I said, 'You can-if you want to look like a clown."

with Susan Christian Goulding in Los Angeles

Mixing it up: 1. Best in Show's Parker Posey 2. Susan Sarandon 3. TV Guide Channel host Katie Wagner 4. Sela Ward 5, singer Monica