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Life & Style

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Put the kettle on, girlfriend, and let's get down to some woolly thinking



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While for fashion enthusiasts the upcoming ready-to-wear shows in Paris mark one of the most exciting dates in the calendar, for knitters Wool Week - which casts on today - is a notable highlight.

Spearheaded by the Prince of Wales and Condé Nast's managing director Nicholas Coleridge, Wool Week - now in its second year - serves to raise awareness of the problems currently facing our oldest textile industry.

But such formal foundations have done little to deter the capital's growing group of craft-obsessives. Knitting and wool in general are cooler and, yes, sexier than ever before.

Central to this rebranding process in London is 28-year-old Jazz Domino Holly, whose first book, *Queen of Crafts: The Modern Girls' Guide to Knitting, Sewing, Quilting, Baking, Preserving & Kitchen Gardening*, hit the shelves last Thursday.

Holly is a surprising contender for the role of domestic craft goddess: she is the daughter of the late Joe Strummer of The Clash.

East End-based Holly campaigns tirelessly to make crafts more rock 'n' roll. In 2007 she set up The Shoreditch Sisters, a Women's Institute group which at its conception had the youngest WI members in the country. "It's hilarious," says Holly, "the same friends who used to laugh at my hobby and call me Granny Jazz are now begging me to teach them to knit."

In pubs, bars and restaurants, groups of avid knitters can now be found spinning a yarn over tea - or a martini. *Stitch and Bitch*, a group of guerrilla knitters who host pop-up knitting events and encourage young people to start their own gang, has more than a thousand groups listed on its website, while olde worlde wool shops like *Fabrics Galore* in Clapham host regular events which are swamped by hip young knitters.

This year's Wool Week features plenty of knitting-friendly happenings. *Love Wool*, an event backed by the Campaign for Wool, is encouraging knitters with a conscience to throw one-off knitting parties to highlight the plight of Britain's declining sheep population. Similarly, high-street brand *Jigsaw* is asking customers to knit a square of fabric for HIV charity *KasCare*, which will sew the squares into blankets that in turn will provide warmth for children affected by HIV and Aids in South Africa.

Of course, it's not all of us who can weft, warp and purl with ease. If you do fancy honing your skills ahead of next year's Wool Week, the purchase of a knitting kit is a good option. US-based knitwear label *Wool And The Gang* sells kits (complete with instructions) to help knitters create everything from tiny triangle-bras to trousers, while *Grannies Inc*, an online knitting store whose mantra is "there's wisdom in the wool", is about to launch its first DIY range.



Having a ball: a Wool And The Gang kit (woolandthegang.com)