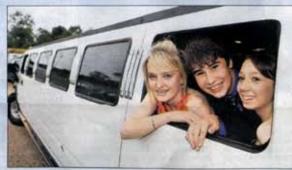
IN FAVOUR OF GLITZY, US-STYLE PROMS. GEMMA PEPLOW IS ON THE GUEST LIST





OPEN NIGHT: The weather is kind to Megan Bullock, Charlotte Alloway and Sophie Bingham



HELLO BACK THERE: Charlotte Mills, Josh Winterburn and Gabbi long on style

CUTTING A DASH: Knockout frocks are a must for the girls



THUMBS UP: Max Brown



THAT'S ME! Pupils watch a slideshow of school photos



MOVING ALONG: Girls on the dancefloor at Shearsby Bath Hotel

have organised everything-I've

ust been there to oversee it. "It's teaching them independ-

"Having a prom makes it a lot more special than having a disco, because they all really want to look their best. It's an opportunity to show that they are mature." are mature." Cherilynn Houston, owner of

Shearsby Bath, pops into the marquee every now and then to see what the teenagers are up to. This is her fourth prom this

She says: "It's a growing trend.

"It's nice to see them enjoying themselves and having fun.

themselves and having fun.
"There's so much negative stuff said about young people at the moment, and this shows them in a really positive light."
As the dance floor starts to fill up, the teenagers show off their moves to Whighleid's Saturday Night, before the moment everyone has been waiting forthe announcement of prom king and useen. and queen.

The 18 nominees line up

nervously on the dance-floor, the boys all macho, the girls whispering and holding hands.

There are massive cheers as David Startin and Heather Edgerton are announced and

given their crowns.

"I was a bit shocked," says David. "It's really good 'cos everyone has looked forward to prom the whole year. It's been better than I expected.

"It's nice to be voted king." Heather is modest about being

voted most popular girl in the

"It's a bit embarrassing going up on stage, but the prom's been really good. I've enjoyed it all,"

With that, she's off to join the masses on the dance-floor for

the final 30 minutes.

Head teacher Angela Edwards, watching from the edge, says:
"It's kind of a rite of passage. It would be very sad to just wave them off at the end of three

years, without having a send off. "It's a very grown-up venue, so I think that makes them act in a more grown up way than if it had been in the school hall."

As the night draws to an end with a bit of slow-dancing, the teenagers pick up their year-books, which have been handmade by the prom.committee. Parents are waiting outside

and the cameras are out again to snap the happy prom-goers.

As Liz waits at the doors, one girl gives her a massive hug.

"Thank you soooooo much, miss. It was the best night ever."

Have you got pictures from your school prom? E-mail them to: picturedesk@leicestermercury.co.uk

LOOKING THE PART: Rita Snape's dress shop does a nice line in prom dresses

HARD-PRESSED parents of teenage girls already feeling the credit crunch pinch may want

o turn the page now.

A prom party may be a cheery. wonderful thing but, unsurpris-ingly, if you want to look the

part, it's not cheap.
Rita Snape owns Solitaire iress shop, in Leicester's Welford Road. A few years ago, she sold exquisite dresses only for weldings, cruises or very such parties. oosh parties.

At this time of the year, Mrs.

Snape's till rings to a slightly different tune. Early summer is when mums come shopping for

Mrs Snape does a nice line in posh prom frocks for teenagers. They start at about £80 and go up to £200

The girls and mums who come here know what they want they want a special dress which will make them feel fant-astic," says Mrs Snape.

But that's not cheap is it? "Well, there are more expens-

ive shops ground. I'm not the most expensive, but, let's face it, on a night like this - a night they will remember for the rest of their lives - you want to get it

Despite headlines about recession, it's business as usual.

"I know there's doom and gloom out there but it seems to me that people are still in work, and if they have a daughter who has a prom, they want to treat them. Things haven't changed much for me," Mrs Snape says.



DRESSING UP: Rita Snape helps Tasia Dore, 15, choose a frock

The girls are worse - boys are cool and quite relaxed

SOMETIMES, Martin McLaughlin sits behind the wheel of his extended New York city taxi or his stretch Cadillac and he wonders what on earth he's doing. The cost of fuel is rising on

a weekly basis, road tax is expensive, insurance – at about £1,200 a vehicle-is not cheap

All in all, it's not the best time to be running a fleet of luxury limousines. Martin runs American

Dream Cars, in Anstey. He has eight limousines, stretch Cadillacs and bad-

stretch Cadillacs and bad-boy Hummers.
On average, Martin's lucky if he gets 10 miles to the gallon from one of his fancy cars.
With sected power at 1180.

With petrol now at 118p per litre - maybe more by the time you read this - it's a rising cost that Martin just has to swallow.

"I don't make a great deal of money doing this," he says. "I do it because I love it."

"I have to say the girls are usually the worst behaved. Boys are usually quite relaxed and cool about it. The girls just go mad."

Martin McLaughlin

Thankfully, the advent of the school prom has been something of a financial lifesaver for Mr McLaugh-

lin.
"I've been doing this for 10 years," said Martin, 52.
"When I started, people hired our limos for birthdays or weddings or very special parties."
June and July - the end of the school term, has be.

the school term - has be come one of the busiest times of the year. "It's good for us," says

It means this is a frantic time, but it also means we get work in the week as well

as the weekend. "As a phenomenon, we've seen it grow in the past 10

years. "Most schools do it now and there are always stu-dents who want to do it in

That is where we come

But who are the worst passengers?

"It depends," said Martin.
"I've been to schools all over Leicestershire and you do see a real difference in behaviour depending on where you are in the county. "But I have to say the girls are usually the worse be-

haved.

Boys are usually quite relaxed and cool about it. The girls just go mad."