

# My little black dress

Every woman has an LBD that jogs a memory. Four writers who have contributed to a book of short stories, *Little Black Dress*, tell Shona Sibary the tale behind their favourite number

PHOTOGRAPHS ANDREW MONTGOMERY

**“It makes me feel sexy and comfortable – a quite astonishing combination”**

**Stella Duffy, 42, has published ten novels, five of which form the Saz Martin crimes series. Besides her writing work, she is also an actress and comedian. She lives in south London.**

“I decided, long ago, that black was the most elegant colour for me to wear. I’m very pale, with the kind of red hair that fades with age, and I’ve always thought black clothes and pale skin are attractive. Well, I’ve convinced myself of the fact!

I bought this dress for the launch of my novel *State of Happiness* in 2004. It’s important to me, as this was the book I worked on while being treated for breast cancer. It was also the one long-listed for the Orange Prize and my most successful book to date. A triumph borne from an incredibly difficult time. Writing it while I was ill was tough, but it helped me to stay focused on something positive when, looking back, I was terrified of the future.

The dress is from one of my favourite boutiques in south London that sells everything from gifts and cards to shoes, handbags and offbeat designer clothes. It’s figure-hugging and makes me feel both sexy and comfortable. A quite astonishing combination.”

**HOW I STARTED WRITING:** “I’d always had this idea for a book, but as I didn’t own a computer I kept putting it off – I knew editing with a pen would be a nightmare! It wasn’t until my mid-twenties and working as an actress that I had access to a computer and finally began my first novel. It took a year to write and then seven hours to print on an outdated machine.” >>

