

English

John Lewis – Christmas advert 2024

The gifting hour

### **John Lewis Christmas Advert: A Story of Two Sisters**

This year, the John Lewis Christmas advert tells the story of two sisters and focuses on the joy of shopping. Unlike previous adverts with cute animals, this one is about finding the perfect gift. The advert takes place in the John Lewis store on Oxford Street in London and is set to the song *Sonnet* by Richard Ashcroft.

After last year's fun advert featuring a cheeky Venus flytrap, this year's is more emotional. It follows a woman rushing to find a last-minute Christmas gift for her sister. The advert has a magical twist: as she looks through a rack of dresses, she steps into a world of memories from her sister's childhood, which helps her think of the perfect present.

The advert also taps into 1990s nostalgia, as Ashcroft's song has become popular again. He is supporting the Oasis reunion tour in 2025, making the song even more meaningful for viewers.

### **Why the Advert Matters**

Christmas is the most important time of year for retailers like John Lewis. It's when they make most of their profits. However, there has been concern that their famous adverts don't always lead to more sales. This worry has grown because John Lewis had three years of losses before returning to profit this year. Even so, staff haven't received a bonus for three of the last four years.

Retailers face tough challenges this Christmas. Rising costs, like higher employer national insurance contributions, are making things harder. For example, Tesco is expected to pay £1bn more in national insurance over the next few years. As household budgets remain tight, retailers are competing harder than ever. Advertisers are spending a record £10.5bn on Christmas ads this year to attract shoppers.

### **A New Approach for John Lewis**

Catherine Shuttleworth, a retail expert, says this advert shows John Lewis's effort to focus on its core business: getting people to shop in their stores. "The advert isn't just about creating a nice feeling. It's about making people buy from John Lewis," she explains.

For some viewers, the lack of a cute character might feel disappointing. But Charlotte Lock, John Lewis's customer director, says the advert highlights the importance of their department stores. "Our customers love shopping in our stores at Christmas, so we wanted to make them the star of the advert," she said.

### **A Chance for Aspiring Musicians**

This year, there's another surprise. Instead of a cover version, *Sonnet* is sung by Ashcroft himself. On Friday, he will launch a competition for musicians to create their own version of the song. The winner's version will air on Christmas Day and be released as a charity single. They will also win a £3,000 shopping spree at John Lewis. The competition will be hosted on the store's TikTok page.

It's something people use as a lightning rod to talk about things. We want to show up with something different and fresh every year."

While previous John Lewis ads used cover versions of famous songs, in another twist it is actually Ashcroft singing this year. However, on Friday he will launch a competition for aspiring musicians to record their version of the song, which appeared on the Verve's 1997 album *Urban Hymns*. The winner's take will feature in a special Christmas Day airing of the advert on TV and be released as a charity single.

Ashcroft will launch the talent search on John Lewis's TikTok page on Friday. The winner will also bag a £3,000 spending spree.

### Comprehension questions:

1. What is the central theme of this year's John Lewis Christmas advert, and how does it differ from previous ones?

*The central theme of this year's advert is a woman's search for the perfect Christmas gift for her sister, with a magical journey through childhood memories. It differs from previous ads by focusing on the shopping experience rather than featuring lovable animals or fantasy characters.*

2. How does the advert use nostalgia to connect with viewers, and why might this be effective?

*The advert uses 1990s nostalgia by featuring the song Sonnet by Richard Ashcroft, which connects emotionally with viewers who associate the song with that era. This is effective because it taps into the audience's memories and creates a sense of familiarity and warmth.*

3. Why is the Christmas period particularly important for retailers like John Lewis? What challenges are they facing this year?

*The Christmas period is crucial for retailers like John Lewis because it is when they earn the majority of their annual profits. This year, they face challenges such as tight household budgets and rising costs like increased employer national insurance contributions.*

4. How has John Lewis adjusted its advertising strategy, according to Catherine Shuttleworth?

*John Lewis has adjusted its strategy by focusing on its core business of retail, emphasizing the store experience in its advert. Catherine Shuttleworth highlights that the goal is to encourage customers not only to connect emotionally with the brand but also to shop there.*

5. What special opportunity does Richard Ashcroft's involvement in the advert create for aspiring musicians?

*Richard Ashcroft's involvement creates a competition for aspiring musicians to record their version of Sonnet. The winner's version will be aired on Christmas Day, released as a charity single, and they will also win a £3,000 shopping spree.*

**Now watch the video and summarize in your own words.**

<https://youtu.be/55ghlHTaRzM?si=-rI43BMT7m8wYwi1>

**Pick one of the following John Lewis' Christmas adverts from the past years and create a short presentation.**

Find out about the **theme**, the **characters** and the **storyline**.

Don't forget to give your personal verdict of the advert. Did it appeal to you? Did it grab your attention?

**2015 – "Man on the Moon":**

Theme: Loneliness and connection.

A young girl reaches out to a lonely man living on the moon, reminding viewers of the importance of thinking of others during the holidays.

**2016 – "Buster the Boxer":**

Theme: Joy and togetherness.

A dog, Buster, hilariously enjoys jumping on a trampoline meant as a Christmas gift for a young girl.

**2017 – "Moz the Monster":**

Theme: Overcoming fears and making memories.

A boy befriends a monster living under his bed, learning to grow and cherish the friendship.

**2018 – "The Boy and the Piano" (Elton John):**

Theme: The power of a gift.

Elton John reflects on his life, showing how a childhood gift of a piano shaped his future.

**2019 – "Excitable Edgar":**

Theme: Acceptance and embracing differences.

A young dragon struggles to control his fiery excitement for Christmas, but his friends and community support him.

**2020 – "Give a Little Love":**

Theme: Kindness and giving.

A mix of animation and live-action stories, focusing on small acts of kindness creating a ripple effect.

**2021 – "Unexpected Guest":**

Theme: Wonder and welcoming others.

A boy welcomes an alien experiencing Christmas for the first time, showing the joy of sharing traditions.

**2022 – "The Beginner":**

Theme: Empathy and new beginnings.

A man learns to skateboard in time to bond with a foster child joining his family for Christmas.

## Talking point

1. What is your general thought on Christmas adverts?
2. Are they as popular in your country as they are in the UK?
3. Do you think Christmas adverts should focus more on storytelling or product promotion?
4. Looking at above presentations, how have the themes and styles of John Lewis adverts changed over the years?

## Optional extension task

Below is a list of some of this year's Christmas adverts in the UK.

Choose one and write a short summary of the story.

### **Amazon Midnight Opus** - Celebrating Talent and Kindness

It tells a touching story about a theatre janitor whose hidden singing talent is celebrated, showcasing how small gestures can bring joy

### **Sainsbury BIG Christmas** – Whimsical Adventures

Sainsbury's incorporates Roald Dahl's BFG in a magical culinary adventure, highlighting festive food and holiday joy

### **LIDL A Magical Christmas** - Spirit of Togetherness

The advert emphasizes the impact of small acts of kindness, showcasing how shared gestures create magic during Christmas

### **ASDA Gnome of Christmas** - Festive Rescue Missions

Asda's animated garden gnomes bring humour and adventure by saving Christmas with teamwork and creativity

### **ALDI Christmas Mission** - Classic Festive Fun

Aldi continues with Kevin the Carrot in a mission to restore the "Spirit of Christmas," blending humour with goodwill

## **Video links**

<b>2015 – "Man on the Moon"</b>	<a href="https://youtu.be/jGY-T4W-BOc?si=e-ic2rfSvl7deoD4">https://youtu.be/jGY-T4W-BOc?si=e-ic2rfSvl7deoD4</a>
<b>2016 – "Buster the Boxer"</b>	<a href="https://youtu.be/c8hXrsOx-cs?si=9U_tcEDNoJAAAJGd">https://youtu.be/c8hXrsOx-cs?si=9U_tcEDNoJAAAJGd</a>
<b>2017 – "Moz the Monster"</b>	<a href="https://youtu.be/sa5dzQhvbil?si=cHuAb9EuhTWuFo2i">https://youtu.be/sa5dzQhvbil?si=cHuAb9EuhTWuFo2i</a>
<b>2018 – "The Boy and the Piano" (Elton John)</b>	<a href="https://youtu.be/DShEAPKV0EU?si=wbfOWZRdD5-JD7JJ">https://youtu.be/DShEAPKV0EU?si=wbfOWZRdD5-JD7JJ</a>
<b>2019 – "Excitable Edgar"</b>	<a href="https://youtu.be/AzIT3pbbZr8?si=TEe9kAoKnNA82u7v">https://youtu.be/AzIT3pbbZr8?si=TEe9kAoKnNA82u7v</a>
<b>2020 – "Give a Little Love"</b>	<a href="https://youtu.be/LUmPzwLniMk?si=3x5A1gEqL-cZGDv">https://youtu.be/LUmPzwLniMk?si=3x5A1gEqL-cZGDv</a>
<b>2021 – "Unexpected Guest"</b>	<a href="https://youtu.be/UDowvVdk-n0?si=zXVtKL1YWwHXn2cm">https://youtu.be/UDowvVdk-n0?si=zXVtKL1YWwHXn2cm</a>
<b>2022 – "The Beginner"</b>	<a href="https://youtu.be/1z0jfP2gCIs?si=ecZfqE-m0XJ3IX9j">https://youtu.be/1z0jfP2gCIs?si=ecZfqE-m0XJ3IX9j</a>
<b>Amazon Midnight Opus -</b>	<a href="https://youtu.be/ecV3E779MfU?si=IRHfUsvxH1vnjjqV">https://youtu.be/ecV3E779MfU?si=IRHfUsvxH1vnjjqV</a>
<b>Sainsbury BIG Christmas –</b>	<a href="https://youtu.be/M3nPZtT6U9A?si=JfJKzvCBhX2uVcH3">https://youtu.be/M3nPZtT6U9A?si=JfJKzvCBhX2uVcH3</a>
<b>LIDL A Magical Christmas -</b>	<a href="https://youtu.be/KThwzTJOTlo?si=HWwvJlrV0HqsGn38">https://youtu.be/KThwzTJOTlo?si=HWwvJlrV0HqsGn38</a>
<b>ASDA Gnome of Christmas -</b>	<a href="https://youtu.be/A6HITAAtPEI?si=NF64OVYWWgvvrYx2">https://youtu.be/A6HITAAtPEI?si=NF64OVYWWgvvrYx2</a>
<b>ALDI Christmas Mission -</b>	<a href="https://youtu.be/dJ1vQesB9hk?si=6FJPIUGfl9RiGj">https://youtu.be/dJ1vQesB9hk?si=6FJPIUGfl9RiGj</a>