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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?
2. How does the advert use nostalgia to connect with viewers, and why might this be effective?
3. Why is the Christmas period particularly important for retailers like John Lewis? What challenges are they facing this year?
4. How has John Lewis adjusted its advertising strategy, according to Catherine Shuttleworth?
5. What special opportunity does Richard Ashcroft's involvement in the advert create for aspiring musicians?

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

<https://youtu.be/55ghIHTaRzM?si=-rl43BMT7m8wYwi1>

**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"**

**2016 – "Buster the Boxer"**

**2017 – "Moz the Monster"**

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

**2019 – "Excitable Edgar"**

**2020 – "Give a Little Love"**

**2021 – "Unexpected Guest"**

**2022 – "The Beginner"**

## 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

**Sainsbury BIG Christmas** – Whimsical Adventures

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

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

**ALDI Christmas Mission** - Classic Festive Fun

## Video links

**2015 – "Man on the Moon"** <https://youtu.be/jGY-T4W-BOc?si=e-ic2rfSvl7deoD4>

**2016 – "Buster the Boxer"** [https://youtu.be/c8hXrsOx-cs?si=9U\\_tcEDNoJAAjGd](https://youtu.be/c8hXrsOx-cs?si=9U_tcEDNoJAAjGd)

**2017 – "Moz the Monster"** <https://youtu.be/sa5dzQhvbiI?si=cHuAb9EuhTWuFo2i>

**2018 – "The Boy and the Piano" (Elton John)** <https://youtu.be/DShEAPKV0EU?si=wbfOWZRdD5-JD7JJ>

**2019 – "Excitable Edgar"** <https://youtu.be/AzIT3pbbZr8?si=TEe9kAoKnNA82u7v>

**2020 – "Give a Little Love"** <https://youtu.be/LUmPzwLNiMk?si=3x5A1gEqL-cZGDv>

**2021 – "Unexpected Guest"** <https://youtu.be/UDowyVdk-n0?si=zXVtKL1YWrHXn2cm>

**2022 – "The Beginner"** <https://youtu.be/1z0jfP2gClI?si=ecZfqE-m0XJ3IX9j>

**Amazon Midnight Opus -** <https://youtu.be/ecV3E779MfU?si=lRHfUsvxH1vnjjqV>

**Sainsbury BIG Christmas –** <https://youtu.be/M3nPZtT6U9A?si=JfJKzvCBhX2uVcH3>

**LIDL A Magical Christmas -** <https://youtu.be/KThwzTJOTlo?si=HWwvJlrV0HqsGn38>

**ASDA Gnome of Christmas -** <https://youtu.be/A6HITAAtPEI?si=NF64OVYWVgvvrYx2>

**ALDI Christmas Mission -** <https://youtu.be/dJ1vQesB9hk?si=6FJPIUGflgI9RiGj>