

Book Review



Big Girl Knits: 25 Big, Bold Projects Shaped for Real Women with Real Curves

by Jillian Moreno and Amy R. Singer

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We all come in different shapes and sizes—and so should our knitting patterns. Unfortunately, a size medium in one book could very well be a large in another, or a *small* in yet another.

The Craft Yarn Council of America has taken steps to remedy this problem with its [standard body measurements](#), which provide a broader and (they hope) more accurate reading of women's body sizes. More publications are following these guidelines when determining the sizes of their projects, which should help level the field.

But this only helps part of the problem. The other issue is the scope of the sizes themselves. Many patterns only size up to a woman's large or, if you're lucky, XL. But recent reports indicate that the average American woman wears a size 14. If that's the average, with sizes fluctuating greatly on both sides of it, then a major segment of the population is routinely overlooked.

My own in-box frequently bears this out, with readers exclaiming in frustration,

"I love this book, but the sizing only goes up to a large. What about the rest of us?!"

By necessity, many knitters have become accomplished at modifying patterns to accommodate our specific physical form. But there's something to be said for designs that were created expressly for your figure type. And that's exactly what Jillian Moreno and Amy Singer have accomplished in their new book, *Big Girl Knits*.

The dynamic duo (Moreno was a catalyst for [Knitty](#) and Singer is its editor) has assembled 25 patterns for cardigans, pullovers, skirts, accessories, and even a tempting pair of knitted pants. Patterns range in size from a large (43-inch chest) to XXXXL (61-inch chest).

From the Beginning

Right from the first page, the authors establish a warm, sympathetic voice. They present the problem succinctly: "If there's a butt load of us with a load of butt, why is it so hard to find good-looking patterns that fit us?" But they are quick to make one thing clear: the book isn't about making you look skinny, it's about making you look *good*. There's a subtle difference, and they whack it on the head like a pair of professional tennis pros.

The first 24 pages of the book are devoted to the broader issues surrounding designing and knitting for plus-sized bodies. And this is where true gold lies. They identify the three major problem areas (boobs, butt, and belly) and give you a tangible, actionable list of things to do and things to avoid. You'll learn about the magic of short rows and how to take meticulous measurements of your body. They even factor in things like the *weight* of the finished garment when choosing a yarn, giving guidance on how to make intelligent substitutions.

The words "boobs," "belly," and "butt," feature prominently throughout the book —there's even a B3 system with icons to identify which part of the body each pattern is designed to address.

The Patterns

Then we get into the patterns, which are organized by garment type. The introductions alone are great to read. With Kate Kuckro's Sexy Ribs Pullover, they advise, "Wear a great push-up bra and keep your business cards handy." Meanwhile, in introducing Kate Gilbert's Bluebelle Ruana they exclaim, "Poncho? Please don't. You might as well wrap yourself in the blanket from your bed."

But the writing isn't just cute or funny. The authors provide valid, helpful information. For example, Jaya Srikrishnan's Sunrise-Sunset Socks include a tutorial on making socks that fit your feet and calves.

In other patterns, they explore the issue of self-stripping and variegated yarns. Knit in plain stockinette they tend to produce unflattering horizontal lines on the garment. Here, they show artful ways to tilt the lines of self-stripping yarns so that they slant diagonally rather than horizontally, and show how you can knit a variegated yarn on the vertical *and* horizontal to break up the lines.

But my personal favorite is Stephanie Roy's Scarlett Carpetbag, with rows of thin alternating vertical stripes over a classic rectangular tote shape. The premise for this bag was simple and wise: knit accessories that scale to your body type.

A Home Run?

I would have to say "yes." Certainly not all these designs will appeal to

everybody—but this is the case with any book of patterns.

Moreno and Singer have assembled a body of work that truly celebrate voluptuousness while teaching knitterly techniques for leading the eye *away* from areas we don't want highlighted. It's all done skillfully and sensitively, with great attention paid to every detail, from the stitch patterns down to the very yarn itself.

I now see a new problem arising: knitters with smaller body types will be forced to take out *their* calculators and resize these patterns so they can wear them too.

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