

Hawaiian Eye

Anyone ever watch Magnum P.I. reruns? If you do, you might notice that in each episode actor Tom Selleck wears a few different variations on the classic Hawaiian shirt. Style comes and goes but somehow this vibrant and sometimes garish garment always survives. Where did this shirt get its origins and how has it had such staying power in fashion and popular culture you may ask? Well I have ALL the answers for you in this column.



A few weeks ago I found myself buying a silk "made in Hawaii" shirt at the Goodwill Retail Store and Donation Center. I guess I would venture to consider it a classic summer option for men of all ages and a few women too! The one I purchased featured a muted palette of grey blue in the background with a Heron print on the fabric. This is not something I normally would wear, but upon more thought and pairing it with a tie dyed t-shirt and white jeans it looked pretty cool.



The Hawaiian shirt is recognized around the world as an international symbol of the 50th state. In the later part of the 1920s Hawaiian clothing manufacturers decided to produce cloth that was uniquely Hawaiian in design. In the 1930s the "Aloha Shirt" as it was called in street slang, referred to the large number of shirts featuring Oriental and Hawaiian designs that were being created by Honolulu tailors. At first, only tourists who visited the islands were able to purchase them, but when they were seen stateside retailers clamored for more to sell to willing consumers!



Movie stars, singers, politicians and those in the public eye, did a great job at promoting the growing trend of Hawaiian clothing. Montgomery Clift, Burt Lancaster, Ernest Borgnine and Frank Sinatra all wore Beautiful Hawaiian shirts in the move "From Here to Eternity" which took place in the South Pacific. Elvis wore a red and white one on the cover of his "Blue Hawaii" album. Gals like Ginger Rogers and Betty Grable also popularized Hawaiian style gowns and swimsuits.



By the 1950s the Hawaiian shirt was prominently featured in "summer living" stories in magazines and other media. The phrase "made in Hawaii" was added to garment labels at this time and sought to distinguish "authentic" articles of clothing from cheap imitations being produced here. This dovetailed with Hawaii becoming the 50th state in August 1959 and one of the world's most popular tourist destinations. This adulation led to the city of Honolulu declaring Fridays "Aloha Shirt Day" in 1965, and allowing city office employees to wear them to work. This of course is where we now get "casual Friday". THANKS Hawaii!



How and when to wear a Hawaiian shirt is totally up to the wearer, but let's set a few boundaries here:

- DO wear them a little on the blousy side, not fitted.
- DO confidently wear the print you love, no matter how LOUD!



- DO pair with a solid color linen jacket to dress it up.
- DO pair with jeans and sandals for the ultimate casual summer look.
- DON'T tuck them in, even though Magnum P.I. did—it just looks wrong.



- DON'T match your partner or spouses shirt!
- DON'T wear them to any formal event as they cannot be worn with a tie.
- DON'T match the shirt to the color of your shorts, skirt, or slacks. The shirt has enough impact alone.



With companies like Tommy Bahamas and others taking their design cues from these colorful shirts, you can have a great time at the Goodwill Retail Store and Donation Center finding just the right "Aloha" type style for yourself at a fraction of the cost. of (Some "vintage" collectors editions can sell for as much as a few hundred dollars!) Remember "aloha" means affection, love, peace, compassion and mercy. Whatever you do, have fun and enjoy this bright and sunny "island look"!

