

The Amazing Well-Groomed Man

Are you a well groomed, style informed, man of the Twenty-First Century? If the answer is no, this column is here to help. If you're already hip, there may be a few surprising tips and suggestions. A study commissioned by Esquire magazine found that 84% of men said that they purchase their own clothes, compared with 65% just four years ago. And 52% of retailers surveyed said their typical male customer shopped at a store at least once a month, up from 10% in 2001. And in recent years, the average growth in men's apparel sales has held steady at nearly 5.5%, in some years even outpacing sales of women's clothing. That means stores like Goodwill are overflowing with brand names and designer men's clothing!

After many years in the fashion and grooming business, I firmly believe that true style, and appeal, is in the eye of the beholder. In other words a little forethought and planning can take almost any guy from zero to hero.

First, do what women have done for years. Edit your clothing collection to just the items you actually wear, flatter your body type and make you feel confident. Wondering where to start? Get your girlfriend, wife, or anyone with a discerning eye, to help you. Try on clothing in front of an audience and it will help you put it all in perspective. You may argue the merits of an ill fitting sweater, but the judge's decision is final. Be brutal. The items you're left with should be well-fitted to you and your lifestyle, and able to mix with other pieces. Lose the items lurking in the back of the closet that haven't seen the light of day for a year or longer. Drop them off at your handy Goodwill donation center so that someone else may enjoy them!

Layering clothing has been in for a few seasons, but truthfully has never been out of men's fashion. A sport jacket, that can be dressed up or down is a great place to start adding to your hip quotient. Find yourself a coat in cotton or linen for summer, and wool or heavier fabric for fall/winter. Pair it with well-fitted jeans, tailored slacks, vintage looking t-shirts, or light sweaters—the possibilities are endless. Great fitting clothing is also an incentive to stay in shape!

"Accessories should be of the highest quality" says a very chic woman I know, "I have seen everything from leather belts to designer watches in Goodwill stores. This alone can say a lot about a man, and make him more attractive even if he isn't an Adonis." Justin Timberlake has ushered in a new era of the "rat pack" hat. "A man who can wear a hat confidently, and not a baseball cap, I find incredibly sexy," says Crystal Jane Gerard of NYC's Bumble&Bumble Salon. Many gals I interviewed said jeans must fit a guy's posterior! A recent report stated that only 20% of men look at their behind when trying on denim. So, look in the mirror. Try on belts with detailed buckles, watches with class and chapeaus that are a manly, yet rakish.

Women of all types agreed on one thing. They LOVE good grooming habits! Consider for example, the explosion in male grooming products, where sales of male specific items surged 14% in 1995, according to NPD Group, a global market research company. Not only are grooming product sales up sharply, but companies unveiled 800 new men-only products in 2006, according to consulting firm Datamonitor—up from 459 only four years ago.

What does all this mean? Get a decent haircut from someone who understands male specific cutting, and learn to style it a bit. Tweeze any stray hairs from places they shouldn't be. Please have two eyebrows. And man, it's safe to moisturize, exfoliate, or use under eye gel!

Besides, these products have now reached general merchandise status at your favorite chain drugstore.

Wearing a scent can be a scary business for any man. Always go easy, Tiger! Eau de cologne generously applied can be a real turn off, especially to those within 50 feet of your lingering scent trail. Choose wisely. Determine if you like light citrus or heavier woody scents. When in doubt get splash cologne with a twist-off top as it will be easier on the nose. Buy fragrances in spray bottles if you want longer lasting scent. Toss any thing more than 2 years old— it has lost its edge.

Yes boys, it is okay to watch sports on TV, AND be concerned a little about the way you present yourself to the world at large, especially to those you care about. The name of the game is balance.