Outlook on Lifestyle

Updated classics

What the well-dressed man wears

FASHION

Mary Martin Niepold

Cary Grant, William Powell and Gary Cooper were the heroes of pre-World War II Hollywood. Today their classic blend of style and comfort pervades men's tailored clothing.

In this climate of dressing with style, men will find suit looks, as well as sport-jacket, tie and trouser ensembles, that stress understated elegance. Beautiful Savile Row-inspired draping in jackets and trousers, luxe fabrics and a fastidious attention to detail all restate this underlying theme.

Subtle mixes of color in tweed and striped suits, a spread-collar dress shirt in the finest cotton, a pure-silk pocket square and tie, alligator belt, woven leather braces (suspenders) and enviable calf-skin shoes are the hallmark of the man who can now dress with as much panache as comfort.

Alexander Julian's fall collection, which he calls "Updated Hollywood," relies on the integration of all of these subtle details of color, draping and lighter fabrics.

"It's a very glamorous look, but comfortable," Julian explains.

"My concepts, which are steeped in the traditions of the elegant 1930s, are a far cry from antiquated clothing," observes Joseph Abboud, one of the newest and hottest designer names. "What I represent is a rejuvenation of these classic ideas, but updated to fit the new relaxed attitudes of the 1980s."

The romantic leading men of the '30s and '40s predated Technicolor, so it's little wonder that black and white are the strongest color combination in 1987's fall and winter collections.

From nubby oversized tweeds and checks by Jeffrey Banks to wider-placed chalk stripes and plaids in the Polo collections by Ralph Lauren, black and white appear in tweeds, herringbones, plaids and stripes in every price range. In a season of classics, there can't be a more classic color combination.

Pattern play is an integral component in men's fall wear.

"With refined English style," notes a Polo spokesperson, "the look is understated, allowing drama in the elegant tailoring and the sophisticated wearing of patterns on patterns ... a chalk-stripe suit, a striped shirt, a black silk tie with bold stripes, a navy pin-dot pocket square."

Whatever their price tag, men's collections stress individuality as well as classic elegance.

SIMPLICITY and elegance underscore men's wear for this fall and winter. At left, Lazo captures "elegant aggression" with a black and white broad-shouldered Glen plaid jacket ($475), red Bengal-stripe cotton shirt ($120) and all-silk coin-dot tie ($50). Polo by Ralph Lauren, at right, achieves an artful mix of patterns with this cream and black wool herringbone single-breasted suit ($585), striped Sea Island cotton shirt ($135) and gray cashmere houndstooth with red overplaid cardigan vest ($265).

Relaxed elegance is the key to this season's interpretation of suits.

Jackets have slightly more fullness in the body and chest. Shoulders are a bit wider, but not as pronounced or hard-edged as in past years. Waist suppression is moderate, but there is definitely a closer fit at the hips.

Formal, fitted "dandy" looks are out. A comfortable silhouette is in.

Imagine Cary Grant posed with both hands in his trouser pockets, and you have the season's new smooth look.

"People want to be comfortable to fit their lifestyles," notes Jon Weiser, owner of New York's six trend-setting Charivari stores. "A wonderful suit is still a valid business look, and it will be comfortably elegant."

This new breed of fashion plate dresses with confidence, not flamboyance. He tends toward quality fabrics: wool or wools blended with cashmere, silk and camel's hair. As a matter of fact, cashmere sport jackets, vests and sweaters — even cashmere socks — are considered standards in the wardrobe of today's well-dressed man.

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Mr. Timleck will continue his professional practice of public accounting in the following manner:

Barry D. Timleck
Chartered Accountant
Carretal Building
Suite 301, 16 Mountainview Road South
Georgetown, Ontario L7G 4K1
(416) 877-6948