

Today's shoppers favor casual look

By William Rudolph
Staff Reporter

Socialites like Ivana Trump may parade around flaunting thousands of dollars of designer sequins. Madonna may stomp around the world caressing her pointy Jean-Paul Gaultier bodices.

But more normal folk are now paying more and more money to look well, ordinary. Casual, even.

Looking good used to mean dressing up in the most expensive designer clothing available, with the label in a prominent enough position so that anyone within 50 feet could tell that the wearer of the outfit didn't shop at Sears.

Today, things have changed.

Perhaps as a reaction to the materialistic, dress-for-success craze of the 1980s, shoppers today are putting aside their severe suits, power ties and Joan Collins shoulder pads in favor of well-made, relaxed clothing that seems more at home in the backyard than in the boardroom.

Nowhere is this any more prominent than in the revival of the T-shirt.

It used to be that T-shirts were something to sleep in, or to wear as undershirts. Whatever their use, they were never anything to build an outfit around. But today, the T-shirt has come into a class of its own.

These days, a well-made T with a good pair of jeans is acceptable casual wear. It can even get one past the door in a club, provided the unobtrusive label is right. Even influential magazines such as Vogue have drooled over the "classic" look of a white T-shirt with pressed jeans.

The basic look is a one-pocket T in a solid color, preferably muted. Although white and black are the classic choices, the more status-minded can dress up the look with socially conscious artsy T-shirts from the late artist/AIDS victim Keith Haring, or the British animal rights organization Lynx.

In contrast to most other trends, even "poor" college students can adopt this look, thanks in part to stores

such as the Gap.

Formerly a discount jeans and record clearing house, The Gap has mushroomed into an international outlet for simple, well-made clothes that look good without being obvious. The chain's slick "Individuals of Style" advertising campaign popularized the look with eye-catching portraits of celebrities such as Neneh Cherry, Mike Tyson, Kim Basinger, Winona Ryder and regular, ordinary folk sporting pocket T's and long-sleeved shirts.

And at \$11 for a T-shirt and about \$23 for mock turtle-necks, The Gap provides fashion at reasonable prices. As a bonus, one doesn't have to live in a major fashion mecca to shop at The Gap: there's even one in Omaha.

If The Gap isn't handy, catalog outfitters such as J. Crew offer many of the same classic combinations at similar prices with the ease of mailbox shopping.

As might be expected, top designers have jumped into the act with their own relaxed lines, particularly Donna Karan, who reportedly came up with the idea when she couldn't find a pair of jeans she liked. Both DKNY (short for Donna Karan New York) and its down-to-earth founder give women options for wearable, easy-to-care-for outfits in soft, realistic styles that recognize most women's bodies do not match anorexic, aerobically perfect supermodel figures.

The idea must have been on target: DKNY so far has grossed \$85 million in 1990, according to the August issue of Mirabella magazine.

Of course, familiar collections such as Ralph Lauren's Polo also promote the new easy style.

If anything, the reasons behind this trend probably reflect the recent move towards relaxation. In the wake of such post-modern traumas as sexually transmitted diseases and the environmental threat, many Americans are abandoning the get-ahead-at-all-costs mentality in favor of an easygoing lifestyle built around relationships, health and "quality time" spent at home, with less emphasis on



Julia Mikolajcik/Daily Nebraskan

Michele Hudson looks casual yet well-dressed in her Donna Karan New York clothing from Ben Simon's.

material trappings.

Consumers now seem to want to spend less time coordinating their closets. Instead, the current search is for a comfortable outfit that can easily go from the bedroom to the classroom, to work and to play without complicated changes or worry about what's appropriate and "in" this

season.

Because T-shirts and jeans rarely go out of style, they guarantee a good investment.

If the relaxed fashion craze is any indication, the 1990s will indeed be "a kinder, gentler nation," as President Bush sees it -- at least on the fashion frontlines.

T-shirt trends that lost the time test

By William Rudolph
Staff Reporter

Remember these T-shirts?

Today, one-pocket T's in solid colors or with judicious stripes may be the rage. In the not so distant past, much different T-shirts were hotter than hot. But like the hula hoop and the Dodo bird, the days of these styles are definitely past.

● 1979-80: The height of the disco era AND the height of the custom printed T-shirt. Lincoln itself boasted at least four specialty boutiques where really cool fashion victims selected decals for the front of the shirt. These designs ranged from Bo Derek to Daffy Duck. And, of course, names were always on the back of the shirt. Particularly popular was the year of high school graduation emblazoned across the chest, especially in elementary or junior high school. Since it was the '70s any statements could be made with the chest, including such gems as, "If I said you had a beautiful body, would you hold it against me?" The ultimate in cool: having the same T-shirt as one's friends. The finished product looked just groovy tucked

into painter's paints or covering hot pants and roller skates. And all at a time when the country had barely recovered from mid-70s wonders like "I'm With Stupid" and "She's Mine."

● Mid-1980s: The rock concert T-shirt. You could always tell who had been at what concert the next day at school by the flurry of concert T's littering the halls. These mostly black (but sometimes gray) T-shirts often had a cheesy silk-screened portrait of the band on the front, with the tour dates stenciled on the back. That way, everyone would know that you had spent your hard-earned allowance to rock out to Loverboy and friends instead of doing your earth science homework like a good student.

● 1984-85: Wham! bam, thank you, ma'am! Plain white T-shirts with large, black messages let everyone know your stand on any particular issue. Whether or not you wanted to "Choose Life" along with George Michael, or "Relax" with Frankie Goes to Hollywood, these trendy coverings were a way to be fashionable and political at the same time.

● 1987: If you didn't have a Hard Rock Cafe T-shirt, you stood a chance

of joining the ranks of the uncool. Everybody who was anybody paraded around campus with the most far-flung Hard Rock Cafe locations stuck on their white and tan chests like battle prizes. Hard Rock shirts actually were wealth indicators. It was one thing to have a shirt from Chicago, but not everyone could go to Cancun, London or Tokyo Hard Rocks. Even the dorms ripped off the Hard Rock logo, although being from Abel Residence Hall didn't exactly match the exclusivity of a Stockholm T-shirt. As the shirts grew more and more popular, the question became not whether you wore the shirt, but whether you had actually BEEN there to buy it.

Last but not least: the greek T. On a similar scale to the rock concert T-shirt, a common shirt about campus commemorates whichever riotous theme evening fraternity and sorority members have recently celebrated. And while the T-shirts may publicize and create solidarity among practitioners of greek life, it's very rare to see any fashionable house member wearing a "Be My Idol" or "Anchor Splash '86" T.

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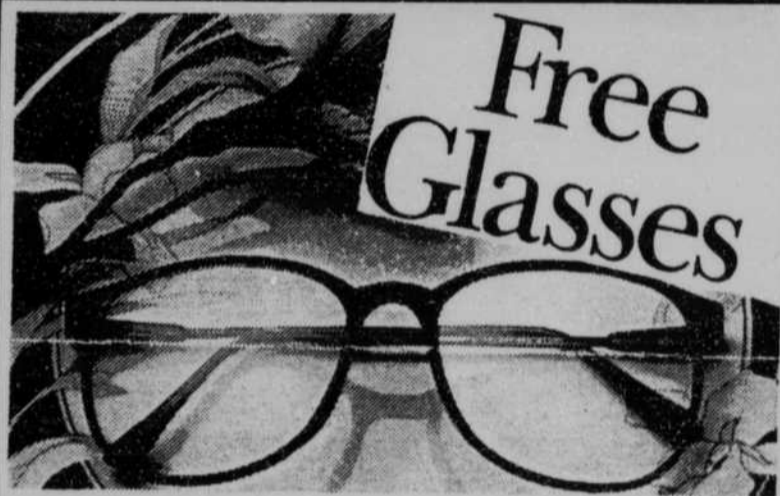
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