

ALDERMAN

NAOMI

BELLINI

SYLVIA

NADIA

ALEX PRESTON

ELLIOTT

PETER FLETCHER

MATT PARKER

KAMIL

MAUS

OF

ADAM

TANDY

GREEN

DAVE

MOOR

NYE

GRIFFITHS

AHSAN

TANIA

GILES

DANIEL TURNBULL

ROO

REYNOLDS

JAMES WARD

27 STYLE

ALLTHERAGE

A CAGED CANARY WOULD ONLY BE ABLE TO MITIGATE SLIGHTLY THE EFFECTS OF GRAVITY IS REPLICATOR BACON KOSHER? IT WAS PRODUCED FROM PURE ENERGY BUT - IT MUST BE WATERPROOF. NOT YOUR MUM'S WATERPROOF

IT'S ASSUMED GOTHS WANT TO DRESS LIKE VAMPIRES. NO, VAMPIRES WANT TO DRESS LIKE GOTHS AVOID ANYTHING WRITTEN BY WATERSTONES STAFF ON THEIR ANNOYING HAND-WRITTEN NOTES

IN DEFENCE
OF WAGS

FESTIVAL
FASHION

A CURSORY REVIEW OF THE SUNDAY TIMES STYLE SECTION, 16TH MAY 2010

I won't judge the whole thing by the cover, but I will judge the cover by itself. I thought it was nice. It features a lady in an orange dress doing a smile. There's lots of writing around her suggesting that the movie she is soon to release will be a movie that the readers of Style will enjoy. There are also other bits of writing on the cover intending to draw you in with interesting articles about WAGs and Festival fashion. This kind of works, because every woman I know wants to look effortlessly beautiful while being bitten by skinny insects, holding warm lager in paper cups and being prevented from seeing a rock band playing half a mile away by the tall men in front of them. And most often, they look so effortlessly beautiful that all the effort was worth it.

The contents page does not include the contents page in its contents. Might there one day be a magazine called Contents featuring only the contents pages of magazines? No, there won't be. Neither will there be a book about book indexes,

whose index is just a shrug and the small words, "Come on. Really?"

On other pages there are

other little bits and bobs. Gok Wan is interviewed – I have nothing to say about that. There's a restaurant review that I didn't read as I don't tend to like restaurant reviews. There's some agony aunt stuff where people with real problems whine and I didn't read that either, as I have 99 problems of my own and I don't even know the meaning of *schadenfreude*. I mean I know it's German for something, an emotion, or something, but exactly what, I don't know. There's also recipes and astrology and a what's up and what's down thing; but I didn't read any of these either. The thing about Sarah Jane Parker I didn't read as I have no interest in her or "that movie". The WAGs article – unread. The Festival fashion thing - I just looked at the pictures.

What I did notice is that Style is mainly pictures of objects and the amount of money you will have to give to people in order then to own them. Here are some of the objects: a scarf on page 65 costing £225; some sunglasses priced at £15 on page 15 (ooh, sike!); and a chair on page 57 which sells for £5270. It being a magazine for women, shoes feature prominently. Often there'll just be a picture of one shoe and a price, but, don't worry ladies – my instinct tells me this is the price of a pair of these shoes, or, if it's a buy-one-get-

one-free offer, it comes to much the same thing.

But on May 16th Style is selling watches big time. There are lots and lots of watches in this issue, making me think the watch industry reckons May is the big watch selling month and the middle weekend of May is Christmas for watchiers. You might think Christmas would be Christmas for them; you think such wrong thoughts, friend.

From my glancery I observed that all the watches in the magazine have their hands set at between seven and ten minutes past ten, and I began to wonder why that was. It's most likely so the hands don't get in the way of the cool stuff that tends to fill up the bottom half of the face (the day of the month, for example; the name of the brand) but the more I stared at them, the more I began to see smiles on these watches. Or the open arms of a lover welcoming you back to bed after you've been to the loo in the night.

On page 4 there is the Jesus of the watches, photographed as if it is telling you the one true time – ten past ten, obv – with rays of holy light in the background, and, if you hold the page up to your ear, the sound of eight angels kissing. It is called the Omega Conte and I fail to want it. My watch cost £7.99 from Argos, and although it doesn't tell the time correctly (it runs fast, as if it wants the future to arrive sooner) you can make the digital readout go all blue. The cliché is that an expensive watch is the bribe you can wear – how many Hollywood films have the hero take

off his Rolex or something in order to get a lift somewhere in the back of a Mexican's truck or sometimes on an inconsiderable horse. Well, at least one: 2012's John Cusack character (played by John Cusack) does this; after all who needs a watch anymore? "What's the time, John?" "I'm guessing it's about half an hour to the end of the world. I don't know, I bribed a guy with my watch" is a conversation that does not feature in this film. So would I recommend the 16th May issue of the Sunday Times Style section to you? Well, if you like looking at pictures of watches, yes; yes I would. Very much.

Can't tell you too much about the other things apart from the contents page, and I can only really tell you about that because I wanted to see if they listed the contents page, as, if they didn't, I could do that joke in paragraph two there. Actually, even if they had I would probably have got it in. That's just the way I roll.

Anyway, there's not much point recommending it now really is there? It came out weeks ago. It's gone, let it go. Move on. Look at your watch. What's the time? Is it ten past ten? Do those arms welcome you, darling, come here? Is it a digital watch? If it is, sorry. Make it go blue if it can do that. There. That's better now isn't it?





STYLE TIPS FOR THE SOON TO BE DEAD



1. DIE IN A CLASSIC LOOK

Wherever you go when you die, there is every chance that you won't be able to take your wardrobe with you. As such, try to dress well in any situation where you have a reasonable chance of a dirt nap. Patrick Swayze in *Ghost* is a classic example of this - after cycling through a series of death-of-the-80s power suits and high-waisted trouser/pattern print top combos, the relatively restrained jeans and shirt that he spends his time as a ghost wearing makes the viewer feel like he really dodged a bullet. Not literally, obviously, or he wouldn't be a ghost.

This is a very, very old piece of advice; in the *Iliad*, the ghost of Patroclus comes to Achilles, demand-

ing to be buried (which Achilles has so far failed to do, on account of having some attachment issues). When he appears, he is described as:

πάντ α τ μέγεθός τε κα
μματα κάλ ἴκυ α
κα φωνήν, κα το α περ χρο
ε ματα στο:²

That is, very much like himself, in his appearance, his eyes, his voice and his clothes. Essentially, a "so last season" waiting to happen.

Generally, what you die in you're stuck in. This is one of a number of ways in which *The Sixth Sense* is a bit of a chiz³: Bruce Willis has more costume changes than Rihanna, which makes it disproportionately hard to confirm that he is dead⁴.

This started out with *Star Wars*, as so many things do - specifically, with *Return of the Jedi*. At the end of which, Luke Skywalker sees the ghosts of the three Jedi he had previously met - Obi-Wan Kenobi, Yoda and his father Anakin, played by a kindly-looking middle-aged man in Jedi robes.

This scene was digitally remade after the prequels, so that now old Ben Kenobi and ancient Yoda are accompanied by Hayden Christensen, Boyband Vader. If this is all happening in the mind of Luke Skywalker - if the stress of watching his father die and realising that he had spent the last few years furtively lusting after his twin sister had made a spring go loose in his head - this makes perfect sense. In the time between the films he had probably done some research into his father, and found newsreel footage¹ of prequels-era Anakin,

which could therefore be his template for imaginary ghost Vader.

If the ghosts are outside his head, though, why does Anakin look like he did in his early twenties, when Yoda and Kenobi have come as they were? Why doesn't Obi-Wan look like Ewan McGregor? For that matter, why not go the whole hog and have the disquieting child Anakin from *The Phantom Menace* glowing blue?

Which serves as some explanation of this unscientific collection of presentations of the presentation of the dead. I've concentrated on examples from the Classical world and from modern culture as the bookends of the western cultural experience, and also because it's what I like talking about most. So, assuming you are not a Jedi, what advice can today's decedent-to-be take from history and culture on taking style beyond the grave?



2. LEAVE A GOOD-LOOKING CORPSE

Another reason why *The Sixth Sense* is a chiz is that all the ghosts display the physical signs of their *modus moriendi* when miniature medium Haley Joel Osment sees them - slashed wrists, burn scars and so on. However, at no point does dead Bruce Willis make a note to himself that he really should get his giant gunshot wound looked at, despite the aforementioned costume changes. This is explained as the dead seeing only what they want to see, but I can't shake the feeling that if this were the case Dr Malcolm Crowe would be wearing a singlet and carrying an Uzi.

Unfortunately, there's a pretty good chance that however you leave this world is going to define your look in the afterlife. If you have any say in the matter go for something below the neckline. And uncrushy.

Vergil is particularly muscular in his listing of fashion don'ts on this one. During Aeneas' visit to the Underworld, he meets an old comrade-in-arms.

atque hic Priamiden laniatum

*corpore toto
Deiphobum videt et lacerum crudeliter
ora,
ora manusque ambas, populataque
tempora raptis
auribus, et truncas inhonesto volnere
nares.*⁵

Deiphobus' face and hands are torn; his ears have been cut off and his nostrils - well, you can probably guess. Nothing good has happened to his nostrils. If there's a lesson here, it may be that you can be polite and kind to others or die somewhere a good distance from scissors, but one or the other is a must. In contrast, Aeneas' ex-girlfriend Dido gets off relatively lightly with a below-the-neck sword wound, and has reconciled with her husband. Even in Hades, your ex looks terrific and has made more progress than you.

A variation of this is the American Werewolf in London - where your ghost decomposes at the same rate as your body. There really isn't much to be done about this; if you find that this is the kind of ghost you are, it's probably best to do the farewells to loved ones while you're still relatively fresh, and perhaps to take up beekeeping.⁶

3. CARE FOR YOUR CLOTHES

Dido is also pretty lucky that she seems to get a new outfit - or at least that there is no mention of her being covered in soot, blood or anything else common to immolatory suicides and detergent adverts. Others are not so lucky. Propertius, writing at around the same time as Vergil, describes a visit from his lover, Cynthia, after her cremation:

*lateri vestis adusta fuit,
et solitum digito beryllon adederat
ignis*⁷

*Her dress had been burned at the
side,
And the fire had eaten at the fam-
iliar beryl ring on her finger*

Cynthia is angry that Propertius is sleeping soundly so soon after her death, but on the plus side her appearance as a skin bag full of burnt

bones will probably sort that "sleeping soundly" issue right out.

Of course, if you found clothing that was fireproof, puncture-proof and crush-proof you quite possibly wouldn't be dead in the first place. Also, on a cheering note, this concern might be academic: the shades wandering at the banks of the river Acheron in Dante's *Divine Comedy* are naked, so they only really have to worry about their eternity of wasps:

*Questi sciaurati, che mai non fur
vivi,
erano ignudi e stimolati molto
da mosconi e da vespe ch'eran
ivi.*⁸

Roughly translated, eternity of naked wasp fun. Interestingly, *Visceral Game's* videogame treatment of *Inferno* faithfully includes a considerable amount of nudity, although from memory Cleopatra's nipples don't shoot out knife-wielding mutant babies in the original⁹.

4. WORK CLOTHING MAY BE PROVIDED

If you find yourself wearing a shining white suit or a minimalist floor-length dress, the bad news is that you are dead, and if after Labour Day you are also committing an appalling lapse of taste¹⁰. Still, at least you can be confident that you are appropriately dressed. Your afterlife has a dress code.

The Marty Hopkirk white suit is the most fashion-forward approach to standardised revenance, but the

classic lazy Halloween costume ghost may have been assigned that winding sheet from some form of post-mortem commissary, possibly as a barrier against the eternity of wasps.

True style is knowing what to wear, but the next best thing is definitely being told what to wear. The newly dead might object to having to wear a uniform, especially since this is essentially a full-body hi-vis jacket. Nonetheless, it does mean that the less well-off ghosts won't be bullied and a sense of team spirit will be engendered.



5. DON'T BE A VAMPIRE

Strictly speaking, vampires are a little out of the field of inquiry, because, although dead, they are dead in a very embodied way. That said, vampires are themselves very fashionable at present, so we should probably take a quick look at what they have going on.

Don't be a vampire. They're totally overplayed. If you have to be a vampire, at least don't dress like a vampire. That rot starts with Dracula, who first reveals himself to Jonathan Harker thus:

*Within, stood a tall old man, clean shaven save for a long white moustache, and clad in black from head to foot, without a single speck of colour about him anywhere.*¹¹

It is generally assumed that goths want to dress like vampires. The horrifying truth is that vampires want to dress like goths.

That was a long time ago, although vampire clothing choices have essentially oscillated between evening dress and fetish gear from then on. However, the latest iteration of the vampire mythos, along with no longer fearing the sun or needing to drink human blood (that is, no longer actually being vampires), is bringing the whole look

into a very sheltered cove of modernity. Edward Cullen, the leader of this trend, is clearly the sort of man John Smedley needs to meet and talk with:

He was removing a light beige leather jacket now; underneath he wore an ivory turtleneck sweater. It fit him snugly, emphasising how muscular his chest was.

I noticed that he wore no jacket himself, just a light gray knit V-neck shirt with long sleeves. Again, the fabric clung to his perfectly muscled chest.

*I realised he had a long, light sweater on, with a white collar showing underneath, and blue jeans.*¹²

Essentially, Edward Cullen dresses like a hip young movie producer in the 1970s, and has a terrific man-rack. This is probably a step up from dressing like The Count, but not by far. In the first episode of Buffy the Vampire Slayer, Buffy identifies her prey by his dated (carbon dated, in point of pun) ensemble. Don't be that guy.

In conclusion, don't be a vampire. If you have to be a vampire, aim for neutrals, earth tones and sharp pieces of wood. Maybe you'll come back as a ghost.

NOTES

1 Space newsreel, obviously.

2 Homer, Iliad 23, 66-67

3 A chiz is a cheat or a swindle, as any fule kno

4 Technically, he either wears or picks up all the clothes he is subsequently seen with in the opening minutes of the film. It's still a chiz, but it's why I make sure to touch my Xbox whenever I appear to be reaching a high point of personal happiness. These high points are usually related to my Xbox, so everybody wins.

5 Vergil, Aeneid 6. 494-497

6 If possible, beekeeping gear is a good thing to have. See the next tip for why.

7 Propertius, Elegies 4.7 8-9

8 Dante, Inferno, Canto 3, 64-66

9 cit.req.

10 First Monday of September in the United States. But, really, screw that.

11 Bram Stoker, Dracula, Ch.2

12 Stephenie Meyer, Twilight (Atom Books Paperback), p. 147, 173, 221

DANIEL NYE GRIFFITHS
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TWITTER: DESCRIBE YOUR PERSONAL STYLE

"BEDROOM FLOOR"

"PONYCLUB PUNK"

"AWESOME"

"AMATEUR CATASTROPHYSICS"

"URBAN GIRLY"

"YOUNG, OFF-STAGE MONTY PYTHON"

"LUFTWAFFLE"

"FAT DAD STUCK IN THE NINETIES"

"SCRUFFLANCER"

WAYS OF DROPPING

I fell down the stairs yesterday. I forget which foot it was that glanced the cliff-edge of one stair and slid across it, causing me to shoot down the slope, banging my right arm quite badly on the way. It was fortunate, perhaps, that I wasn't carrying our one-year-old daughter at the time, as though I would like to think that hard-wired primordial coding would have kicked in and instructed my reflexes to do all I could to protect the child, even at risk of much serious injury to myself, who knows what might have happened?

Let's assume that evolution in all its complexity would ensure that I saved the child at the expense of myself and any other items I happened to be carrying at the time. It is not uncommon for example for me to be making my way downstairs with the infant firmly tucked under one arm and my laptop under the other. The laptop is at least as delicate as a baby, but while it has been with me for longer, and contains countless priceless documents which I seem incapable of backing up, I think in a head-to-head with my actual biological progeny, I'm guessing - this is all conjecture: how could we know? - it is the computer that would be sacrificed.

Which leads us inevitably onto the question: Not including babies, what is the hierarchy of objects to be dropped when falling down the stairs?

To investigate this I propose first a list of not quite randomly selected items, in alphabetical order: a balloon; a canary; a cat; a cup of tea; a fried egg sandwich; a laptop; the laundry; a piano; a plaster of Paris bagel and cream cheese paperweight; ten chocolate layer cakes; an unbound manuscript; a vase. This list instantly throws up some mouthwatering fixtures - canary vs cat is the stand-out tie - but also several potential "local derbies", such as "balloon: helium or air?" and "laundry: ascending (clean) or descending (dirty)?". So, and in no particular order:

Piano. We're in strictly Laurel and Hardy / PG Tips territory here, the consequences of dropping a piano on the stairs being well documented. It is to be avoided, especially if you're the pusher upper rather than the puller upper. But is it possible to drop a piano, if you're pushing it upstairs? Doesn't it drop you?

Ten Chocolate Layer Cakes. There is a scene in Sesame Street, in one of the many songs dedicated to the

number 10, in which a baker, holding a pyramid of ten chocolate layer cakes at the top of some stairs, sings "ten chocolate layer cakes", and then falls down the stairs. It makes a right mess.

Fried Egg Sandwich. We all understand the pain of losing a lovingly prepared fried egg sandwich before the first bite, and there's the risk of some staining here too, especially if we consider the high probability of tomato sauce. However, the potential for serious damage is limited. Perhaps if that was the last egg, the safety of the sandwich should be prioritised, otherwise, regrettably, it might have to go.

Cup of Tea. It's the fried egg sandwich again, but with more valuable crockery - is it part of a set?

Cat and Canary. The ability of a cat to right itself after release is legendary, and even on the uneven surface of a staircase, it should be able to escape the incident relatively unscathed. It is a cat. The canary is more contingent:

a loose canary, a bird in the hand as it were, should, like the cat, be fairly self-reliant, unless it is being carried upstairs because it has fallen asleep watching the snooker. Equally, a caged canary would only be able to mitigate slightly the effect of gravity, so an effort should be made to hold on to it.

Laundry. Traditionally considered a "non-breakable" item, there is minimal risk involved in letting go of laundry in an emergency, the only slight concern might be that the clean laundry becomes dirty on falling, especially if dropped in conjunction with an egg sandwich. We shall assume for the sake of the argument that the laundry is not sufficiently dirty as to become a potential source of embarrassment if allowed to tumble out of the basket.

Balloon Dropping. A standard domestic air/breath-filled balloon is relatively harmless. Dropping, or at least letting go of, a helium-filled balloon runs the risk of balloon loss, especially if, to add a consideration not hitherto introduced,

the staircase is exposed to the open air. This in turn depends on the presence of a string attached to the balloon, and whether the string is tied to part of the body. Perhaps the balloon is being carried upstairs in 1994 after a Christmas party for employees of a leading insurance company, this particular employee having walked the four miles from the Botanical Gardens to their house in the early hours of the morning with the balloon tied to their wrist.

Plaster of Paris Bagel and Cream Cheese Paperweight. In all honesty, this item was serving merely as a pretext to acquire the girl in the coffee shop's phone number, and as such can be released without guilt. Almost entirely without guilt.

Vase. Are you just working in the museum in the summer holidays, or is this your career? You are about to find out.

Unbound Manuscript. Inevitably, whilst you had finished the dissertation with plenty of time to cycle down to the department office before 4.45, you had seriously underestimated how long it would take to spell check and print it, and now you are cutting it very fine, and, gambling on the secretary having

one of those really industrial staplers or something, just gather it into a bundle and set off down the stairs. It is at this point you start to wish you had bothered to number the pages

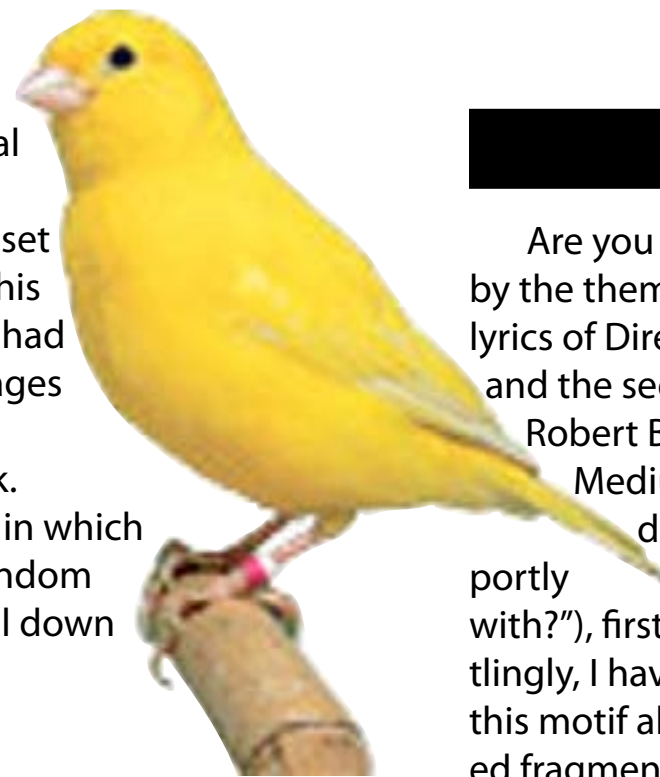
Laptop. Hey, it's a MacBook.

And here it is, the order in which you should drop various random items if you are about to fall down the stairs.

1. Balloon (air)
2. Cat
3. Canary (uncaged, awake)
4. Plaster of Paris Bagel and Cream Cheese Paperweight
5. Balloon (helium)
6. Laundry (descending)
7. Laundry (ascending)
8. Fried Egg Sandwich
9. Cup of Tea
10. Ten Chocolate Layer Cakes
11. Unbound Manuscript
12. Canary (caged/asleep)
13. Piano
14. Vase
15. Laptop

Remember, it's very important to try to hold on to the baby.

PETER FLETCHER, JOYFEED.COM



MONEYS FOR NUTHING

Are you like me? Were you struck by the thematic similarity between the lyrics of Dire Straits' Money For Nothing and the seemingly self-critical tone of Robert Browning's Mr Sludge, The Medium ("How many lies did it require to make/ The portly truth you here present us with?"), first published in 1864? Startlingly, I have spent many years tracing this motif all the way back to a discarded fragment of The Canterbury Tales, written by Geoffrey Chaucer around 1392. The section proceeds as follows - the translation from Middle English, forgive me, is my own:

Herkne, lo, that ilke songstrel (Listen, listen, to the travelling minstrel)

Toutes with his lyre, thro alle hostelrye (He sings and plays in every hostelry)

Partook his toile for the devel's honde (It is not real work, it is the devil's idleness)

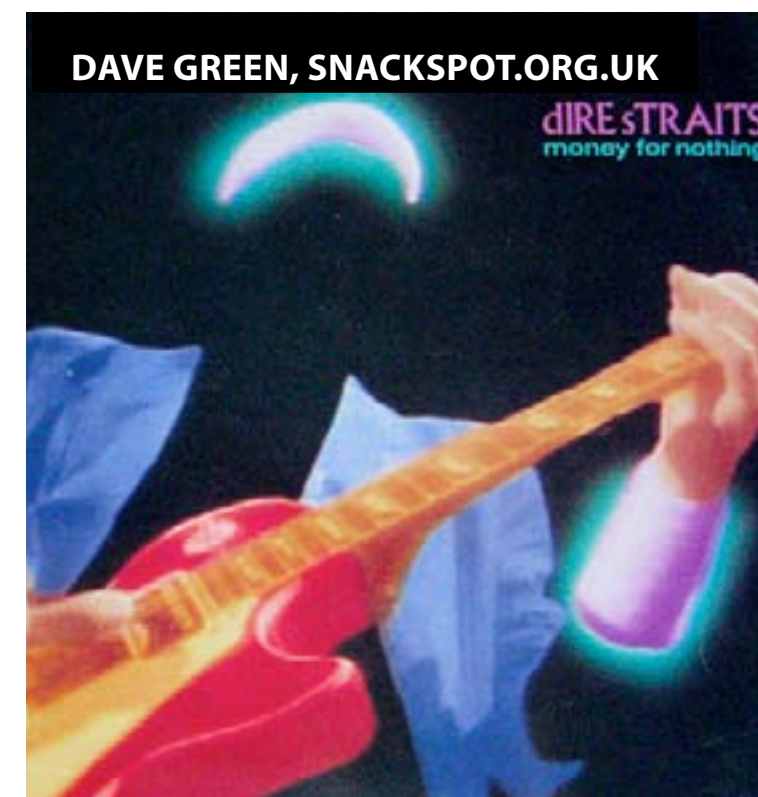
Bistowes yifte and mistresse - blessed moot he be! (But it brings women and riches - the lucky swine!)

While I durste labor in fylde nigh fermenture (As for me, I must toil in the harvest-fields)

Semme heerse and oxen, upon thy fey (Like a beast of burden - oh, believe me)

I chidde ilke songstrel, for his gentillesse and dauliance, (I condemn the minstrel and his fancy entertainments)
I chidde hem well spitously! (I condemn him whole-heartedly!)

And it doesn't end there - I have circumstantial evidence to suggest that the Baha Men's one-hit wonder Who Let The Dogs Out? is based on a medieval French ballad ("Qui, qui a libere les chiens?"), and The Who's Won't Get Fooled Again/Theme from CSI Miami was inspired by an Elizabethan folk lament ("Meet the new squire/ son of the old squire..."). Money for old rope, more like!



LIFESTYLES OF THE FUTURE: JEWS IN SPACE

It's always hard to reconcile two opposing lifestyles. Hard, I imagine, to be a nun and a champion scuba diver. Hard to be an imam who loves to mambo. Perhaps most difficult of all: hard to be an Orthodox Jew and also a member of Starfleet serving on the Starship Enterprise.

This might strike you as a purely hypothetical problem, given that both Starfleet and the Starship Enterprise are fictional creations from the imagination of Gene Roddenberry, creator of Star Trek. However, for the forward-thinking Orthodox Jewish Star Trek fan the dilemmas loom large. One day, there will probably be starships. And then what? These, then, are the questions that troubled me as a teenager.

Replicator food

This is quite a problem. Orthodox Jews take a lot of trouble over sourcing their food. The animals must be kosher, and slaughtered in the right way. Meat products must be separate from milk products, even to the extent that separate pans and utensils have to be used to cook and serve meat and milk foods. On Star Trek, replicators instantly produce food, seemingly from pure energy.

So. Is replicator bacon kosher? No pig was involved, it was produced

from pure energy. Surely yes, like vegetarian fake bacon, it is kosher. But then, it is exactly identical, molecule-for-molecule to bacon from a pig, which is clearly not kosher. Surely it isn't kosher. But if replicated bacon isn't kosher... what about a replicated cheese toastie molecularly identical to a cheese toastie made in a kitchen that did not separate meat from milk? Would you only be able to eat from a special replicator 'kosher' menu? Would Starfleet provide it?

The Sabbath

Orthodox Jews don't use electricity on the Sabbath. Don't turn lights on, drive cars, answer the phone, use a computer. Even passive electricity use is forbidden – a lot of Orthodox Jews take the bulb out of their fridge light, so they don't turn it on when they open the fridge on Shabbat. So could you even travel on the Enterprise given that it will keep going during the Sabbath? For this, you will be relieved to know, we can rely on the answer given in Talmud Shabbat 19:a that one may travel on a ship even over the Sabbath as long as you embarked well before it started. But our troubles don't end there:

* All the doors on the

Enterprise are automatic. We'd have to set the door of our personal quarters to manual. Or put up a curtain, or some retro thing like that?

* The Enterprise is enormous, but we couldn't use those turbo-lifts on Shabbat. Would we be reduced to crawling through Jeffries Tubes on our holy Sabbath? Or would the Orthodox Jewish crew members all be able to live on the same deck in an official Starfleet Ghetto? You'd bet the Andorians would come over and laugh at us.

* Talking of visitors, what if Lieutenant Commander Data – an android – came to observe our curious customs on the Sabbath? His positronic brain is surely electric – would we even be allowed to say hello to him? What if not saying hello caused more of his electronic neurons to fire than simply replying? It's a puzzler.

Now these are day-to-day issues, ones which would come up again and again. But they're really only the start:

1. What if, enchanted by our way of

life, a member of an alien species wanted to convert to Judaism? What if they could only survive by eating, for example, live bloodworms (very clearly not kosher on several levels)?

2. What if a member of a race without a penis wanted to become Jewish? How would they get circumcised?

3. Since everyone on the Enterprise seem to read these newfangled 'e-books'... would we end up being the only people to own Sabbath-readable paper books? Would they fit in our luggage allowance?

4. Would we be allowed to take off our communicator badges on the Sabbath?

5. Do one-piece spandex jumpsuits really constitute the 'modest' attire required of both sexes by Rabbinical strictures?

Like peak oil, the destruction of the rainforest, mass extinctions and the coming tungsten shortage (we only have enough for another 140 years of lightbulbs left), these problems may not affect us in our lifetimes. But it is as well to be prepared. The Orthodox Jews will one day want to boldly go just like everyone else – and when they do, it's forward-thinkers like me who'll have paved the way.



NAOMI ALDERMAN IS THE AUTHOR OF 'THE LESSONS' AND WRITES A GAMES COLUMN FOR THE GUARDIAN



BROKEN DOWN STYLE IN JAMAICA

I came to Jamaica with a broken heart. I was twenty – maybe the best time to have your heart broken. The teens are spent lurching from one emotional train wreck to another, but underlying the pain rests the knowledge that things are not yet serious, that your heart is not yet quite *en jeu*. At university things changed – relationships suddenly developed a certain seriousness. People went on to get married from here, we thought, as we flirted and dated and fucked.

Hearts only get broken once. The muscle cells of the heart do not regenerate. Each further assault after the first break merely serves to continue the destruction of the organ. Later-life events like divorce and bankruptcy and the death of a child are all tragedies that serve to confirm that fatal original blow.

When my godmother heard about my misfortune, she sent me a ticket to Jamaica. It was early September – we would go for two weeks, stay in a villa that an old friend of hers owned on the northeast of the island. I had been in bed for two weeks reading Rimbaud and Hölderlin. I needed the change of scene.

I arrived in Montego Bay the night before my godmother and checked into a hotel next to the airport. I sat on the balcony and watched the sun go down, sipping at a Red Stripe and feeling a delicious sense of loneliness. I was alone on an island miles away from the world that had so wounded me. Crickets rose their voices to the fiery evening sky. Night birds called out as they flew in swift shadows down to the seashore.



My godmother landed early the next day and we made our way along the rutted track that led to Ocho Rios in an open-top jeep driven by a beaming Rasta called Henry. We passed coves of white sand overlooked by nodding palms, boats pulled up almost to the road filled with fishing nets and harpoon guns. We stopped at Noel Coward's house – Firefly. It was white and modernist and rather unimpressive. I ate conch from the shell. We finally came to the villa that was perched on a hillside overlooking the sea. We unpacked and strolled down the steep slope for a swim.

The next day we set out to visit a friend of my godmother, Patrice

Wymore. She lived on the coconut plantation that she and her husband, Errol Flynn, bought in the 1950s, just as his career was beginning to fade. We rented a car in Port Antonio and drove under the shadow of the Blue Mountains until we came to a headland where the road described a long curve between clumps of scrub and acacia trees. Sad-looking horses grazed on dusty grass. There was a huge pile of coconut husks by the side of the road. The flesh in some was still rotting and a black shimmer of flies rose up as we passed. We turned off the road and drove up the hill until we came to a lightning-struck tree with a sign hanging from it that read Mulholland Farm.



The house was surrounded by lush trees, swamped with bougainvillea. It had once been white, but had come to take on the colour of the land, dusty and sun-bleached. Pat was waiting for us as we drew up outside.

Errol and Pat Flynn lived at Mulholland Farm throughout the 1950s. The house, perched above the coconut plantation, looked down on a forest of palm trees, and was built to provide an escape from Errol's dissolute Hollywood existence. He and Pat rode across the surrounding countryside on horses, rowed down rapid-furrowed rivers before drinking sundowners on the beach, lived like

young honeymooners even though he was heading towards fifty, and his liver (an organ whose cells are extremely regenerative) was much older. Flynn's wild lifestyle wasn't entirely left behind in LA. He once loosed a crocodile in the centre of Port Antonio market; Pat told me that rumours of him driving into their swimming pool smoking a cigar weren't true. "He didn't smoke cigars," she said.

The swimming pool now stands empty. Errol Flynn died in 1959, aged 50. Pat has lived on the estate ever since. The rooms are dark and full of dustsheet-covered furniture. Birds squabble in the roof. Dust blows in waves across the floor.

Pat poured us drinks and we sat overlooking the concrete lacuna of the swimming pool, watching the sun move slowly across the plantation below. Pat told us stories of living at the farm with Errol. Her eyes misted and she paused occasionally with a distant smile on her lips as she reminisced. When my godmother told her of my recent romantic misfortune, Pat placed her hand on mine and fixed me with a gaze of extraordinary warmth.

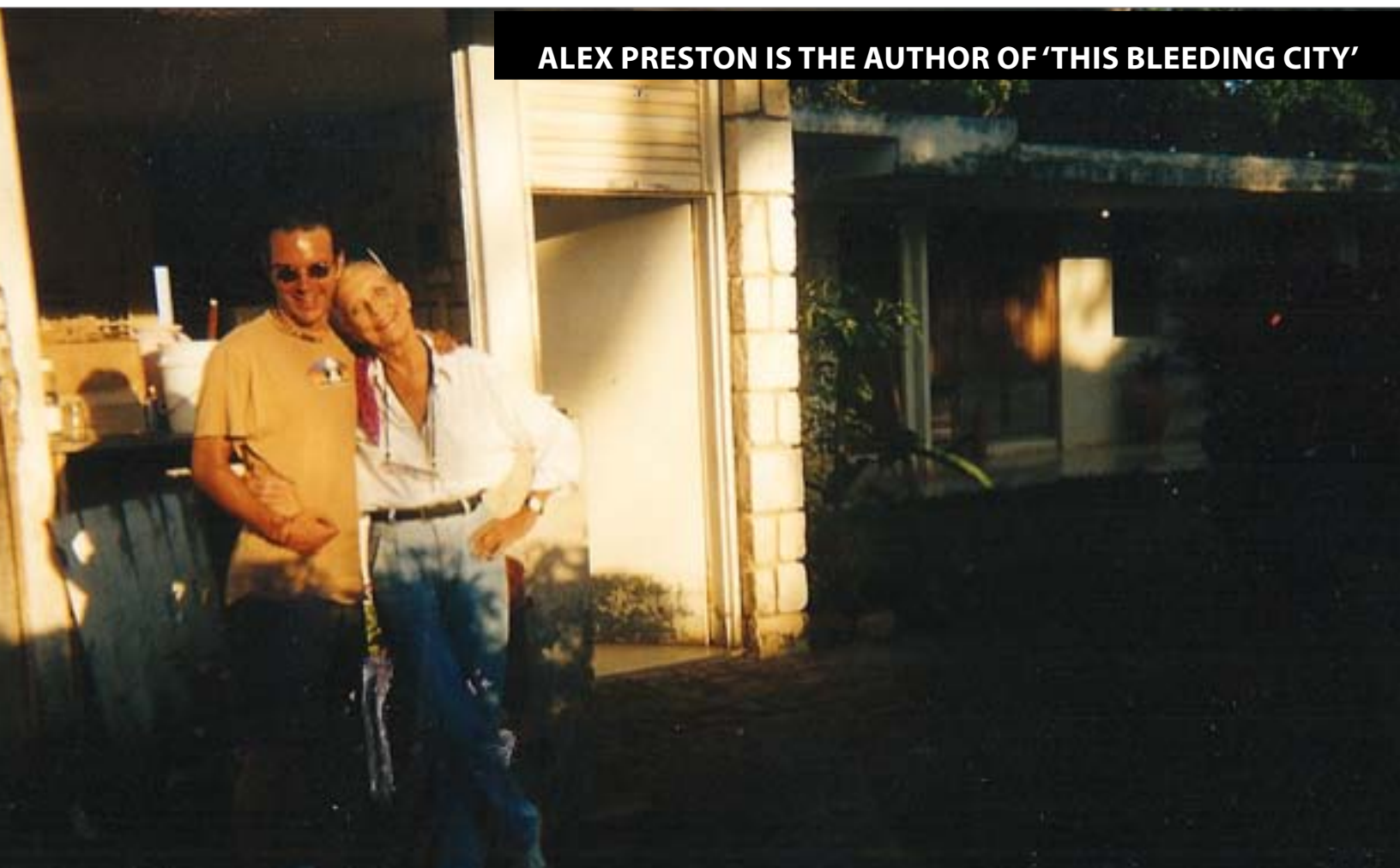
"Love comes again," she said, and she led me by the hand down to a spot where we could see the sea surging up the mouth of a river, bright birds in the trees, mangoes hanging heavily from dark-leaved bushes. "Errol and I used to come and stand here," she said as the wind whipped around us. "I still come down here every night and look at the river." A closeness built between us in the thick Caribbean air. We drank some more and then it was time to go.





I found out afterwards that we visited Pat on the first anniversary of her daughter's death. Arnella Flynn, a one-time model in Europe, was found by plantation workers dead in her bed after a short life of drug abuse. She was Errol and Pat's only child. I look at the picture of Pat, hand on

hip, smiling, and I try to find that pain, try to locate the sadness she must have felt. And I wonder whether it was her warmth, her kindness despite the crushing weight of her loss, that caused my solipsistic self-pity to evaporate as we stood looking down over the river that evening.



ALEX PRESTON IS THE AUTHOR OF 'THIS BLEEDING CITY'

TWITTER: DESCRIBE YOUR PERSONAL STYLE

"SHARP CASUAL"

"POST-DALSTON DOOFUS"

"UNDERSLEPT SELF-EMPLOYED ECCENTRIC"

"DRIVE-BY SUBTELLECTUAL"

"AN UNWANTED CUSTOMER OF THE GAP"

NO BRANDING, NO IRONING

LETHARGY-CHIC

THANKS MARTIN DAVIES, GILES TURNBULL, CORY DOCTOROW, GRAEME HUNTER, JAMES HENRY, FIONA CAMPBELL-HOWES, LAVINIA MURRAY, PHIL GYFORD, SOPHIE RIVETT, RICHARD BIRKIN, NADIA KAMIL, LILY SMITH, ANT MILLER, ALISTAIR JOHNSTON

HACKER STYLE

You don't hear so much about hackers these days, not sure why. Maybe they're just better at hiding in the shadows. LOLMAX! AS IF! Despite going to extreme lengths to conceal their true identities, members of computing's secret underworld have always been delighted to pose for photos.

1. Here's Eric 'Emmanuel Goldstein' Corley, long-time editor of *2600: The Hacker Quarterly* and impersonator of that purple blobby thing off MacDonalds. Extrapolating from his hair, I'd venture the cap/shirt colour coordination is nothing more than a very happy coincidence. He's holding a card that says 'Free Jon Johansen'. In this world someone's always on trial for information offences while escaping justice for their many, many crimes against fashion.



2. Look at young Mark 'Phiber Optik' Abene there - butter wouldn't melt eh? Curtains might, if he doesn't move that lamp. Phiber was an infamous teen BBS hacker. A what? Put it this way: if someone hacked a BBS nowadays they would not be famous. It's like hacking Ceefax. And while trend-setter Abene looks good in a black v-neck, he became a real style icon in 1994 when he modelled an ensemble covered in arrows for a year in the Federal Prison at Schuylkill, Pennsylvania. Phiber is also a legendary authority on 'phreaking', which is when you mould you hair into the shape of a beret.



3. There's more to Chris 'Eric Bloodaxe' Goggans than that Samurai advent calendar on the wall behind him. He may look like Lovejoy, but don't be fooled by the cuddly exterior! Pleather-clad Bloodaxe is as 37 minutes past 1pm as they come.

Founder of hacker group 'Legions of Doom', Chris also became editor of Phrack magazine (what's wrong with the letter 'f'? I miss f). He claims he never used his skills for evil, and given the likely price tag on that polo-shirt/jacket get-up, I believe him.



4. This is Bruce 'Timberwolf' Fancher, founder of ISP Mindvox, burning a photo of Bill Gates while sporting a worryingly flammable-looking polo neck from Next. I'm not going to speculate on the success of this protest, you can decide for yourself who you've heard of most - perhaps you're reading this on a Mindvox PC?

Bruce here is a 'Legions of Doom' member too, which means he's all about the hacking, cracking, phone phreaking, and tying bits of string to coins then pushing them into coke machines to get a free tin of pop.

Everyone in Phrack magazine seemed to hate Fancher, probably because he refused to get rid of the 'f' in his name and replace it with a 'ph'.

And the fashion? Well, I'm not sold on the high-waisted slacks, but I think the goatie and hair work surprisingly well. The photo does leave a lot of questions unanswered though, mainly about angles. Is it the camera that's wonky or the writing on the jumper? Or his spine? Or the framed photo of Michael J Fox? When it comes to the ways of computer hackers, truly nothing can be certain.



MAUS OF ELLIOTT IS THE EDITOR OF ALL THE RAGE



SCOUT LEADER STYLE

Scout Leaders are a breed apart. They don't care what they wear. They don't care what it looks like. It's what it does that matters.

Scout Leaders are that rare sort of person who is happy to give up evenings and weekends, getting soaked and cold and hungry in the name of education our nation's kids into the joys of getting soaked and cold and hungry while tying amazing knots and building fires. So it's essential that they have the right kit.

It must be waterproof. Not your mum's waterproof, which she dons when there are a few dodgy looking clouds over Peckham and she thinks she might get damp before reaching the safety of the bus stop. And not your wellies waterproof, which keep the wa-

ter on the ground from the soles of your feet, but offer little protection to your shins and ankles. Shins and ankles deserve to be warm and dry too. So proper waterproofs will be actually, genuinely proof against the ingress of moisture. They might smell odd, even when brand new. They might come in a variety of unflattering shades of green. They will almost certainly make you look like a Scout Leader even if you aren't one already. And they will definitely cost more than most people spend on a winter coat. But by God, they will keep the water out.

Kit must be functional, too. Trousers - waterproof or otherwise - must have pockets into which a penknife, a spare penknife, a box of matches, a small coil of rope, two carabinas, an old stubby

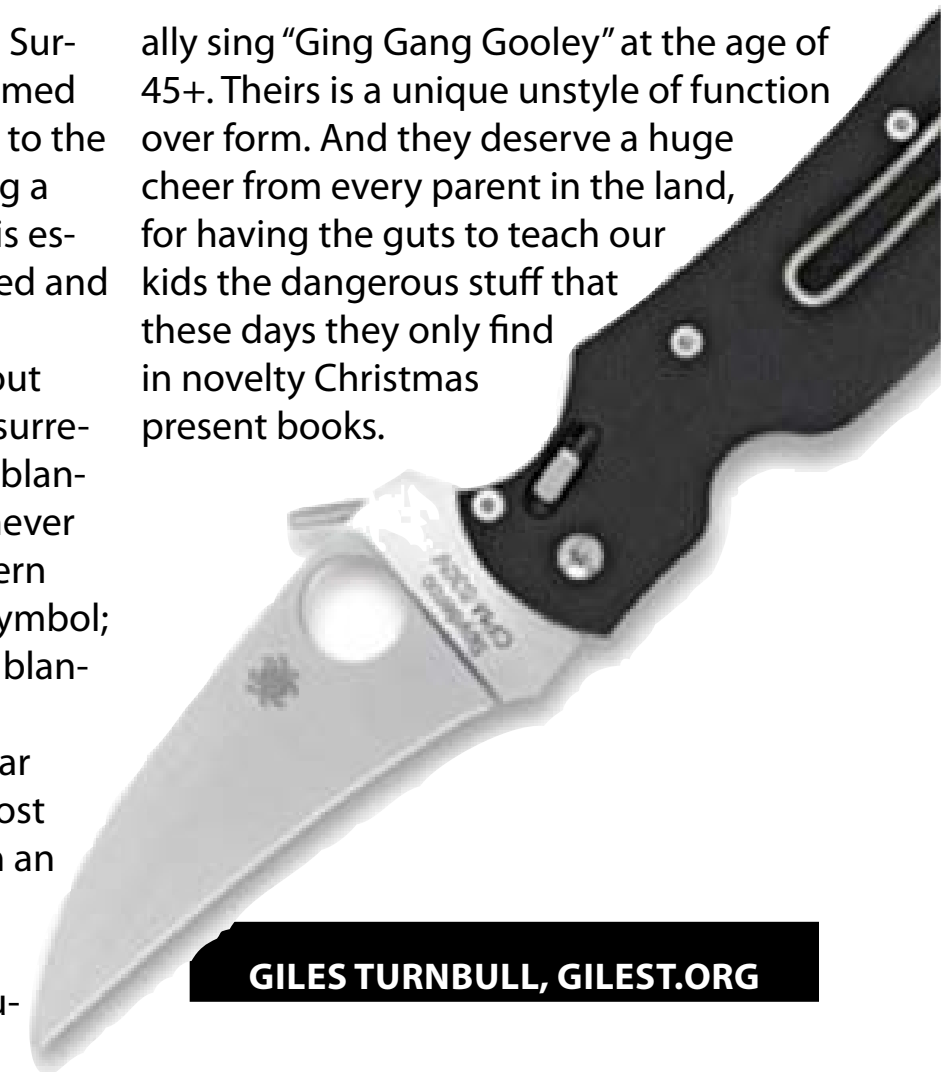


pencil, a compass, and an Ordnance Survey Explorer map with its cover trimmed will fit without excessive discomfort to the wearer. "Discomfort", of course, being a metric of Scoutliness; a degree of it is essential. Hats should be wide-brimmed and have a chin strap.

Campfire blankets are where Scout style takes its own bizarre turn into surrealism. Old school Scouts cover their blankets with badges, almost as if they never really left the Cubs at all. More modern Scouts cover theirs with a motif or symbol; yes, you do see minimalist campfire blankets.

There are Scout Leaders who wear purple. Scout Leaders who, having lost their hat in a canoeing incident with an angry swan, will pull their T-shirt up over their ears to protect them from the sun. Scout Leaders who still actu-

ally sing "Ging Gang Gooley" at the age of 45+. Theirs is a unique unstyle of function over form. And they deserve a huge cheer from every parent in the land, for having the guts to teach our kids the dangerous stuff that these days they only find in novelty Christmas present books.



GILES TURNBULL, GILEST.ORG

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE JET SET AND THE DEATH OF STYLE

Incredibly, the commercial Jet Age was a British invention. It was hinted at in 1953 by those plucky enough to take to the stratosphere in Britain's own De Havilland Comet, but swiftly put on hold by the Comet's propensity for falling apart in mid-air. To those brave New Elizabethans the jet experience was perhaps less style and more lab experiment: disorientation caused by pressurisation problems, long cramped seating conditions and a creeping sense of fatalism that must have been a little like sitting through the extended 3D version of Avatar. The Comet's passengers probably flew out of a sense of national pride and duty to one's country, as these high-altitude aeronauts flew the flag to rebuild post-war Britain, and not simply to appear in the pages of style journals.

While the world's aviation engineers were working on ways of keeping jets from dropping out of the sky, the preferred form of luxury long-distance travel involved propellers; either attached firmly to planes or, if you must, ocean liners. The style icons of the day – Hollywood stars and European royalty – took the advice of studio publicity and state security and

stuck to well-proven technologies.

The newest star in the firmament of MGM ("More stars than there are in heaven") was 23-year-old Grace Kelly, a New York actress who had been drafted in at the last minute as ingénue on the African epic *Mogambo*, and within days of the film's release Kelly was being hailed as a movie legend. A new style icon was born. Her face was suddenly everywhere; her screen style (masterfully created by MGM's costume designer Edith Head) instantly became the fashion of America, and her life-style defined the apotheosis of taste and ambition.

The April 1955 issue of the *Woman's Home Companion* published a lengthy article describing how Kelly carefully selected her clothes for travel by airplane, fitting a whole wardrobe of lightweight clothing into the special air luggage she needed as she flew around the world. It ran to an entire page of instructions on the correct type and weight of woollen fabrics to buy, and how to pack them carefully into one's suitcases. This was seriously aspirational stuff, at a time when only a tiny minority of the population had ever seen the inside of an aircraft.



By 1956, Grace Kelly's style credentials were unassailable. Her stardom had increased by several degrees of magnitude over three short years, being nominated for a Supporting Actress Oscar for *Mogambo*, taking the lead in half a dozen successful movies, winning the Academy Award for Best Actress in March 1955, and the following month meeting Prince Rainier of Monaco. Within a year, Kelly was not only a style icon just because she was Hollywood star; she was now also European royalty, having jumped on board an ocean liner in New York bound for Monte Carlo.

So as the Jet Age dawned, Kelly was the obvious choice to lead the Jet

Set, this élite of society, those to be idolised for their worldly sophistication and global glamour. They were everywhere. They were everything. The entire planet was theirs. It may have been fuelled by the booming economy of oil-rich America, and its need to drive industry with insatiable consumer demand, but that is what style is for. Style is only an expression of aspirational consumerism. It is fashion, not art. But if fashion was taking a fortnight on the French Riviera, or flying in for the Cannes Film Festival, so be it. And for that you needed a Boeing.

Luxury commercial air travel only truly became jet-powered with the

commercial launch of the Boeing 707, embraced as the epitome of style. Even so, Pan Am had made few concessions to luxury in coach class. If passengers were already used to cramped seating in air travel, Pan Am wasn't aiming to give them a break – they made Boeing reduce seat-width to allow six-across rather than the five-across arrangement that Boeing had originally intended in their cabin lay-out. But coach was for the little people, right?

The Jet Set all flew up front in First, being tended to by harems of women with their hair up. Extraordinary though it might seem today, an airline

stewardess was considered to be a dating-partner of almost supermodel proportions. Stewardess was not only the most glamorous, sexiest job a girl could aspire to but it provided access to the most eligible, glamorous single men on the planet: pop stars, footballers, hell-raising actors. Even Grace Kelly's son, His Serene Highness Prince Albert II of Monaco, had a fling with a flight attendant (and even has an illegitimate child with her), but these days flight crew don't command quite the same cachet.

From her husband's palace in Monte Carlo, Kelly continued to set

the style for the world and for fashion houses like Hermès, Givenchy and Dior. But she clearly found her new status less than easy, having been prevented from continuing her film career and, by report, missing America intensely. Perhaps it was because of this that Rainier encouraged the Jet Set to fly in on the slightest excuse, by establishing a social calendar of Festivals and sporting occasions. Chief amongst these was the Monte Carlo TV Festival, established in 1961 to celebrate the best in world television, which for all practical purposes means television from the USA (Princess Grace was at home with her industry friends for at least one week a year.) The prizes come in the form of a Golden Nymph, a gilt copy of Bosio's Salmacis Nymph. I like to think that Rainier was having a private joke, having his own golden nymph safely tucked up at home. Either way, the Jet Set did Rainier a massive favour: his principality now positively oozes with lucre.

And this is how I find myself, exactly fifty years later, on a train to Monte Carlo. A media non-celebrity, nominated for a Golden Nymph, slipping in beneath the fame-radar. I'm taking the train out of carbon-guilt: it takes longer, and costs more, but somehow it seems more ethical. I actively dismiss the notion that I might aspire to join the Jet Set. Some of them might be on the train somewhere, I guess, fright-

ened out of the sky by the possibility of a volcanic ash cloud from Iceland. But it seems unlikely: coach 16 of this particular TGV is filled with forty Yorkshire OAPs on an escorted holiday. This eminently sensible form of travel has been colonised by an eminently sensible tribe. They don't have glamour, but they do have their own marvellous style, an earthy self-assurance that seems fit to take on the Cote d'Azur.

Monte Carlo still has its style. The hotel has a dozen sports cars parked outside it. The parking valet is working out how to switch on a \$120,000 Tesla electric roadster. A white convertible Bentley and a white Ferrari pull up, at the end what I imagine has been an exciting road-race on the twisting mountain roads above the town, and two middle eastern teenagers and their wafer-thin girlfriend-models emerge from the cars and head for the bar. I haven't been invited for cocktails with Prince Albert at the Palace. But a lot of American soap stars have been, apparently.

Half a century later and the world has moved on. Rainier and Grace are no longer with us, although Grace still has the iconic, spectral presence that comes with the tragic death of a royal beauty. The Jet Set are still jetting in but, of course, so are the rest of us: our aspirations of luxury air travel finally met half-way by steerage class in the





wide-bodied fuselage of a Boeing 747.

Back amongst the shards of Broken Britain, I find myself fretting about the onset of the end of civilization. Have we left the good years behind forever? Is the credit crunch and the current belt-tightening simply the dawning and overdue realization that we've all been living beyond our means, only staggering on by raping the planet of its dwindling natural resources, and borrowing money off the Chinese?

Did the Romans ever notice that their 500 year-old civilization was on

the slide? That their reliance on the service economy and lack of indigenous manufacturing base had also undermined their financial system and left them weak to the influence of other global superpowers? It all seems horribly familiar. The Romans funded their economy with silver, frantically mined to pay for their massive military-industrial complex, and when the precious metals started to run out ("peak silver" occurring in 79AD, coincidentally the last time a volcanic ash cloud disrupted daily life in a big way), the Empire faltered and started to contract within a few years.

The stars of MGM are going out one by one, as the studio is rumoured to be on the edge of bankruptcy. The oil-driven economies of the 20th Century have finally imploded in a primordial sinkhole of debt. With only so much oil left in the ground, the black gold that literally fuels our jet-setting lifestyle, and with "peak oil" - the point where oil production starts to decline - seemingly just a year or two away we seem to be on a downward course. The Jet Set are richer than ever, but we are beginning to question their right to impose their style on us. An age of austerity invites us to reject their lifestyles, to reassess

what is important in life. If style is really only a reflection of aspirational consumerism, where does that leave us when it all goes pear-shaped?

Grace Kelly: Style Icon, is at the V&A until 26 September 2010.

Adam Tandy is the producer of political comedy *The Thick Of It* and the spin-off movie *In The Loop*. He is the winner of the Golden Nymph for Outstanding European TV Comedy Series, and is currently working on air travel comedy *Come Fly With Me* with Matt Lucas and David Walliams.



HAIR AND STYLE

A while ago my oldest friend in the world told me that he straightens his hair on a semi-regular basis. I was delighted. He is vastly superior to me in most arenas; he's more athletic, more attractive, more confident, and generally better than me at most things that don't involve mathematics. Finally, there was something to level the playing field. He straightens his hair, and that makes him a bit of a twat.

I do not have a hair style. I have hair. I ignore it as it sits atop my head, uncombed and tufty. I long for the day that I go bald and don't have to worry about it any more. I never use any products in it, not even shampoo: I am pretty sure that shower gel works just as well, even if washing your hair and body with the same soap is the olfactory equivalent of a jumpsuit. I tried to conform in the past, but all attempts ended semi-disastrously. When I was twelve I tried spiking it up, and ended up looking like a tubby prototype Jedward. At sixteen I decided to dye it: my hair stayed the same colour, while my scalp turned a shade of sunset orange. I conditioned it once and now, every time someone rings a bell, it salivates.

I like to think that I'm making a moral choice. I have a limited amount

of time on this earth – especially if one takes into account my fondness for smoking – and I'd rather spend my finite minutes re-watching old episodes of 30 Rock than rubbing greasy nonsense on top of my head. Not styling my hair doesn't hurt anyone, but styling it would hurt me; taking small chunks out of my day from now, until the fatal heart attack I'm planning to have. Whenever I see someone sporting a "deliberately messy" look that the VO5 advertisers seem so keen for us to have, I think of my own indifferently messy hair and feel very smug indeed.

I do many things that should irritate or upset my house-mates. I rarely bother washing up, I make loud honking noises in the middle of TV shows, and just before the Easter holidays I threw up on my bedroom floor then neglected to clean it for three weeks. Somehow, they rate my refusal to use wax or gel as more heinous than my interruptions during *The Thick Of It* or my using a vomit soaked carpet to play chicken with our security deposit. They think that I'm just being pointlessly stubborn; that I could make myself look a lot better if I put a little effort in, but I've stuck to my guns in the face of external pressures, just like Noam Chomsky or Ferris Beuller.

One concession I will make is to have my hair cut regularly. When I was younger, fatter, stranger, and less personable than I am today I used to leave it for up to six months at a time, which led some people at school to call me "Ringo Starr". I never really minded, for it was better than my other nickname (Tits), and because I found The Beatles hugely preferable to whatever that jibber-jabber they were listening to was. Nowadays I love getting my haircut, partially out of practicality, but mainly because I love my Barber's. It's an old fashioned shop, staffed by a group of men from various Mediterranean and Middle Eastern countries, which I chose arbitrarily in my first term at university. Each hairdresser has their own individual way of turning what should be a chore into a wonderful experience. There's the Kurdish one, who complements the thickness of my hair, and always suggests that we swap. He uses a straight bladed razor to shave the back of my neck, then sprays alcohol on it for no discernible reason. Then there's the Turkish Cyprian who likes to soak my head only to dry it completely with a few pieces of kitchen paper before cutting my hair – again, I can find no explanation for his actions. My favourite is the Greek one who will suddenly stop, put down his scissors, and forcibly turn my head to admire a passer by; saying something like, "Viry Pretty", "Look a zose legs", or on one

occasion, "Look at her. Yang and Frezsch." When I think about graduating, it's not the thought that I'll have to get a proper job, or that I'll probably lose contact with some of my friends that makes me feel saddest. It's the thought of having to find a new barber.

Shortly after my friend made his shocking confession, I met his girlfriend. I'd popped round unannounced with the intention of coercing him into playing Pro Evolution Soccer 4, Brian Lara Cricket 2005, or some other out of date sports game. I was not aware that she would be there, and if I had then I probably would have found something else to do; I imagine he didn't really want me there. Also, meeting new people terrifies and upsets me, and I prefer to have a few days to prepare.

As it happened, she was very nice. We were introduced and she hugged me, which struck me as being rather too forward – I'm more a fan of the awkward half wave accompanied by a jokey grin – but other than that she was an absolute delight: charming, funny, and so unimaginably beautiful that within about fifteen minutes of knowing her I'd decided to become a poet.

Later that night, back at home, I discovered that I'm a hypocrite; that, in the right circumstances, I will freely and easily abandon my morals. I caught myself researching hair straighteners on the internet.

READ ME LIKE A BOOK

A very handsome blonde man appears to be in a sort of anguish as he keeps looking at me, reading my book, Jitterbug Perfume by Tom Robbins. Eventually he can take no more and leans over to say that it is his favourite book of all time. I am not expecting this and so blink several times in horror at the attractive stranger who has struck up a conversation with me, wholly unbidden. 'Umm, fab,' I say, using the one shortened adjective guaranteed to make me sound like a dildo. Five aching awkward minutes of silence later I add, 'Have you read his other books too?' 'Yes, they're all brilliant, not as good as that one, but all good...' 'Ah... fab.' I am an idiot.

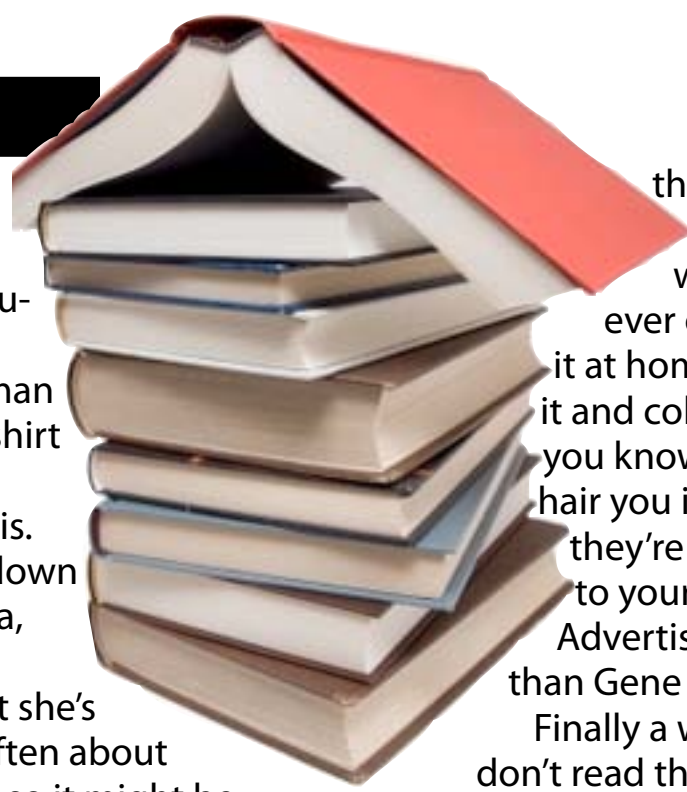
This rookie mistake comes from actually being lost in my reading material. Style dictates that you should not read while in transit anything you actually want to read and will get caught up in. No, Style-seekers, read what will make you look good and stay aware of your surroundings. While I was reading a good choice for the style-conscious reader, I became lost in the story and had that glassy, mole-emerging-into-bright-sunshine, look when I returned to Earth.

Like questionable porn (unlike intellectual erotica), some books should be read in the privacy of your own home. There are some terrible offenders out there. The impeccably groomed woman takes the latest Jane Green book from her bag,

instantly rendering her a sad old spinster with a penchant for tutu-wearing pug dogs. An Andy McNab-reading man might as well wear a t-shirt highlighting the disappointing size of his penis. An old woman settles down with the latest Aga Saga, reinforcing ageist stereotypes about what she's probably like. Style is often about subverting stereotypes so it might be okay if the old woman were reading McNab and the man were reading Green.

The other day I saw a very muscular, tough-looking bloke sit down opposite me and start reading Jane Austen's Emma. I couldn't be certain but I suspect he was a victim of... The Book Club. The Book Club is a new torture technique that made it out of Abu Ghraib and has claimed the lives of many good people. Each month one tormentor gets to choose a book none has read before. When it is your turn, you invariably waste it on some old classic that you've always wanted to read – and you finally figure out why you never got round to it. However, you can't abandon it because you have to discuss it in the next meeting.

Now Austen is a great author but reading her on the underground does cause your testosterone levels to drop significantly and women give you



that 'aww... he's so in touch with his sensitive side' look which means you'll never, ever get laid. Put it down. Read it at home in the bath. Do not read it and collect more female 'friends' – you know, the sort of friends whose hair you inhale when you think they're not looking. Don't do that to yourself.

Advertise that you're more of a man than Gene Hunt and read Nietzsche.

Finally a word on religious texts: don't read them on a journey. It makes you seem a bit, well, nutty. If you're a Muslim, you'll make folk nervous that you're reading a last verse before becoming a martyr and if you're a Christian, you'll come across as a misogynistic homophobic. These are, of course, sweeping generalisations but there's a time and place for everything and stuffed up against someone's armpit on the commuter train is not the place to go bothering God. If He cared, He'd have made you rich enough to be able to afford cabs. God hates you, you're a commuter; don't compound His irritation by reading religious texts while in the midst of your punishment.

You can ignore this advice entirely and read whatever you fancy on the tube but don't blame me if you die alone from having done the literary equivalent of wearing Speedos off the beach.

Tania blogs at hottongs.blogspot.com – it is done semi-anonymously since she doesn't want her parents to know how often she says 'c**t'.

WHAT TO READ

1. Classics, the more obscure, the better
2. Big famous philosophy tracts
3. American contemporary authors like Charles Bukowski, Richard Brautigan, William Saroyan or Tom Robbins
4. Erotica – but only if you can do so with style and grace (and no hard-on)
5. Anything not in English (but only if you do actually understand it)
6. Scary-sounding occult titles like The Satanic Bible

WHAT NOT TO READ

1. Anything by Mormons who are into vampires
2. Anything that begins 'The Girl Who...' unless a satirical take on this such as 'The Girl Who Sat On A Hornet's Nest and Kind of Liked It So Set Up Her Own S&M Bestiary' (this doesn't exist but probably should...)
3. Chick lit
4. Anything recommended by Waterstones staff with their annoying handwritten notes – usually it's rubbish best-sellers followed by one or two iconic books you'll already have read
5. Self-help books
6. Religious texts

**TANIA AHSAN, TANIAAHSAN.COM
AND HOTTONGS.BLOGSPOT.COM**



THE TROUBLE WITH MODERN ETIQUETTE

Trying to navigate the etiquette of the modern age is a full time job. Etiquette may be little more than a formalisation of 'being polite' (or, as I like to think of it, political correctness gone right) but knowing what to do in specific situations is becoming increasingly complicated. In years gone by, the finer points of the rules of polite society were not only taught in schools and shared over the dinner table, they were also codified, written down and turned into books. Etiquette and its practical application was something with which you could become conversant and confident, if not overnight then certainly by the time you left school.

Today, accelerating progress means we need a lot more rules, and I notice that nobody appears to be even attempting to write them down. The easy stuff is still obvious; knife on the right, fork on the left, start from the outside, don't pick

your nose in public and so on. What about the harder stuff though? Is there a fixed rule, or even some useful pointers, about when it's okay to phone friends at home in the evening? (9pm is too late, right? (Unless it's your wife or something, obviously. But definitely not for someone who is not an actual blood relation. (Unless, of course, you're locked out of your house, in which case it's fine to ask for help. (Unless you're going to ask to sleep on their floor, which might stretch even a close friendship. (Unless the friend was the best man at your wedding.))))))

The clauses and caveats soon become overwhelming, and that's before we've even touched on the intricate what-ifs of mobile vs. land-line and when it's acceptable to leave a voicemail, or a text. Or an email. Or a DM.

I think the best escape route for me might be backwards. I may need

to become an eccentric old gent, perhaps complete with a shooting stick and tweed jacket. Not in order to appear quirky or different (though obviously, that's a major plus) but because I want to be excused a total unawareness of tomorrow's etiquette. If we allowed our grandparents to be casually racist, perhaps the next generation won't notice, or care, if I continue to live like it's the mid 1990s. Saying or doing something charmingly foolish or old fashioned would be fine. People would even come to expect it of me. Because honestly, I don't think I can keep up with it any more.

There's a whole new generation (or at least a sizeable and very visible proportion of a generation) who seem to regard listening to music in public through - I don't even know. The speaker on their mobile phone, one presumes - as being acceptable. This is not the same as having headphones turned up too loud.

I've checked. Nor is it a phone going unanswered. It's actual music being played through an actual stereo in public, intentionally, apparently for the benefit of a group of nearby friends. This goes on for whole albums, sometimes. Remarkable as the social dynamics of changing attitudes to what we would once have quaintly called 'personal stereos' are, and as fascinating as an ethnographic study of this emergent social bonding experience would undoubtedly be, it's not something I'll be volunteering to research. Picking a track that your friends, with their overlapping musical tastes, will all appreciate but with which they are not yet bored must surely come a close second to assaulting (or worse, insulting) that tall guy who is looking over here again and taking notes. The lanky pipe-smoking twat.

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LONDON SUMMER STYLE: A PLEA FOR MERCY

Summer Style in London is in evidence normally about a fortnight after Christmas. All it takes is two consecutive hours of sunshine, and the horror known as summer dressing is out there, ready to torment us. Yes, torment us. That's the word I choose to use. As a lardy person I make sure that I am well covered in a kaftan top, baggy trousers and pair of old trainers. Unattractive and inoffensive, that's my look. If only most of the population of London thought the same thing! For every pretty slim girl in a flippy knee length skirt, v neck t shirt, and pumps, there's one who regularly eats their weight in hoola hoops wearing a skin tight jump suit. And no bra. Generally, the more unattractive the person, the more exposed they are. It's as simple as that.

Vest tops are my personal pet noir. They are merciless. Every contour, every piece of flubbery flesh, and every tattoo - don't get me started on those - is revealed for everyone to see. These people are shameless!! Often the lower torso is encased in a pair of shorts. To quote Patsy from Ab Fab - "a zeppelin in a condom, darling" The more revolting the legs, the higher cut they are! Now, my own legs

resemble a physical map of the moon, overlaid with a motorway map of Europe. You get the picture. If only a few more people thought like me when choosing what to wear we would never have to be subjected to third degree cellulite.

Men think that wearing the clam digger, those long baggy shorts with many pockets, solves all their fashion dilemmas. Stylish, airy, and plenty of manoeuvre for jangling change. Wrong wrong wrong. I've only ever seen one man who looked good in those clam diggers - you know who you are, Martin. A certain height, leg length, beefiness and a huge quantity of personality are essential.

The latest horror is the maxi dress, the female equivalent of the clam digger. So good on paper, but in real life it seems we've been taken over by the killer curtains, billowing on a street corner near you. As with the clam digger, a certain height, attitude and just the right amount of beefiness is required. Too thin and tall, bean pole territory, too short and fat, rubber ball. As a style, though, the maxi dress



their tumbs. I used to be one of those before childbirth and crisps put an end to my lovely flat stomach. I've quite come to like the maxi dress - only it looks so out of place on the high street, with the wearer dragging along all sorts of dirt from the pavement.

Footwear is a real minefield in London in the summer. We have the ballet pump for the ladies and the boating shoe for the men. It's as simple as that, everyone, pay attention. The main styles are the fit flop, the latest in a long line of novelty sports footwear that guarantees the constant wearer slimmer legs and a perkier bottom; the gladiator sandal, which guarantees the owner a vast number of blisters; and of course the flip flop.

Men seem to have taken flip flops to their hearts over the past few years, but there should be a law against most men wearing them. Except for two particular individuals. One is a consultant gastroenterologist, the other runs a textile company. Their feet really are things of beauty - I've

spent many an afternoon on a beach over the past thirty years peering at their feet, and luckily the years have not diminished them.

But all this talk is really too depressing - can it all really be that bad? No, of course not. It would help though if people realised that London dressing is different from holiday dressing. We just don't cope well with hot weather here! There are the occasional glimmers of hope - the lovely olive shirtwaister dress I saw a girl wearing today. She looked cool, glamorous and smart - such a difficult thing to pull off. The wear of the maxi dress who actually suited it - so pretty. She sashayed down the high road in her oversize sunglasses and gold sandals turning heads as she went by.

So is this rant a plea for mercy? Maybe not. But definitely a plea for some consideration.

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STYLING THE BODY

I don't like to do other women down. If anything, I like to do them up. Not in the sense of buying a shitty old shack, painting one wall in each room a garish colour and then selling it off as on-trend contemporary accommodation with wi-fi. Women are not houses, when will we all learn this important fact? Not least because doing a woman up on the inside will do little for her value. Sure, confidence is sexy but so is a sexy dress and smokey eye make-up and a pair of sexy shoes.

My dream in life is to have all women (except the super morbidly obese) to be confident about their bodies. If you are super morbidly obese and happy about your body then you are far beyond the help of flattering colours or vertical stripes - you are mental and also dying. I cannot help you, I can only judge you. Unless, of course, it's a glandular thing - in which case, you are FABULOUS (still super morbidly obese).*

I don't want there to be an ideal body image for women, except for

'healthy'. This is almost certainly because I don't want to ever compare myself to a body ideal and find that I am nothing like it. Deep down I want the body ideal to be my body at any point in my adult life, but that's what we all want isn't it? We'd all be free to wear what we liked best on ourselves, not attempting to shift ourselves into the image of something else. Lily Allen points out a good example in her hit 'Everything's Just Wonderful' when she sings "if I buy those jeans I can look like Kate Moss". But what if those jeans are shit? What if they make you look more like Kate Moss, but they also make you look like a massive prick? I think I'd rather some jeans that made me look like an ace version of myself.

The crux of this is that I am really judgemental of what people wear, and I resent myself for it. I wish I wasn't, but I totally am. It's equally a good thing though. I met someone recently who I instantly decided I wanted to be my best friend because I liked her fringe so much. Also, I am equally judgemental of what boys wear. Just ask my exasperated boyfriend.

I chided myself for judging last night, but in retrospect I stand by it. I saw a woman in a bar, who was around 35-45 (let's give her a broad age range) wearing a backless top and no bra. I'm a fan of this look myself, especially on myself as I have a modest rack and they

(my 'bangers' - as Gok would say) support themselves with gusto. Ladies, don't get me wrong. I think most people can get away with this kind of top, but only a few can do so when the top offers no support and is see-through white. I bet that woman's tits would've looked better in the nude than molested in that mid-90's number.

What I'm saying, ladies, is to work with your boobs. Don't dress as if you've got Kate Moss' chest if you've got Beyonce's or all the other variants. Breasts are marvellous, lovely things and I reckon everyone's look good - but you need to know how to deal with them. I'm not saying wap them out either, just that you need to consider your knockers when putting together an entire outfit. Alternatively, you can tell me to fuck off and spend time dealing with far more important things. In which case you'd be right, but I'd still look nice.

*I don't mean to be offensive with this, I just have a fear of the super morbidly obese and have done since I was two years old. Yes, I know - I am the mental one.

**NADIA KAMIL IS A COMEDY
WRITER AND PERFORMER**

THE TIE CATALOGUE

For a long time, I have wanted to catalogue my collection of ties. It seemed like the right thing to do. It is only now that I have got round to realising this dream¹.

There are many ways in which ties can be arranged, many factors which could be considered. Some of these are entirely objective and some entirely subjective. Some would be useful, others not so much. Putting together the tie catalogue meant assessing these various factors and deciding which should be considered and, of these, which should be given priority. For example, I could consider the age of each tie (or at least how long it has been since I acquired the tie – many have come from charity shops or vintage boutiques and it would be difficult to date them accurately). While this age-based system may be of some academic interest, it is rare that I find myself saying “With this shirt, I’d really want a tie which I bought at least two or three years ago”. Therefore, I decided not to concentrate on such factors and instead think about the considerations I make when choosing a tie to wear.

The most important factor when choosing a tie is obviously colour, and to begin with, this was going to be the first column in the Excel

spreadsheet I used to form the catalogue. However, as I separated them into piles, I realised I had overlooked something important: many of the ties consisted of more than one colour². And so, I moved “Colour Of Tie” into column B (renaming it “Main Colour”) and inserted a new column “Number Of Colours” in front of it (which became column A). Columns C to E were labelled “Second Colour”, “Third Colour” and “Fourth Colour” respectively³. The next column⁴, I simply labelled “Pattern” and I believe that is quite self-explanatory. Likewise the columns labelled “Thickness Of Tie”⁵ and “Fabric”⁶ shouldn’t require any further explanation.

The structure was in place. Now I simply needed to enter all of the tie information into the spreadsheet. I did this by hand, it seemed the easiest way.

Despite my aims for objective accuracy, some elements of subjectivity did slip into the spreadsheet. For “Thickness Of Tie”, I introduced three classes – “skinny”, “medium” and “wide”, however, I did not clearly define the boundaries of each class and it is possible that some ties labelled “medium” were actually wide, some labelled “wide” were actually medium, some labelled “medium” were actually

skinny and that some labelled “skinny” were actually medium. It is however doubtful that any ties labelled “skinny” were actually wide or that any ties labelled “wide” were actually skinny. Similarly, the classes in the “Pattern” column were also rather broad and ill-defined. “Plain”, “striped”, “spotted” and “chequered” were easy to distinguish. Some other patterns were more ambiguous though. Ties with a graphic pattern featuring geometric shapes⁷ were labelled “graphic”. Ties with a more painterly, abstract pattern were labelled “painterly”. Some ties had a combination of patterns, and I can’t remember what I did about that. I think I just labelled them with whatever felt right at the time.

Once the catalogue was complete, it was possible to “sort” the information using Excel’s “Filter” function. This revealed some interesting insights into my tie collection.

Of the single coloured ties, those in the “blue” family formed the largest group⁸, followed by white⁹ and pink¹⁰. Black was the most common “base” colour for those ties featuring more than

one colour¹¹, followed by various members of the “grey” family¹². White was the most common secondary colour¹³ and, unsurprisingly, was most commonly partnered with black¹⁴ or grey¹⁵ as the base. The vast majority of my ties consisted of either one¹⁶ or two colours¹⁷ with numbers dwindling further with each additional colour¹⁸.

The most common pattern found on my ties was no pattern at all; almost two fifths of my ties were plain¹⁹. Of those which did have some pattern or decoration, the largest group were striped²⁰. There is a clear tendency towards skinny ties rather than wider ties²¹ and polyester is by far the most common fabric for ties²², regardless of width – although there was some degree of correlation between a tie being leather and an increased chance of that tie being skinny²³.

So what conclusions can we draw from all this?²⁴ Is there a “typical” tie? One which combines all of the key traits of the tie catalogue? A tie which condenses the entire spreadsheet into a single piece of fabric? It would appear so. A skinny black or grey

polyester tie with white stripes would most accurately reflect the trends shown here. I only have one tie like that, but maybe that is enough. Perhaps I should just burn all the others. I don't need them anymore.

NOTES

1 Ironically, I recently moved house and in the process thinned my tie collection by about half; the moment I finally have my tie catalogue in place is the exact moment my tie collection is at its least impressive (in terms of quantity, if nothing else).

2 It turns out that 54.5% of my ties consist of more than one colour.

3 I had considered adding an additional column here ("Fifth Colour") but this proved unnecessary.

4 Column F.

5 Column G.

6 Column H.

7 Such as squares, triangles and circles.

8 28% of single coloured ties were blue (12.7% of all ties overall). Of these, 16% of single coloured ties were navy (7.3% overall) and 12% of single coloured ties were light blue (5.5% overall).

9 16% of single coloured ties were white (7.3% of ties overall). This is equal to the number of single coloured ties which were navy (see note 8 above).

10 12% of single coloured ties were pink (5.5% of ties overall). This is equal to the number of single coloured ties which were light blue (see note 8 above).

11 40% of ties with more than one colour had a "base" colour of black (21.8% of ties overall).

12 22.7% of ties with more than one colour had a "base" colour of grey (14.5% of ties overall). Of these, 13.3% of ties with more than one colour had a base of light grey (7.3% of ties overall). 6.6% of ties with more than one colour had a base of dark grey (3.6% of ties overall) and an equal amount had a base which was simply labelled "grey" and was con-

sidered to be neither light nor dark.

13 26.7% of ties with more than one colour had white as the secondary colour (14.5% of ties overall)

14 50% of ties with a secondary colour of white had a black base colour (7.3% of ties overall).

15 37.5% of ties with a secondary colour of white had a grey base colour (5.5% of ties overall). The secondary greys were equally split between "light grey", "grey" and "dark grey".

16 45.5% of ties consisted of one colour only.

17 30.9% of ties consisted of two colours.

18 14.5% of ties had three colours, while only 9.1% stretched to four colours.

19 38.1% of ties were labelled "plain".

20 44.1% of ties which weren't labelled "plain" were striped (29.1% of ties overall).

21 "Skinny" ties made up 50.9% of the whole tie catalogue. "Medium" ties represented a further 34.5%. Only 14.6% of my ties are "wide".

22 A whopping 72.7% of all the ties in the catalogue were polyester.

23 63.6% of leather ties were "skinny", compared with 50.9% of ties from the general population (see note 21 above)

24 Not many.



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