

Style

How to look classic – but not staid



Anna Berkeley

Ask a stylist

like to dress in a relatively classic style but am worried I end up looking staid and old-fashioned. Have you any tips?

There is a fine line between being classic and chic and looking, well, boring. Some pieces are incredibly hard to get right. Unless you are well schooled in styling, or are Alexa Chung, I would give the following a wide berth: twinsets, most brogues, penny loafers, ballet flats (don't shout, I know you love them but they only look good with slim jeans or trousers), brooches and three-button jackets.

Now we've got that out of the way let's look at the way you wear your classics. Even the tiniest tweak can change the whole feel of an outfit. When you first put everything on, take a look at how you've buttoned a shirt, arranged cuffs and hems, and tucked (or not tucked) things in. If you simply put your clothes on with no regard for what looks right, you are doing yourself a disservice. Try rolling up sleeves to show your wrists and forearms, then adding an interesting bangle or cuff. I love the solid bracelet from British brand Ferian (£525, ferian.co.uk) or the finer Gate bracelet.

Invariably a shirt worn with the top two or three buttons undone looks more interesting – use Philippine Leroy-Beaulieu (Sylvie from *Emily in Paris*) as your muse here. Never before

has a shirt looked so good, although you may want to avoid going this low for a board meeting. See Equipment's simple silk version (£255, farfetch.com) or Victoria Beckham's wrap front style (£540, farfetch.com). For other great shirts look at MaxMara, Alexander McQueen and Bourrienne Paris X for inventive, statement sleeves. Or go for an exaggerated collar – the Valentino shirt pictured has just the right amount of edge but is not off message for a classic customer.

With a jumper, push the sleeve and give it a tuck. Avoid tucking if you have a short body and long legs – it just won't look right. Instead, arrange the hem of the jumper casually over the waistband of your skirt or trouser to lengthen the torso. For everyone else, tuck away. It's easiest to try and catch a small portion of the knit at the side of your waist near the hip.

On the bottom half, tread carefully. The wrong length can take you from cool to dowdy in a millisecond, so ensure skirts, dresses and trousers are hitting you at the right point on the leg. Consider cut, fit and detail. Good cut and fit are essential to perfecting classic style with panache.

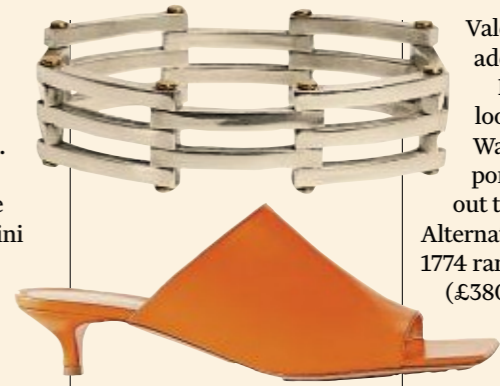
Also important is to ensure you aren't wearing items when they are past their best. Do a check to make sure nothing is looking tired, felted or bagging at tension points like the knees. Once this is done then it's down

to detail. A small twist to a classic piece can work wonders for keeping it contemporary.

Accessories are the key to unlocking the cooler side of classic. What would Audrey Hepburn in *Breakfast at Tiffany's* be without the sunglasses, multi-strand pearls, mini tiara, opera gloves and cigarette holder? Giovanna Battaglia Engelbert's predominantly classic style is made fun, frivolous and exciting by the addition of a wide range of colourful shoes, bags and outré sunglasses. And the super understated Carolyn Bessette-Kennedy was never seen without a slick of red lipstick, not strictly an accessory but it makes a big impact nonetheless.

Choose statement sunglasses to add some edge. I like the cat-eyes frames from Saint Laurent which suit round, pear and oval faces well (£270, net-a-porter.com). The butterfly shape from Chanel is good on heart and oblong faces (£480, chanel.com). The classic Ray-Ban aviator works on square, diamond and inverted triangle shapes (£140, net-a-porter.com).

I really believe in the transformative power of the right shoe. Keep it modern and on point, literally. Khaite's Lafayette slingbacks are superb (£620, matchesfashion.com). Pair with midi skirts and dresses, slim, wide or cropped trousers. Choose a strong, coloured mule to pep up neutrals.



Ferian Gate bracelet, £365, ferian.co.uk; Bottega Veneta mules, £590, net-a-porter.com; Valentino cotton poplin shirt, £890, matchesfashion.com

Valentino, Prada and Neous are all adept at a modern classic shoe.

For a more relaxed weekend look choose Loro Piana's yellow Waikiki suede slides (£515, net-a-porter.com). That yellow is crying out to sit next to a dark denim. Alternatively, any of the Birkenstock 1774 range will keep your look fresh (£380, net-a-porter.com).

If you're wearing a very classic shoe – like the Belle Vivier (£520,

rogervivier.com) or low Trompette from Roger Vivier (£520, rogervivier.com) – you'd need to have a more fashion-forward outfit. For instance an exaggerated shape like a stiff tent dress or coat, a standout print or a knock-out colour combination.

Finally, a note on hairstyles. The wrong cut can add years to your face and can be very damaging to your overall look. Ensure you are pushing it a bit. Many of us stay loyal to hairdressers we have been with for years. It's a good idea to occasionally cheat on them with another stylist just to see what they might proffer as an alternative. A word of warning though, ensure you get a strong recommendation first.

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Fashion: the directors' cut

Film festivals | Actors grab attention

on the red carpet, but those behind

the camera often have the most

interesting style, says Kitty Grady

When the Cannes Film Festival kicks off on May 17, the spotlight will be on the actors gliding down La Croisette in custom gowns and suits. Less attention will be paid to the style of the people behind the camera – the producers and directors – yet they too are often a rich source of fashion inspiration.

Claire Denis, the French auteur behind 1999's *Beau Travail* and whose new film *Stars at Noon* will have its premiere next week, tends to opt for leather

From top: 'Zola' director Janicza Bravo; Benny and Josh Safdie in their 'normcore' look; Wes Anderson's trademark suit and brown shoes

Getty Images

jackets, blazers and sharp suits – sometimes in metallics or prints – and Cuban-heel boots, even on the red carpet. Expect a statement, too, from provocative Catalan director Albert Serra, who will premiere *Pacific*, about a diplomat in Tahiti. He has previously worn a cowboy-inspired waistcoat, aviators sunglasses and paisley foulards on the red carpet.

Although they may not land in magazine spreads, filmmakers who cut a dash have not gone completely unnoticed. In 2021, Los Angeles-based Hagop Kourounian set up the Instagram account @directorfits as a tribute to the wardrobe choices of cinema's visionaries.

The account has film industry fans such as Jonah Hill, Natasha Lyonne and Jeremy O'Harris ("He was in my DMs begging me to post more Pasolini fits," Kourounian says of the playwright, over Zoom). "I'm very interested with the creative process, whose brain a film came from . . . you always see these mood-board accounts of actors in movies wearing costumes, but if you look at the wardrobes of directors, you can often see a very personal through-line from their style to their films."

An image of Sofia Coppola demonstrates this synergy. Filming *On the Rocks* in 2019, the director wears a blue mannish shirt (her go-to on-set outfit, often by Charvet) with bottle-green trousers. Next to her Rashida Jones, playing a writer-daughter of a successful father, wears an identical pair.

Kourounian cites Wes Anderson as another example of this art-life parallel. Anderson's signature look of corduroy suits and Clarks Wallabee shoes (bolstered sometimes by a quilted coat in cold temperatures) encapsulates the whimsical aesthetic of his films and is even replicated in his movies. "It's worn in *Fantastic Mr Fox* – on George

Directors' style tends to be free from the expectations that actresses experience to look conventionally chic

Clooney's clay-mation character – and Bill Murray in *The Royal Tenenbaums*," says Kourounian.

David Lynch is also a distinctive wearer of suits. When he wears them without a tie, with a white shirt buttoned up to the collar, the effect is slightly off-kilter and appropriately Lynchian. Pedro Almodóvar's films – camp carnivals of melodrama – have included designer collaborations such as Jean Paul Gaultier and Versace in the 1993 film *Kika*. His own flamboyant looks are lessons in pattern and colour. Pictured on set, he has worn black jeans with a vertical striped red-and-white shirt, while at Cannes in 2019 he wore a moss-green suit with a fuchsia-coloured scarf.

Directors' personal styles tend to be more, well, personal – free from the expectations that actresses experience to look conventionally chic. "My parents were both tailors, so from a young age it had been made clear to me that dressing was a form of expression," Janicza Bravo, director of A24's *Zola*, tells me in an email exchange.

A former costume designer and stylist, Bravo describes her sartorial inspirations as "Jamaican dance hall, French New Wave, ship men, grandpas". At the Sundance Festival in 2021, she wore a



mental illness" – "I turned 41 this year and decided to go nuts," she says.

The wardrobe of the late Belgian-born French director Agnès Varda – who died in March 2019 – was similarly eccentric. "Agnès always dressed the way she wanted to," her daughter Rosalie emails me from Paris: "A bit hippie chic, and never well-known brands."

Mainly buying her clothes from charity shops and on holidays, the director's looks were a creative mix and match of different fabrics and textures – from polka dots to chinoiserie – with an overwhelmingly purple palette ("The colour of bishops!" says Rosalie).

In her later years, Varda's most distinctive style signifier was her two-tone basin-cut hair, a silver crown formed by her grey roots. "It was a way to smile at getting older and have a bit of humour," says Rosalie. "People would stop her on the street: with your hair, we recognise you . . . and she smiled."

Prioritising practicality over making a statement are the Safdie brothers, the duo behind cult hit films *Uncut Gems* and *Good Time*, who don a "normcore" uniform of Patagonia, Carhartt and New Balance sneakers. "They are just 100 per cent themselves . . . I like that they wear normal brands – I could wear their whole outfit for \$300," says Kourounian. He also ironically enjoys the fits of Quentin Tarantino, who wears Tony Soprano-style button-downs and T-shirts by Aéropostale: "A brand your grandma would buy you in middle school from the mall – but he's wearing it at Cannes."

One accessory stands out, however, and could come in useful on the French Riviera. Italian director Lina Wertmüller described her signature white glasses as her own "personal décor" and ordered them in bulk (the minimum order was 5,000 pairs). In *The Mood for Love* director Wong Kar-wai is similarly never seen without his rectangular sunglasses, which are essential to his identity as a filmmaker. "When people see the glasses, they will know this is the director Wong Kar-wai," he told *China Daily* in 2008. "The sunglasses are my 'working clothes'. That's all."

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