

CASUAL CHIC:

Men’S Holiday Fare Has The Look Of Luxe

Whether worn to a friend’s house party, a corporate affair or a New Year’s bash, this season’s holiday looks are all about laid back elegance.

“Men are definitely prepared to spend money on holiday looks this season,” asserts Jade Howe, designer and president of Huntington Beach, CA-based House of Howe. The rock-and-roll premium sportswear firm has several holiday looks this season, including a three-piece cotton velvet suit and sport coat. “We received re-orders in the first week we shipped them, and the weather was quite warm.”

Besides velvet, this holiday’s dressy styles include plush corduroy sport coats, tuxedo shirts and even a denim tux.

H&M’s advice: “The hot look for holiday is a clean, tailored slim fit look. Men should try a velvet blazer to update [their] style or a striped sweater,” says Jennifer Uglialoro, spokesperson. The evening wear portion of the retailer’s uber-hot Viktor and Rolf collection includes tuxedo shirts and a denim blazer. At press time, V&R products were 85% sold out.

Overall, 20% of H&M’s holiday season is focused on the luxe/dressy category. “Important items we focused on include velvet blazers, satin shirts, bowties, skinny ties and thin knit sweaters, which are more holiday and festive,” Uglialoro says.

DKNY Jeans’ Janice Sullivan, president, agrees with the style, saying men will look best this season in, “Dark straight jeans and a velvet blazer with a tuxedo shirt or printed knit.” With this combination, she says, “You never look too dressy or too casual for almost any occasion.”

This just-right synthesis of casual elegance is welcome this time of year. Cotton Incorporated’s Lifestyle Monitor™ finds that when dressing for a party, 50% of men prefer to be slightly overdressed, while 44% lean toward being slightly underdressed.

The ultimate in dresseddown elegance has to be the denim tuxedo, offered by New York-based Plan B. Designer Stephen Hardy credits his design partner Tony Falwell for a thoroughly modern take on the 007 mainstay.

“We thought it would be an amazing thing to do denim evening wear, and Tony said, ‘Let’s do a tux,’” Hardy recalls. The pair used a 9-ounce denim that goes through a “jelly wash” treatment, which lends the fabric a satiny drape and sheen.

“Couture details, like hand-pleated lapels and top collar make the tux special and give it texture,” Hardy adds. “The cool thing about this is that the model who wore it for our photo shoot is 19 and he looks incredible in it, but I can also see this on an executive in his 50’s with gray hair -- the silver fox. This has a very sleek shape and the fabric is incredibly comfortable.”

That’s music to the ears of many a man. Because even for dressy occasions, men are looking to stay comfortable. In fact, 61% of Monitor respondents say that when choosing what to wear for dinner and dancing, they prefer clothes that are more comfortable than clothes that look better. But this season, they can have both.

At DKNY, dressy items can be found in all categories, from velvet blazers in a variety of colors, available in solid, stripes and paisley, to cotton poplin and tuxedo shirts in several fun colors. They also offer a corduroy blazer. The fashion house sees men pairing a tuxedo shirt with jeans, or wearing a simple v-neck sweater under a velvet blazer for this season’s holiday gatherings.



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- Janice Sullivan,
DKNY Jeans

DRESSING FOR PARTIES

Slightly Overdressed 50%
Slightly Underdressed 44%

DKNY Jeans' Sullivan says men are responding to novelty and luxe. "We have a velvet pinstripe blazer that is blowing out of stores," she reports. "At this point, the velvet blazer is a fashion piece, but we are finding it to be a fairly universal one. Dark jeans are also doing very well."

The holiday delivery for DKNY Jeans includes "luxe pieces that work back to the denim collection and dress it up. The capsule usually consists of velvet jackets, tuxedo shirts, wovens with hints of shine, as well as outerwear."



With denim's ascendancy in the market, men have become more comfortable wearing it to better occasions. The Monitor finds that 76% of men are comfortable wearing a pair of nice-looking denim jeans for a dinner out, while 73% would wear them dancing.

Howe says the slim jeans and stylized jacket look has defined his collection from day one. "It's kind of how I dress and how our customer identifies us," he says. "I call it 'the cowboy punk meets English country gentlemen' look."

Howe's items this season include the lowpile velvet suit, the three-button, fitted jacket of which features a boot-cut sleeve, and a hand-stitched embroidery of a fleur cross on the elbows. The back of the jacket bears a suede leather logo finished with brass studs.

"The logo says 'Felonious Priest,' a fictitious band I design for," Howe says. The jacket has validation by real-life artists, too. "It was worn to the Grammy's by Chester Bennington from Linkin Park, and to the CMA's by Jamey Johnson."

Howe also has a one-button, tux-style velvet printed blazer. "It's extremely luxurious looking, very holiday. It says, 'I'm going to my holiday party in style.'"

Plan B also has a tuxedo shirt that features a finely frayed, hand-picked jabot, as well as a zip-front vest jacket, made of denim. For a finished look, Hardy recommends its threequarter-length coat done in lightweight denim with a vintage bluish-purple fox collar.

"The tux, the vest jacket and the fox-collar trench all are super evening looks that fill a niche for really special clothes for men this season."

This story is one in a series of articles based on findings from Cotton Incorporated's Lifestyle Monitor™ tracking research. Each story will focus on a specific topic as it relates to the American men's wear consumer and his attitudes and behavior regarding clothing, appearance, fashion, fiber selection and many other timely, relevant subjects.



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