

A Short, Individualized History Of Post-World War II Men's Fashion

by Chris Okum



He was interested in how his sense of fashion had slowly but surely whittled itself down into a perpetual need for leisure wear, like t-shirts, sweatpants, and sneakers. How had he gotten here? There

had to have been a stage between the formal wear he evidenced during the first half of his life (button-down shirts, slacks, suit jackets, lace-up brogues and penny loafers) and this second stage, and then it came to him, that brief moment during middle age when he wore nothing but formal wear made out of the same materials that would later be used exclusively to create leisure wear, such as poly-cotton blends, fleece, and terrycloth. He was a man born right after World War II and at some point in his life he wanted to be comfortable but still be taken seriously, hence the button-down shirts and slacks that he would wear to go looking for strange at one of the various Purple Onion Bar & Restaurants dotting the map of the Southland Empire. This was easygoing mufti of men who wanted to appear successful and also give the appearance of being able to get nude in the blink of an eye, thanks to the mobility of EZ-Stretch pants that came in various colors and patterns, including herringbone and pinstripe. Those were the days, right, and yet he could barely remember them, even if he could remember what his style was meant to connote to hyper-stimulated divorcees.

Nowadays he would go out and he would see a man wearing a suit and tie and he would just assume that the man was a white collar criminal, someone who clicked a button and created abject chaos in places like Bangladesh and Ecuador. Everything appeared flipped around to him. Men who wore t-shirts and shorts came across as innocuous (as long as the t-shirt and shorts were clean, devoid of holes and stains), unable to affect the angel of history. But at some point in his past these very items of clothing indicated something sinister, as if the person wearing them was loose, not in the sexual sense, but literally, as if the nuts and bolts that kept them together were coming apart. There were young men in his neighborhood, he would see them in the morning, getting into their expensive electric cars, wearing three-piece suits, and he imagined them driving off to an undisclosed location where they would do horrible things to other people. He also imagined them coming home at the end of the day and swapping their business clothes for something light and baggy, the diminution in style giving them plausible deniability regarding

their crimes against humanity.

