

Plan The Perfect Wedding



Traditional tux still top wedding wear

By Lisa Lebowitz
Copley News Service

Much is made of bridal party attire: What kind of dress will the bride wear? Will the bridesmaids be able to recycle their outfits?

Has the bride, for superstition's sake, kept her dress closeted away where her groom-to-be won't be able to peek?

All of this fuss, ritual and tradition draw attention away from what the men are wearing. But if this season is any indication, the eclipse is over.

Menswear for weddings is emerging with quiet elegance. The well-groomed groom is looking to textural interest to make traditional shapes more modern and more dashing than ever.

According to Kenneth Hall, vice president of After Six, there are four traditional types of formal wear:

For semiformal, daytime weddings, the "stroller," a gray, regular-length jacket worn with gray-striped trousers, a pearl-gray vest and four-in-hand gray-striped tie. This is the attire of choice when the bride opts for a dress without a train.

When the wedding is more formal, but again during the day, the traditional cutaway, sporting an ascot and pearl-gray vest, is the most popular choice, but only before 6 in the evening.

After 6, the classic tuxedo is top sartorial choice, superceded only when the event is ultraformal — in which case "full dress," or white tie and tails is the order of the evening.

"By definition, marriage is a very formal thing" explains Hall, "and traditional occasions call for traditional tuxes."

But even the most time-honored silhouette can be improved upon.

"What we're seeing now are changes in styling that are consistent with general menswear trends," comments Monroe Weinstock, president and head of Raffinatti formal wear division. "Jackets are slightly wider with higher shoulders, the button-positioning is a bit lower at the waist. Jackets are non-vented, and pleated trousers are a must."

There's also a greater variety of lapel choices to select from. The classic shawl collar is still important, as is notch-lapel styling.

The trend that currently is gaining popularity? The peak lapel, where the bottom part of the lapel protrudes and wings upward.

The biggest news to date, however, is in fabrication, and there's nothing like textural interest to add punch to familiar shapes.

"Look for tone-on-tone and texture," says Barbara Tober, editor-in-chief of *Bride's* magazine. "The shadow stripe, diamond patterns, jacquard or brocade ideas that evoke 'Le Smoking' — the great old smoking jackets, these are strong trends now."

Tober adds that some interesting colors are entering the market. In addition to traditional black and gray, *Bride's* just photographed a purple tux for a future issue. Midnight blue is also out and about, and white is always

Groom's Glossary

Any groom can find himself lost in a maze of ties, tails and dress shirts. To help you look dandy, here's a quick rundown.

Formal, daytime. Gray cutaway with black-and-gray striped trousers and pearl gray vest. Spread-collar shirt and striped four-in-hand tie or wing collar and striped ascot. Gray gloves optional.

Formal, evening. Black full-dress tails and black trousers with a black satin stripe. White pique wing-collar dress shirt, white tie, white vest. White gloves and black top hat optional.

Semiformal, daytime. Try a gray stroller coat with black-and-gray striped trousers. White spread-collar shirt under a gray vest. Four-in-hand tie.

Semiformal, evening. Black tuxedo coat with satin peak, notch or shawl lapels over trousers with a black satin stripe. Cummerbund or vest and turned-down or wing collar with ruffled or pleated front. Black satin or fashion-print tie that matches the cummerbund.

classic for summer weddings or affairs in the South and Southwest.

That perennial dilemma, to choose a double- or single-breasted style, is in part, pragmatically solved.

"Ninety percent of wedding tuxedos are rented," says Weinstock. "Single-breasted styles are easier to fit, so the majority of wedding rentals are single-breasted."

But there is a growing trend toward buying. Hall reports that in the last four years, retail sales have grown from 10 percent to 30 percent of After Six's total business.

"And with so many men buying tuxes," says Hall, "it's become important to individualize them — a feat that's accomplished with the savvy use of accessories."

Enter paisley cummerbunds and ties, art deco and baroque vests, bow ties that glitter with threads of silver lame or colorful suspenders that don't even match the bridesmaids' dresses.

These days, there are more occasions to dress up, and if a man is going to wear his tux six times a year, he's going to find a way to make it interesting," comments Hall.

But unless his wedding is hip and fashion-forward, the more traditional tuxes head for the altar, while the high-fashion accoutrements wait at home for another evening.

Frequently, the only difference between the groom's attire and the rest of his wedding party is the flower worn in his lapel. Grooms may wear a sprig from the bride's bouquet, while the best man, ushers and fathers of the bride and groom, sport a flower similar to those the bridesmaids are carrying.

"But boutonnières have more style, too," says Tober. "These days it's not unusual to catch sight of delphinium, freesia and lily of the valley in place of roses and carnations."

What are the two most egregious errors a groom can make — short of not showing up?



GROOM GORGEOUS - Today's grooms are a dapper set, sporting suits of crisp elegance. Shown here: A formal black tail coat paired with front pleated trousers and a wing collar shirt from the Raffinatti.

Shirts and shoes!

On the definite *don't list* are formal-wear shirts with ruffles. Also on the outs are tired-looking tops in sappy pastels.

If you do want to create visual interest, choose a white shirt with a natty wing collar. The best fabrics to go with are silk or 100 percent cotton, fibers that breathe.

And to step out in style, make sure your shoes are high-shine patent rather than workaday matte.

"They don't have to be traditional evening slippers in shape," says Hall, "but they really should be high-gloss black, and preferably a black patent leather shoe."

Jewelry can make the perfect gift

By Debra Lee Baldwin
Copley News Service

Gifts of jewelry symbolize that which is beautiful, timeless and of paramount importance — and as such are ideal for your wedding.

The bridal couple will want to select special gifts for each other and for your attendants. It is also appropriate for you to receive jewelry from your parents and guests.

Ideal gifts for the bride to give the groom are a good watch or pair of gold cuff links. As with all wedding gifts, engraving the date of the occasion and a few sentimental words is appropriate.

The groom might surprise the bride with a watch, too, or with

fine jewelry. Another popular choice is a frame of sterling silver to hold his picture.

The father of the bride usually gives her a gift of fine jewelry — perhaps diamond earrings or a pearl choker.

Gifts to your attendants are usually distributed before the wedding. Traditionally, each bridesmaid gets an identical gift, but honor attendants usually receive something a little more special.

Good choices for attendants' gifts include something they can wear on the big day — such as pearl earrings, a diamond hair clip, a gold chain with a heart shaped locket or a lovely bracelet.

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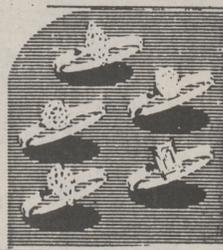
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