

Men's wedding-day style can be versatile

By Sharon Achatz
Copley News Service

While grooms used to dress as cookie-cutter imprints — black tux by night, gray stroller by day — menswear styles have become much more versatile.

Granted, certain fashion basics apply. Appropriate wedding dress still is determined by the formality and time of wedding.

For example, a "morning suit" — cutaway coat with striped trousers — is traditionally the choice for formal morning affairs; for something more informal, a stroller fills the bill. For formal evening weddings, a black tuxedo should be worn; an ultra-formal evening calls for black tails with white tie and accessories. Afternoon weddings allow for a wide array of tuxedo selections ranging from classic to contemporary.

Within this basic framework, however, today's grooms have much more leeway for including pattern, color and pizzazz to the wedding party.

HIGH-STYLE ELEGANCE

While the morning suit still reigns supreme, it has been updated in a variety of new patterns. Black cutaways now are paired with diamond-pattern ascots as well as the traditional stripes, and striped trousers often give way to tiny birds-eye or houndstooth prints of gray.

Adventurous afternoon formal wear includes the likes of tuxedos styled with Western yokes and worn with bolo ties, tux jackets

worn with short pants or tux jackets of pattern such as tartan plaid or paisley. Stylish suits also are appropriate for informal daytime weddings, as is ethnic dress such as a Scottish kilt or an African Igbo pants set.

Evening high-style elegance can range from the black tails and white accessories of ultra-formal affairs to newer double-breasted shawl-collar tuxes.

While black is the color of nighttime formal wear, the black peak lapel tuxedo is an indispensable classic that looks sophisticated in any setting and now can be dressed up with accessories that pack a punch of color and pattern — including the likes of ties, cummerbunds, vests and pocket squares in florals, paisleys, abstract prints, stripes, brocades and metallics that shimmer in subtle patterns.

Even black-and-white accessories are enlivened with the likes of snappy prints — from zebra stripes to geometrics, and from patchwork patterns to polka dots.

Often, the groom seeks to distinguish himself from the rest of the wedding party — perhaps by wearing a vest while the men don matching cummerbunds, or by selecting a dramatic wing shirt for himself and classic turndown collar shirts for his attendants.

SELECTING A STYLE

Regardless of their level of formality, tuxes often follow the world of men's fashions in terms of shoulder width and trouser fullness. Formal wear can be found in



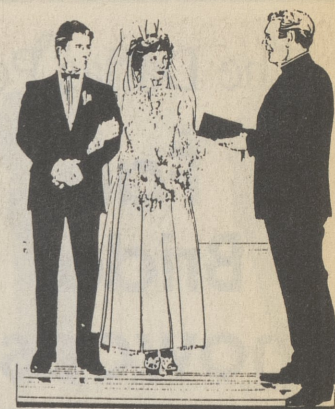
From cut to colors, grooms can make their own fashion statement on the big day.

single-breasted and double-breasted styles, with peak or shawl lapels, with full or trim cut jackets. To complement looser fitting jackets, trousers should be full — per-

haps with double pleats in front.

If a bridal couple is uncertain about what's in style, they can look

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to designer tuxes for a cue. While they may decide not to rent or purchase the likes of Pierre Cardin, Christian Dior, Karl Lagerfeld or Nicole Miller, these creations can provide insight as to what nondesigner brands best simulate that level of sophistication.

With so many formal-wear options, some bridal couples prefer to leave wedding dress selection up to the formal-wear specialist. Experts suggest, however, that they instead rely on the professional to explain what is traditional and what is currently chic — then let their personal preferences be the deciding factors in what the groom and groomsman will wear.

To select a reputable formal-wear specialist, know first that some shops don't have their own merchandise; they rent the tuxedos, and, in turn, rent to you. Be sure to order tuxes at least three months before the wedding to ensure they arrive in time for the groom, fathers and ushers to have them properly fitted.

Shop around for a reputable formal-wear specialist. Get referrals from your recently married friends, then visit the stores to compare prices and selections.

Make sure there is a tailor on the premises for any necessary alterations.

Before putting down a deposit, call your local Better Business Bureau to see if any complaints have been filed. Also, request a letter of agreement. A reputable store will not object to putting all terms in writing. Important points to specify in an agreement include:

- Pick up and return dates.
- Deposit paid and balance due.
- Any additional charges for alterations, late returns.
- Accessories included in rental fee.
- Store policy on refunds, cancellations, damage to formal-wear rentals.

And, finally, never pay in full until you've received, tried on and are satisfied with the merchandise. Pick up tuxes two to three days before the wedding and try on everything in the store — down to the cuff links. That way you'll know if any buttons are missing and whether you have all the accessories, and you can allow time for any alterations. Ask all faraway ushers to visit the formal-wear shop for a fitting as soon as they arrive in town.



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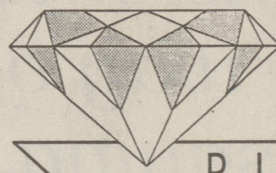
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