



FASHION POLICE

Going toe to toe

When done right, sandals make the man

By Bobby Hankinson, Globe Correspondent | May 18, 2006

It's the season for open-toe shoes, but it's not just the ladies who are giving winter shoes the boot. More men are also opting to liberate their little piggies with sandals.

Whether worn at inappropriate venues or sloppily matched with the wrong outfit, the sandal is often an accessory to a fashion crime. But when worn properly, they make men look not only comfortable, but hip.

Mike Ray, co-founder of Grapevinehill.com, a Danvers-based website that sells luxury footwear, proudly touts the sandal's increasing visibility. "Certainly there's been a ton prognosticated about how our entire society is becoming more casual . . . I do see more acceptance of sandals," he said.

And designers are beginning to notice, too.

"If you look at footwear collections as far as three or four years ago, many collections wouldn't have a [sandal] in it," Ray says. "Now every major men's collection out there is going to have a [sandal]."



To do the sandal right, there are a few basic parameters. First off, tuck those gym socks right back into the dresser drawer. There is no act more heinous than pairing a simple thong sandal with a thick pair of white tube socks pulled way up high. It's OK if you're a Geisha girl, but the average Joe ends up looking more like he has Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle toes.

Secondly, like real estate, it's all about location, location, location. Sandals can't be worn just anywhere. Ray says rubber sandals are best left on the beach, not in the boardroom.

"Certainly any place that requires any formality, you don't want to be wearing any kind of rubber flip-flop," he said.

Basic rules of fashion apply. Just because you're donning sandals doesn't mean they don't have to match your outfit. A dressier ensemble needs a dressier sandal -- like a leather slide (one thick band over the top of the foot). The clothes don't have to dictate the shoes, but the right stylish sandal can help an outfit transcend trendy to trend-setting.

But choose carefully: Sandals have the potential to make or break an otherwise acceptable outfit. When they work, all eyes focus downward, but there's also the risk of looking like a tourist dad lost on the T.

In addition to socks, there's one other thing that is never to be combined with sandals: funky feet. G20 Spa and Salon by Giuliano, at 338 Newbury St., offers a men's "Sports" pedicure (\$55) that includes a soak, nail shaping, cuticle work, a foot file, exfoliating scrub, moisturizing, foot/lower-leg massage, and buffing. But for guys who aren't ready to be pampered salon-style, G20 nail technician Natasia Lowe has some tips for men to use at home:

Keep nails short. Men should cut nails straight across. Trying to angle and shape toenails like fingernails could lead to in-grown nails.

**File calluses to make sure your feet look smooth. Lowe recommends the OPI Foot File or a pumice stone.

**Moisturize often to prevent feet from cracking.

**Leave tricky cuticles to the professionals. -- B.H.