

# What You Will Wear Next Year . . . and WHY!

## And Who Decides?

**F**ashion is BIG business! Here in the U.S., apparel is a \$172 billion retail market. The industry employs more than 4.6 million people (most in retail sales). And here's some trivia: Connecticut and New Jersey residents spend more on women's clothing than shoppers anywhere else in the US!

Cynthia Nellis, author of *Your Guide to Women's Fashion*, defines fashion as "the prevailing style or custom... something such as a garment that is in the current mode." Fashion surrounds us through the media – in ads, on runways and on screen. We're all aware of fashion in our daily lives. We'll notice an attractive pair of boots on the elevator, an interesting handbag at a restaurant or a lovely belt worn by someone in the grocery store.

As someone who has long been professionally interested in beauty, I recently found myself intrigued by an aspect of the appearance biz I'd never seriously contemplated before. Where do fashion trends come from? How are fashion decisions made? Is there a "fashion patrol" that guides or regulates the industry? My curiosity led me to conversations with some well-known names in the fashion industry. I think you'll be quite interested in what they had to say.

### FASHION MATTERS

Fashion author Nellis observes that, "To some, fashion is an art form. To others it is almost a religion. But for most people it is a method of utilizing clothing,

accessories and hair to show or hide something about yourself. Fashion statements can be made with clothes, accessories, shoes, hair, makeup, even your cell phone," she adds.

Nellis calls Miuccia Prada, Marc Jacobs, Tom Ford and other top fashionistas "directional designers." They help set the course for the rest of us, she suggests.

But who decides what's in and what's out? How short will hemlines will be this season? Will black be the new black? Or will brown make a return engagement as the formerly new black?

### WAS MARK TWAIN RIGHT, "CLOTHES MAKE THE MAN . . .?"

It all sounds a bit frivolous until we stop to realize how important fashion can be. How we look, and how we feel about how we look, contributes significantly to our sense of personal contentment. For many people, looking good is the foundation of a positive attitude that pervades all aspects of life.

Research shows that people who like the way they look often find it easier to make and keep friends, and they're even tapped for promotions over others. Projecting a positive image usually improves chances for long-term success overall. But that's getting ahead of ourselves.

The point is simply this: Whether it's a matter of self-confidence, the need to compete with the stars or just because it's fun, people have always, and will always, pay attention to fashion. Who, then, tells them what to pay attention to?!

### TREND FORECASTERS

In my interview with fashion designer Terri Rosenthal, creator with her daughter of the Carasan line, she explained to me the role of "trend forecasters." These professional soothsayers sell their concepts to designers who use them to create the lines we see strutting down the runway and in glossy magazine ads.

According to Rosenthal here's what happens: About six to eight months ahead of the season, trend forecasters host shows attended by apparel and home-fashion designers, print buyers, textile designers and members of the fashion media, who report on trends of interest to their readers.

My search for understanding also led me to April Wilkins, fashion director for Saks Fifth Avenue in Atlanta. She believes fabric shows are one of the strongest influences on designers. Trend forecasting firms work with textile houses to anticipate textures, patterns and colors as long as three years before a given season.

Beyond the role of textiles, designers are often influenced by current events, celebrities and street trends – global as well as local ones. Some trends necessarily catch on more readily in some parts of the country or the world than others. But ultimately everyone has nearly equal access to these thanks to the Internet and the influence of mass-market retail, according to Wilkins.

Rosenthal explains another way the big names, like Ralph Lauren, get their designs is by a team of designers working under

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them. “Many of the large design houses are run by larger companies and when that happens the designers lose creative control over their work. They choose based on what will make money for the company, not based on a designer and/or design. That is why so many fashion labels look alike.”

Like Nellis, Rosenthal agrees that celebrities play a role in determining fashion. Often, it’s not their personal sense of style that’s seen and adopted by others. Rather, it’s what the designers put on them. “Most celebrities are very nice and will wear garments just to have something new and exciting to wear. It is good for both the actors and the designers. These relationships can make a new designer or break them if the reviews are bad.” The new looks also make their appearance on the small and large screens.

As for celebrities who launch their own fashion lines, Rosenthal says the trend can be a bit misleading. In fact, celebs lend their names to clothing, jewelry, etc. but sometimes do very little beyond that. Many if not most have design teams that design the garments for these labels. As Rosenthal points out, “Many of these labels come and go with the popularity of the actors and/or singers that own these labels.”

Rosenthal says some designers purchase designs and garments to copy and blend into their own private label lines. “There are Jessica Simpson shoes that are in stores now. They are black pumps with a tie and wedge heel that sell for around \$90. These are a direct knock-off of the more costly Chloe shoes that sell for around \$500.”

Jessica Simpson is an example of a celebrity who also has a fashion line. In fact, she has four design lines: Jessica Simpson, Princy, JS by Jessica and Sweet Kisses by JS. However, success sometimes



comes with a great deal of stress. For instance, according to a W Magazine article by Marc Karimzadeh, the producer of Simpson's clothing line, Tarrant Apparel Group, sued the star for breach of promotional terms of her contract, alleging she's unwilling to wear her own labels or promote them in public. In response, Vincent Camuto, owner of the rights to Simpson's fashion trademark, filed a countersuit insisting that "there is simply no celebrity who I am aware of who works harder than Jessica Simpson for her brands." So it may be the courts that make the final decision, a decision could have a lasting effect on the fashion industry.

### 'FRENCH' DESIGN

I gained even more insight by talking with Scott French. He's co-founder and designer of the French Jenny lingerie collection. Most recently, he's turned his attention to men with a wonderful line he calls R. Scott French. When I asked who mandates fashion today, French emphatically pointed to the "tabloid princesses – Britney, Lindsay, Jenn and Jessica."

The stories that report in nauseating detail on the personal dramas of these women are also platforms to showcase the latest styles they are sporting. French explains that stylists and editors attend shows across the world and the stylists outfit their clients in the fashions they've seen.

The editors pick up on the trend and the new look is perceived as fashion correct by readers. "These trends are picked up by the fans who follow these people and thus a trend runs its course," he adds.

Unlike some fashionistas, French does not believe style is set by the collaboration of a cabal of exclusive designers. "The concept has no basis in reality. The reality is that, as a designer, one must be sensitive to what's going on around you at any given time." That means paying attention to the social, cultural and political vibe of the moment.

Because designers are all subject to similar influences, French says it's no surprise that they may respond similarly. "As well, we are all buying from the same finite number of fabric mills. Because we're seeing the same fabrics, it's impossible not to have some overlaps in design."

Hair and make-up professionals also play a role in setting fashion, he believes. Once they see the colors and "personality" of a particular season's clothing, the hair and make-up gurus create styles to complement the look.

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Cynthia Nellis, author of *Your Guide to Women's Fashion*

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### HAIR TODAY...

After getting somewhat of an understanding of the fashion clothing world, my appetite was whet to learn more about hair fashions. I sought the perspectives of internationally known hairstylist Frederic Fekkai, with whom I am honored to serve on the advisory board of New Beauty magazine. Observes Fekkai, "I think that the hair-care industry plays a huge role in fashion in that hair completes the overall look as much as accessories and make-up." In fact, he believes hair can make or break a look.

Fekkai, who partners with top designers including Diane von Furstenberg, says that when called in to work a fashion show, he wants to see the clothes first to get ideas and inspiration. Fekkai is among those who believe individual celebrities strongly influence style. He points specifically to Sienna Miller and Kate Moss. "They can both wear so many looks – short or long, blond or brunette, jeans or couture, bold or subtle make-up. They are ever-changing and keep the public wanting more."

### OTHER INFLUENCES

Historically, fashion has reflected the times. For example, hemlines dropped in the early 1930s as Depression concerns heralded a more sober period. Another example of this influence occurred during World War II, when the War Production Board issued regulations on use of fabric for clothing and hemlines shortened. Wool, silk, rubber, leather and nylon were all needed for the war effort. In order to conserve

resources, men's suits were sold with one pair of pants rather than two, which had been the norm. And women's skirts were limited to 72 inches in circumference!

Although such restrictions are hard to imagine today, cultural influences persist. For those old enough to remember the 1960s, "flower power" and "free love" were strongly reflected in the braless, flowy look of the day. During the 1980s, as women gained professional status and economic success, buttoned up blouses.

### IT'S YOUR TURN!

"The beautiful," wrote St. Thomas Aquinas in the 13th century "is that which pleases us upon being seen." What pleases us – that is, what we consider fashionable – may be influenced by everything from exclusive councils, trend forecasters, tabloid coverage of celebrities or the politics and mood of the country.

But when it comes down to the perfect neckline, hemline, texture, cut or color, the ultimate fashion expert is the one you see in the mirror every day. Ultimately, fashion is a personal statement. It's wise to be informed and it's fun to buy an occasional trendy piece you'll never wear next year. But at the end of the day, your way is the right way. Just don't be surprised if departing from prevailing trends raises an eyebrow or two!

Does what we learned here change the way we dress, or how we look at the latest styles from Paris and Milan? Probably not. But it certainly gives us insight into the fascinating world of fashion!

Dr. Ronald Goldstein is author of *Change Your Smile*, top-selling consumer guide to cosmetic dentistry. He has authored or co-authored numerous dental books (10 foreign translations), is a prominent teacher of dentistry worldwide, and has given almost 500 professional lectures. Laymen are also familiar with Dr. Goldstein since he is often interviewed regarding the role of physical attractiveness in our society, the power of a great smile, and other aspects of personal beauty. He is regarded as the dental consumer's advocate, is frequently interviewed by mainstream media, and was recently featured on ABC's *20/20*. He has practiced dentistry in Atlanta for over 40 years. Dr. Goldstein can be contacted by email through the Web site [www.goldsteingarber.com](http://www.goldsteingarber.com)

