

Black tie

When the pleasure of your company is requested

By Margery Stearns Krevsky
special writer

THE GRAND PRIX Ball is the first of June. Last week was opera week at the Masonic Temple. Prom nights and the wedding season have started.

It's time to think about what to wear to all these gala events, and I don't mean the ladies. For a man, no other clothing is as steeped in ritualistic sense of correctness and tradition as formal wear. Black is the traditional color, but a trip to any tuxedo rental/sales store reveals that a "tux" can come in many styles and colors.

Fred Bowman, area manager for Valente's, states, "There is more interest in black tie dressing, traditional weddings are more important, and there is the return of the debutante party. Right now is our busiest season, so we have to hire extra help, mostly college students who will work through August."

When asked what men are selecting, he said, "The two biggest colors are silver gray and black; and we're starting to get more requests for white dinner jackets as opposed to three years ago when everyone wanted pastels."

HOW DO MEN feel about being measured for a tuxedo? Yvonne Fox, manager of President Tuxedo in Birmingham, replied, "Most come in and think this is going to be awful and boring. At the first fitting they are measured and when they come back to be fitted the second time they really enjoy seeing the image change."

Vince Provenzano, district manager, said, "President Reagan has turned the attention of the country to traditional black tie entertaining. The whole country has gone formal. More men know what they want and seem to have a good idea about what options are available, and young men are especially into it. I see a trend away from ruffle shirts and if someone wants color, they match the bow tie and cummerbund to the color of the lady's dress."

Jacobson's specializes in sales only. "Over the past 15 years, the tuxedo rental business has changed the formal image of the tuxedo by introducing pastels, velours, brocades and lace shirts. Trends come and go, but the Birmingham people go for the classic black tuxedo," said Frank Roach, the Jacobson's Men's store supervisor.

Beth Frantz, sales promotion and advertising manager, added, "In Birmingham, tuxedos are bought because of the active social life. We sell them as a service to the community."

ONE SALES promotion some rental firms use is



When Dr. and Mrs. Richard Galpin attend formal occasions, the doctor believes in paying tribute to his Scottish ancestry. With his formal jacket he wears a Robertson tartan kilt and an array of naval decorations.



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responsible for the double breasted tuxedo, which is still elegant and simple.

Things remained more or less status quo until the fashion excesses of the '50s and '60s, when fads developed. Remember Canaby Street, the Nehru jacket and the Edwardian look?

How nice to be in the '80s where black plus white equals the return of classic formal wear. — Margery Stearns Krevsky

to have young men from a local high school wear a formal tuxedo to school to drum up business. In return, their prom tuxedo is free. That's no small compensation. Tuxedo rentals range from \$25 to \$55. Add to that an additional \$7 for shoes.

In general, the price for buying your own tuxedo is \$145 for a polyester version and up to \$425 for a custom or designer version. All of the notable designers have entered the market, including Bill Blass, Oscar de la Renta, Yves St. Laurent, and Givenchy.

For many high school-age men, their first experience with formal dressing is the spring prom. Jeff Chajes, senior Student Council president and Barry Horowitz, both of Groves High School, are as involved in selecting their prom dressing as they are in graduation.

"I don't like to mess around with unusual colors. I'm going classic," said Chajes.

Horowitz got some input from the ladies. "My



GARY CASKEY/staff photographer

Groves High School seniors Barry Horowitz (left) and Jeffrey Chajes have ideas about how they want to dress for formal occasions, which means a return to the classics after years of fashion excesses.

Mother likes basic black with a lavender cummerbund which goes with my date's dress," he explained.

TIM FARAH of Seaholm High School will wear a shell pink jacket and black pleated trousers. "It sounds a little funny, but it looks great," he said.

Rick Laney, co-owner of Gallery Birmingham, doesn't follow the traditional lines when, as an art gallery owner, he attends many black tie functions in New York and San Francisco.

"I never wanted to look like the other guy. I wanted to look creative and not blend in with the woodwork."

Laney's choice was a white Palm Beach double breasted suit jacket purchased by a relative at Hudson's during the '30s.

"It's one of my favorite things with mother-of-pearl buttons and classic lines," he said. With it he wears a thin paisley patterned tie and matching pocket handkerchief.

Dr. Richard Galpin, Birmingham pediatrician, said very formal occasions require the most traditional effort. Being a Canadian and loyal to his Scottish ancestry, he chose a kilt and formal jacket.

"When I'm wearing my kilt, I'm at my ultimate best," he said. His accessories, the sporran, a handbag of sorts worn around the waist, high rise hosiery and a beret, plus a spectacular array of naval decorations.

Robert Pangborn of West Bloomfield, percussionist for the Detroit Symphony, wears his tux when performing, which means he sometimes wears it several times a week.

"For me it's a uniform. Some men go to work in a business suit, I go formal."

He has four tuxedos in his closet, said Pangborn. Two for winter, and two for summer.



Robert Pangborn of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra calls the four sets of tuxedos he owns his uniforms. He frequently wears a tuxedo as often as four times a week.

BLACK TIE ACCESSORIES:

• **The bow tie** — Usually black or midnight blue. However, here is one area for creative expression. Try maroon with a summer jacket, or polka dot foulards or preppy stripes. Just make sure the size is in correct proportion to the collar on the tuxedo. Josh Logan (the producer) is noted for wearing oversized bow ties with everything, day or formal wear.

• **The cummerbund** — Also traditionally black or midnight blue. Another area for being an individualist. Try a plaid or color.

• **The shoes** — The most elegant footwear, usually a low-cut patent oxford or a classic calf with a grosgrain bow, are the tradition. When all else fails, shoes can be rented.

• **Hose** — Stick with black or dark blue. Hosiery can also pick up the color of your cummerbund. Don't think of this as just another pair of socks unless you remember not to cross your legs, for you can count on exposing several inches of ankle during the evening. So, go for long hose, business partners are things of the past.

• **The apron** — A white linen handkerchief in the breast pocket equals class. A carnation in the lapel creates charm and romance.

• **The shirt** — Three variations in shirts from the stiff front, the pleated and the button-down. The button-down is the most popular. The pleated shirt is the most formal. The stiff front is the most traditional. The button-down is the most modern.



Gallery owner Rick Laney wants to look creative when he attends black tie parties on both coasts. His favorite is a Palm Beach double breasted suit purchased by a relative in the '30s.