

Tracking fashion

From designers' shows to local display windows

By RAMONA JONES
Staff Writer

Lapels are narrower. Skirts are shorter. Shirts are more tailored. Ties are skinnier. Heels are higher—much higher.

Says who?

Calvin Klein, for one. And Ralph Lauren. And Bill Blass. And other designers in fashion centers such as New York and Paris.

Manufacturers start copying designers as soon as new lines appear in fashion shows each season, said Pam Lambert, manager of Brooks clothing store at University Mall. "They copy everybody—Calvin Klein, Halston, Sassoon."

But not everyone can wear clothes the way designers create them, so manufacturers modify the styles.

Joy Jensen, an Ivey's department manager, said manufacturers avoid extremes in fashion because most people are shy about wearing clothes that would make them stand out. Only special kinds of people try the latest, most unusual fashions.

"A woman confident with her body shape will try unusual things," she added. "She helps start trends. She's interested in clothes and is willing to give up other things to have them. This person can be a college woman or a 55-year-old. She's not trendy and faddy, but new and innovative."

Men also like new and innovative fashions, but men in this area are more conservative than those in New York or San Francisco, Ed Dixon of Ivey's said.

"But this is changing some," he said. "There's a greater emphasis on people looking better. They're also looking for comfort, and that's why your natural fibers are coming back. They look good and feel good, too. People aren't afraid to iron clothes anymore, so they'll get cotton shirts. Most people just got bored with polyester."

For the person who is bored with polyester, or bored with the jacket or suit worn all last spring and summer, the stores are full of the latest spring fashions.

There are blouses and shirts in bright colors to add life to the subtle shades of natural fiber pants, skirts and blazers. Red is very big this season.

The emphasis in style is on slim lines. Pant legs are narrow. Skirts are tight. Shirts are tailored. The loose baggy look is gone.

Skin is in. Plunging necklines, shorter skirts (just below the knee this season), pants (just above the ankle—and tight) and slits—lots of slits.

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And the stores in town have been caught in the middle. Lambert said Brooks buyers in New York know what

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sells in what part of the country and try to buy accordingly, but manufacturers who have copied the designers still have a great deal of control over what is available.

Jensen added, "We try to stock what people around here will wear, but when the manufacturers aren't making it, we can't buy it. People wear what's in the stores—that's what's available to them. But we're aware of what they want, too."

"This area is very sportswear conscious, for example, so we stock the brands we know they're going to buy. Chapel Hill people will always buy J.G. Hook, Cargo, Jones of New York, Liz Claiborne, and brands like that. Those things might not sell at all in Albuquerque, but they do beautifully here."

She said because shoppers recently have become more interested in sports, Ivey's has started carrying professional sportswear brands including Head (AMF), Chris Evert and Loomtags.

"Last year to get those things you had to go some place like Hackneys, that specialized in sportswear. We used to just carry swim suits, cover-ups and some golf wear. But now people want active sportswear, not spectator sportswear."

Clothes on the racks in men's wear departments also reflect an emphasis on sports. "Everyone wants casual sports clothes," Dixon said. "People are moving away from suits because for the last few seasons everybody was buying them and by now they've got all they need."

Dixon said he is selling a lot of solid-color blazers from designers such as Bill Blass. Almost all of them are made from natural fibers for conservative comfort.

"New York and California are more fashion conscious. You wouldn't find a market for Oxford button downs there, but that's what people wear around here," Dixon said. "The South isn't dictated by what designers say. Some things catch on, like collar bars and more rounded collars, but a lot of it doesn't."

"People seem to be more fashion conscious about what they wear on the tennis court than what they wear to work, or class or wherever. You can coordinate everything—socks, shirts, shorts, wrist bands and all. People get name brands, like Jantzen, Catalina, Christian Dior and Cardin," Dixon said.

"But as far as the latest fashions go, we have bits and pieces. You find a better selection in New York, because

people will buy it. They don't buy it here. They buy what looks good or feels good on them," he added.

But not everyone at UNC ignores Calvin Klein. Paula Wright, a freshman from Raleigh, wears Calvin Klein jeans and high heels.

"I don't like faddy clothes, but I do like fashionable clothes that won't go out of style," she said. "Students don't have the money to buy faddy clothes every season. They have to get things that can be changed with accessories."

Linda Wheatley, a junior from Jacksonville, doesn't think high fashion clothes are applicable for college students.

Students follow their own styles in what to wear to class, Sha Bradshaw, a junior from Charlotte, said.

"A lot of the clothes people wear to class are just practical," she said. "Nobody's going to wear hose and high heels to hike across campus. You wear knee socks and flat shoes. But when I go home, everybody's got on Candies shoes (very high heels with a strip of leather over the toes). Around here, you wear Chapel Hill styles."

Mark Vitek, a senior from Raleigh, said men usually chose a style that looks good on them, and stick to that style unless fashions change drastically. New York and Paris have only a small effect on what they wear.

"I dress like a typical fratty bagger, I guess," he said. "No silk shirts or high heels. I'm a conservative dresser."

Ruthie Norton said she conforms to the styles everyone else on campus is wearing. "I like Carolina fashion," she said. "I like designer clothes when I can afford them, but I wear jeans, too. I even like pink and green."

Wes Lovelace said he just wears what he thinks is tasteful. "I think fraternities are too fashionable. They've gone overboard with the fraternity-sorority look."

Peter Brown, a sophomore from Boston, said he doesn't really follow fashion.

"When ties got really wide, I kept wearing thin ones, and now they're back in style. I like to wear Brooks Brothers clothes. The styles in men's clothes don't change that much, though. This year lapels are narrower, but in two years, they'll be wide again."

"People around here just don't dress up like they do in New York. There are really no big night clubs where you'd wear those kinds of clothes. But even the business men don't dress up that much. They're more casual," Brown said.

So fashion is give and take in Chapel Hill. People can't wear clothes that aren't made. Stores can't sell clothes people won't wear. And while Chapel Hill may have a fashion sense of its own, Calvin Klein and Bill Blass don't seem to be hurting at all.



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