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## Short-sleeve shirts for summer



Spring/Summer 2014 looks from (from left) Bottega Veneta; Paul Smith; Missoni

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David Hayes APRIL 18 2014

The holiday season is approaching and that means that men in the public eye will be struggling to keep cool while retaining their dignity.

One of the sartorial tricks politicians have up their sleeves is, well, short-sleeve shirts but these have a chequered history. Barack Obama fell foul of the style police on his past two trips to Hawaii by tucking shirts that stopped at the elbow into shapeless, tightly-belted trousers. However, despite the association of short-sleeve shirts with fast-food chain uniforms, this time Obama may actually have been on to something.

“Short-sleeve shirts are not just all over the menswear runways this season but they have hit the street in a big way,” says Tom Kalenderian, general merchandise manager and executive vice-president of menswear at Barneys New York. “Every important designer collection featured short-sleeve shirts in a myriad of fabrics. Many are fun and bold, offering up a pop of colour.”

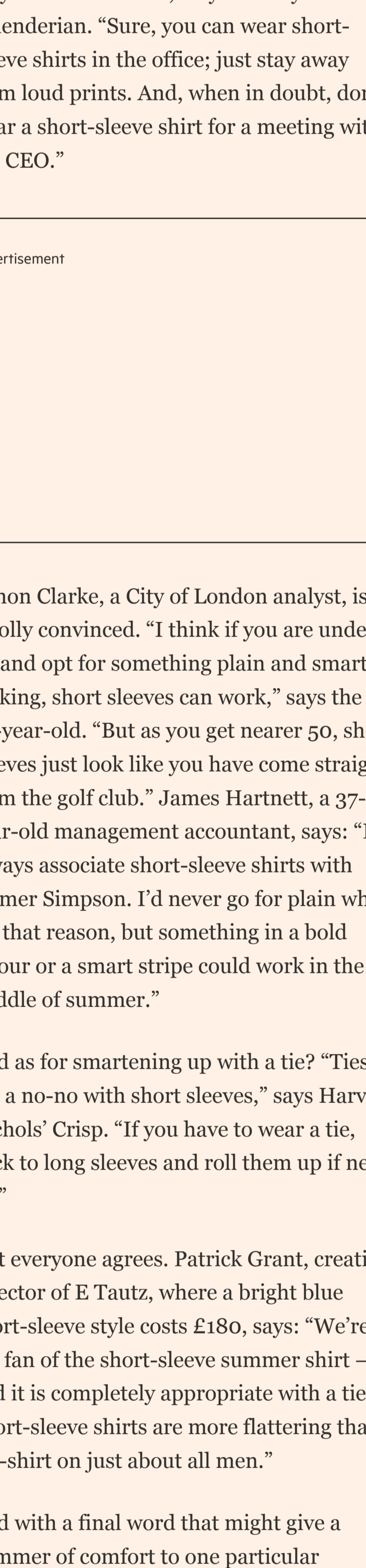
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Barneys department store has a wealth of cropped sleeve options; from Lanvin’s electric blue cotton style (\$475), to Alexander McQueen’s grey/blue city stripe (\$375), Saint Laurent’s silk Hawaiian shirt (\$890) and Gitman Vintage’s striped shirts with a Beach Boys vibe (\$200). And what’s more, they are selling. “There is no resistance to short sleeves,” adds Kalenderian. “In fact, they are performing stronger than in previous seasons.”

Toby Bateman, buying director at Mr Porter, says: “Short-sleeve shirts have been a surprising commercial hit – and we are confident the trend will continue to sell well. A lot of styles feature graphic prints but there are also more traditional Oxford shirts too.” The online men’s retailer has looks from catwalk stalwarts such as Bottega Veneta (hand-painted cream 1950s style, £495) and Raf Simons (red and black panelled shirt, £205) alongside more affordable contemporary labels such as APC (fleck print cotton shirt, £140), J Crew (button-down chambray shirt, £65) and Hentsch Man (print shirt, £90).

“The short-sleeve shirt has been absent from men’s wardrobes for a few years so, inevitably, it looks fresh again right now,” adds Bateman.

Reece Crisp, a buyer at Harvey Nichols, says: “There are a couple of new ways to wear the short-sleeve shirt, from layered streetwear looks – either over a long-sleeve T-shirt or unbuttoned over a vest – or simply worn on its own. My favourite is a floral print shirt from Raf Simons (£195). With a kitsch vibe, it is the shirt of the summer. I would say keep the look clean and streamlined. I am into a plain short-sleeve button-down Oxford, worn with a slim pair of vintage wash jeans. It’s a classic look.”



Elvis Presley on the set of ‘Blue Hawaii’ in 1961

The new short-sleeve shirt is all about cultivating a retro rebel edge – many of the runway looks channelled stars from the 1950s and early 1960s such as Elvis Presley, Billy Fury and Marlon Brando – rather than dress-down Friday in the City circa 1996. Great for holidays or at weekends but will they work in the office when the weather heats up?

“There are no rules that say short sleeves are only for the weekend,” says Barneys’ Kalenderian. “Sure, you can wear short-sleeve shirts in the office; just stay away from loud prints. And, when in doubt, don’t wear a short-sleeve shirt for a meeting with the CEO.”

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Simon Clarke, a City of London analyst, isn’t wholly convinced. “I think if you are under 30 and opt for something plain and smart-looking, short sleeves can work,” says the 42-year-old. “But as you get nearer 50, short sleeves just look like you have come straight from the golf club.” James Hartnett, a 37-year-old management accountant, says: “I always associate short-sleeve shirts with Homer Simpson. I’d never go for plain white for that reason, but something in a bold colour or a smart stripe could work in the middle of summer.”

And as for smartening up with a tie? “Ties are a no-no with short sleeves,” says Harvey Nichols’ Crisp. “If you have to wear a tie, stick to long sleeves and roll them up if need be.”

Not everyone agrees. Patrick Grant, creative director of E Tautz, where a bright blue short-sleeve style costs £180, says: “We’re a big fan of the short-sleeve summer shirt – and it is completely appropriate with a tie. Short-sleeve shirts are more flattering than a T-shirt on just about all men.”

And with a final word that might give a glimmer of comfort to one particular president, Grant also advises: “Avoid tight sleeves. There’s nothing elegant about having one’s biceps straining away at the sleeve. And do tuck in your shirt and wear a belt.”

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