

YVES SAINT LAURENT once proclaimed that “fashions change, but style is eternal”. Of no period in history could this said to be truer than of Hollywood’s golden age which spans from the earliest days of the 1930s through to the heady 1960s – a time when filmstars strode the studios like colossus, while sartorial elegance and glamour were the order of the day. Goddesses, Grace Kelly, Audrey Hepburn and Greta Garbo, demonstrated with poise and elegance the beauty ideal for which mere mortal women were encouraged to strive, while leading men like Cary Grant, Humphrey Bogart and James Stewart epitomised the sophisticated masculine energy that audiences today have come to expect from classic Hollywood productions.

And so, as another Hollywood classic is transformed this season, one cannot help but wonder at our current generation of nostalgia. Has the glamour of bygone eras become entirely extinct? Or does it continue to inform the choices of our fashion leaders? *From Here to Eternity*, stands as an irrefutable paragon in this particular branch of stylish Hollywood melodrama, winning eight Academy Awards out of the 13 the film was nominated for, including Best Director for Fred Zinnemann and Best Picture.

What this picture illustrates most clearly, however, is that the overarching theme of this period in Hollywood history was erudite style. It was an age in which the studio system ran the industry with an iron rod, all contracted artists were required to conform to strict protocols, appearances included. In turn, this meant that an almost cookie-cutter like approach became the norm for film stars. A clear uniform began to emerge, one that put paramount importance on looking smart, and one which continues to be a keystone of our contemporary fashion.

This period of unprecedented Hollywood success, continuing up and into the 1960s, was dominated by costume designers like Walter Plunkett, famed for his involvement in films such as *Jezebel* and *Singing in the Rain*, and Orry Kelly, head designer at Warner Brothers until 1944. These auteurs designed with unprecedented craftsmanship the razor-sharp suits, immaculately cut and tailored, that have come to epitomise traditional Hollywood glamour. Designers typified a look that favoured broad shoulders, wide-legged trousers and rich fabrics. Montgomery Clift and Clark Gable – veritable icons of the silver screen – modelled this sharp look adeptly, cutting fine figures in films such as ►

STYLE ETERNAL

As *The Great Gatsby* wowed audiences this summer with a stylish take on an American classic, and The Shaftesbury Theatre opened this autumn to rave reviews of Tim Rice’s *From Here to Eternity* – a musical adaptation of the Hollywood film, we take a look at a whole generation of cinema and stars that continue to influence our contemporary style

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The Great Gatsby



Gone with the Wind

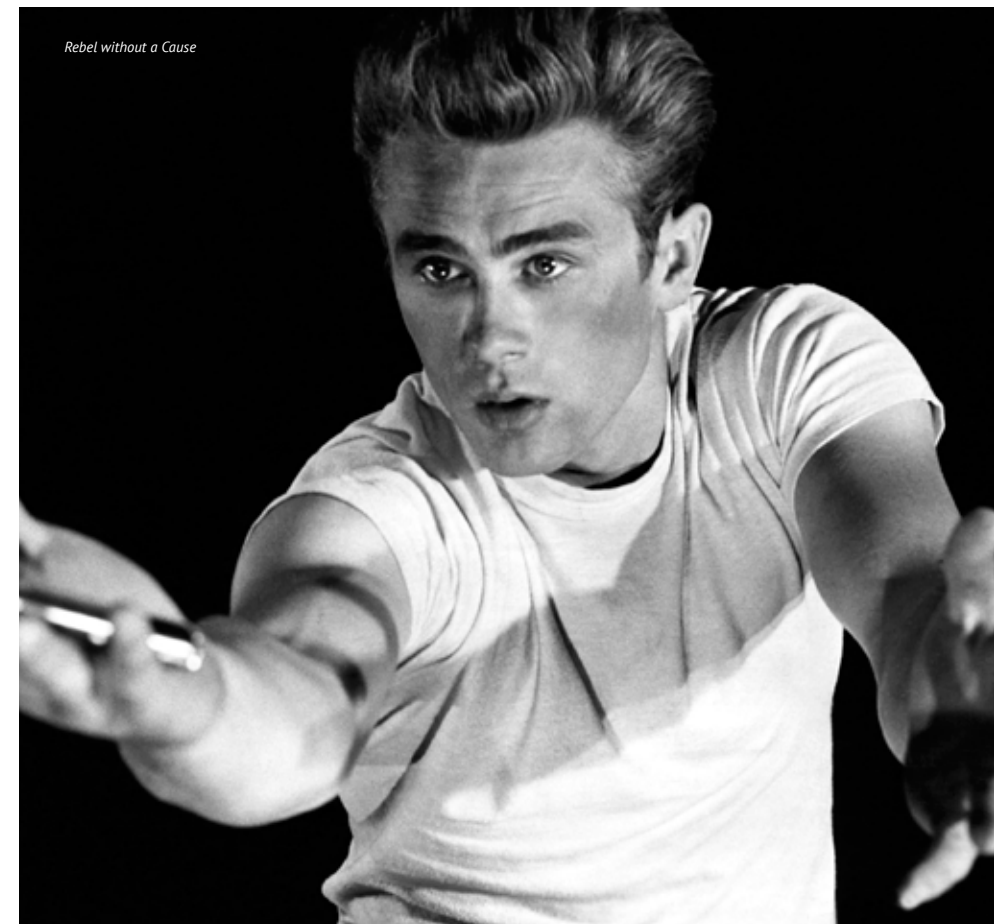


FEATURE

Casablanca



From Here to Eternity



Rebel without a Cause



Easy Rider



The cast from the London stage adaptation of From Here to Eternity

► *Gone with the Wind*, and *Suddenly, Last Summer*.

The more casual looks inspired by silver screen stars, saw shirts and ties for almost any occasion, tucked-in polo shirts paired with pristinely pressed trousers and spotlessly polished shoes, a look best displayed by the likes of Sidney Poitier in *Guess Who's Coming To Dinner* and *In The Heat Of The Night*.

In more recent times however there has been a movement away from traditional film-star suave. The chiselled cheek-bones and slicked-back hair which allowed celebrities to sell glamour as their 'stock in trade', as Marlene Dietrich so astutely acknowledged, no longer seemed to be a pre-requisite for success. As the 1970s dawned, an evolution in style began, facilitated by social change. Post-Vietnam counter culture saw the same anarchic sentiment that gripped the USA applied to film-star fashion. Actors such Jack Nicholson and Peter Fonda in *Easy Rider* screeched into view astride Harley Davidsons wearing ripped denims and distressed leathers, taking to extreme the same insubordinate, anti-institutional attitudes as James Dean in his *Rebel Without a Cause* denim jacket and plain white t-shirt before them.

Similarly, in the ensuing decades came a period in which fashions continued to evolve. The 1980s saw an economic revolution, with more working in finance than ever before, and stars like Michael Douglas and Tom Cruise making films that revolved around the workplace environment, such as *Wall Street* and *Jerry Maguire*. In reaction to their social context, these films positioned money and well-designed workplace attire back in the cinema-going consciousness and heralded a new love affair with the traditional three piece – none more so

than the now infamous Gordon Gekko of *Wall Street*. Now an analogy of capitalist greed immortalised in film, Gekko also bought with him a new and hitherto unseen approach to style, one that made looking smart mandatory again, but this time equating it with professional and financial success. Owing to Douglas's creation, men dusted off their pin-stripes, narrow ties and wide-legged trousers, paring them with their shirts and ties, as the public both adapted to and adopted the new look – a yuppie interpretation of Hollywood style from previous decades, personalised with added brogues, tie pins and braces.

Though the years may have passed, the legacy of this romanticised period of film lives on, with homage being paid to the habitually dapper male stars of years past in the contemporary film industry. Indeed, when looking at the biggest male names in film today, George Clooney, Brad Pitt, Jude Law, Leonardo DiCaprio and Jamie Foxx, a common theme begins to emerge, a fondness for spruce attire that harks back to an altogether nattier time and seems to transcend film. One only need look at this summer's Wimbledon, where Hollywood a-listers Bradley Cooper and Gerard Butler were seen cheering on a victorious Andy Murray from the boxes of centre court in irreproachably fitted linen suits.

It would seem, then, that Yves Saint Laurent hit the proverbial nail on the head, and that while fashions have shifted and altered with the passing years, what has remained is a direct homage to the definitive collection of luminaries that originated it. Demonstrating so seamlessly that the well-dressed man will always have a place in the heart of the film-going public. **BY**