

MASCULINE FRAGRANCE

Masculine Elegance and What It Smells Like

by Luca Turin

Being a guy is not always pleasant, but at least, like balding and belching, it does not require much work. True, such things as short socks, depressing underwear, elastic-waist trousers, badly cut suits, and square-toed black slip-ons can spell trouble (e.g., the girl laughs uncontrollably and is never seen again). But avoiding disaster requires a checklist as short as that for a light aircraft on final approach: flaps, gear, mixture, carb, fuel, prop. Once memorized, it can be applied widely with minimum thought. Only Tom Ford and John Edwards really need to spend as much time in front of a mirror as a woman, and that because of their lines of work. Even the most persnickety manuals of masculine elegance contain handy options for the absentminded and the short of cash. Countess Tolstoy's uncompromising book on the subject, for example, cautions against wearing new clothes too often and includes several fond references to frayed cuffs. Even such an arbiter of elegance as a writer for *Fantastic Man* magazine was prepared, when she interviewed me recently, to countenance my Keen fishing sandals worn over socks as a potential fashion statement. If I were a woman, I'd have to be a lot better-looking than I am to be forgiven such a lapse of judgment. In fact, in a reversal that shows how far man has diverged from birds, it is the male of our species that can afford to be as comfortably drab as a female mallard. By the time he's thirty, a man should have figured out which of the mercifully limited fashion options available, from seer-sucker jacket to black roll-neck polo, is best for him, bought himself a few quality specimens, and learned to hang on to them until they fray to tatters.

Perfume is a good deal less stringent than clothes: When's the last time your mother looked up at you sat down for dinner and said,