

# What's a boomer woman to wear?

BY WENDY DENNIS

I'm not sure when shopping became a humiliating experience. I just know that when I last walked into Holt Renfrew, safely dodged that smarmy doorman and headed up the escalator to the third floor past the counter princesses and \$1,000 shmattes hanging in the hallway, I was so depressed my shrink told me to up the dosage. I don't want much, really. Just a sophisticated-yet-funky jacket that doesn't feel as if I'm wearing blood-pressure cuffs, a Lycra top that wasn't cut for Barbie and a pair of pants that covers my hysterectomy scar.

Having scoped the season's trends, I'm here to report it will be another long winter of wrist-slashing in fitting rooms. Just when I thought we were safely past that Juicy Couture athletic wear Brazilian flip-flop thing, we're in for minis and the Mod look.

Not that I don't harbour a nostalgic affection for '60s style. My going-away outfit for wedding Number 1 was white linen hot pants and black patent-leather boots (in my defence, I was in my twenties and probably on acid).

But you can't go home again, at least not draped in cartoon colours and Mondrian prints. Alternatively, I could opt for something more polished, like the ladylike look, all pumps and pencil skirts — a fetching style if you're Grace Kelly, but not so hot if your ancestors hail from the Ukraine.

Then again, I could just stay in all year. According to the breathless, hyperbolic scribes of Fashionland, it's going to be a season of LIMITLESS CHOICES!!! The moment to mix glamour with streetwear, to don corsets and animal prints and crocodile bags and shrunken coats and pointy-toed flats and motorcycle jackets and over-the-knee boots. Mind you, women who've logged a few miles have their own cause for celebration. Opaque tights are back.

My shrink says I'm hostile. He thinks we need to work on lowering my expectations. Still, you'd think it would be simple for the reigning geniuses of fashion to deduce that millions of boomer women are wandering around dejectedly, twitchy to buy a smart, affordable outfit they can actually wear. Or get into. Here's a news flash for all the style visionaries:

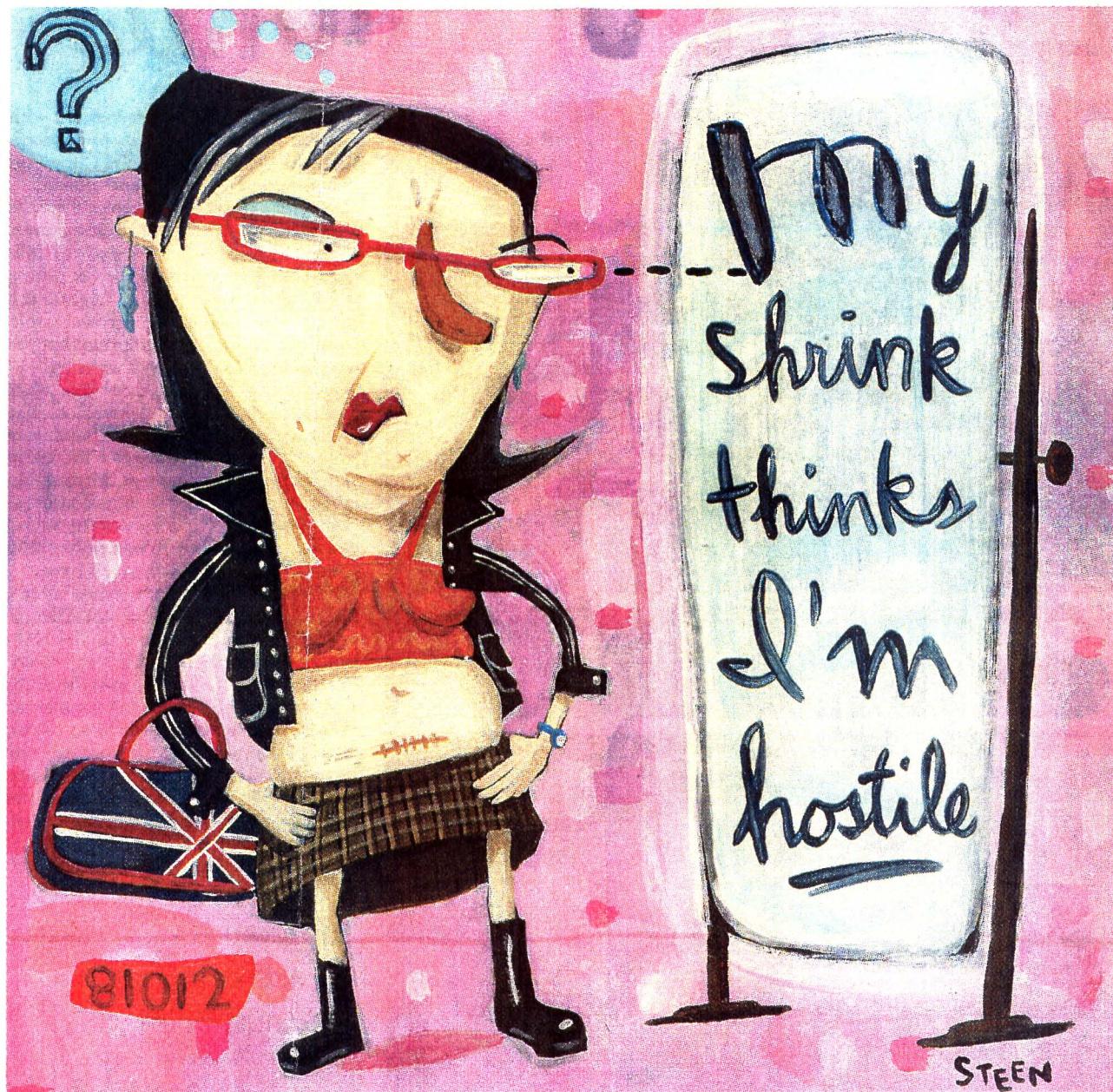


ILLUSTRATION BY BRANDON STEEN / SATURDAY POST

Those of us who fall somewhere on the demographic curve between Demi Moore and death still want to look as if we're in the game. We'd like this year's must-haves adapted for our bodies, not frumpy watered-down offerings two years later. We'd like a range of choices that suit our lifestyles, which eliminates Carrie Bradshaw's tutu. And we'd like the

trends at prices that won't land us in debtor's prison. While we're still up for an adventure, we don't particularly enjoy trying to shoehorn our asses into a pair of jeans cut for a pygmy. Nor do we appreciate being told to try the plus-size store for a size 10. Since when did wearing double digits make you a pariah?

What do women want? Respect. Ado-

ration. Unlimited oral sex. To look like Nicole Kidman. What the hell do you think we want? But given that most of us aren't blessed with the genes of a goddess, we'll happily settle for a garment we can extricate ourselves from without having to call 911. Those screams you hear in fitting rooms across the nation are the desperate wails of middle-aged

women trapped in the armholes of shrunken tees.

This may sound like a radical idea, but middle-aged women are not dead. We look good (or want to); we work out (or plan to), and we have the cash. Having been on the cutting edge for most of our lives, we don't perceive ourselves as old, boring, invisible, matronly and sexless, even if an entire Clearasil culture does.

We don't want to dress the way our mothers did, although they looked lovely for their day. We want to look cool. Not navel-rings and baby-hoodies cool. Cool for our age. What this means is hip styling, forgiving fabrics to suck us in and hold us up, and sophisticated tailoring to mask our flaws and flatter our morphing bodies.

Men know whereof I speak. Nobody snubs *them* because they have a gut. The fashion industry treats them with royal deference and respect. My husband, the bastard, can walk into any decent menswear store and ask to be directed to the section for fat bald Jews. He always gets a laugh and he's always offered an array of smartly designed pieces cut to make him look casually sophisticated, stylish and trim. He can step out of the fitting room transformed into a sexy beast, which, I daresay, is the whole point of fashion at any age, isn't it?

Gods of retail, if you're listening — and you should be, because retail's in the toilet — here's a little tip: If you build it, we will come. Give us the season's highlights in complimentary cuts, reality-based sizes and prices that don't insult our intelligence, and we'll be yours forever.

Take a cue from Banana Republic, which has successfully translated this year's trends into clothing that some of us might actually wear — a perfect '40s camisole that doesn't make you look like a Britney Spears wannabe, the ideal Jackie O Chanel jacket cut for a real live woman, not a stick-insect. (Size 8s, 10s and 12s are already sold out at their flagship store in Santa Monica. Could there be a message here?) I'm tired of trudging home without a score. In a perfect world, shopping will be fun again. Instead of leaving Zara pissed off and empty-handed because I couldn't yank one garment past my kneecaps, I'll walk out with an armload of the season's cheap chic. A girl can dream, can't she?

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