



Lifestyle

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On the cuff, and making a statement

Natasha Hughes

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CUFFLINKS are the link that's missing between corporate bland and creative bling. They can prompt a conversation, make a style statement and give an insight into a man's personality. They also break the uniformity of the business mould.

"For a man in a suit, they're a way of expressing a bit of personality," says Imogen Lamport, business image consultant. "When he's at a meeting and takes off his jacket, when he uses his arms, takes a drink, they're noticed." But not too much. The beauty of cufflinks is that they are a way of wearing jewellery without ostentation - to merely hint at wealth and taste and qualities.



Cufflinks ... give insight into a man's personality. QUENTIN JONES

Like the wedding band, they don't arouse comment in the corporate world: heavy bracelets went out with Brut, gold chains look silly unless the third, fourth and fifth shirt buttons are undone, studs are passe (the number of earlobe indents pays testament to that) and tie pins? They were always tacky.

"I think cufflinks are fantastic to add a bit of style to any outfit," says Andy Murphy, a L'Oreal Melbourne Fashion Festival ambassador. "When I'm out or at a gig and don't want it to be a plain outfit, it's a way to sharpen up on style, change it up a bit, be a little bit crazy without worrying too much."

Murphy is 28 and a DJ and music producer - a far cry from the middle-aged men of finance and law who are traditionally associated with cufflinks - but like many of his contemporaries, he's a sharp dresser. "It's not unusual for men my age and way younger to wear cufflinks," says Murphy. "When I play at universities, it's a sea of French cuffs and bow ties. People like to dress up a little. Cufflinks aren't just for weddings any more."

Lamport has noticed this trend. "Men who are more interested in what they wear - the ones who are more likely to have more than one pair of shoes - are now wearing French cuffs every day, along with the men and women in upper levels of management. It's become part of their style," she says. "They don't want too much jewellery and they want to look polished."

Michael Klim, the swimmer and Olympics broadcaster, says cufflinks are one of the few ways for men to accessorise.

"Women have a lot more options to show off their style. We have shoes, belt buckle, the watch, the pocket square and cufflinks. I wear them a lot, definitely. Cufflinks are a subtle thing but they can make a nice statement."

But be careful what sort of statement you're making, says Lamport. "Gaudy






cufflinks are out - they won't do you any favours. Also anything blinged up with a lot of sparkle, and the novelty ones."

Murphy says he now owns quite a number of cufflinks, most of them bought for himself. "Initially it was 'this shirt needs cufflinks - oh god' but now I prefer to buy shirts that can rock cufflinks." Among his collection are some black Louis Vuittons, plain Calibres and personalised cufflinks from when he was part of a bridal party.

Klim says his favourite cufflinks (aside from the St Kilda colours) are the ones his wife Lindy had engraved with their three children's initials. "When you're holding a drink, it's something people see. They're a good conversation starter."

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