

Sweats offer the best of both worlds; style and comfort

By Janean Chun
Emerald Contributor

Ever since the concept of body awareness hit the '80s generation, fitness has become more and more a part of daily life. Leading an active life no longer is equated merely with grunting through Rocky-style workouts in a stench-filled gym.

Likewise, the image of athletic wear as torn, faded clothing is passe, and the refined sports look is not restricted to athletes on the field of play.

"I met a friend of mine for brunch the other day at the (Eugene) Hilton, and he walked in in a sweatsuit," said David Winchell, owner of Dance City Sweats.

"In fact, if you have on an expensive pair of sweats, you can walk into the finest restaurants these days in Los Angeles and San Francisco. It's acceptable to go out in," Winchell said.

This fall, the look is more

than acceptable; it's downright desirable. Active wear has penetrated the pages of top fashion magazines as well as the clothing racks of local athletic stores. The style-conscious public now is paying attention to both the athletes' performances and their uniforms.

One of the most striking looks this fall is the form-fitting body wear inspired by track and cycling. Running tights and bike shorts in modern shapes and styles evoke a sleek, sexy street attitude. Lengths are creeping upward, with popular cuts ranging from anywhere between mid-calf and mid-thigh.

Perhaps this season's most fashionable length falls just above the knee.

For a futuristic look, color is of key importance. Color blocking, which plays neon, geometrical shapes such as circles or stripes against a black base, decorates the newest tights.

Runners and bikers have been customers of these Lycra shorts and tights for good reason. "You don't feel the material. It's not bulky. It's supportive, like pantyhose. It actually supports the muscles, and it's good for circulation," said Nancy Hull of the Eugene Athletic sales department.

Cropped, midriff-revealing tops for women and wide-back tanks for men complete the snug silhouette. However, top-ping tights with an oversized T-shirt for the inverted triangle effect is just as fashionable. Today's T-shirts emphasize unexpected graphics or bold messages. Brand name T-shirts such as Swatch, Vision Sports and Adidas satisfy the label hungry.

The football letterman jacket is another hot item this fall. Eddie Murphy sported a Detroit Lions jacket in "Beverly Hills Cop II," and many football fans are following suit. With the NFL players' strike still in progress, shirts and sweatshirts splashed with pro-team logos are doing a lot better than the games themselves.

For fall evening wear, softer, more delicate miniskirts are in, and the influence is definitely ballet.

Dance leggings can be worn beneath swingy miniskirts or see-through net skirts are still fashion assets. This season's legging colors include naturals (ecru, taupe), pastels (peach, mint green) and, of course, basic black.

With the introduction of the term "fashion fleece," sweats,



Photo by Shu-Shing Chen

Ann Gilman stretches in a two-piece Lycra exercise outfit with cropped tights and racerback tops (above). Bold, solid, neon colors are the latest in fashion with "less is more" styling that gives the most comfort to the activity-oriented student. Racerback tops also are available in 100 percent cotton (below). (Sportswear courtesy of Dance City Sweats.)

too, have become a means of making a fashion statement. For fall, white fleece accented with fun colors is a strong seller. Still, almost anything goes in this category.

Dance City Sweats offers sweat shirts and pants in 23 colors for \$10.95 each. Winchell defines sweats as the new staple in the closets of budget-conscious students. "They sell almost like jeans used to. People will come in and buy five colors because they can buy them for about \$10 each. Jeans now are about \$30 a pair," he said.

In fact, sweats have become so popular that the Esslinger equipment room has had difficulties keeping sweat shirts stocked. When students check out a basket, athletic clothing items may be borrowed free of charge for a term. As a result, "last year all girls, especially the petite ones, would ask for extra-large sweat shirts. Then when the big guys who really need extra-large sweta shirts

came up, we had to tell them we didn't have anymore," said Ilana Fuld, student manager of the equipment room. This year, extra-large sweat shirts are off-limits to women unless the size actually fits them.

Unfortunately, such agreeable prices are not the norm. Name brand sweat suits can run up to \$85. And the cost of most types of activewear is rising to meet the increased demand. But in the long run, these purchases should please the practical fashion-follower.

"I think it fits the lifestyle a lot more because even though a lot of the clothes aren't really cheap, they can be worn again and again and again. They're really easy to care for, and they don't have to be ironed," said Donald Zadoff of Backstage Dancewear.

"The initial outlay of money might be pretty substantial, but if you figure the cost-per-wear, it ends up being pretty economical," Zadoff added.



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