

Made in the shade: Sunglass trends for 2008

by Sharon_Mosley

OK, we know that many of you out there have a thing for shoes, but you probably also have a thing for sunglasses.

FUN AND FASHION - Sunglasses are a top fashion accessory, second only to shoes. CNS Photo courtesy of Maui Jim Sunglasses. Sunglasses, a top fashion accessory, are second only to shoes, according to authorities at the Sunglass Association of America, who predict that the "Class of 2008" sunglasses offer a wider range of styles - from classic, to sport-chic, to la femme romantique - and are packed with new features that enhance all-day comfort and optimize eye protection.

And, what's more, consumers will find sunglasses to compliment a wide range of facial shapes and meet the needs of every budget, from hundreds of dollars to well under \$30.

"The fun and fashion appeal of this year's sunglasses is standard equipment on styles worn for pure glamour, easy-going leisure lounging, or extreme weekend warrior pursuits," says Dave Bibbey who, in addition to his duties as SAA president, is vice president of product supply for Zoom Eyeworks, based in Berkeley, Calif.

"This year, consumers will see new takes on old favorites, like the aviator look and the latest iterations of extremely popular shields, which are super stylish and provide excellent protection," adds Melanie Martin, SAA vice president and co-CEO of Suntech Optics in Vancouver, British Columbia.

"Whether driving, playing beach volleyball, beachcombing or reading by the pool, this year there is a quality pair of sunglasses for everyone."

What are the hottest sunglass styles, details, materials and features to watch for in spring and summer of 2008?

According to Bibbey and Martin, here's a sneak peak at what to expect when shopping for sunglasses for men, women and children:

Q: What's happening with frame styles?

Bibbey: For 2008, expect a fresh look at classic styles like the aviator frames, and a renewed emphasis on wraps or shields. The large, oversize frames will still be popular, but watch for a more diverse selection of sizes and shapes in '08.

Q: What about frame colors?

Martin: Definitely, in terms of the vintage, retro frames we'll see basic colors of gloss black, tortoise and white. Metals will be primary colors - gold, silver, black and white. Brights such as cherry red, orange and pink will also be popular.

Q: And as for frame embellishments?

Bibbey: Watch for more medium-sized frames, which lend themselves to decorative details - prints and polka dots on the inside of the frame, flowers, stones and logo treatments on the outside.

Q: Any new materials or design features of note?

Martin: One area to watch for is "eco-trends" in the new eyewear. We are on the cusp of a transition from pure fashion fantasy to a sense of environmental responsibility. And that means increased interest in frames made from recycled materials.

Plus, consumers now understand the need for all-day UV protection. So frames must provide all-day comfort. Therefore, watch for non-slip nose pads, nylon temple tips, spring hinges and lightweight, composite frames; they enhance comfort and provide additional protection from wind and sun.

Q: And lenses?

Bibbey: Glare-cutting polarized lenses will continue to be very popular. These are great for driving and for sports. They eliminate harsh glare and boost color. The neutral grays are super in bright sunlight and bronze lenses work in a wide variety of outdoor conditions.

Q: Speaking of sports, what types of sunglasses will be available for the "weekend warrior?"

Martin: Active lifestyles require outdoor sun protection. The demand for performance eyewear continues unabated. Polarized and photochromic lenses are becoming the norm. Weekend warriors - from cyclists to runners - will find sleek, Euro-inspired styles. They are lightweight, durable, offer fantastic protection and look incredible.

Q: Tell us about the "sun-reader revolution."

Bibbey: This is a new breed of high-fashion eyeglasses that marries sun protection with the corrective optics of the finest over-the-counter reading glasses. These sunglasses provide optimal UV protection in bright conditions and magnification for reading and close-up tasks, in a variety of powers.

They are a great new option for active, farsighted consumers. Imagine, no more switching glasses to read on the beach or text message a friend.

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