

In Fashion: Springtime looks good in polka dots

by Sharon_Mosley

When it's time for spring closet cleaning, I always seem to start seeing spots - polka dots that is.

I've got polka-dot scarves, polka-dot blouses, polka-dot jackets, and I even have a pair of polka-dot leggings (a bad gift with good intentions). Those finally did hit the giveaway pile this year. The stretching circles that grew bigger and bigger just never did quite seem the thing for a grown woman to wear out in public.

Now with the springtime surge in this nostalgic print, I'm thinking about signing on the dotted credit card line and buying a polka-dot sweater. Shopbop.com has a great little cashmere number that's on my wish list. And I also spotted some little polka dot slingback pumps on the Neiman Marcus Web site.

PRETTY POLKA DOTS - Polka dots are hot this spring and summer in cool dresses like this one by Mixit from JC Penney. CNS Photo courtesy of JC Penney

But while polka dots - in black and white of course - are one of my favorite fashion "patterns" that are spotted in my wardrobe over and over again, I had never really thought about the origin of this popular fabric pattern until recently. I knew it must have something to do with the "polka" dance - duh - but just what I didn't have a clue.

Wikipedia, the free online encyclopedia filled me in: "The name comes from the Czech word pulka which means "a half" and is related to a half rhythm in the music" characteristic of the polka dance.

Wikipedia also gave me a brief history:

"While polka dots are ancient, they first became common on clothing in the late 19th century in Britain. At the same time polka music was extremely popular and the name was also applied to the pattern, despite no real connection between them." Sounds like some fashion writers in the 1800s had a little too much ale one night after the dance.

Wikipedia goes on to say that "there were many other 'polka' items some of which included 'polka-hats' and 'polka-jackets.' Most disappeared with the fad of actual polka dance. However, only the polka-dot fabric pattern remained popular and the name has been left intact over the years."

Indeed polka dots have been immortalized throughout the years in playful children's TV programs, spotted houseplants and popular songs. Who can forget the 1960 song, "Itsy Bitsy Teenie Weenie Yellow Polka Dot Bikini?" Well, that's one thing you won't find in my closet, but you will find in the stores this season. If you're itsy bitsy, I suggest you go for it.

The rest of us can choose from a wide array of dresses and tops to add a little oompah-pah to our wardrobes. There are even lots of polka-dot ties for guys. But a word of caution: If you're on the plus size of things, stick to the smaller dots; petites can go for bigger dots. And keep your accessories simple when you're connecting the fashion dots. The more "square" those extras are the better!

Sharon Mosley is a former fashion editor of the Arkansas Gazette in Little Rock and executive director of the

Fashion Editors and Reporters Association.

Â© Copley News Service

In Fashion: Springtime looks good in polka dots by Sharon_Mosley