

Grooming by Sarah-Jane Adler for Anthony Yacomine

# COLLAR CODED

Buttressed down, buttoned up, but invariably tieless, you will know Nineties creative man by his neckwear, says PAUL KEERS

MEN OF ideas don't like to be confused with money men. In professions such as advertising, architecture and the media, the creative types prefer a look which sets them apart from the company accountants. But when conservative dressing became fashionable for men, so the gap between the two of them closed, and soon it was difficult to distinguish between the designers wearing suits, and the Suits wearing designer labels. What the creative professionals needed was a way of wearing the same kinds of suits and shirts, but which clearly identified the men of ideas. And the result was that the creatives simply took off their ties, but left their collars buttoned up — and a whole new style emerged.

The film director David Lynch is one celebrated supporter. Another is Richard Rogers, the architect, a man so tieless that he had to borrow one for his initial interview with Lloyd's. Jonathon Docherty is managing director of the Georgina von Etzdorf label, hailed for its flamboyant silk print ties — but he refuses to wear one. Krishnan Guru-Murthy, the presenter on ITV's style series *Posh Frocks and New Trousers*, is naturally a dedicated follower of the fashion, along with Graham Fink, ponytailed art director at Saatchi & Saatchi. And whenever the reclusive Charles Saatchi himself is spotted, he, too, sports his collar done up, but his tie done away with.

John Hegarty, of the advertising agency Bartle, Bogle Hegarty (responsible for the celebrated Levi ads), now rarely adopts any other look. "You have to dress up smartly for meetings," he explains, "but if you're not careful then everybody looks the same, and you can't tell who's the creative chap, unless he's wearing a beret or a beard. So leaving your tie off is a kind of creative statement, and I think clients expect that kind of role-playing."

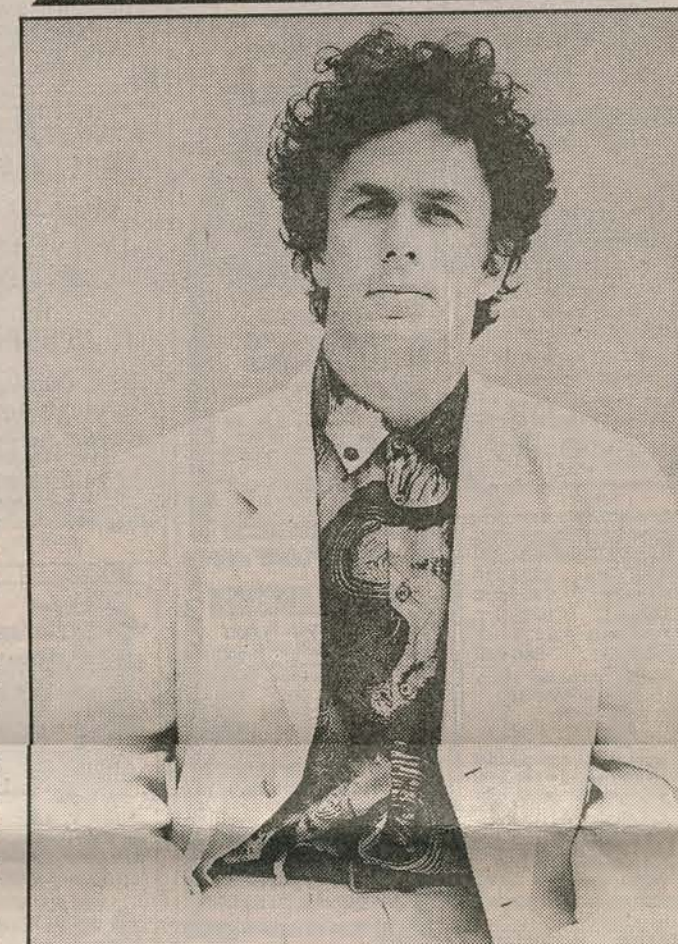
Not only clients, it seems. Photographed recently for *Campaign* magazine, the advertising copywriter Tom Jenkins deliberately took off his tie, and was pictured wearing his standard Thomas Pink button-down buttoned up. "It's a great sin in creative work to have the collar unbuttoned," he explains. "You'd look like somebody normal."

The popularity of the look undoubtedly lies in its combination of the conservative formality of a buttoned-up look (so much more disciplined than a casually open collar) with the radical chic of not wearing a tie. Dylan Jones, editor of the men's magazine *Arena*, says: "I think it's one of those styles which, if worn formally to work (like wearing loafers with no socks), is a minor fashion rebellion. It has taken off because there was such a big fashion for ties in the Eighties, when the whole pseudo-Gekko look was very important, and now men have been told they no longer have to do that."

The only problem lies in the desert of open shirtfront which it exposes. As Jones admits: "If you have the right shirt, body and jacket, it looks fabulous. But if you get it wrong, it just looks dumb." And Hegarty agrees: "You need a really well-cut shirt. Paul Smith's work superbly, with or without a tie, and there are few people who cut a soft-collar shirt that can do that."

But several designers have created shirts specifically styled for this look. Romeo Gigli says that, "Even if I like to design ties in the best fabrics and colours, I don't like to be tied up myself." His soft-collar shirts, like those of Jasper Conran, are ideally suited to buttoning-up. The Japanese designers *Comme des Garçons* have used shirt-front buttons in pairs, or in differing sizes, which are clearly not meant to be covered with a tie; likewise the elaborate embroidery on the plackets of shirts by *Workers for Freedom*. And the film publicist Jonathan Rutter, who regards a tie as "an unnecessary appendage", also recommends shirts by Margaret Howell and Katharine Hamnett.

But the look may not be that new. Tom Jenkins says: "I remember as a child 20 years ago seeing a picture of the film director David Lean, wearing a crisp white shirt, buttoned up to the top, without a tie. He was a respected director even then, and so as a schoolboy who hated wearing a tie, I was really struck by the look." So perhaps it's always been the case that open minds prefer closed collars...



● **Graham Fink, main picture left:** White cotton shirt with black diamond pattern, £90, from *Workers for Freedom*, 4 Lower John Street, W1; Harrods, Knightsbridge, SW1; Liberty, Regent Street, W1; Wade Smith, Mathew Street, Liverpool. Black wool jacket with drawstring waist, £485, from *Comme des Garçons*, 59 Brook Street, W1

● **Jonathan Rutter, above top:** White cotton shirt, £108, from Margaret Howell, 29 Beauchamp

Place, SW3. Red, gold and green on navy silk printed waistcoat, £570, from *Hermès*, 155 New Bond Street, W1 and 179 Sloane Street, SW1. Grey wool-mix jacket, part of suit by *Romeo Gigli*, £525, from *Browns*, 23-27 South Molton Street, W1

● **Jonathon Docherty, above:** Multi-coloured print silk shirt, £230, to order from *Georgina von Etzdorf*, 149 Sloane Street, SW1; *Pickett*, 41 Burlington Arcade, W1. Beige linen suit, £350, from Margaret Howell, as before



● Putting their shirt on the tieless look: the designer Romeo Gigli, the advertising chief John Hegarty, the director David Lynch

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