

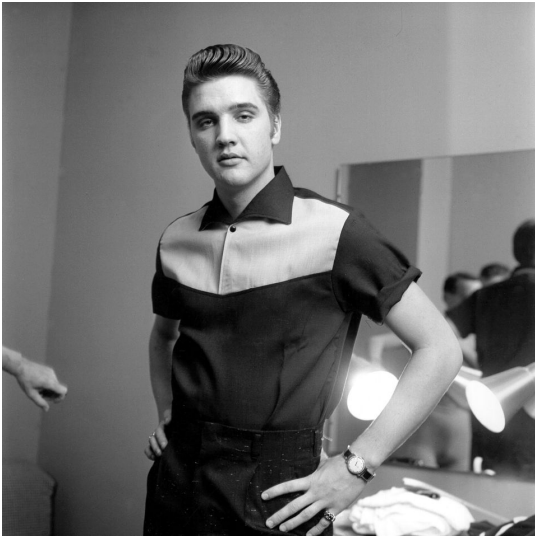
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# Take a Page Out of Elvis's Style Playbook

For spring, men's designers are rolling out versions of the King's beloved 'bowling' shirts, a casual look that feels right again



STRIKE A POSE Elvis Presley backstage at 'The Milton Berle Show' in Burbank, Calif., in 1956. PHOTO: MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

By *Jacob Gallagher*

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**ONE DAY IN 1952**, in Memphis, Tenn., Elvis Presley walked into the Lansky Bros. clothing store, where Bernard Lansky was tending the till. Elvis, then a 17-year-old usher at the Loews movie theater around the corner, confidently declared, "Mr. Lansky, I don't have any money, but one of these days I'm going to come in and buy you out." Amused, Mr. Lansky countered, "Don't buy me out, just buy from me." With that, a lifelong collaboration took root. Even as Elvis became a global phenomenon, Lansky Bros. kept him in blue suede shoes and collar-popping shirts. When the controversially gyrating star was invited to perform on "The Milton Berle Show" in 1956, Mr. Lansky outfitted him in the pink and black bowling shirt he wore on air. At the time, lots of men wore bowling shirts on their off days whether they bowled or not, but Elvis took the shirts to the next level with his electric color combinations.

"In the mid-50s when he broke into the scene, Elvis really liberated menswear," said Zoey Goto, a London-based writer and author of the book "Elvis Style: From Zoot Suits to Jumpsuits." Six decades later, fashion has adopted a brash Elvis-ish sensibility and designers are whipping up their own unconservative bowling shirts. Most notably, Prada and Ami brought them to the European runways in candy-color schemes that might have met with Mr. Lansky's approval. "My dad used to call them his 'lifesaver colors,'" said Hal Lansky, who became president of Lansky Bros. after the passing of his father in 2012. "My dad loved to put those loud colors in the window, and that's probably what drew Elvis to our front door."

The sort of brightly colored open-collared shirts Elvis helped popularize played a role in defining the breezy style of California and Hawaii, too. "It's a very surfer look, like in the '60s when surfers would wear nice suits and camp-collared shirts before changing into their boardshorts to go surfing," noted Kurt Narmore, the designer of Los Angeles-based label Noon Goons. Bowling shirts walk the line nicely between refined and rebellious. Their straight hem and boxy cut create a crisp silhouette, and striking colors and textures make them more interesting than whatever you're probably wearing right now. "It's not your normal oxford

shirt or something that's just a regular shirt. It has more flavor, style and flair," said Mr. Narmore.

While Noon Goons does sell a solid black iteration, which would look subtly cool with light-wash jeans, bowling shirts score highest when done up in startling shades and Elvis-friendly patterns. Visvim and Stussy offer shirts in flamingo pink and cornflower blue, while Topman is hyping stripes. Hecho embellished its patchworked bowling shirt with screenprinted characters for an added wink.

The more experimental you get, the more prudent it is to wear solid chinos below (in neutral navy or khaki, please) so you don't look excessively eccentric. Whether you pop the collar like the King is entirely up to you.

#### For the pattern-averse man:

Pharcyde Shirt, \$239,  
*noongoons.com*



#### For the extravagant man:

Leather Shirt, \$2,760,  
*Prada, 212-664-0010*

#### For the hip-but-thrifty man:

Stripe Shirt, \$55,  
*topman.com*

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