

FREEZE FRAMES

Glamorous glasses

Men are finally figuring out that eyewear can be an important accessory

By JOY SEWING

HOUSTON CHRONICLE

MEN are finally seeing what women have known for several years. Fashionable eyewear can be quite eye-catching.

Check out Kanye West's recent fashion statement — large, black frames with a unique, Afro-mullet hairstyle. Simon Baker of 2006's *The Devil Wears Prada* sported a Ray-Ban Wayfarer style at the

Grammys, as did Mickey Rourke at the Academy Awards. And rap mogul Jay-Z has been spotted in bold black, nerdy-looking plastic frames.

As famous men take the red carpet and attend star-studded events, they are accessorizing their wardrobes with fashionable eyewear for both indoors and out in the sun. Classic, vintage eyewear from aviator styles to geek-inspired frames, such as

those of Jerry Lewis in *The Nutty Professor*, is huge this spring, says Kristie Weiss,

spokesperson for the Vision Council, a nonprofit

trade organization.

"It's a more secure fashion statement with minimal risks. You can buy the styles now and still wear them in another 20 years," she said.

Female celebrities have been wearing large, round Jackie O.-inspired sunglasses for the past sev-

eral years. L'Amey Company, which produced the original Jackie O. frame by designer Nina Ricci, is

planning to relaunch that design and will use an iconic photograph of Onassis in its advertising.

At Smith Opticians in Houston, owner Philip Brown says "retro" eyewear often refers to a frame size as large from top to bottom as it is wide. He says the thick, plastic frames are a defining look

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and, for many of his customers, are a welcome change from modern, rectangular prescription frames. (Remember Sarah Palin's rimless rectangular Kawasaki frame?)

"I guess when something has been in style for so long, it becomes boring; and something that's been out of style long enough, it eventually comes back," said Brown, who specializes in inexpensive vintage frames.

His customers have been requesting Wayfarer styles in clear plastic as well as in red, and also asking for the '70s-style, graduated tint that's darker at the top of the lens. He says combination frames made of metal and plastic, such as those worn by Malcolm X or actor Kevin Costner in the movie *JFK*, are also popular. Brown's frames are \$90-\$150.

Tina Afra-Ozcelik, owner of the Eye Gallery of Hous-

ton, says eyewear designers have rejuvenated older styles with modern colors. For example I.a. Eyeworks' "fiction" collection, at \$330 each for both men and women, mixes vivid colors such as hunter green with clear crystal and dark blue with sky blue.

Afra-Ozcelik says men are also opting for classic round frames, such as those by Ralph Lauren's purple label at \$295-\$500.

Even frames with wider, more detailed temples continue to be a popular fashion statement, but she says the frames can be distracting at first.

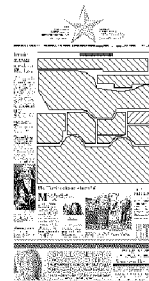
"They definitely aren't as wide as they have been in the past few years, but they do take time to get used to," she said.

"As long as you turn your head appropriately, you shouldn't have much problem."

LensCrafters calls the men's look a "power fashion" statement, says Lisa Gear, the company's director of optical-frame sourcing.

"It's a strong look but with a lot of variations from geek chic to aviator cool," Gear said. "Women decided years ago that eyewear is a fashion accessory, and men are late coming to the trend. They are finally seeing frames as more than just necessity."

The eyewear retail chain



has seen a resurgence in requests for tortoise shell and black plastic frames and offers options in the \$100-\$150 price range.

And like Houston eyewear boutiques, LensCrafters has customers clamoring for retro designer styles.

“Eyewear is a less expensive fashion statement,” Gear said. Even if you can’t afford a Chanel outfit, she added, “you can get Chanel eyeglasses affordably.”

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EYEWEAR TRENDS

Bold is new again in eyewear.

MEN

■ **Geek chic:** Horn-rimmed or a metal-plastic mix

■ **Ray Ban Wayfarer:**

Think of the Blues Brothers or Tom Cruise in *Risky Business*.

WOMEN

■ **Cat-eye:** Plastic in herringbone, black or a bright color

■ **Jackie O:** A must-have for sunglasses

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ENGAGING EYEWEAR: See photos of male celebrities and their larger-than-life frames. chron.com/style



RETRO: LensCrafters' Ray Ban frames, \$135.



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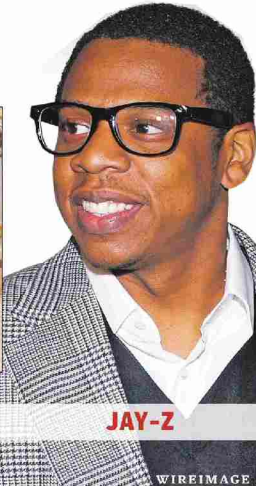
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