

Engineer Boots: Full-Throttle Vintage

The ultimate in high-octane footwear, the engineer boot was born to ride. Slip into a pair and hit the highway.



Is high-profile moments might be behind it, but it still has a foothold in rugged style. Popularized by motorcyclists in the 1950s, engineer boots played a key role in an emerging American counterculture. While time and style has marched on, the engineer boot has endured. Some might view it as a nostalgic relic. For others, the engineer boot is timeless.

Tracing its origins to U.S. Cavalry footwear, the engineer boot assumed its modern

form in the closing years of the 1930s. A trio of North American bootmakers, Wisconsin's Chippewa Boots, Minnesota's Red Wing Shoes, and Oregon's Wesco, started producing slightly different versions of the rugged, buckled slip-on boot. According to legend, it was designed for and quickly adopted by locomotive stokers, giving it the name "engineer boot." The tall shaft of the boot protected the fireman's legs from the embers or the tip of his shovel, and the slip-on design allowed the wearer to kick



Marlon Brando in *The Wild One* (1953): Producer Stanley Kramer filled out the background cast with real bikers. When he asked one of the bikers what he was rebelling against, he responded, "Well, what have you got?" The line was worked into the script and became the best-remembered snatch of dialogue from the film.

THE REBEL'S WARDROBE

The Untold Story of Menswear's Renegade Past

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Thomas Stege Bojer & Bryan Szabo
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An entertaining exploration of trend-immune fashion classics, and the surprising origins of your everyday clothing items.

How did the plain white T-shirt become an everyday hero? Which movie star helped turn the leather jacket into a global icon? And were chinos really created for military purposes? The origin stories of these casual men's fashion staples will surprise you, often being traced back to subversive counter cultures.

The Rebel's Wardrobe unpacks the modern menswear lexicon and reveals, for example, why the Carhartt jacket designed for railroad workers became synonymous with skaters and graffiti artists, or how polo shirts made the leap from middle-class tennis clubs to British Mods. Traversing genres and styles, this book goes back to the gestation period of iconic pieces, showing how they became timeless classics transcending fashion.

Comprising THOMAS STEGE BOJER and BRYAN SZABO, *Denimhunters* is one of the internet's premier denim and heritage menswear authorities. It was founded in 2012 by Stege Bojer, who now serves as the editor-in-chief. Experienced writer and editor Szabo is a contributor to the site, and notably spearheads the writing and research for the Well-Made Essentials rugged menswear buying guide.

The Cardigan: Knitted Kit for Settled Style

The conservative classic might be linked to fully domesticated masculinity, but it's got a surprising military pedigree.



The cardigan takes its name from Cardigan and Lieutenant general in the British Army. Brudenell led the famous Charge of the Light Brigade during the Battle of Balaclava, the 1854 engagement between Russian and British forces that also gave us the knitted socks favored by stick-up artists. Brudenell made it all the way to the Russian lines and, after briefly engaging with the enemy, turned his horse on its heels and galloped back to the British lines. He lost more than 60 of his 600 men, but the charge became legendary.

When Cardigan returned to London, he was showered with praise for his gallantry. Ballads were composed in his honor, and pictures appeared in London shops showing the general leaping over the Russian battery on horseback. The text reads: "without that he had worn in the battle (and possibly designed) became fashionable in London, and people started referring to it as the 'cardigan.' Within a decade, sleeves were added to the waistcoat—both versions co-existed for a time. At first, the jackets were knit by hand, but with the advancement of knitting technologies, manufacturers were able to start producing cardigans by the 1880s in considerable numbers.

By the early 1900s, the knitted sweaters were popular in most modern wardrobes. Men and women wore them while playing golf or mixing socially. Coco Chanel is often credited with creating the women's cardigan shortly before World War I, but according to textile historian Leimont Oakes, "Chanel" was merely reproducing what was already a widespread trend. But she did help to further popularize the style, which became an essential item in Western fashion by the end of the 1920s.

As musicians and actors began to ditch the shirt and tie in the '50s, the cardigan assumed a central role in a leisurely yet smart style that paved the way for the widespread relaxation of fashion in the '60s and '70s. Flirty-eyed stars like Paul Newman, Steve McQueen, and Clint Eastwood showed their softer side by posing in woolly cardigans, and jazz musicians like Grant Green and Eric Dolphy wore



McQueen in red made all about it (1960s). All in woolly McQueen (right), a cardigan (right) favored by a group of English Mod men, including Malcolm X. Sold down to show and on movie screens, it was the official paper of the Nation of Islam. The issue here was published three days after McQueen's (left) for the first time, scoring a 100 with the controversial "phantom punch."

The Breton: Stripes by the Seaside

Born on the French coast, the Breton might have made a comfortable home in the city, but it longs for the sun and surf.



In the iconic photograph captured by Robert Doisneau in 1952, Pablo Picasso sits at a table in his kitchen, enjoying his lunch with his mistress, painter Françoise Gilot. His eyebrows arch ironically, but he looks with laughing eyes through the off-camera window to his left. Though the croissants on the table in front of him share a comic affinity with swollen fingers (they were arranged on purpose by Picasso to produce this effect), they are still not the most striking thing about the photograph. The star of the show is Picasso's shirt, the Breton.

The thin horizontal stripes were a signature pattern for Picasso, forming the above-the-belt bedrock of his off-kilter personal style. They appeared on the artist's shirts, tees, and sweaters, and even in some of his paintings. They were as much a trademark of his personal style as berets and cigarettes.

As one of history's most documented artists and, at the time the photograph was taken, widely regarded as the world's greatest living painter, Picasso was acutely aware of the power of the image. He was an obliging subject for photographers because he understood that doing so allowed him to shape his public image and fame. He approached and broadcast his personal style with the same deft hand that he painted with. His style, like his art, marked him as a man unconcerned with conventions, and though his horizontally striped pieces were far from the loudest ones in his impossibly expansive and expressive wardrobe, they were the ones he returned to time and again. Nobody has worn the shirt so well, and nobody has so masterfully exploited the full power of the casual and continental Breton to showcase his inimitable cool.

Just a few years after Picasso posed for Doisneau in the summer of 1955, James Dean visited Sanford Roth's home. Roth was struck by the young actor's outfit. He had paired the Breton top with a pair of thoroughly faded Lee 101 Riders, a combination captured in other photographs from the day. It was Dean's top, though, that caught the photographer's eye. He reached for his camera when the actor was seated at the table. Like Picasso, there is a plate of food in front of Dean. A glass of milk sits on the table, and



the colors have been drained out of the photograph, making both the blue stripes and collar and the brown table look black. The Breton, its collar turned up carelessly, pulls the scene towards sunny Mediterranean shores; the actor, pouting and heavy-lidded, further away still. It's an alluring and intoxicating combination, and the Breton provides much of the image's force.

The Breton shirt (called the *marinière* or the *tricot rayé* by the French) had existed long before Picasso and Dean wore it so memorably.

It originated in Brittany (sometimes called Little Britain or, by the French, *Bretagne*), the peninsula in the northwest corner of France bordered by the English Channel to the north, the Atlantic and Celtic Oceans to the west, and the Bay of Biscay to the south. Strictly speaking, the Breton is a fisherman's sweater. Those words may conjure up images of heavy knits produced in the rain-sodden Aran Islands, but the Irish weren't the only fishermen in Europe to knit sweaters made for the sea.

Pablo Picasso at lunch at his home in Vallauris (1952). In 1911, after a man walked out of the Louvre carrying the *Mona Lisa* under his arm, a young Picasso was brought in for questioning. The humiliated (and innocent) artist broke into tears at the court hearing and was released. The masterpiece was recovered from an Italian home in 1914.