



ZONING IN

Overtly sexual or coquettishly neo-Victorian, erogenous zones are hot. TEXT: AMBER NASRULLA

Jayne Mansfield's bosom, Angelina Jolie's lips, J.Lo's backside, Tina Turner's legs...Celebrities—and their celebrated shapes—have been transforming mere body parts into enviable erogenous zones, or “e-zones,” for decades. This year, the stars are showcasing a curious mix of e-zones, from the overtly sexual “underboobage” (where the lower half of the breast below the nipple is on display) and exposed back to the neo-Victorian areas of the wrist and ankle.

While it may seem odd that wrists and ankles are considered erotic opposite the flashier underboobage, it's not unusual. In its quest to be fresh and relevant, fashion propels society's roving eye all over the body. Back in 1937, James Laver, a renowned designer and historian, explained it best when he said, “The erogenous zone is always shifting, and it is the business of fashion to pursue it, without ever catching it up.” Psychologist John Flugel also wrote about the industry's tendency to fixate on one particular body part, exhaust its erotic potential and then move on.

This year's breast flash is a good example. Having exploited all the other lust-worthy areas, bustacular stars such as Pamela Anderson, Anna Nicole Smith and Britney Spears (before her pregnancy) are happily posing in ultra-cropped shirts for public appearances. Earlier this year, Anderson was photographed at a Las Vegas casino sporting a pink-and-white V-neck top slightly larger than a ▷





handkerchief. “Underboobage is one trend that’s going to become even more popular,” predicts Kevin Jones, fashion historian at the Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising in Los Angeles. “My colleagues and I talk about this...What part of the bosom will be revealed next?”

Hilary Swank can be credited with single-handedly launching this season’s other hot e-zone—the back. Wearing a high-neck, long-sleeve, backless ’40s-style sapphire-blue Guy Laroche gown at this year’s Academy Awards, she landed on all the best-dressed lists. The dazzling contrast of

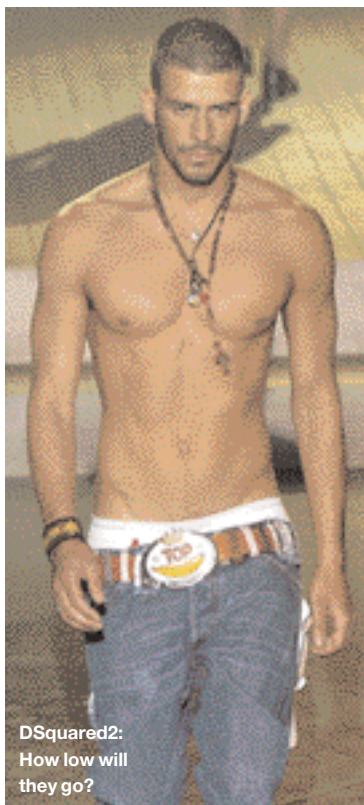
“UNDERBOOBAGE IS ONE TREND THAT’S GOING TO BECOME EVEN MORE POPULAR.”

complete coverage in the front versus “the shockingly low cut in the back made it a great dress,” recalls David Wolfe, a creative director at The Doneger Group, a fashion merchandising and consulting firm in New York.

“The spine is our life-force highway,” says Evana Maggiore, president of Massachusetts-based Fashion Feng Shui International. “When you drop your armour and reveal your back, it’s seen as vulnerable, and that in itself is intriguing and sexy.” Maggiore uses feng shui principles to determine which clothes may enhance a client’s energy and how specific apparel can boost her quest for success. While it may be powerful for one woman to expose her back or décolleté, Maggiore notes that for others it may be best to channel their energy through more subtle areas, like the ankles and wrists.

The emergence of designs that draw attention to the wrist—which fashion designers such as Celine, Marc Jacobs and Marni highlighted with their bracelet-sleeve jackets—could be a result of flesh fatigue, says Sue Upton, a Toronto-based makeup artist who has worked with celebrities in L.A. “You can get shocked for only so long.” Wolfe agrees that designers are moving beyond overexposure because “we are reaching a saturation point with extremism.” He cites Paris Hilton and her penchant for noodle bikinis and flimsy outerwear, calling her “the cultural black plague of our time.” ▷

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How low will they go?

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE, DA CRUZ SAYS THE SMALL OF THE BACK WILL CONTINUE TO BE AN E-ZONE.



Celine:
Wrists can be sexy too!

On the other end of the style spectrum, you have actresses such as Teri Hatcher. Her character on *Desperate Housewives* caught the sexy plumber's attention in her fitted jeans and blouses with draped sleeves that showed off her slim wrists. Danielle Kelly, a celebrity custom designer/stylist in L.A. whose clothing has been worn by the likes of Pink, Madonna and Eve, weaves jewellery and sequins into fabric to showcase an e-zone, such as the neck, waist or wrist. "It catches the eye as much as bare skin does," she says.

"A star wearing a full-length gown or billowy, knee-length skirt is saying 'Guess what's under my skirt,'" says Elyssa Da Cruz, an associate at the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Costume Institute in New York. "It's a game of 'peek under my dress.' It's about coquetry, teasing and concealing. It's about a hint of flesh." In her video *Hold You Down* (featuring Fat Joe), Jennifer Lopez looks stunning in a white gown with thigh-high slits, but it's the parrot-green scarf on her left ankle that sizzles. Looking to the future, Da Cruz says the small of the back will continue to be an e-zone. She also forecasts an explosion of interest in bare shoulders, saying that it will evolve naturally because of their proximity to the bare back. Wolfe, meanwhile, says he's convinced that the next erogenous area has to be the genitals. "Even in men's fashion, trousers are so low-rise that male models' privates have to be waxed," he says wearily before adding, "No, no! I don't think we're going to go there!" □