

{the style guy}

the thin edge of the medge



This season Fendi unveiled the latest in fashion for men – wedged shoes. Is this the latest in a stream of ultimate fashion crimes or the next evolution in menswear?

I remember sitting at the Fendi show on the last day of the Milan spring/summer 2009 menswear shows back in June last year. Amid the slew of collarless shirts, cotton and leather peasant wear and knits, one item stood out among all others – leather men's wedges. And now, as the collections hit the stores, I'm once again reminded of this addition to men's footwear.

Not content with the Cuban heel, Silvia Fendi wanted to add something feminine to the boys' shoes and voila, the platform wedge (let's call them 'medges') was obviously the answer. As wedges are going out the door for women, it seems quite fitting that they're making an entrance in men's fashion. We've seen men's shoes get a bit of a lift in the past with the short-lived platforms of the seventies, but nothing since. In the same collection, Fendi also feminised trousers (by cropping them) and produced a much more slender, androgynous silhouette.

And medges weren't the only trend to emerge at the shows this season – though the trend was one of the most prolific in terms of media coverage – designers brought everything from skirt

shorts (at Marni) to bright orange macs onto the catwalk. At Calvin Klein, bold suits in fluorescent pink and green, so bright that they almost required sunglasses to look at them, provoked spontaneous applause from the crowd of

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fashion editors. Perhaps the most wearable trend out of the more unusual, however, was in the re-emergence of bow ties in day-to-day wear, with not a dinner jacket in sight. Female models turn out in some unusual garb when womenswear designers take over

the runways twice a year. But the twice-yearly men's runway shows have a wider disconnect between catwalk and store clothing rail than their women's counterparts.

But can designers be blamed for avoiding a commercial collection of predictable grey suits, dress shirts and v-neck sweaters? If designers were to replicate the staples of a wardrobe season upon season, how would runway shows keep our interest and what would the fashion press write about?

So the men's shows have become over-the-top exercises designed to create a buzz around a collection. Another example from this season is the utterly un-wearable 'man-bikini' (a pair of speedos attached to a halter-neck) from Alexander McQueen, which will never be worn in public.

While I'm sure that Tom Cruise and other height-conscious men will be rubbing their hands with glee at the thought of an additional boost, it's going to be quite some time before the average guy slips his feet into a pair of built-up medges – no matter how expensive or how noteworthy the designer. However, now that this territory has been breached, it's only a matter of time before a designer goes the whole hog and wheels out a fully-fledged line of men's stilettos. Maybe that's something we'll see next season.