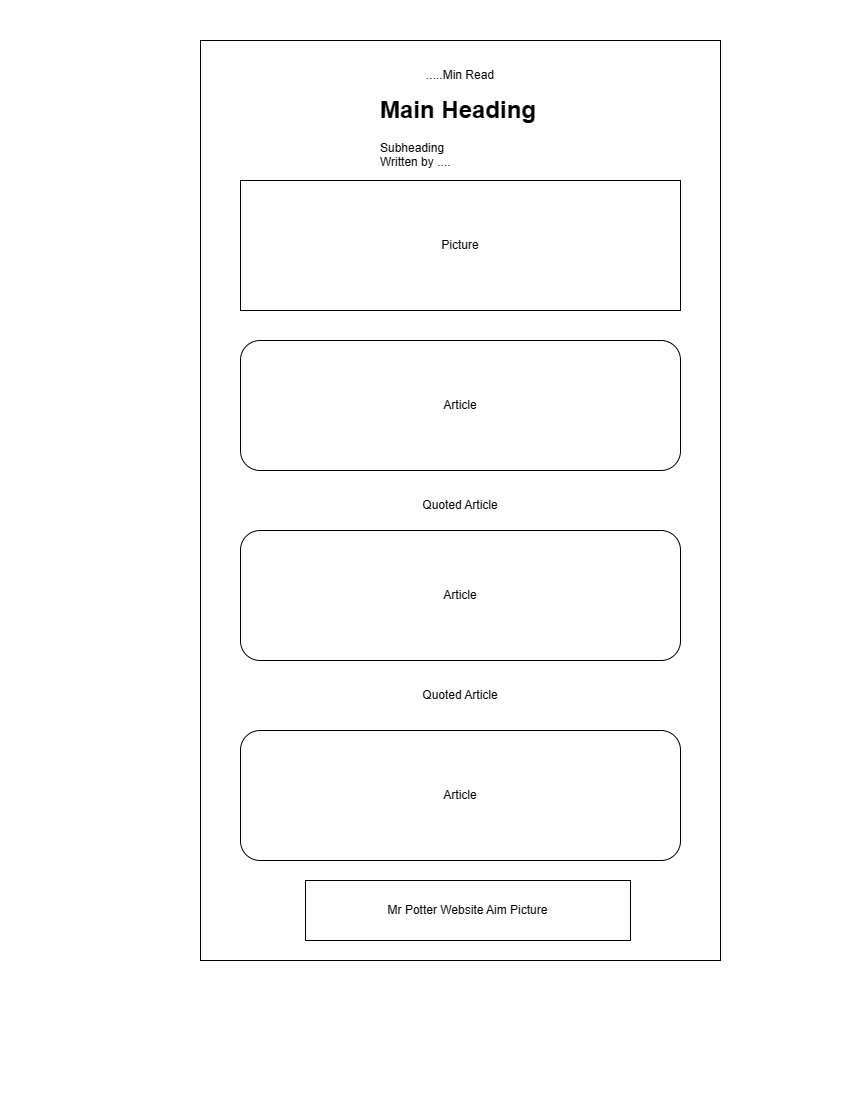
Mr. Porter Website Articles



https://www.mrporter.com/en-gb/journal/lifestyle/how-to-enjoy-being-single-guide-men-24417306

4 MINUTE READ

Is It Actually OK To Be Single?

*Words by Mr Tom M Ford*

*1 August 2023*



Illustration by Mr Michael Parkin (Folio Art)

The contemporary self-help literature tells us that there is power in being on our own. Love yourself, primarily, and everything else will fall into place. And according to Twitter (sorry, X) and dating apps, relationships don’t look like they once did. Out are eternal vows and nuclear families; in is polyamory, solo date nights and nuclear anxiety. Who needs marriage when you’ve got Feeld, a side hustle and the world is about to end? What’s more, being single has never been such a team sport. Just a few months ago, the Pew Research Centre found that 63 per cent of American men aged 18-29 have, much like 30 per cent of the entire population, got no one to argue about towels with.

But I am single, and something is wrong. I am outside a pub in London’s Soho, a couple of weeks after I started thinking about writing this story, and I am fielding those questions that come from a friend of a friend of a friend. I’m 34, yeah. No, I don’t have a partner. “What’s wrong with you, then?”

Well, how long have you got?

But also: nothing, really, right now. Life’s never been better. I just, you know, don’t have a girlfriend.

Despite the nihilism, I believe in the concept of a monogamous, loving partnership. I’ve had enough casual hook-ups and non-committal relationships to know that it doesn’t work for me. I’d like children one day, if it’s possible. And I would like a girlfriend in the near future, when I am ready, should the opportunity present itself. But I am not on any dating apps (I like the idea of meeting someone IRL). I am single by choice and have been for almost a year.

I have always been in and out of relationships, so I am gaining strength and happiness from being with myself for a bit. But there is a reason this question didn’t just evaporate into the lazy summer air with all the other random sentences. I feel it on some level. I’m in my thirties and I’m single? *Something* must be wrong.

Year after year, studies show that [men are less happy being single than women](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/01461672211049049?journalCode=pspc). Indeed, unmarried, childless women are the happiest people in society, according to [one study](https://www.businessinsider.com/unmarried-childless-women-are-happiest-expert-says-2019-5?r=US&IR=T), while male loneliness is [on the rise](https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-state-our-unions/202208/whats-behind-the-rise-lonely-single-men).

I don’t feel lonely, personally, but I know from talking to some single male pals that it can be tough to be out of a relationship. Mr Jon Spiteri is a 64-year-old restaurateur who was married for 16 years and has three children. In January, he came out of a five-year relationship, his longest since his marriage. “I hate it,” he tells me over lunch. “I can’t remember the last time I was single; I tend to go from one relationship to the next.” Historically, this has also been my pattern. “During the week when I’m doing things and working, I meet my friends, I go out for lunch,” he says. “At weekends, I feel this huge loss. I don’t feel like a loser being on my own, I just feel lonely.”

*“I’m in my thirties and I’m single? Something must be wrong”*

Spiteri struggles with the etiquettes and parameters of dating apps and, like me, wants to meet someone in real life. “I’m fun, I’m well-connected, I like to eat out, I behave properly, I’m a gentleman. But I think [potential matches] see a completely different thing to me. They don’t know me. It’s just six pictures.”

It’s great Spiteri can own the fact that, despite living a full and rich life, he experiences loneliness in this specific area. It makes me wonder if I am lying to myself. I like my own company, but I often fantasise about a relationship. And I am probably single now, however happily, in preparation for a relationship. I’m doing the groundwork.

We agree that there is a societal taboo about being lonely. It is tempting to assume that this weighs more heavily on women – the old trope of the spinster and the eligible bachelor. This may be true to some extent, and men do not have the same biological pressures as women, but I have heard men talk openly about, say, depression or therapy at parties – never about being lonely. It might represent a unique sense of failure for a man. What’s more, women seem better at handling their solitude.

Data suggests that [much of what men need from a relationship, women tend to get from their friends](https://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/28/opinion/sunday/what-women-find-in-friends-that-they-may-not-get-from-love.html). In a 2021 survey, only [21 per cent of men](https://eu.usatoday.com/story/life/health-wellness/2023/02/03/male-friendship-lonely-close-friends-men/11162423002/) said they received emotional support from a friend in the past week. Apparently, men are still not hot on talking to their mates about feelings. This would explain the [huge rise in men’s support groups in recent years](https://www.gq-magazine.co.uk/lifestyle/article/mens-groups).

*“All the emotional support I would get from a partner I have found in my flatmate… It’s an interesting model of a relationship that’s non-traditional”*

I have a brilliant, supportive friendship group of men and women that could hold pretty much anything I wanted to give them. I’m comfortable talking about my feelings and fears. But I feel that a loving, romantic relationship “hits different”. It’s built on a carefully constructed, unique symbiosis of feelings and interests (and random things you hear at dinner that become an eternal, absurd in-joke) that a friendship, however old and deep, can’t replace. It’s a 24/7, unconditional thing rather than an as-and-when pick-and-mix. But maybe that’s my needy male view...

Mr Snake Denton, 26, is a journalist for *Vice* and *The Face*. He has been single for a year and recently came out as queer. “It doesn’t surprise me that men report being lonelier than women,” he says. “In [women’s] relationships, there are fewer boundaries, so they get a free exchange of emotional support. Whereas with men, I think it’s less intimate. Male relationships can be quite policed. When I watch women communicate, I’m like, ‘Wow, that’s amazing.’”

Denton’s flatmate ably fills his relationship void. “I live with a girl who is also queer and we’re super tight,” he says. “All the emotional support I would get from a partner I have found in my flatmate, but the sexual side has conveniently been taken off the table. It’s an interesting model of a relationship that’s non-traditional.”

Denton had always wanted to emulate the traditional, heterosexual marriage of his parents and grandparents, but his experience of coming out made him reassess. “Suddenly, all those ideas I had fell away, which was really liberating,” he says. “The whole world is reflecting back a very specific idea of what a relationship is – on the train, in movies, it’s everywhere.”

The idea of a “perfect”, conventional relationship, reinforced in culture, is a potent one. It has probably been a factor in me spoiling perfectly good relationships in the past. I have sought perfection (whatever that even means), despite sometimes being way below an ideal partner myself. If we could shake the idea of what things should or could look like, like Denton, we’d be a lot better off. After all, the UK divorce rate is estimated at 42 per cent. Marriage and monogamous, conventional, ever-lasting partnerships are not unobtainable. But they needn’t be a given or a goal.

*“Being single can be super fulfilling. I’m still not sure why that can’t be a lifetime thing”*

Mr Rob Woodhead, a 42-year-old entrepreneur, is single, like me. But, unlike me, he has spent most of his adult life without a partner. He also suggests that relationships are rarely linear or conventional. “Some of my friends are divorced,” he says. “They are able to go on and do other things. Other relationships are just other chapters. I can have a five-year relationship. It doesn’t have to be forever.”

Woodhead thinks that finding a relationship is more difficult for men because women are simply more capable. “I see a higher barrier to entry,” he says. “Women tend to be content in their lives.” This reminds me of something Spiteri said about his ex-wife. “She’s on her own. She’s happy in herself. She’s built a life. I think men are fucking difficult.”

At the risk of being a pavement psychotherapist, I hear elements of avoidance in Woodhead’s dating history (he says he is scared to hurt people) that I relate to. I’ve read enough books on attachment to note the pattern in myself. “The maturity of men happens a lot later,” he adds. “The desire to settle down.” Sure enough, in my twenties, I was not able to be a present, mature or unselfish partner. This is another reason I am single now.

It seems like single men feel an element of fragility about their place in the dating world. You might be single by choice, or because of your actions or character – but if you are actively looking for a relationship, it can feel out of reach or scary. Finding solace in your support groups as you get older isn’t so easy, either. Woodhead’s friendship group has become more fragmented in his forties. “Some of my friends have moved away from central London,” he says. “They have also gained a load of new friends from their NCT classes or pre-school. I don’t have as many friends as I used to.”

I think about some of my own friendships that have been diluted with the introduction of a child. What’s more, feelings of envy or inferiority can creep in next to friends who have started a family.

Being single clearly means different things, depending on your age. My own vague anxiety may be rooted in the idea that my current stable and carefree situation won’t last forever – so finding someone in the next few years feels significant. But we are back to that idea of things not being linear or predictable, relaxing into our solo status and even redefining what it means. It doesn’t have to represent the absence of something. “I do think [the state of being single] feels somehow temporary,” Denton says. “I do wonder – can we reimagine ways to live together? Being single can be super fulfilling. I’m still not sure why that can’t be a lifetime thing.”

Woodhead agrees. “There are some massive positives to being single,” he says. “I can go to the Philippines next month, my business partner can’t. The traditional marriage-and-kid thing is not dead, but you can happily live alternatively to that.”

I might not have anyone to argue about towels with right now, nor might I in the future. And perhaps that’s something to celebrate.

https://www.mrporter.com/en-gb/journal/grooming/best-wellness-destinations-spas-detox-facials-travel-24399470

4 MINUTE READ

Six Of The World’s Best Wellness Destinations

*Words by Mr Ahmed Zambarakji*

*2 August 2023*



Illustration by Mr Michal Bednarski

Every country the world over has a tradition that fuses nature, science and indigenous healing in a way that encapsulates its culture. Whether you’re submerged in the silica-rich geothermal springs of Iceland or beaten into submission in a Russian banya, an authentic and well-executed spa experience can provide a visceral – and sometimes thoroughly enjoyable – insight into a country’s DNA.

For example, the hammams of Morocco aren’t just about getting about slathered in mud; they’re a space for pre-prayer ablutions and socialising. Equally, the Mexican temazcal (from which the modern sauna came into being) is a sweat lodge used for ceremonial healing and spiritual connection.

Of course, not all spas offer mental and metaphysical rejuvenation. Hotel spas in particular have a tendency to sell massages by numbers, making them about as inspiring as the on-site business centre. That’s why we’ve scoured the globe to find the most unique and transformative wellness destinations in operation, and unpacked the experiences they have on offer.

Detox in the Alps

***What to know***

Alpine spas have a distinctly medical bent. So much so that Austrian establishments like Lanserhof and Mayrlife could be mistaken for galactic hospitals. Cutting-edge diagnostics sit alongside newer practices such as psychoneuroimmunology (the interplay of psychological stress and disease) and orthomolecular medicine (better known as nutritional supplementation), but it is the detox treatments that bring everyone to this majestic part of Europe.

***Where to go***

At Mayrlife (formerly VivaMayr), the founding principle is that a fully detoxed body is more adept at self-regeneration. Detoxing, of course, is politically correct wellness speak for controlled fasting. That doesn’t mean *no* food but it does mean you’ll endure bouts of hangriness before the benefits of a full gut rest kick in. These include better skin, more energy and, crucially, a bolstered immune system (in fact, both Mayrlife and Lanserhof both offer long-Covid programmes for those who have not found relief through mainstream medicine). Fortunately, the landscape is so achingly beautiful – and the celeb spotting so relentless – that your deprivation demons will be thoroughly pacified.

Breathe better in the Cotswolds

***What to know***

At only an hour from the capital by train, the chocolate box villages of the Cotswolds have become a refuge for burnt-out Londoners in recent years. While this hasn’t delighted locals, it has created demand for some exceptional spas and boutique hotels – and there are some real gems to be found among the soft rolling hills.

***Where to go***

Bamford, Calcot Manor and Barnsley House are all well established, but it is Thyme, a verdant and exquisitely manicured 150-acre manor, that elicits the most joyous of exhales.

Breathwork and botany take centre stage at the hotel’s Meadow Spa, a serene enclosure within the mini village that never feels crowded or overdone. Ask for the signature ritual in the Botanical Bothy, a private space sculpted from natural resin that’s dedicated to what Thyme calls “conscious diaphragmatic breath” (controlled belly breathing).

Therapists guide you into a meditative breathing pattern using aromatherapeutic blends from Thyme’s sister brand Bertioli before incorporating pressure point techniques, lymphatic brushing and a very light scalp massage. It’s not a treatment so much as a sensory journey but one that manages to release stress while tangibly boosting sleep, digestion and mood. Like all things at Thyme, the prescription is disarmingly simple but faultlessly executed. To help you integrate the benefits, the ritual ends with an outdoor bath on the secluded veranda.

Try panchakarma in the Himalayas

***What to know***

Panchakarma, literally translated as “five actions”, is the cornerstone of Ayurveda, the system of medicine that originated in the Indian subcontinent over 3,000 years ago. It is not for the faint of heart (or, indeed, gut). Common practices include drinking ghee and irrigating almost every orifice at all-too-regular intervals. It would be a gross oversimplification to think of panchakarma as a cleanse; the aim is to rebalance body, mind and consciousness through diet, herbs and specific treatments.

***Where to go***

Six Senses Vana or Ananda, a former palace in the Himalayan foothills, will provide sufficient cushioning for the experience. Panchakarma can be brutal at times – especially when approaching the finish line – so it makes sense to undergo the strict 21-day protocol in an environment that’s both luxurious and medically sound.

At Ananda, an Ayurvedic doctor will devise a bespoke programme that includes deeply nourishing therapies such as Abhyanga (a massage performed with sesame oil), and restorative yoga sessions that are a far cry from the calisthenics-inspired aberrations that are so popular in the US and Europe. The personalised diet and herbal supplements aren’t exactly appealing on paper, but the resident chef manages to magic the critical ingredients into a gourmet experience.

Take to the waters in Languedoc

***What to know***

There is something altogether easier about the French attitude to *bien être*. It is about good food and wine just as much as it is about cult treatments and products (head to The French Pharmacy in London for those). There is also long history of using natural springs for regeneration and relaxation, as well as the treatment of serious medical conditions.

***Where to go***

Southern France is dotted with boutique gems, from L’Occitane’s recently renovated Le Couvent des Minimes in Provence to Maison Ila in the Languedoc-Roussillon region. The latter is an 18th century house turned boutique retreat founded by Ms Denise Leicester, the visionary healer behind natural skincare brand Ila. For anyone who has experienced Ila’s bodywork therapies – arguably the best in the spa world – this is a chance to fully immerse yourself the brand’s gentle and unpretentious philosophy.

A typical day includes meditation, sound healing, yoga and soft, slow treatments designed to rebalance mind and body. Guests are encouraged to walk into the hills and take in undisturbed views of the Pyrenees or plunge into the River Hers (there is a hot tub and a pool on site if the mountain water is too much). With just six rooms, Maison Ila is, for all intents and purposes, a semi-private retreat where guests can indulge in three, five or seven-day programmes. Make the most out of your visit and book the entire house for you and a group.

Get a next-generation facial in Seoul

***What to know***

From glass skin to eleven-step regimes, South Korea is firmly established as the epicentre of advanced skincare. Its influence might be international, but nothing quite compares to the experience *in situ*. “Customer service is huge in Korea. The level of care you get is unparalleled,” says aesthetic doctor and South Korean skin expert [Dr Christine Hall](https://www.drwassimtaktouk.com/the-team), whose regular visits to Seoul have informed her approach to beauty. “You can’t fill up with petrol without someone greeting you at the pump and then gifting you a box of tissues as you leave. Facials are no different. You get a lot more bang for your buck,” she adds.

***Where to go***

The central fixture of the Seoul spa scene is Shangpree, where resident aestheticians train for three arduous years before they’re allowed on the spa floor. The brand’s bespoke facials use a combination of intense facial kneading (to boost circulation), plant stem cells and rubberised masks. Sometimes a mechanical air compression massager is wrapped around your legs while they work on your face.

If you want to go all out, head to the Chaum Life Centre, where anti-ageing takes on a whole new meaning. In-house diagnostics ranging from gene analysis and intestinal scans all the way to arteriosclerosis prediction sit, somewhat bizarrely, alongside beauty treatments. You can, of course, forego the medical probing and fast forward to the Evercell facial, which involves facial muscle stretching (FMS), lymphatic drainage and microneedling.

Undergo a spiritual transformation in Bali

***What to know***

Bali’s reputation for spiritual transformation – or, at the very least, your first yoga teacher training – is verging on cliché. Hemp-clad expats will insist, kombucha in hand, that the island is an energy vortex, and that Balinese sacred sites and healing rituals have unfathomable power. While all of this is true, there is, paradoxically, a great deal of sun-warmed hedonism in certain corners of the Hindu paradise. More reason to choose your retreat carefully.

***Where to go***

Ms Christina Ong’s Como Shambhala set the blueprint for wellness retreats when it opened in Ubud’s lush rainforest in 2005. And while countless competitors have cropped up in recent years, the resort’s reputation for industry-leading practitioners remains unchallenged. Asian-based therapies, yoga, gratitude ceremonies and breathwork are all heightened by the heartfelt sincerity with which everything is performed.

If you prefer to be by the water, there’s Amankila, where freestanding suites perch atop stilts and provide unperturbed views of the Lombok Straits. It is difficult to leave the spa at any Aman resort but rest assured that the resort’s Purifying Spiritual Journey is worth the effort. It includes an authentic water cleansing ritual (Melukat) at Jagasatru Waterfall and a ceremonial blessing at the 11th-century Silayukti Temple. All, we hasten to add, without having to battle through throngs of backpackers.

https://www.mrporter.com/en-gb/journal/fashion/how-to-be-more-ken-barbie-movie-style-24403606

3 MINUTE READ

The Zen Of Ken: What A Plastic Doll Can Teach Us About Life And Manhood

*Words by Mr Chris Elvidge*

*21 July 2023*



Mr Ryan Gosling in Barbie, 2023. Photograph courtesy Warner Bros. Pictures

Is there a more potent symbol of the tragically emasculated man than Barbie’s on-again, off-again boyfriend, Kenneth Sean Carson? Ever since emerging from his toybox in 1961, Ken, as he’s known to his coterie of mostly female friends, has been the subject of incessant ridicule, labelled as a beta male whose smooth, featureless crotch isn’t just his most recognisable feature, but a physical metaphor for his general lack of manhood. It’s not just Ken’s sex organs that are missing: his entire personality is neutered, a pale shadow of the testosterone-fuelled hypermasculinity represented by GI Joe or He-Man.

Who better, then, to act as an alternative role model for modern men?

With Barbie – and, to a lesser extent, Ken – dominating the zeitgeist thanks to this month’s hotly anticipated live-action *Barbie* movie, we thought that it was high time to give this much-maligned figure a reappraisal, and perhaps to see if we couldn’t learn a couple of life lessons along the way. After all, in an era when the topic of what it means to be a man has never been more hotly debated, and traditional views on masculinity are increasingly seen as a source of toxicity, should we not all be asking ourselves: what would Ken do?

Embrace male beauty

Sure, Ken’s sculpted torso might *look* like the result of thermoplastic poured into a mould, but it’s actually down to a rigid and uncompromising fitness regimen. Don’t believe us? Just look at the variety of personas he has adopted over the years: 1981’s Jogging Ken, 1983’s Great Shape Ken and 1989’s Workout Ken reveal him as no stranger to the gym.

And it’s not just plastic Ken who doesn’t skip leg day; it turns out that live-action Ken has been putting in the hours, too. The doll is depicted in the upcoming movie by Mr Ryan Gosling, a famously good-looking man, but an actor who was 41 years old at the time of filming. Despite this, the movie appears to have captured him in the shape of his life. The results, if reports are to be believed, of a gruelling five-day-a-week workout plan. That’s not to mention the peroxide, the fake tan, the body waxing and the teeth whitening that were required to complete the look.

Is Ken someone we should aspire to look like? Absolutely not: you only need to google “Human Ken Doll” to see what happens when we attempt to replicate, in flesh and bone, a level of perfection only possible in plastic. Nonetheless, we could all learn something from Ken’s 60-year dedication to fitness and personal grooming. Indeed, far from an expression of vanity, the pursuit of self-betterment can be considered a moral imperative. As Socrates wrote, “It is a shame for a man to grow old without seeing the beauty and strength of which his body is capable.”

Support the women in your life

“This is a man’s world,” sang Mr James Brown. It’s safe to assume that he wasn’t talking about the Barbie universe, a place where patriarchal hierarchies are upended and male dolls act as little more than accessories to their more popular female counterparts.

Conceived by his creators at Mattel as a romantic companion to Barbie, Ken has played a supporting role from the very start, defined not by his personal qualities, but by his relation to someone else. A more fragile ego might have resented this subordinate status, but not Ken, who has lived in Barbie’s orbit happily for more than six decades, content to fill his days at the beach, at the gym, or pursuing one of his many hobbies.

Barbie is a complicated female role model, to say the least. While she may have taught little girls that they can be anything they want, in doing so providing an early precursor to the Girl Power movement of the 1990s, she has also promoted unrealistic beauty standards with her impossibly exaggerated proportions and permanently en-pointe feet.

Ken isn’t perfect, either. His recent on-screen portrayals, in both *Barbie* and *Toy Story 3*, have exposed the flaws and fragilities that many men suffer from. Beneath it all, though, he is a sympathetic character, and a model for a new, progressive kind of masculinity. Supportive, uncompetitive, willing to subvert traditional gender roles, and also *really* into pink. Speaking of which…

Wear more pink

The celebrity style on show on the red – sorry, pink – carpet at the *Barbie* premiere in Los Angeles this month might prove to be the tipping point in the nascent Barbiecore trend, dragging it from the pages of fashion magazines and into mainstream consciousness. We’re talking in particular about the soft-pink [Gucci](https://www.mrporter.com/mens/designer/gucci) [suit](https://www.mrporter.com/mens/clothing/suits) and silk [shirt](https://www.mrporter.com/mens/clothing/casual-shirts) worn by Gosling, but special mention also goes to Messrs Michael Cera and Xolo Maridueña, who both offered their own interpretations on the trend.

Barbiecore, which takes the all-pink colour scheme of the Barbie universe and applies it to the real world, follows the “millennial pink” trend of 2016 in bringing wider acceptance to what has historically been considered an effeminate colour. But while millennial pink referred to a specific shade of dusty rose – it even had a Pantone code – Barbiecore offers a much broader spectrum of colour, ranging from fuschia and bubblegum-pink to the peachy tones of Gosling’s suit. (At a stretch, you could also include the lavender jacket worn by Mr Mark Ronson at the premiere.)

While ultimately about fun and frivolity, this look is also about confidence (Ken-fidence?). The “pink is for girls” argument might seem frivolous and outdated, but it is rooted in decades of social tradition, and there are plenty who still subscribe to it. There will be haters – but what meaningful trend ever came without an element of transgression?

Try new things

For a doll whose name translates to knowledge or understanding, Ken has an unfortunate reputation as a bit of an airhead. But is it deserved? Sure, he’s overly concerned with his appearance, and he does seem to spend most of his time on the beach. But look a little closer and you’ll find an open-minded character with a boundless appetite for travel and fashion – not to mention a portfolio career that would put the average Gen-Z job-hopper to shame.

Coming of age in the era of the single-company career, when it was expected of men to join a firm after graduation and remain there until receiving their gold carriage clock some four decades later, Ken chose to reject grey-suited corporate conformity in favour of a more footloose approach to employment. This has seen him turn his hand to a variety of professions over the years, including a short stint as a doctor in 1987. While Ken’s educational background is undocumented, this theoretically would have required him to spend most of the 1980s in medical school – a time when he was also briefly in a glam-rock band.

The glam-rock connection is an apt one: his talent for reinvention rivals that of legendary artistic chameleon Mr David Bowie. But has this lifetime of dabbling left Ken without a core identity? While his serial hobbyist behaviour could certainly class him as a dilettante, perhaps the best way of putting it is that he shows a frivolous interest in frivolous matters. As for the suggestion that he might be a commitment-phobe, he remains unflinchingly loyal to the things that really matter: his 60-year relationship with Barbie, and the beach.

https://www.mrporter.com/en-gb/journal/grooming/expert-guide-to-perfect-summer-haircare-routine-for-men-24355900

4 MINUTE READ

The Experts’ Guide To Looking After Your Hair This Summer

*Words by Mr Ashley Ogawa Clarke*

*20 June 2023*



Illustration by Jalcalara, Colagene, Creative Clinic

Summer is the season of expectation. When the vacation we’ve been yearning for, the beach body we may (or may not) have been working on, and the chance to relax in the sun finally all comes to fruition. Follicularly speaking, though, summer is arguably the cruellest season to deal with. Hot weather can spell trouble for even the most fastidiously groomed coif. From harmful UV rays to frizz-causing humidity, sweat and melting products, a good hair day can turn bad as soon as you’re out of the comfort of the AC. In short, your usual [haircare](https://www.mrporter.com/mens/grooming/haircare) routine likely won’t cut it when the mercury starts to rise. To help that summer glow extend to the very tip of your head, we spoke to some experts for some summer hair tips to follow.

Know your hair type

The first step in preparing a robust summer haircare routine is to understand that everybody’s hair will respond to the heat differently. “For some people, it will mean they perspire more, so their hair might get greasy,” says London-based hair stylist and groomer Ms Natalie Shafii. “While for other people, it will make their hair dry and brittle, especially if it is blond or bleached. And if you frequently go swimming, the chlorine or sea can dry the hair out, too.”

Depending on which type camp you fall into – and how much time by the pool or sea you plan to spend – will affect how you switch up your routine. Which brings us to…

Handle humidity accordingly

“Curly hair will often get bigger and puffier in humid weather, whereas straighter, finer hair might get limper and greasier,” Shafii says. If you have natural curls or waves that tend to get wilder in the heat, a curl cream or oil will help tame the frizz, while finer, or straighter hair will benefit from a texturising hair powder to absorb the scalp’s natural oils and keep everything looking on point.

A salt spray is an easy summer go-to if you struggle with greasier looking hair in the summer. “It will add a bit of texture and go with that beachy feel rather than trying to work against it,” Shafii says.

Protect your scalp at all costs

Thought sun protection was just for your face and body? Not quite. “Just like you would protect the rest of your skin from the sun, it’s important to shield your scalp as well, especially if you have thinning hair or a visible scalp,” says Mr Jeffrey Laub, co-founder of NYC men’s haircare brand Blind Barber. For this, he recommends applying a sunscreen specifically designed for the scalp, which will be formulated to stop hair getting weighed down.

Or you could get creative with your sun cream and use it as a styling product. “It won’t have as much hold obviously,” Shafii says. “But if you have shorter hair, it can be a great way to add some texture and is great for protecting the skin.”

The experts’ tip if you can't get your hands on an SPF you like? Have a hat handy. As well as being a failsafe for protecting your scalp from harmful sun rays, it’s just the thing for a bad hair day.

Heat-proof your routine

Even if you’re usually good at handling the heat, your hair products probably aren’t as hardy. “Heat can break down most styling products, since the majority are water based,” Laub says. “Instead of the heavier hold products, opt for lighter alternatives, such as a lightweight styling creams, sea-salt sprays, or even a clay that has kaolin, which works to help soak up any excess oil. All of these lighter-touch styling products will help maintain your look while not weighing the hair down, nor adding any additional shine.”

Wash with balance

“Heat leads to more sweat, excess oil and accumulated debris, which can clog the hair follicles,” Laub says. This build up can lead to scalp issues, such as inflammation and dandruff, which likely isn’t part of your plans this summer. To combat that happening, switching up your shampoo and conditioner to something more summer-appropriate is key.

“If you have dry, bleached or coloured hair, or you’re going swimming a lot or are in the sea, try using products that are more moisturising,” says Shafii. Or, if your hair doesn’t need any help staying oily, opt for a gentler, lightweight shampoo, or start using dry shampoo to absorb excess oiliness.

Either way, regular washing is advisable. “Cleanse your scalp regularly with a to remove impurities and keep the follicles clear, but be sure not to over wash the hair, which will strip away natural oils,” Laub says.

In summer, washing hair every two to three days should be enough for most of us. “It’s all about balance.”

https://www.mrporter.com/en-gb/journal/watches/simple-versus-complicated-watch-complications-expert-debate-24329888

4 MINUTE READ

# The Debate: Are Simple Watches Better Than Complicated Ones?

*Words by Mr Chris Hall and Mr James Buttery*

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At times, it can seem like watchmakers are on a quest to cram as much microscopic machinery into a 40mm case as possible. Calendars, [chronographs](https://www.mrporter.com/mens/luxury-watches/chronograph-watches), repeaters and tourbillons – the capacity of high-end horology to dazzle with detail never ends. But is it best? Is there actually something to be said for the simpler designs? Where hour, minutes and seconds are left alone to do what they do best. Two [watch](https://www.mrporter.com/mens/luxury-watches) experts go head-to-head to make their arguments.

### IN PRAISE OF SIMPLE WATCHES

## Mr Chris Hall, Senior Watch Editor, MR PORTER

Too often, we fall easily into the fallacy that more – even more of a good thing – equals better. But any car nut will agree that you can have more fun in a manual, petrol-powered Lotus Elise than a two-tonne hybrid hypercar. The Lotus founder Mr Colin Chapman lived by the motto “simplify and add lightness”. Like all good engineers, he knew that less is more.

Many a watch brand will boast of the number of individual parts contained within its latest grand complication, sometimes thousands of them. But anyone with a degree of mechanical, or mathematical, sympathy knows that the most beautiful form is the one with the fewest components, the one that achieves its goal with the minimum amount of effort.

More complications on your watch inevitably means more things that can go wrong. Not that I am calling into question the build quality of Switzerland’s finest, but by and large it is the three-hand automatics that you would comfortably take to the beach, rather than the minute repeaters and split-second chronographs.

*“The most beautiful form is the one with the fewest components, the one that achieves its goal with the minimum amount of effort”*

Ms Coco Chanel knew the value of simplicity, too, with her oft-quoted advice to simplify your get-up before you go out. Great chefs may have mastered arcane culinary arts to deliver oyster gel, samphire ice cream and essence of fennel, but few would argue with the sheer pleasure of a perfect fish and chips. Not by accident did the almost featureless form of an iPhone obliterate the fussy, fiddly Blackberries and Nokias of the 2000s. You get the idea. So it is with watches. Simplicity reveals good design. A [Cartier Tank](https://www.mrporter.com/mens/designer/cartier?facet=ads_f17016_ntk_cs%253A%2522Tank%2522), even after more than a century, still knows no equal as a dress watch. There is a reason the earliest pilots’ watches and dive watches have become iconic over time: they are a true example of form following function. Having encapsulated the platonic ideal of their horological niche, all that was left for everyone else to do was imitate and complicate.

Lest you think I am casting aside the last 70 years of watchmaking in one sentence, I will caveat my argument slightly: there is such a thing as elegant complexity. Witness the aesthetic created by [Ressence](https://www.mrporter.com/mens/designer/ressence" \t "_self), or the approach taken by the likes of Ochs und Junior and [H. Moser & Cie.](https://www.mrporter.com/mens/designer/h-moser) to perpetual calendars and tourbillons. Do you need to know today’s date, and that alone, or do you need to be shown every possible date in the year with a tiny arrow pointing to the information you want? The problem is not so much with mechanically sophisticated watches, but a design language that flaunts complexity for its own sake. Time to get back to basics.

### THE ARGUMENT FOR COMPLICATED WATCHES

## Mr James Buttery, watch writer

If you were once that kid who took things apart to see how they worked (I make no claims about successfully putting anything back together), then you will almost certainly derive a great deal of pleasure from the ingenuity behind even the most basic watch movement and the mechanical methods used to store and release energy in a uniform, constant manner. It’s genius, plain and simple and the only thing better is, well, more.

I’d love to say functionality comes into it, but when was the last time anyone needed to hear the time represented as a series of chimes or that a chronograph was used to time anything important? (The answer is 53 years ago during the Apollo 13 mission.) I’ve come to realise that my own cycling through the start/stop/reset of a chronograph has more in common with worry beads or fidget toys than it does recording elapsed time. Today, the most practical complication is probably the humble date display and even that somehow manages to drift off course five times a year.

While your Apple Watch can trounce a mechanical watch in terms of practical functionality, the physical mechanics of watchmaking are amazing both in concept and as a visual spectacle in a way that Cupertino’s finest solid-state electronics never will be. The addition of more advanced complications only serves to make for a more impressive watch.

*“The addition of more advanced complications only serves to make for a more impressive watch”*

Take the gateway complication, the chronograph, for instance. It features an entirely separate mechanism that piggybacks off of the timekeeping mechanism, using clutches, levers and wheels to mesh together when engaged by a column wheel. The whole process demands to be seen through a sapphire display case back. Step up to a perpetual calendar, which, while not as interactive, introduces another level of complexity through star wheels, leap-year cams and something majestically titled the “central grand lever” that coordinates the whole system.

Start bringing these complications together to form a grand complication and movements become labyrinthine three-dimensional marvels, miniature horological citadels formed of hundreds and hundreds of tiny components, which, at this level, will be decorated to the highest standards – a dizzying mélange of black-polished and blued screws, hand-polished bevelled edges, Geneva stripes and perlage. From here, simple watchmaking looks, visually at least, too easy. At the highest, most complicated levels of watchmaking, each of the hundreds of hours lavished on a watch during its creation is all too evident.