

## How to choose a hat: Q&A with Mark Mejia of Baron Hats

The hat store owner who's outfitted Bruce Willis and Jessica Alba talks about trends in hat styles and smart summer looks.

By Julie Neigher, Special to the Los Angeles Times

July 4, 2010

Hats are a la mode this season, whether on the beach or the catwalk.

On the beach, savvy sun worshippers know that a hat will protect the scalp from burning and peeling while shading the face, neck and ears. On the catwalk, Dior's haute couture collection for spring-summer 2010 featured tilted-top hats with dainty veils attached. For this same season, the always-cheeky Isaac Mizrahi designed his own spin on the boater with a casual straw tone for day, and satin black and silver for evening.

For some insight into how to choose a hat, we turned to Mark Mejia, owner of Burbank's Baron Hats, <http://www.baronhats.com>. He's created bespoke beauties for Bruce Willis (he loves his straw Panamas) and for Kate Hudson and Jessica Alba, most recently for the flick "The Killer Inside Me." For those who dream of attending the Kentucky Derby or Royal Ascot channeling Eliza Doolittle, Mejia even has a My Fair Lady collection, inspired by the film. Having made more than 2,800 hats for movies and television and countless pieces for the public, he's an acknowledged expert in the millinery field.



### What's the trend for this year's summer hats?

Something lightweight. When we build summer hats, we use a lot of different straw, Panama and Paglina. Though that's not always the case. There's not a true rule of thumb. Southern California is interesting, because we have a unique climate. We sell, for example, felt hats during the summer months too.

### What would you recommend for the beach or the pool?

I'd show a customer what we'd call a blank. It's a floppy hat made of hand-woven Panama straw. It's oversized and provides great coverage. They can choose a grosgrain band and take it with them right away. We can always add embellishments to suit the customer too.

### With so many styles of hats, how does one choose the right look?

It's a matter of getting a few and trying them on. There are so many factors — the brim width, the crown height and hue. I have to look at the color of their eyes, the shape of their face and their features. All of these things matter when choosing the right hat. Skin tone and height even play a factor.

If you have a narrow face, you don't want a telescopic crown. It'll poorly elongate your features and act as a comical extension of your face. A fedora is an excellent solution as the brim gives a gentle rounding to gaunt features.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, if you have a round face, you don't want to buy anything squatty. A stinky brim with a flattop is recommended. If the shop truly knows their hats, request a pork-pie crown and they'll give you exactly what you're looking for.

### **Can a woman wear a man's hat?**

Absolutely! I think women look better than men in hats. A fedora on a woman is unbelievable, done correctly. They are very sexy.

### **Hats have made quite a comeback. When did you notice the trend begin to boom?**

About five or six years ago. Hats have been coming back more than ever in the past decade. It's fashionable and accessible. Fifteen years ago, you were making too much of a statement [if you wore a hat]. People felt inhibited.

### **So, can anyone wear a hat?**

Definitely. It's an individual process. Your face is involved, so it's particular to you. Try enough of them on and have someone help you get the right fit. You'll walk away happy.

[image@latimes.com](mailto:image@latimes.com)