



The forty-seventh issue of a sortof letter substitute, kinda thing, maybe weekly, maybe not, from:

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Available only via the net at the moment. See the colophon for the usual disclaimer. Supporting Toronto in '03 for the 2003 WorldCon. This issue dated, already, 26/08/99 and dedicated to James White.

Dedicated Follower of Fashion

I had one of those epiphany moments the other day. It was quite strange, as epiphany's go, quite big. Not one of the ones I normally have, like "So that is how Lara Croft does a back flip in mid air," or, "that is what the 'Post Event' function in PowerBuilder 6.5 does." No this was one of those life-changing moments. For such an important event though it was not completely earth shattering, unlike previous occasions: two months from now I'm not going to end up in Canada and two weeks from now I'm not, although I might have, ended up back in Belfast. No, it is a lot subtler than that. The epiphany that I had was that I realised why I like wearing the clothes that I wear.

Well I did warn you that it wouldn't be life shattering.

For those of you who have only seen me at conventions recently wearing a suit, let me explain. For years, all of them in fact, I've been known to consistently wear three items of clothing come hail, rain, wind or snow. These are Nike trainers, Levi 501 Jeans and a tee shirt. The more astute of you will also have noticed that I'm a label freak, but more of that later.

Now so far that is fairly standard most people these days tend to wear these items of clothing; it has been like this since the sixties at least. That is why I never gave it any particular thought, and had always assumed the following:

1) The Nike trainers came form my years as an athlete when they were (and still are) the best running shoes around. (I know all about the South East Asian sweatshops, the messages from the workers in the soles and the horrendous environmental record of Nike. I also know they are just great shoes.)

I was in Nike's Irish HQ in Limerick in the spring of 1984 with a colleague of mine who was going to the LA Olympics and was being sponsored by Nike. There I read an

amazing letter from the Irish MD of Adidas (which is pronounced Ad dee das, and not ad deed des as the Americans amongst you will no doubt insist. The name comes from the founder of the company, the guy who invented the first running spikes and who was German: Adi Dassler. Okay? Well I'm glad I got that off my chest.) Anyway, this MD had sent his counterpart in Nike a pair of Nike trainers, which had been sent to the Adidas guy by mistake. The letter contained all sorts of really nasty crap about Nike's shoes and the personnel in Ireland and I thought, even then, that this was way out of hand. So did the Nike guy. He had it framed and put on the wall in reception for all and sundry to see.

2) The jeans thing came, I thought, from when the Irish Republic's monetary union with the UK changed, and again this must have been in the early 1980s. We have a 'shack' in the Irish Republic that belongs to the extended family and where we have, without fail spent most of the summer months of my family life. When the Irish punt went its own way all of the goods in the Republic became a helluva lot cheaper. So my mother could afford to buy me decent clothes for once, rather than get my brother's hand-me-downs. The first pair of jeans that I chose for myself, without any interference from any one else was a pair of Levi's which, even when I was just thirteen or fourteen I knew were a better pair of jeans. I'm smug enough to admit this is way before they even discovered what a marketing campaign was. I've never bought any other make of jeans since.

3) The Tee shirt thing I could never get a handle on. I always thought it was a combination of having to have so many. 49 were counted in my first year at University compared to the grand total of 0 proper shirts. My first proper shirt (we didn't have a school uniform) was a birthday present on my 19th birthday I still have it, and to everyone's continued horror, it still fits me, just. There was a need for this many because I was training two and three times a day and wearing them just became a habit.

All of this seems imminently sensible and a reasonable set of solutions to the question. Then a couple of weeks ago I spent my usual weekend in, watching crap TV and drinking too much cheap beer, when I noticed that there was a Starsky & Hutch night on Channel 4. A wry grin, a couple of bottles and I settled in for the night. Imagine my astonishment when I realised that my jeans and trainers fetish actually came from watching Starsky run up and down stairwells and alleys, jump over cars and fences and grab the bad guys whilst wearing a pair of jeans, trainers and a sloppy Joe? It clicked. THIS was wear my habit came from, a 20 year old idea of what was 'cool' was still hanging onto my sub conscious all these years later. Jesus.

And the worst thing? Starsky was wearing Adidas SL72s, of which I not only owned a pair once but also actually liked. The shame.

More on James White (who died on Monday 23 August 1999) and my return to Ireland in later issues. The reason for TommyWorld coming back to your screens? I want to hit issue 50 before the end of the year

Hopefully more soon.

This is being distributed to a whole bunch of friends on the net, if you received this and would NOT like to be on the mailing list please accept my apologies for this intrusion and let me know so that you will not be bothered by further ramblings. If you know someone who would like to be on the mailing drop me a line.