The Sweatshirt Encyclopedia Article

The Sweatshirt

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The humble gray cotton sweatshirt with fleece lining was one of the last garments to come out of the gym locker into high-style fashion. The wonderfully practical sports coverup was determinedly unglamorous: it was affiliated with no one sport in particular; its heavy cotton tended to lose shape over time and, unlike jeans, move away from sexual outline to a gray blob. Technology, which around the early 1980s introduced just enough synthetic stretch (generally less than 5 percent) to maintain shape, collar, and cuffs without losing the integrity and feel of cotton, catapulted the sweatshirt out of the bottom of the locker. In 1981, Norma Kamali made a woman's jumpsuit ensemble for day or evening in gray sweatshirt material; by 1986, Emporio Armani styling showed hooded sweatshirts with sports jackets; in 1987, Quincy Jones appeared in an American Express advertisement in a short-sleeved sweatshirt. Perhaps a more influential popularizer of sweatshirts as fashionable garb was actress Jennifer Beals, who wore cut up sweatshirts in the 1983 movie *Flashdance*. Since the 1980s, sweatshirt gray has become a popular color for diverse clothing.

Further Reading:

Martin, Richard, and Harold Koda. *Jocks and Nerds: Men's Style in the Twentieth Century.* New York, Rizzoli, 1989.