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ASK URBAN

HAVE A PROBLEM WITH THE WAY YOU LOOK? DON'T SWEAT IT. E-mail your queries to URBAN at urban@sph.com.sg

Q I'm rather conservative when it comes to clothes and usually go for black and white. What colour can I use to brighten up my look?

A Despite pared-down looks and neutral colours like camel sweeping the runways for fall/winter 2010, designers know well the allure of a lady in red.

Bottega Veneta, Valentino and Zac Posen are some labels that splashed the scarlet tone on top-to-toe looks this season.

Subtle hints of the hue are enough to jazz up your basic black and white ensembles. The best part is, red is one colour that never goes out of style.

When wearing red accessories, go for at most three items in a similar shade. A pair of red heels, a red handbag and red crystal earrings, for instance, will do the trick.

For touches of scarlet, try the tribal-inspired earrings by [illegible] clutch bag from Lida Rocks that is easier on the pocket for $500.

If all you want is a hint of colour, a chilli red belt by Italian brand Eloth ($33, from Tangs) is a good option.

– IAN LEE

Q Is it necessary to apply sunblock on top of my BB (blemish balm) cream, which has an SPF of 30?

A No, it is not.

BB creams are multi-tasking creams which originated from South Korea and act as a moisturiser, make-up base, foundation and sunscreen.

The SPF (sun protection factor) from different products used at the same time will not add up to give you better protection, says Dr Low Chai Ling, the medical adviser for aesthetics clinic and plastic surgery chain, The Sloane Clinic.

What you will get is the benefit of the highest SPF.

If you like the convenience of a BB cream, pick one that has a rating of at least SPF 15, the minimum recommended by doctors, as it will block out about 94 per cent of harmful UVB rays. An SPF of 30 blocks out about 97 per cent.

The SPF number determines how long you can stay in the sun before getting a sunburn. For example, an SPF of 15 means you can stay outdoors 15 times longer than you can without sunscreen.

There is no sunscreen that offers 100 per cent protection, says Dr Jean Ho, consultant dermatologist at Jean Ho Skin and Laser Clinic at Mt Elizabeth Medical Centre.

Sunscreens get increasingly denser and harder to apply as the SPF reading goes up, and any SPF reading beyond 50 will not give you much added protection, she adds.

Whether you prefer sunscreen or BB cream, you should get a product that offers broad-spectrum protection against skin-ageing UVA rays as well.

You can try The Sloane Clinic's SPF 25 BB cream ($60) or Vichy's Aera Mineral BB cream with SPF 20 ($49, from Watsons).

If you plan to spend a long time outdoors, you may want to use a sunscreen of up to SPF 50 as most BB creams offer SPF from 12 to 30 only.

I like Shiseido's Very High Sun Protection Lotion SPF 50 ($63, left) PA +++, a waterproof formulation which you can apply on both your face and body.

– KAREN TEE

STYLEWATCH

TANG WEI

Chinese actress Tang Wei may be best known for her daring role in the 2007 espionage thriller Lust, Caution, but she appeared nothing short of pure and ethereal at the recent 2010 Busan Film Festival in Seoul. Instead of the sheer runway design, the 31-year-old opted for an opaque version of an ivory gown by Italian designer Alberta Ferretti.

She was wise to pair the statement frock, which comes with crystal embellishments, with just an understated metal wrist cuff.

– IAN LEE

GOOD-LOOKING

IMRAN JALAL

Sharon Huang, 20
student

WHAT ARE YOU WEARING?
[illegible] from Hong Kong for $30 [illegible] my Topshop [illegible] The heels are from online [illegible].net and cost $50. My Prada [illegible] from my dad. I bought the [illegible] a shop called My Room in Far East Plaza for about $60.

[illegible] YOUR SENSE OF STYLE.
[illegible]nto menswear-inspired outfits.

[illegible] YOU'RE GOOD-LOOKING?
[illegible]here are plenty of prettier girls. I'd rate myself a six out of 10.

Redzuan Abu Bakar, 33
creative director of a design firm

WHAT ARE YOU WEARING?
My shirt is from Hong Kong label Izzue and cost about $100. The Uniqlo jean leggings cost $60 and my Tod's loafers cost $500. I don't remember the prices of my Zara belt, Porter International bag and Diesel watch. I'm wearing glasses from Prada which cost $700.

DESCRIBE YOUR SENSE OF STYLE.
Comfortable. I leave home wearing only clothes that make me look good and feel confident.

DO YOU THINK YOU'RE GOOD-LOOKING?
My confidence plays a big part in how I perceive my looks. I'd rate myself a seven out of 10.

WIN!

[illegible] URBAN / 11

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