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The Case for Men in Hats, by Way of *The Adjustment Bureau*

March 4, 2011 at 6:35PM by [Julian Sancton](#)



It's been a tumultuous couple of weeks for the hat community, what with *The Adjustment Bureau's* John Slattery — maybe the most prominent on-screen American hat-wearer since Gary Cooper — calling for a moratorium on all the men's headwear just days before the (extremely) hat-centric film's release. Ordinarily, Esquire would be inclined to second the motion. But the movie's Polish-born costume designer, Kasia Walicka-Maimone, makes a pretty stirring defense.

ESQUIRE: Of all the preposterous things in the movie — namely the all-powerful secret agency that controls man's fate — the one thing I have trouble suspending my disbelief about is the widespread wearing of hats. I thought *J.F.K.* — or at least *Mad Men* — killed the hat for good, no?

KASIA WALICKA-MAIMONE: So what did you think? Did you buy into the movie? Did you buy into the hat?

ESQ: I mean, they look great, but somebody who wears a hat is immediately suspicious to me. Like they have something to hide. How did you get around that problem?

KWM: It was definitely tricky. We all have exactly the same reaction as you. My idea was, first of all, to go out and look around and see what was happening. And I think there is a resurgence of hats on the street. But it was a huge challenge to find the actual hats. We spent hours finding them, and trying to find the right proportions and figuring out whether it would work. On the other hand, it's a movie. We're taking reality to another level. So I feel that gives us the room to shift it a little bit.

ESQUIRE: Right. So in this alternate reality, a man who's wearing a hat doesn't look like he's trying way too hard.

KWM: Right. Really. Yes. That was the intention.

ESQUIRE: Do you think a politician wearing a hat could be elected?

KWM: Well, it would definitely be stretching reality. I do think that Matt Damon, in the end, was fantastic in that hat, and because he was able to embody the hat — was able to own it — I believed him.



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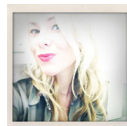


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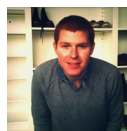


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OWN RE I BELIEVED HIM.

ESQUIRE: *What made you choose that hat for him?*

KWM: It was the best fit, and it had to be something that resonated enough. The hat [made by Biltmore of Canada] was the closest to what a lot young men are wearing currently. Of course, there's a fine line between the hipsters wearing the straw hats — which is quite a different short-brimmed version, and it's worn completely differently — but I feel like as long as it resonates, there is a chance of survival with it.

ESQUIRE: *And then there are those shady, god-like, impeccably tailored characters in the film who draw their supernatural power, somehow, from their hats. Do you think hats have an empowering effect in real life?*



KWM: Absolutely. I think that they're like another level of power in how we project images of ourselves. The hat is like the final statement — a very, very big statement.

ESQUIRE: *So do you think Esquire will be running a fashion story on hats anytime soon?*

KWM: You tell me. [Laughs.]

ESQUIRE: *Unclear. But in case we do, do*

you think a man should jauntily cock his hat to the side?

KWM: Well, it completely depends on your face. I mean, some people can pull it off if they do it gently and delicately. With some people, it just ends up looking like too much — too big of a gesture. I think it needs to be subtle and elegant. There's a sea of options out there, but it's so much about the fit and the brim and the height and size of the crown and how it all fits. Some men wear hats beautifully, and I think that it adds a level of elegance and mystery and intrigue. And, hopefully, if it's done right, it looks very contemporary. I would love to see lots more hats on the street. I think it would be fabulous, actually.

EARLIER: [Mad Men and the Modern Jerk Potential of Hats >>](#)

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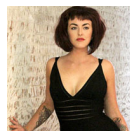
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