

BERGDORF GOODMAN

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It all about?

What's

When Derek Blasberg suddenly became a boy named It, he began to wonder what It meant, why It mattered and whether there are differences (besides the obvious ones) between It Boys and It Girls.

I'm not sure how it happened (perhaps because I was wearing a pound of black eye shadow, a silk jersey head wrap and a gold-embroidered emerald green caftan), but last fall I was asked to walk a press line at a Halloween event. I'd been asked to do this before, typically when I was with more fabulous friends, but I always declined. I have a bad habit of displaying multiple chins when photographed, but on this occasion I relented, stood for a few seconds in front of a logo—flashbulbs blazing—then timidly spelled my name for the photographers.

That's when I overheard one of them name my profession: "It Boy."

It Boy? I demur. I have a real job, *thankyouverymuch*. But before I could protest—"No, I'm a writer"—I was hustled away to make way for a much worthier red-carpet specimen (one of the Olsens, I believe: "billionaire"). And sure enough, a few months later my picture surfaced with the It Boy caption. Yes, I was secretly pleased to see myself in print, but I was ambivalent about the label.

It Girl was exhausted long ago, and so many contemporary It Girls are exhausting. So, I wondered, is it flattering to be the male equivalent? And what exactly had I done to deserve this label? Was I merely an It Girl with different plumbing? And if so, where were my free clothes? When *Vogue* anoints the likes

of Genevieve Jones and Jessica Joffe "Girl of the Moment," their seats at fashion shows bump up a row and designers start sending them garment bags full of loot. My mailbox is empty; my closet begs for cashmere.

"It Boy: A young man famed for his looks" is a very flattering definition I found online, but it continues, "the reign of an It Boy usually lasts around a year, when they will either become a full-fledged celebrity or their popularity will fade." Thus, if the It Boy species exists, I have till Halloween to bump my status or else I'm over.

Being a society It Boy is hardly as easy as being an It Girl, who, I'm told, needs only be "skinny, photogenic and stylish." The expert, my sources agree, is Fabian Basabe, the son of a wealthy Ecuadorian businessman, who parlayed a sensational tabloid cover into red-carpet status and a reality television show. "I wouldn't call myself an It Boy," Basabe says with a wildly sarcastic grin. "But Oprah does." He is referring to the time the TV host asked him to help a humble midwestern lady make it in New York.

While I am uneasy with the term, Basabe revels in it, albeit with tongue in cheek: "The invites, press and presents are a given—but the highlight is that you can have cocktails in the middle of the afternoon with friends every day and no one gives you funny looks. Hey, you're an It Boy, what else are you supposed to do?"

But therein lies my problem. Basabe seems unperturbed by the label; he's cashing in on his handsome smirk, snappy responses and luxurious lifestyle and is pleased with his reputation. I, on the other hand, despite ignoring his rules ("Take taxis instead of a car service, but never take the subway. Don't use hair gel, only use grooming cream, and if you don't know what I'm talking about, stay home") was awarded the title because I go out and dance a little too much. Frankly, my ambitions run toward a more sophisticated profession, one in which a reputation as an It Boy can send you straight to the Out house.

"I don't understand it. I think it's impossible for a man to be one," says Eric Villency, the grandson of furniture maven Maurice Villency and now his company's president. "It's like, I work, I'm not a playboy." Villency, who, for the

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record, is a handsome frequent face on the social circuit, says he was pinned with the label because of his personal style and admits it's one he's not comfortable with. "I hope I'm never known for dancing on tables," he says, adding that besides, "It" is totally different for boys. "When they go out, women get dressed and can express themselves," Villency explains. "But a guy wears a tux. He's basically an accessory."

Still, both Basabe and Villency agree that being called an It Boy is "flattering." Hey, I've been called worse—and as Basabe points out, it could also mean something a bit more mundane. "It's a pretty happy existence," he winks. "And it sure beats being an I.T.-boy. I'd hate to fix computers all day." BG