

How The NBA Tunnel Became its Own Fashion Runway

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The tunnel walk has become a fundamental part of any NBA players game day ritual, also giving an opportunity for the athletes to display their luxe lifestyles. With cameras waiting on arrival, the minute long walk from the parking lot to the court has turned into a highly anticipated spectacle. The daring outfits modelled in the tunnel illustrate the competitive drive that's entrenched into the attitude of players beyond the court and exhibits the meteoric rise of high fashion in sports.

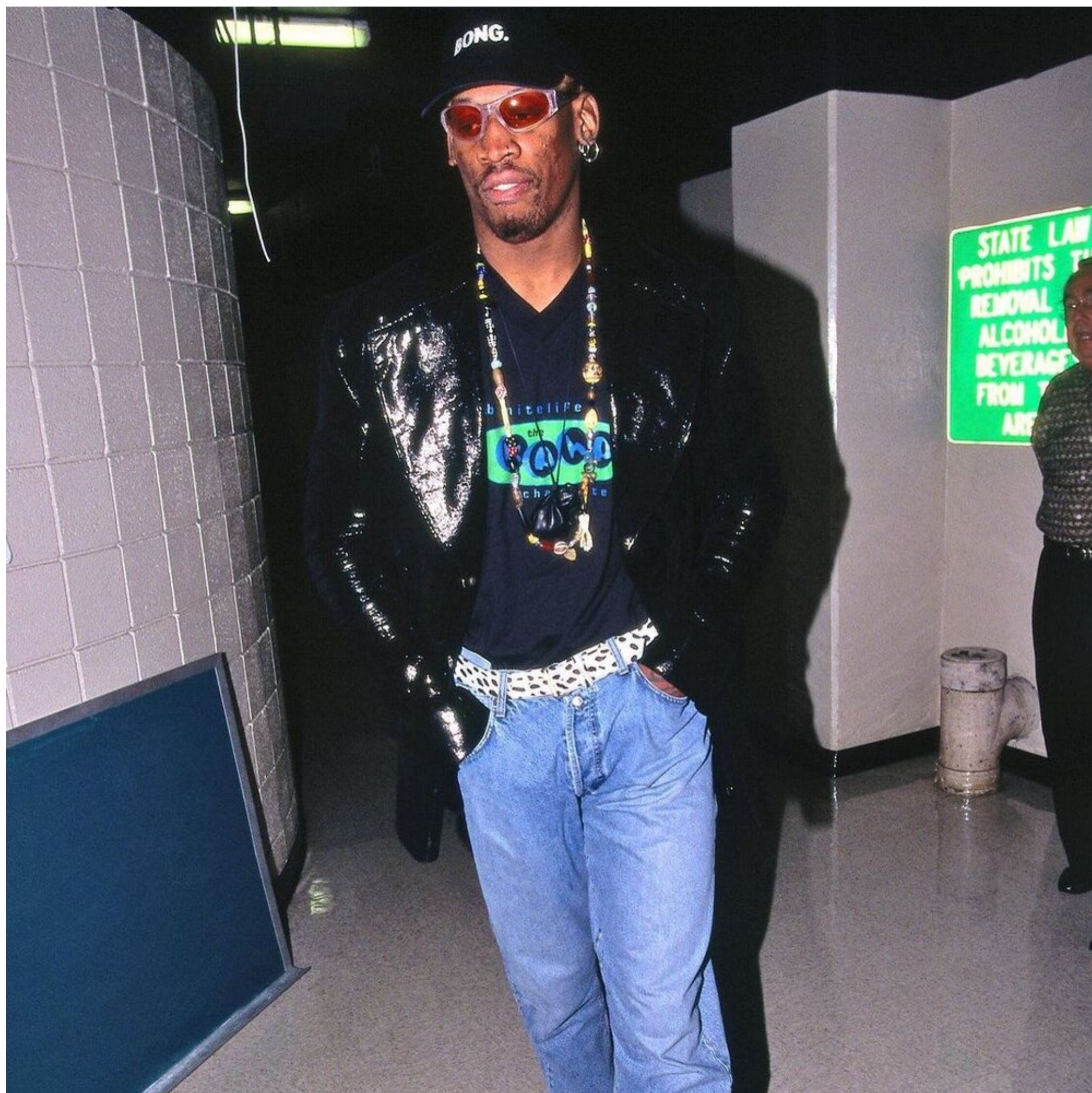
While players like Allen Iverson are recognised for bringing the style of 2000's hip-hop to the league, a business casual dress code was enacted in 2005. In an attempt to repair and 'professionalise' the league following the Malice at the Palace brawl, adornments that were direct influences from hip-hop culture, namely chains and headgear were banned. Trailblazers like LBJ and Melo used the new dress code as an opportunity to propel high fashion into off-court culture and the league quickly turned into a fashion powerhouse. From custom Louis Vuitton Keepall duffles, to exclusive sneakers, players began bringing their personal flair to the pregame.



"There's always some kind of entrance that a warrior makes before he goes into battle. And it's the same thing with the guys today"

With the advent of Instagram accounts like @leaguefits dedicated to archiving game day fits - tunnel walks have become as highly viewed as the games themselves. MVP's like Harden and Westbrook are known for making headlines each season with their outlandish and inventive style. However, a notable tunnel moment in recent years was the Cavaliers team arriving in custom Thom Browne suits during the 2018 Playoffs, giving immense media exposure to the designer. Significant to emerging fashion labels, tunnel walks are equally important to fans looking to either critique or be inspired by their favourite star.

The phenomenon that an NBA star's self-expression could be commodified turned the tunnel into a business. It's undeniable that NBA athletes have ascended to style icons with many attending major fashion shows and securing brand partnerships.



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