



THE FELT ISSUE

At Optimo we are focused on giving you a hat that looks great right out of the box. A hat that ages well, stands up to the elements and patinas over time. In this issue of *The Hatter's Bench* we want to focus on what makes a great Felt Hat.



THE LIFE OF A HAT

Everyday We Witness the Value of a Well-Made Hat

When Optimo felt hats return to our shop to be cleaned or blocked, we have the opportunity to study them after years of use. We see the effects of everything from regional climates to everyday wear. Hats that have been rolled up, sat on, worn daily in dry desert air and even bashed about on Safari. We get direct feedback from people who have really lived in their hats.

We also examine the aging of other hat brands. It is amazing to renovate a hat from the 1930s that has been worn for decades and to see it emerge restored to its original beauty. That's why we're making our hats like the great companies did 50 years ago.

IN THIS ISSUE

PAGE I:

The Life of a Hat
What to Look for in Great Felt

PAGE II:

The Optimo Difference
Finishes of Optimo Felts

PAGE III:

Colors
Optimo Special Blends

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A GREAT FELT



Density regardless of weight

A great felt should be very dense regardless of weight. It should be even in every respect, with thickness equalized throughout. Snapping the brim of the hat or creasing the crown should not create any breaks or thin spots in the hat. The hat should be smooth and mellow.

Rich color, no spotting

Color should be rich and consistent. The felt should never show spotting, mottling, or "spidering." Spidering is a web-like pattern from the shellac that is improperly placed into the hat to stiffen it.

Supple, not floppy

The felt should feel good to the touch, have a nice hand, and be easy to manipulate. If this is the case, it will crease perfectly without the use of steam.

THE OPTIMO DIFFERENCE

After years of dedicated research, we have refined our production to ensure the best hat you will ever own.

PRODUCTION

- **Accuracy of sizing.** We offer precision cutting with three sizes between each size, plus three ovals in that size (long, round, and XX). A hat could be correct in diameter for you, but it won't be perfect unless the oval is shaped correctly. We will never overstretch or use a hat body that's too big or too small.
- **Most sophisticated pouncing (sanding) of our felts.** The resulting hats are perfectly shaved, providing a total uniformity of finish.
- **Decatising of our hats.** This secondary blocking improves the hand of the hat and strengthens the material.
- **Hand sewn linings.** Our trimmers are exceptional. No glue is used, ensuring a hat that is as good on the inside as on the outside.
- **Fine imported ribbons** are folded and sewn by hand. Silk thread is used to stitch our bindings.
- **Roan (sheepskin) sweatbands.** We put the sweatband through an extra flanging process. These small machines roll the edge of the sweatband, adding cushion for comfort.



RAW MATERIALS OF EXCELLENCE



We use all wild furs in our hats, which are far and away the best for felting. Our felt is made exclusively for Optimo and every year we come up with new colors for our collections. We constantly work with our mills to create the best hat bodies available today. The principles of how we treat our felt remain the same throughout this complicated process. We don't stress our materials, but respect them as they move towards one final desired shape.



Finishes of Optimo Felts



At Optimo, we offer various felt finishes to accommodate our customers wardrobe and climate needs.



Our Smooth finishes in both Classic and Lightweight can be adapted to any local climate. Our Flecked finished hats perfectly compliment a sweater or tweed jacket during the fall/winter months.



Optimo Melusines can add an air of sophistication to any winter ensemble. However, there are no unbendable rules on what kind of hat finish to choose. Ultimately it's what feels and looks right for you.

COLORS

We don't pay much attention to fashion, but we do come up with new colors for each season.

Our hats are entirely colorfast and residue-free. You can wear them with confidence next to white clothing, or in the rain. Many companies use powders as part of their manufacturing process, which permits them to cover up unevenness in modeling and in the coloration of the hat. Using powders means they continue to put the byproduct of the hat into the hat. We keep the hat clean and pull everything out to maintain its purity, beauty and richness of color. Working this way is the most difficult because you see every imperfection, so the hat must be flawless.

During the dying process of the felts, we never force a color, choosing the fur mixtures that will react best to being dyed the color we desire. Always conscious of the vintage of the fur that year, our decisions are based on whatever best serves the color and longevity of the hat. When blending different colors we also think about the undertones in the hat and how it may change color as you move your head.



AGING THE HATS



Our hat bodies are aged in our factory's cedar closet. Just like a fine wine, a fine felt will improve and mellow with proper aging.



Optimo Special Blends



THE OPTIMO 1000

Made from an exquisite mixture of beaver and mink, or pure beaver belly fur. The result is a tighter felting hat with an even softer touch. Both beaver and mink are extremely strong felts. If too much mink is used, the hat body shrinks too tightly and there is no control of the material. The Optimo 1000 in pure belly fur comes from the underbelly of the beaver. It is an exceptionally soft, smooth and strong felt. Available in original (natural) and a selection of colors.



SILVERBELLY

A development we're very proud of. Sumptuous, totally un-dyed, pure beaver belly fur. Often you see "silverbelly" hats from other manufactures that are dyed this color, but our Silverbelly is our silverbelly is the genuine article.