



Men

PAUL GILES

Hat brimming with style

You can't beat the panama for headwear that's both snappy and practical

WE hear so much about sun protection, and rightly so – the consequences can be drastic and even fatal. I am sure if you looked up the definition for “sun worshipping” in the dictionary a number of years back, a photo of my leathery old head would have graced the pages.

I now rarely go outside without wearing some sort of protection – usually a hat.

With limited, or should I say no, hair to protect my scalp, a sun hat is my saviour.

My hat of choice for all the key areas of consideration – comfort, style, versatility and protection – is a panama.

This iconic headwear was first worn in the 16th century and was made of palm leaves.

Back then, and still today, the leaves were stripped into strands and woven so tightly that up to 1200 weaves would only cover 2cm.

Each hat is handmade and takes up to three months to complete – meaning no two hats are alike. Panama hats are naturally pale cream in colour, or are bleached white using sulphur from the volcanoes in the region. The finishing touch is a black band.

Technically, the panama should be known as the Ecuador hat, as that's where it is made. The hat received its name when it became internationally popular thanks to the workers building the Panama shipping canal



R.M. Williams Panama hat **\$128**,
rmwilliams.com.au



Billabong Panama hat **\$29.99**,
jettysurf.com.au

in the early 20th century. They used the hat as we do today – for protection from the sun and to beat the heat.

The hat really came to prominence when Hollywood legends Humphrey Bogart, Gary Cooper and Frank

Sinatra began sporting them – not only in movies but also off the set.

Former Calvin Klein model Paul Giles runs the image consultancy firm Style Shift. Daily tips can be found on facebook.com/StyleShift

TRADITION: An Ecuadorian worker weaves a panama hat for the tourist trade.

Picture: BRAD CROUCH