

Why it's time we had an amnesty on what's cool

We'd all love to be seen as cool but, as DICK LUMSDEN sadly accepts, it's just never going to happen for the older man

THERE'S no getting away from it...if you want to be cool, you have to work at it.

We all like to think we are keeping up with the times, adopting new brands and new technology and believing we are keeping in touch with an ever more youth centric world.

But the reality is, for most of us over the age of 50, we are so far away from being cool, we may as well dry our Y-fronts in the microwave.

Like a lot of people, I have two e-mail addresses – one for work and another for personal e-mails. But it seems that my Hotmail account has me marked down as seriously out of touch.

Hotmail was launched in 1996, when the internet had only just reached this side of the Atlantic and millions of us took up their offer of a free email account, putting ourselves at the forefront of the online revolution.

Sadly though, anyone still using a Hotmail address – or a BT Internet address for that matter – is really showing their age and is now very much pigeon holed as a wi-fi Luddite. It's just not cool, and it's one reason why it is going to be completely re-branded by Microsoft.

But while people may snigger when you read out your e-mail address, they roll about the floor when many of us take our mobile phone out of our pockets.

Recent research shows that 53% of all older mobile phone users in the UK have not changed their phone for three years or more. And something approaching 40% of us possess an old model Nokia which can do nothing else other than make calls and texts. Not cool.

And talking of text, it's not so long ago that we read scare stories about the falling levels of literacy among the "youth" and their development of a new texting language. We all had to learn how gr8 this was for meeting your m8s l8r.

But even attempting that now marks us down as out of touch.



LOOKING GOOD: Let the style statement fit the age, says Dick Lumsden who looks good in M&S polo shirts, his Hyundai Getz... and there's nothing wrong with a classic mobile phone. A Ferrari is cool... depending on who's in it. Photos: CONTRIBUTED

(albeit American) and we're left behind again.

And it's not just the techy world where we struggle to look cool.

But what can we do? Would buying a slim-fit T shirt from Superdry make me cooler than my M&S polo shirts? I don't think so.

Would driving an Aston Martin be cooler than nipping into Manningtree in our four-year-old Hyundai Getz? Definitely, but it isn't going to happen in my lifetime.

The plain truth is, unlike our gawky and troubled offspring, where teenage angst is a transient phase, the angst of the 50+ is never going to end.

If we're not cool now, we'll never be cool and we'll fret about it forever. Even if we could afford to buy some of the coolest brands,

squeeze himself down and into the latest Ferrari, or heave his chunky thigh over the back of a Harley Davidson, doesn't make him cool.

Not even those of us who have kept ourselves fit and trim can go out wearing young brands. It's just not right. It would be like seeing my 79-year-old Dad in a Justin Bieber hoodie. Not cool.

So we're stuck in a netherworld of hope versus reality.

We all want to be cool, we want our peers to respect our judgement on everything from our clothes to our gadgets. We want to believe that being cool keeps ageing at bay.

But we can't stop the clock from ticking, and no matter how many pairs of Calvin Kleins, Ray-Bans or Converse All Stars we buy, or whether we have a Maserati to drive ourselves to The Fat Duck for dinner, being

On behalf of all older men, everywhere, I'm hoping to start an amnesty campaign, with large but discreet boxes outside all major supermarkets.

We'll accept anything really, but in particular, I'd like to see men voluntarily giving up double-breasted suits, Crocs, open-toed sandals, pyjamas, flat caps, briefcases, Crocs, blazers with shiny buttons, novelty socks and ties, white Y-fronts, push-button umbrellas, thermal cups for taking your own coffee out...and did I mention Crocs?

Ridding the world of that lot would be a good place to start. We may not increase the cool factor, but we'd definitely reduce the "totally unacceptable" factor.

■ Dick Lumsden is Managing Director of Owl Marketing Solutions, a specialist in marketing and advertising to older consumers. If you have any views on this article, or are over 50 and would like to take part occasionally in some

