

From the Sidewalk to the Catwalk: Fashion and Subcultures

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Fashion in Culture

PASSING THE COURSE

- 3 credits: Attend lectures and read texts pertaining to lectures
- 5 credits: Attend lectures, read texts and write a learning diary
- **Deadline** for returning the learning diary: **March 31 2019.**
Late admissions are not accepted!
- Program, texts and instructions for writing the learning diary are on the MyCourses website:
<https://mycourses.aalto.fi/course/view.php?id=22557>

GRADING

- You are expected to attend at least 80 % of the total number of lectures
- Assessment: pass/fail



FROM TRICKLE DOWN to BUBBLE UP

- World settling after the WWII
- People yearned to catch a glimpse of a positive future
- 'New Look', working on an 'old look' promised that: extravagant amount of fabric, long full skirts – the dress became the symbol of 'new times'
- Only a tiny number of women were able to buy the Dior's dress ->
- 'New Look' trickled down to department stores and patterns which enabled sewing the dress at home

Christian Dior, The Corolle Line 'New Look', 1947

ILLUSTRATES THREE PRINCIPLES OF FASHION

1. Celebration of The New
2. Celebration of one singular style – *the* New Look
3. Diffusion from high fashion and high society to the masses and the mass market

Trickle Down Theory, coined in 1899 by American economist and sociologist, Thorstein Veblen in his book *The Theory of the Leisure Class*.

BUBBLE UP

- QUESTIONS:
- Do new looks still begin from high fashion and 'trickle down' to the masses?
- Or, do fashions and trends start from streetstyles and subcultural styles that 'bubble up' to the fashion system?
- Polhemus, Ted 2010. *Streetstyle. From Sidewalk to Catwalk.*

FROM THE STREETS TO THE CATWALK



Inspired by punk: Jean-Paul Gaultier, first collection, 1977. Image from the 30th anniversary retrospective catwalk show, 2008.



Kate Moss wearing a Linton Leather biker jacket typical to rockers, *Vogue Japan*, 2011.



Rebellious rocker-punk 'bad boy' in a sleeveless leather biker jacket, Versus Versace for S/S 2017.



Jean-Paul Gaultier, A garbage bag dress with tin can jewelry, fall 1980. CourtesyJean-Paul Gaultier.



Celine, Fall 2019 menswear, inspired by mods.



Rick Owens, Fall 2019 menswear, inspired by glam / Kiss



Comme Des Garçons Homme Plus, Fall 2019 menswear, inspired by punk.

SUBCULTURE?

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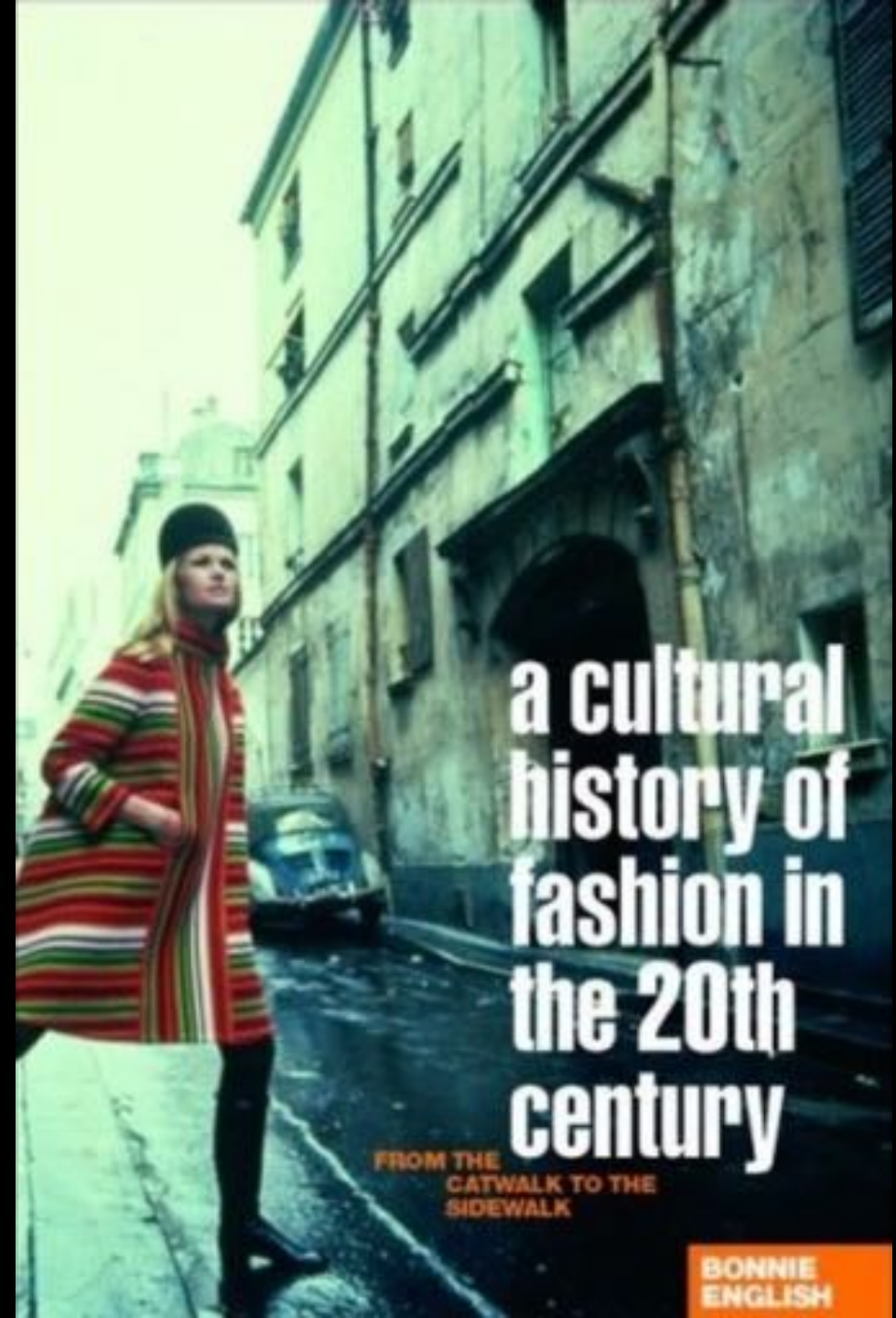
- “Subcultures are groups organized around or based upon certain features of costume, appearance, and adornment that render them distinctive enough to be recognized or defined as a subset of the wider culture.” – David Muggleton (2010)
- Defined by *collective identity* instead of individuality
- Oppositional stance to mainstream culture and its understanding of dress / fashion
- Paradox: subcultures depend on fashion while often oppose it, instead preferring the idea of “*style*” or “*anti-fashion*” – Elizabeth Wilson (1985)

SUBCULTURAL THEORY

- *Subcultural theory* was established in the 1970s
- The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS), the University of Birmingham, UK
- Theorizes British subcultures as *working-class resistance* to dominant capitalist culture
- Focus on stylistic practices of youth in the 1970s as response to social change in Britain
- Punk at the focus: seen as frustration of working-class youth
- “Subcultural style” = an *alternative symbolic system of dress*, which offered an alternative to the dominant fashion system and *middle-class adult culture* (Dick Hebdige 1979)

CHANGING HIERARCHY OF FASHION

- The centre of the fashion world changed from Paris to London
- Aristocratic haute couture was not the bellwether of fashion anymore
- Street styles largely the source for inspiration
- New mediators of fashion: musicians, bands
- Fashion and clothes *as signs* of subcultural identity
- Fashion highlighted as *visual communication: image* became increasingly important
- To be fashionable meant to have 'edge' or an 'attitude' inspired by a dynamic and youthful consumer culture

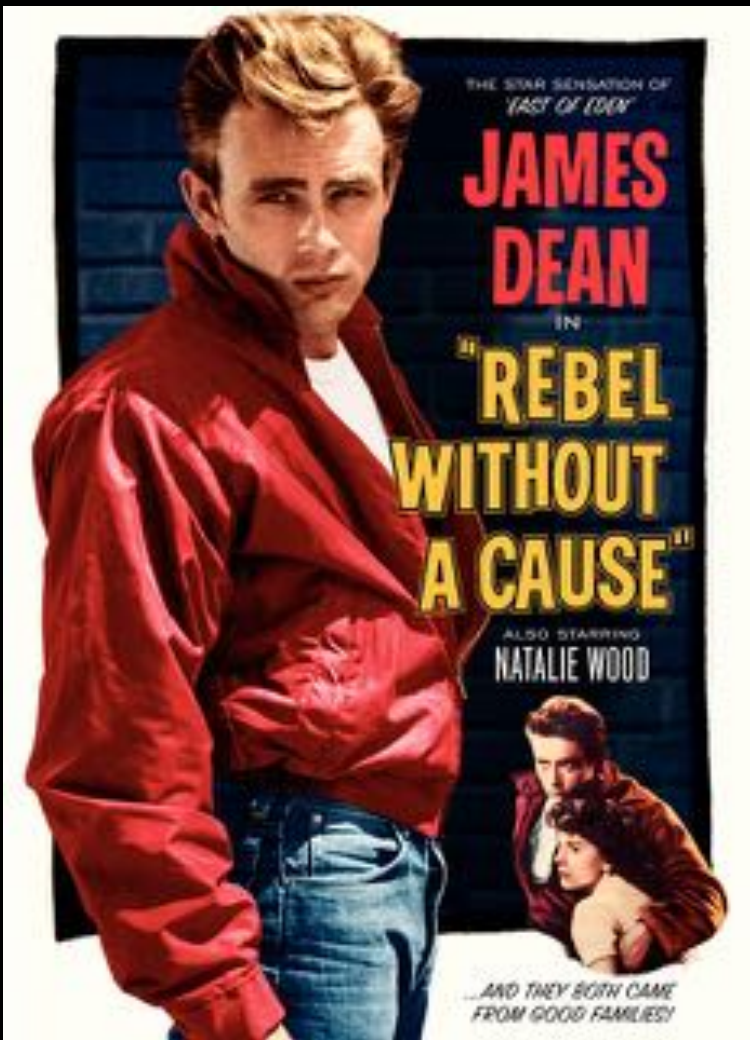


THE BIRTH OF YOUTH CULTURE

- Post-war Western culture saw the birth of the youth culture, symbolized in the concept of the “teenager”
- The teenager designated an age and white middle class youth already in the 1940s
- In the 1950s it referred to *youth’s novel visibility in public culture and to a stylistic identity*
- The fashion- and consumer-oriented teenager was constructed and popularized by Hollywood films and stars
- James Dean and Marlon Brando represented the “rebellious youth,” *a new market niche through their filmic characters*

Elsa Schiaparelli (1930s): "What Hollywood designs today, you will be wearing tomorrow."

1950s



James Dean in *Rebel Without A Cause*.
Director: Nicholas Ray, 1955.

Clothes: Lee jeans, white t-shirt,
Harrington red windbreaker jacket.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wXRqAXU1-T4>



Marlon Brando in *The Wild One*.
Director: László Benedek 1953.

Costume design: Not credited –
reputable chosen by Brando himself.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dIKWlx-Yxkg>

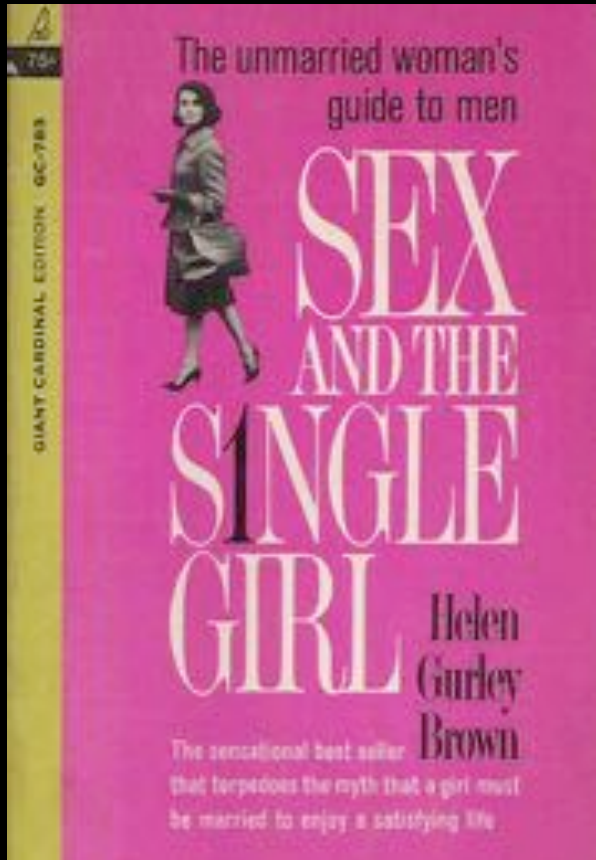
- Both characters made the white T-shirt, still an undergarment in the 1930s, and jeans – a garment mainly worn by children in the 1930s – into fashionable and defiant outfit
- Dean & Brando became “ambassadors of teenage fashion” (Vänskä 2017)
- The characters constructed “rocker-look” and the “Teddy-look,” the earliest youth subcultures or “style tribes”
- Paradoxically, while these styles were defined as “rebellious,” they centered on a normative understanding of masculinity and femininity



Youngsters, end of 1950s, Helsinki. Photograph: J. Poutanen. Picture archive of Heinola city museum.

"Gangyouth", 1959. Photograph: Pertti Jenytin. The Picture Collections of the Finnish Heritage Agency.

1960s



- Sexual revolutions
- “Second-wave feminism”
- Lesbian and Gay Liberation Movement (“Stonewall riots” 1969)
- The first orally consumed contraceptive, “the Pill”

- Youth culture fully developed; rise of consumer culture, rise of fashion
- New technologies in clothing manufacturing; mass production of new materials and cheap clothing possible
- Fashion as sign of individuality and freedom



LEFT: Twiggy on the cover of *Seventeen* magazine, 1967. ABOVE: The “London Look” / “Chelsea Girls”, clothes by Mary Quant, 1967. Photo: Keystone-France/Gamma-Keystone via Getty Images.



MODS

- Mods – “modernists”: androgynous, unisex, conceptual styles; reflecting gender equality
- Desire to show good taste: “Better to have one good suit than dozen with the wrong number of buttons” – inheritors of Beau Brummel’s puritan dandy
- Ingredients of mod-style: understated style, slim suits and mini-dresses, heeled boots, turtlenecks, clean jeans, trousers and Clark’s boots – and scooters
- Lower middle-class, often Jewish background
- The Beatles, The Who



Dusty Springfield, "The Queen of Mods", 1960s.

- A lesbian singer masquerading black American soul singers' styles
- Beehive hair, heavy mascara, false eyelashes and peroxide blonde hair
- Springfield's performances performed by drag queens – who in turn masqueraded them in her own performances
- Popularized her own style and the styles impersonated by drag queens
- Made gay male sub culture's camp performances known for a mainstream audience



- Growing multiculturalism in the UK
- Jamaica independence 1962
- Rude boy-style born in Kingston, Jamaica
- Sharply dressed young men
- Marked out new self-confidence and sense of self-reinvention among the young and disaffected black men
- The rude boy was a recognizable and culturally complex interpretation of the archetypal “bad-boy” figure

ABOVE: Rude boy (Rudie) tailor Sam Lambert.
RIGHT: From the exhibition *The Return of the Rudeboy*,
Summerset House, 2014.

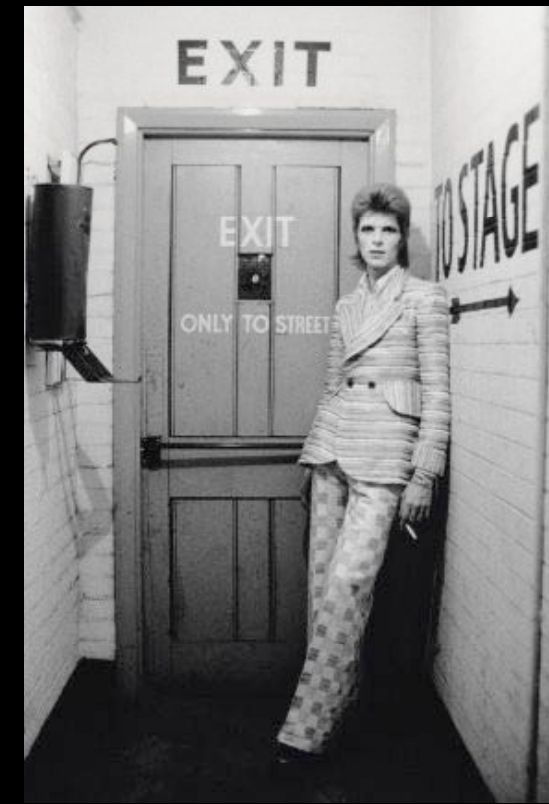


PSYCHEDELICS, HIPPIES



- "Swinging London": Carnaby Street boutiques
- Vivid colors, psychedelic drugs (LSD)
- Opposite to "less is more" ideology of the mods
- Fusion of different styles: Folkloric and ethnic motifs
- Middle-class youth concerned of Vietnam war
- Respect for nature, ethnic lifestyles – "flower power"

GLAM



- CENTRE: David Bowie wearing a "man-skirt" and posing as "Olympia" on the cover of *The man who sold the world* (1970)
- RIGHT: David Bowie backstage, 1972. Photograph by Masayoshi Sukita. Two-piece suit by Bowie, the patterns cut and made up by Freddie Burretti and Sue Frost.
- LEFT: David Bowie wearing striped bodysuit designed by Kansai Yamamoto for Aladdin Sane tour (1973)
- *Making androgyny and unisex reality instead of theory*



ABOVE LEFT Cover photograph for *Aladdin Sane*, 1973. Photograph by Brian Duffy.



ABOVE RIGHT David Bowie on stage during the *Aladdin Sane* tour, 1973. Photograph by Mick Rock.



ABOVE LEFT: Christine Walton for *Vogue* Paris, August 1971. Photograph by Alex Chatelain

ABOVE AND LEFT *Harpers & Queen*, London, July 1971. Designs by Kansai Yamamoto. Hair and makeup by Sachiko Shibayama



LEFT: Transvestite superstar Jackie Curtis, 1970, the year Curtis began filming *Women in Revolt*. Photo: Jack Mitchell/Getty.
CENTRE: Women's glam-rock style platform boots, 1970s.
RIGHT: Marc Bolan / T-Rex, 1970s.

PUNK & ANTI-FASHION

- Punk: to offend the older generation & to shock the middle class values of decency and propriety
- DIY-style: safety-pins, lavatory chains, plastic, trashy fabric, plastic bags, rubber, tin, old tires
- Represented the ideological assault on the aesthetic values of dominant classes – if not capitalism itself
- Challenge the hegemonic upper/middle-class ideology of fashion
- “The punk-body”, shockingly coloured hair, overtly visible make-up etc. challenged conventional ideals of prettiness and decency and traditional conventions of femininity and masculinity
- Highlighted *artificiality* & clothing as *disguise, costume, statement*
- Dick Hebdige (1979): *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*
- Valerie Steele (1997): “Anti-Fashion: The 1970s” in *Fashion Theory*, Vol. 1, No. 3, 279–296

Vivienne Westwood & Malcolm McLaren, *Sex* (1974–1976)





Left: Two boys wearing Vivienne Westwood Destroy T shirts, Kings Road, UK, 1980's. Getty Images.

Right: Vivienne Westwood and Malcolm McLaren, "Tits" and "Cowboy" t-shirts worn by Siouxsie Sue, 1976.



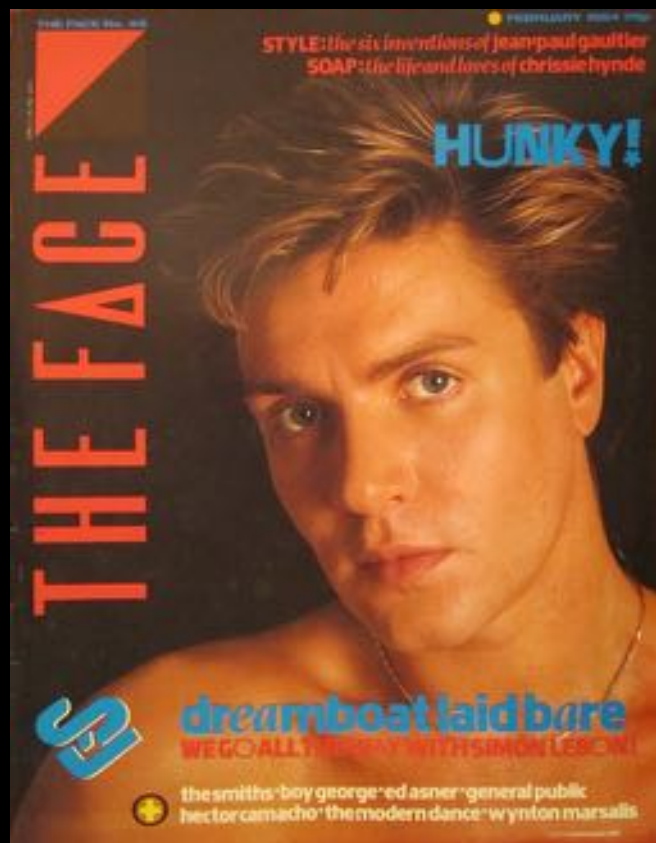
Left: A group of punks in London, January 1, 1970. Photo: Virginia Turbett / Redferns.

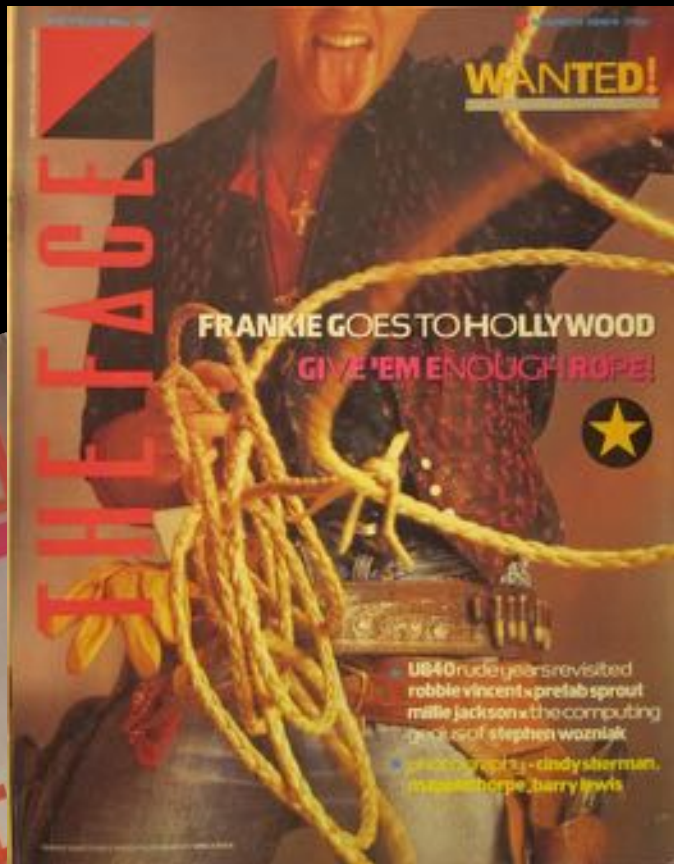
Center: Bromley Contingent, a pre-punk group, pre-1976, preceded the birth of punk. Members included Siouxsie Sue, Billy Idol and Adam Ant (and Sid Vicious). The fashion statements of Siouxsie Sue incorporated fetish and bondage clothing and innovative style of makeup, had a lasting influence on punk. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YaPug6kae0c>

Right: The Sex Pistols and their friends, the "Bromley Contingent" (1976). Photograph: Richard Young.

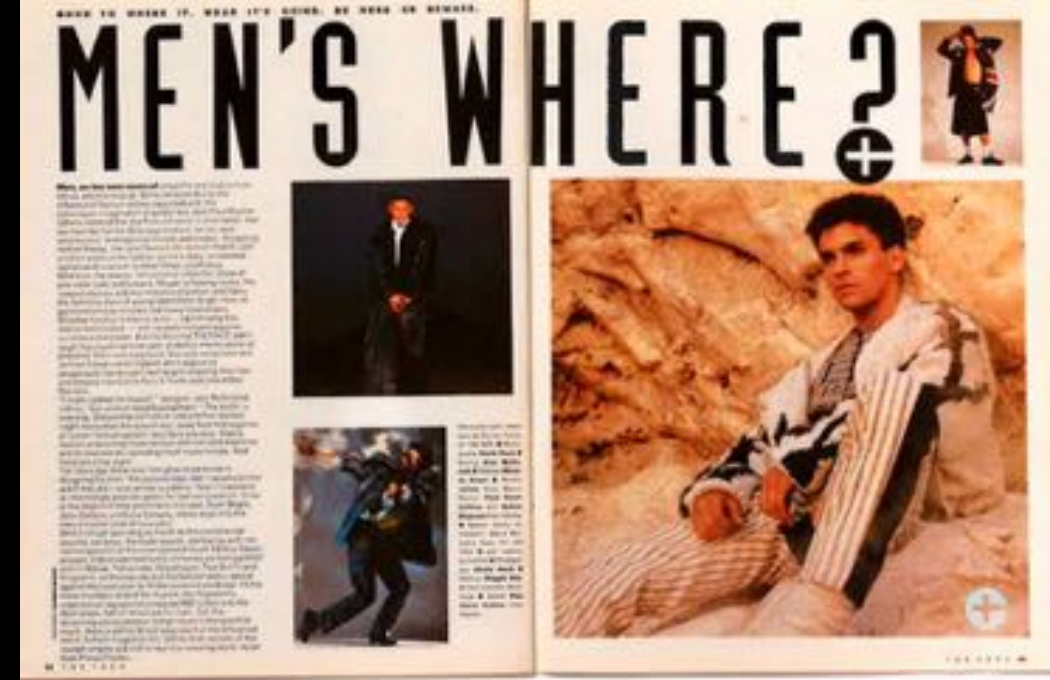
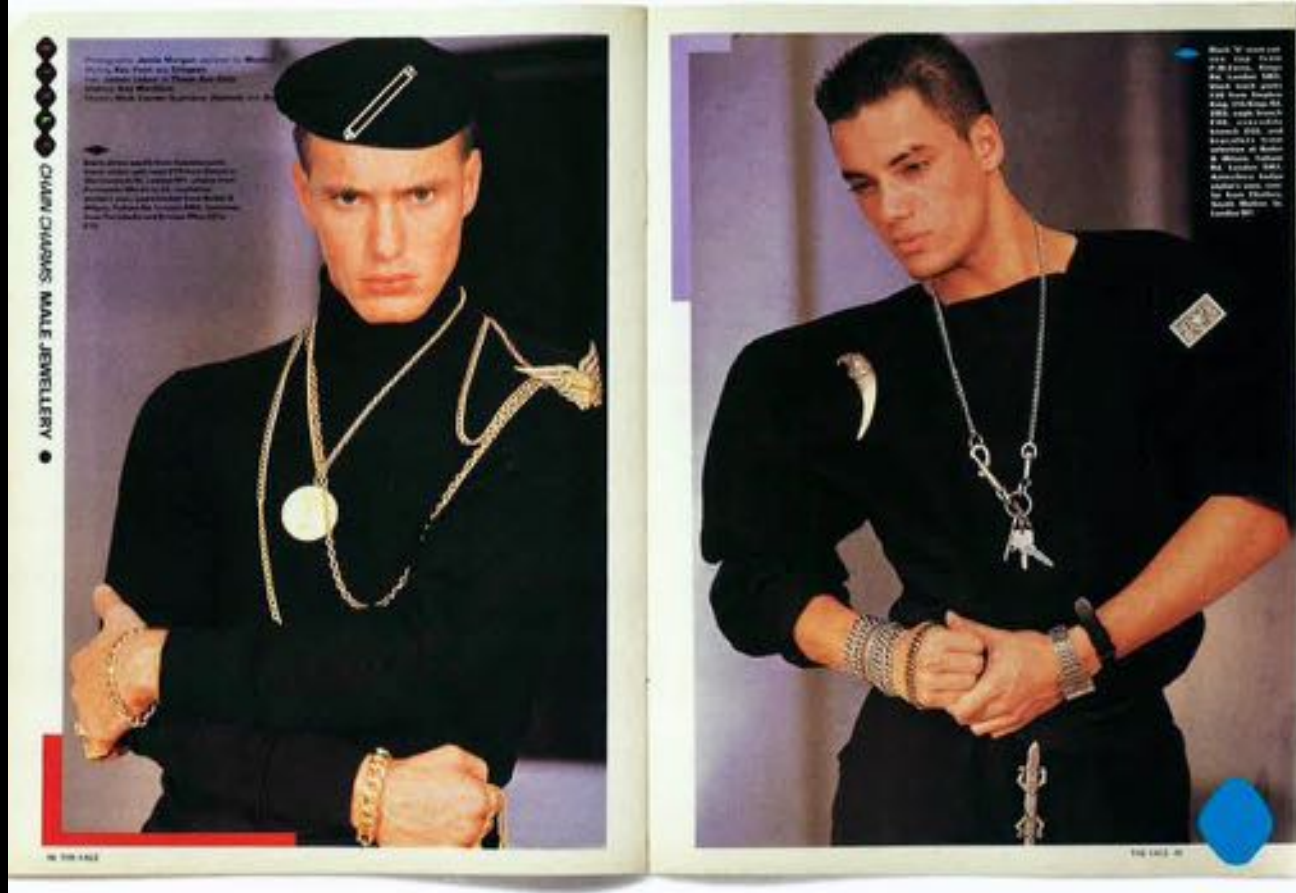
Siouxsie And The Banshees, Spellbound (1981), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TjvvK-Rj0WI>

1980s





Mid-1980s, *The Face* became more political and fashion-oriented with stylist Ray Petri joining the magazine. *Men became the most marketable category.*



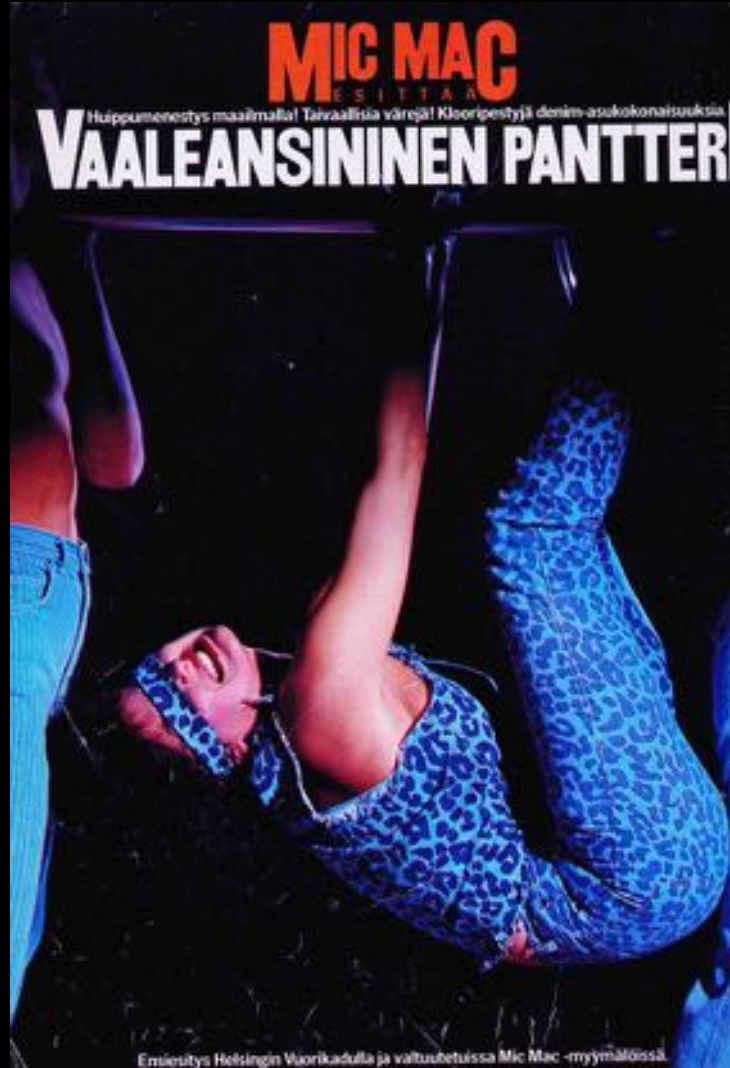
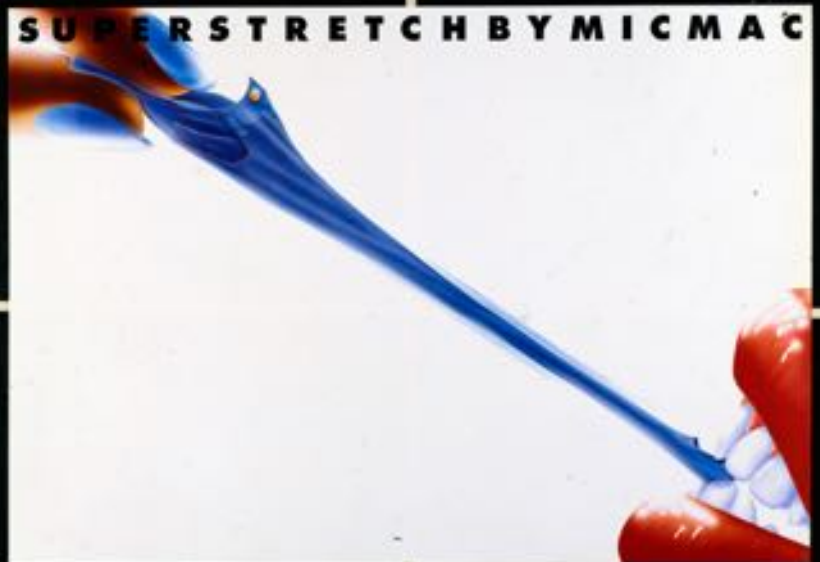
- Fashion historian and curator Andrew Bolton (2004) hailed the magazine for creating the 'men's wear revolution'
- Fashion & music columnist Robert Elms (1985): 'Style is our status system, our guide to what is right in the world and all-in-all we're getting better at.'
- Dick Hebdige (1985): '*The Face* is the embodiment of entrepreneurial Thatcherite drive. ... [It] reflects ... the concerns of a significant minority of style-conscious people who are not ... interested in the party politics ...'

- Subcultures subsumed into ‘edgy’ style magazines and their fashion advertising, thus detaching subcultures from their cultural context
- Magazines increasingly started to teach us to see ourselves as ‘consumers’ with multiple, changing identities (Trentmann 2016)
- Developments in graphic design technologies (e.g. Macintosh GUI & gd-software -> revolution of print industry)
- Broader academic discussions of ‘postmodernity’, ‘fragmentation of the self’
- Changes in political economy: ‘freeing-up’ of economies + ‘freeing-up of the self’ (Julier 2017)

”Someone is watching you!”, Mic Mac advertisement, 1984.
AD: Herbie Kastemaa.



Interweaving of new technologies, subcultural identity & economic change



Fashioning / Aestheticising capitalism



Mic Mac alphabet



Mic Mac plastic bag (above)
Mic Mac invitation card (above right),
Store milieu – Benetton (below right)



DISAPPEARANCE OF SUBCULTURES?



The Story Of Skinhead with Don Letts, BBC, 2016.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=reGXa3vgeF4>

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