



Bob Revelle, clothes by Ben Simon's.

Spring fashion:

from blue jean epidemic to fashion explosion

by Nancy Stohs

Jeans to class. Jeans on dates. Jeans downtown. Even jeans at church.

Until recently, the blue-denim epidemic on college campuses had pushed creative fashion out the window. There was no place jeans weren't accepted.

Fashion magazines were becoming collector's items rather than practical guides to dressing. Levi's sales were putting London and Paris to shame.

But in recent months, experts, local fashion sources and UNL students say they have noticed a reverse trend. Dressing up, both on campus and off, seems to be on the way back.

A popular explanation is that college students are simply tired of being sloppy. "You get sick of looking like everyone else," said one student.

But jeans' sales are increasing, according to local stores. One campus shop estimates selling 300 pairs a month. Racks of dresses remain nearly untouched. But the jeans themselves have changed.

In place of the original straight-legged, faded Levis are this year's popular baggie, cuffed, pleated and high-waisted blue jeans, along with new brush denim fabrics.

To comply with the "total look", girls are wearing tailored tops and mean are buying more dress shirts and sweaters. Not really dressy, as students say, but "neat" or "well-groomed."

Even for blue jeans, however, new styles mean higher prices. A pair of jeans now costs from \$9 to \$17, said one store employee, whereas three years ago they were priced as low as \$6 or \$6.50.

Reasons for the price hikes include the greater amount of material needed for flare styles, the strain placed on denim manufacturers and of course, something called demand.

But jeans have reached their peak, local sources predict. Students, especially men, are spending more money on other clothing.

Newest in men's dressier fashions are sportcoats, plaid baggies, platform shoes and a wide variety of shirt styles in many colors. They're selling well.

"Everybody still wants to wear their flannel shirts," a men's store manager explained, "but not day after day, all the time."

There are also reasons outside the fashion realm why a dress-up trend is being noticed at UNL.

One store manager suggested that Lincoln is offering more cultural events at which a person wears dressier clothes.

Then there are the special cases, such as student teaching, seniors with job interviews or students who work, that have always kept some students in hose or neckties.

But most everyone still agrees that blue jeans — in one form or another — will never leave the college scene

completely.

Jeans and other "grubbies," students say, are easy to wash, relatively inexpensive and versatile.

One store employe said that college students' manner of dress depends on the school. At UNL, she said, there is no real fashion group to follow.

Both extremes in personal attire will always exist side by side — like the sophomore girl who still owns many dresses and only one pair of blue jeans or the senior who said he hasn't dressed up a day since starting college.

What would happen if the trend were to revert to the first extreme — if everyone started dressing up for everything again?

Of course the stores would like it. "That's our business," one salesman said.

But more unique would be the effects. "You feel better about yourself when you're dressed up," several students said.

On the other hand some say they feel uncomfortable. "People stare at my legs when I wear a dress," a freshman girl said. But she added that men open more doors for her.

It's rumored that on East and West coast campuses men are wearing shorter hair styles and dressing in suits and ties for class, alongside girls who are flipping on dresses and high-heeled shoes.

But whether or not this is coming to UNL, most everyone seems to agree that some kind of renewed "fashion fever" is on its way.

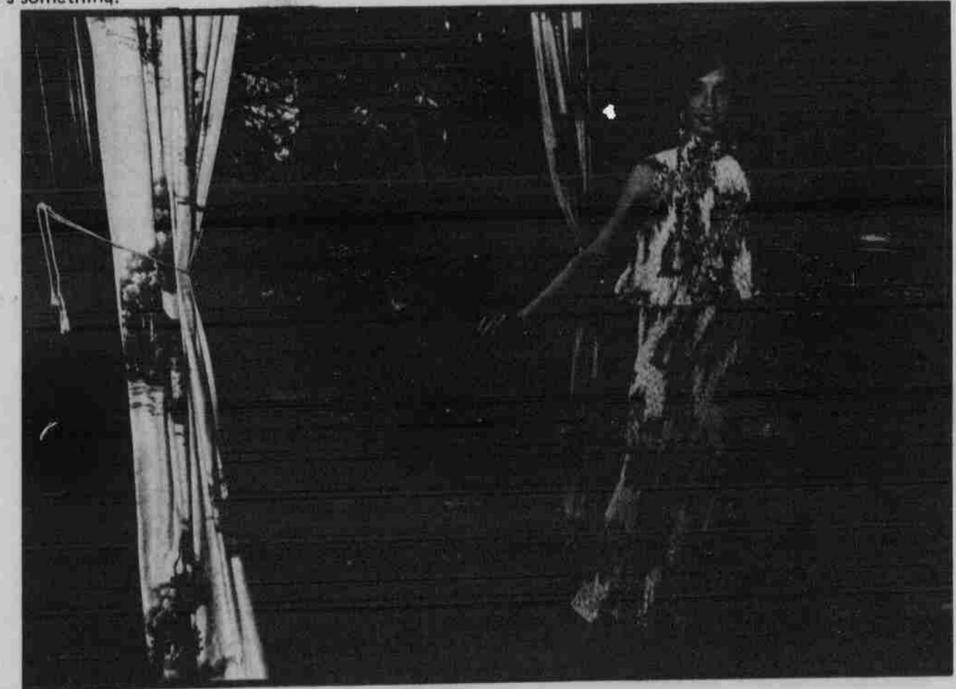
News like this may not make the leading Paris fashion experts jump for joy. But compared to the faded, raggedy-jeans, peace patches, no-bra look, it's something.



Patti Schneider, clothes by Hovland-Swanson.

photos by
Dan Ladely

On the cover: Bob Revelle and Jolene Huckfeldt, clothes by Ben Simon's.



Jan Ashbaugh, clothes by Hovland-Swanson.