

Classics

20th century weaves film, fashion

Hollywood and the entertainment industry have influenced popular fashion nearly as long as the various visual media have been around to spread the news. In the late teens and early 1920s, the movie studios, upon learning the immense monetary value of "star quality," began publishing movie magazines filled with gossip on the latest screen sensations. F. Scott Fitzgerald literally created "The Jazz Age" and all the frivolity and decadent good times associated with it.

Steve Abariotes

At the time Jay Gatsby was killed in his pool, the flapper craze was twirling to startling new heights. Short hair and short skirts were nothing new in 1920. They reflected a rapidly growing concern in this country for the liberated woman. And it was silent screen star Clara Bow who epitomized the flapper look, reflecting an existing trend.

Hollywood has created fashion from scratch and has popularized existing trends that were perhaps distinctive of particular subcultures. Hollywood reflects as well as generates popular fashion. The relationship between the movie industry and popular fashion is a complex array of mirrors pointed at each other, as complicated as the row of lenses in a modern film camera.

In the 1930s the development of the Western and the emergence of the movie musical and the gangster film helped lift the spirits of people victimized by the Depression. Everyone with 5 cents could see a movie and forget their problems for a while. The 1930s proved to be a prosperous decade for Hollywood.

Clark Gable unbuttoned his shirt during a film produced in the mid-1940s called *It Happened One Night*, and in so doing, revealed a bare chest that set new standards for masculinity and sent the T-shirt industry tumbling downward. During the same period, Veronica Lake popularized a hairstyle that was to be adopted by women nationwide during World War II. She parted her hair on the side, then brushed the top forward and over so the bangs covered one eye. It soon became apparent that this hairstyle created occupational hazards for women working in factories producing supplies for the war. Soon afterward, Lake changed her hairstyle by brushing her locks to the side.

In the '50s James Dean would prefigure the counterculture that surfaced in the 1960s with his troubled adolescent good looks and his marvelous method acting that was surpassed only by his legend. He starred in three films: *Giant*, *East of Eden* and *Rebel Without A Cause*. Elvis Presley set music to a generation obsessed with penny loafers, leather jackets, slick-backed hair and backseats.

Marilyn Monroe set curvacious new standards for beauty during the late '50s and early '60s. This ideal feminine look would change after her death to a thinner and more athletic appearance. Twiggy was the embodiment of the new look, and she also was instrumental in getting miniskirts off the ground. Julie Christie and Leslie Caron wore colored eyeliner and lighter shades of lipstick in films during the early '60s. These styles in facial makeup were emu-



Lou Anne Zacek/Daily Nebraskan

lated to a large degree by the public until the evolution of the hippie and the natural and carefree look that arrived with the psychedelic era. When Cicely Tyson appeared with George C. Scott on a television series during the 1960s wearing her hair in an afro, black women began letting their hair go, allowing it to curl into its natural shape. Up until this time black women, in the movies anyway, had straightened their hair into what amounted to Caucasian hairstyles. Besides saying something positive about civil rights, there is evidence that Tyson's "fro" sparked a renewed

interest in African culture for black women, who began experimenting with African beads and braids. Bo Derek wore her hair in an African braid in the film *Ten*, which started a short-lived fad. The Beatles, had a drastic influence on the way men wore their hair.

When Peter Fonda and Dennis Hopper rode off to find America in the cult film classic *Easy Rider*, they probably kept a few college graduates out of business clothes a little longer than they might ordinarily have been. *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* is another cult film that affected dress

fashion for a short time. Usually, people do not dress up in the sparkling and gaudy "rocky horror" outfits unless it's to see the show. To my knowledge, no one has walked into the Chicago police station disguised as "Riff Raff" and lived to tell about it.

In 1976, Diane Keaton established the *Annie Hall* look in the award-winning Woody Allen film. She wore different sorts of hats, modern horn-rimmed glasses and layers of big, baggy clothes. This style of dress became very popular, especially among frustrated actresses.

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