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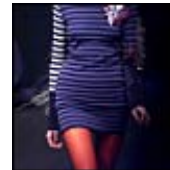
JAY WALKING

Fishnet Fashion Victims

By Jacqui Zurcher

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Across the globe, from Tokyo to Miami, they can be found at the bottom of old shoeboxes or falling out of manhandled photo albums — pictures of giggling pre-teens in bubble-skirts and Madonna sandals dripping plastic accessories. Photographic proof that we as a species survived the fashion vacuum that was the eighties and progressed to the cleaner lines and relative style sanity of the nineties and 21st century.



Those of us who endured our early teenage years in the eighties will never forget our fishnets and ruched waistbands. By some cruel hand of fate, we spent our formative years in the most unflattering clothes of the century.

I can only imagine that the free flow of hard drugs in high places was to blame for the absurdity of eighties cool. Or maybe it was just a reaction to the BeeGees. Where do you go after trendy is personified by a handful of brothers in snug white lycra bodysuits singing at frequencies only audible to dogs and small rodents. Court shoes and pleated jeans could reasonably be considered a plausible next step.

Purveyors of hairspray and blue mascara quietly become super wealthy while Blake, Crystal and Alexis Carrington not to mention Bobby, Pam, Sue-Ellen and JR sold us the eighties idyll of stupefying wealth and big hair. And we bought it all, lock, stock and umpteen smoking barrels. From shoulder pads to knickerbockers and knee length socks, we strutted our stuff with abandon and without the faintest suspicion we were living the fashion joke of the century.

How could we know? Even Madonna flaunted her fishnets and teased hair. In fairness, she was the only one who managed to make the eighties look work for her, but I reckon even she recognised its fashion handicap. As Madonna cunningly morphed into Marilyn and belted out the classic eighties anthem 'Material Girl', the rest of us were left bewildered surrounded by our plastic jewellery-stuffed trinket boxes.

For eighties kids, the only comeback when faced with the fashion faux paux of our youth,

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is that we were young and impressionable, taken in by the likes of Cyndi Lauper and Margaret Thatcher. With a fashion sense cradled in an era of excess, we had little hope of resisting the pencil skirts and court shoes. It seemed to make sense at the time.

in IT.

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With two decades between us and our luminous leg warmers we can now look back and laugh good-naturedly. Still laughing and cringing, I walked into Woolworths the other day to be confronted by a pouting mannequin sporting red fishnet stockings under a fire engine red corduroy miniskirt. Woolies, that temple of sensible clothing, that bastion of dependable and sober mid-range fashion, was peddling off-the-shoulder stripey tops with orange dropped waistbands.

Inspecting the clothes on offer at a number of different stores, I could not escape the definite eighties revival theme. Reds and blues that were consigned to the colour wheel's reform school after the eighties had escaped and were being flaunted in skirts and shirts. Footwear departments proudly displayed court shoes and there was an inexcusable amount of net over shirting going on.

One thing's for sure, I'm not going back. They might be peddling my youth out there in neon tones, but I have no inclination to relive it. It's a sick joke and the fashionistas are watching to see who falls for it. They're not going to get this sucker, I can tell you, not a second time. No stonewashed denim for me, no luminous dropped waistbands, no cut-off lace gloves — I'll leave that to the gullible teens.

I'll let someone else look like a sordid amalgam of Lennox Lewis and Frank-N-Furter in fishnets and boxing boots, but I might relent to the eighties in one area. I may just have to dust off some old tapes, whip out a Def Leppard Greatest Hits CD and play some Bon Jovi full throttle while dancing with my hairbrush and air guitar in front of the mirror. Because, for all it's craziness, the eighties produced some shamelessly enthusiastic rock. And if you're an eighties kid, there's nothing quite like glam rock sung by men in tight pants with permed hair.

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