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FASHION DESIGN

LIST B (*from The Fifties to The Nineties*)

- ❖ **“The Twentieth Century”, by Clare Hibbert, Adam Hibbert, Vol. 8, in *A History of Fashion and Costume*, New York City, Facts on File Inc., Bailey Publishing Associates (July 1, 2005).**

THE FIFTIES

During the fifties, post-war rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union developed into deep mistrust, marking the start of a long period known as the Cold War.

Its name came about because there was never direct military action between the two nations, although they took opposite sides in many conflicts around the world. The first of these was the Korean War (1950–1953), in which the United States backed the anti-communist south, while the Soviets supported communist North Korea.

Compared to the previous two decades, however, the fifties was a time of optimism and prosperity. Baby boomers born just after the war grew up to become the first “teenagers.” Young people had their own fashions and culture, especially in the United States, which was the birthplace of rock and roll music.

There was an explosion of new technologies. Laborsaving appliances gave housewives more spare time. Invented in the twenties, television took off as sets became more affordable, and regular broadcasting began.

Color television was available in the United States from 1953. The end of the decade saw a great advance, when the Soviets launched the first satellites into space.

Comfort and Practicality

Having emerged as a major superpower, the United States also took over in the world of fashion. Most everyday clothes were inspired by the “American look,” mass-produced separates that could be mixed and matched.

Twinsets—a sweater and matching cardigan—were very popular, usually in fresh pastel shades of pink, blue, and yellow. Sweaters were tight-fitting, as worn by the Hollywood “sweater girls,” Marilyn Monroe, Lana Turner, and Jayne Mansfield. Some were made of wool, but others were in a new “wash-and-wear” blend of acrylic and cotton.

Skirts came to mid-calf, and could be straight or full. Pencil skirts were long and straight and looked extremely elegant with a matching suit jacket and high-heeled shoes. Full skirts, a continuation of Dior’s *New Look*, became exaggerated for the youth market. Worn over taffeta petticoats and sometimes featuring lots of accordion pleats, they permitted plenty of freedom for dancing.

Not everyone wore separates, however. The sack dress, introduced by Spanish designer Cristobal Balenciaga in 1956, was a carefully tailored but loose-fitting, knee-length dress that tapered in at the bottom. It provided a sharp contrast to the nipped-in waists of most fifties styles and was a forerunner of the sixties’ shift dress.

Nylon and Elastic

Figure-hugging sweaters showed off the bosom, which was usually supported in a pointed “missile” bra. Synthetic fabrics revolutionized underwear. Bras and girdles were made from elastic and nylon, sometimes mixed with natural fibers.

One of the decade’s strangest inventions was the inflatable bra. Made of nylon and rayon, its cups had air pockets that could be blown up to achieve the desired bust size.

Fifties Fabrics

Although the fifties saw a revival of natural fabrics, such as cotton jersey and denim, nylon and polyester were everywhere!

The new textiles took dye well, did not crease, and did not even get eaten by clothes moths. As well as continuing to develop new fabrics, chemists found a way to permanently press material, resulting in lots of easy-care pleated skirts and dresses.

Youth Styles: Hard-Working Materials

Blue-collar workers continued to dress in overalls and dungarees. Firefighters saw a huge improvement to their uniforms with the invention of aramid fibers, such as Kapton and Nomex. Aramids were a kind of fireproof nylon. As well as being used by firefighters, aramids were soon used to protect people in other professions, including racing drivers. Another invention of the fifties was Velcro, a method of fastening clothing inspired by the hooks on plant burrs.

Young Rebels

Work clothes became the uniform of the new generation of young, rebellious bikers, who adopted leather jackets, jeans, and T-shirts. The look was captured on the silver screen by Marlon Brando in *The Wild One* (1953) and James Dean in *Rebel without a Cause* (1955).

Jeans were invented by a Bavarian immigrant called Levi Strauss in the 1870s, and had originally been intended as workwear for Californian gold miners. They were made from strong cotton cloth called denim (originally from the French town of Nîmes) and were reinforced with metal rivets.

Beatniks

Another group of young rebels who emerged in the fifties were the Beat generation—poets and writers who hung out in the cafés of Paris, France, and Greenwich Village, New York.

Although the beatniks, as they were known, did not want to conform in any way, their individual clothes style soon became a sort of uniform in itself. Many of the men grew goatie beards. Some wore plaid work shirts and jeans, while others slouched in shabby suits. Beatnik women dressed in pedalpushers and men's shirts, and sometimes cut their hair extremely short.

Cha Cha, Rock, and Jive

Dance crazes of the fifties had an enormous influence on youth styles. Rockabilly girls wore full, swirling skirts. Even their ponytails emphasized the twisting and twirling moves they made to the new rock and roll music. Boys wore snug-fitting jeans and two-tone shoes, just like their rock hero, Elvis Presley.

In Britain, there were two main youth styles at the end of the fifties, which were as much defined by their musical tastes as by their clothes. The jazzloving mods wore smart suits with tight, "drainpipe" trousers and short jackets. Those who could afford them rode Italian scooters, such as Lambrettas or Vespas. Rockers listened to rock and roll and dressed in scruffy jeans, T-shirts, and long, pointed shoes known as creepers.

Hairstyles

During the fifties, more attention was focused on hair as hat wearing became less popular. Many women wore wigs or hairpieces so they could keep up with the latest styles, which could be short one season, then long the next.

Hair dyes became more reliable from the middle of the decade. As well as covering gray hairs, they could also be used to introduce unnatural shades, such as pink or blue! There was also much more demand for hair products, such as shampoos, hair sprays.

THE SIXTIES

The sixties were a time of enormous social change. Civil rights were a key issue and people campaigned to end discrimination on the basis of gender, color, sexuality, or class. There were serious race riots in Los Angeles (1965) and Detroit (1967), while the Stonewall Riots (New York, 1969) marked the start of the gay rights movement. In 1968, a student uprising in Paris, France, protested partly against the Vietnam War (1964–1975) and also demanded greater freedoms.

The sixties saw a sexual revolution. The oral contraceptive pill (1960) enabled women to experiment with sex without the fear of unwanted pregnancy. Sexual matters were also more openly discussed, and love scenes in books, films, and on television became more explicit.

Neat Suits

Many older women adopted elegant Chanel suits—or copies of these. Featuring a collarless cardigan jacket with a contrasting border and a knee-length skirt, the Chanel suit was comfortable and easy to wear. It was popularized by American first lady Jackie Kennedy, who wore hers with a small, oval hat known as *the pillbox*.

Birth of the Mini

The youth fashion scene centered on London, where new designer boutiques stocked affordable clothes. Mary Quant was one of the first to produce miniskirts, but the mini also appeared in couture collections, for example by André Courrèges.

Displaying more leg than ever before, the mini was an outward sign of women's new sexual freedom. Many of the older generation found it extremely shocking. Minis were often worn with knee-high boots, sometimes in PVC or Corfam (synthetic suede).

Hemlines fluctuated widely during the sixties. The mini stopped at mid-thigh, or even higher, but did not suit everyone. The midi skirt, which came to just below the knee, looked good on most women. The maxi came down to the ankle and suited taller physiques.

Hippie Chicks

The late sixties were dominated by a new youth movement, which originated around the Haight- Ashbury area of San Francisco. Hippies were young people who did not want to conform to establishment values. The name originally came from the term "hipster," meaning white people who were involved in "hip," black culture. Hippies believed in free love and world peace. Many of them took recreational drugs, such as marijuana and LSD. They refused to follow their parents into "straight" jobs and they dressed to reflect their beliefs.

Rather than giving money to big business, some preferred to make their own clothes. They knitted ponchos and sweaters in brightly colored wools and tie-dyed their own T-shirts.

They gave clothes they had bought an individual touch by sewing on patches. They avoided synthetics, which were the products of big chemical companies, and favored natural fabrics instead such as cotton, wool, and velvet.

Ethnic Styles

Many hippies adopted spiritual aspects of other cultures, such as Buddhism, Hinduism, or Native American religious beliefs. They also bought ethnic clothing, such as Indian peasant shirts, batik skirts, beaded vests, or the unisex kaftan.

Kaftans were long, loose robes worn by desert nomads in North Africa and Asia. Since they covered up the body, they were especially popular with people who did not conform to the ideal sixties' body shape, which was tall and skinny. They were also extremely comfortable and easy to wear.

Hair, Makeup, and Jewelry - All Sorts of Hairstyles

The most famous hairdresser of the decade was Vidal Sassoon, whose clients included designer Mary Quant, model Jean Shrimpton, and film star Mia Farrow. Sassoon's first innovation was to reinvent the bob.

Short, sleek, and dark, this made a big contrast to the backcombed fifties' beehives, which were still being worn by older women. Boyish hairstyles such as the bob and crop harked back to the twenties, and hats from that era also saw a revival, with the reappearance of the cloche.

As the sixties progressed, hairstyles for both sexes grew longer and some young men grew beards. Women wore their long hair loose, or else in Native American-style braids.

The Afro became a symbol of pride for black men and women and was also widely copied by nonblacks who had tight, frizzy perms that could be teased out with an Afro comb. Hippies wore a variety of headgear from floppy sunhats to bearskins and tall, pointed wizard hats. Berets and peaked caps were also popular for a while.

Making Up

Like all other aspects of sixties fashion, the makeup of the time was strong and eye-catching. At the beginning of the decade, the "dolly bird look" placed the emphasis on the eyes. Women created spidery lashes with thick coats of black mascara or stuck-on false eyelashes.

They also used metal eyelash curlers to crimp the lashes. Eye shadow colors included bright blue, green, or space-age silver. The edges of the eyes were accented even more with a thick black liquid liner. By contrast, the look for lips was pale but shimmering. Lipsticks came in a wide range of sugary pinks, but the more adventurous chose colors such as silver, green, or white.

There was no single style of hippie make up. Some hippies did not use any cosmetics or beauty products, preferring to return to nature as much as possible, even tolerating body odor. Others used colorful cosmetic crayons to produce wild designs. Body painting was a popular pastime, especially at festivals. Swirling patterns, hearts, flowers, and slogans were all likely to appear on hippies' faces or bodies!

Cool Jewels

Just about every style of jewelry was popular at some time during the sixties. Op art minidresses suited bold necklaces of molded plastic, in black, white, or bold primary colors.

Chanel-style suits were worn with chunky fake pearl chokers and other costume jewelry. Hippie accessories were often made of natural materials, such as wooden beads.

THE SEVENTIES

The seventies was a time of great changes and social conflicts. The Vietnam War continued, despite demonstrations by anti-war protestors. There was a rise in more violent kinds of protest, with hijackings and terrorist bomb attacks. In 1972, Palestinian terrorists massacred the Israeli team attending the Munich Olympic Games.

There was an oil crisis (1973–1974), when Arab nations refused to sell oil to Israel's allies, leaving the United States and much of Western Europe with severe energy shortages. The Arabs were showing support for Egypt and Syria, Israel's opponents in the Yom Kippur War (1973).

Throughout the decade, unemployment rose and economies slumped. There were widespread strikes in the United Kingdom. In the United States, President Richard Nixon was forced to resign (1974), following the Watergate scandal.

Glamorous or nostalgic fashions offered an escape from all of the social and political unrest. Other styles, such as punk, expressed people's frustration with society.

Retro Styles

The seventies saw designers revisiting styles from previous decades. Haute couture designers, such as Yves Saint Laurent, borrowed thirties' and forties' tailoring for their tweed suits and flowing evening gowns.

Ralph Lauren drew inspiration from the clothes worn by settlers of the Wild West. His "Prairie" collection (1978) included calico and gingham frocks with ruffled hems.

In Britain, Laura Ashley produced inexpensive, flowery cotton dresses that looked home-sewn. With pintucks, ruffles, sashes, and lace trim, her garments harked back to around 1900.

Many women assembled their own nostalgic look by visiting thrift shops. They mixed and matched different styles—long, flowing skirts or baggy tweed trousers, austere lace blouses, or colorful, tight sweaters.

Jeans for all Pockets

Denim became more popular than ever. Over the decade, various styles were fashionable, from flared bell-bottoms to neat rollups.

Tight-fitting jeans, decorated with sequins, were worn to the disco. Punks ripped their jeans and then fastened them back together with safety pins.

At the end of the decade the first "designer jeans" appeared from Calvin Klein and Ralph Lauren. Jeans, originally valued because they were cheap and hard wearing, could now be shockingly expensive, depending on their label.

Hippie Hangovers

Flares were just one of the hippie fashions of the late sixties that began to influence the mainstream. Men wore their hair long and many grew beards or moustaches. Women, too, kept their hair around shoulder length, styled with gentle waves or flips.

Ethnic clothing remained popular. As well as kaftans, some people wore a version of the *djellaba*, a North African hooded cloak. Cheesecloth smocks with embroidered yokes and full sleeves were adopted from Eastern European folk costume.

Work Clothes

Pantsuits were popular with women who were fighting for equality in the workplace, although A-line skirts were also worn.

Trousers for men and women were generally flared and shirts had wide collars.

Men wore wide, garish neckties, sometimes nicknamed “kipper ties,” or even patterned silk cravats.

Super-Stretchy!

Spandex was invented as early as 1959. During the seventies, under the trademark Lycra, it started to appear in sports and disco outfits, as well as underwear. Adding Lycra to a material such as cotton gave stretch and helped the fabric keep its shape. Lycra was also quick drying, which was an advantage for sports or dancing.

Lycra breathed new life into other synthetics such as rayon, nylon, and polyester, which were being used for the nostalgic fashions. Lamé, a twenties’ brocaded cloth with tinselly metallic threads, also reappeared with stretchy Lycra added.

One of the most outrageous fashion fabrics of the decade was fake fur. Wearing real fur was becoming unacceptable to some people, concerned about animal welfare. Fake fur was a fun alternative. It was made to look obviously fake, so no one could mistake it for the real thing. Leopard spots and tiger stripes were the most popular fake fur prints.

Decade of Protest: Youth Styles

Like the sixties, the seventies was a time of social protest. Groups that had traditionally been marginalized by society—including women, blacks, and gays—continued to fight for their rights. The peace movement grew stronger, with largescale campaigns against the Vietnam War and the growing nuclear threat.

There was also an increasing awareness of environmental concerns. Unlike sixties’ protestors, those of the seventies sometimes resorted to violence, such as sieges or letter bombs.

Gay Rights

Homosexuals came up with their own “uniform.” Gay men looked to “manly” styles, including dungarees and leather, which they adapted in order to flaunt their sexuality. The workman’s white string undershirt, for example, became a raunchy undershirt in black fishnet. Fetish clothing, such as chains and studs, was also popular.

Gay women, too, dressed to express their sexuality. Rather than conforming to how men liked to see women, some lesbians shaved off their hair, threw out their makeup, and wore macho denim dungarees.

Hair

Hair also became a badge of identity for other groups. Black men and women continued to adopt the Afro as a symbol of black pride.

Anti-war protestors generally wore their hair long, not just because they were hippies, but also to contrast with the cropped hair of the soldiers they opposed.

Toward the end of the decade, new styles appeared. Glam rockers teased their hair into larger-than-life styles. Spiky punk haircuts, often dyed in primary colors, were even more shocking.

Music Scenes

Glam rock had its roots in the New York scene around artist Andy Warhol. It was a glamorous, stagy, and feminine look for men. They wore tight, glittering clothes with feather boas and tall platform-soled boots, as well as lots of make-up—rouge, eye shadow, and lipstick.

One of the most prominent glam rockers was David Bowie, who reinvented his look several times during the decade. Few ordinary people adopted the glam look.

Punk was another style that was seen on-stage, but also spread to the streets. It emerged in London and New York around the late seventies.

Punks were rebelling against middle-class values. They wore ripped T-shirts, tight leather trousers, combat boots, and bondage jewelry. They distressed their clothing themselves, and painted slogans onto their leather jackets.

Body piercings were also part of the look, with rows of studs, rings, or even safety pins through the ears, nose, or eyebrows.

THE EIGHTIES

The eighties saw the end of labor union influence in politics, and the rise of a riskier, more individualistic, free market culture. Fashion changed to reflect the “greed is good,” ambitious attitude. Some clothes expressed this desire to seem successful, while others were a deliberate rejection of those values.

Young adults in the eighties wanted high-powered, highly paid jobs. People in their twenties had more money to spend on consumer luxuries than ever before, and their tastes set the trend for the fashion market.

Western governments focused on winning the Cold War with the Soviet Union, which US president Ronald Reagan called “the evil empire.”

Some eighties designers used symbols from the West’s enemy, such as a crossed hammer and sickle, or a red five-pointed star, to communicate “rebel” values. The Soviet Union began to collapse in 1989, with the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Power Dressing

As in the twenties and thirties, men’s suits stiffened to create a triangular frame, with wide shoulders and a fitted, narrow waist.

This powerful look was emphasized with very dark grey flannel materials and expensive details, such as silk linings. Names like Armani, Gucci, Ralph Lauren, and Calvin Klein became global fashion brands.

Women’s suits also widened at the shoulders, which were built up with shoulder pads, while skirts shortened. Hair was worn fluffed out, as “big hair.” Makeup became bolder and used a wider palette of colors. The result was more powerful and predatory.

This look was popularized in television soap operas, in the glamorous costumes worn by Dallas’s Sue Ellen Ewing (played by Linda Gray), and *Dynasty’s* Alexis Carrington Colby (played by Joan Collins) and Krystle Carrington (played by Linda Evans).

Supermodels

As consumer wealth increased, more fashion magazines appeared, and it became harder for fashion designers to make headlines in all of them.

They needed the help of a celebrity model, who could guarantee coverage by magazines around the world. The eighties saw the emergence of supermodels, including Claudia Schiffer, Naomi Campbell, and Cindy Crawford. Many became so famous that they would soon sell their own fashion and beauty products.

Glamorous Evening Wear

Women’s evening wear was more dramatic than the style for daytime clothing. Gianni Versace used shocking, garish fabrics and exciting peepholes or slashes in clothing.

Designers such as Oscar de la Renta and Karl Lagerfeld provided more classic evening styles, with sleek, draping fabrics and glittering details such as sequins.

Yuppie Accessories

Young, upwardly-mobile professionals (known as yuppies) spent their new wealth on gadgets and other accessories.

Expensive brands of sunglasses, such as Ray-Bans, became an important symbol of yuppiedom. Yuppies also sported the first mobile phones, status symbols which came attached to a briefcase full of batteries and electronics.

High-Fashion Watches

The Swatch wristwatch was the accessory success story of the eighties. Launched in 1983, it was fun and affordable and came in colors and designs to match—or clash with—every outfit.

For the first time, consumers purchased more than one watch. Initially bought only by teenagers, Swatches became highly collectable, especially the limited edition watches designed by world-class artists such as Keith Haring.

New Man

For men who were critical of macho culture, power dressing was a turnoff. The “New Man” preferred soft fabrics, romantic or floppy tailoring, and pastel colors.

Even in a suit, New Man wanted to look as though he might have just stepped off the beach, wearing his shirt open at the neck, and shoes without socks.

Big Brands

Some manufacturers’ brands—their names and corporate logos—began to be used in street fashions as a badge of belonging to an in-crowd. Sports shoe makers Nike and Adidas grew from specialist sports manufacturers to the huge global brands they remain today.

Branding was also vital for designers such as Calvin Klein, whose male underwear had his name embroidered onto the waistband, making underwear a design statement.

More traditional high-fashion labels, such as Chanel, began to seem a bit stuffy compared to these hard-edged brands. Punk designer Karl Lagerfeld was hired by Chanel in 1983 to bring in younger, funkier clients for the label. His designs won back Chanel’s chic reputation.

Sporty Styles: Dancewear

The disco fever of the late seventies developed into dancing as a kind of sport, as expressed in the influential movies *Flashdance* (1983) and *Footloose* (1984).

A “rehearsing ballerina” look became popular, with figure-hugging leotards and tubular woolen socks without feet, called legwarmers. Other sports-related fashion details included sweatbands and vibrant, neon-colored flashes and stripes.

Sports Casual

Concern for health and fitness grew in the eighties, becoming a badge of self-respect and ambition. Casual clothing expressed this desire to look good and to seem fit and powerful.

Tracksuits made people look like they might be about to go jogging. Leggings stretched taut from a loop under the heel suggested that the wearer could be on her way to a session at the gym.

This clothing was not only fashionable, but also very comfortable—ideal for going shopping or watching television.

Techno Fabrics

A new textile, Gore-Tex[®], was patented in 1978, making sports clothing in the eighties far more appealing to men. Male consumers tend to appreciate high-tech functions in clothing, and Gore-Tex[®] offered the amazing power to repel water from outside the clothing, while allowing sweat to evaporate from inside.

Following this breakthrough, manufacturers developed other new fabrics, such as flame-proof, unrippable, or even chainsaw-proof textiles. These advanced fabrics, often brightly colored, made for striking winter coat styles.

Pop Styles

MTV, the music television channel launched in 1981, connected young music consumers in many countries with the biggest pop idols. Short video films alongside a song made it easier for fans to copy the fashion styles of their favorite musicians.

Stars such as Madonna changed global trends by appearing on MTV in unexpected clothing.

Madonna's outfits made their designer Jean-Paul Gaultier even more famous. Hip-hop artists also had a big influence, driving sales of athletic shoes around the world.

The Nineties

At the beginning of the nineties, the Cold War finally ended, with the breakup of the Soviet Union. In 1991, American president George Bush announced a “new world order,” where nations would work together to end war and poverty. However, the nineties were a decade of instability, with countries and federations breaking up, sometimes violently. Fashion design expressed a similar mood of chaos and disintegration.

Many young people adopted antifashion “grunge” styles, wearing clothes that deliberately looked dirty and scruffy. The grunge look was associated with the rock band Nirvana, and was expressed on the catwalk by designers such as Marc Jacobs and Martin Margiela.

The traditional divide between high fashion and mass consumption blurred. Department stores employed cutting-edge designers to create cheap, “fashion-forward” items. Fashion-conscious teens, meanwhile, turned to secondhand stores to build their own retro styles.

In a decade lacking strong social trends and ideas, many fashion consumers wanted clothing with meaning. Eco-friendly features, or little ethnic details such as embroidery, made the wearer feel that their clothing made a difference to other people’s lives or to the environment.

Fashion Without Cruelty

Fur was driven out of fashion by campaigns for animal welfare in the late eighties and early nineties. PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) ran a high-profile campaign in 1993 involving models such as Naomi Campbell.

By the decade’s end, though, fur was back. Campbell herself left PETA in 1997, having decided that if leather, suede, and meat eating were okay, then fur should be too. The century ended with a brief fur revival on the catwalks.

Unisex

As eighties’ macho values went out of style, tough new tomboy ideas of femininity emerged. Young women adopted camouflaged combat pants and hefty workboots.

The early nineties’ comic series *Tank Girl*, and the *Tomb Raider* game character Lara Croft (1996), were figureheads of this trend. Tattooing and body piercing became more widespread. Other androgynous fashions included shaved heads for women and sarong skirts for men.

Sporting Fashions

Eighties’ sports clothing had been designed to show off a fit, muscular body; by contrast, nineties’ sports fashion trends were associated with “slacker” sports such as skateboarding, snowboarding, and surfing. (“Slacker” was the name given to a new generation of dropouts who were reacting against the go-getting culture of the previous decade.)

Baggy jeans, beaten-up sneakers or basketball shoes, and loose tops were accessorized with bangles, ethnic necklaces, and tattoos.

Australian clothing labels such as Billabong and Mambo made an impact on the world fashion scene.

High-Performance Fabrics

Hooded tops in cozy fleece fabrics were popular with adults and children of both sexes. Polartec was an innovative fleece made from recycled plastic bottles. It was soft and warm, but also dried quickly if it got wet.

Another new, eco-friendly material was Lyocell, first made in 1992 out of renewable wood pulp. Lyocell was manufactured under various trade names, including Tencel, which was used for figure-hugging tops, dresses, and underwear. Depending on the production process, Lyocell could be made to feel like silk, leather, or suede.