

## [Transcript] The Rest Is History / 364. Sixties Fashion: Swinging London

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I hope you enjoy it.

There she was, the world's highest paid fashion model, snubbing the ironclad conventions of fashionable Flemington with a dress five inches above the knee, no hat, no gloves and no stockings.

For my money she looked tremendous, but Flemington was not amused, fashion conscious derby day race girls were horrified, insulting her disgrace, how dare she, if the skies had rained acid, not a well-dressed woman there would have given the shrimp an umbrella.

That Dominic was the Melbourne Sun News pictorial reporting on what I think we both of us would agree is one of the world's most important episodes in history, rivaled perhaps only by the Battle of Cressy in the list of top historical events.

For me Tom, there are three great events in history.

There was the Battle of Cressy.

Of course.

There was the Battle of Melbourne when Gene Shrimpton was dressed slightly too short and there is Wolves Inventing European Football in the 1950s.

That means nothing to me, but I think the first two I'd agree with you.

This is the incredible cliffhanger on which we left listeners at the end of the last episode.

Unbelievable cliffhanger.

Now Dominic, you are going to reveal what happens in Melbourne, what has Gene Shrimpton, the shrimp, done, the supermodel, the world's most beautiful girl.

She's gone to Melbourne and what is it that happens at the races?

She's done something absolutely extraordinary, Tom.

She has gone to the Melbourne Racecourse on Derby Day in a white shift dress made from the synthetic all-on fabric that she's been paid £2,000 to advertise and they haven't given her enough fabric.

She's designed it herself and her hemline ends just above her knee, so a few inches above her knee.

She has no stockings as that beautifully read Australian newspaper editorial says.

Now gloves and no stockings, absolutely scandalous behavior and the matrons of Melbourne.

Australia is quite a conservative place in the 1960s, so this is the place that your

Clive James' and your Dame Edna's and your Germaine Greer's are trying to leave because

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they think it's too stuffy and conservative and people in Melbourne are outraged by this. Absolutely outraged.

The British newspapers are delighted.

That's what British newspapers said, surrounded by sober draped silks and floral nylons, ghastly tool hats and fur stoles.

She looked like a petunia in an onion patch, so this is the kind of commentary that always endears British newspapers to Australian readers.

So Gene Shrimpton has turned up in this white shift dress and this apparently scandalous appearance makes the front page of every newspaper in Australia and indeed in Britain, and it is seen often as the moment the miniskirt was invented, which is actually weird because she's not wearing a miniskirt because it's a little dress.

But it demonstrates, does it not Dominic, in the words of Vogue that brevity is the soul of fashion. Oh, very good, Tom.

Very good.

Reading off your notes, sir.

Yes, no.

So there has been a move generally, we were talking about this in the last episode, with the foundation of Mary Quant's boutique Bazaar in 1955, with the growing kind of infantilisation

of fashion, which I think is going to become an even more pronounced theme in this episode.

There's been a move towards a much more informal look, much lighter, more colourful.

I was about to say more sexualised.

It's more sexualised but in a very peculiar way, so it's a childlike sexuality.

So miniskirts and mini dresses come out of that.

So people have been experimenting for a few years with shift dresses and with shorter skirts.

And the Sunday Times, their fashion correspondent, Ernestine Carter, had said that 1963 was the year of the leg.

And this sort of stuff is in the air.

But when Jean Shremson goes to Melbourne in October 1965, that's the moment when it really explodes into a kind of global consciousness.

And then, of course, miniskirts are everywhere and they become emblematic of this sort of exciting new...

But it is basically a British invention then?

I think it's fair to say it's a British invention.

Yeah.

So it's up there with parliamentary democracy, industrial revolution.

Exactly.

The King James Bible.

King James Bible.

Absolutely, it is, Tom.

Brilliant.

So proud.

So proud.

It's just under two years since the Beatles went to New York,

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which is a transformational moment in the image of British youth culture abroad.  
And a genuinely transformational moment.

So before that point, British pop culture had had very little sway overseas after the Beatles trips to New York.

Obviously, you have the British invasion, bands enjoying extraordinary success, not just in America, but in almost every Western country.

And people are looking to Britain.

They're affecting British slang, copying British fashion, copying the fashion that the pop stars wear.

And so, yeah, I think you can absolutely say at this point, 1965, that Britain is setting the tone internationally.

But most of the Beatles, obviously, but Rolling Stones and Kinks, who I sang at the beginning of the last episode and so on, are male.

But the look of the 60s is female.

Yes.

I think that's fair to say.

The sound of the 60s is male.

The look of the 60s is female.

A guy called Peter Lowry wrote a book in 1965 in that year called The Teenage Revolution.

And he said the real dynamo of the Teenage Revolution is the teenage girl,

the girl age between, let's say, 13 and 18 or 13 and 21,

as people would probably have said in those days,

who has more spending power than anybody of her age previously in history,

has more freedom, probably has a job after school or the weekends,

has money in her pockets, is reading these magazines that we were talking about last

time, like Valentine or Honey, the biggest of these magazines in Britain,

is buying the pop records.

Said that the Beatles audiences, those gigs in 1963,

they're screaming of Beatlemania.

I mean, there are boys in the audience too.

There are young men in the audience, but it's the young women who get all the attention, who drive the sales.

So the Beatles famously wear suits.

They're put in suits by Brian Epstein.

Yeah, which is a kind of slightly mod type thing, I would have said.

And thinking about, I guess, the most kind of emblematic British TV show of the 60s,

The Avengers.

Patrick Minney playing John Steed in The Avengers Wears a Suit and a Bola Hat.

He does indeed.

He looks like the archetype of a British gentleman.

Yes.

But Diana Rigg playing Emma Peel.

I mean, she's all about leather and plastic and all that kind of thing.

Well, here's the interesting thing.

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At first, she wears leather.

So The Avengers is a really good example to pick because it's the first British TV show.

So we should just say what that is.

It's a kind of faintly surreal, crime capers, spies, set in Swinging London.

Very Swinging London and ever more surreal plot.

So it starts out and it's quite gritty.

And as time goes on, as the 60s continues, The Avengers becomes more and more kind of...

But the writers take more and more psychedelic drugs.

Yeah, it becomes kind of bonkers and very, as you say, very surreal and really fun and imaginative.

And it's very highly produced.

It's extremely expensive by the standards of TV series of the day.

The outfits are a massive element of it.

So when Diana Rigg replaces Anna Blackman, Anna Blackman goes off to make Goldfinger, the Bond film.

Again, a real British pop cultural export to the 60s.

Diana Rigg comes in to replace it.

Now, Anna Blackman had already been wearing kind of leather, lots of leather.

But Diana Rigg, the producers make a huge hullabaloo about what her clothes are going to be.

And over time, they get rid of the leather cat suits and they bring in this sort of op art look.

So op art for the most people probably won't even know what that is,

because again, that's something that has dated quite badly.

So there's an artist called Bridget Riley who would do these sort of slightly

mind bending geometric black and white patterns, very space age.

She's still very big name.

Oh, she's very cool.

I love all that stuff.

Designers copied that in wallpaper, in fabrics, and particularly in clothes.

So you'd wear black and white clothes, short skirts, as you said, lots of PVC, lots of plastic,

because people are absolutely obsessed with this idea of clothes of the future.

We didn't really talk about this last time.

But in 1965, so again, the same year that she enshrimps and goes to Melbourne,

there's a guy called André Courage who does this by far the most globally reported kind of collection of clothes in the whole of the decade.

And they were called kind of clothes of the future space age clothes.

And they are kind of absolute classic kind of, you know, I'm going to wear a plastic jumper.

PVC trousers.

This is what people are going to be wearing on Venus in the year 2017.

We're all going to be taking holidays on Mars.

People will wear space astronauts helmets as standards.

Jet packs.

Jet packs.

And these clothes, obviously, nobody dresses in spacesuits.

But people do wear plastic kind of skirts and stuff.

I mean, they don't wear them for very long because they realize how ludicrously impractical they

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are.

But there is a great fascination with the op art and with the space age and the new synthetic fabrics. I mean, it's telling that Gene Shrimson had gone to advertise a synthetic fabric in Melbourne.

And Diana Rigg in The Avengers is wearing all that stuff, very brightly colored.

While kickboxing and felling villains.

While karate chopping villains, exactly.

So 1965, I would say, is the moment when it reaches the sort of peak of the Austin Powers.

Very swinging 60s.

You mentioned Dolly Birds.

Again, it's the infantilization, Tom.

So they have whitened faces.

You would whiten your face.

You might wear white lipstick.

And then your eyes, you would blacken around the eyes.

Pander eyes.

Yeah, pander eyes.

Huge eyelashes.

And of course, a lot of people don't even think about this at the time.

But the reason this appeals is basically it makes you look like a baby.

It makes you look like a child.

Never thought of that.

With a very, very pale face and huge eyes, which is famously how small children look.

It's carrying to the extreme the look that had first been pioneered by Mary Quant in the mid 1950s, which is, let's have everybody look like members of the famous five, sort of Enid Blyton.

Yeah, but to be fair, I mean, the famous five aren't dressing up in PVC minis.

Certainly George isn't.

Did I read yesterday, Tom, that the BBC are going to redo the famous five?

They are with a Danish director who...

With a new woke version of the famous five.

Well, no, I think the Danish director is famous for making very violent films.

Is it Lars von Trier?

Is he going to do that?

No, it's not Lars von Trier, but he's kind of in that ilk.

But I would like to see the famous five done now in the 1960s.

So put them in PVC space age outfits.

That would be great.

Yeah, that would be fantastic.

And actually, instead of fighting smugglers, they could be fighting pirate radio stations.

Yes.

Yeah, they wouldn't approve of pirate radio stations at all.

They absolutely wouldn't.

Anyway, Dominic, so you said that this is the image of the 60s that people have.

Austin Powers begins with him on Carnaby Street, I think.

Oh, right. Yes.

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So Carnaby Street is a street off Regent Street in Soho.

Yes.

In the middle of London.

Yeah.

Why Carnaby Street?

I presume it's not famous before the 60s, is it?

No, not at all.

It's cheap and rundown.

And actually, what drives Carnaby Street fascinatingly is not women's clothes, it's men's clothes, really, I would say.

So there are lots of boutiques.

We talked last time about boutiques.

There's a famous partnership called Fold and Toughen, Mary and Fold and Sally Toughen.

They are part of this new wave of boutiques that are copying, really, what's happened in the 50s and early 60s with Mary Quant.

And they are establishing their new shops in rundown areas.

And they choose a backwater called Carnaby Street.

But what actually really turbocharges Carnaby Street is men's fashion.

So there's a guy called John Stephen.

John Stephen is the son of a Glaswegian shopkeeper.

He had moved to London, as so many bright people did in the post-war years, to sort of, you know, pursue his dreams.

He works at Tater's Clark.

He sets up his own boutique, which is called His Clothes.

And he becomes the king, people call him the king of Carnaby Street.

Because what he's doing is he is selling the equivalent of all the things we've been describing, but for men.

So very brightly coloured, jolly.

The Codswallop fashions of perverted peacocks, I read, is one description of them.

By the menswear association.

Yes. Someone's toes are being trodden on.

The menswear association are probably still trying to sell you quite heavy overcoats and very highly properly tailored clothes.

I mean, the thing with John Stephen's clothes,

I hope we're not going to be sued by him or his estate.

They're really cheap and they fell apart.

But they were cheerful.

Yeah, they were cheap and cheerful.

I mean, it was basically, his shops are the ancestor of the cheap and cheerful mass market shops that you have now.

Uniqlo or whatever.

Yeah.

Or Primark or the big kind of retailers that you have in Britain right now.

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His sort of Pilem High, Sellem Cheap, very jolly, very brightly coloured.  
And Carnaby Street, because it is run down, there's nothing going on there.  
That's the place he identifies.  
It's obviously very central.  
What's happened to London, so there's a whole London story here  
that we haven't really touched on at all,  
which is that what is happening to London in this period is manufacturing is fleeing London.  
So London, which was a manufacturing city in a port city, those things are dying.  
All those people are moving out of the city centre and means there's a lot of cheap  
office space, housing space and so on.  
So younger people are moving in and that's where you get all the boutiques and stuff.  
And Carnaby Street is a classic example of that.  
So by 1967, John Stephen owns 10 boutiques on Carnaby Street alone.  
And because of the success of the Beatles and their worldwide sort of marketing of swinging  
London, now for the first time you have tourists coming from overseas, also because of the  
availability of cheap air travel, tourists coming from overseas and they want to go and buy  
a pair of Union Jack underpants from a terrible shop on Carnaby Street, as people do to date on.  
Isn't it time that Chris is London, they're swinging London?  
Time Magazine, yes.  
Here's the funny thing, you know, most people at this point, so if you'd walked down Carnaby  
Street, most people obviously don't look tremendously cool, right?  
They're not wearing all these amazing clothes.  
There's a wonderful story in the Times, the fashion editor of the Times, there was somebody  
called Prudence Glyn.  
She was one of these sort of slightly forbidding women who are the gatekeepers of fashion and  
actually make or break people's reputations and careers.  
She wrote a story in August 1966 at the peak of the swinging London craze.  
She said, I was on the London Underground and I looked around all the women on the tube.  
And there were 17 of them, 12 of them were wearing cardigans, 10 of them were  
wearing navy blue, 13 were wearing sandals.  
Not one was wearing a miniskirt, not one is wearing a space band's outfit.  
You know, none of them are addressed in the sort of...  
So actually, for most people, it has yet to really trickle down.  
But this is very Sandbrook, very, very Sandbrook, to basically dump on iconic moments or  
monuments  
to the 60s and say, well, most people aren't doing it, but it doesn't really...  
It doesn't matter.  
It doesn't really matter, does it?  
Because it's the myth that matters.  
Because as you rightly say, Time Magazine, just about three months earlier,  
run this very famous cover story.  
Their title of it is, You Can Walk Across It on the Grass.  
And they had basically, you know, London, the Swinging City.  
A year earlier, the weekend telegraph had done exactly the same.

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Periodicals in France, Italy, in Germany are doing exactly the same.  
They're saying, you know, London is the city.  
It is the cool place.  
Everybody is young.  
Everybody's... It's full of fun.  
This is when The Kinks released Dedicated Follower of Fashion.  
Follower of Fashion, exactly.  
And that is a kind of a mockery of...  
It's mocking it, because everybody knows it's a bit of a con.  
You know, the happiest and most electric city in Europe, says the Spanish magazine, Epoch.  
Great days, great days.  
So of course, this is a sort of, in some ways, a ludicrous parody.  
But it's one in which so many people are invested and they believe in fashion, like pop music.  
It's one of them, the two poles.  
One is, I mean, specifically, is pop.  
It's sort of the Beatles and the imitators at this point, because it's not really yet rock.  
And then the other is the fashion, the clothes, the miniskirts, the emphasis on youth.  
And Jonathan Aitken.  
You know, Jonathan Aitken, Tom, the guy who...  
The trusty sort of truth and the shield of...  
Fair play. So he was...  
Telly, yeah.  
So people who don't know what we're talking about.  
He was a Conservative Cabinet Minister in the 1990s, who fought a disastrous libel action.  
But he went out with Mrs. Thatcher's daughter, Carol, and made her cry.  
He did. A raffish Conservative MP.  
He ended up being in prison, didn't he, for perjury?  
Was it perjury?  
Yeah.  
And he had failed libel trial against the Guardian.  
So he was Oscar Wilde behavior.  
Very Oscar Wilde behavior.  
But he, in the 60s, was a very cool young journalist.  
And he wrote a book called The Young Meteors,  
which is actually for those people who are interested in this period.  
It is a tremendous read.  
It's a brilliant read.  
It's the best book on swinging London.  
He completely buys into this.  
He says, fashion has seized all the threads of the contemporary cults  
and woven them together in a strand that binds the entire younger generation  
with a new sense of identity and vitality.  
And he says...  
He's a vicar now.



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He is. I know. He's found God. He found God in prison.

Yeah. Man of the cloth.

So that's 1966 that he publishes that.

And now that we're in 1966, we should talk about the one person who was called the face of 66, who is...

We haven't talked about it at all.

And it's probably for some of our overseas listeners who know a bit about the 60s.

They may be wondering why haven't we mentioned the one female character who is more emblematic of all this than the other?

And that is, of course, Twiggy.

So are you a Twiggy fan, Tom?

Not particularly.

That is a shocking...

I don't really have strong views on Twiggy.

A shocking revelation.

I think Twiggy...

She's so famous that I'd never really stopped to think what her name actually meant.

Oh, really?

So her real name.

You know what her real name is?

Leslie Hornby.

But would you have known that if you didn't have my notes in front of you?

No, I wouldn't have known that.

So she's from Neesden.

And to give you a...

I mean, Neesden for our overseas listeners, it's a synonymous...

I'm not dissing Neesden.

But in Britain, it's kind of synonymous with suburban banality, isn't it?

Because Private Eye, the satirical magazine, uses it as a sort of...

The tittering public school boys at Private Eye.

Tom, you can't be dissing tittering public school boys on the rest is history.

That's the ultimate in self-fagilation.

So her dad is a carpenter at the Elstree Film Studios.

It's actually a sort of respectable working class, as people used to call it, aspirational household that she grows up in.

She wrote a memoir called Twiggy on Twiggy, or Twiggy by Twiggy in the late 60s, which I actually found incredibly interesting as a bit of social history, because she is an absolutely typical example of that sort of social type that we were talking about who drives this revolution.

She's a teenager in the early 60s.

She's obsessed with pop music, with telly, with dancing, with fashion.

She works on Saturdays at the local hairdressers.

She earns 30 shillings a week, and she spends almost all that on clothes.

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Her heroine, by the way, is Jean Shrimpton, Victor of the Battle of Melbourne.

She does her face in the sort of the white and black makeup.

What's remarkable about her is she's so androgynous.

So she's tiny.

Well, she's a twig.

I mean, she's five foot five or five foot six.

She weighs six and a half stone, shoe size four, dress size six.

She basically looks like a waif, like an urchin.

And she starts going out with this immensely amusing person

who knows her because his brother works in the barbers

next to the hairdressing salon where she works.

He calls himself Justin DeVille-Nerve.

But do you know what his real name is?

No.

Nigel Davis.

So Justin DeVille-Nerve, he's just a sort of a chancer really.

He starts going out with Leslie, as she's called.

And he says, I think you should try it as a model,

even though you're so skinny.

Now, most models, so that is during Shrimp Towns, they are posh, Tom.

Yeah.

They've been to the Lucy Clayton School of Modelling.

Yeah.

They've often been to private schools.

It's just a thing that you do if you're a kind of posh girl.

But the whole vibe of the mid 60s is classless, isn't it?

It's classless.

Leslie Hornby has not been to any of these things.

She's not been to the modeling school.

She is not posh, but basically she manages to get a foot in the door at a sort of cheap downmarket magazine called the Women's Mirror.

And in the course of this, there's a complicated origin story,

but in the course of this photo shoot, she goes and has a haircut in this salon and they give her this sort of, this cropped haircut.

All the stuff that we were talking about before about looking young

with the big eyes and the pale face, she has that already.

And especially with the cropped haircut, this way flight look.

She looks like an urchin from Oliver Twist.

She does a bit, doesn't she?

And the hairdressers put up photos of it because they're really struck by her appearance.

And a few days later, the fashion editor of the Daily Express,

who is called Deirdre McSharry, she goes in and she sees the photo and says, oh, who's that?

I want to get in touch with her.

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And so on the 23rd of February, 1966, in the middle of the Daily Express, kind of middle spread, there's a massive photograph of Leslie Hornby's face. And the headline says, Twiggy, the Cockney kid.

And have they made up the name, Twiggy?

No.

So her friends or Justin De Vilnerve, AKA Nigel Davis, called her that as a joke, but people love the name.

They think, oh, what a brilliant name.

The headline says, the Cockney kid with the face to launch a thousand shapes.

And she is going to be the face of 66.

The calm appraisal of a child or a Martian, a rare strange creature tranquil, composed almost bloodless.

Yeah.

One half orphan of the storm, the other purely aesthetic.

So people, as they were doing with the Beatles and stuff, I mean, obviously older people who are trying to look cool,

go completely bonkers and write these ridiculously pretentious analyses of her appeal.

But how do older women who can't emulate this kind of wave-like look?

I mean, how are they feeling about the fact that this is now being projected as the fashion that everyone should be following?

They're probably quite grumpy about it.

So there are lots of women who will say of the 60s,

I didn't have the shape for the 60s.

As there had been in the 20s, of course, with flappers,

there are lots of women who say all these new fashions actually make absolutely no allowance for how real women look.

Yeah.

Because Twiggy is so slight and so androgynous, that obviously most women don't look like her at all.

However, there is this kind of weird rejection of womanhood,

and especially I would say motherhood in the late 60s,

which is a rejection of the kind of housewife ethos of the 1950s.

And is that influenced by the coming of the pill, do you think?

No, because the pill hasn't really, the pill is not available to unmarried women until 1970.

Right.

But there is a sort of sense of sexual availability, I suppose, of a loosening of moral attitudes.

Obviously, more women in education there than women in the workforce in higher numbers.

But also, the becoming a parent is very ungroovy.

Very ungroovy.

The two things that are actually very ungroovy in the 60s are,

A, becoming a parent, and B, refusing to have sex with somebody.

So this is the whole thing about that people would now say,

and some people, by the way, did say at the time,

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that the sexual revolution is very one way,  
that the sexual dynamic of the late 1960s is actually quite predatory and quite unpleasant.  
I mean, you read these 60s manifestos written by counter-cultural people between 1965 and 1970.  
I mean, there's some pretty, yeah.  
I mean, sometimes we use the word pungent on this podcast to describe stuff we don't approve of.  
I think there's actually some pretty downright shocking and horrible  
stuff in those memoirs about young girls, all of this kind of thing.  
I mean, even actually, the Guardian, 1965, the point about very short skirts,  
white lace stockings and pantomime boots is that they separate the girls from the women.  
They say, I am young, I'm different, I am special.  
This sort of emphasis on being a young girl is a really central element of 60s fashion.  
Mary Quant, I grew up not wanting to grow up.  
Growing up seemed terrible.  
It meant having candy floss hair, stiletto heels, girdles, and great boobs.  
And all this sort of stuff.  
I mean, here's this, Mary Quant again.  
Now, this is unbelievable, Tom.  
There was a time when every girl under 20  
yearn to look like an experienced sophisticated 30.  
She writes this in 1966.  
All this is in reverse with a vengeance now.  
Suddenly, every girl with a hope of getting away with it is aiming to look not only under  
the voting age, but under the age of consent.  
And this sort of stuff about looking under the age of consent is everywhere.  
I mean, Mary Quant delights in this.  
She says, this is great.  
You're saying at the same time, because in the same thing, she says,  
the girl of today is standing there defiantly with her legs apart, saying, I'm very sexy.  
I enjoy sex.  
I feel provocative, but you're going to have to job to get me.  
I can't be bought, but if I want you, I'll have you.  
And this sort of emphasis on sexual availability  
and extreme youth to a 21st century reader is pretty, you know.  
But there's, I guess it's not actually a paradox perhaps,  
but one of the big kind of gear shifts in the 60s is between 66 and 67.  
And in 67, even as girls are still being encouraged to look very young,  
suddenly boys are growing enormous beards and hair sprouting everywhere.  
They are.  
And kind of becoming hypermasculine.  
That is a very big tonal shift.  
And just before we come onto that one last point about the girls,  
some people may think I am being too sensorious that the Cromwellian  
presenter of the rest of history is frowning on people's fun.  
But, you know, you read this, this is a 1965, an American reporter.

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He says, the great thing about England is that young English girls take to sex as if it's candy and it's delicious.

I mean, no one would write that now.

And actually even, I'm not back projecting because even at the time, there were people who said, this is not right.

And actually the most famous one of those is Germaine Greer.

So taking us back to Australia, Tom.

Yeah.

So this is the female unit.

The female unit at the end of the 1960s, I think it's 1970.

The female unit is partly about the image of the dolly bird that you see everywhere in the 1960s.

And she says, her dominion must not be thought to entail the rule of women, for she is not a woman.

She is a doll weeping, pouting or smiling, running or reclining.

She is a doll.

She is an idol formed of the concatenation of lines and masses, signifying the liniments of satisfied impotence.

She is, in other words, a female eunuch.

And I think now when you look back at that sort of the image of womanhood that is presented in the mid to late 60s, it looks to our eyes.

I mean, at the time celebrated as liberated and exciting, but to our eyes, I think it looks, don't you think, pretty exploitative and a bit distasteful?

I think we should take a break here.

And when we come back, the Lord Protector of the Restless History, the man who wants to ban the 60s, can cast his antifungase over a new figure in the cityscape of Swinging London, the hippie.

We'll see you in a few minutes.

Suddenly happiness is flower shaped.

The in things are Indian jackets and dresses, kimonos, Victorian dresses, elaborately patterned beaded and flowing 20s and 30s dresses, bell-bottomed trousers and brocade waistcoats. Plus, of course, those beads, bells and flowers.

That was the daily sketch in July 1967, the summer of love, the summer of Sergeant Pepper.

All you need is love.

And Dominic, 67 is a real kind of gear shift, isn't it?

It is.

I guess the female look of the 60s is mini skirts, and we've been talking about them.

But the male look probably paradigmatically is a hippie, beard, John Lennon glasses, kind of calf-dans.

Only from this point onwards, Tom.

Yeah.

So one of the things I really love about social and cultural history, lots of people don't do it enough, I think, is nailing down when the narrative.

So at what point do people start having beards?

You know, people are not wearing beads and bangles in 1965, but they are in 1968.

So when does that change?

So Sergeant Pepper, the Beatles are wearing moustaches but not beards.

Exactly.

And I think that is a huge change, by the way.

So the Beatles, we've mentioned them a few times in this, in these episodes, they're obviously a massive influence on all this because they are the chief exporters of a British look abroad.

But so Sergeant Pepper, they are working on it by the end of 1966, the beginning of 1967.

So at that point, when the kind of the Avengers, Dolly Bird, Gene Shrimpton, Twiggy look is at its height, the kind of op art, Glows of the Future, all that stuff.

They're going Victorian.

And they're going Victorian.

So that's one of the remarkable things about the Beatles, is they're always, you know, six months, two years, to two years ahead of everybody else.

The dominant motif of Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Car Band, which comes out that June, June 67, is the kind of late Victorian Edwardian music hall.

And so, again, we talked about Teddy Boys, didn't we, in the previous episode?

Yeah.

That there's obviously a kind of abiding appeal.

There is.

And the fascination with Victoriana, I think, is fair to say.

So there had been massive exhibitions on Alphonse Mucha and Aubrey Beardsley in 1963 and 1966.

People in the 60s, for the first time, really, they're taking the late Victorians seriously, rather than rejecting them.

So the Beatles' moustaches, are they Victorian, do you think, rather than being influenced by what people are growing in California?

Yeah, because the Beatles are growing there first, by the way.

## [Transcript] The Rest Is History / 364. Sixties Fashion: Swinging London

The Beatles are, I would argue, I mean, I'm not saying they're the first people in human history to have had moustaches, but they...

Well, no, because, you know, the British elites, British military men in the late Victorian period, paradigmatically have moustaches.

They are.

And it's part of the military uniform, actually, isn't it?

Because the Beatles are wearing uniforms on the cover of Sergeant Pepper.

And uniforms become very fashionable.

At about that point, 1967, the most famous shop where you can buy them is I Was Lord Kitchener's Valet, or I Was Lord Kitchener's Valet, which you would go to on the Port of L.A. Road.

And there you would buy, it's a sort of...

It's an ironic, imperial shop, isn't it?

Right, because Lord Kitchener is the figure on the recruiting poster at the beginning of the First World War.

Your country needs you and one of the paradigmatic imperial heroes.

Now, I think none of this would have been possible

if the British Empire had not, by this point, definitively been dissolved.

So, actually, when people even today say,

oh, Britain hasn't come to terms with the loss of empire,

I think, actually, Britain has come to terms with it perfectly well, by this point.

Because by this point, they're already making a great joke of it.

Yeah, they're ironizing it.

It's very funny.

They think it's a tremendous laugh to have imperial shops and to dress up in imperial...

To look like General Gordon, basically.

Okay, but a question.

So, what the British do during the imperial period is go to India, where they go around with moustaches and swagger sticks and kind of tell people what to do.

Whereas the Beatles famously go to India

and they dress in Indian clothes

and they get told what to do by the Maharishi.

I mean, lots of them don't like it.

Well, Ringo Starr, of course, travels Tom with his own baked beans because he doesn't trust the Indian food.

But is that the interest in dressing like in Indian fashions?

Is there any link to the kind of repudiation of the age of the Raj there, do you think, or not?

Would that be over-intellectualizing it?

I think it's more that there's always been a strain of Orientalism in British popular culture

that stretches right back to the Victorian period, maybe even beyond.

But that's bread of the empire, isn't it?

It's bread of the empire.

And it's still the reason...

I mean, why India?

Why Sittas?

Why the Maharishi?

Because, in a way...

It's familiar to British people.

It's familiar, they're prepped for it.

It seems the logic, it seems an understandable thing to do

that people go to India to seek enlightenment

because, of course, people have been doing that for rich Bohemian people.

So, do Indian fashions have the same impact outside Britain?

Or is it a distinctively British fashion, do you think?

I think it's...

When it goes to California, and then to America more widely,

I would say it's a general kind of ethnic look, isn't it?

There's a very much an ethnic what people...

I mean, that's the term that people would have used

in the late 1960s, early 1970s, rugs, bangles,

jostics, incense, statues of Hindu gods, eastern religions.

Now, obviously the United States at that point

doesn't have the same kind of relationship with India specifically  
as Britain does.

So, in the US, in California,

it might be mixed up with Native American stuff

and those kinds of things.

But, yeah, there's a fascination with the East

that comes in in the late 60s.

I mean, you can connect this, I think,

with a general reaction against industrial modernity

that is very pronounced in the late 60s.

That's part of the hippie thing.

So, hence the flowers?

The flowers.

Now, you've seen...

Everyone would have seen probably photos of people putting flowers,

anti-Vietnam War protesters putting flowers

into the rifles of National Guardsmen.

And I think Vietnam is part of this, actually.

But that's American, isn't it?

So, is there a sense as you move into, say, into 1968

that London's fashion crown is slipping



and passing to P. Snicks in America?

I think definitely.

So, by the beginning of 1968,  
the elements of this new look are already there.

The bell-bottom trousers, the flare trousers.

By the way, that's coming out of the uniform thing, the flares.

Right.

And that takes us back to the Regency period  
where the influence of the dress of the Royal Navy  
is very influential on the look of the English gentleman  
as it evolves.

And indeed, to our Trafalgar podcast, Tom,  
about the fascination of the Royal Navy  
and who would have thought only the rest is history  
can link from the fashions of 1968  
to a three-part series about Trafalgar,  
which I heartily commend to the listeners.

Because people have, you know, you had your flare trousers  
that made it easier to roll up your trouser legs  
when you were working on deck.

People start wearing the flare trousers, the beards,  
which look like Imperial heroes.

So, why are they wearing beard?

Is that just kind of logical, except if you've got a moustache  
and you might as well grow a beard?

I think so.

Because that's going beyond, obviously, a Victorian look.

There is an argument by some historians of fashion  
and sort of sociologists and things  
that people start wearing the beards  
because as men's fashion is becoming more feminized,  
so they're wearing lacy shirts, flowery scarves,  
Mick Jagger circa 1968 is wearing like a blouse or something.  
He's wearing a dress, isn't he?

Exactly.

All that stuff.

At the same time, you have a beard because it's saying,  
I'm still very much a man's man,  
even though I'm wearing a dress and, you know, I love flowers.  
Although Conchita would not agree with that.

Conchita versed the Eurovision champion.

Yes.

There's a dark waters Tom then, which I don't want to.

Let's row back from those.

## [Transcript] The Rest Is History / 364. Sixties Fashion: Swinging London

So, the idea of hippy, what's the word comes from?  
Hip, does it?  
Hip hipster, so black American words,  
African American words, then used by people like Norman Mailer  
to talk about white Americans are copying black culture.  
So, at that point, people are talking about hipsters  
and then that evolves into about 19...  
So, it's interesting.  
In 1965-66, American teenagers are copying British slang.  
They're saying things are groovy, you know.  
Gear.  
Gear.  
Yeah.  
All that fab, all that sort of stuff.  
And actually, even in provincial American cities,  
Des Moines, Iowa or somewhere,  
there will be shops called the Carnaby Store,  
the Soho Emporium.  
Yeah.  
You know, I was General Gordon's Batman.  
Whatever.  
You know, they're with that.  
But by 1967-68, that's no longer cool.  
And actually, the music, the British music,  
is no longer as cool as it was, actually.  
That you can judge that from the chart.  
It's the doors and...  
It's the doors, the grateful dead.  
It's a much more druggy, much more Californian sound, actually.  
California and San Francisco and LA have recaptured  
the sense of music, more momentum.  
But the language, the fashion,  
that is much more being driven from California.  
And the truth of the matter is,  
Carnaby Street is now a massive tourist trap.  
It's always been a bit of a tourist trap.  
So it's very uncool.  
It's, I mean, it's the uncoolest place in the world.  
It is.  
And, you know, going back to the origins of all this,  
Mary Quant, she opened her boutique bazaar in 1955.  
By 1968, who cares about 1955?  
I mean, it might as well have happened in the 13th century,  
as far as youngsters.

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Because the people who are the shoppers now,  
who are buying, who are 18,  
they were five when she opened her boutique.  
So what do they care about that look?  
But also there's a sense, I mean, to live through the 60s  
is to feel that you're kind of running up a down escalator  
in terms of keeping up with fashion, I imagine.  
I mean, it's changing at such a speed.  
Yes.  
And so obviously.  
Yeah.  
But also there's a tonal shift.  
It's less optimistic, I think, the late 60s.  
It's more conflicted.  
The economy is beginning to slow down.  
And actually, as you say, you're rushing to keep up with fashion.  
But one of the things we often forget  
is that even in this period,  
if we talk about our long 1960s,  
there were different generational cohorts.  
So if you're 18 in 1968, 69,  
what people were buying in 1963, 64  
just strikes you as ludicrously antiquated, laughable.  
You're not going to wear a PVC mini skirt in 1969,  
if you're very cool.  
I mean, obviously the truth of the matter  
is at any given moment, Tom.  
Most people aren't very cool.  
So I wrote about this in my book, *White Heat*,  
and ITV made a drama called *White Heat*  
about people living through the 60s.  
And basically, because I had the title,  
they felt it was actually a remarkable instance,  
probably the only instance in history,  
of a TV studio feeling on a bound.  
That's unheard of.  
To recompense me for the fact they had stolen my title.  
And the deal was they said,  
well, you can be the consultant to the series.  
So I went along to this meeting  
and they were describing, you know,  
it's going to be set in 1966.  
Everyone's going to be wearing, you know, astronauts clothes.  
And I said, and they said,

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they all said, what do you think?  
And I said, well, obviously,  
nobody would have worn those clothes.  
They all looked really boring  
and they all looked like people really look.  
They didn't want to hear that.  
That was the last meeting I was ever invited to.  
Sandbrook bucket of cold water.  
They said, what would people be listening to?  
I said, oh, probably the sound of music.  
Of course you did.  
Of course.  
That's your whole stick.  
It is.  
That's what you do.  
I would describe it as a stick,  
so much as a penetrating insight.  
An insight so good that you keep returning to it.  
That I keep returning to it,  
even when TV companies are asking,  
begging me to stay away.  
Okay.  
So this is all rather sad, then,  
that, you know, London had its time in the sun.  
It was swinging.  
It was groovy.  
It was gear.  
And now the sixties are ending  
and they're selling hippy wigs in Woolworths.  
Yeah.  
So unbelievably, you could buy.  
I love this detail.  
I must have found this in a magazine or something.  
An advert.  
Make the scene with these fantastic new raves.  
You can buy full side pieces, as they call them,  
and a false moustache made by poor white productions.  
Wow.  
Say, with or not I weren't joking.  
And here's the thing, Tom.  
The slogan says, as seen on TV.  
Who's wearing them on TV?  
It says, these Edwardian style sideburns  
are so realistic they're almost undetectable

and can be used time and time again.  
Please send a small cutting of your hair  
for colour and matching.  
Your shade will be matched as near as possible.  
That old scammy.  
And then there's a note that says, glue not included.  
Brilliant.  
Well, these people walking around with moustaches,  
glued onto their faces.  
It's very sad.  
At that point, you know that the spirit  
of the early boutiques is a long way away.  
The dream is over.  
Exactly.  
So there's a sort of efflorescence  
of these mad boutiques in the late sixties.  
So Granny takes a trip.  
The Beatles have one, don't they?  
The Apple store is a kind of, I mean, hopeless.  
People just running off with mad gizmos  
that don't work and things.  
And the most famous one of these.  
So the one that is always, always taken  
as the parable about what happens to sixties fashion  
is Bieber.  
You've heard of Bieber, obviously, Tom.  
They're such a slightly flower-powerish boutique.  
It's a remarkable, remarkable story.  
So it's run by somebody called Barbara Hulanicki.  
She was born to Polish parents.  
Her father was killed by the Stern gang.  
Goodness.  
In the 1940s.  
I'll tell you who else.  
Somebody we haven't talked about at all.  
Vidal Sassoon, the hairdresser.  
So he did kind of Mary Quant's hair  
in this very famous Bob.  
He fought in the Arab-Israeli War  
in the late 1940s and 1948.  
And he had been part of an anti-fascist sort of squad  
in London called the 43 Group  
who went around beating up British anti-Semitic fascists.  
Goodness.

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So there's this whole,  
anyway, this is a segue from Bieber.  
So Barbara Hulanicki,  
she had studied at Brighton Art College.  
She sold kind of very early sixties  
gingham dresses.  
And actually, she's really ahead of the curve  
because she can see, I suppose,  
because she recognizes this latent appetite  
for Victoriana and stuff.  
She opened Bieber, her shop, in 1964 in Kensington.  
And at the time, people say,  
oh, it looks like an Eastern souk.  
And it's full of tie-dyed stuff and maroon scarves  
and very dark colors.  
So it looks completely different from anything else.  
And she is well ahead of the game on all this.  
So Bieber is very cool to that extent.  
So in other words, it's selling the fashion of 1968,  
three or four years early.  
And by the end of the sixties,  
it's the most fashionable,  
the most celebrated of all London's clothing shops.  
So it gets celebrities,  
kind of Julie Christie, Brigitte Bardet,  
Mary Ann Faithful.  
They come and shop there.  
It's very cheap.  
They open a new store in 1966 in Kensington Church Street,  
as one journalist puts it,  
an estimated 3,000 dolly birds each week  
push through the heavy Victorian wood and brass doors,  
intent on dissipating their last shillings  
on the tempting sartorial baubles  
of the Aladdin's cave that lies within.  
They suffer massive problems,  
like all these shops do a shoplift thing.  
So because of the sort of grooving-ness, you know...  
Yeah, because it's far too...  
I mean, that's very blue meanies  
to have people stopping you shop there.  
Exactly.  
Very square.  
Exactly.

And they move into bigger and bigger shops.  
So they move into one in Kensington High Street in 1969.  
And that has got Egyptian columns and its marble floors.  
They get 100,000 customers a week.  
Their turnover is four times that of a department store.  
They are selling sunglasses, boots.  
It's the hippy look par excellence.  
You want to feather boa, Tom?  
Yeah.  
You're going to one of your events.  
You're going to a book event  
to publicize your new history of the Romans.  
Yeah.  
You might wear a cravat, a feather boa.  
Yeah.  
It's kind of Jimi Hendrix look.  
You'd have glued on those Edwardian side-beds.  
Yeah.  
You'd be wearing a kind of floppy hat of some kind,  
a sort of...  
Jimi Hendrix is exactly the look.  
Platform heels.  
Platform heels.  
Because I'm starting to mutate into Elton John, aren't I?  
I mean, that's the truth.  
The early 70s.  
The fashion best that is waiting.  
Yeah.  
Or for British listeners, you're basically...  
The fate that awaits you is Peter Wingard as Jason King.  
That's what you're going to turn into.  
Yes.  
It's all very depressing.  
And John Leiden will despise you.  
Yeah, he will.  
He wins you.  
Yeah, he will.  
That is what you're turning into.  
He will.  
So Bieber moved into a succession of ever bigger locations.  
And then in 1973, it moved into the former Derrion Tom's  
department store in Kensington High Street, Big Bieber.  
It was the first new department store in London  
since the Second World War.

And it's absolutely losing money hand over fist.  
And it closes, I think, 1975, I think.  
And that's it.  
The dream is over.  
So at that point, the early 70s, the 60s look has become...  
Obviously, nobody now is wearing miniskirts  
and is wearing sort of the mascaraed eyes  
and the twiggy look.  
I mean, all these people have disappeared from the headlines.  
The look is very decadent and sort of...  
You know, it's very over glamorous and over kind of lush and stuff  
in the early 70s.  
And then punk is this scene,  
is this tremendous breath of fresh air.  
And we should do a whole podcast about punk.  
Because I think punk's legacy is far more sartorial and design  
and kind of culture broadly than it is musical.  
And I think the look of punk is actually arguably more important  
even than the sound.  
Although punk, in turn, gets replaced by new romantics,  
who, again, are looking back at kind of the Edwardian Victorian.  
And so the cycle continues.  
Of course.  
And then you're back to the cravats and the floppy hats.  
And you can get out...  
I mean, you can't get out your Edwardian sideburns again, Tom.  
But the Feather boa that you'll abort in Bieber...  
That comes back.  
If you've still got it, 1982...  
Yep, going to hang out with Boy George and...  
Yeah.  
Exactly.  
Exactly.  
So I suppose by that point, by the 80s,  
60s fashion has been absorbed into the revolving door that is...  
And then into the 90s, you get the mods come back and...  
Exactly.  
And it just becomes endlessly recycled.  
I mean, I think there is a reasonable case,  
those people who argue that in music, in fashion,  
in design, that we're slightly stuck in a kind of  
endlessly repeating cycle.  
I think that's true, isn't it?  
That we still live in the shadow.



Well, that's the excitement of the 60s, isn't it?  
Is there is a genuine feeling that boundaries are being pushed  
and that new horizons are opening up,  
even if you may be skeptical about that.  
But I mean, there is a sense.  
Yeah.  
People have never looked like this before.  
That's the excitement of the miniskirt.  
Hence the vast historical significance of the Battle of Melbourne,  
as you pointed out.  
And where you and I would disagree, I think, Tom,  
our fund disagreement that we always have in the rest of history  
is you would probably be more interested in the ideas.  
And the intellectual side of that.  
And I think that's all actually ultimately driven by money  
and by the economy.  
No, I don't in any way dispute that.  
I think that fashion is absolutely driven by money.  
But you're always more interested in, you know,  
you like an abstract noun.  
I do like an abstract noun in the broad sweep of European history.  
I mean, absolutely.  
I think that the influence of ideas is vastly more influential.  
But I think in the context of 60s fashion,  
I think money, I completely buy your thesis.  
I mean, I read your books on it.  
I have no doubt that money is what is driving it.  
But having said that, you need the raw material of creativity  
and initiative and originality, which is what you do get in the 60s.  
And that's why we've done two programs on the fashion of the 60s  
and not say on the fashion of the 70s, 80s or 90s.  
And I think the 60s also gives us something that we've never lost.  
I can't see why or when we would lose it, which is the cult of youth.  
The fact that people remark on it so much in their 60s  
is a sign of how novel it is.  
The idea that youth, which previously, I guess,  
was associated with a lack of economic power.  
I slightly think that youth feels embattled now, though,  
in a way that hasn't done before.  
Yeah, I think that's a fair point.  
They're kind of the economies against younger people.  
And in fact, of course, it's the people who were young in the 60s  
who are now squatting in their enormously expensive houses  
and with their pensions.

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Yeah, you're right.

We've now spiraled off into general kind of saloon bar conversation.

But I think you can reasonably argue they're the most fortunate generation in history.

Yeah, you could do the boomers.

Even if you weren't a Carnaby Street habituator, which of course, 99% of people aren't, you've arguably enjoyed, I mean, of course, there've been ups and downs, but you've arguably enjoyed greater prestige, greater cultural prestige and greater economic opportunity than any other generation before or since.

Well, on that cheery note, if you are an elderly listener and depressing note, if you are a younger listener, we'd better leave Carnaby Street behind and groove off.

So, Tom, choose a look.

Am I male or female?

It's your choice.

Female. I would definitely dine a rig kind of thing.

Yeah, that's what I'd go for.

Kickboxing in miniskirts and boots.

Absolutely, absolutely.

That's exactly what I would like to see.

We'd look lovely.

We'd make a lovely pair.

So, the Sunday Times wanted to photograph us dressed up as Henry VIII and his wives.

I was against it, but if they had said, if the descendant of the pioneering Sunday Times color section of 1962 had said, we want you to dress as Mary Quanten, or it's Jean Strimpton and Twiggy, Tom, I would have been so up for that.

And actually, that's a standing invitation to other color supplements.

Dominic, I mean, I don't want to be offensive.

I don't want to sound rude, but I think you make an improbable Twiggy.

I'd be Jean Strimpton.

I would absolutely be Jean Strimpton.

I think do it counter-intuitively is the only way to do it.

Okay.

Okay, well, there's a terrifying thought, a mental image that listeners may find hard to get out of their head.

Thank you very much for listening.

Thank you, Dominic, for brilliant sweep through Swinging London.

And we'll be back very soon. Bye-bye.

Bye-bye.

## [Transcript] The Rest Is History / 364. Sixties Fashion: Swinging London

Hello, Rest is History listeners.

It's Anita Arnand from Empire Podcast, which I host along with me, William Dalrymple, and we are here to tell you about our brand new series on the Russian Empire and the Great Game.

So far in this series, we've told the story of Ivan the Terrible, who tortured and murdered his way through his reign somehow, being effective enough to unify Russia, but bonkers enough to stab his son right through the head. We've also done an episode on Rest is History fan favorite, Peter the Great, the recent runner-up on historical Love Island 2. No detail was spared.

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