

1970s Women's Fashion



In 1971 hot pants and bell-bottomed trousers were popular fashion trends. As is typical with most fashion eras, the female fashion trends take precedence when defining the styles of the era. Bell-bottom jeans rose to prominence during the disco era and continued to grow in popularity, and as that popularity grew, the width of the jeans increased. In addition to bell bottoms, women also popularized a style of shirt known as "peasant tops" as well as the iconic shoe of the era--platform wedges. Peasant tops were typically loose-fitting blouses that came in a vast array of colors and prints. Platform wedge shoes were the defining shoe of the era, worn by both men and women. While they varied in height, most averaged around 4 inches high.

The fashion trends of the era certainly redefined the way we thought about fashion in general, but the most dominant feature of 1970s disco fashion has to be color. Rising from the drab colors popularized in previous decades, **wild colors and prints rose to prominence during the disco era.** Women's blouses were typically adorned with wild prints that would have never been considered for clothing in the past. Men's clothes were not immune from the influx of color either, with bright colors dominating the fashion racks.



1970s Fashion included platform shoes which appeared on the fashion scene in 1971 and often had soles two to four inches thick. These were worn by both men and women. Wide-legged, flared jeans and trousers were another fashion mainstay for both sexes throughout most of the decade, and this style has been immortalized in the 1977 film *Saturday Night Fever*, which starred John Travolta. The "disco look", complete with three-piece suits for men and wrap-around rayon or jersey dresses for women, which the film further popularized,

Early 1970s

The decade began with a continuation of the androgynous hippie look from the 1960s. **Jeans remained frayed, and the Tie dye shirts and Mexican peasant blouses** were still popular.



By the early 1970s, **miniskirts** had reached an all-time popularity. This young English woman is wearing a fringed suede miniskirt

In addition to the mini skirt, mid-calf-length dresses called "midis" and ankle-length dresses called "**maxis**" were also worn in 1970 and 1971, thus offering women three different skirt lengths.^[1]

By 1970 women chose who they wanted to be and if they felt like wearing a short mini skirt one day and a maxi dress, midi skirt or hot pants the next day - that's what they did





HOT PANTS

THEN VS. NOW

In 1971, extremely brief, tight-fitting shorts, called **hot pants**, were a fashion craze for girls and young women. Throughout the period, trousers for both sexes, though flared at leg bottoms, were very tight and revealing from the lower thighs up.



From 1972–1974, fashions were inspired by extravagantly-dressed glam rock stars such as David Bowie, Roxy Music, and Marc Bolan.^[2] Glitter was in vogue. Women wore **high-waisted, flared satin trousers or denims**, the latter usually decorated with rhinestones, tight lurex **halter tops**, metallic-colored lamé and antique velvet dresses, satin hot pants, and sequined bra tops,.



For teenage girls and young women the **crop top** was often worn, sometimes with a halter neck or else tied in a knot above the midriff.

Trendy colors were dusty rose, Prussian blue, bottle green, rust, and brown.



Fashion influences were **peasant clothing**, such as blouses with laces or off-the-shoulder necklines, inspired by those worn in the 17th century. Yves St Laurent introduced the peasant look in 1976, and it became very influential. Skirts were gathered into tiers and shoulder lines dropped. Camisoles were worn. Clothing became very unstructured and fluid at this point. Embroidered clothing, either self-made or imported from Mexico or India also enjoyed favor. Floral-patterned prints were in fashion. **Fake-flower chokers** and hair combs were often worn with the **peasant skirts**.



Neck-scarves were also used.

The zippered jumpsuit was popular with both men and women,



JUMPSUITS

THEN VS. NOW



Leotards and clothing inspired by modern dance (wrap-around skirts and dresses of rayon or jersey) also became common.

The dancer's leotard became an important feminine fashion accessory in 1974, and remained in style throughout the decade. In the late 1970s the leotard had become a standard of the disco scene, where movement helped by an



throughout the the late 1970s the become a standard of the disco scene, flexibility and ease of were important. It was extensive advertising



campaign in the late 1970s by Danskin which promoted their leotards and tights as "not just for dancing". Celebrities of the 1970s also appeared regularly wearing leotards, including Joni Mitchell, Cher, and even Rod Stewart. The leotards popularity was still climbing at the end of the decade, and exploded with the Jane Fonda fitness craze.

The lower sleeves became fuller and fuller so that by the late 1970s they were similar to Victorian engage antes. Sometimes they were left open and

were known as an **Angel sleeve**.

The edging of the sleeve was often of the bordered fabric used in the main body of the garment. Richly patterned, border print fabrics were perfect for some of the simple garment shapes of the fashion era.





The ethnic influence was so strong that it revived craft skills from far flung places.

Macramé bags and bikinis from the Greek Isles and crochet waistcoats and shawls from Spain were all

high fashion **Gypsy tops** with drawn up necklines trimmed with bells and puffed sleeves were made in cheesecloth or light cottons. A peasant fashion for eyelets with lacing, oversized ric rac braid with false bib parts of blouses became universal.



It was during the 1970s **that friendship bracelets** first became fashionable. These hand braided bracelets made from coloured yarns were initially made by teenagers. As the 1970s fashion for teaching friends how to do it flagged, street sellers started to make income from the craft by weaving bracelets to order, as customers waited. The bracelets started as fine strips no wider than 6mm, but by 2001 they were often as wide as 2cm





Flared jeans

were worn with platform shoes in the mid-1970s

Pants began gently flared and reached wide bell bottom proportions by about 1975. After which they slowly reduced to straight and wide until by the end of the seventies they were finally narrow again. Popular fabrics included heavy crepes, wool jersey knits, Courtele



jersey and woven Polyester suiting such as Trevira. Emerald green, apple green and bottle green were all favored fashion colors of the early 1970s. Right - Green trouser suit pattern of 1971. This style of **trouser suit with a hip length tunic**, was very typical of fashion trends of 1971 and 1972.

Heavy crepes used to make wide legged trousers. **Elephant Pants** often emulated the Chanel trousers of the 1930s They were worn with small knitted short vests or scoop neck tank tops. Waistcoats were popular in any length from traditional, to hip length to maxi.



1970s Evening Wear

For eveningwear women often wore **full length maxi dresses**, evening trousers or glamorous **halter neck cat-suits**. Some of the dresses oozed Motown glamour, others less so.



One frequently worn style was the **Granny dress** with a high neck. Sometimes the stand neck was pie-crust frilled, or lace trimmed. Often they were made from a **floral print** design in a warm brushed fabric or viscose rayon crepe which draped and gathered well into empire line styles.



For evening in the early seventies, either straight or flared **Empire line dresses** with a sequined fabric bodice and exotic sleeves were the style for a dressy occasion.



Another hugely successful evening style of the 1970s was the **halter neck dress**, either maxi or above knee.



The jersey wrap dress, first designed by Diane von Fürstenberg in 1971, became an extremely popular item, as it flattered a number of different body types and sizes, and could be worn both to the office, as well as to nightclubs and discos



70s Disco Fashion

Late 1970s

With the popularization of disco and the increasing availability and diversity man-made fabrics, a drastic change occurred in mainstream fashion, the likes of which had not been seen since the 1920s. All styles of clothing were affected by the **disco style**, especially those of men. Men began to wear **stylish three-piece suits** (which became available in a bewildering variety of colors) which were characterized by wide lapels, wide legged or flared trousers, and high-rise waistcoats (US vests). Neckties became wider and bolder, and shirt collars became long and pointed in a style reminiscent of the "Barrymore" collar that had been popular in the 1920s.



By the 1970s the disco scene was huge and performance dancing was popular with variations of the shake still around with Jazz tap as the new energy. Disco dance clubs created a venue for a new kind of clothing called disco wear which was based on **stretch clothes and light reflecting fabrics** that shone under disco lighting.





Disco looks began in the 1970s and was memorable for its **hot pants** look and **Spandex tops**. Shiny clinging Lycra stretch disco pants in hot strident shiny colors with **stretch sequin bandeau tops** were often adaptations of professional modern dance wear that found itself making an impact in discos as disco dancing became serious. Gold lame, leopard skin and **stretch halter jumpsuits** and **white clothes that glowed in Ultra Violet lights** capture the 70s Disco fashion perfectly.



Disco gave way to dress codes and a door screening policy. **People had to have tried to look right to gain entry to clubs. Disco wear was never acceptable for day wear, but for night it was the only possible wear to enable the participants to be part of the action**, to be part of the atmosphere of strobe lighting, mirror balls and spotlighting of individuals at any time. Satin jackets that reflected the light and a medallion resting on a tanned chest in an open neck shirt with the collar turned up were de rigueur, however awful such fashions might seem now. The latter is a fashion male individuals will never admit they followed, yet for many men it was the equivalent of the iPod accessory or mobile phone of today.

Films like Saturday Night Fever of 1977 as John Travolta, emphasized how important it was to release all the pent up energy of the working week on the weekend. Posing clothes designed to show off the body and made in materials like figure molding stretch Lycra were ideal.



The elevation provided by **platform soled shoes** which were the epitome of the spirit of the seventies, also gave an air of theatrical space age fantasy as individuals in Lurex and satin flared silver trousers shimmered as they swayed to the music beat.

Platform Soled Shoes



In the early 1970s platform shoes started with a quite slim sole which moved from ¼ inch up to about 4 inches at the peak of popularity. When they were that high, individuals frequently got friendly cobblers or handy men to hollow out cheese holes from the sole base. A platform shoe with a 1 inch sole was quite comfortable to wear stopping the development of hard skin and feeling small stones through the soles.

By the mid-seventies the most ordinary people were wearing two inch deep platforms without a second thought at about the same time, **clogs** became popular as they followed the trend for chunkiness of sole.



Women's shoes began to echo the 1940s, with high-heeled lower-platform **mules**--"Candies" made of molded plastic with a single leather strap over the ball of the foot or "**BareTraps**" made of wood becoming very popular.





Photo: Style.com



Yes, these are all Vintage. Look familiar?





For those who still liked to show a leg, it became tasteful in the early 70s to wear creamy white tights with black patent shoes.

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