

Sensationally 70s

Pink hair and feathered kaftans, over-the-top hats and going out without knickers... such was the 1970s. Four women who pushed fashion to the brink during its most memorable decade look back. By *Ellen Burney*



Clockwise from above left With Bianca Jagger in 1978; pink-haired the same year; pre-punky in '74; in the early '70s, wearing shoes from Manolo Blahnik's first collection. Below A dress with a classic Rhodes pointy neckline

'My business partner said, "Hide, because you frighten the buyers. You are so extreme"'



From left Birtwell in one of her signature relaxed floral-print creations in 1970; with husband Ossie Clark and their sons in 1971; a sketch for one of her dresses – "I have a weak spot for embroidery"



Rex Features, Getty, © David Hockney, photograph by Richard Schmidt, Zandra Rhodes main photo: Robyn Beecher; make-up: Richard Sharah; hair: Leonard, Richard Young

Celia Birtwell

Textile designer and ex-wife of fashion designer Ossie Clark



I wouldn't ever go away at the weekend during the 1970s as I had to go to Portobello Market every Saturday morning. I bought lots of vintage there – lots of jersey jackets. I would never wear vintage clothes now but I still go to car-boot sales on Sunday mornings in the country. Back then I wore an eclectic mix of vintage and Ossie Clark, and a lot of the Puritan look I've

always liked, with high collars. I had a lot of Romanian embroidered blouses and some that I found in Greece when travelling. I have a weak spot for embroidery and had a dirndl skirt with poppies and wheatgrasses around the edges that I loved. I've always been keen on – and quite particular about – fashion, but my look was modest. I was a mother in the '70s, so I had to move about an awful lot and my clothes reflected that. I went for nice comfy fabrics, and I was always a bit plump so I chose things that were flattering. I love stripes and was a big Agnès b fan.

For parties I wore Ossie's chiffon blouses and the little black suits that he made especially for me that were understated and well cut. Plus I had some glamorous dresses; I remember a very nice bib dress with a suede front in black crêpe that I would wear with some rather ridiculous shoes. David Hockney's *Mr and Mrs Clark and Percy* was painted in 1971 in my living room and I wore a black crêpe dress to pose for it. Around that time I also liked a long-sleeved, pale-pink dress with a green-leaf print and rick-rack trim. I loved to wear brooches and I had a necklace I adored – art deco,

I think – on a black cord that I could move the pieces around on. But we all have our own ideals and followed people with similar style. My muses were the cool girls I'd see around Notting Hill or in Paris. Lots of people wanted to look like Faye Dunaway in *Bonnie and Clyde* at that time too. I considered myself alternative, but then I went to art school and lots of people there dressed like me.

Zandra Rhodes

Fashion designer



I lived in Notting Hill Gate during the 1970s. It was very "flower power". My hair was green and I had feathers on the ends. I suppose I did look extreme but I didn't see it that way – I think I was born with a very thick skin. I believe that as a designer you should wear – and be – what you are designing. I believed in my textiles and how they translated into garments and I wanted to show them to the world. Then I found people kept

ringing me up, wanting to buy my clothes. In the late '60s, Sandie Shaw wore one of my pieces on *Top of the Pops*. One minute, Sylvia Ayton, my first business partner, was saying, "Hide, because you frighten the buyers. You are so extreme." The next, David Bailey was shooting my clothes and the models were telling me I needed to hit America. Famous people were knocking on the door of my Paddington studio. Baby Jane Holzer [one of Andy Warhol's "superstars"] came round. Peter Sellers brought Britt Ekland. I was flown to Paris to deliver a quilted kaftan to Paloma Picasso. I went to a party at Blenheim Palace

thrown by Mick Jagger, where Bianca Jagger appeared like a fabulous dream wearing my cream crinoline dress printed with seashells. Divine! The kaftans I made showed my prints to their full advantage. I wore them with high white boots, or a long, printed felt coat with beads hanging from the collar. When I was working, I wore a long kaftan with belts made from antique carpets and my high canvas Biba boots. Sometimes I wore turbans, too! A pink chiffon piece with feathers that Bianca Jagger wore

was a favourite: the chevron-print coat and chiffon jacket were both cut out around the print, making fronds to which I attached feathers. I didn't distinguish between day and evening dress. I might have worn my evening chiffons in the day – they had tiny satin bodices and voluminous chiffon swags or pointed chiffon with feathers. Otherwise, I'd just wear flowing kaftans with scarves on my head. I never wore anything other than my own clothes. I felt free as a bird to experiment and do as I liked. I'd look into the mirror and be me!



Molly Parkin
Fashion journalist



The world of fashion was very exciting in the 1970s and the designers were my friends. I discovered Manolo Blahnik and put him in print when I was fashion editor at *The Sunday Times*. I wore his very, very high heels in black and scarlet and I wore a lot of Biba, too – I'd started making hats for Barbara Hulanicki in the 1960s and she remains one of my best friends today. I liked Andrew Logan brooches and Zandra Rhodes chiffons. I've always been committed to colour, to magenta and violet. Musicals are a huge passion and my greatest influence was Carmen Miranda. I never had a stylist to dress me, never wore jeans or informal clothes.

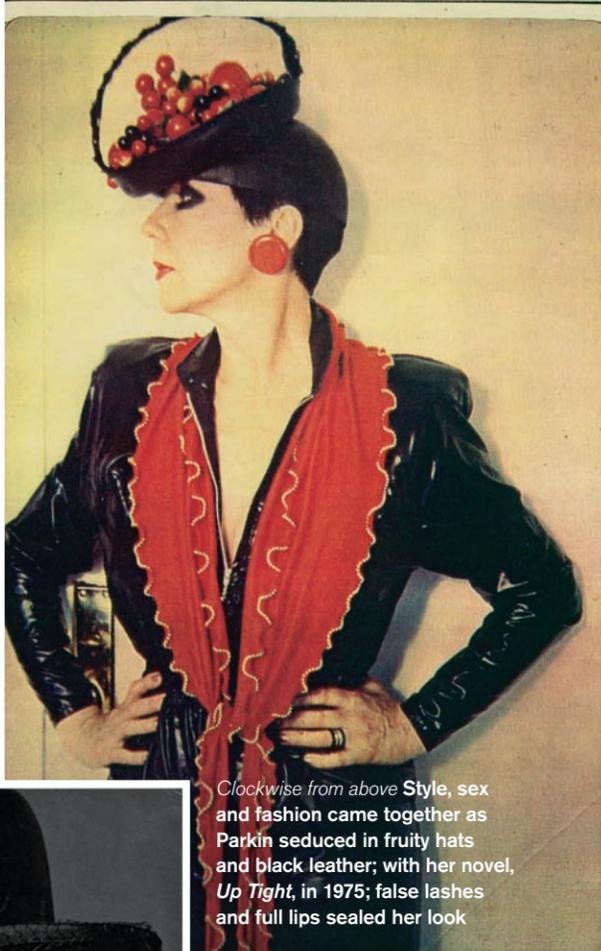
In 1979 I moved to Manhattan and lived in the Chelsea Hotel for a year. Large shoulder pads were a thing and I had a glossy silk jersey, step-in jumpsuit that was very tight – I was in sublime shape at the time as I was swimming 40 lengths every day. Underneath it I wore a black French lace bra from Rose Lewis in Knightsbridge and no knickers – I didn't want to have a line. Roger at Vidal Sassoon in London cut my hair; he gave me a long fringe, hair tight to the skull and dyed it black. Fortunately, he moved to New York at the same time as me and managed the salon there.

I was very good with make-up because I'd been a painter. I loved all the Biba lipsticks and wore scarlet lips, nails by Lancôme and black false lashes, top and bottom. My perfume was Shalimar.

I always did – and still do – start getting dressed with a hat. All of my hats were by David Shilling and sometimes I would swap them for one of my second husband Patrick Hughes' paintings. My favourite was made with very fine French

straw in the shape of a basket of cherries (right). Shilling had French women down in the basement making them.

Since I had a fall I haven't been able to wear Manolo's shoes, so now the hats I make are very tall to give me extra height. I've been dressing this way since I was aged about seven, when I found a wardrobe full of my grandmother's silky things, beautiful laces and satin shoes. I'd wear them to collect the rents from houses she owned in Wales and I loved the floating feeling they gave me. Even now, whenever I try things on in front of the mirror, it is all with that little girl in mind.



Clockwise from above Style, sex and fashion came together as Parkin seduced in fruity hats and black leather; with her novel, *Up Tight*, in 1975; false lashes and full lips sealed her look



Clockwise from left Wearing cheesecloth and velvet, around 1970; in dungarees bought on the King's Road; Paris in 1970; with Justin de Villeneuve in '75



HOW THE 1970s STILL ROCK FOR AUTUMN/WINTER 15



Jan de Villeneuve

Model and ex-wife of Justin de Villeneuve, who discovered Twiggy



I spent the summer of 1970 in London modelling for British *Vogue*. The hairdresser Leonard [known as "Leonard of Mayfair"] gave me a fabulous cut: short and feathered on top and longer below, and Daniel Galvin did the perfect blonde highlights. After the miniskirts became longer, which I liked, and I wore lots of sheer, floaty frocks, Liberty-print skirts with

embroidered peasant blouses.

I had Mr Freedom dungarees – both long ones and hot pants – in velvet and also cotton with childlike prints. Another favourite was a long-sleeved, full-skirted dress by Tommy Roberts for Mr Freedom that was royal blue with a flower print all over. I wore it with his pink suede bolero jacket with grapes appliquéd on the back, along with a leather belt with appliqué and ribbons tying it on... and Swedish clogs!

I wore anything from Biba, particularly the T-shirts in every colour with tiny buttons top to bottom, and her great suede boots. I had wonderful accessories from Pablo & Delia

– leather belts and necklaces with beads and feathers.

I loved short shorts for warm weather and French bathing suits from Eres. In the early '70s I liked Ossie Clark, Biba, Fiorucci, Dorothee Bis, and later in the '70s, Zandra Rhodes, Kenzo and Halston. I wore Thea Porter frocks in the evenings and still have three stunning long dresses of hers.

The designer I wore most in the mid-1970s was Bill Gibb, who became a friend. I helped him out modelling one summer and he paid me in clothes – I got the wardrobe of a lifetime!

I loved Victorian vintage pieces too, which I first discovered on a David Bailey

shoot with Jean Shrimpton for US *Vogue* in 1969. We were in Hawaii and she appeared each day in a lovely vintage outfit – pretty old skirts and tops.

I shopped at Chelsea Antiques Market and Antiquarius, both on King's Road. British fashion seemed far ahead of the US. It was more individual and eccentric. In 1971 I was refused entry to a restaurant in San Francisco for being "too Mod"! I had on a long Liberty-print skirt, a white peasant blouse and a cardigan. Strangely enough, a lady wearing a skimpy two-piece leopard-print outfit with midriff showing was allowed in – I had to borrow a trench coat. ●