

Fashion: Italians go back to the future

BY DANIELA PETROFF
AP FASHION WRITER

ROME (AP) — It's back to the future for fashion in 1996, with Italian designers taking a new look at the mod styles of the 1950s and 1960s for their spring-summer collections.

Sometimes feminine, often funky, the oldies but goodies will all return—shifts, shirt-waists, caftans, hip-huggers and hot pants.

These styles are updated mainly through technological advances—combinations of synthetics and silks, which create new textures.

The most futuristic is the super-stretch lurex in shimmering shades, which will positively blaze in the summer sun.

Just like in the heydays of Audrey Hepburn and Jacqueline Kennedy, Brigitte Bardot and Marilyn Monroe, Bob Dylan and the Beatles, the look is a combination of top-drawer chic and counter-culture cool.

Neat little suits with short belted jackets and proper mid-knee hemlines, country club shirt dresses and polo shirts will share the closet with bell-bottoms and wide-lapeled pantsuits, cropped lurex T-shirts, caftans and pedal pushers.

Waistlines are either demurely cinched, dropped or bared to hug the hip and reveal the navel.

1996 marks the year of the bejeweled belly button, a fad started by Naomi Campbell during the spring-summer showings in Milan last October.

Small shoulder purses, thick-heeled pumps or posh suburban footwear—loafers and buckskins—and oversized plastic jewelry complete the vintage picture.

Hairdos range from the debutante page boy and ponytail to other-side-of-the-tracks wild and frizzy styles.

Speaking of debutantes, they will all be coming out again in 1996 in a series of dainty chiffon gowns and pretty floral printed petticoat dresses.

For the more aggressive set, the Italian designers unleash a myriad of spotted and striped prints. This, too, is a revival item, as are the shocking lime pink and yellow shades—certainly not familiar in normally understated Milan.

The revival look when previewed in October was met with mixed reviews.

"Seeing it all over again reminded me of how awful the look was way back then," said Mary Lou Luther, a veteran U.S. fashion editor who writes a syndicated fashion column.

But the young set, which is now rediscovering the Beatles and lapping up such film favorites as "Breakfast at Tiffany's" and "Some Like It Hot" on TV, are sure to make the look their own.

Junior fashion followers have already shown their enthusiasm for past looks by snapping up all the thick-heeled 1940s pumps launched this winter.

The bad news for this spring is that curves, bosoms and bottoms are out again to return to a Twiggy ironing board silhouette. So now that the Christmas season is over, a rigorous diet is a must.

On the good side, local thrift shops are sure to have a wide selection of vintage apparel at affordable prices.

How Italian designers interpret the spring look depends largely on their trademark styles.

It is easy for Valentino, the late Jacqueline Kennedy's favorite designer, to revive the best in 1960s feminine chic.

His second-line Oliver collection features dainty prints, petticoat dresses and jumpsuits worn under short jackets.



Gucci, known for its classic styles, puts some new zing into a stuffy country club wardrobe. The horsy set will now sport see-through polo shirts, shirt dresses, rushes and lace for country club dinner dances.

Doing the 1960s for the first time are Milan's trendiest designers, Dolce and Gabbana, mere babes-in-arms when the Beatles first made music history.

Their strongest summer style is the pantsuit with low waisted bell-bottom pants and long, wide-lapeled double-breasted jacket. Ultra short shiny vinyl skirts worn with lurex T-shirts are also typical 1960s fare.

Giorgio Armani shuns most of the mod fashions, sticking to his tailored suits in understated shades. Nighttime, however, is a modern debutante's dream of diaphanous pastel-colored chiffon ball gowns.

Gianni Versace offers the most modern version of the revival look. He does it with 1990s flair, which means gold buttons, fitted bodices and see-through skirts. Versace's favorite shock color is lime green. But the new Versace suit with short jacket and just-above-the-knee hemline comes in sedate navy blue or demure apricot.

The most low-key and low-waisted collection of the season is Prada. Full of polo shirts, shifts and shirt dresses, the styles are drab, as are the anything-but-spring-like colors: chestnut brown, grape purple and olive green.

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3. Chicken Soup For The Soul, by Jack Canfield and Mark Victor Hansen. (Health Communications, \$12.00.) Stories for heart & spirit.
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Edited by Stanley Newman
FILM FINERY: Dressed-up movies
by Shirley Soloway

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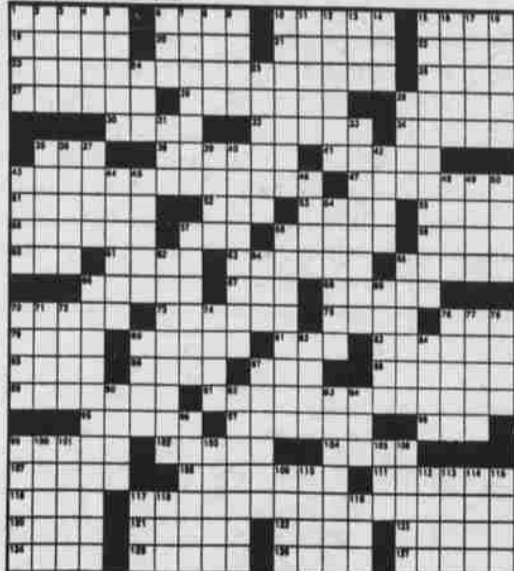
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