

WHAT·U·WEAR

by Jerome Ryckborst

Fashion models are just dumb twits. They are walking, smiling clothes racks. Nothing more.

Most Edmonton models start out in the business by taking a course at an agency. They pay big bucks to learn how to be a real model: around \$500 just for the first starter course.

Modelling is an essential, even crucial part of today's fashion industry. Studies show that while most people think fashion *should* not matter, it sure as hell does, and we all know it.

Models know it too. Modelling can be learned, but it's a dead-end business unless you have the looks. How does it feel to know your employability depends entirely on your looks?

In one study, Edmonton models avoided the issue completely. Instead they stressed how difficult it is to be a model. Why, you have to: a) get to work on time, b) get changed in five seconds flat every two minutes, c) smile, walk, and basically look like hot shit.

Auto-biographies of famous New York



Fashion fun at HUB photo Norm Selleck

models tell us that models may appear outwardly confident, but this is seldom a true reflection of a model's self-image. When they can't get work they blame their looks. When they *do* get work they are only what the photographer makes them out to be. "It's very easy to lose sight of what you really are."

The average model is up there on the runway, knowing she's envied by every woman and coveted by every man in the room. Models talk of "cut-throat competition" and the "tremendous pressure to stay thin." Models make it clear they consider their job a tough and legitimate profession.

But in truth, local models don't have the faintest idea what it is they do for the fashion industry. Some models can't even answer a simple question like: "Why do people hire models?"

If models had an understanding of their role in the industry, they could be more professional and effective. More importantly, they might also realize their self-esteem should not be a function of *how much* or *what type* of work they get. Perhaps it is time for Edmonton modelling agencies to start teaching their models some reality instead of selling them a glamorous dream.

Models are essential in fashion marketing. Designers and merchandisers use models to introduce new styles to the consumer. These walking, living beauties embody our ideals. It is possible to be beautiful, thin, and glamorous. Models prove it. Consumers identify with these models, buy what they're selling, and attribute the models' positive characteristics to themselves. We want to be beautiful like the model so we chew gum, drink pop, wash our hair with the same brands the model uses.

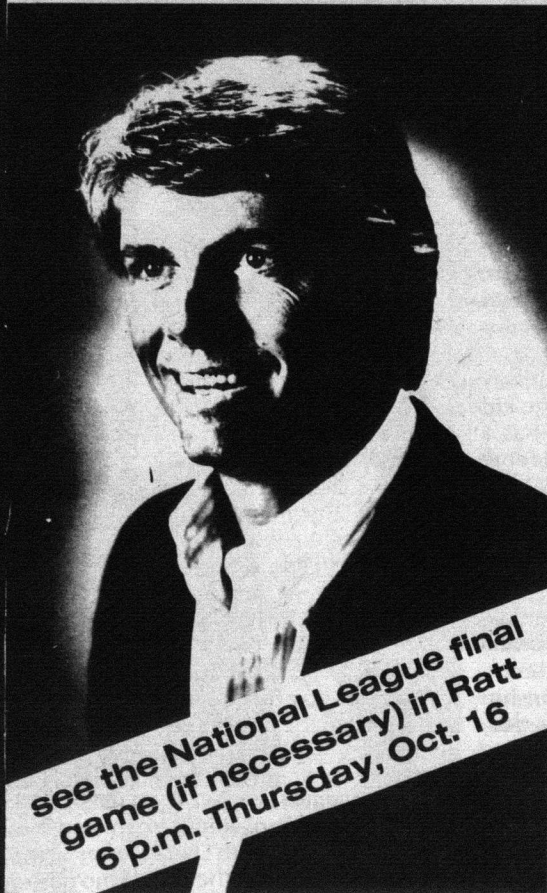
Models are the catalysts which change the public's image of the fashion ideal: what's in style now, what's next. Any merchandiser realizes the tremendous selling power that fashion models have. It is an extremely effective medium: "real-live" people showing us what to wear and how to wear it. Retailers are wise to use such an effective tool. It works!

I'm glad to see local retailers using models more often. Strathcona clothing retailers recently held a fashion show with models walking up and down Whyte Avenue. This is an unusual approach which may prove more effective than just walking models on a runway. Consumers are exposed to these models in a real situation — walking down the sidewalk. This tells potential customers that people actually wear this stuff out in public!

HUB MALL is also in on the action. Students were given a visual treat last Thursday and Friday. The fashion show gave us a look at the wide variety of clothing available in the mall. I was surprised. Many of us discovered that HUB has fashion, fun, and clothing basics too. Good for the retailers! Using models is a great way to promote their products. ■

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