

# WHAT U WEAR

THE FASHION TRADITION

by Jerome Ryckborst

Fashion changes fast. In fact, styles change faster today than ever before. We reject tradition in favor of a passing fad. One of the main forces behind the fashion revolution of the last century is technology.

Technology allows faster production and



faster dissemination of fashion. Mass production was the first step in the process. The reorganization of the workforce allowed large factories and assembly line manufacturing. During the industrial revolution the population increased and migrated to urban areas, since new methods of production required large groups of employable people.

Urbanization made the exchange of information much simpler, faster and effective. You could see what your neighbours — thousands of them — were wearing, doing, etc. Before you know it everybody was 'keeping up with the Jones'. The development of the mass-media introduced cost effective advertising. Print, followed by radio and t.v. were all possible because of technological advance.

Soon another brilliant idea came along: fashion obsolescence. A combination of 'keep up with the Jones' and advertising soon had consumers used to the idea that something could be out-of-style before it was worn out. Advertising changed traditional attitudes.

Advertising does work. He who advertises can make it big overnight. These days ads don't just sell us a product, they sell a life style. Even beer ads pay attention to clothing. Certainly commercial music and fashion are in bed together. Hi-tech music videos sell a product, but also a more abstract feeling (fun? sex? illusion?).

Some people disagree that technology is solely responsible for our fanatic insistence on change. We frantically follow the latest trend not because the media sells it to us. Rather, our constant adoption of new styles supposedly reflects a searching, a political unrest. In politically turbulent times fashion changes much faster than in stable times.

Politics definitely has had an influence on clothing throughout history. A few hundred years ago in Europe everything from the colour purple to the length of one's pointy-toed shoes was legally restricted. The ruling classes passed sumptuary laws to ensure no lower classed citizen could dress above their status. Only royalty were allowed to dress like royalty. Prostitutes had to wear certain colours and styles by law.

While technology and politics may both

cause more rapid fashion change, it can certainly be argued that *technology* causes *political instability*.

Technology then, keeps us changing. That makes sense. It not only restructures society, it is changing our approach to change itself.

We are encouraged to open our minds to new ideas. We used to equate fashion with rapid change, and tradition with conservative stability.

Now it seems change has become the tradition.

## Black Widow crawls

*Black Widow*  
Odeon, Westmount, Cinemas 6  
review by William E. Mah

*Black Widow* is a re-telling of the old Bluebeard tale, with the roles reversed. In this aspiring suspense thriller, directed by Bob Rafelson, a beautiful, cunning woman marries, then murders, a string of wealthy husbands. Each time, she assumes a new identity, and each time, the deaths appear accidental. She, in turn, is pursued across America by a female federal agent who, appropriately enough, tries to snare her suspect by befriending her and her would-be victim. But as it turns out, she herself gets ensnared by becoming emotionally involved. This basic premise is original and intriguing. The performances of Debra Winger and Theresa Russell (*Insignificance*, *The Razor's Edge*) are both strong. Yet for all its promise, *Black Widow* is an irritating let-down.

This film goes nowhere in a hurry. Rafelson, famous for his far superior *Five Easy Pieces* and *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, skips and skims along the surface neglecting essentials like character development and motivation. For a supposed psychological thriller, *Black Widow* never explains nor explores in any depth its villainess, its victims, or its heroine. Obvious questions go blatantly unanswered. We never see how or why Russell as the femme fatale captivates her men, or why no man can resist whatever it is that she does do. All this gives the movie a forced and superficial feel.

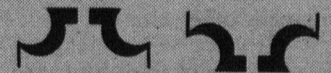
Potentially revealing relationships with Russell's lovers are joined in progress and abruptly cut short. As a result, we care little about their overly antiseptic, off-screen deaths. Wasted in their husband roles are

talented actors Nicol Williamson and Dennis Hopper. After such a chilling performance in *Blue Velvet*, Hopper's part here is little more than a walk-on.

Even more frustrating for the viewer is the vague relationship between the cruel and sensuous Russell and the more earthy Winger. Generally, they act like college room-mates: shopping, sharing clothes and going to parties. They even share the same man: There are, however, faint, half-hearted hints at homosexuality which, if only allowed to blossom, would have bound the heroine, and the viewer, in an interesting dilemma. But as handled by Rafelson, it becomes just another lost opportunity.

Because the audience isn't involved in *Black Widow* emotionally, we watch it with a more intellectual eye. Under scrutiny, *Black Widow* looks silly and far-fetched. After reading several books, Russell becomes an expert on Native culture, totally fooling her lover, a respected anthropologist. Another husband plans to build a hotel on the slopes of an active Hawaiian volcano. Meanwhile, undercover agent Winger gives her murderous friend a wedding gift — a black widow brooch. Since everyone knows that female black widows devour their mates, she casually and effectively blows her hard earned cover.

*Black Widow* succeeds only at the technical production level. The cinematography by Conrad Hall, is stylish and the acting competent. This, however, is only hollow success, for *Black Widow* is otherwise disappointingly mediocre.



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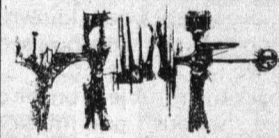
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- VP Academic
- VP External Affairs
- VP Finance & Administration
- VP Internal Affairs

### UNIVERSITY ATHLETIC BOARD:

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- VP Men's Athletics
- VP Women's Athletics

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- 1 Student Representative

### Nominations Close:

1700 hrs. Tuesday, February 24, 1987

### Candidates Meeting

1700 hrs. Tuesday, February 24, 1987

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