

Haute couture a la Central Square

Leora Aisenberg

Svelte young women with prominent cheekbones parade through the crowd, wearing the latest Gucci tops and Yves St. Laurent pants. Thin, successful looking men hurry to seemingly important destinations, wearing Daniel Hechter trousers and carrying Louis Vuitton briefcases. Is it the stage of a "haute couture" fashion show in Paris? Or, perhaps, a delegation from Studio 54? Strange as it may seem, the location is noon other than Central Square, on the York campus.

Of course, not everyone at York avidly follows *Vogue* magazine like the Bible. There are a lot of Levi diehards—men and women who would rather go naked than swap their t-shirts and faded jeans for the latest chic apparel. Rob Lanni, a first year student, fits this category. When interviewed, Rob was wearing jeans and a Mickey Mouse t-shirt. He claims that the way he dresses is comfortable, as well as economical. Says Rob, "If I dress up to go to school, I feel like an idiot. It's just not me."

Modified punk is another look at York. Kristi Manuel advocates

freedom and originality in university fashion. "I dress as originally as possible to suit my own tastes, because I got fed up with having to delight the masses



in high school," says Kristi. One of her typical outfits consists of a long white t-shirt, knee-length,

red Capri pants with black polka dots, spiked heel "mules" that have a band of paper leopard skin stretched across the toe, grey knee socks, and an oversized blazer that used to belong to her father. Clark Kent glasses (a version of Annie Hall specs), pink eyeshadow, and bright red lipstick provide the finishing touches to this individual look.

Although there are some exceptions, the majority of students dress according to trends (which no one seems to know who sets). Straight leg pants are "in"; the only wide legs belong to the bodies of Stong College. Running shoes are acceptable, if they are Nikes, or if they go above the ankle. Baseball and football shirts are prevalent as well. Ironically, flat lace-up shoes have become fashionable, although five years ago we would have laughed at our grandmothers for wearing them.

Indeed, some fashions are dictated by nostalgia, judging by all the York students who look like they just stepped out of the forties. For women, loose blazers with padded shoulders, straight skirts with slits to show off Betty Grable legs, and even seamed stockings are appearing in lecture halls.

However, much of today's

stylish attire results solely from a unique phenomenon of the seventies — disco. Girls boogie across campus, clothed in tight Spandex leggings that come in an array of dazzling colours, such as fuchsia and aquamarine. They often have a pair of high heels to match every outfit. Guys' fashions are also affected by disco, especially where tight pants are concerned. Disco styles are as revealing and provocative as a second skin, which makes people watching—a popular pastime at York—far more exciting.

Examining the way people dress can be informative and enjoyable. Why would a blonde and bearded student wear only shorts and hiking boots, when all else are wearing ski jackets? (Perhaps he is simply a non-conformist or a member of the Polar Bear club). When a guy is spotted in a t-shirt that says "being loyal is drek" one has to wonder what his friends are like. The sociological implications of fashion, in a diversified society such as York, are numerous.

Professor William Westfall, of the Humanities department, believes that the only major cultural change reflected in fashion is the integration of the sexes. "Today's clothes are not sexless, but bisexual," says Westfall, citing the Annie Hall look as an example of women adopting traditional men's styles. "Things are returning to 'normal',

though," he adds, referring to his days as an undergraduate, when traditional institutions, as well as styles of dress, were rejected. For example, blue jeans, which were once a symbol of cultural rebellion during the sixties, have undergone a complete role reversal, as fifty-dollar designer jeans have become the latest status symbol of the "establishment."

"I don't notice a lot of high fashion at York, especially among the faculty," says Westfall who often scorns the traditional garb of professionals for jeans and corduroys.

What about those who dress "a la mode"? Westfall concedes that there is an element of "ego gratification" in dressing to make an impression.

There is a rumour that some girls come to York to get their Mrs. degree and thus put

a lot of emphasis upon their appearance in order to get an "A." "Not so," says Westfall, who adds that, nowadays, the idea that girls go on to higher education to land a husband is just an "over-reactionary" myth.

It is impossible to define exactly how "well-dressed" York students actually are, for fashion is in the eye of the beholder. Campus attire ranges from outlandish to boring, exciting to non-existent. As one passerby commented when asked to give her opinion, "Fashion at York? Who are you kidding!"



Insect crisis: York leads fight

James A. Carlisle

Every six seconds someone in the world dies from an insect-borne disease.

With much of the world threatened by famine, one third of all food crops grown are eaten or spoiled by insects.

Insects are becoming increasingly resistant to insecticides — our only means of holding their damage to even present levels.

At York, Dr. Ian Orchard and other members of the neurosecretion group in the Dept. of Biology are exploring innovative ways of developing new insecticides.

In a recent interview Orchard explained that the older insecticides, including DDT, have many problems associated with them. "Some of them are nerve poisons, developed during the Second World War, which were later used to control insects. They have quite a strong effect on mammals, especially humans; which is not surprising since that is what they were initially designed for."

"Second, they have very strong persistence problems. You never get rid of them. Once they were laid down they stayed." However, Orchard is quick to defend use of these imperfect chemicals. "If it

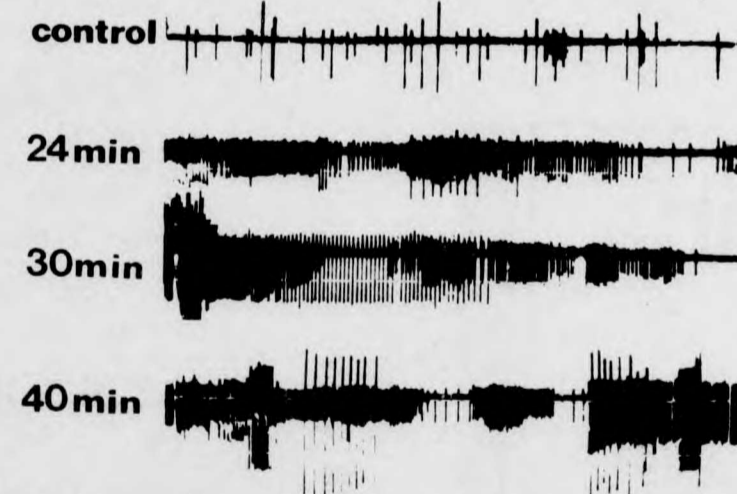
weren't for DDT, half of the population of the world would not be here."

In developing new insecticides, "scientists are looking for non-persistent chemicals which are very toxic to insects but not toxic to man or other animals," according to Orchard.

Orchard was recently invited to address the International Conference on Insect Neurobiology and Pesticide Action, held in England. In his lecture he explained, "To a great extent, no one knows how an insecticide kills an insect." But, he surmised that, "In the great majority of cases the primary action must be on the nervous system because that's where the first symptoms are noticed."

Orchard began studying insect nerves while working at the University of Birmingham. Nerve cells are long, multi-branched structures. They act as a 'communications network' for the body. A signal passes through the nerve cell electrically. At the end of each nerve cell, where the information is to be passed from one cell to the next, a chemical is released which stimulates the next cell to produce its own internal electrical signal.

In developing new insecti-



Typical oscilloscope tracings of an insecticide experiment. Increased frequency of 'spikes' shows the increased release of hormone.

cides, Orchard says, "The rationale is to study the physiology of insects, find out how they work — specifically how the insect nerve functions normally. It is then possible to see how insecticides interfere with the normal function."

Orchard's experiments are simple in principle but very difficult and delicate in execution. Orchard dissects out living insect nerves and applies solutions of new insecticides to them.

Working under a microscope

with micromanipulators, Orchard then sticks tiny glass tubes, finer than hairs, into individual nerve cells. These tubes, called electrodes, allow Orchard to monitor the electrical activity which is amplified and displayed on an oscilloscope.

Orchard is able to determine what is going on in the cell by interpreting the oscilloscope traces. He has found that one particular kind of nerve cell — the neurosecretory cell — is very susceptible to pesticides.

Neurosecretory cells have a special function to release hormones.

Since the neurosecretory cells seem to be the target of the insecticide action, several new possibilities have opened up.

Upon encountering an insecticide, "a plethora of hormones is released at inappropriate times," according to Orchard. "Since these hormones regulate the insect's metabolism, the disruption of the hormonal balance may be lethal."

He gave the example of diuretic hormone which regulates the insect's water balance. If it is released at the wrong time the insect loses all its internal water and dies of dehydration.

Knowing this, scientists can now look for chemicals which specifically cause or which prevent the release of hormones. But even with these new developments the insect problem is going to remain serious.

"It is estimated that in India, one million people die every year from malaria alone," said Orchard.

"Insects are always going to become resistant to any new insecticide produced, so we have to keep on producing newer and better ones."