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Fashion on Film: How 1950s Fashion Shaped the Movies of the Era

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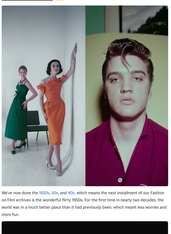
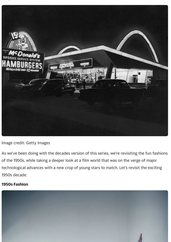


We've now done the 1920s, 30s, and 40s, which means the next installment of our Fashion on Film archives is the wonderful flirty 1950s. For the first time in nearly two decades, the world was in a much better place than it had previously been, which meant less worries and more fun.

Image credit: Getty Images

1950s Drive-In

The Great Depression was done, and World War II had been over since 1945, so the transitional period from the late to 1940s to the early 1950s was a much smoother one than the previous two decades.



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As we've been doing with the decades version of this series, we're revisiting the fun fashions of the 1950s, while taking a deeper look at the film world was on the verge of major technological advances with a new crop of young stars to match. Let's revist the exciting 1950s decade.

1950s Fashion

Image credit: Getty Images

Many of the themes and trends developed in women's fashion during the course of the 1940s, expanded and carried over into the 1950s. Tapered pencil skirts and dresses outlining women's curves and "lines" were still very much a popular trend (that continued to rise due to Christian Dior creating the "New Look" dress), along with more playful pieces such as poodle skirts, polka-dot-themed clothing, and uniquely designed dresses thanks in part to the rising superstardom of young actresses along the likes of Marilyn Monroe, Elizabeth Taylor, and Audrey Hepburn.

While dresses and skirts still dominated in terms of day-to-day fashion, laid back casual wear was beginning to become more accepted.

Remember, there was once a time where women couldn't even wear pants (which Katharine Hepburn changed), so to now see women wearing jeans, jeans, and even shorter skirts was a testimony to just how much things had changed in women's fashion.

Image credit: Getty Images

Introduced during this decade was the Beatnik style, which was basically fitted designs with dark clothing, and something called Rockabilly fashion, which was a mixture of women's clothing inspired by rock 'n' roll-and-country music.

Sexier figure hugging dresses such as the halter and square neck, are additional trends that could be found popular in the latter half of the 1950s thanks in part, once, again, to Marilyn Monroe, and other fashion trends for women included: wide-brimmed hats, jewelry that was simple and eye-catching, peep-toe shoes, and cat-eye glasses (which would become even more trendy the following decade).

Image credit: Getty Images

As for the fellas, the 1950s were the first time that we saw a separation between teenage and adult fashion (the same can be applied for women as well). The men of the 50s still loved their tees and glasses (spectacles in part), but began experimenting with vests as opposed to the traditional long coats they had opted for in previous decades.

Image credit: Getty Images

Casual sports coats, shirts, and pants (which the guys had begun more comfortable playing with in the 1940s) were beginning to become the designated outfit of choice when not at work primarily due to its comfort, along with just about anything corduroy. If it was corduroy anything, you can rest assured that the fellas were wearing it.

Towards the end of the decade, that Rockabilly fashion that we talked about earlier with the ladies, carried over into mens fashion as well, with young teens and twenty somethings basically dressing like Elvis and John Travolta in Grease (which was set in the 1950s).

Image credit: Getty Images

This meant leather jackets, jeans, shirts with bow ties, and suits that weren't the "standard traditional colors" such as pink.

1950s Film

Image credit: Getty Images

1950s film culture represented a lot of what was becoming popular in real-time. As we mentioned before, the drama and gloom that the two previous decades had represented was gone, and the fun was back. Drive-in movies, beach culture, and even fast food restaurants were things that were attached to the decade, and as a result, the storylines of films (which could be very dark at times) began changing into more lighthearted playful ones as well.

By this point actors and actresses that had made their debut in the 1930s and 1940s like Katharine Hepburn and Cary Grant were now the veterans in the industry, and young stars like Elizabeth Taylor (who had debuted as a child star in the 40s), Marlon Brandon, Marilyn Monroe, Paul Newman, and Audrey Hepburn were the new kids in town. Since kids, teenagers, and 20-somethings had a tight grip on popular culture (a sign of things to come), more and more films were being created and marketed specifically for them.

Image credit: Getty Images

Just like with our other articles, below are seven movies from the 1950s that you can check out to familiarize yourself with the decade.

So as you can see, the 1950s were a super fun decade full of entertainment. We'll catch you next time with the captivating decade that was the 1960s.

And if you are looking for a couple of brands that specify in 1950s fashion here are two:

Carla Busso

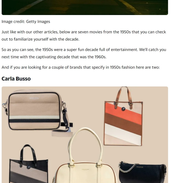

Image credit: Carla Busso

Another brand with a 1950s inspired line is Carla Busso's Handbags. This collection contains popular baguette handbags, crossbodys, tote bags, and mail bags. The line ranges from effortlessly transitional bags for day to night to pure simple shapes inspired by 1950s timeless handbags.

They have an array of colors and plenty of neutral patterns that are perfect to complement the Fall aesthetic. The range is wide but the quality of these uniquely designed bags withstands their luxurious appearance and function.

See y'all in the 60s.

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