

Ethnic Dress in the United States

A Cultural Encyclopedia

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Stefani's established fame and popularity exposed Japanese street fashion to a wider audience than it previously had. In more recent years, *Fruits* magazine reports new trends in Japanese street fashion from Harajuku and is widely subscribed to by many top U.S. fashion brands.

Critics of Japanese street fashion accuse followers of focusing on consumerism and abandoning traditional morals of religion, humility, and conformity. The biggest contrast between street fashion in the United States and Japan is the context. In the United States, street fashion is political and often subcultural. It confronts issues of race, economics, gender, and lifestyle. Street fashion in Japan is pop culture; it's not considered art, nor is high quality important to those who wear it. There is no subcultural context implied in Japanese street fashion—it is not a lifestyle; it is purely fashion for fashion's sake.

See also KIMONO; OBI

Compare to BOHEMIAN DRESS; CHOLO STYLE; HIP-HOP FASHION; ZOOT SUIT

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■ JENNIFER ROTHROCK

JELLIES

Jellies are colorful plastic shoes that were very popular in the 1980s in mainly Europe and the United States. Women and children of all classes wore them because they were fun, easy-to-care-for summer footwear that was relatively inexpensive. They were available in many different colors, textures, and styles, from slip-ons to sandals. Although jellies were the most prevalent during the 1980s, they come back into style every few years.

History

The true origins of jellies are not known, but there are a few theories as to why they were created. Jellies are made by a process called injection molding. Some believe the first plastic shoes completely molded were created in the 1960s and were not meant to be fashionable. Their original target customer was a Third World worker because the shoes were inexpensive to produce since they are made completely by machine. Another proposition is that the shortage of leather after World War II caused a manufacturer in France to produce plastic shoes. However, Elizabeth Semmelhack, curator of Toronto's Bata Shoe Museum, believes fashion designers started using plastic in their products in the 1950s and 1960s when the new material was becoming popular. She considers jellies a creation born out of curiosity instead of need. Regardless of how they came to be, they eventually made their way to the United States.

Jellies in the United States

There are two men held responsible for bringing jellies to the United States—Andrew Geller and Preston Haag Sr. Geller was inspired to design jellies because of plastic oxfords he saw Greek hotel employees wearing. He brought a similar style back to New York in 1980, and his shoes were very popular in stores like Saks. Preston Haag Sr. traveled to Brazil, where he noticed the bright shoes that the young women were wearing. They were designed by Dorothee Bis, Fiorucci, Thierry Muglar, and Jean Paul Gaultier. The company Grendene was manufacturing them, so Haag negotiated with them to export their plastic shoes to the southeastern United States. They combined their names to make Grendha. Haag's family introduced jellies in Brazil's lot at the 1982 World's Fair in Knoxville, Tennessee. The comfortable summer shoes fared well there. That next year, the Grendha jellies gained national attention at a shoe exposition in Chicago. A Bloomingdale's New York representative ordered 2,400 pairs, and they were featured in their catalog and main floor of the store. Because of the European designers, the frequent change of design, and the quality of stores jellies were sold in, the Haag family strove to keep the shoes high fashion. However, cheap imitations were inevitably created.

Influence and Impact

Grendene is still the number-one manufacturer of jellies. They started in 1971 making plastic wine-bottle covers, expanding to produce different plastic parts, such as soles and heels for shoes, and then changed to plastic sandals. Plastic shoes are still being designed under the Melissa brand, which was created in 1979 to make high-fashion, designer jellies. Melissa is working with Judy Blame, Edson Matsuo, Alexandre Herchcovitch, and Fernando and Humberto Campana to design jellies for the international fashion market. Over the years, they have also teamed up with designers such as Vivienne Westwood, Isabela Capeto, and Karim Rashid.

Jellies had a big comeback in 2003 with designs coming from companies ranging from Burberry to Old Navy. Also, in 2009, top designers reinvented plastic shoes after Crocs made it more socially acceptable to wear plastic shoes again. Advancements have been made over time to make them more comfortable and less sweaty. Plastic designer shoes have successful sales because they can come in styles ranging from flats to high heels, are eco-friendly, and are fairly inexpensive. Throughout the years, jellies have retained a solid image and target market. They started as fun, careless, inexpensive shoes for all ages and classes, and remain so whenever they come back in style.

See also CHINESE FLATS; FLIP-FLOPS (GETA)

Compare to BIRKENSTOCKS; CLOGS; HUARACHES; MOCCASINS

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