



OPENING LINES

The Dubliner Debate



YES, IT'S A LOAD OF ME ARSE

says Paddy Cullivan

I'll say one thing in defence of Fashion. Without it, we'd all be naked. That may appeal to the nudists among you, but two weeks on the beaches of Gran Canaria should

prove the importance of covering up the human form. JG Ballard himself couldn't conjure an image so horrifyingly dystopian.

But how do we cover up that form? That's another story. The haute couture frippery and *Next Top Model* madness gives a serious business a seriously fickle front. And though the real business of fashion should be about making great clothes that fit people and keep them from freezing to death, fashion has colonized every other art form to the point of suffocation.

Take music. Drained of any bite or soul (as much in indie as pop), artists can prolong their careers based on how well they accessorize. Music seems to be the last consideration. For instance, much as I admire Lady Gaga's impact on culture, without the spectacular imagery her music has all the depth of reconstituted Boney M (Play 'Bad Romance' after 'Rasputin' and you'll see what I mean). Looks count for everything. And don't tell me that Susan Boyle is the perfect antidote to that.

What has fashion ever done for men? Fashion means, for a woman, some of the world's greatest creations. For a man, it means jeans and a top. And suits. I can only wear clothes bought in Dunnes Stores - this isn't a plug, it's just that nowhere else makes clothes that fit me (short arms and legs). I only wear classic Adidas runners, not out of some Williamsburgian fetish, but because I have feet wider than they are long. And only Marks & Sparks make good suits for the average Joe, in sizes of short, regular and long, because that's what men are. At least, because of these places, I don't walk out the door looking like Robert Smith or Edward Scissorhands.

So fashion is a fickle, narrow-focused business - but at least it's future-oriented. And as a sci-fi fan, I am looking forward to the *Mad Max* or *Buck Rogers* era, where all women must wear those lycra jumpsuits like Erin Gray. Well, I didn't say I wasn't fickle...

When Paddy Cullivan is President of Ireland he will insist that all women wear lycra jumpsuits. See paddyenllivan.ie for more information in his presidential campaign.



*As the **Dublin Fashion** Festival kicks chicly off, we ask if the fashion industry is ultimately a fickle load of nonsense.*



NO, FASHION MAKES THE WORLD GO ROUND, DAHLINGS *says Darren Kennedy.*

"You want a career in TV and fashion? You've got a first class honors degree in International Business, why would you want to do that? Get a real job in the bank and make something of yourself?" Or so the conversation went when I announced my career intentions to my folks. Fast forward a couple of years and it's interesting to see how times have changed. Many fashion houses are bucking the global economic trend and faring far better than our 'respected' banking institutions. Take Mulberry, for example, where profits have quadrupled this year alone. Perhaps governments should be looking to the so-called 'nonsense' industry for some financial guidance? The fashion industry is one that many people like to belittle and shrug off as nothing other than a distraction from real business. Like art, dance, theatre and music, people who don't 'get it' like to dismiss it. When it comes to fashion, you can't ignore the fact that an estimated 4 million people globally are employed in an industry which spans far more than glossy magazines and runway shows. Factor in design, materials sourcing, manufacturing, distribution, marketing, retailing, advertising, communications, publishing and consulting and you start to get a sense of what this "load of nonsense" is all about.

If you really examine it, you'll find that the fashion industry in some way, shape or form affects many aspects of all our lives. Indeed this very magazine, a platform for views to be expressed, may not exist if it weren't for the fashion industry and its widespread advertising spend. In a world where all too often big corporations try to control, regulate and manipulate, fashion is one of the few precious areas where we are all free to express ourselves without uttering a word. Indeed, throughout history, there have been various laws that have tried to control who is allowed to wear what in order to keep people in their so-called place and maintain social hierarchies.

Fashion as we know it today helps demolish such barriers and is a form of empowering communication. On a daily basis what you wear communicates who you are, what you value and where you see yourself in society. You decide! Therefore I believe fashion, far from being a fickle load of nonsense, firmly deserves its place in the world. People are fickle but great fashion lives forever.

Darren Kennedy is a TV presenter and fashion writer currently hosting Project Parent on BBC1. He's also the founder of online fashion and lifestyle magazine Help My Style; helpmystyle.ie