

Style Report: Another Nail in the Coffin of Accessible Discourse or: Quick, Where's My Jargon? I Have a Public to Alienate — Part I

by Jonah CAMPBELL

In writing this “style” column, it was merely a matter of time before I got onto the topic of elitism (as an extension or determinant of attire), for anyone who pretends to know anything about fashion must inevitably do so in some form or another, lest, in neglecting to do so, they fall prey to some form of *amende honorable* at the hands of the poorly-dressed masses. In this week’s installment (and next week’s as well) I’d like to address elitism in the context of counter-cultural fashion trends, and contrast this to the debatably more insipid form of elitism which inheres in the mainstream. More specifically, I’d like to localize this discussion around punk and hardcore, which, owing to the unfamiliarity of the average reader with this social arena, allows me to make all sorts of exaggerated claims, the validity of which would be quite difficult to discern. So suffer, little children, because it’s spoutin’ time.

Before proceeding, it’s only fair to acknowledge that this discussion will be rife with over-generalizations, owing simply to the incredibly diversity, even fissiparity (fissiparous is a word - And fissiparity damn well is too, I don’t care what spell check says.) of the punk and hardcore scene(s).

My basic concern in this article is how the fashion associated with the hardcore scene has become all but indistinguishable from the fashion trends in society as a whole. “Hardcore chic,” as I like to refer to it, is actually a sort of integrated style which incorporates hardcore, emo and indie rock. The commonalities in dress are most likely due to the interchange and overlap between these three sub-genres (both in terms of band members and audiences); simply- emo kids listen to indie rock, indie rockers play in hardcore bands, hardcore incorporates elements of emo, etc. etc., in the end it all manages to be a big mish-

mash that somehow retains its ridiculously particular labelling distinctions.

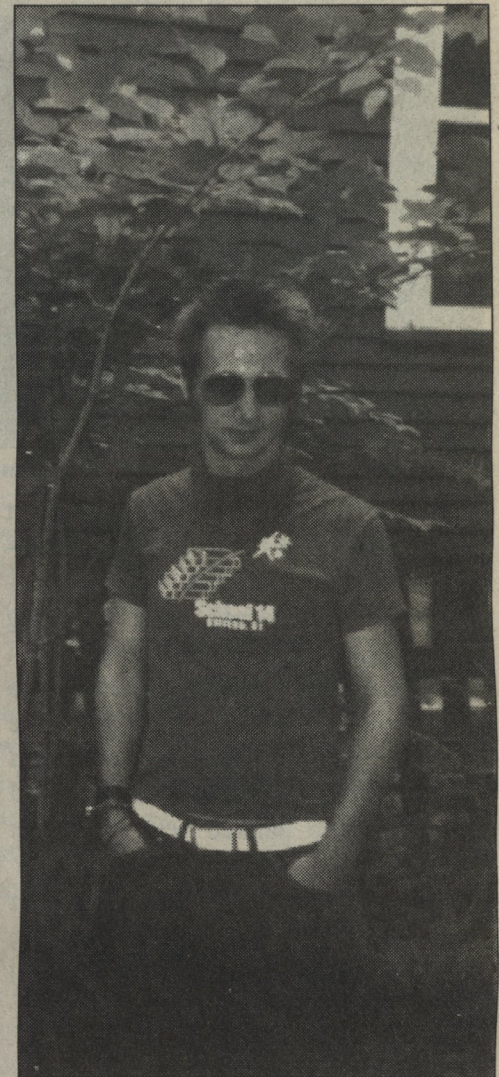
Most people who have spent much of any time not eating bugs under a rock are most likely more familiar with this “hardcore chic” than they know, and this is due to its marked similarity to “chic” fashion in general these days. The most typical uniform consists of skinny pants, especially black dress pants or dark blue jeans, with the cuffs rolled up, often to a ridiculous degree (in many cases well above the ankle, evoking the cut of Capri or shirt pants). Particularly in the case of dress pants, they are small enough (ie, too short) as to enhance the overall appearance of skinniness of the wearer which, despite the heralded demise of heroin chic, is still quite fashionable, especially among emo and indie rock kids (hence the term “skinny core”). The belt is an integral part of the outfit, and most popularly takes the form of the studded belt (one of the few remaining vestiges of hardcore’s punk roots), although the white belt, or anything with a sizable, snazzy belt buckle is becoming increasingly common. Short sleeved t-shirts are the top choice and are almost invariably extremely tight. Perhaps most characteristic is the accompanying hairstyle (which I have been recently informed is known as a “turkey cut,” but which I refer to simply as “hardcore hair”), which usually involves a black dye job, neatly trimmed bangs (cut straight across, or left longer, so as to be swept to one side), and “wisps” of hair which, left long, come down in front of either ear (not unlike the “Chelsea” haircut popular among female skinheads). At this point, we have what is commonly known as a “pixie cut” (it’s very pixie-esque, trust me), but the final touch, which makes it quintessential hardcore hair, is the spiking out, up, or generally orchestrated

messiness of the hair at the back of one’s head.

Voila. Of course, this is not to say that all hardcore kids sport such a hairstyle, but for those who partake fully in the fashion aspect of the culture, this serves as the basic template for hairstyles, with a certain degree of variation. Another popular haircut, more so among men than women, is the pompadour, a hair-do which previously found its greatest outlet (Morrissey notwithstanding) in the rockabilly scene.

As far as accessories are concerned, equally popular within hardcore and the mainstream is the bandana (which I will give fuller treatment in a future installment, oh, you just wait), employed by both sexes as either a headband, to keep their hair back, or wrapped around their wrist.

The above description bears many commonalities with emergent trends in mainstream fashion, from haircuts to studded belts to big cuffs and tight pants, however, there are a number of elements common in the hardcore ensemble which differentiate it from the mainstream, but it would seem only a matter of time before these too are either subsumed or abandoned, further blurring the line between “hardcore chic” and just plain fashionable. Such characteristics include the larger number of tattoos often sported by hardcore kids, usually in old-school style and favouring such mainstays of tattoo culture as rockers, banners, sparrows, brass knuckles, straight razors or other tuff iconography, and of course, skulls. In fact, throughout the outfit as a whole, there tends to be a great preponderance of skulls, be they tattoos, keychains, logos on shoes (the shoe of choice having made the transition from a more functional adidas shell-toe style to the infinitely more fashionable Creeper) or shirts, jewelry, or what-have-you. Moreover, the hooded



“Style.”

sweatshirt is the probably the most common second layer among hardcore kids, although of late one can witness the increasing encroachment of the crisp little denim jacket into hardcore chic (it is especially with this addition that hardcore fashion blends into indie rock and emo fashion, which themselves are closer to mainstream styles). There is also the tendency to accessorize outfits with metal spikes and studs, and the spiked or studded bracelet is still a big favourite, another article reminiscent of punk stylings.

(Tune in next week for the conclusion of Campbell’s discussion on hardcore fashion and its relationship to mainstream fashion. - Ed.)