



# BUT SERIOUSLY, FOLKS...

For years, the fashion industry has wanted to be taken more seriously, tired of the “dumb blonde” jokes, wanting that honorary doctorate. Looks like they’ve made it.

by **TIMBER MASTERSON**

Lately, fashion has been finding its way into people’s lives via many different avenues: media, art, entertainment. There’s no question that fashion has come a long way from the almost secretive design brotherhood of yesteryear. But should it be taken seriously? “There are a few designers that you should take seriously,” says Chris Tyrell, half of the famed Canadian design team Hoax Couture. “Miyake, Gaultier, Masaki Matsushima, Comme Des Garçons – people who are true pioneers. Or you can take it all as seriously as you do pop music. We have fun doing what we do, certainly, though I do think there is a trend towards more intellectual fashion; Helmut Lang, Prada, Jil Sander – their stuff is conceptual. And Martin Margiela at Hermès, well, he’s the captain of the intellectual fashion-design team. It’s kind of like wearing a piece of conceptual art, not like wearing a piece of everyday clothing.”

“There is a European designer, who shall remain nameless, who sends out ordinary jeans to art schools to be worn for a year and when they’ve been worn to perfection, he asks for them back, does a little bit of tailoring and voilà! High Concept Fashion, straight to the public. That’s not serious, that’s pretty silly, but you give the people what they want – or what they think they want.”

Hoax approaches everything with a little bit of humour. “Our particular fashion vision isn’t that serious. We believe in what we do, but it’s not brain surgery; the fact that we called our label Hoax Couture says something.”

David Livingstone, fashion and beauty editor at *Elm Street* magazine, says that what is serious to people is “if it’s clean and if it fits!”

“When people get up in the morning and they are getting dressed, they are not thinking about fashion as an art form. It’s clear that serious thought and original imagination can go into the designing of clothes; Rei Kawakubo, Yohji Yamamoto and Susan Cianciolo come to mind immediately. Susan’s clothes have often been shown in galleries; whether that makes the actual clothing anymore serious is anybody’s guess.

“It started back in the ’80s with Vreeland doing all those exhibitions at the Costume Institute in New York. Though there were people who actually thought that was doing a disservice to the idea of a museum – that it was just a way of bringing crowds in and not presenting legitimate art.”

Is it some sort of ploy to broaden the consumer base? “Well, whether it is or not, it’s happening,” said Livingstone. “There’s some smart people whose business it is to make and design clothes. They are very capable; they’re not all clods and charlatans the way some people may think!”

The Costume Institute of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum in Cleveland are currently spotlighting classic rock-and-roll performers and their pervasive influence on fashion in an exhibition called *Icons of Rock Style*. According to Richard Martin, curator of the Costume Institute: “It would be difficult to over-