

She Was Beautiful

"Like, man, I really don't give a damn about clothes. Even when I was studying art I walked around like an absolute slob. But who doesn't when you're making the art scene? Basically clothes are a facade, nothing more. I groove on my clothes now because I have to. I'm entertaining in front of an audience and I have to care how I look, regardless of how I really feel. . . ."

"With this basic style of tops and pants, I can give my body the most freedom while I'm singing. Anything that interferes with my thing, baby, forget it. . . ."

This was Janis Joplin, 1968. Long before anybody else had recognized her as a "fashion" phenomenon, Blair Sabol interviewed Janis for her "Outside Fashion" column in the *Village Voice*.

"The secret is freedom," Janis explained then, "and that means no bras or girdles. You got to do what you want to do and wear what you want to wear. Everybody is so hung up on the matching game—the shoes have to match the bag which matches the coat and dress. But the big question is, is it matching your soul? Your soul goes through changes, you're always feeling all things at once. So why not wear all things at once—it's groovy, it's real."

Better than anyone else, Janis articulated a growing movement in style and thought. And RAGS—like dozens of other trips—is a direct outgrowth of that movement. We are, in a peculiar way, her children. Following are

some thoughts from Blair Sabol, in her role as RAGS' editorial consultant, on what Janis meant to us:

Janis Joplin was "a style"—"a look"



—as much as she was a rock and roll star. Through the force of her personality, she created the Hip—Earth Mother/Sex Symbol image. Cartoonist R. Crumb was so taken with her visual presence that he admittedly patterned almost all of his voluptuous females after her. "There's something

about her visual strength that turns me on," he said. "All that hair, all that bod, all that abandoned control."

Janis took the straight fashion world by storm. She became a hair style—"give me a Janis Joplin." A certain tie-dye velvet was named after her and advertised as "The Joplin Lightning Motif." It is said that she increased the sale of the "mule" style of slipper by 100 percent in 1968. That same year *Vogue* ran a double truck picture of Janis by Richard Avedon as one of "The Year's Most Dynamic Women." Janis was Avedonized and somehow it looked wrong. Her hair was flying alright, but not in her style—more like Verushka. Her craggy, silly putty features were airbrushed to a high gloss finish. Janis wasn't made for *Vogue*, or anything like *Vogue*. She wasn't a clean cut diamond, she was a rough cut emerald—which is much more valuable.

Janis made funk a fashion by herself. She was the *only* female visual in all of rock—Grace was too. . . Slick, and Tina Turner was too Vegas flashy. Janis just *was*—a national monument, a natural resource. Close up, her parts were gaudy and cheap: Five & Ten plastic necklaces, panne velvet costumes instead of the more lush cotton and rayon, shocking pink ostrich feathers pinned in her hair. In wintertime, a giant 12-inch-high fur hat surmounted her head like a strange growth. But the sum of the overexaggerated parts made a glorious style—a personality sketched in rags—all her own. She was beautiful. ♪

Janis: Anything that interfered, baby, forget it