



CYNTHIA NEWMAN

*Diana in a daring number from the Twenties*



INGEBORG GERDES

*Diana, again, in a Thirties ribbon knit*

# OLD CLOTHES

What is it about old clothes? Why the sudden surge of interest; why the mystique? The prime reason is probably the ability old clothes have to transport the wearer back in time and transform him into anything he wants to be. It's a fantasy trip with no bummers—if you don't mind the stares you get on the bus.

Remember dressing up in your mother's or father's old clothes? Remember striding down the sidewalks of your hometown, wrapped in an outrageous (and often imaginary) cloak, the embodiment of black-hearted evil or invincible good, D'Artagnan or Zorro or Superman or

Never Trust  
Anything  
Under  
30

by Alexa Davis

Ming The Magnificent? That cloak made the dream come true—it was an instrument of liberation.

And, now, you can do it out in the open, with other people (that quickly becomes the best part of all) for the benefit of the entire world. Creating a continuing and complex drama for that big eye in the sky to enjoy. Let's get fantasy out of our daydreams and onto the streets, where it belongs.

Some of the old clothes thing has to do with the revived interest in Americana, in the styles and tastes and trips of the generations who came before the one that's currently ruling the world. Partly, it's the cyclical na-



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Carol in a silk chiffon Thirties print



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Nancy, all in Victorian silk

ture of fashion; partly, it's the American compulsion for *understanding* ourselves, for digging into our roots to find out where we all come from and what that means about where we are.

Also, it's camp. Old clothes have a marvelous way of horrifying the people you want to horrify while delighting the people you want to delight. They're a fine way of announcing: "Good morning, America, my head is in a very nice, if not a particularly respectable, place." And people who get indignant about games like that can get indignant, and you can smile at that, too.

There are many places around the country which specialize in old clothes. Two in the San Francisco Bay Area, where these photos were shot, are Osher's, at 1310 Grant Ave, San Francisco; and Bizarre Bazaar, at 6089 Claremont Ave, Berkeley.

Osher's has been in business about a year, although they've only been

at the current location since August 1. The awning over the entrance still says, "Meat Market." The models in these pictures are all his customers.

In addition to extremely foxy chicks, Osher's gets a lot of transvestite business—the Cockettes, for instance, are regular customers.

Why is he successful? Says Tom Osher: "People wear these old clothes because there has been nothing original made in clothing since 1950 and these old clothes are the only ones that have any style. Most people don't have enough style; they're too timid." Whatever else they are, Osher's customers are not timid.

Karen Wyse is the guiding light behind Bizarre Bazaar. She got into old clothes through her father, an estimable gentleman generally known as Jake the Junkie. Jake is an antiquarian and junk dealer in New Jersey.

Karen bought the Bazaar three years ago, when it was the Claremont Thrift Shop. Like all thrift shops, it had a regular clientele of old timers who came in to buy or barter. Karen



CHUCK STEPKIN

A Berkeley bombshell



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*Tom Osher (second from left) and all his sumptuously arrayed friends*

was looking for an outlet for her handmade jewelry and thought the thrift shop's stock of used clothes, waffle irons and dime store paintings might make an okay backdrop for her wears.

She soon discovered, however, that there is a big difference between old clothes and used clothes. Used clothes are fairly new (20 years old at the outside) and, more often than not, they weren't very much to begin with. Old clothes are really *old* and were, in their day, the pride of the carriage trade. So Karen wound up giving the entire contents of the shop back to the Salvation Army, completely alienating her old clientele, and started afresh.

For a while, nobody came, but then people began getting turned on by the Bazaar, and now there are many regular customers who drop by, drink tea and try on old clothes. Some of those customers can be seen in photographs on these pages, doing their (uh) thing.



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