

STUD & PATCH &

By Amie Hill

Not so long ago you didn't mess with your jeans. Sure, a certain amount of ceremonial preparation and custodianship was required: you dutifully brought them a size too small, ran them through the washer and bravely and clammily wore them until they dried into that delicious fit.

Occasionally, somebody wrote or drew on his blue jeans with ballpoint pen, added a grass stain or two, splattered them with grease, bleach, or battery acid, or bled all over them. But further innovation somehow seemed as superfluous as bloomers on an Aberdeen Angus bull.

But lately, with a minimum of effort, you could have found jeans machine-embroidered, machine-appliqued, artificially faded, bleached and tie-dyed, farm-boy-patched, pre-cutoff, pre-tattered, pre-shrunk and permanent-pressed. It is cheerful and a great object-lesson to realize that although one or two of these innovations have caught on as actual improvements, the top sales figures still go to the old blue denim shrink-to-fit number with the button fly, and what you do to your pants in a fit of creativity one day is still the most exciting thing that's likely to happen to jeans.

As a matter of fact, the "Money Designs" no longer come off the drawing board. Manufacturer's flunkies and designers have taken to the streets hopefully, trying to reproduce the desirable look that comes from spontaniety of design.

Bleaching Blues

For those who just can't wait past the first wash, a quart of Clorox or other bleach added to the hot water of a washing machine will produce a satisfyingly old-wrangler texture. Be sure to remember, if your taste doesn't run to bleach-blotches, to wait until the machine is full of water before adding bleach.

Bill Cunningham sent us a secret French recipe which changes blue jeans and denim skirts to a super all-over blue, the color of Siamese



VALERIE SANTAGATO

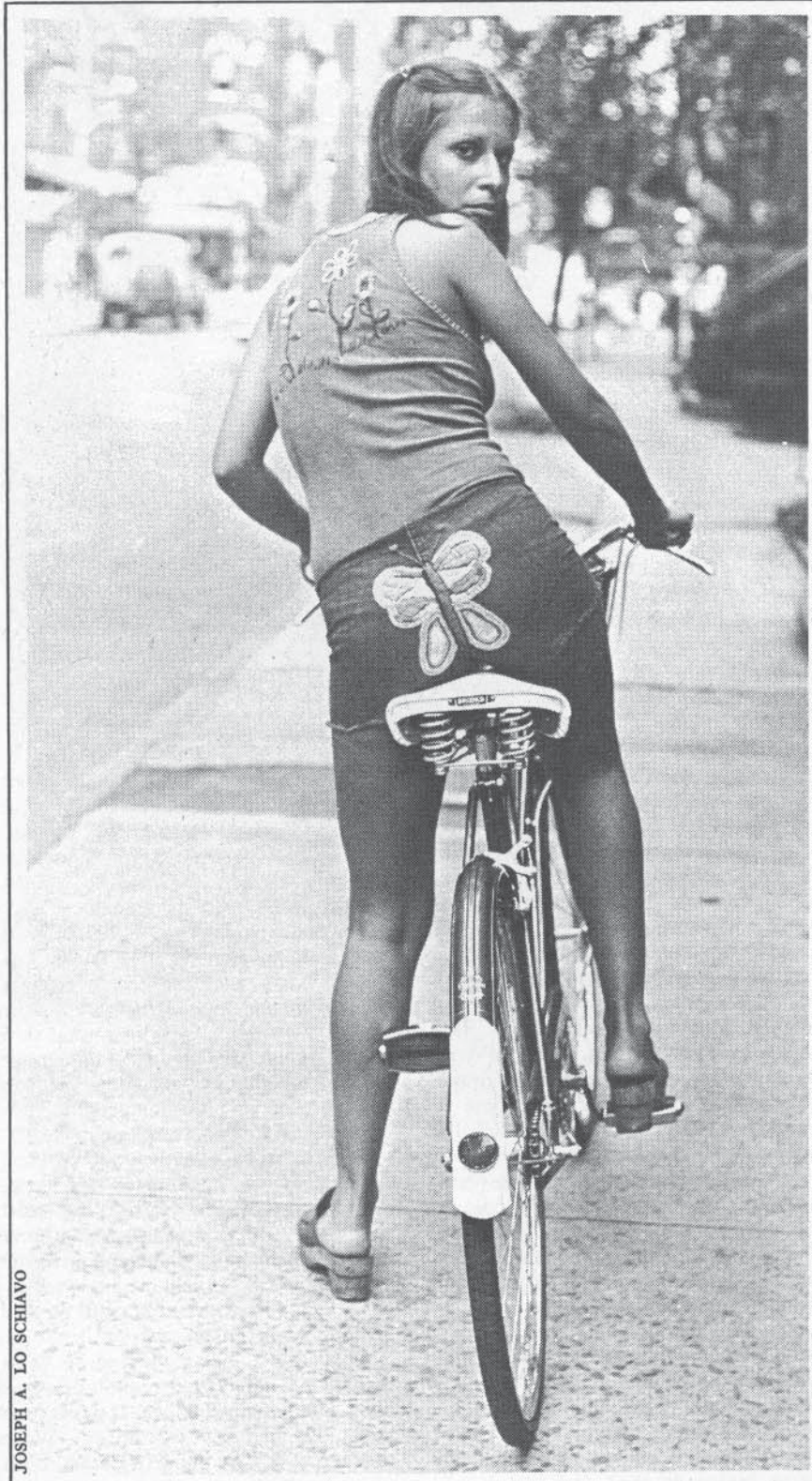
cat's eyes. It was invented by fashion photographers Claude Guillaumin and Pierre Houles. During fashion week in Paris this year, they were constantly being asked to sell their faded blue clothes right off their backs. They say sophisticated young Frenchmen will pay anything for American worker's clothes—all recut to fit perfectly. "They're equal to trading cigarettes during the war."

1. Buy American Levi's or Wrang-

ler jeans—other brands turn gray-blue. If the jeans are to be worn over boots, buy a 38 length. Cut off six inches so the wider width of the jean leg fits over the boots.

2. Fill the washing machine with water and start agitation. Pour in one quart French Clorox, Eau de Javel, which is many times more powerful than American Clorox and bleaches the clothes in an even tone. (Pierre and Claude's mothers send them box-

PAIN T & BLEACH



JOSEPH A. LO SCHIAVO

es Javel instead of cookies.) After a few minutes, put in two pairs of jeans or one pair of jeans and one shirt—never more than two garments or the color will not be even. Repeat for a second washing using a second quart of Javel. The third wash is only clear water to remove all the Javel so the fabric won't rot.

3. The two photographers then engage their Chinese assistant of the same size to break in the jeans. He must wear them for one month without cleaning. During this stage, the denim becomes very soft and the important wrinkled lines appear across the front hips and the knees (undoubtedly important for snob appeal.)

4. If you have no Chinese assistant, go to a salt water beach and swim in the jeans, shirts and jackets. Let them dry on your body as you lie in the sun, turning just as if you were getting a tan.

Regarding the American trend to fringe the cuffs and decorate the jeans, Pierre says, "They're beautiful as is. It's a big mistake to decorate when a thing is beautiful."

Patching Blues

The old-fashioned patch works better if you first turn your jeans inside out, pull the edges of the rip or hole together, and slap on an appropriate amount of iron-on mending tape or patching material. (Always round off all square corners of tape or patch with scissors to prevent peeling off.) This takes care of the rip, but looks sort of routinely ugly, so apply to the outside any shape of pleasing fabric, being sure to turn all raw edges under and to sew it on with very tight small stitches. (Or substitute 10-minute epoxy without sewing.) Embroidery is good for keeping small holes from getting enlarged and for reinforcing weak and worn areas, particularly if you use a large, spread-out design with edges running into sounder cloth. If the hole is round, edge it with a buttonhole stitch, and preserve it for the center of your design. Flowers and

STUD & PATCH & PAINT & BLEACH

sunbursts work out best for reinforcements. Indeed, embroidered applique designs of stars, roses, eagles, duckies, choo-choos and moo-cows, have gone on sale in boutiques and trimming stores.

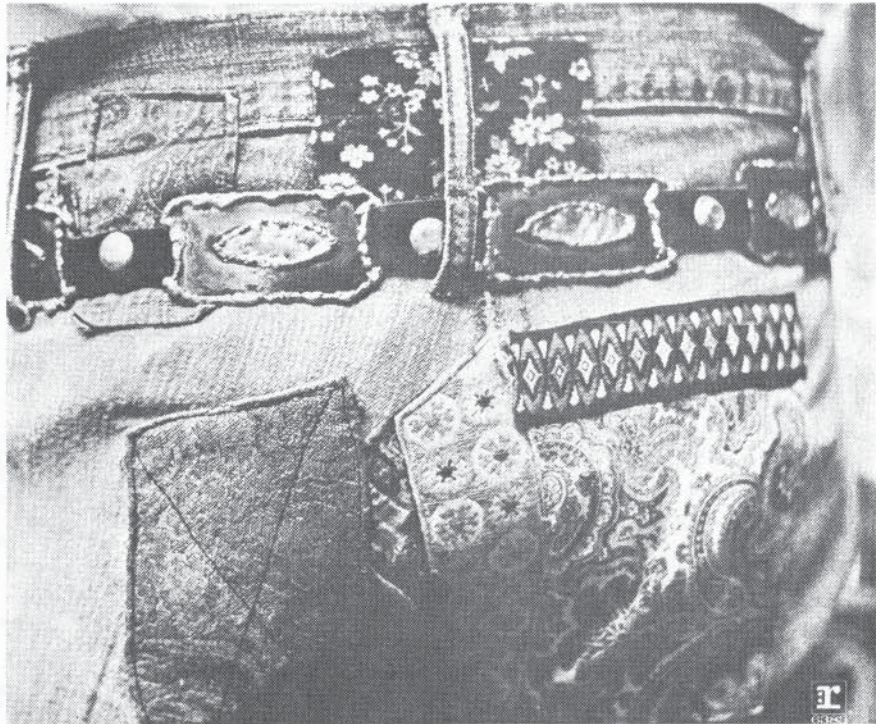
Frayed cuffs, unfashionably narrow legs, or cuffs which have crept too far up the leg through shrinkage can be combatted with an embroidery edging or by folding heavy fabric or soft leather around the bottom of the cuff or in a slit in the leg seam and stitching it into place. Those who crochet may wish to punch small holes in the cuff and crochet on a thin reinforcing band with string or cord. (This also works well, with heavier string, for lengthening cuffs.) Reinforce the punched area with good old iron-on tape.

Lengthening cuffs by sewing on a band of broad cotton ribbon trim works better when you back it with plain ribbon or hem tape of the same width. Fabrics can also be used for lengthening, but make sure that the one you choose is heavy-duty, no-wrinkle, no-shrink and doubled onto the cuff, or it'll just shrivel up around the bottom of your jeans.

Of course, nearly any kind of sewing-shop trim, lace, fringe, braid or ribbon can be sewn onto pants, in circles around the legs or lengthwise on seams, ad infinitum. A striking stripe effect comes from ribbon sewn lengthwise, at intervals, from waist to cuff.

For ladies, worn jeans can be cut off at nearly any point on the leg, and the missing part replaced with a gathered ruffle of fabric of any length, and nearly any pair can be converted into a fly-front maxi-skirt with pockets by slitting the inside leg seams (including crotch) and inserting triangles of fabric into front and back spaces thus revealed.

Still in the snip-and-sew category are cutouts and lacing. For the former, cut out and hem (about ¼ inch) strategically shaped and located holes. Patch these from the inside with lacy material or crochet work. For lacing, split your seams up the sides to the pocket rivets, turn back the fabric and make a one-inch hem. Set in eyelets and grommets (sewing and hardware stores carry little kits for doing this) about three inches apart



Take a gander, for instance, at the back cover to Neil Young's **Gold Rush** album (Reprise RS 6383). Mini-review: *Young's music sounds like this photo looks.*

along the hem. Then lace 'em up with rawhide or long shoelaces. Satisfyingly bad.

Silver studs, however, may be the ultimate in flash — reminding one simultaneously of Hells Angels and Haute Couture (guess which came first?). Several sizes of studs from pea to quarter-diameter, and the tools to install them, can be bought at leather craft and hobby stores. Stud the seams and pocket edges of your pants, or try all-over patterns (drawn in chalk first) if you have time to bend back all those prongs on the backs of all those studs.

Tie-dyeing and batiking are both obvious numbers for light-colored jeans. And anyone who's into tie-dyeing can do the same thing with bleach on blue. Tie all those same little knots, dunk into a solution of about two parts bleach to one part water for five minutes or until they're lightened to a little darker than you think you want them, and rinse *thoroughly* without untying the knots. For a dappled effect, put wadded-up jeans into a washer and just barely

cover with water. Pour into a quart of bleach and let sit for about five minutes before starting the washer. Rinsing is very important to prevent weakening of the fabric and sudden holes in embarrassing places.

Another trip for light-colored jeans, as reported in the August issue of RAGS, is burning or scorching them with an iron turned all the way up for a brown tie-dye or animal-skin effect. When you try this, remember to not let the burned area get too dark brown and tilt the iron a little to avoid iron-shapes and steam holes.

A paintbrush and dye can be used to great effect on damp or dry jeans, and on wet denim, again as reported in RAGS, for a spreading-sunburst effect which is particularly effective on light colors. Indelible magic-marker allows for finer lines, and greater latitude with the printed word.

And that's just a beginning. The idea is to take these techniques and work your own changes. If they turn out to be particularly far out, write RAGS and tell us about it. This could go on forever. ☺