

Famous Faces behind Famous Frames

Who Made Sunglasses Popular?

We know by simply looking around that sunglasses are a pop culture phenomenon. Have you ever stopped to wonder how they became this way? Humans seem to have an obsession with sunglasses as more than protection for their eyes. Sunglasses make a statement about the face they're sitting on, and can add much needed style to an ensemble. One has to wonder how sunglasses came to be what they are today.

Sunglasses have been worn and made infamous throughout the years by a variety of icons and legends. Some of these iconic names have even been given to their chosen signature style. Former First Lady and American Royalty Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis had a particular favorite style of sunglasses. This oversized look was coined as "Onassis Glasses" or "The Jackie O" and will probably never be known by any other name.

Sir Elton John has paraded his courageous fashions on stage for the past four decades. Known for his amazing way with Ivory keys, and his crazy fashion statements, Elton John has inspired stylistic insanity with his share of peculiar eyewear. He has been seen on stage wearing some of the most imaginative and artistic sunglasses the world has ever known.

However wacky the designs have been, Sir Elton John's trademark is not necessarily in the frames of the sunglasses he wore. Lenses of all different shades have been this icon's signature style. Whether yellow, blue or purple, Sir Elton seems to like the way the world looks through these colorful shades.

James Dean helped make one particular style of sunglasses popular. The 1950's movie star could often be seen wearing the style known as the Wayfarer. This simple design of sunglasses made famous by the "Rebel Without a Cause" is proof that even the most uncomplicated ideas can take off with a little bit of fame behind them.

Later, James Belushi and Dan Aykroyd put their own spin on the retro sunglasses. The Blue Brothers movie of 1980 saw the two sporting the Wayfarer style in a more modern, sleek, black look. The glasses came back in style briefly and made other appearances on the screen, such as Risky Business. No girl can forget a young Tom Cruise in underwear, a dress shirt and his Wayfarers doing a sideways sock-slide to "Old Time Rock and Roll".

Musicians are known for setting style trends, including sunglasses. In reality,

the reason so many musicians began wearing sunglasses while they performed is that the stage lights can be blinding. Additionally, during the 1960's and 1970's, musicians like John Lennon, Ozzy Osbourne and Janice Joplin were said to have worn the sunglasses all the time as a way of disguising mysteriously bloodshot eyes. This theory has not been proven, so we can all assume they wore them because they looked cool.

John Lennon and Ozzy Osbourne helped bring the Teashades into popular culture. Other musicians such as Mick Jagger and Janice Joplin favored this style. This style of sunglasses is still mostly associated with former Beatle John Lennon. This is perhaps because not only were they his preferred shape for sunglasses, but his corrective lenses were this shape as well.

Movie and rock stars are not the only ones that have made sunglasses what they are today. The United States Military has had a hand in coining what is possibly the most famous sunglasses style in history. In the 1930's, Ray Ban designed sunglasses that were sold to the U.S. Military to be issued to pilots. Ladies and Gentlemen, the Aviators are born. This is quite possibly the strangest fashion trend setter yet: the United States Government!

Another example of the average Joe popularizing a fashion trend is in the case of the "cop shades" or Mirror Shades. Police officers favored this design and it quickly made its place in pop culture trivia books everywhere. A popular theory for this preference is that police officers like the intimidating vibe they gave off. It is somewhat unnerving to look into a one-way mirrored pair of sunglasses and not know the expression of the person looking back.

Many people have played a part in making sunglasses the pop culture icon they are today. You don't have to be a movie star, musician, or government official to start a fashion trend. Pick up a pair of sunglasses that looks good on you, even if they have been out of style since the Reagan Administration. Wear them with pride; you never know when it might catch on!