



BABY COME BACK

Jean Shrimpton, Barbra Streisand, Twiggy – **Polly Devlin** remembers the icons who taught us about 1960s beauty the first time around, along with pancake foundation, spidery eyelashes and the white, white mouth

It was 1963, and there I was in the middle of Ireland, where nice girls didn't use cosmetics. Even a trace of Yardley lipstick put you at risk of being denounced as a Jezebel. If you did venture into the underworld of make-up, the pitfalls were many. I once combed an ointment through my hair (mousy was the term the magazines used for my colour — so uplifting) that promised to transform me into a natural blonde. For weeks afterwards, I walked around with huge brassy hanks hanging off my head. Even the dog stared at me.

The magazines were full of arcane advice about the way in which the shape of your face dictated how you applied the thick unyielding stuff in bottles and compacts that was make-up back then. I fretted as to whether I had a heart-shaped face, or an oval one — which meant you were a Classic Beauty — until the truth wormed its way into my brain. My face, from any angle, was round.

I remember the advice given by the make-up artist François from Elizabeth Arden: "The jocund mouth gives the true chic." Blimey. Make-up, he said, was a transparency of the soul. I stared doubtfully at the heavy pancake foundation made by Max Factor, which was all that was available in Cookstown and made my skin look as though I had rubbed it in plaster of Paris. Not much jocundity there. I was 18. I looked provincial. And I looked old.

The models who showed us what to look like were tall and elegant, with pencil-slim skirts and haughty poses. They wore sleek hairstyles, or things called beehives; they were poised, ageless and grown-up, and they had nothing, nothing to do with me or the likes of me.

But 1963 brought an epiphany. Suddenly, every issue of Vogue had picture after picture of the most incredible person: coltish limbs, with a tiny face, retroussé nose, huge eyes and an adorable fringe. It was ▶

Jean Shrimpton, the epitome of everything we wanted to look like. She turned our world around. This was a face to sell a dream.

And dreams can come true. Almost overnight I found myself working at *Vogue*, right bang in the middle of it all. I became friends with Jean, who she was even more beautiful in life than in photographs. Under the studio lights, David Bailey cajoled and shouted and coaxed and seduced. There was never a make-up artist or hairdresser on photo shoots — the models always did their own. And they knew every make-up technique there was, including drawing eyelashes under the eye and painting freckles onto the bridge of the nose.

All the rules changed. First of all there was the white mouth: a pale slash that glimmered — and the whiter, the better. The pout was mandatory. A pursed lower lip was the legacy of Brigitte Bardot, and Patti Boyd did it extremely well.

Sexy was the whole point. Most of us couldn't pull it off, although we thought we could. We were kittens with false eyelashes, coupled with great sweeps of black eye liner that swept up the sides of the temples, tapering from a broad stroke at the corner of the eye to the merest flicker at the end. If your hand trembled you ended up like Big Chief Black-Line.

Everything came in sticks and tubes and brought new pitfalls. Brigid Keenan, a former fashion editor of *The Sunday Times*, remembers delving into her bag in the dark, on the way to a ball, putting on what she thought was a lipstick and causing a sensation when she arrived with startlingly blue eye-shadowed lips.

I was once interviewed by a newspaper about what beauty products I used, which was apparently so much Revlon mascara that, in the accompanying photograph, I look as though two large spiders had settled in my eyes. When I went to work at *American Vogue* in New York, I lost my head entirely and had false lashes woven into my own. I still tended, in my enthusiasm, to throw stuff at my face, hoping it would land in the right place. But watching Barbra Streisand having her hair and make-up done for a

Sixties children
From top, Jean Shrimpton, a face to sell a dream; Baby Jane Holzer, "a tiny face, like a narcissus"; the Vidal Sassoon look, "only for small, sleek people". Previous page, Polly Devlin, in her 1960s prime



"I NEVER WENT ANYWHERE WITHOUT MY LITTLE ROUND BOX IN CARTIER RED, IN WHICH LAY COILED AT LEAST TWO SLIGHTLY SINISTER HAIRPIECES MADE OF REAL HAIR"

Richard Avedon session was a lesson to me. She would have nothing less than perfection, no matter what it cost in blood, sweat and tears (though none of it her own).

The biggest change in the 1960s was how we wore our hair. We all spent a lot of money on it. Vidal Sassoon was a household name. I once had

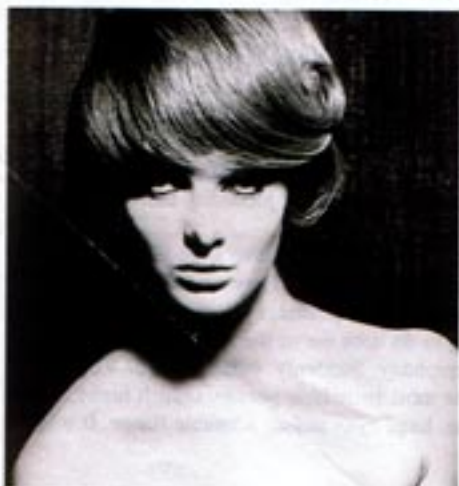
my hair cut at his salon in Bond Street. Big mistake: his carved cut was only for small, sleek people — Grace Coddington, the model turned fashion editor, wore it to perfection. Sadly, I didn't. After that, I went to Leonard's chic town-house salon or Annie Russell, who was young and hip and next door to Biba.

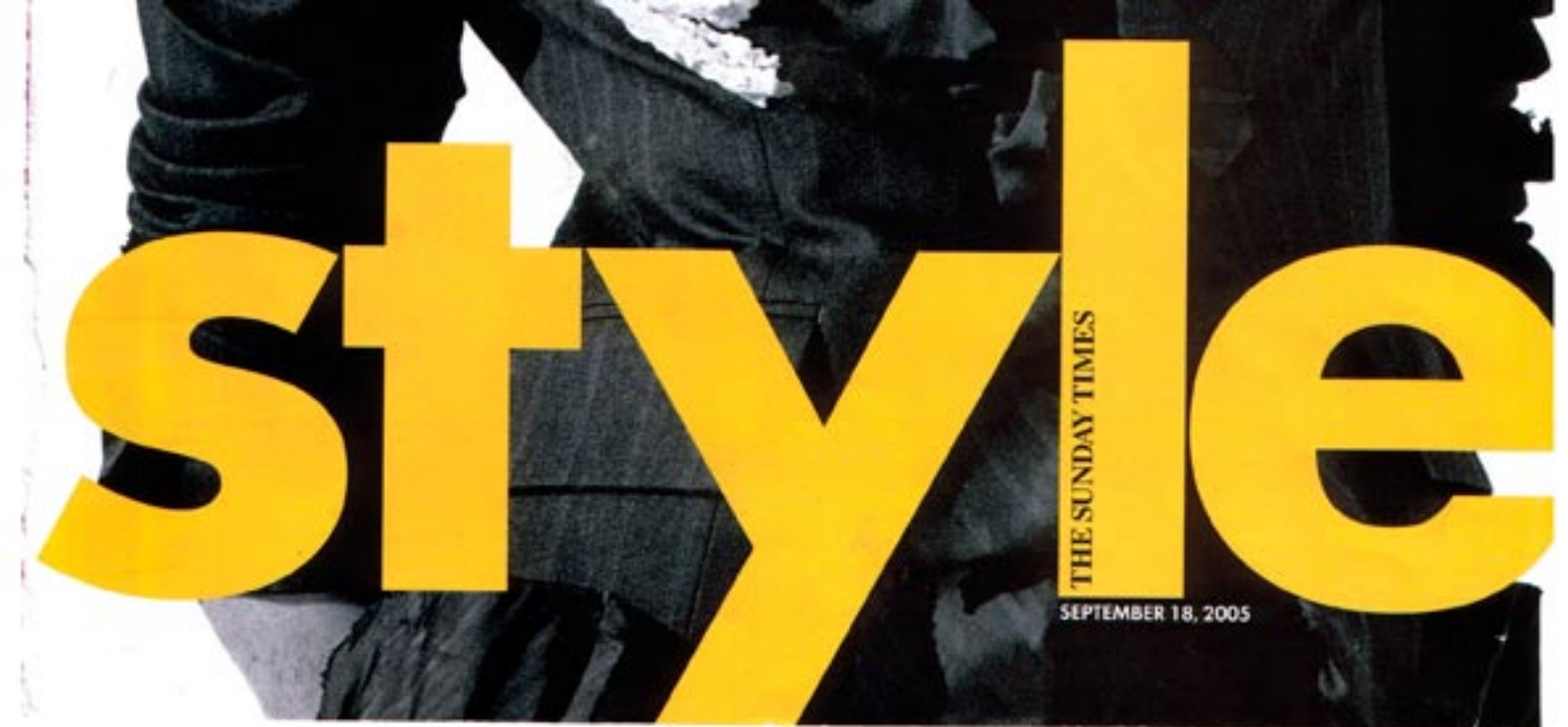
It was during the 1960s that an American socialite, Baby Jane Holzer, became the darling of the editor of *American Vogue*, Diana Vreeland. After seeing Holzer at a Paris fashion show, Vreeland said: "She had the greatest head of hair. And a tiny face like a narcissus. She just looked great." That was when backcombing was born. The hair was forced into a frazzled haystack, with a

little thatch combed over until your barnet billowed in frozen masses around your face. I still yearn for that look.

Yet even those great hillocks of hair weren't enough for us hair junkies, and so the hairpiece became mandatory. I never went anywhere without my little round box in Cartier red, in which lay coiled at least two slightly sinister hairpieces made of real hair. I pinned these onto my own locks, often covered with a wig. What was I thinking of? I can't tell you. When I interviewed the rising new star Julie Christie, I sussed that she wouldn't be seen dead in a wig, and when she said that she liked to look "as natural as possible, with a slight sun tan all year round", I dumped the hairpieces and the foundation.

Then Twiggy came hop-scotching along. Again, I went to interview her. She weighed 90lb, was 17 years old, and had a 22-inch waist. A commentator of the time observed: "She even makes childish sounds when pressed." She had nothing, nothing to do with me or people like me. This was a role model none of us could aspire to. At that point, I realised that I was 24, metropolitan and at last I looked how I wanted to look. Like myself. □





style

THE SUNDAY TIMES

SEPTEMBER 18, 2005