

Melbourne: Second hand fashion First rate value & style

You may not believe that some people in Melbourne would give away a good pair of Prada leather lace ups, a Burberry jacket or a Dior suit, but that's exactly how this writer found them in second hand or thrift stores as vintage fashion for the smart second hand shopper. And sometimes, these designer seconds can be quite the bargain.

Of course, not everything in second hand or thrift stores are designer discards or are always cheap, but it's about finding something that you didn't even know you liked or wanted. Like an eighties pointy shouldered blazer, even though you swore you would give the trend a miss when you saw the price of a brand new one in Balmain.

So the next time you head down under to Melbourne, it's worth making the detour from your itinerary and check out some of the vintage shopping destinations below.

RetroStar
First floor, Nicholas Building
37 Swanston Street (Cnr Flinders Lane)
Melbourne CBD
Tel: 03 9663 1223
www.retrostar.com.au

When this writer was snooping around the shop, he spotted vintage Aigner and Coach leather handbags, Bally women's shoes and Burberry trench coats lurking in the racks. There could be more vintage designer goodies hidden in the store, considering that it is home to over 10,000 vintage clothing, shoes, bags and accessories for both men and women, from the 1940's to the 1980's sourced from around the world.

But when you go through the countless vintage dresses, psychedelic prints, seventies' flares, western boots, vintage t-shirts, knits, jeans or jackets, you will begin to appreciate the garments for what they are, as clothing that are far more unique and beautiful than the brand or label sewn onto them.

And people in Melbourne appreciated the value and variety of vintage fashion very early on, because they recognised these desirable factors in the discarded. For Caitlin Liversidge, the store manager at RetroStar, she remembers her parents taking her to second hand shops to shop for clothes when she was a child. Today, it's more likely that the creative citizens of Melbourne are setting the example for vintage fashion.

Caitlin explains that, "Melbourne is a creative city and there's a lot going on. There are lots of cafes where lots of musicians and artists hang out. And for these people, it is normal for them to be more eclectic. Therefore when it comes to fashion, they may use vintage clothing as another form of self expression. And like their music and their art, vintage fashion or second hand clothing complements their creative energy really well."

In the past three years, she has seen the trend of vintage fashion extend beyond the creative citizens. But she thinks it's not just the economic crisis forcing people to take a second look at the cheaper price tags attached to second hand clothing.

"Sure, buying vintage fashion is cheap, economical and good for the planet, but its popularity has more to do with celebrities and bands wearing them, so young people want to emulate them", Caitlin explains.

She adds, "now you have guys dressing more dapper, like the characters in the TV series *Mad Men*. The fifties, it's all coming back, so I think it's got more to do with film, music, television and popular culture."

You can tell the passion that people in Melbourne have for vintage fashion, especially in hearing Caitlin talk about her favourite pieces in the store (or from the comments of the street people interviewed for this story). Her current picks include a forties, chocolate brown pinstripe suit and a forties magenta dress. "The tailoring in the suit is just extraordinary and the colour of the dress really stands out," she explains of her choices.

For such quality vintage clothing, especially vintage designer pieces, you would think that they would charge a premium. But as their customers are mainly young people, and the store's pricing is determined according to the quality and rarity of the garment, you can expect to find reasonable prices from \$25 onwards.

So for its affordability and uniqueness, vintage fashion can become your best souvenir from Melbourne. For the vintage fashion novice, don't have second thoughts about wearing it out. Just give it a go. As Caitlin puts in succinctly, "It can look really bad, but most of the time, it looks amazing. At the end of the day it's about creating your own look".

Moustache
124 Gertrude Street
Fitzroy
Tel: 0401 353 268

Moustache is one of the pioneers that first brought vintage fashion to the once quiet Gertrude Street, which has now become a retail hub of the suburb Fitzroy. The boutique sells women's clothing, shoes and accessories.

Idaho Vintage
11 Carlisle Street
St Kilda
Tel: 0401 353 268 (same contact number as Moustache because owned by the same owner)

Another store worth checking out, not only for the knockout selection of vintage clothing, but also for the way interesting pieces of furniture and vintage curiosities are placed side by side to create a store experience that's truly inspired.

Check out why people enjoy vintage shopping and the goodies they've found

Andy Moller, Sales Assistant, Melbourne,

It's interesting to explore the fashions of the different eras past and then mixing elements from the old with the new.

An Issey Miyake pleated jacket circa late eighties/ early nineties and a pair of digital printed jeans.

Sophia Charles, Student, Melbourne

I really like a black duffel coat. I've had it since I was 6 and it's a full length coat when I was little, but now that I'm taller, the hem line has gone way higher, but I still wear it.

Kate McCrimmon and Sarah Gilchrist, Students, Melbourne

K: A lot of vintage clothing are classic pieces in classic shapes and silhouettes, so they don't follow the trends.

S: Brown floral singlet from the Lost and found market, it was a present.

Your beginner's guide to wearing vintage fashion

According to Caitlin, guys can try:

- Eighties inspired look with a graphic printed T shirt with skinny jeans, paired with a pair of leather brogues
- Nineties inspired look with button-down collared shirts, in blue or denim that are slightly oversized matched with skinny pants.

Girls can try:

- Fifties inspired look with preppy pastel dresses with cardigans.