

Trend

THEM



Representative of a '70s-inspired, bohemian and boisterous look that's back in vogue.

NOW



From evil

The great fur debate

By **ANDREW SCHLESINGER**

When did fur become fashionable again? New York's fashion scene is so busy that it's hard to remember that the animal-skin industry could ever be so popular with and profitable to its purveyors. Consider what has happened: The words of '70s hit "Fur" by the Village People and a 1980s "Fur is a fashion" though, just before the '90s, when fur became a fashion faux pas.

"I've seen fashion designers launch ranges in India & Cambodia... [and]... which are advertised '100% fur'—but they're really 100% tiger. They're actually using '100%' fur that's been dyed to look like tiger. They're showing up in a [fashion] magazine," said Clinton, Kim, Steve, Brian, and Eric from the band. "It's about the leader in fur, and what's more, they're using fur from animal reserves."

And despite the fur's bad press, it's still a major player in the fashion industry. "I've seen fur in the past, but I've never seen it like this," said Clinton. "I've seen fur in the past, but I've never seen it like this." Clinton, Kim, Steve, Brian, and Eric from the band. "It's about the leader in fur, and what's more, they're using fur from animal reserves."



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to elegant?

credibility."

Indeed — practically every major designer collection for fall/winter 2002 showed fur, with the notable exception of staunch animal rights activist Stella McCartney, who reportedly had a falling out with fellow designer Tom Ford over the fur issue.

"I have no idea how far made such a turnaround," says fashion superstar and staunch animal rights activist Moby. "Five years ago I thought — or hoped — that the fur industry was dead," he says. "Designers pledged to stop using fur, models had pledged to stop wearing it, and the only people sporting fur were tacky B&B stars."

Vintage couture dealer and accessories designer Mark Walsh thinks that hip-hop stars like Puffy and Lil' Kim — who have worn fur for years — were responsible for the trend eventually trickling back up to the world of high fashion.

"Even last year it was like, 'Ewww, fur,'" he says. "But you still had these subliminal images of rap stars wearing fur. And then all of a sudden, J. Mendel, who has been around since the '70s, re-invented fur — and now J. Mendel's everywhere."

Fur took a step further into the mainstream when Kim Kardashian, Scotty, and J.C. Penney started selling faux fur knock-offs this year.

"You can wear fur with absolutely anything," explains model and fur fan Moby Sims, who wore a fur vest this week for the taping of MTV's "Fashionably Loud." "It's such a rich look."

Some animal rights really of trendy and disposable and Fendi baguette!

"It used to be trendy to be conscious and caring," says stylist Danna Weiss, "and people thought it sounded cool to fight for animal rights."

Moby is appalled at the disposability of the animal rights where fur is concerned. "It will stain me that someone could wear fur, especially with the knowledge of how it's produced — and electrocutions, etc.," he says. "I strongly believe that someone shouldn't clothe themselves in something if they couldn't stand to be involved in its means

"We'd rather go naked than wear fur."



THEN

Animal rights activists urged people to go naked.

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PETA
PEOPLE FOR THE ETHICAL TREATMENT OF ANIMALS

of production. PETA's Dan Matthews says that some activist supermodels flipped on fur because "they felt they had limited options after other careers didn't pan out, so they wore whatever they were paid to wear."

"Every year a desperate clique of greedy fashion editors and designers scream, 'Fur is back,'" Matthews continues, "in the hopes that they'll revive it to the glory days of the '80s, when people were unaware of how animals suffer so miserably on fur farms and in traps."

Of course, there are those who alleviate guilt by buying the old stuff. Lucy Sykes, Marie Claire Magazine's Fashion Director, purchased her '70s vintage Michael Kors coat at Ritz Furs for a mere \$400. "Psychologically, buying vintage fur makes me feel like I'm not getting something so offensive," she says. "All the girls I know are wearing vintage fur."

Kary Rodriguez, owner of East Village boutique Restoration, believes older is better, too. "If something has been in the world for a while — 20

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Naomi Campbell once posed naked for PETA — but now she prefers pelts.

years or so — people are more apt to justify the purchase," she says. "Buying a '70s rabbit jacket for \$200 is different than buying a coat that was made yesterday for fifty grand at Bergdorf's."

Keith Tauber, owner of Ritz Furs, says business is booming. "Buying pre-owned fur often relieves people of political issues," he says.

Walsh is more cynical: "Everybody just throws in the towel," he says. "And even the towel is fur!"



Anna Wintour is a longtime fur devotee.

Keeping up appearances

Now that you've found your fur, make sure you know how to care for it properly. John Mahon, owner of Madame Paulette (1255 Second Ave., (212) 818-6827), the Upper East Side dry cleaning mecca, warns fur wearers, "Do not clean them at home. Always take it to a

professional." Madame Paulette cleans, dries, and restores furs for prices that range from \$50 to \$300, depending on the length and integrity of the garment. They also replace missing pelts.

As far as storing is concerned, never fold or box a

fur, so it damages the skin. And furs should always be stored in cold storage vaults that are 68 degrees. Otherwise, the fur becomes brittle. Madame Paulette rents hangers for \$75 a pop. Most furriers offer storing services. (Ritz Furs service just "when to buy") is free if you buy your fur there.)