

Expansive times mirrored in 80s fashion

Big shoulders and big hair were the hallmarks of high fashion in 1987. Wintec journalism student Deanna Harris talks to the style-setters of 20 years ago.

FASHION commentator Erin Allen remembers 1987 for power suits and stilettos.

Hairdresser Patrick Lennan remembers it for the second coming of the mullet and "big hair".

Journalist Denise Irvine recalls a lot of denim - denim shirts, jeans, dresses and jackets - and big shoulders. "We never went anywhere without our shoulder pads."

In the late 1980s, fashion mirrored the expansive times.

Influenced by television dramas such as *Dynasty* and *Dallas*, and later the home-grown bitchy soap opera *Gloss*, Kiwi women adopted a range of "power tools" to reflect their corporate success. The business suit was tailored with increasingly wide shoulders, and the look even extended to casual wear. Shoulder pads could be attached with Velcro to practically any garment, including t-shirts.

Denise Irvine, a feature writer at the *Waikato Times* who reported on fashion trends in her early career, says she never went anywhere without shoulder pads. However, she drew the line at the really large ones. "They made me look like a gridiron player."

Erin Allen, a former fashion compere who still works in fashion, also remembers suits with wide shoulders and trouser suits in checks and plaid with "stirrup" trousers (elastic that went around the foot) to create straight, narrow legs in contrast to the wide shoulders.

Men's fashion also featured power suits, worn with skinny ties. Leather and studded jean jackets were popular with men, and the influence of the television programme *Miami Vice* was seen in the trend to wear pastel t-shirts under jackets.

The "big" look was also reflected in women's jewellery, again influenced by the stars of television soap operas. Costume jewellery was popular and earrings were often several centimetres wide and long, to balance the wide shoulders.

Hair was on a similar scale.

Hamilton hairdresser Patrick Lennan, who has owned Patrick's hair salons in Hamilton for 35 years, says in the 1987 Hairdressing World Cup, entrants competed to see who could achieve the biggest hair.

"We used a round wooden brush to blow wave and backcomb the hair to get it so big," he says.

He also remembers the late 1980s for the second coming of the mullet.

"Through the late 80s and early 90s it got uglier and



THOSE WERE THE DAYS: Fashion in the 80s was influenced by television dramas such as *Dynasty*, *Dallas* and New Zealand's *Gloss*, and women adopted a range of "power tools" to reflect their corporate success.

Denise Irvine admits her hair was a "shocker".

"It was fluffy and long. It had a body wave to make it look a lot bigger than it was."

The stiletto was the dominant style in shoes.

Erin Allen says they complemented the feminine styles of dresses for evening wear.

"Women made an effort to dress up in the evening. You didn't wear casual trousers like today."

Denise Irvine says favourite items in her wardrobe in the late 1980s included two jumpsuits - one in watermelon and the other navy blue. "They were all-in-one buttoned up the front (worn with) a belt." Another favourite was a silk dress with a dropped waist.

Denim was a particular fashion favourite in 1987. Erin Allen says classic blue denim jeans had been given a hip new acid wash look and were often teamed with a matching jacket.

"Everything was very matching."

The 1987 *Woman's Weekly* also featured home-knitting. Over-sized jumpers in bright colours and patterns were a favourite fashion item but Erin Allen says wools were limited. "We didn't have the blends we have today, like merino. There was just pure wool."

Joan Depina, who has worked in retail fashion for nearly 30 years, says there was very little imported clothing in the 1980s. While New Zealanders were influenced by overseas fashion worn by super models at the time such as Claudia Schiffer and Cindy

uglier. People didn't want to get rid of all their hair so they cut it short on top and left the rest long."

In July, 1987, the New Zealand Woman's Weekly magazine described the mullet as "the cut of the month". To achieve the look, it advised readers to "keep hair long, but short on top for extra body, with the fringe layer cut from the crown". Extra body could be achieved with heated rollers, it said.

Lennan says in the 1980s women would come in once a week to have their hair blow-dried and styled. Men also blow-dried their hair.

Erin Allen says women had to work hard to preserve their elaborate hairstyles between visits to the hairdresser. "Some girls would wrap their hair in toilet paper overnight."

Crawford, most clothing was New Zealand-made.

Clothing was also expensive because there was little competition to force down prices. "I still have a vest from the 80s that cost me \$400," says Depina.

In the May 21, 1987, edition of the Waikato Times, a fleecy-lined women's sweatshirt cost \$40. Today, a similar sweatshirt is the same price.

As a result, many New Zealand women made their own clothing. Most outfits featured in the Woman's Weekly were accompanied by a sewing pattern.