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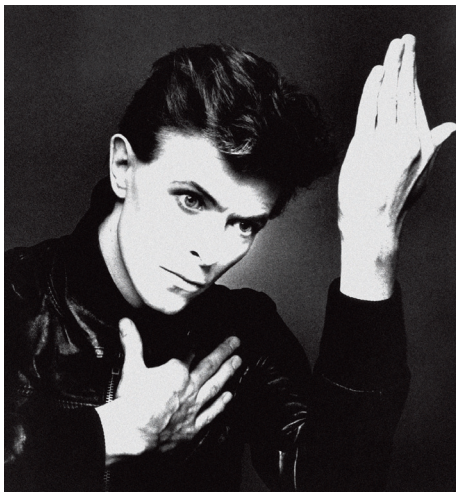
David Bowie Style

Written by Danny Lewis

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Classically stylish as the Thin White Duke.

exacerbated by drug use. Written primarily while on the road touring the Ziggy show, the album is also Bowie's response to the United States, a country that he admitted he was both appalled by and fixated with. The Ziggy hairstyle remained, as did the flamboyant androgynous space-age costumes. On the record's sleeve, Bowie is featured with a vivid lightning bolt of make-up across his face – a visual representation of the album's key theme.

Having toured almost constantly for two years promoting the Ziggy/Aladdin Sane story, Bowie moved to America to plot his next move. The difficulties he had encountered separating himself from his creations may have been one impulse for him to abandon such previously well-loved characters, as he was about to do. He retreated first into other people's music (on the covers record *Pin Ups*) then into narrative. *Diamond Dogs* was a concept album set on a post-apocalyptic world. Influenced by the works of William Burroughs and George Orwell's dystopian novel *1984*, *Diamond Dogs* maintained the glam rock template of the previous two albums, but Bowie also added elements of the soul and funk music that was achieving great popularity in the United States at the time. The album reached number one in the UK and number five on the US Billboard Hot100, with the title track and *Rebel Rebel* (which would go on to become the song of Bowie's most covered by other artists) released as singles. The latter was his final glam single, an irresistibly catchy guitar riff providing the backdrop to his gender-bending lyrics ('Got your mother in a whirl/ She's not sure if you're a boy or a girl').

While the album cover saw Bowie still sporting the Ziggy hairstyle (albeit combined with canine hindquarters) and early promotional appearances retained the glam look, by the time he toured the record he had dispensed with all the accoutrements of the glam-era Bowie. Boxy suits, braces, wide ties and a floppy fringed hairstyle were the order of the day, as Bowie stalked a stage set comprising strangely-dimensioned buildings and ominous lighting. Props were used liberally, emphasising the 'story' rather than any character.

The transition away from glam rock continued with *Young Americans* in 1975, which found Bowie shifting his sound further into soul and funk territory. While disorientating many fans who had fallen in love with the previous records, *Young Americans* proved a mainstream success: the single *Fame*, co-written with John Lennon and Carlos Alomar, gave Bowie his first number one single in the United States. His sartorial style at the time continued to draw back from flamboyance, emphasising a much more classic look of tailored suits and ties. This paring back was accelerated for his next project, *Station to Station*, an album which fused the soul and disco elements of *Young*



Touring in support of Low and "Heroes".

Americans with the driving electronica of the emerging 'Krautrock' bands, and for which he created another compelling alter ego: the Thin White Duke. Shrouded in darkness, dressed in classic monochrome – white shirt, black waistcoat and trousers; hair combed back from a face whose cheekbones, highlighted by a slash of blusher, stood out like razor blades; a cigarette at the lips – the Duke resembled a reclusive movie star from Hollywood's golden age. Indeed, it was a look perfect for the silver screen and Bowie employed it when cast in the lead role of *The Man Who Fell to Earth*, playing an extraterrestrial from a dying planet who had assumed human form as he searched for the water needed to save his species. Bowie's already lithe frame became increasingly gaunt during this time as his drug use escalated. Bowie recalled later that he was subsisting on little more than milk, red peppers and cocaine. Not that it stopped him working, however: he undertook extensive promotional duties for the five album tracks that were released as singles.

An interest in the artistic movements of the 1920s and a motivation to retreat from the limelight to re-establish his mental equilibrium informed Bowie's next move. He relocated to West Berlin. Seduced by the synthesised sounds that had emanated from the city's underground clubs over the previous couple of years – most notably from the band Kraftwerk – and by Berlin's air of seedy decadence, as well as his interest in the German Expressionist movement, Bowie used the relative anonymity of Germany to escape the paranoia (augmented by industrial-level cocaine use) that global fame had engendered, and to beat his drug addiction.

With friend Iggy Pop in tow, he found himself rejuvenated by the exposure to new influences, and the following three years were an incredibly prolific period. Not only did he produce three of his most experimental and critically lauded albums during his time based in Berlin – *Low* in 1977, *"Heroes"* the following year, and *Lodger* in 1979 – he also co-wrote and produced two albums for Iggy – *The Idiot* and *Lust for Life* – that gave the former Stooge the biggest hits of his career.

The Berlin trilogy, as Bowie's three albums became collectively known, were sleek affairs, combining rock, ambient electronica and classical elements to create work that seemed, somehow, to reflect the nature of the divided city: harshness in the East and comparative opulence in the West. This was summed up on the title track of *"Heroes"*, which detailed a pair of lovers coming together in the shadow of the Wall – passion and privation combined. Bowie's style during his time in the city was also emblematic of this duality. A kind of proletarian chic of leather jackets and flat caps alternated with a more classic look of trench coats, fedoras and three-piece suits.

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THE MAN WHO SOLD THE WORLD

INSPIRED IN PART by Marc Bolan's androgynous look, the theatrical circles he had been introduced to by Lindsay Kemp and the hippy counter-culture that had sprung up at the tail end of the Sixties, Bowie began experimenting with notions of gender in his style choices. He grew out his hair, eventually sporting the flowing locks of a maiden from a pre-Raphaelite painting. He started wearing brocaded jackets, loose-fit blouses and the sort of flared trousers that were worn by both men and women at the time. He also began designing and making his own unisex clothing and took to wearing 'man dresses', the most famous of which was designed by Michael Fish (who also invented the kipper tie) and which caused a stir when Bowie insisted on wearing it for promotional interviews in the United States prior to the release of *The Man Who Sold the World*. Rather than fitting into a pre-existing style as he had with the mods, Bowie's experiments in androgyny during 1970–2 were a deliberate act of self-creation, of carving out an individual look that would set him apart from his contemporaries. Influenced by the ideas of gender bending and constructed self-images attendant on Andy Warhol's Factory, Bowie was moving away from mainstream notions of what rock and roll should be, of what a performer could do, and even what a man should look like.

The two albums that he produced during this period, *The Man Who Sold the World* and *Hunky Dory*, are evidence of this attempt to formulate a new style. The first predominantly featured the folk music Bowie had been playing with his Beckenham Arts Lab cohorts (indeed, the track *Memories of a Free Festival* immortalises an event that the collective organised in the spirit of other hippy-esque gatherings such as Woodstock). *Hunky Dory* had a lighter touch, incorporating elements of music hall, kitsch and cinematic scores. It contained songs of skewed pop in which Bowie sang of sailors fighting in the dance halls, and of society's outsiders; the kooks and creatives among whom he was moving. It also paid homage to two formative influences, explicitly on the track entitled *Andy Warhol* and implicitly on *Queen Bitch*, which was written as a tribute to the Velvet Underground.

The archetypal image of Bowie at this time is found on the front cover of *The Man Who Sold the World*. In it, one can see the nascent rearrangement of gender roles and theatrical ideas that would subsequently generate even more memorably iconic moments in his career. In the photograph, Bowie reclines on a chaise longue. His man dress is open almost to the navel, its skirt falling over the silk covering the furniture, revealing knee-length boots. His hair sits below his shoulders and he holds a playing card, the remainder of the deck thrown across the floor in front of him, as though he were now playing his hand, ready to pursue his ideas to their conclusions and gamble that the public would take to him. The gamble paid off.

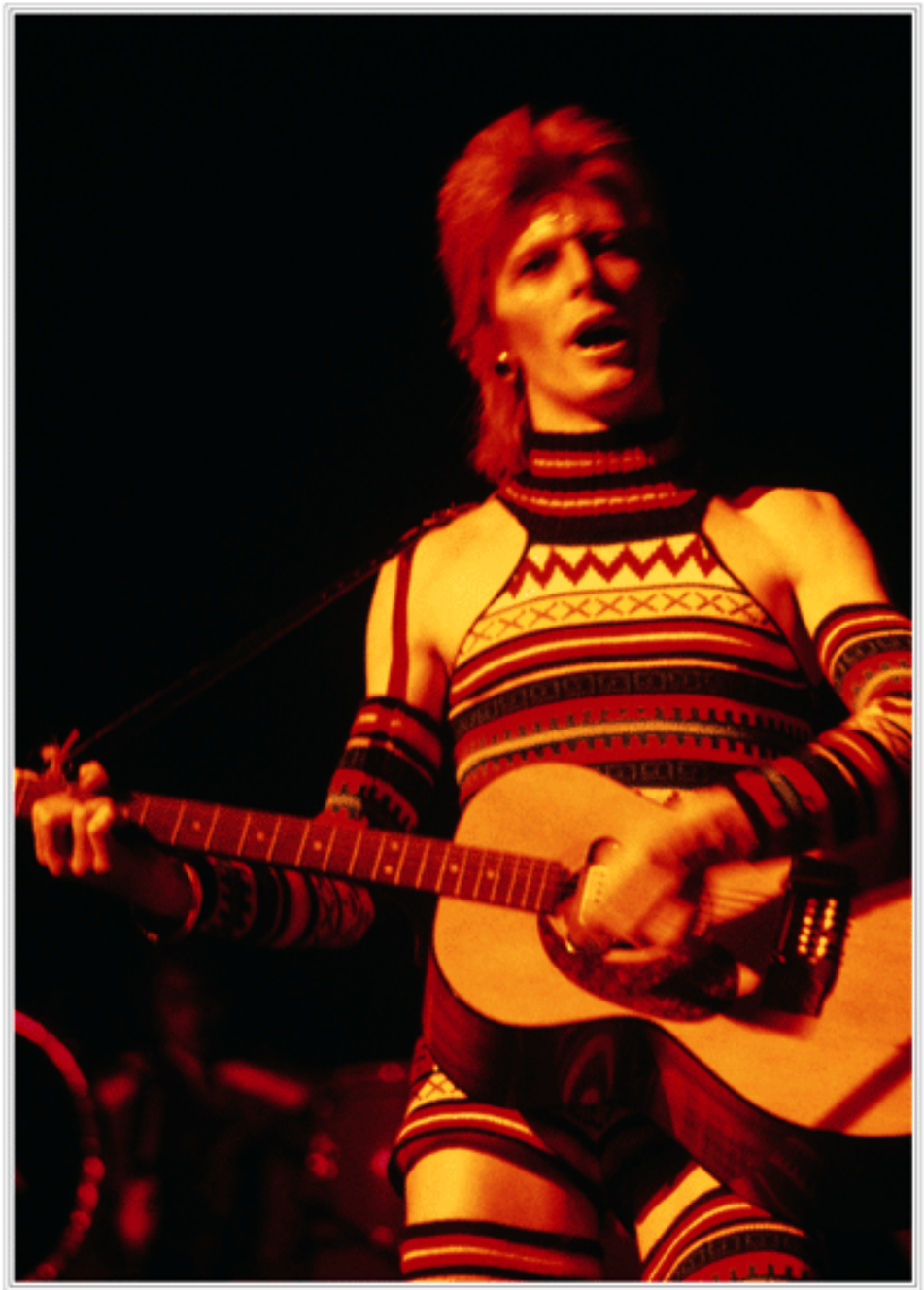


OPPOSITE

Towards the end of the Sixties, Bowie's engagement with many different musical styles and art forms was influencing his fashion. Here he sports a brocaded jacket, common amid the hippy scene.



Knitted, patterned jumpsuits with various parts cut away were some of Bowie's flamboyant stage outfits. Here a one-legged, one-armed version is accessorised with over-sized bangles…



…while a high-necked affair features shoulder and thigh omissions.



Offstage, Bowie has an almost 'rat pack' air about him.



Cutting a classic silhouette in the 1986 film Absolute Beginners.



For Earthling Bowie favoured longer-cut clothes, such as this Eastern-influenced ensemble.



Frock coats were a popular choice during the mid-Nineties.