

Punk Hairstyles - From Rebel Culture To Fashion Statement

Punk hairstyles - those bizarre, colorful things that you see in high streets, villages and black-painted teenage bedrooms! I'm not a punk and have never been one, but I have always been fascinated by the whole punk look and ideology - probably because I was a teenager at the very time that punk exploded, kicking, screaming, swearing and spitting, into popular culture.

Punk took off as a mainstream fashion and music trend during the mid-1970s, largely due to the efforts of high profile English fashion designer, Vivienne Westwood and the crown princes of punk - The Sex Pistols. The Pistols were managed at the time by Malcolm McLaren, who was Westwood's partner (personally and professionally) and the crazy mixture of these 3 forces gave rise to what would become a global phenomenon.

The Pistols' unique look was largely created by Westwood, utilizing zips, rips, chains, bondage, porn and slogans. The fashion tapped into anti-establishment feelings of the time and the punk hairstyles were a reflection of the clothes and attitudes - unwashed, anarchic and spiky. Mid-to-late-1970s punk hairstyles were actually quite subdued; hair remained fairly short - probably as a reaction to the trend at the time for both male and female hair to be worn long.

Hair was simply chopped off using whatever implements were to hand, and left untreated and unwashed. As a result, the hair tended to form itself into clumps and spikes, which started to become the formal "look" for punk hair. Color - especially bright orange as worn by Pistols' frontman Johnny Rotten - became another punk hairstyle 'stamp,' which could be seen on high-streets all around large cities of the UK. Women also tended to decorate their hair to match their outfits.

As punk moved into the 80s, it also moved from the streets into mainstream fashion and also from being a largely British phenomenon, into a worldwide movement. With the greater influence of fashion, punk hair styles also became more popular, formal and more 'designer,' with the use of much more hair colorings and deliberately asymmetric cuts. Spiky hairstyles began to be formalized with the use of hair gel and bleaching (the Billy Idol look) became really popular, as did the most famous punk hairstyle of all - the Mohawk.

The Mohawk - or Mohican - hairstyle is the definitive punk hairstyle. The style is so-called because it is thought to have been worn by the Mahican and Mohawk tribes, although in reality it appears that the Huron tribe were the first to sport the hairstyle. The Mohawk hairstyle is characterized by a shaved scalp with an upright strip of hair running across the crown of the head from the forehead to the nape of the neck.. 1980s punk culture became identified with magnificent, colorful Mohawks, but - tragically for a rebel culture - the style became so mainstream that high-fashion catwalks around the world began to feature supermodels wearing beautifully-styled, peacock-like Mohawks.

Since that time, little has changed really. Punk music has evolved into many styles, most notably the Emo punk genre so popular with American teenagers. Punk music has largely returned to the underground, but the punk 'look' is very much mainstream, as popular as ever with disaffected and experimental teens as well as older punks who refuse give up on the punk lifestyle and philosophy. But what about the hairstyles? Well you can now walk into any high street salon and ask for a modern, punk hairstyle. Truly punk hairstyles are now all about the fashion statement...

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