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Rhapsody in Blue Jeans (1959)

This brief and whimsical article in praise of blue jeans appeared in the first edition of the influential teen magazine *Twen*, which was published in the Federal Republic from 1959 until 1971. Praised for its innovative layout, photography, and design, this left-liberal magazine featured articles on a range of topics of interest to youth – from fashion and lifestyle to music and film. It also tackled more difficult subjects, including those relating to sexuality and contemporary politics.

You can't call this fashion any longer. The habit of wearing Blue Jeans is a force of nature. Oceans, continents, and the Iron Curtain, too, are easily conquered by the blue avalanche from America. It is only in red China that the youth seems to resist quite readily. There, old and young, men and women wear only blue linen suits – assembly worker outfits. But that is a different case. Blue Jeans are not “locksmith pants.” Blue Jeans are rural dress. Farmers gave rise to them. For farm work they need light but tear-resistant wear. Pants that cover the entire leg down to the ankle, to protect it against underbrush and mosquito bites. Yes, these were the prosaic beginnings.

That people soon wore them not only to work but also for leisure – because the picnic replaced the pub and the coffee klatsch – points in various ways to a social revolution: it is not the young gentleman with a walking stick and a bowler hat who is at the top of the hierarchy today, but the “natural boy.” But perhaps the explanation is much less complicated. Young people simply like themselves in jeans. They make legs long and hips narrow, and that always looks good.

Unlike Bavarian lederhosen, jeans should not be greasy. They are supposed to be washed frequently, until faded spots appear on the thighs. The rivets must be copper. Yes, these are strict customs, and some suspect behind such rites nothing more than a new penchant for a uniform.

But we have little concern in this regard. The only thing that is firm in the age of the Blue Jeans are the pants themselves. They fit so tightly that you can't get your hands into the pockets. You simply hook your thumbs onto the waistband. Belts are unnecessary. Jeans stay up even without them.

It was supposedly the Italian star model Elsa Martinelli who invented the version of the “wet jeans.” She prefers to step under the shower in her pants. Afterwards, of course, the pants are skin tight and the audience applauds. But that is not everyone's cup of tea. Some are put off by it.

P.S. If you wear Blue Jeans, you don't need a handkerchief. After all, they are soooo practical.

Source: Emerich Budweis, "Rhapsody in Blue Jeans" ["Rhapsodie in Blue Jeans"], *Twen*, no. 1 (1959), p. 42.

Translation: Thomas Dunlap