

Lapel pins 'look' for the '80s

By Diane Winocur
Of the Emerald

Buttons are back.

A fad that never completely left has found renewed popularity. With the recent successes of video rock (MTV) and New Wave music, the fashion magazine "look" for 1983 is similar to Britain's post-Punk "New Romantic" style. Central to this fashion, as it was for the Punks, is the lapel button.

University students have embraced the fad, pinning the multi-colored ornaments to T-shirts, jackets and backpacks.

For years, buttons have served as a barometer of social consciousness. Students' reasons for wearing buttons shed light on the debate over student apathy in the 1980's.

"U.S. out of Springfield" reads the lapel of political science junior Tom Birkland.

"It's making a political statement," he says. "It points to places that the U.S. should get out of, and it grabs your interest more than, say 'U.S. out of El Salvador' would."

"And it's funny," he adds.

One button reading "wearing buttons isn't enough" neatly summarizes the reason for the popularity of political buttons on college campuses — low-effort politics. Political views expressed on buttons can make the wearer feel involved with a cause through declared allegiance alone.

"I can say things without being garish. I'm not standing on any feet, and I'm not preaching," says Rannah Hall, a sociology junior. Two buttons pinned to her backpack show "Protect All Beings, No Spray" and an un-happy face with a "Reaganomics" caption.

College students have worn buttons for decades. In the 1950s, the button to have was "Ban the Bomb." The '60s brought a deluge of peace signs and counter-culture promotion. The '70s were punctuated by the now infamous "Have a nice day" happy face. One student suggested the button for the '80s may be "I don't have Herpes."

Mark Johnson, a journalism senior, says he wears his "Why be Normal" button — upside down — "for the hell of it."

"That's how I feel most of the time. Normal is boring. I'm making a personal statement. Nobody has to believe in it except me."

Some students keep their button motto current with their mood. "I have about 10 or 12 in a basket, and I choose them by how I'm feeling," says Land duPont, a journalism junior. "Sometimes I wear a whole lot, and sometimes just one."

DuPont wore his "most stripped-down and ambiguous button" — an "X" button — because it described his mood that day.

Buttons touting favorite musicians are chosen as carefully as personal mottos because fans often consider a performer's



Photo by Bob Baker

Rock band buttons, political buttons and buttons for fun are making a comeback at the University.

image before publicizing them.

Laurie Miller, a journalism sophomore whose jacket reads "The Police," "Look Sharp" and "The Beat," says she would never buy a band's button if she didn't like their music and their "ideas."

Retailers say carrying an inventory of buttons for a market of individualists can be tricky. Bob Lee, owner of Face the Music record store, says the line between patently offensive and good fun is fuzzy, especially when some buyers aim to "get a rise out of people."

"It's like comedy. What one person finds funny, another is offended by," Lee draws the line at swastikas but finds most button profanity acceptable.

For some, no message is necessary, simply wearing buttons gives them pleasure. Kristin Rowe, an undeclared freshman, wears a leather jacket decorated with odds and ends such as a pickle, lips, an "I (heart) N.Y." button and old jewelry pins.

"I just like the look of it," Rowe says.

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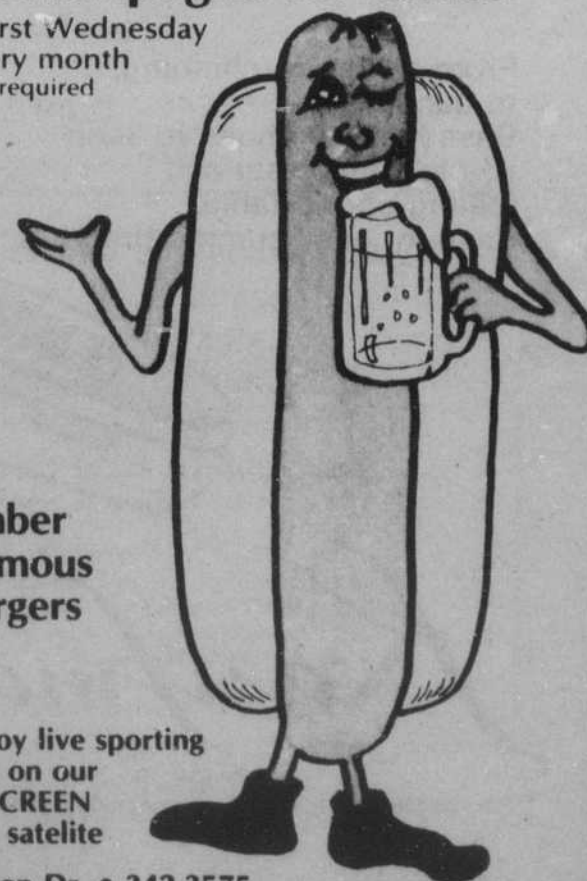
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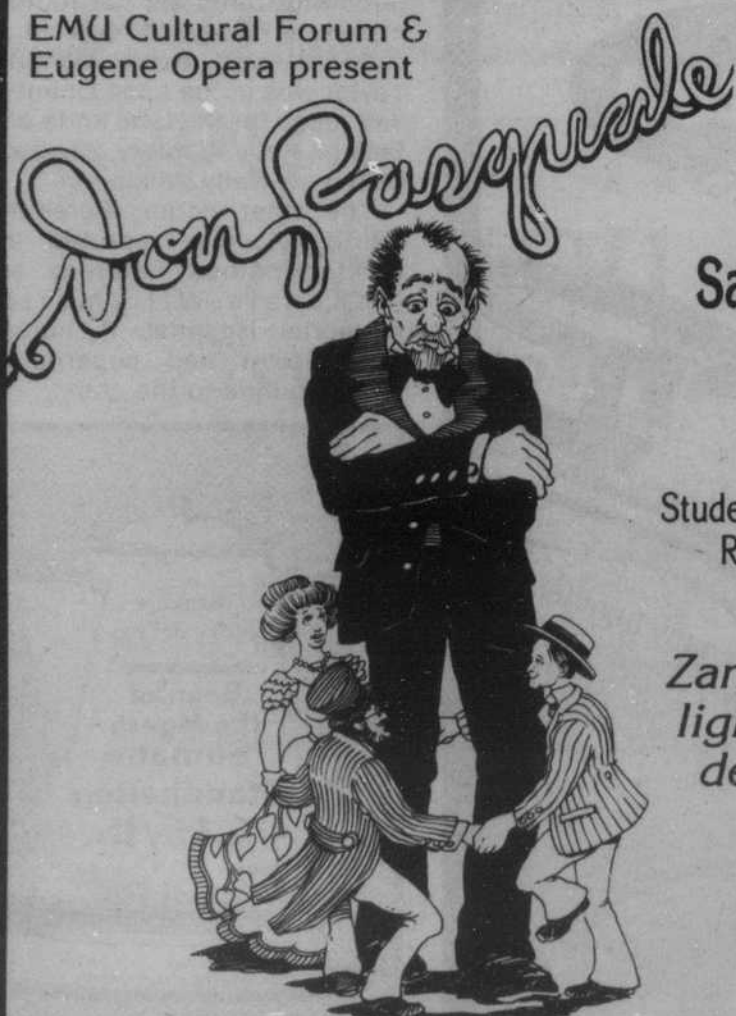


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