

Ravers, Skaters, Pirates and Satanists

Reflections on high school fashion

BY ANNA GRACE

Last Thursday my fourth period class was home to the following fashion statements; a large, soccer-ball-shaped hat and grungy sweatshirt, an impossibly short denim skirt worn with enormous, knee high, fuzzy boots, a girl in a tuxedo, and a T-shirt summarizing all major world philosophies by their take on “Shit happens.” That was the front row.

As I scanned to the back, taking in every imaginable ensemble, I wondered what has happened to high school fashion, the days of the late 1980s that I remember so well from my own student days at South. Gone are the simple days of preps in trendy Gap attire and a few different cliques each in their own uniform of rebellion. Most students at South claim to “wear whatever they want.” With a minimum of dress code rules (shirt and shoes are required, but the handbook makes no statement at all regarding pants) and parents eager to foster creativity and independent thinking, most students are wearing outfits of their choice. That doesn’t mean the outfits are not chosen to convey a message. But what does an oversized, soccer-ball-shaped hat mean? I’ve assembled a few observations and reflections on various South Eugene trends to help the older folk — that is, those beyond 18 — decode high school fashion.

Colored Tag Holders

I was having a serious conversation with a particularly hip young man in an Abercrombie shirt and gazillion-dollar jeans. As we spoke, I noticed a little piece of green plastic sticking out from the shoulder of his shirt. It was a colored tag holder, the kind that Goodwill uses to differentiate prices. I figured he must have forgotten to cut it off, so when we’d finished with the business at hand I said, very politely, “I think you have a tag holder still attached to your shirt.” He turned his head and tugged at it affectionately, “Yeah, the shirt’s from Goodwill.” Then after a pause he said proudly, “I hope you don’t think I’d shop at Abercrombie & Fitch.” No, of course not; this kid was too cool for the mall. Actual cool is buying expensive, trendy clothes at Goodwill, and leaving the tag in. Your shirt can say ABERCROMBIE six ways to Sunday so long as you didn’t actually buy it there.

Pirates

It will not surprise anyone to learn that there are a number of pirates attending class at South, wearing tri-cornered hats and medallions of Aztec gold around their necks. Aside from a general desire to be more like Johnny Depp (which is wholeheartedly supported by this author), what is the allure of emulating some historically filthy, rat-eating miscreant? These latter-day pirates seem to be tapping into a sense of adventure and

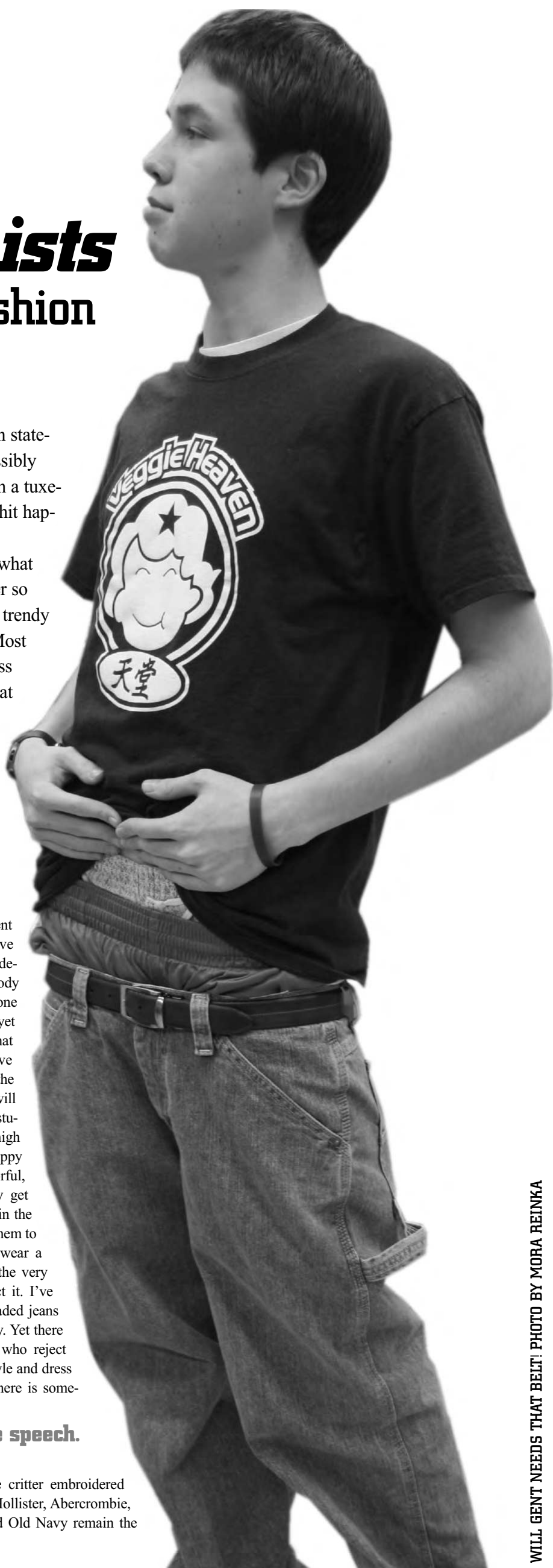
Hippie Couture

Hippie couture, as one eloquent student termed it, is expensive clothing worn to project an independent, free-spirit look. Everybody can see the irony in it, and no one would claim it as his or her style, yet it is pervasive. This is not to say that all hippie teens wear expensive clothing, not by a long shot (see the previous information on Goodwill tag holders). According to one student, youth often begin their high school careers at South with preppy clothing and ease into a more colorful, more casual hippie look as they get older. I think there is something in the very walls of South that inspires them to let their hair grow shaggy and wear a beaded necklace, and it is only the very strongest of souls who can reject it. I’ve noticed administrators wearing faded jeans with Birks — and not on a Friday. Yet there are plenty of students at South who reject their parents’ Saturday Market style and dress unashamedly in name brands. There is some-

I have seen a boy hike his pants up 27 times in a five-minute speech.

purpose. A pirate is rebellious but not a slacker. A pirate might learn the material he’s being taught, but he’s not to be bothered with homework. And South’s pirates are, of course, a highlight of any journey through the halls.

thing kind of cute about a little critter embroidered proudly on the breast of a shirt. Hollister, Abercrombie, Gap, Torrid, American Eagle and Old Navy remain the favorites.



WILL GENT NEEDS THAT BELT! PHOTO BY MORA REINKA