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Radio : Music : Sleeve Notes**Madonna Makeovers**

15 Aug 2011

In 1984, a young Madonna declared that she wanted "to rule the world". She wasn't kidding.

Her Majesty hasn't reached the age of 53 and remained at the top of her game by resting on her taut and terrific laurels, nor has it been enough for her to simply follow the musical and stylistic trends that have come and gone over the years in which she has sat on the pop throne.

Madonna has held onto her crown because she has set the trends, reinventing herself like no female artist has ever done before. Since she first burst onto the scene with her armfuls of rubber bracelets, fingerless gloves and crucifixes, urging everybody to get up and do their thing, Madonna has been the embodiment, in many ways, of vogue.

While there is no way to predict what trends the Queen of Reinvention in the years to come, we can still look back at what she has given us and pop culture history since she secured her first singles deal with Sire Records in 1982. As we present the most memorable Madonna makeovers in honour of the Material Girl's birthday on 16 August, we ask you to join us when we say, "Long Live the Queen!"

Boy Toy

Torn T-shirts, cut-off tights and lacy bras formed the style of New York dance students during the late 70s. Madonna made the look famous and inspired a generation of Madonna wannabes. She firmly established her highly sexualised image and status as a controversial figure when she upped-the-ante of her tattered lacy ensembles and appeared in a wedding dress for the video to 'Like a Virgin'. The Queen of Pop had been appointed.

**Blonde Ambition**

Madonna swapped dirty blonde for platinum and modelled herself more explicitly on sirens like Marilyn Monroe and Marlene Dietrich, honouring the icons of pop culture that went before her in 1990's 'Vogue'. Like Dietrich's tuxedo or Marilyn's white halter dress, the equally iconic blonde gave us one of the 20th century's most memorable looks when she wore the cone bustier designed by Jean-Paul Gaultier on stage for her Blonde Ambition World Tour. It pointed skyward as she writhed around on a bed and simulated masturbation while she sang 'Like a Virgin', reinventing the track and making it controversial once more.



Dita

Following her MTV-banned video for 'Justify My Love', Madonna released the 1992 album *Erotica*, in which she purred, "My name is Dita; I'll be your mistress tonight". This makeover involved a literal undressing, with her *Sex* book causing worldwide scandal and *Entertainment Weekly* publishing on its cover the infamous shot of Madonna hitchhiking nude with a cigarette in her mouth and a purse in her hand. Her masks and whips took us into the realm of role-playing, fantasy and fetish for her *Girly Show World Tour*, which emphasised androgyny and fluid sexuality.



Evita

After winning the role of Argentine heroine Eva Perón in the 1996 film adaptation of Andrew Lloyd Webber's stage musical, Madonna transformed herself into the equally controversial figure, donning Christian Dior suits, wearing red lipstick and pulling her bleached hair into a knot. Madonna believed it was a role she was born to play.

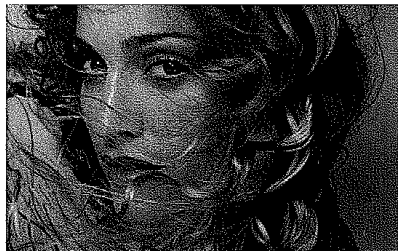
The film earned Madonna not only a Golden Globe, but also a Guinness World Record title for most costume changes in a film. Madonna broke Elizabeth Taylor's 1963 record of 65 costume changes for *Cleopatra*, changing costumes 85 times. The costumes included 39 hats, 45 pairs of shoes and 56 pairs of earrings.



Mystical Mother

After giving birth to daughter Lourdes and being introduced to the practice of Kabbalah, Madonna's 1998 album, *Ray of Light*, signalled a new musical direction, featuring electronic undertones, shades of ambient techno, Middle Eastern percussion and introspective lyrics about motherhood, fame and spirituality.

Her interest in Indian religions was reflected in her makeover, in which she wore her hair long, draped herself in elaborate robes and dresses, and painted her hands with Henna ink. Water imagery frequented her songs and videos, suggesting that *Ray of Light* signified a baptism of sorts; Madonna's rebirth as a more spiritually aware mother figure. In other words, this particular Madonna reinvention was not merely superficial.



Geisha Goddess

Madonna reinvented herself as a geisha for the video to 'Nothing Really Matters', taking her inspiration from Arthur Golden's book, *Memoirs of a Geisha*, and modelling herself on one of the book's characters, Hatsunomomo. The Western Hemisphere's pop icon adopted Eastern aesthetics for the transformation, wearing a red kimono, jet black Cleopatra style wig and painted face, giving us one of the most dramatic makeovers in music history.



Veronica Electronica

Madonna ventured into electro-pop territory for her 2000 album, *Music*, at the same time as she returned to the simplicity of her earlier songs, such as 'Everybody' and 'Get Into the Groove', when she reminded us that music "makes the people come together". The style that was built around the album was also relatively simple – a clean, cowboy-inspired look made distinctive with beaded jeans, embellished cowboy hats and statement t-shirts.



American Woman

For her 2003 album, *American Life*, Madonna used art to make a statement against right-wing politics, the war on Iraq and American conservatism. Her military fatigues seemed like suitable attire for this all out political attack in which she threw a grenade at a George W. Bush look-alike in the original video to the album's title track, which was later pulled and replaced with an edited version.

Upsetting the establishment once again seemed to be the order of the day when she performed 'Hollywood' at the 2003 MTV Video Music Awards. Wearing the bisexual dominatrix garb previously seen in 1993 for 'Bye Bye Baby', she snagged American pop princesses Britney Spears and Christina Aguilera, who both donned replicas of the famously controversial 'Like a Virgin' wedding dress of the early 80s.



Disco Queen

Much like the spinning mirror-ball she dances underneath or the roller rink she skates around, Madonna came full circle in 2005's *Confessions on a Dance Floor*. Reviving the Farrah Fawcett flick and using a sample from Abba's 'Gimme! Gimme! Gimme!' for her single 'Hung Up', Madonna marked her return to the dance floor by bringing back her leotards and cut-off tights, paying homage to the early disco days.



Urban Über-Icon

One of her latest releases, *Hard Candy*, saw the Queen of Pop team up with r'n'b royalty for a new incarnation, toughening up her look with boxing attire. Her overall themes, however, remained the same – that, no matter the musical genre or the role she is playing, it is music and dance itself that makes the shiny disco ball go round.

Her track 'Heartbeat' reminded us of what she once told us in 'Vogue', that being on the dance floor makes her "feel beautiful" and that she's "the only one that the light shines on". Indeed, the spotlight continues to shine down on Madonna as her star blazes brightly on the pop cultural landscape, and it's a message that Madonna impresses upon us with a sucker-punch that tells the world to cop it sweet.



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Madonna's 53 today, but are you wise with age about her lyrics?

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