



Dress up

THE STATE OF PLAY IN CHILDREN'S FASHION

Over the last 15 years, unlike some of our European counterparts, children's clothing in the UK has been distinctly trend led with bright bubblegum colours and high fashion shapes dominating. There has been a loss of tradition, innocence and charm to the way children have been dressing. "Children's clothes have become so much about logos and brash colours" says Fashion Director of Easy Living, Liz Thody "and like so much in our society there is no sense of longevity anymore."

Fortunately, fashion is fickle and a subversive element of small, individual makers have emerged producing vintage inspired children's clothing with a softer colour palette in kinder prettier styles using real fabrics. "This change is definitely a backlash against the mass market. I also think that just as in the beauty industry, there are opportunities for small, niche brands to survive as people demand children's clothes which are more original and quirky."

As Laura Ashley looked back to the Victorians for her children's wear ranges of sprig print, pin-tucked dresses and frilly collared blouses, this generation are being informed by a previous era. "For forty something's who were children in the early 60s, there is a nostalgia for the clothes they wore as children" says Thody. "It was also a time when women would not step out of the house without make-up and feeling the need to be well dressed." Linda Mclean Fashion Director of Junior Magazine agrees "things that are coming through include pinafore dresses from the 60s, paisley's from the 70s and batwing shapes from as recently as the 80s."

This reincarnation of the past is, however, a reinvention not a replication. A process of evolution has occurred: the clothes embody the 'essence' of past looks rather than being faithful reproductions. As Thody reminisces "It is the quality of the details, the use of natural fabrics, hand-knits and the subtler colour palette that I remember about the clothes I wore as a child." This sentiment is reflected in the