



Vivienne Westwood

08 April 1941 – 29 Dec 2022

Vivienne Westwood was an English fashion designer and businesswoman, largely responsible for bringing modern punk and new wave fashions into the mainstream.

Westwood became noticed when she made clothes for a boutique with Malcolm McLaren ran on King's Road. Their ability to synthesise clothing and music shaped the 1970s UK punk scene, which was dominated by McLaren's band, the Sex Pistols. She viewed punk as a way of 'seeing if one could put a spoke in the system'.

She opened four shops in London and eventually expanded throughout Britain and the world, selling a varied range of merchandise, some of which promoted her political causes such as the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and climate change.

Vivienne was born in the village of Tintwistle, Cheshire, on 8 April 1941. In 1958, her family moved to Harrow, Greater London. She took a jewellery and silversmith course at the University of Westminster, then known as the Harrow Art School, but left after one term, saying: 'I didn't know how a working-class girl like me could possibly make a living in the art world'. After taking a job in a factory and studying at a teacher-training college, she became a primary-school teacher. During this period, she created her own jewellery, which she sold at a stall on Portobello Road.

In 1962, she met Derek Westwood, a Hoover factory apprentice, in Harrow. married on 21 July 1962; **Vivienne** made her own wedding dress.

Vivienne's marriage to Derek ended when his business soon collapsed, causing poverty and constant scandals. Three years after the wedding, the family broke up. **Vivienne** has two children with Derek: a daughter named Rose, and a son, Benjamin after she met Malcolm McLaren. **Westwood** met Malcolm McLaren soon after and moved to Thurleigh Court in Balham, where their son Joseph Corr  was born in 1967. **Westwood** continued to teach until 1971 and also created clothes which McLaren designed. McLaren became manager of the punk band the Sex Pistols, and subsequently the two garnered attention as the band wore **Westwood's** and McLaren's designs.



Punk Era

Westwood was one of the architects of the punk fashion phenomenon of the 1970s, saying 'I was messianic about punk, seeing if one could put a spoke in the system in some way'. The store that she co-managed with McLaren, SEX, was a meeting place for early members of the London punk scene. **Westwood** also inspired the style of punk icons, such as Viv Albertine, who wrote in her memoir, 'Vivienne and Malcolm use clothes to shock, irritate and provoke a reaction but also to inspire change. Mohair jumpers, knitted on big needles, so loosely that you can see all the way through them, T-shirts slashed and written on by hand, seams and labels on the outside, showing the construction of the piece; these attitudes are reflected in the music we make. It's OK to not be perfect, to show the workings of your life and your mind in your songs and your clothes.'



Fashion Collections

Westwood's designs were independent and represented a statement of her own values. She collaborated on occasion with Gary Ness, who assisted **Westwood** with inspirations and titles for her collections.



McLaren and **Westwood's** first fashion collection to be shown to the media and potential international buyers was *Pirate*. Subsequently, their partnership, which was underlined by the fact that both their names appeared on all labelling, produced collections in Paris



and London with the thematic titles such as *Savages* (late 1981), to *Worlds End 1984* (later renamed *Hypnos*). After the partnership with McLaren was dissolved, **Westwood** showed one more collection under the Worlds End label: *Clint Eastwood* (late 1984–early 1985).



New Romantic (1981–85)

During which time she created the famous look of the band Adam and the Ants.



Petrushka Ballet (1985-1989)



Westwood took inspiration from the ballet *Petrushka* to design the mini-crini, an abbreviated version of the Victorian crinoline. Its mini-length, bouffant silhouette inspired the puffball skirts widely presented by more established designers such as Christian Lacroix. The mini-crini was described in 1989 as a combination of two conflicting ideals - the crinoline, representing a "mythology of restriction and encumbrance in woman's dress", and the miniskirt, representing an "equally dubious mythology of liberation".

The Pagan Years (1988-91)

During which **Vivienne's** heroes changed from punks to *Tatler* girls wearing clothes that parodied the upper class.

Political Involvement

In April 1989, **Westwood** appeared on the cover of *Tatler* dressed as Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. The suit that Westwood wore had been ordered for Thatcher but not yet delivered. The cover, which bore the caption "This woman was once a punk", was included in *The Guardian* list of the best ever UK magazine covers.



In September 2005, **Westwood** joined forces with the British civil rights group Liberty and launched exclusive limited design T-shirts and baby wear bearing the slogan *I AM NOT A TERRORIST, please don't arrest me*. She said she was supporting the campaign and defending habeas corpus. The sale of the £50 T-shirts raised funds for the organisation. **Westwood** stated on television in 2007 that she had transferred her long-standing support for the Labour Party to the Conservatives, due to concerns about civil liberties and human rights.

Before her death on 29 December 2022, **Vivienne Westwood** continued to speak out on causes she was passionate about. In 2008, she campaigned for Nuclear Disarmament in Berkshire. The following year, she cut her hair to highlight the dangers of climate change. She appeared in a PETA campaign to promote World Water Day and vegetarianism. In 2015, **Westwood** stated her support of the Green Party: It was reported that she had donated £300,000 to fund the party's election campaign. The Green Party later excluded her due to her avoidance of UK corporate tax. Subsequently, **Westwood** switched her support to campaigning on behalf of Nigel Askew, the 'We are the Reality Party' candidate opposing UKIP leader Nigel Farage. In 2017, **Westwood** endorsed Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn for the 2017 general election. She said, 'I'm excited about the Labour Party manifesto because it's all about the fair distribution of wealth.'

