

RHODESIAN COOL

Most of us at some point in our lives have tried to look cool. Many of us used the latest clothing fashions to achieve that. Sadly, I missed the pink and black moccasin craze because I was too young. For the same reason, I missed the first wave of blue jeans, ducktail hair and pointed-toe shoes. But I caught the tail end of the chisel-toe, high-heel boots, flared trousers, and over-the-ear hairstyles.

On drives beyond the suburbs, out into the countryside, you would often pass something that looked like an outsized, dark green telephone box. The sheet metal roadside stalls targeted the passing African trade. Inside each sat a single, sweating African man, hemmed in by narrow shelves crowded with cheap cigarettes, sweets, packets of crisps, and warm cool drinks.

In those days, smoking was cool. The unfiltered cigarettes cost tuppence for a pack of eight, the ideal price for pre-teen pocket money. The Star brand, everyone's favourite, stood resplendent in its distinctive red and white packs. But if you preferred, you might buy the less colourful maroon and white Marvel brand. And best of all, you didn't have to prove your age.

Then in our teens, we discovered the incomparable Rhodesian wines. The sweet-flavoured Golden Eagle was popular, but its yellow colouring reminded me of another similarly coloured liquid. A little less popular was the colourless, dry, White Thunder, delivering an assault on young palates honed on the irresistible sweetness of Coca-Cola, Sparletta, and Fanta. I never drank too much White Thunder because I suspected its name was a label warning to those tempted to over-indulge.

When Elvis burst onto the scene, the guys grew sideburns and combed their hair into ducktails. Others preferred crewcuts, brush-cuts (flat-tops), or a traditional parting. We all remember, 'Brylcreem, a little dab will do ya!' Fabian, Troy Donahue, and other teen heartthrobs set the style for the boys.

The girls had their ponytails, fringes, pageboys, beehives, and pixie cuts. Makeup and Je Reviens perfume, or Chanel No. 5 if you could afford it, added the final touch. Hollywood, including Sandra Dee, Annette Funicello, and others, all played their part.

If all else failed, and we'd bothered to learn the latest steps, we might try to draw attention on the dance floor. Many minor dance crazes came and went in the 1950s and 60s. People often jitterbugged to rock and roll music, but then in 1960, Chubby Checker introduced The Twist, which lasted longer than most other popular dance styles. And if you could waltz, foxtrot, or cha-cha, that was even more impressive.

As we age, doing what we like replaces looking cool and trying to impress. Now that's really cool!