

# Man markets Fab Four clothes

Stitch-for-stitch copies help outfit Beatles tribute bands, fans

By John Kelly  
The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — One day, a little over five years ago, Russ Lease decided that what the world needed was historically accurate, reasonably priced reproductions of Beatles clothing: stitch-for-stitch copies of the distinctive outfits the famous musicians wore in concert.

Luckily, Russ was in the position to provide them. With his brother, he had owned the Pants Plus clothing store in a suburban Maryland mall from 1976 until the mall closed in 2001. Russ knew the clothing industry. And he knew the Beatles. A fan since childhood, he's a leading collector of high-end Beatles memorabilia: signed letters, rare albums, old performance contracts, one of "The Beatles" drumheads from the front of Ringo's bass drum.

At a Sotheby's auction in 1994, Russ had paid about \$5,000 for a tailored tan jacket, size 39 regular, with epaulets, pleated breast pockets and Nehru collar. It was the so-called "Shea jacket," the very jacket Paul McCartney wore when the Beatles performed at Shea Stadium on Aug. 15, 1965.

Recently, Russ, 50, slipped on a pair of white cotton gloves and eased a headless mannequin out of a locked display case. He unbuttoned the Shea jacket and removed it from the form. The fabric was clean and unwrinkled, although there were sweat stains on the acetate lining.

Russ's idea was to reverse-engineer the jacket and create an exact duplicate.

"All of the tailors I spoke with wanted to take it apart," he said. "I said, 'No you can't do that.'"



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Russ Lease holds a copy of the "Shea jacket" worn for the Beatles' concert at Shea Stadium in New York. Behind him in the case is Paul McCartney's original.

Finally he found a master tailor in Lehighton, Pa., named Pete Camioni. The two spent four days poring over the jacket, taking measurements, making sketches. Today, you can buy your own Shea jacket — in tan or black, sizes 38 to 50 — for \$295 from Russ's company, www.beatlesuits.com.

Next, Russ duplicated the frock coat Ringo wore on the cover of the "Abbey Road" album. (The original — size 34 short; Ringo is tiny — is in another display case.) Russ also sells the collarless suits from the Beatles' early days, the narrow-lapel jackets and drainpipe trousers they wore on "The Ed Sullivan Show" and the velvet-collared sharkskin suits seen at the end of "A Hard Day's Night."

These outfits are a godsend for people whose job requires them to dress as John, Paul, George or Ringo. These are the hardworking Beatles tribute

bands, made up of musicians who comb their bangs over their foreheads and master not only the chords of the Beatles' songs, but also the distinctive bounce of the Beatles' heads, their knees-bent joggling stance, the slight eyeball flutter that accompanies a lusty "Woooooo!"

These groups — with such names as the Mersey Beat, the Beat Club, BritBeat, the Beatalls, the Beatlads, the Fab Four, the Fab 5, Fab Forever and Almost Fab — were cruising thrift shops looking for clothing that could be altered and made to look vaguely Beatlish.

About a third of Russ's suits go to "trib" bands. More recent rockers including Elliot Easton of the Cars and Doug Fieger of the Knack are also customers. So, too, are relatively normal folks.

"Some of it is kind of back in style now," Russ said of the clothes, made at a factory in

Pennsylvania that also sews police uniforms. "Then I think there are people who just want to have it to hang in the closet. I have a fair amount of women customers who want (the Shea jacket) in Paul's size — not to wear it, not to give to their husband, just to have it in their collection, to put it on a mannequin in their Beatles room."

There is something Shroud of Turin-like about the clothes. Looking at them brings a flood of associations. And Russ's memorabilia-filled basement is like a reliquary, adorned as it is with various slivers of the true rock-and-roll cross.

So, Russ, have you ever put on Paul's jacket?

"I'd be lying to you if I said I didn't," he said. "When you get Paul McCartney's Shea jacket, you have to put it on and slap on a Hofner bass and look in the mirror and see how it looks." Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah!

# Accessories for iPods are proliferating

By Michael Booth  
The Denver Post

From a solar-powered battery charger that fairly shouts "eco-friendly rawk!" to a clock-radio fit for a space odyssey, there are better ways to run your iPod.

Feeding, clothing and caring for your iPod with accessories has become a major American growth industry, seeing as how Apple sold 21 million of its media players in the last three months before Christmas.

Estimates put the sales market for iPod add-ons at \$1 billion a year, and growing fast.

Companies like Griffin, Belkin, JBL and Bose have either launched or revived entire brand names by jumping on the iPod's goodwill marketing train.

Many of the accessories are ridiculous, of course. Do you need the \$40 iFish, that amplifies your iPod and flops around on the floor in time to the music? Or the iPod dock for the

bathroom that also dispenses toilet paper? We think not.

Ah, but that \$100 sun-powered battery charger from Solio.com — that's a winner. When you want to be off the grid but remain in tune, the charger gives you one hour of play time for each hour soaks in the sun. It also provides eight to 10 hours of battery storage on top of your regular charge.

The most useful iPod tools these days put the sound where you want it, when you don't want it in your ears: through your car stereo.

Industry product reviews call the Belkin TuneFM a cheap, decent-sounding option for wireless transmission of your iPod's signal into your car stereo and speakers.

The TuneFM model (\$40 to \$50 online) plugs into the cigarette lighter as a charger for your iPod, and mounts on the bottom of the iPod to send the music signal through an unused FM frequency.

But many users of the wire-

less transmission gizmos are frustrated by static, or constantly searching for better frequencies as they roam a signal-filled city. Hard-wiring your iPod to the car stereo is a better option if you spend a lot of listening time in the driver's seat.

There are a few basic options for car owners. Car Toys will hard-wire an FM modulator that connects your iPod to your existing stereo, leaving a connecting cord dangling through the dashboard.

You'll still have to control the

music on your iPod's panel, a dangerous pastime while moving at 65 mph. The equipment costs about \$49, and the installation is about \$75.

Newer cars and separately-purchased car stereos include an auxiliary or headphone jack on the front panel of the tuner. Your iPod can hook directly into that jack from the iPod's headphone jack; you are still controlling the playlists through the iPod itself. New radios with that set-up include a Panasonic model starting at \$120.

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# Boomer women gather on Internet

BoomerGirl.com geared toward 50-somethings

By Korky Vann  
The Hartford Courant

There's a new girl in town — or in cyberspace, to be exact.

BoomerGirl.com, launched last month, offers news, blogs and tips on health, fashion, family, finances and fitness — all geared toward "women of a certain age." The Web site grew out of a Kansas woman's weekly column on her own midlife misadventures and the challenges and humorous happenings of being a female over 50. Cathy Hamilton, who wrote Boomer Girl Diary for a local paper, was surprised when she searched for similar content online and found little.

"My kids are all over Facebook.com and Myspace.com, which offer relevant content and a community experience for teens and twentysomethings," says Hamilton, 51. "I wanted to find the same thing for women my age, but there really wasn't much out there." Hamilton took her idea for a Web site geared toward middle-

aged women to the marketing folks at her paper. They saw the potential and helped get the project up and running.

"The reaction to my column told me there was a need for something like this on the Internet," Hamilton says. "Women over 40 just aren't seeing themselves in today's media."

Hamilton's venture joins Boomerwomenspeak.com, launched by empty-nester Dotsie Bregel in 2002, and eons.com, created in 2006 by Jeff Taylor, founder of Monster.com for the over-50 audience.

Sandy Berger, author of "Great Age Guide to the Internet," a handbook for "boomers and beyond," says such sites make good business sense. Born between 1946 and 1964, boomers have more political power, education, discretionary income and cultural impact than any other generation. The last wave of boomers turns 43 this year. The oldest turns 61.

"Back when I started teaching boomers computer skills, I actually had folks pick up the mouse and put it on the screen," says Berger, creator of compukiss.com, which features computer tutorials, technology

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