

## Looking Like the Other: The Evolution of Vampire Fashion

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**Abstract:** *From Victorian gothic inspired outfits to the leather, chains, and ripped jeans of the punk movement, this article highlights the transformation of popular vampire fashion over the years.*



(<https://townsquare.media/site/442/files/2014/01/Interview-with-the-Vampire.jpg?w=980&q=75>)

Whenever we think about vampires, we tend to picture the same archetype of a person in formal wear straight out of the Victorian Era with pale skin and black clothing but that is not always the case (Magic Wardrobes, 2013). Vampires are flexible creatures, through and through, thanks largely in part to a long list of legends and mythology which has allowed writers over the years to morph the monsters to fit their individual narratives (Asbjørn, 2001, 97, 102). As such, it makes perfect sense that the fashion worn by these characters changes to match their stories. Lestat & Louis from Anne Rice's *Interview With The Vampire*, for example, spend the majority of the film dressed in fine period-typical clothing in order to signal both, Louis' wealth as well as allow the vampires to blend in amongst human society in order to hunt for victims. Towards the end of the film, however, when the narrative catches up with the characters in real-time, both have moved away from the more traditional vampire wear to something a little more modern. No longer as concerned with portraying wealth, a larger importance is placed on being able to camouflage humanity. Though seemingly inconsequential, appearances matter greatly to vampires when taking into account the core of their power stems from being able to seduce their

victims. Ethereal beauty combined with clothing that demonstrated a level of wealth allowed classic vampires like Lestat to draw their victims to them, but also inspired and influenced numerous fashion trends in the years that followed (Komar, 2017).



([https://i.etsystatic.com/30920866/r/il/b047f7/4284364296/il\\_fullxfull.4284364296\\_rrk7.jpg](https://i.etsystatic.com/30920866/r/il/b047f7/4284364296/il_fullxfull.4284364296_rrk7.jpg))

Gothic fashion emerged as the result of combining the romanticism of the Victorian era with the rebelliousness of modern society and is often thought of as being “vampire fashion”. Influenced heavily by the mourning wear of the 1800s, it is easy to understand where the connection between goth clothing and vampires came from (Attitude Clothing, 2021). Though black dominates most wardrobes, gothic fashion is actually about darker shades than focusing entirely on one color and the “flashier” pieces to attire came later with the emergence of the punk movement in the 1970s & 1980s (Asbjørn, 2001, 105; Magic Wardrobes, 2013). Influenced heavily by underground musicians such as David Bowie, Iggy Pop, and Peter Murphy, punk emerged as a sister-style to the gothic and quickly became popular amongst disenchanting youth looking for a way to push back against authority (Attitude Clothing, 2021). Punk, much like the vampire itself, was seductive and easily able to draw in admirers who wanted to replicate the style on their own, much to the dismay of the conservative mainstream. Outsiders to the punk movement quickly took the stance that this loud and aggressive style with its leather, chains, and

spikes were corrupting society's youth and attempted to combat punk's growing popularity. History, as they say, is destined to repeat itself as decades earlier the predecessor to gothic & punk fashion also found itself the target of cries for censorship.

Hypnosis is frequently cited in vampire fiction as being one of the creature's many powers. Whether this is to try and unburden the fictional victim of guilt for succumbing to the monster's seduction or simply because the idea of not being in control of even yourself is terrifying beyond measure depends entirely upon the story being analyzed but, either way, hypnosis is ascribed as being connected to the eyes. There is a strange connection between lust and eyes, as a source of beauty, to the point where language describing the mere act of looking becomes sensual. When discussing the evolution of vampire fashion, it is impossible not to mention the importance of the eyes and the use of make-up such as eyeliner to highlight the feature. Historically these practices can be traced back to Theda Bara, a sex symbol from the silent film era, who used make-up to give her eyes a more almond shape (Attitude Clothing, 2021; Komar, 2017). Studios working with Bara helped her construct and embrace a vampire-like persona in which she claimed to be fascinated with the occult, to help boost her popularity and, as such, her beauty practices quickly caught on with her fans (Attitude Clothing, 2021; Komar, 2017). Only a couple of decades away from the Victorian era itself, Bara was a major influence in the flapper girl style that came in with the 1920s (Attitude Clothing, 2021; Komar, 2017). Unsurprisingly, the wider public was not pleased to see young woman applying make-up so "heavily" and women who engaged in the style were characterized as being sexually charged and carrying loose morals with the men who so easily became enchanted with them depicted as being helpless to their powers (Komar, 2017). Once again, a desire to shift against the mold was demonized and became associated with the concept of wicked sexuality.

So, what is vampire fashion? There is a tendency to assume that it is nothing more than black clothes and dark make-up but that is not the case. Though heavily inspired and influenced by historical styles such as goth, punk, and flappers, the style of the vampire is unnaturally beautiful; it is seductive, sparking concerns for the morality of those who engage with it by uninformed outsiders, but, above all else, it is fluid and changes with the times and the narratives.



([https://akns-images.eonline.com/eol\\_images/Entire\\_Site/2020629/rs\\_1024x759-200729102655-1024-The-Lost-Boys-cast-photo-1-ch-072920.jpg?fit=around%7C1024:759&output-quality=90&crop=1024:759;center,top](https://akns-images.eonline.com/eol_images/Entire_Site/2020629/rs_1024x759-200729102655-1024-The-Lost-Boys-cast-photo-1-ch-072920.jpg?fit=around%7C1024:759&output-quality=90&crop=1024:759;center,top))

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