

BUFFALO ZINE INSIGHT REPORT



**An insight report looking at Buffalo Zine in the context of
subcultural era revival**

PALOMA ELSESSER
by Eric Johnson

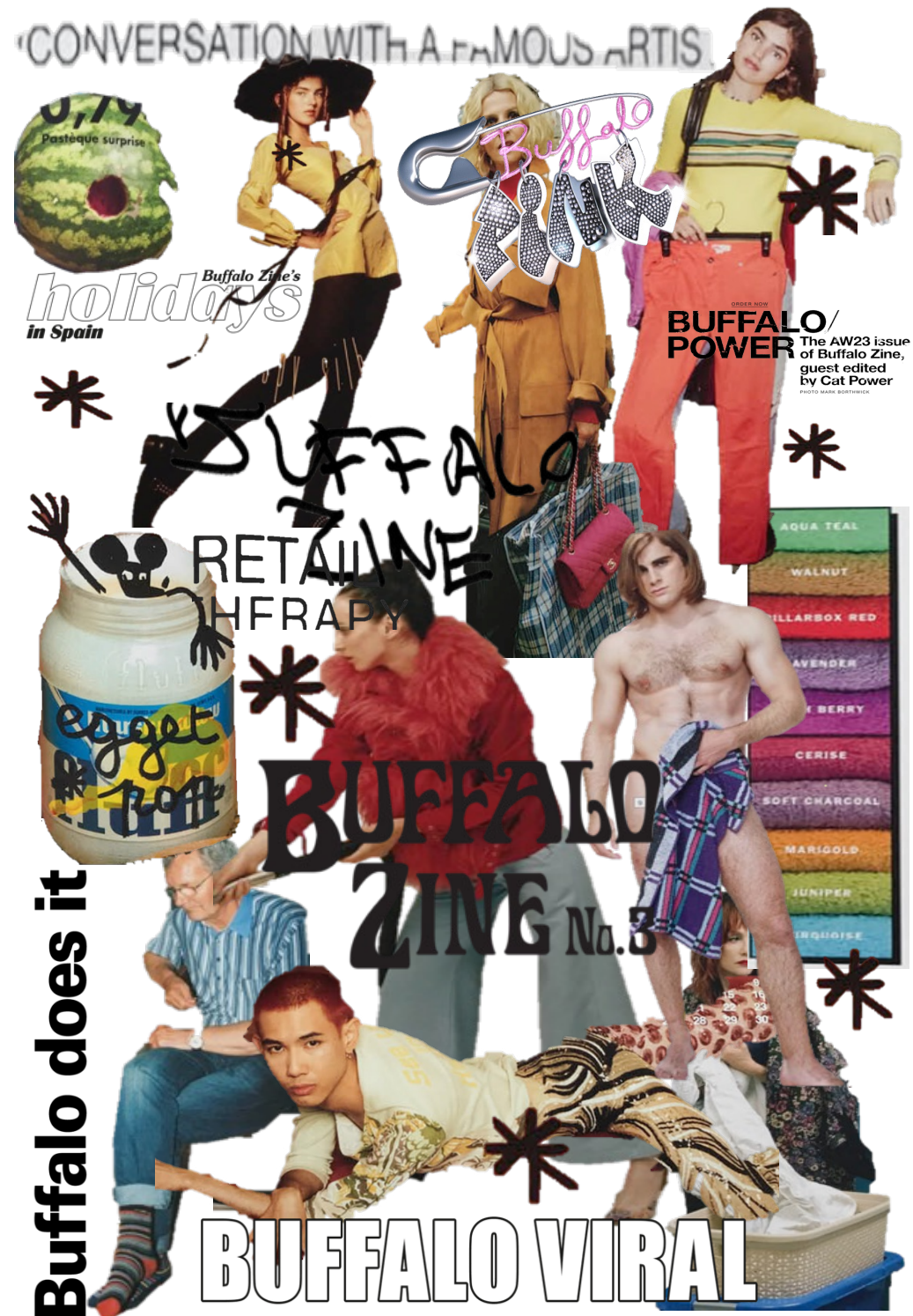
Image: Buffalo Zine (2022). Issue 16.



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All Images: Buffalo Zine Various Issues

The image displays three distinct magazine covers for Buffalo Zine. The first cover, titled 'BUFFALO HOTEL CHSELSEA', has a solid red background and features a person in a red and white striped outfit. The second cover, titled 'hol days in Spain', has a yellow background and shows a person in a colorful swimsuit sitting on a beach chair. The third cover, titled 'BUFFALO ZINE ISSUE 10 AW19', has a black and white background and depicts a person in a plaid coat standing in front of a cityscape. Each cover includes a list of featured artists and a barcode at the bottom.





Images: Buffalo Zine (2019), Issue 10 and
Buffalo Zine (2016), Issue 4.

editors. This genre-blending and nostalgic aesthetic exemplifies how the magazine embodies the subcultural era revival trend. With each issue, it embraces a different aesthetic, an homage to the chosen trend for this report – as each issue in itself revives a certain era, theme, or subculture that appears culturally relevant.



Subcultural Era Revival: How We're Referencing the Past ³



Image: Time Life Images (1969).
Getty Images.



Image: Dave Bennett. (2003). Getty
Images.



Ralph Lauren Spring RTW (2011).



Image: Phil Oh. 2020. Vogue

The media trend of subcultural era revival in today's media landscape reflects a case in which past countercultures and their distinct aesthetics are re-explored, re-imagined, and brought into a modern framework. Spanning everything from fashion to music, and from film to digital media, this trend represents the notion of cultural nostalgia which is often driven by younger generations who are discovering these aesthetics for the first time through digital archives and curated social media content that capitalise on the retro style of different decades. Buffalo Zine, as a magazine known for its bold editorial style and eclectic themes, sits at the intersection of this trend. By exploring the cultural implications of Buffalo Zine's engagement with subcultural era revival, we can better understand how nostalgic revivals operate within contemporary media landscapes to offer fresh perspectives on identity and authenticity.

Subcultures, historically defined by their opposition to mainstream values, have often arisen as responses to the economic, social, and political climates of their times. Hebdige (1979) states that subcultures, through their "style," create symbolic spaces of resistance against hegemonic culture. In the current era, these symbols are being reinterpreted not as part of a lived movement but as "aesthetic nostalgia" (Guffey, 2006), where elements of past subcultures are consumed and reinvented, often through a digital lens in the new technological era our Millennial and Gen Z generations are experiencing. The



Image: TikTok Star Addison Rae wearing Miss Sixty, a popular y2k brand (2024). Backgrid.

subcultural era revival trend is shaped and accelerated by digital platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Pinterest, which allow for the easy dissemination and remixing of retro visuals and aesthetics. For example, 90s grunge, 70s punk, and early 2000s emo are not simply recalled as styles, but are resurrected through layered meaning and digitally facilitated reinterpretation, reflecting the desire for individuality in a hyper-connected, homogenous media culture. The subcultural era revival is therefore more than a visual trend. It reflects a complex interplay between nostalgia, digital culture, and social resistance. This trend capitalises on the yearning for identity and authenticity, catering to audiences who seek alternatives to the mass-produced and commercialised products of the digital age. For media brands like Buffalo Zine, who embrace satire and eclecticism, the subcultural era revival presents an ideal landscape for re-engaging with retro aesthetics in ways that critique both contemporary culture and consumerism.

Subcultural Era Revival in the Past and the Now

The subcultural era revival trend is part of a larger phenomenon in fashion and media in which nostalgia for different eras and trends are consistently referenced. This trend involves reintroducing and reinterpreting aesthetic elements and styles from specific historical periods. Across the 20th and 21st centuries, fashion and media have frequently revisited the past, drawing inspiration from different eras to shape contemporary tastes. This cyclical nature of cultural revival is something we see crop up in all areas of fashion and the media and is pertinent to most areas of history in which we see nostalgic references shape different eras.

Subcultural revival as part of the wider trend of era revival emerged during the mid-to-late 20th century, when distinct subcultures formed as expressions of identity and resistance against mainstream values. Subcultures such as punk, goth, and grunge each developed unique aesthetics and ideologies that served as responses to the sociopolitical and economic climates of their times. For example, the punk movement of the 1970s in the UK, marked by DIY elements and anti-establishment symbols – and designers such as Rei Kawakubo and Vivienne Westwood – was a reaction to right-wing politics and economic disillusionment of the time. In addition to the subcultural elements, era revival more broadly has seen the media and fashion industries repeatedly reintroduce iconic styles from different periods.



Photos: 70s inspired Gucci collection (1995). Gucci Fall/Winter 1995 Ready-to-Wear Collection, Milan Fashion Week.

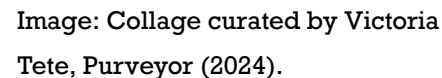


Image: Heavy Edwardian influences in ELLE France (1978). Giles Bensimon.

The Victorian revival of the 1970s (Jenss, 2015) and the 1990s' fascination with '70s disco style (see illustration of Tom Ford's Spring 1995 Gucci Show) displays how the media often turns to previous decades for inspiration. The 2000s similarly saw the resurgence of 1980s power dressing (Arnold, 2009), reflecting a fascination with the past reinterpreted to suit contemporary tastes.

In today's digital age, subcultural era revival has gained a renewed sense of significance and complexity, particularly through the influence of social media and digital stores of information. Platforms such as Instagram and Pinterest function as vast archives of cultural memory, where younger generations can interact with and reinterpret visuals and styles from past decades. This contemporary context of subcultural revival reflects more than just nostalgia; it is also a response to the pressures of modern life. In an era marked by climate anxieties, economic precarity, and a constant shortening of trend cycles due to mass production and access, past subcultures resonate with young people who see them as symbols of authenticity. Linking this to the Buffalo Zine, its wayward design and ever-changing format taps into the revival trend not only as an aesthetic choice but as a critique of consumer culture itself. By referencing subcultures of the past in ways that feel both nostalgic and ironic, Buffalo Zine engages readers who are drawn to alternative narratives of identity and resistance, making it a key player in this era of subcultural revival.

Incorporating nostalgic and retro elements into culture, such as fashion, interior décor, architecture, and food. With ever-increasing access to reference images and texts of the past, it is no wonder that the revival of eras and subcultures is at an all-time high – with Google Trends reporting terms such as “y2k fashion” and “60s style” trending upwards, particularly post 2020 (Dia&Co, 2022).



Secondly, the current revival of subcultural aesthetics also speaks to a broader disillusionment with modern social and political issues. Issues such as economic instability and climate crisis concerns have made past eras appear as symbols of revolt and originality in a digital environment that so often feels performative. Subcultures like punk and grunge, and eras of change such the Victorian era or the 1960s civil rights movement are particularly resonant in today's circumstances, offering modes of self-expression or change that reject mainstream narratives and capitalist ideals (Jameson, 1991).

Lastly, in a world dominated by influencers, social media personas, and branded identities, many young people are drawn to subcultural styles that seem more real and less curated. Due to the nature of influencer culture (Freberg et al. 2011), audiences are constantly chasing 'the next best thing' and looking for the new. Because of this, subcultural era revival provides a sense of authenticity that contrasts with the hyper-mediated nature of modern life. Buffalo Zine taps into this desire for authenticity through its unconventional style, irony, and rejection of fashion and magazine industry norms, capturing an audience that values irreverence and nonconformity (Banet-Weiser, 2012). By reviving retro aesthetics, the magazine also offers its readers a way to explore and critique the media landscape while engaging with subcultures that defied the mainstream.

All Images: Moschino Fall RTW (2019). Collection is heavily inspired by 1980s television culture.



Case Study 1: Lirika Matoshi's Strawberry Dress

In 2020, Lirika Matoshi, an independent designer, gained widespread attention for her “Strawberry Dress.” This pink tulle dress covered in embroidered strawberries went viral on social media, particularly on TikTok and Instagram, where it quickly became a symbol of the cottagecore aesthetic. Cottagecore, which idealises a rural, simplistic lifestyle, often incorporates a nostalgic view of the past. The dress resonated with audiences as the COVID-19 pandemic made such idyllic escapes particularly appealing. Social media users adopted the dress as a cultural symbol of cottagecore, pairing it with whimsical and nostalgic themes, from flower crowns to rural landscapes.

However, Matoshi's brand struggled to sustain momentum after the Strawberry Dress's success. The brand's primary challenge was its heavy association with a single product and aesthetic that was highly trend dependent. Once the cottagecore trend faded in favour of other aesthetics (such as “dark academia” and “Y2K”), demand for the Strawberry Dress and similar items dropped. This is shown by the fact that in 2020, Lirika Matoshi made it into the Lyst Index's ‘Hottest Brands’ list due to the popularity of the Strawberry Dress. However, by the second quarter of 2021, Lirika Matoshi was no longer listed in the index (Lyst, 2021). Without diversifying or evolving, the brand was left with a highly specific identity that limited its appeal once the viral moment passed.



Image: Lirika Matoshi.

Case Study 2: Reebok Reviving Retro Trainers

Reebok is an athletic brand known for its trainers and was immensely popular in the 1980s and 1990s. However, competition from brands like Nike and Adidas led to a decline in Reebok's market share. Starting in the 2010s, Reebok began embracing the "retro" trainer trend, aiming to recapture its former glory through nostalgic designs. Reebok successfully brought back several iconic sneakers, such as the Club C and Classic Leather models, which appealed to streetwear and sneaker enthusiasts looking for authentic, retro styles. Collaborations with designers like Pyer Moss and partnerships with influencers allowed Reebok to position itself as a heritage brand within the streetwear community, valued for its vintage appeal and association with 1980s and 1990s pop culture. Reebok's success in the retro sneaker market shows the potential for brands to revive their status by leaning into their historical product lines, tapping into the trend of era revival and using it as a business model to further promote and sustain image, reputation, and identity.

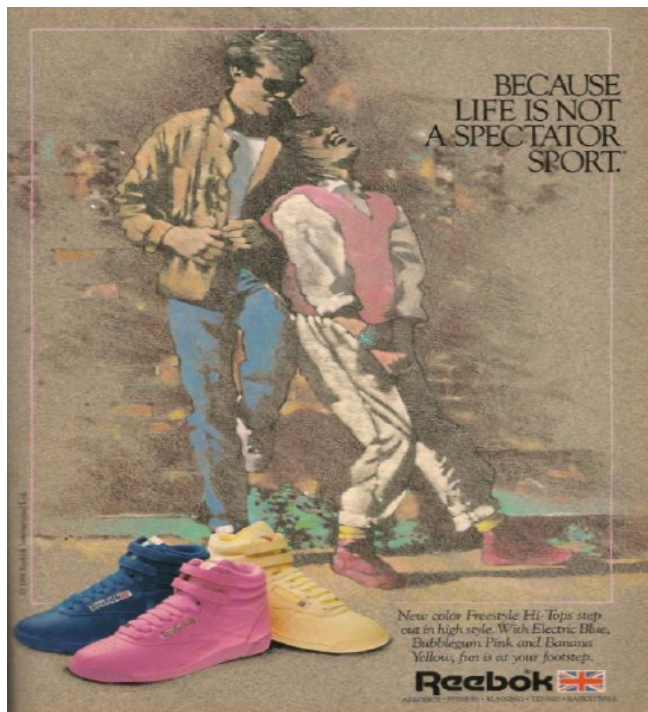


Image: A Reebok USA Campaign from 1986



Image: Reebok Pride Campaign from 2024.

How Should Buffalo Zine Respond?

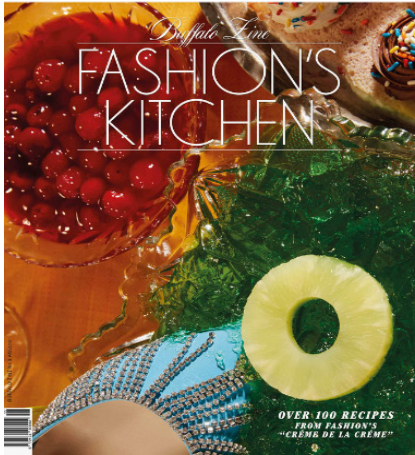


Image: Buffalo Zine (2018). Issue 8



Image: Jell-O Ad (1956).

To continue engaging effectively with the subcultural era revival trend, Buffalo Zine could consider several strategies. With revival of the past being such a heavy focus in today's media and fashion, it is important to remember that Buffalo Zine has the flexibility and creative edge to deeply engage with the subcultural era revival trend in a way that feels authentic and insightful. This adaptability allows the magazine not only to celebrate the aesthetics of past subcultures but to critique and reinterpret their values, making it a key player in this trend. A few suggestions as to how the magazine may respond to this trend are as follows:

- **Interactive editions and digital extensions:** As a print-focused magazine, Buffalo Zine could explore digital supplements or interactive features that bring past subcultures to life. For example, it could use augmented reality (AR) to allow readers to interact with retro aesthetics in a virtual format, appealing to the digital-native audiences of Gen Z and Millennials. Their lack of digital presence is something they are proud of; however, they must think about the future of print and perhaps looking into digital editions and extensions would be something to consider.
- **Exploring global subcultural aesthetics:** Expanding beyond Western subcultures, Buffalo Zine could explore global subcultural aesthetics, such as Tokyo's Harajuku style or Mexico City's punk scene, providing a fresh perspective on subcultural revival and expanding its appeal to a broader, international audience.
- **Interactive spaces and event-focused ventures:** Buffalo Zine could consider looking at a more event-focused direction for the future. Collaborations with artists/brands, fashion show events, hosting dinners, and other events of the like could expand their influence and market into something more tangible.

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