



# **How Ziggy Stardust Married Fashion and Music**

A retrospective look at the influence David Bowie had on music  
and how it was interpreted in fashion.

By James R. Sanders



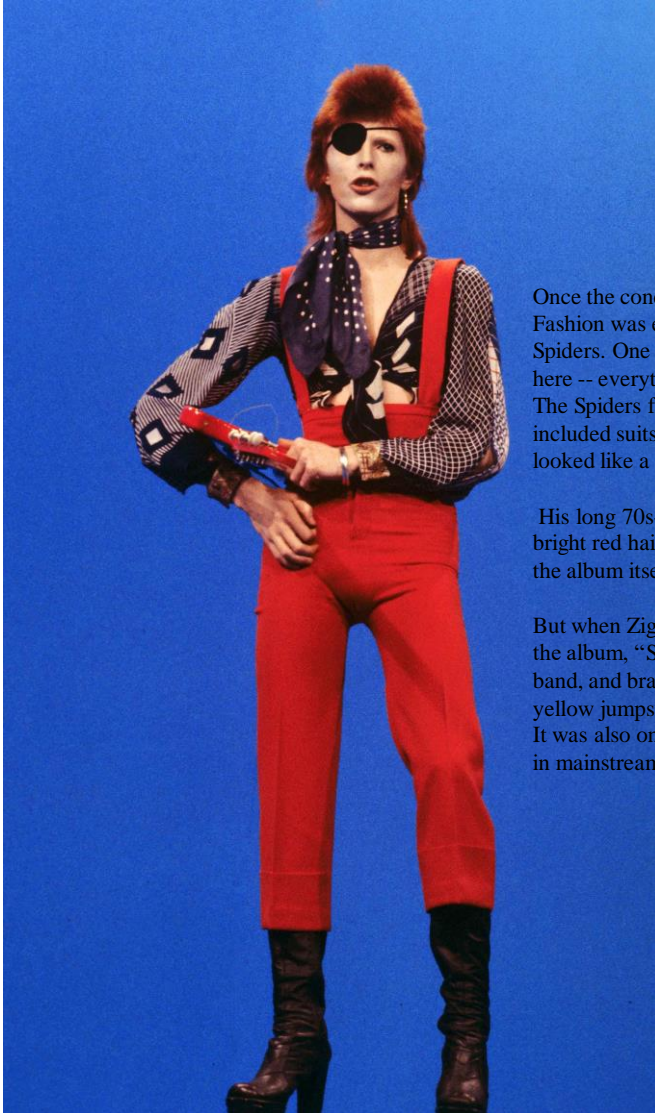
## ***IN***

1970, after his "Space Oddity" album, David Bowie was at a crossroads. While the album was praised for being innovative, it failed to chart. He then he released "The Man Who Sold the World" where he wore a dress on the cover. It was hard rock – a sub-genre that wouldn't be popular until many years later. While that release also failed to chart, it created the first shocking Bowie moment. The dress juxtaposed what male rockers wore. Denim was the uniform – especially in London where the album was largely being promoted.

In New York, Bowie was introduced to Andy Warhol and the Velvet Underground -- a group of misfits who were trendsetters in the US's counterculture. Their meeting started what would be the movement and man – Ziggy Stardust.

Some could argue that the earliest version of Ziggy debuted in 1971, when Bowie performed "Queen Bitch," a single from his newest release "Hunky Dory" for the popular BBC Whistle Test. It was then that people began to take notice of Bowie who dressed for the performance in red patent leather boots with green apple shoe-strings, and a green-patterned jumpsuit with a short and messy brownish-blond haircut. His look had been, once again -- different than other rockers who'd performed on the program.

*It's said that "The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars" had been written over 10 years. It tells the story of an alien who takes human form as a rock star. Commonly thought of as a narrative set to music, this was the album that made him a star.*



Once the concept was there, the branding needed to be created. Fashion was essential to the success of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders. One of the golden rules of branding was especially true here -- everything from a fashion perspective had to be consistent. The Spiders from Mars wore Freddie Burretti originals, which included suits made from curtain fabric and space boots. They looked like a gang -- which was exactly what Bowie wanted.

His long 70s-era hair was the first to go. The short cut with the bright red hair became a trend -- and had become just as popular as the album itself.

But when Ziggy and the Spiders performed their first single from the album, "Starman" live on television, it launched them as both a band, and brand to be reckoned with. Clad in a red, blue, and yellow jumpsuit, British homes were introduced to Ziggy Stardust. It was also one of the first times that androgyny had been explored in mainstream music.

He took Glam Rock and made it better.

When Aladdin Sane came along, Ziggy Stardust and The Spiders from Mars had been a fully realized rock outfit. They'd taken the Glam Rock sub-genre and added a red and blue lightning bolt right across the face. The year was 1973.

When he toured Japan, he wore costumes designed by Kansai Yamamoto. This included the iconic black jumpsuit with the jumbo legs and gold lines.

When Thin White Duke became Bowie's new persona, his fashion was more streamlined and less dramatic compared to a Ziggy with gold dust and streamers. His looks were tailored, flared in some spots, and much more minimalistic. But the androgyny was a mainstay.