



THE FACE OF CHANGE

The skinny schoolgirl who became the world's first supermodel and the 'Face of the Sixties' is still going strong as she reaches her own 60s – and she is about to release a new album

BY
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Lesley Hornby was a teenager in 1966 when she walked into House of Leonard, a fashionable salon in London's Mayfair, to style her hair for a series of test shots. The hairdresser was experimenting with a new, boyish look, something perhaps a little reminiscent of the 1920s. That afternoon, Lesley modelled her new style for a photographer. It was a fun day out for the north London girl.

Her pictures were hung in Leonard's salon, which is where they caught the eye of journalist Deirdre McSharry. McSharry asked to meet the gamine girl.

A few weeks later, Lesley, or Twiggy as she was nicknamed by her boyfriend's brother on account of her stick-like legs, saw her name and face splashed across a double-page spread in the *Daily Express* newspaper.

She was pronounced "The Face of 1966".

The article ran with the words: "The Cockney Kid with a face to launch a thousand shapes. . . And she's only 16!" And so a schoolgirl became an icon.

McSharry was right. Twiggy not only became the face of 1966, but the face of the 1960s, with an image and look that defined an era, was copied endlessly and still proves enduring to this day.

Soon, she was travelling the world, from the catwalks of Paris to the magazine studios of New York to the runways of Japan – cameras and fans following her every move. Credited as the world's first supermodel, she soon had her own Barbie doll, her own magazine, clothing range, lunchboxes and other merchandise featuring her bright-eyed, doll-like face shining out from them.

She became friends with Paul McCartney and dined with her hero Fred Astaire.

She modelled dresses by Mary Quant and Barbara Hulanicki and was declared by *Vogue* as "the mini-girl in the mini-era". It was a head-turning look that everyone on London's fashionable Carnaby St copied.

Twiggy soon became a name everyone would know.

She might be a hard-to-believe 62 now, but for 40 years

Twiggy has not stopped working. As a recent judge on *America's Next Top Model* and the campaign spokeswoman for major UK department store Marks & Spencer, today Twiggy is still an icon of the 21st century.

But Twiggy is not just a face, she is also a voice.

What many people may not remember is that in the 1960s and 1970s she had a successful singing career. She released a number of albums and had hits with songs including *Here I Go Again* and *Please Get My Name Right*.

Already, she was thinking ahead, stating at age 20: "You can't be a clothes hanger for your entire life!"

In 1971, she was cast by cult British director Ken Russell as Polly Browne in the film version of the musical *The Boy Friend*, a pastiche of 1920s hits. It was a dream-come-true for the committed Fred Astaire fan. The role won her two Golden Globe awards, for New Star of the Year and Best Actress in a Musical or Comedy.

She went on to star in stage and film productions including *Cinderella* and *Pygmalion* (*My Fair Lady*) and hosted her own series *Twiggy's Jukebox* and *Twiggy's People*. She made her Broadway debut in the Ira Gershwin musical *My One and Only*, earning her a Tony Award nomination.

So releasing a record in 2012 is not such an unusual step.

Today, Twiggy is the voice on the phone from London, cheerful and upbeat, talking about her new album, *Romantically Yours*, out this month.

"Basically I was offered to do it by EMI," she explains.

"They got in touch with me and said would you like to do a new album and I jumped at the chance.

"Lots of people don't know but I've actually been singing almost as long as I've been modelling."

Music has been the soundtrack to her career and, like every teenager in the 1960s – or in any era – she was obsessed with it. She counts The Beatles, Joni Mitchell and later Crosby, Stills and Nash among her favourites.

"And I loved all the girl groups," she confides. "The Ronettes, the Chiffons, the Shangri-Las. I had an obsession with *Leader of the Pack*, do you remember that?"

Romantically Yours includes some of her favourite standards from *Blue Moon* to *My Funny Valentine*. Her sweet voice recreates classics from *Waterloo Sunset*, to a duet with her daughter, Carly Lawson, on Neil Young's *Only Love Will Break Your Heart*, and surprises such as *Right Here Waiting*, the 1980s hit by Richard Marx.

"When I started doing my list, we started out with about 50 songs, and the record company said, you can't do 50 songs!" she laughs. "So I had to whittle it down.

"We got the title *Romantically Yours*, which we thought was a good title for those sort of songs, and then I started thinking, oh I'd love to do *Angel of the Morning*. I'd love to do *Right Here Waiting*, because Richard Marx is a friend of mine and I just think that's one of the most romantic pop songs ever written."

She went one step further, "cheekily" emailing Marx to ask him to do a duet with her.

"I thought, if you don't ask, you don't get.

"I just said, 'Please will you sing it with me?' And I'm happy to say he said yes. I love the version we've done. It's the perfect duet."

She and Richard and his wife, Cynthia Rhodes, became good friends when they met at another mutual friend's birthday party. That friend would be very familiar to Australian readers, notes Twiggy – Hugh Jackman, "a wonderful actor and an Aussie, who has to be one of the other nicest men on the planet".

"Not only is he gorgeous but he is such a great guy, and his wife Deb," gushes Twiggy. "We met when he was over in London doing *Oklahama*, before he became the mega-star that he is now.



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"So we always say to him, 'Hugh, we knew you before you were famous'. But he is such a lovely chap. It was his 40th birthday party in New York and we were all at a restaurant and our table companions were Richard and his lovely wife, Cynthia."

For a 1960s icon, *Romantically Yours* opens somewhat appropriately with The Kinks' 1967 hit *Waterloo Sunset*, a tale of two lovers crossing London's famous Waterloo Bridge.

But Twiggy never met the great British pop group in the 1960s, and hasn't to this day.

"I know!" she exclaims. "I think people think we all went partying together. But I was a real party pooper. I wasn't really a party girl. I never have been; I was too busy travelling the world and working, I think."

Before Twiggy had time to attend a fashionable party, she was off on the next plane to the next city to the next high-profile fashion shoot. She did, however, befriend The Beatles' Paul McCartney.

"He's one of my best friends," she says, "But that's really the only rock 'n' roll person that I became friends with. And I was very, very close to Linda, his first wife. Obviously it was a great tragedy when we lost her. So I've known all the kids, since they were born. They're family friends really."

Twiggy's daughter Carly is good friends with McCartney's daughter Stella, working for Stella's fashion label as a print designer. It's a talent that must run in the family. Twiggy made many of her own clothes as a teen, before every other label thrust their latest designs upon her.

Singing is another talent that runs in the family.

"My daughter has always sung as far back as I can remember," says Twiggy. "I always said to her one day I'm going to get you into the studio. It was great fun."

"She was actually quite nervous in the beginning because it's not what she does for a living, but after the first hour we just giggled a lot."

Instead of being the swinging '60s party girl we might imagine, Twiggy was very much the girl-next-door.

That vibe is still with her today. She's certainly no diva. Rather, she's the trendy aunt next door, level-headed, funny, kind, cheerful and natural. Her look today embodies that – fresh, simple and fuss-free – she's more likely to wear her hair scooped in a ponytail than styled in the latest coiffure.

Despite the jet-setting lifestyle, she has always kept her feet on the ground. She may have been a wide-eyed Alice in Wonderland at age 16, drawn into the world of superstardom, meeting all sorts of wild characters on her big adventure, but she didn't fall down the rabbit hole of drugs or alcohol.

She became the youngest ever celebrity to feature on *This Is Your Life* at the age of 20.

She remembers the 1960s as an exciting time, though it seemed to fly by like a silver jet plane. The romantic image of the '60s is one held fresh in the minds of youth to this day – an era of hedonism and optimism, of change and experimentation, of fashion and fun.

"When you're living through a time, you don't actually stop every day and think, 'wow, this is an amazing time,'" says Twiggy. "It's only in hindsight that you think, 'well, that was pretty amazing'."

"Half of the '60s I was at school, which was fine, I was quite a happy schoolgirl actually, and I had a nice family, so I had a happy home life, and then obviously the second half of the '60s my whole world turned around and it became slightly insane, but it was so exciting."

"I was spending a lot of time in New York and Paris, doing all the things that you do when you're a fashion model. I remember thinking I love what I do, but I didn't stop and think, 'this is an amazing time'."

"And now, my daughter, who's in her early 30s, and even the younger ones, teenagers, everyone seems to be so obsessed with the '60s. It never seems to go away."

While today's society might be dominated by youth culture, the 1960s was the time when young voices were only just beginning to be heard. It was a decade of experimentation and invention, and companies quickly realised there was enormous marketability in the outpouring of freedom and creativity from youth. Kids



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Twiggy hit the fashion scene as a 16-year-old in 1966 (top) and her career has lasted more than 40 years spanning movies, music and the catwalk as well as campaigning for causes such as animal rights.

created, other kids copied. It was a buzz.

In the midst of an economic boom, London's Carnaby St and the King's Rd were the places to be and be seen.

"I walked down Carnaby St lots of times. And the King's Rd," reminisces Twiggy.

"It was happy memories. It was very buzzy. And again looking back, I think it was the first time young people a) had a voice, and b) had the freedom. It was a young person's world, really."

But times have a-changed.

"I think it's very tough on young people today."

"Maybe, we thought we were opening up the world for everybody, but we obviously didn't do everything right, because of the mess we're in today."

Lesley Hornby was born into a loving working-class home in north London. Her father was a master carpenter. She was the youngest of three sisters. Her strong accent gave away her roots at a time when modelling was the domain of posh families.

It has also been important to her to present a stable home life to her own family. Today, she lives in London with her husband, actor and director Leigh Lawson. They met on the set of the Shirley MacLaine film *Madame Sousatzka* in 1988 and have been married more than 20 years. Lawson adopted Carly, whose father and Twiggy's first husband, Michael Witney, died in 1983.

At home in Britain, Twiggy is never out of the public eye. She is a cultural ambassador, as recognisable as Big Ben or the London Eye, and has done advertising campaigns for British tourism.

In the UK, where she heads up the advertising campaign as the face of retail giant Marks & Spencer, she has been credited with the Twiggy Effect – visually representing older women who are often ignored by the fashion industry. Now, instead of representing the voice of youth, she is the voice of an older generation.

"When you reach 50 plus, you don't drop off the perch," says Twiggy. "I think women of my age now are very fashion-savvy, very fashion-conscious."

"Maybe our mothers reached middle age and were happy to stay at home in their polyester, elasticated trousers but I don't think we do that at the moment, and nor should we."

"The grey pound, as they call it, has big spending power. So the whole fashion industry for that age group has changed colossally. I think the retailers are realising that."

"I can't speak for Australia, but in England it's changed an awful lot. The fact that somebody my age is heading a major ad campaign for a major retailing store – that would never have happened. And in America, Jane Fonda, who is 10 years older than me, is doing a major beauty campaign. That would never have happened 20 years ago."

Not only is she a face for older women, but a voice, joining the ranks of other older, wiser role models, and speaking up for a group largely overlooked by a youth-obsessed, now-hungry culture.

"It had to happen and it's the right thing to happen because, as you get older you become more knowledgeable, you hope, and maybe one can help with things. I think it's the right way."

"It was always very youth-oriented, especially in the advertising world, and that's changed enormously. And maybe I did a little bit to help. . ."

So how does Twiggy feel about being an icon?

"It's very flattering. I think I prefer the role model thing, because if you can be a role model to young people then that's a very nice thing to have. I hope I'm a role model. Certainly I was the first working-class model in Britain. And hopefully I've kept my feet on the ground and I'm still here," she laughs.

"I didn't drop off along the way. I've done lots of different things in my career, which I've been lucky enough to be given the chance to do, but I think to prove to people, and women in particular, that if you work hard and you get given the opportunities that I obviously was, you can do it. There's always great opportunities if you can look out for them."

Romantically Yours is out on February 24. To see a gallery of Twiggy through the ages and watch a video of her talking about her beloved London, go to uonsunday.com.au today.