

OOH-LA-LA

Youth culture, the Swinging Sixties, and the Five-Point Cut: A new documentary celebrates the life and legacy of Vidal Sassoon.

made up my mind, if I was going to be in hairdressing, I wanted to change things.”

When Vidal Sassoon utters these words less than 20 minutes into *Vidal Sassoon the Movie*, a new documentary out this month, you get the feeling he's talking about more than the coiffed, set-and-spray salon culture of post-World War II England.

As the world's first bona fide celebrity hairdresser, Sassoon created sharp, geometric crops that became as powerful a symbol of the British Youthquake as the Beatles or the miniskirt.

the ordinary bob as a series of graphic eye-, neck-, and ear-grazing lines, he introduced the idea that a woman could radically reinvent herself with something as simple as a haircut.

Through archival images and interviews with Sassoon and his inner circle, the film travels back to the pivotal moments surrounding many of fashion's most Earth-shifting hair happenings: Mary Quant's glossy bowl cut; the asymmetrical, Gehryesque bob that took Nancy Kwan from burgeoning starlet to overnight icon for her film *The Wild Affair*. Kwan “was petrified. . . . She played chess with her manager while I was [cutting]. She couldn't look,” remembers Sassoon on-screen. After slicing off nearly four feet of the actress's dark, waist-length hair, he

MASTER STROKES

LEFT, SASSOON CUTS MIA FARROW'S HAIR FOR *ROSEMARY'S BABY*, 1967; BELOW, GRACE CODDINGTON MODELS THE FIVE-POINT CUT, 1964.

called photographer Terence Donovan (in the middle of the night), who came over to capture the moment. It promptly appeared in the October 1, 1963 issue of *Vogue*.

When Roman Polanski (who had shot scenes from *Repulsion* with Catherine Deneuve in Sassoon's Bond Street salon a few years earlier) asked him to transform Mia Farrow into a modern-day ingenue for *Rosemary's Baby* in 1967, he sheared her strawberry-blonde hair into an era-defining pixie before a mob of photographers in a makeshift boxing ring on the Paramount lot. Farrow's haircut, for which Sassoon was paid an unprecedented \$5,000, earned its own line in the movie.

Sassoon, now in his 80s, no longer cuts hair, but the visual vocabulary he created continues to reverberate through fashion. Phillip Lim recently sent his models down the runway wearing sixties-influenced military jackets and Sassoon-inspired bowl-cut wigs. Japanese model Tao Okamoto's career skyrocketed after she lopped her hair into a similarly sculptural shape. “It's *always* a Sassoon moment,” says stylist Guido Palau, who appears in the documentary. “Those images, they're so startling. Whether you're thinking of them consciously or not, they're always in your head.”

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“Sassoon cut hair the way Mary Quant was cutting clothing,” recalls Michael Gordon, coproducer of the film and a longtime friend of the stylist. “There was shape; there was movement.” It was the Swinging Sixties, “and the hair, quite literally, it *swing*.”

“Before Sassoon, you didn't photograph a haircut, you photographed a hairdo,” says *Vogue* Creative Director Grace Coddington, who was a house model for the stylist in 1964, when she famously sat for the game-changing Five-Point Cut. Reimagining

