

Brains On (APM) | The rise and fall of fancy men 01G5HVG3DV8GAHRR7X2TVMH2J9

MAX: This is Forever Ago, where we explore the before.

JOY DOLO: Where's Max? They're never late.

[DOOR OPENING]

[PANTING]

MAX: Hey, Joy. I'm so sorry. I got caught up in a web search rabbit hole.

JOY DOLO: Oh, I love a good internet deep dive. What were you looking at?

MAX: I was looking at the hairstyles and fashion for this party I'm going to later. It's a '70s party, want to come?

JOY DOLO: Groovy. I love a good disco. Let's see. I can pick out my hair into an Afro and wear my wide-leg, hot pink pants--

MAX: No, sorry. My bad. Not the 1970s, the 1770s. You know, like Hamilton times. It's a macaroni party.

JOY DOLO: Oh, OK. I love macaroni too. In that case, I'll make some noodle necklaces and maybe macaroni mittens.

MAX: OK. Yeah. I see how I may not have been super clear here. It's not the pasta. A macaroni was a nickname for a super fancy man from Britain in the 1770s. They were the height of fashion back then, and we're going to dress just like them.

JOY DOLO: Wait, but I have no idea what they dressed like.

MAX: Don't sweat it. You can come with me. I've got a macaroni makeover booked at that new history spa.

JOY DOLO: The spa with all the hot looks from across time?

MAX: You know it. Come on. You don't want to look like a phony macaroni.

JOY DOLO: That's no baloney.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

Welcome to *Forever Ago*. I'm Joy Dolo.

MAX: And I'm Max.

JOY DOLO: I can't wait to meet this macaroni person. I hope he's not an impasta. Get it? Pasta?

MAX: Oh, boy.

JOY DOLO: Because macaroni. Get it? Anyway, what exactly do we wear to a macaroni party?

MAX: Let me find the invitation.

[PAPERS RUSTLING]

It says, join us for an evening of classical music and iconic looks from the 1770s. Dress code, powder wigs, the taller the better, high-heeled shoes, bright-colored clothing, and a full face of makeup. Don't be afraid to pack on that blush.

JOY DOLO: That sounds out of this world extravagant.

MAX: Right? Lucky for us, we've got the fanciest of all the macaroni to help us get party ready. His name is Frank and, oh here, he comes now. Hey, Frank.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

JOY DOLO: Holy wig.

(SINGING) It's Frank. He's got a tall, white wig. It's Frank. It's a really big wig.

It's Frank. There's a tiny hat on top and a lot of curls that just won't stop. It's Frank. Ooh.

It's Frank. He's wearing stripy tights. It's Frank, and a coat that's bright.

It's Frank. He's got boots that shine. He carries a cane, but he walks just fine. It's Frank, Frank, Frank.

JOY DOLO: Oh, yeah.

Wow, that wig, so tall, it looks like a fuzzy watermelon. It looks like you're hiding a traffic cone in there. It looks like a dinosaur laid an egg on you. It looks like an ice cream sundae, where they just kept adding more and more whipped cream until it almost toppled over. It looks like--

MAX: OK. Yup. It's big.

FRANK: You're in awe. I get that a lot.

JOY DOLO: And your pale white makeup, oh, and look at that tiny, little hat perched on top of the wig, so cute.

FRANK: Why thank you.

MAX: Joy, meet Frank, a macaroni from 1770s England. He's here to help us with our costumes.

FRANK: Trust me. You are going to be the talk of the party. I will make you so fancy, people will have to put on a suit and tie just to look at you. After all, us macaronis, we had money and power, and we liked to show it off. So we know what we're doing, when it comes to fashion.

JOY DOLO: Ah, I can't wait. Quick question, will I get a massive wig?

FRANK: The massive-iest. Now, wait here, and my best makeup artist will be with you shortly to get your faces ready. I'm off to pick out your outfits. Tootle-loo

JOY DOLO: Wow. Frank is the best dressed man I've ever seen, and his makeup so white. It's like he dunked his face in a bag of flour, and that fake beauty mark, classic. I cannot imagine men today looking like that.

MAX: Well, get this, Joy, the macaronis were not the first to do this. Powerful men have looked fancy for millennia, and many even wore makeup. In ancient civilizations, like China and Korea, men wore rice powder on their faces and painted their nails, in part to show off power and wealth. And for the Koreans, because they believed a good appearance reflected a beautiful soul.

JOY DOLO: Wow. Asia was the queen of ancient makeup.

JAX: Wait. Wait. Hold on. I'm sorry. Did you say Asia was the queen of makeup? I am insulted.

JOY DOLO: Um, hi? Who are you?

JAX: I'm Jax, a makeup artist from ancient Egypt.

MAX: Oh, OK. So Egyptians wore makeup too?

JAX: Ha-ha, ha-ha. Honey, we perfected makeup, specifically eye makeup. You both are my 4:00 PM clients. Walk with me. Talk with me.

JOY DOLO: Wow. He moves fast.

JAX: Sit down and let me tell you about ancient Egypt. Picture this--

[MUSIC PLAYING]

--it's 3,000 years ago. Egypt is thriving. We've got gold. We've got silver.

We've farmed tons of food, since the Nile River supplied us with nutrient-rich soil. We invented lots of things, like paper, pens, toothpaste. We were incredibly skilled in agriculture, architecture, art, literature. We built over 130 pyramids, and we looked great.

We were definitely the best kingdom in all of humanity, in my opinion. You ever see art of ancient Egypt, where people have those striking, dark rings around their eyes? That was makeup, my makeup. I did that.

JOY DOLO: Wow. So like everyone was wearing makeup back then. Huh?

JAX: Oh, no, dear, only the wealthy and powerful. People like me, we worked for royalty and rulers, you know, pharaohs, queens, and noblemen.

MAX: Pharaohs, like King Tutankhamen?

JAX: Exactly. No brag, but I did his makeup. Now, let's see. It says here I'm giving you both a 1770s makeover?

So white powder faces and lots of blush? You sure? This sounds a little extra, if you ask me. How about I do my famous Egyptian smoky eye instead?

MAX: Thanks, but that makeup is kind of the dress code for our party.

JAX: Or I could do red henna dye in your hair or on your fingers. It looked great in my day.

JOY DOLO: Polite pass, but I would like one of those fancy beauty marks like Frank had.

- JAX:** Fine. Whatever. I guess there's no accounting for taste. I'll get started, and let me know when you change your mind.
- JOY DOLO:** You mean, if we change our minds.
- JAX:** I said what I said.
- MAX:** Say, while you do our faces, can you tell us more about the eye makeup in Egypt? Sounds very chic.
- JAX:** Oh, it was. We usually wore either a green eyeliner, which was made from copper, or black made from lead. We'd take those minerals from the Earth and mix them with either vegetable oil or animal fats before putting it on our face.
- MAX:** Animal fat on your face?
- JAX:** Don't judge. It's very moisturizing, and our eye makeup was helpful too. We lived in the desert, and it was so hot, flies would buzz all around your face all day, so annoying. But our eyeliner actually helped drive those bugs away and helped clear up eye infections. So it was kind of a medicine too.
- JOY DOLO:** Wow, multipurpose makeup.
- JAX:** Oh, yeah, and because we were in the desert, the sun would reflect off the sand, and it could be really hard to see sometimes. But our eyeliner actually protected our eyes from the harsh light.
- MAX:** Oh, yeah, kind of like football players. They used to put black paint under their eyes to protect them from the sun too.
- JAX:** What the heck is football?
- JOY DOLO:** Oh, it's a sport, where men wear bright shiny uniforms and special shoes and have lots of fancy headgear on.
- JAX:** Oh, so like Frank and the macaronis?
- JOY DOLO:** No, but also, now that I think about it, kind of yes.
- JAX:** Anyway, even though our makeup had practical uses, the main reason the rich and powerful wore it was to show off their status. In fact, throughout much of history, women and men wore makeup and jewelry to say, hey, I'm somebody, and you better know it. Speaking of which, are ready for your big reveal?
- JOY DOLO:** OK. On the count of three, we'll both look at the same time.
- MAX:** One, I'm so excited.
- JOY DOLO:** Two, three. Oh my goodness.
- JAX:** Honestly, this is some of my best work.
- MAX:** I look amazing. Say, did you ever do Cleopatra's makeup?
- JAX:** No, but I hear she was the worst tipper. Speaking of-- [COUGHING]

JOY DOLO: Oh, thank you, Jax.

JAX: Don't mention it. Now, Frank will be here shortly with your outfits. Bye, babes.

JOY DOLO: I cannot wait to see our wigs and outfits, but before we get to that, it's time for First Things First.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

(SINGING) First things first.

This is the game where I give you three items from history, and you have to guess which order they were invented. You ready?

MAX: Yes.

JOY DOLO: Yes, you are, born ready. Here we go. Today's items are baseball caps, neon clothes, and bell bottoms. Bell bottoms are pants that get wider at the knee, like a bell. Have you seen those before, Max?

MAX: I have.

JOY DOLO: Yeah. They're still in style, right?

MAX: Yeah. I'd say, in certain circles.

JOY DOLO: Oh, well. Well, what do you think came first-- bell bottoms, neon clothes, baseball caps?

MAX: I think baseball caps came first.

JOY DOLO: Oh, really? Why is that?

MAX: Because I know baseball as a sport has been around for a while.

JOY DOLO: Mm.

MAX: It's like part of the uniform.

JOY DOLO: So do you think next up in history is neon clothes or bell bottoms?

MAX: That's actually a tough one, because just because something wasn't popular until a certain point doesn't mean it wasn't around.

JOY DOLO: That's a good point. That's a really good point, and like you were saying, baseball's been around for a long time. And like I grew up in the 2000s or whatever, and the '90s I know were really cool for like neon clothes. So what do you think? Baseball caps one, hmm?

MAX: Probably bell bottoms?

JOY DOLO: Bell bottoms two, and then neon clothes?

MAX: Yes.

JOY DOLO: I'm going to agree with you, because that just makes sense. We'll reveal the answers right after this.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

We're making a time capsule. Time capsules are a great way to be a part of history. You simply find a box and put stuff in that represents the time you are living in, like maybe a smartphone or maybe a reusable cup.

MAX: Then you stash it away for people in the future to find.

JOY DOLO: We want to know what you would put in our time capsule. Record yourself telling us, and send it to foreverago.org/contact. Max, what would you put in?

MAX: I would put in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, by Shakespeare, because that is one of my favorite Shakespeare plays.

JOY DOLO: Oh, yeah. I love that play.

MAX: I would put in one of the epics, like *The Odyssey* or probably *The Iliad*, because I like *The Iliad* better.

JOY DOLO: Oh, OK.

MAX: I would put in S.E. Hinton's *The Outsiders*, and I would put in all of these just to show people in the future like what life was like at certain points in time.

JOY DOLO: Well, all of these are an excellent idea. We'll hear what more listeners would put in the time capsule at the very end of the show, after the credits. Send us your recording at foreverago.org/contact. We can't wait to hear what you come up with.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

You're listening to *Forever Ago* from APM Studios. I'm Joy Dolo.

MAX: And I'm Max.

JOY DOLO: And we're going to find out what came first, neon clothes, baseball caps, and bell bottoms. Envelope, please. And just a quick reminder, we had baseball caps, bell bottoms, and neon clothes in that order. All right. Oh my gosh. Guess what was first-- bell bottoms.

MAX: Seriously?

JOY DOLO: Its bell bottoms.

MAX: Oh, my gosh.

JOY DOLO: Of all the things that could come first in history, its bell bottoms. So most people associate bell bottoms with the hippie culture, from the 1960s and '70s. That's what we did.

MAX: Yeah. That's what I was thinking.

JOY DOLO: Yeah. I know. Me too, but some of the first documented signs of bell bottoms go back to the 1800s. That's like 200 years ago.

- MAX:** That's actually really cool.
- JOY DOLO:** So sailors with US Navy were wearing them back then, and there was no official uniform. And people think sailors probably liked having looser pant legs, because they were easier to roll up.
- MAX:** That's really interesting.
- JOY DOLO:** All right. So, eh, we were wrong for one. So the second one, let's see what we got, and oh my gosh, get this. The second one, baseball caps.
- MAX:** When did those come in?
- JOY DOLO:** Listen, we've been wrong a lot.
- MAX:** I know.
- JOY DOLO:** So when people first started playing baseball, in the 1860s-- so you're right. It came from a long time ago-- that was around the time of the Civil War. And most players wore straw hats to keep the sun out of their eyes. So by the 1800s, cloth hats with visors became more popular with players. Many credit a team in New York, the Brooklyn Excelsiors--
- MAX:** That's a cool the name.
- JOY DOLO:** I know. That should be the name of a band, the Brooklyn Excelsiors. So the Brooklyn Excelsiors popularized hats with a round top, a long visor, and a button on top. But the modern hat, with the stiff yet bendy brim, didn't catch on until the 1940s.
- So last but not least is the wonderful, the very popular, neon clothes, the super bright neon clothes, like electric orange or hot pink. They're actually tricky to make. It requires special materials and acid dyes. That stuff was available as early as the 1960s, but it was mainly used for jobs where you needed to be seen, like construction workers or crossing guards.
- It wasn't until the 1980s that neon-colored fashion for everyone really came into style. Suddenly, you could get neon on everything, from scrunchies to shoelaces. Do you have anything neon in your life right now?
- MAX:** Probably somewhere, I just don't exactly know where they are. I know I have some leg warmers somewhere.
- JOY DOLO:** Oh, that's should have been on the list too. I love--
- MAX:** I'm pretty sure they're green, like bright green.
- JOY DOLO:** Oh, that's a great color. You're a very cool person.
- [MUSIC PLAYING]
- OK. Back to our macaroni makeover.
- MAX:** Yeah. I can't wait to see our outfits.
- FRANK:** Hello, friends. I have returned.

It's Frank.

MAX: Whoa, Frank. Those are amazing clothes. I hope the bright red coat with the gold hat is mine.

FRANK: Of course.

JOY DOLO: Frank, these costumes look amazing, but I've been dying to learn more about the macaronis. I have so many questions. Why were your wigs so big? Why were your hats so tiny?

How come no one dresses like that anymore? Where did the name macaroni come from? Did you all eat a lot of mac and cheese? Have you tried putting bread crumbs on it and--

FRANK: Whoa, whoa, whoa, hold your horses. Let's get your wigs on first. Then I'll dive into the story of the great macaronis. I just need a ladder so I can place these hair pieces on you. Thomas, oh, Tommy Tom-Toms?

THOMAS: I hate when you call me that.

FRANK: Did you bring my ladder?

THOMAS: Yes.

FRANK: Please, set it up, so I can place these wigs, spit spot.

THOMAS: [GRUNTING]

FRANK: All right. While Tommy Tom-Toms sets that up, let's dive into the past.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

Our story begins in Europe, around the 1770s. No light bulbs, we use candles and oil lamps. No cars, we rode horses or walked. We wrote with feathered quill pens and did hot viral dances, like the minuet.

Now, most people were farmers or skilled tradesmen or servants. i.e. They didn't have much money, but me and my friends, we came from the upper crust. We were aristocrats. Our families had money to burn.

THOMAS: Yes, full wallets and empty heads.

FRANK: What was that, Tommy Tom-Toms?

THOMAS: I said your ladder is ready.

FRANK: Oh, good. I shall fluff and place the wigs. So one thing we rich and wonderful loved doing was traveling. It was common for a wealthy, young man from Britain to spend a year or more soaking up the culture in places like France and Italy.

THOMAS: By soaking up the culture, he means shopping.

FRANK: Well, yes, a little light shopping was necessary.

THOMAS: As the one who carried your luggage, sir, I can say, there was nothing light about it.

FRANK: And of course, when we did return to England, we'd bring with us our new, beautiful clothes and a newfound love of pasta. We ate a lot of pasta.

MAX: Is that where the name macaroni comes from?

FRANK: Indeed. Anything we thought was cool, we'd call it macaroni. That hat, macaroni. Your glasses, macaroni.

MAX: People who can do back flips?

FRANK: Macaroni.

JOY DOLO: Dogs on skateboards.

FRANK: Macaroni.

MAX: When someone throws a crumpled piece of paper, and it swishes in the trash can.

FRANK: So macaroni. The actual macaroni, that was the most macaroni that ever macaronied. We liked the term so much that we became known as the macaronis. Tommy Toms, fetch the boots and polishing kits, post haste.

THOMAS: Right away, sir.

MAX: Is Thomas like your butler?

FRANK: Oh, no. He used to be my servant, but now he's been promoted to-- oh, what's that word again? Oh, yes, intern, he's my intern. Anyway, let me tell you. When we walked the streets of London, heads turned.

(SINGING) Macaronis, people gasp. Macaronis, they're walking past. Macaronis, looking fine. Going to plays and drinking wine. Macaronis, macaronis, macaronis.

Yes, even flowers wilted out of jealousy. We were unlike anything those rubes ever had seen before. Some even tried to imitate us, as if you can fake greatness, like that Yankee Doodle fellow.

JOY DOLO: Wait, Yankee Doodle (SINGING) stuck a feather in his hat and called it macaroni. That's about you all?

FRANK: Yes. It was a song the British sang to make fun of Americans for not being as in the know as we were about cool looks. Yankee Doodle thought sticking a feather in his cap made him as stylish as us. [LAUGHING] He was what I believed you would call a poser.

THOMAS: Here, I have the boots and shoe polish kits.

FRANK: Great. Start polishing.

THOMAS: Ahem, what did we agree to say?

FRANK: Oh, fine. Yes. P-- p-- pull-- pull-- please?

THOMAS: Was that so hard?

FRANK: Yes.

MAX: So you all invented this wild new look. Huh?

FRANK: Well, sort of. We weren't the first men to dress loud and proud. Like Jax mentions, men in makeup and fancy dress goes way back. And even in Western Europe, our parents or grandparents sometimes sported fancy, silk jackets and powdered wigs.

But we took it to new heights, like literally. Our wigs were higher than theirs. Here, watch this clip from Amelia Rauser. She's an art history professor at Franklin and Marshall College. She'll help explain.

AMELIA The macaronis are representing the sort of culmination of this long tradition of aristocratic men in Western Europe, dressing in an extravagant way, showing their wealth through their fashion.

FRANK: Yes, we loved flaunting our wealth. But get this, poorer people with terrible clothes? They didn't like that for some reason.

THOMAS: I can't imagine why.

FRANK: Right? Here we are bringing beauty and taste, and what do they do? They start making fun of us.

THOMAS: Maybe you kind of deserved it?

FRANK: I know, so unfair. Right? You see, around this time, magazines devoted to fashion were becoming quite popular in England, but rather than celebrating us for being better than everyone else, they would draw cartoons of us, make us look silly, like with giant wigs and tiny hats on top.

JOY DOLO: You're literally wearing a giant wig with a tiny hat on top.

FRANK: Yes, but it's stylish. Look, you just had to be there. Anyway, Tommy, time to steam the coats-- puh-lease.

THOMAS: Thank you, and yes, I will.

FRANK: The thing was, around this time in Western Europe, things were changing fast. People who weren't the elite and powerful started having money and influence too. They were called the middle class, and they did not like us wealthy, aristocratic folk. Here, watch this clip.

AMELIA The middle class was growing in wealth, as trade and globalization and industry was starting to spread. And so they're making money, but they don't want to just be like the aristocrats. They are actually saying, these aristocrats are kind of decadent.

They're kind of behind the times. They're kind of laughable, and we are real men. So part of the making fun of the macaroni is also this middle class group saying, that's not what real masculinity is. Real masculinity is wearing a black suit and going to work every day.

FRANK: Dress plain? Oh, as if.

MAX: So it sounds like tastes were changing pretty quickly in your day.

FRANK: Sadly, yes. This new idea of manhood started gaining popularity in Europe and even America. It was all dull and dark colors, plain shoes and shirts, and decidedly short wigs. If you're a wig at all, no pretty lace, no makeup.

By the end of the 1700s, things really swung in a less fancy direction. For instance, in France, people were so upset at the elites that they threw them out of power. Some were even beheaded. The new people in charge, they made laws targeting the rich and fabulous. See?

AMELIA RAUSER: There were actually rules about what you could wear in revolutionary France. You could not wear fancy clothes, because that was considered decadent. And fashion was one way in which the new ideas of the revolution were spread, and also, they were hoping that people would sort of internalize the ideas. If they changed what their bodies looked like and how they were presenting their bodies, that somehow that would correspond with changing how they thought about the world.

FRANK: We were in England. My friends and I didn't want to be targets of ridicule anymore. So we dressed in navy and gray. Uh.

(SINGING) They look drab, no tiny hats. So bad--

OK. OK. That's enough. I don't like dwelling on it. But alas, times change. Right?

MAX: Yeah, but actually, they haven't for a long time, at least in Western culture. I mean, pretty much since the time of the macaronis, men in America and Europe have been expected to dress kind of plainly. And for the most part, it's been frowned upon for them to wear makeup.

JOY DOLO: Yeah. Some of that is starting to change, but it sounds like the trends that started in your day, Frank, really set the tone for the next 200 years or so of male fashion. Maybe, it's time we bring fancy, fabulous looks for men back into the mainstream.

FRANK: I would love to see it. People should be allowed to look as wild as they want. There are so many ways to use fashion to express yourself. Why be limited? I mean, it was so tragic that in our day people ridiculed us for being supremely beautiful.

THOMAS: Do you think it could have actually been because you flaunted your wealth and lorded over everyone like you were better than them?

FRANK: Hmm, that's an interesting take, Thomas, but no, they were just jealous. Anyway, speaking of which, you two are going to make fine macaronis for tonight's party. Check it out.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

JOY DOLO: Oh my goodness. Frank, look at us.

FRANK: Wait, the finishing touch.

[DING]

JOY DOLO: My own tiny hat.

FRANK: You both look very macaroni. Nice work, Thomas.

THOMAS: Oh, why thank you.

- FRANK:** Now, go to that party and minuet the house down. Make me proud.
- MAX:** Will do. Whoa, how do you walk with this giant thing on?
- FRANK:** Very, very slowly. Good luck.
- JOY DOLO:** So we learned today that, for long stretches of history, both men and women wore makeup and fancy things.
- MAX:** It was often a way to show off power and wealth, but it had other meanings too.
- JOY DOLO:** But in Western society, flashy, decadent clothes, big wigs, and makeup for men fell out of fashion, in the late 1700s, and it stayed that way a long time.
- MAX:** But things are changing now. Who knows? Maybe the macaroni look will make a comeback.
- [MUSIC PLAYING]
- JOY DOLO:** This episode was produced by Sanden Totten, Molly Bloom, Kailash Todi, with additional production support from Anna Goldfield, Monika Wilhelm, Grace Totter, Tara Anderson. Sound designed by Eduardo Perez. Theme music by Mark Sanchez. Voice acting by Brant Miller, Nate Hesberg, and Alex Simpson.
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- [MUSIC PLAYING]
- And now, it's time to add things to our time capsule.
- [CLICKING]
- MAX:** Here's what we're putting in this week.
- [MUSIC PLAYING]
- ZANNA:** Hi. My name is Zanna and I live in Massachusetts, and here's what I would put in the time capsule. I would put in recipes from my Pink Princess Cookbook, because I would want people from the future to know what dessert, appetizers, and fancy drinks I especially liked.
- GIDEON:** Hi. My name is Gideon, and if I could put one thing in a time capsule, I would put a normal car, because maybe in the future there will be no normal cars, and everything will be electric to save the environment.
- JOY DOLO:** Thanks to Gideon and Zanna for those time capsule ideas.
- MAX:** Send us your time capsule idea foreverago.org/contact. We'll feature new answers in every episode.
- JOY DOLO:** And of course, as always, we'll go way back.
- MAX:** Thanks for listening.
- [MUSIC PLAYING]

