

# vogue beauty

"Nancy Kwan was a star and arrived with an entourage," says Sassoon. "She didn't show any nerves – she just sat and played chess with her manager. No one got angles better than Donovan. One of the best shots we've ever done"



Top: *Vogue*, March 1969. "It really was a team, a very special one – if new ideas came out we were on it. Roger Thompson's done a very beautiful, simple bob here; with that kind of jewellery, the simpler the better." Above: July 1969. "Christopher Brooker [art director at Vidal Sassoon] had an extraordinary imagination and was a first-class chess player"



Sassoon with Jean Shrimpton in 1961

## Sharp act

As a new film celebrates Vidal Sassoon's remarkable career, Kathleen Baird-Murray talks to the legendary hairstylist about his enduring relationship with *Vogue*

Vidal Sassoon is on the phone from his Los Angeles home, talking about how he lopped off four feet from actress Nancy Kwan's hair to create the world's most famous bob. Even 48 years on, his excitement is palpable as he recalls the night it all started: "While I was cutting, seeing the shape formulate, I got on the phone to Terry Donovan and said, 'Terry, are you up for working tonight? I've got Nancy Kwan here and I've got a feeling.' And he said, 'Good, let's get to work.'"

Vidal Sassoon with model Peggy Moffitt – wearing a cape made of ringlets – in 1968



The following morning, the pictures of Nancy's new bob went to Max Maxwell, then art director at *Vogue*, and "he moved something else in the magazine to get the pictures in before the newspapers could get it". The rest, as they say, is hairdressing history, as big a moment in the story of how we wear our hair today as Coco Chanel freeing women from the rigours of the corset was in fashion history. Putting an end to pins, backcombing, hours under the dryer, and revolutionising the way hairdressers the world over cut hair – we have all this to thank Sassoon for.

"Nancy Kwan's bob was the shot that put me on the map," he explains, "because it motivated a whole new feeling." A perfect fit with the spirit of the Sixties, it felt modern, liberating; as democratic as his Bond Street salon where society ladies, film stars and models rubbed shoulders with shop girls, call girls, secretaries. "Anyone could wear Nancy's bob at different lengths."

His relationship with *Vogue* was to last several decades, but was at its peak in the Sixties. Often shoots took place in the now-defunct *Vogue* studios – on a good day, you could find David Bailey, Duffy and Donovan working alongside each other; Twiggy, Jean Shrimpton and Peggy Moffitt fitting from studio to studio. "We were serious about our work," says Sassoon, "but the photographers made it a party." His favourite was Donovan, closely followed by Duffy and David Montgomery. He also loved Bailey, although the two were never on the same wavelength when it came to hair – Sassoon wanting precision, sharpness; Bailey wanting something looser. "Bailey loved hair that looked as if it had just come out of bed," says Sassoon. He laughs. "His bed, preferably."

The launch of a new documentary film and the publication of Sassoon's autobiography last year has brought a new wave of interest in the legendary clipper. "I can't believe what's going on," says the boy from the East End orphanage, astonished at his own achievements, "but one thing's for sure. This 83-year-old is having a lot of fun." ■  
"*Vidal Sassoon: The Movie*" opens on May 20



"I'd been going to Harlem jazz clubs and seen some beautiful heads there; I wanted to create this look on Caucasians and Asians," says Vidal. "We called it the Greek Goddess, but it should have been called the Harlem Princess – this is the version I created for Beverly Adams, my second wife"

Nick Ackermann; David Bailey; Terence Donovan; John Goss; Barry Lategan