

## MORE INFORMATION ON.....LYCRA!!

*(adapted from VOGUE magazine January 1991 - Editor Elizabeth Saltzman)*

On October 28, 1959, DuPont trademarked a weird, miraculous substance, synthesized in its laboratories, that had twice the strength of rubber and half the weight.

Originally called Fiber K, the stuff was renamed Lycra. Imagine having to say, "I would love to have a Fiber K tube dress" or "These Fiber K biking shorts are really great."

People in the sporting goods industry put Lycra to use soon after its invention. So did Playtex. The first piece of Lycra in most American closets, in fact was probably the Lycra Playtex Living Girdle. The Living Girdle's awesome flesh squashing powers, shaped the bosom and flattened the rear end without using whalebone that was used throughout the 60s.

During the 70s and early eighties, Lycra almost disappeared from the fashion world. Its use seemed synthetic and sexy/cheesy in an era of big, naturalistic, floppy, cottony, ginghamy, earthy, nubby. "I wish I were a wheat farmer fashion."

Some of the first designers to use it were Isaac Mizrahi, Donna Karan, Michael Kors and Patricia Field.

What happened to bring it back into favor with the designers and the public? Technology for one. The original Lycra was a pure petroleum by product. It was slick, squishy stuff that made you sweat and reminded you of John Travolta's white stretchy Saturday Night Fever suit. Stretch these days, thanks to knitting technology, can be added to anything from cashmere (done by Donna Karan) or fine wool gabardine (Romeo Gigli) to cotton Pique (Isaac Mizrahi). Not to mention the Cotton/Lycra which spans such a huge range of fashion these days, everything from leggings, swimwear, dancewear etc.

Almost any fabric can be made stretchy with the addition of as little as 1 percent of its weight in Lycra. Most designers contend that this is what saved stretch from a life as nothing but leotards and has made it the material of the next century.

People love to wear "stretch" because it is so comfortable. Many people only wear stretch. Some items you must be terribly thin to wear, but not all of them. Stretch clothes do show an awful lot of "shape", and if you have an awful lot of shape, or if you're in awful shape it seems to add insult to injury.

"You can do stretch in untrashy ways" says Donna Karan. "It's the modern day girdle. You wear the thing that holds you in on the outside rather than the inside."

Stretch won't come in or go out, any more than corduroy or jersey does; it's become a staple, the underpinning for all fashion and because it's so comfortable and simple it will probably be a basic for most wardrobes from now until the year 3000.