

Top Hatters' Top Hats



Mr. John's creation for Maria Riva wraps up glamor and "practicality" in a maze of red velvet cord and fish-net veil. Practical? Well, the phone is just a prop, but it's handy for ignoring amused stares at the Colony

SINCE primitive woman discovered that the band she wore around her hair was a handy place to stick flowers and other embellishments, female heads have blossomed with a variety of strange and wonderful things.

The motive that spurred the first maiden to outshine the other ladies in her territory is probably no different from the one that sets women on the path of a new bonnet today. But whether it's vanity, the creative urge, or a desire to step out of the ranks in a carbon-copy age, the results are getting more sensational all the time.

Collaborators in the struggle to produce a taller plume, a more involved bird's nest, are the hat designers—to whom carrots and cornstalks, bean pods and bumbershoots are all perfectly acceptable decorations for the head.

As an ultimate challenge to their ingenuity, Collier's invited five of the country's top hatters to co-operate in an experiment. The designers were presented with an odd basic assortment of raw materials from which to make a selection: a handful of unblocked hats, some veiling, rhinestones, dried flowers, leaves, thistles, ribbon—and a telephone.

Catch in the collection was the telephone, which was a must for every model. The experts didn't flinch. Mr. Bell's instrument turned up in one form or another on every hat. Sour-minded skeptics may carp about the practicality of such an idea, but it would take a real quibbler to deny its decorative qualities.

Faced with an identical problem, the five outstanding milliners turned out five very different-looking hats. Symbol of their varying approaches was the trimming each fished out of the hodgepodge of materials provided for their use.

1951 HATS



This yellow beaver fur designed by Mr. Fred has a telephone wired to brim with gold cord. Dorothy Leffler joined in gag by faking a call



Utility ties to fashion in Sally Victor's toast-colored beaver fur, its telephone disguised with rhinestones plus two feathered comets

Mr. John dug up a length of red velvet cord, a few yards of fish-net veiling and a red telephone. Sally Victor chose a black phone receiver, black velvet ribbon, rhinestones, a batch of feathers. Mr. Fred of John Frederics needed only a length of gold cord, a telephone; Lilly Daché, a thistle, some dried flowers, a foot or two of chartreuse velvet ribbon. Mr. Maxwell of Knox the Hatter kept things simple, settled for one red phone.

In the belief that the lady beneath the hat has much to do with its success, Collier's then called in Maria Riva, talented television actress and daughter of Marlene Dietrich, to model the creations.

The results of the session point up at least one homely truth—that nothing is so consistent as woman's inconsistency. For, Maria, who turned out to be the designers' delight, doesn't believe in hats. "That's why I enjoyed modeling them," she says. We'll let someone else take it from there.

EVELYN HARVEY

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1951 HATS



For luncheon at the Sulgrave Hotel, Lilly Daché has dressed Maria in a toast-colored topper adorned with gilt phone receiver and thistle



Still playing it for laughs, Maria hunts a familiar number while she wears sporty model designed under supervision of Knox's Mr. Maxwell



Paul Maxwell's design suits Knox's functional emphasis



Champion of the sculptured silhouette is Sally Victor

1951 HATS



Mr. John is famous for hat of simple but dramatic line



Elegance and craftsmanship are typical of Lilly Dache



Mr. Fred of John Frederics believes in a casual effect

PHOTOGRAPHS FOR COLLIER'S BY SHARLAND

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