

# FASHION & FLEMINGTON

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FASHION COMMENTARY AND CAPTIONS BY EMILY POWER

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AND THEY'RE OFF: Fashion house models in 1963 showcase impeccable racewear, typical of the era, when gloves and a smart hat were a must. Boxy bags, pretty tweeds and florals, and hems finishing modestly at the knee, completed smart ensembles. The models were part of the Victoria Racing Club's 'Fashions, Flowers and Favourites' promotion, which supported the Fashions on the Field competition and introduced women to the types of outfit they could wear to the races.



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PHOTO FINISH: Models show off nine different looks for the 2009 Carnival. The divergence of styles, from slinky 1960s shifts, to sweet full skirts with nipped-in waists, fluid shapes and sharp tailoring, reflects the broad interpretation of modern racewear.



# FASHION & FLEMINGTON

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## FOREWORD

# RACING'S OSCARS!

*Philip Treacy OBE on why the Melbourne Cup Carnival is the Oscars of thoroughbred racing.*

The Melbourne Cup Carnival is the Oscars of thoroughbred racing. There is great anticipation in any occasion where you can dress up to the nines. The races at Flemington are special because they are populist—they are for everybody. The Carnival is one of the most incredible feel-good events on the planet and, admirably, all racegoers put so much energy and effort into looking their best.

Wearing a hat is connected with the Melbourne Cup. It is also connected with racing at Royal Ascot and with royal weddings, and is an iconic aspect of the sport.

Hats are about special moments in your life when you want to look and feel a million dollars: your child's wedding, for example, or a party, when getting married, while performing at the Grammys like Lady Gaga, or when you go to the races. The world-class racing and social scene at Flemington is about creating an ultimate moment in people's lives, the thrill of an important national occasion and a great day out.

The Carnival embraces 21st-century hat wearing. For racegoers, it is not about old-school hat-wearing—it is about the future. The level of stylishness at Flemington is excellent, and whether they are wearing a fascinator or an incredible headpiece, everybody aims to look their best.

To me, spectacular racewear is in the imagination of everybody who dresses up to go to the Cup. Whether they end up looking spectacular is irrelevant—in their minds, they are spectacular. Racegoers plan their outfits for months, and it is also the preparation of attending the races that, like most extraordinary events, makes it so fantastic.

I am a great fan of Australia and Australians, but I had never been to a Melbourne Cup before 2011. The Cup is an iconic race in the world and attending is one of the top 10 things you must do before you die. Racing at Flemington is different to the other major race meetings around the world—Australians do it in a more exuberant way, because there is nothing elitist about horse racing in Australia. At Flemington, everyone enjoys themselves, the quality of racing is incredible, the horses are exquisite, and as a sporting and fashion spectacle, it is the best of the best.

THE DESIGN MASTER: Philip Treacy OBE is one of the world's most celebrated hat designers, named in *Time* magazine's 'All-Time Top 100 Icons of Fashion, Style and Design'. Treacy, born in Ireland and based in London, is a multiple British Accessory Designer of the Year winner and has created remarkable headpieces for fashion houses such as Givenchy, Chanel and Ralph Lauren. His clients have included the late *Tatler* fashion editor Isabella Blow, superstars Madonna, Lady Gaga, Sarah Jessica Parker, Victoria Beckham and the British royal family, among others. Treacy was a distinguished guest of the Victoria Racing Club at the 2011 Melbourne Cup Carnival.

#### AN EYE FOR STYLE:

Some spare no expense when it comes to choosing exquisite racewear, but Queenslander Jaydee Paino proved that a natural sense of style and flair, not a huge budget, can snare Australia's richest fashion prize. Paino won the 2010 Myer Fashions on the Field competition in a whimsical horse-print dress that she purchased on eBay for US\$18 and a beret-style headpiece with navy feathers and pearls from milliner Bernice Patton. She claimed the television series *Mad Men*, set in 1960s New York, and ladylike glamour, as her inspiration.



#### PREFACE

## A MELTING POT OF FASHION AND CULTURE

*Since the great Archer won the first Melbourne Cup in 1861, Flemington Racecourse has been the stage for an unrivalled sartorial spectacle.* BY EMILY POWER

*Fashion & Flemington* affirms all that is joyful and special about wearing a glorious outfit to the Melbourne Cup Carnival, where the glamour and frisson off the track is as much of an attraction as the world-class action on the turf.

Produced under the auspices of the Victoria Racing Club, during the year in which the club celebrates 50 years of the iconic Fashions on the Field competition—sponsored since 1983 by Myer—this book is a showcase of the most treasured fashion moments through Flemington's remarkable and evolving history. The outfits are fun and frivolous, elegant or fashion forward, reflecting local and international designer visions.

Stunning imagery captures the talent of the designers and milliners whose breathtaking

creations ignite Flemington's lawns with colour and intricate beauty, and showcases the Myer Fashions on the Field contestants—and committed racegoers—collaborating with a fearless sense of style to form a unique people's catwalk as exciting and dynamic as any of the world's famous fashion events.

For the seriously stylish, current trends are carefully interpreted according to the customs of classic racewear, but all racegoers find pleasure in expressing the fashion of the day, however they choose. From costumery to *haute couture* each extremity of style has its place, and will continue to excite and inspire for as long as Flemington Racecourse holds its extraordinary place in the heart of the public.

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Captions describing the fashion, personalities and characters throughout this book were written by Emily Power



## The London influence

IN February 1964, Australian women's style magazine *Flair* said the youth fashion movement in Australia—of which Jean Shrimpton became the paradigm—was embodied by: “A clean, well-scrubbed beauty, dead-level gaze and complete disregard for compromise or artifice. They go with their generation in a very Chelsea direction... these are the girls who will wipe the fashion slate clean and scrawl on it with their own straightforward, but unmistakable signature.”

By 1968 young Australian women like model Suzy Kendall (pictured) had brought the youthful clothes and make-up of London's progressive Carnaby Street and Kings Road, Chelsea, to Flemington. Kendall won the Fashions on the Field prize for the most elegant hat—a navy blue and white piece by milliner Wendy Mead, which she offset with a long-sleeved blue silk and wool dress.

## All in a day's work

NEWSPAPER photographs of glamorous women snuggling up to champion racehorses isn't a modern media concept. On Cup Day morning in 1969, Caroline Bell, in a sleek mod outfit consisting of a jacket with an oversized collar and simple accessories such as the slim-line watch, cosies up with one of the Melbourne Cup favourites, the Bart Cummings-trained Big Philou, who was to be scratched from the race in controversial circumstances 39 minutes before the start.





## Style stakes

SINCE the early years of the Melbourne Cup, the presence of some of the most beautiful women of the day, from socialites and models to Miss Universe winners, has added glamour to the Carnival. In contemporary times, former Miss Universe and the face of emporium Myer, Jennifer Hawkins, has set a style standard. Favouring body-skimming frocks and flirtatious headpieces, she often wears top Australian designers such as Toni Matceviski, as pictured here on AAMI Victoria Derby Day in 2008.

Matceviski said of creating racewear for Hawkins: "I love a structured dress, tailored and beautifully finished. I love putting her in figure-hugging, simple shapes and clean colours. She always looks amazing in cooler tones and soft structure."

The fun set, with their matching hats and stubby holders, obviously agree.

## Come a long way

NEW York-based Australian supermodel and Myer ambassador Jessica Hart surveys the impressive Myer Fashions on the Field arena in 2010. Hart was resplendent in a Richard Nylon hat and a scarlet jacket atop a form-fitting pencil dress, reminiscent of 1940s sophistication. The outfit was a bespoke creation for Hart by celebrated designer Wayne Cooper.

"I like it when women step left of centre of traditional racewear, when they don't play safe and they get it right, but in an interesting way," Cooper said of fashion at the Carnival.



## A jolly good day out

AUTHOR and actress Joan Collins, who was a guest of the lavish Swisse marquee in the Birdcage for Crown Oaks Day in 2011, was as glamorous as ever in a *Dynasty*-style violet Jackie Palmer dress with 1980s-style exaggerated shoulders and a veiled hat by British *haute couture* milliner Stephen Jones. A fan of self-styling, Collins apparently chooses all her own outfits and finds looking good comes effortlessly.

“It takes me about a quarter of the time to get ready as these young actresses,” she said. Collins recognised the enduring appeal of Crown Oaks Day. “My understanding of the races ... they are a jolly good day out,” she said. “I just find it fun to look at everybody and admire the hats and the clothes, and just really have fun.”





INTRODUCTION

# A PERSONAL REFLECTION

*Fashion designer Leona Edmiston has been a Carnival regular since the 1990s. She says fashion at Flemington represents “daywear taken to its ultimate form”.*

Each spring season, a large portion of my fashion range is devoted to racewear, with outfits spinning around in my head for months in advance. The fervour involved in planning an outfit for the Melbourne Cup Carnival can be likened to that of preparing for a wedding. Numerous options will be tried and tested; heels need to be sophisticated, sexy and worn all day; make-up has to be flawless with minimal touch-ups. A small bag is essential, which means packing no more than powder, lipstick and the ever-trusty racebook. And the look would be incomplete without a statement hat to top it all off.

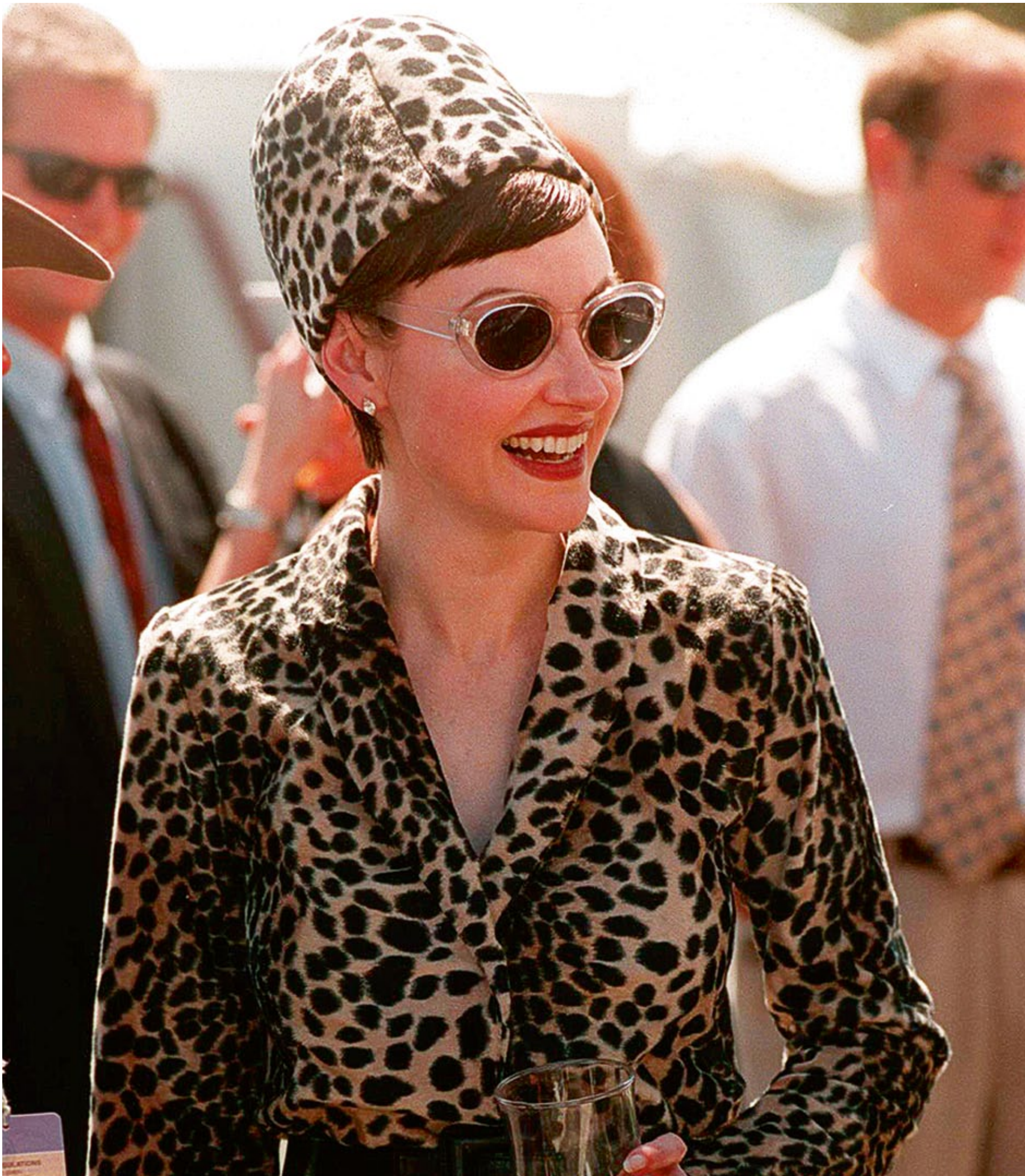
I’ve been very fortunate to have been invited to various marquees within the Birdcage during the Carnival. What used to be little more than decorated tents have become elaborate sets in which beautiful racegoers come to play. The Lexus marquee, possibly larger than many homes, towers over the track at Flemington, and the impeccable styling of the Myer marquee is quite breathtaking. In 2011 Myer flew in Jeff Leatham, New York’s floral designer extraordinaire, to style giant displays of blooms in Waterford crystal, creating an elegant atmosphere of spring.

Guests of these exclusive marquees sip on champagne and nibble on delicacies from Australia’s most renowned chefs. After all, the Melbourne Cup Carnival is about opulence, extravagance and star-spotting—such fun! We have the privilege of mingling with international celebrities from the film and music worlds and, of course, plenty of our own sporting legends.

I do, however, love to venture out of the Birdcage and judge Myer Fashions on the Field. It is here you see the real extremes of race dressing. What a fabulous competition! Every year the entries become more elaborate and detailed with many entrants spending months making their outfits and hats. Sometimes, however, it takes a simple dress to win the day—as when a gorgeous young blonde in a straight shift, long beads and a cloche won AAMI Derby Day simply for her understated, fresh look.

It’s not just the prestige of the title that is coveted, in the past Myer Fashions on the Field prizes include cars, such as a brand-new Lexus, and other fabulous prizes. Each year, I recognise familiar faces as they stand on the stage to try their luck once more.

**QUEEN OF FROCKS:**  
One of Australia’s most loved and respected designers, Leona Edmiston started her solo label as “a tribute to the dress in all its incarnations” in 2001. Celebrities Kristin Davis, Susan Sarandon, Elle Macpherson, Melissa George and Drew Barrymore are among the women who have worn her sophisticated creations. Edmiston has boutiques throughout Australia, including concession stores in Myer, and in Los Angeles and Shanghai. Edmiston has judged Fashions on the Field and is a passionate Melbourne Cup Carnival-goer.



“The insane thrill of seeing Makybe Diva winning her three Cups is a memory to always cherish”

Racewear style is unique—it’s daywear taken to its ultimate form. It gives the wearer such a broad platform for personal expression and individual style. Some outfits have an amazing impact, such as Tara Moss’s J’Aton corset which she wore in 2004—she was mesmerising.

My first Melbourne Cup was in 1992. I wore a pink wool crêpe pant suit with a matching turban. I felt fabulous! However, a few years later I suffered my own race-day *faux pas* that I have never repeated—it involved wearing a faux-fur leopard-print suit and matching hat à la Audrey Hepburn in the film *Charade*. Up until that point, all of the Carnival days I had attended had been wet and chilly, but that one particular day Melbourne was experiencing a heatwave. I learnt my lesson that year about the importance of adaptable racewear.

Weather has always provided a challenge, but that’s also half the fun. I remember judging Fashions on the Field with Carson Kressley, of *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* fame, when a huge dust storm blew in from across the track, demolishing our tent, dismantling our millinery masterpieces and sending us all running for cover—it was hysterical!

Of all the Carnival days my favourite is Cup Day, because of the colour and flamboyance, and it is the perfect occasion to wear a statement hat. For the past 11 years my great friend Nerida Winter has created millinery works of art for me, from ostrich

and peacock feathers and tulle, to silk flowers, net, straw and lace—pieces so beautiful I display them around my home.

Of course, without those glorious, magnificent thoroughbreds none of us would be there in the first place. The insane thrill of seeing Makybe Diva winning her three Cups is a memory to always cherish. But the Melbourne Cup Carnival isn’t all about what happens on the track—there is such excitement around Melbourne. Years of tradition sees numerous lunches and dinners leading up to and during the week—one needs a trunk to hold all the outfits. But one of my favourites is the Grossi Florentino lunch, when the Cup makes an appearance for an up-close look before being presented to the winner on Cup Day.

I wish Cup week would last all year. There is unrivalled excitement from the Melbourne Cup. However, one thing we know for sure, no matter where we are, be it in the Birdcage at Flemington, on the racetrack at Rosehill, at luncheons in Newcastle, or participating in an office sweep in Brisbane, when 3pm hits on the first Tuesday of November we will all be standing still with our little white tickets in our hands.

Don’t take it too seriously, though—one year, my outfit did get likened to a puffball poodle—because the Melbourne Cup Carnival is all about fun and flamboyance. What other day of the year do you get to look like a French *chien*?

HEPBURN CHIC:  
Designer Leona Edmiston had a sassy approach to dressing on AAMI Victoria Derby Day in 1996, channelling movie and fashion icon Audrey Hepburn in the 1963 film *Charade* in a leopard-print suit, matching hat and vintage-style sunglasses.