

STYLE FILE

Vintage Melbourne

The appetite for all things tried-and-true shows no signs of falling out of fashion, so it's no surprise that Australia's style capital has embraced vintage in a big way, says Helena Iveson

As the return of shoulder pads and power dressing shows, just about everything comes back into fashion if you stash clothes in the back of your wardrobe for long enough. But if you didn't have the foresight to raid your grandmother's closet while you could, head to Melbourne. From covetable clothes to cool homeware and fabric, Australia's most diverse city has a wealth of stores that will make even the most chic of vintage shoppers swoon.

If the thought of French enamelware and an eclectic mix of antique furniture, lamps and mirrors makes you go *ooh la la*, head to **Gigi à la Maison**. The store, which looks and feels like it should be thousands of miles away in Provence, specialises in vintage homeware, much of which is sourced directly from France. Look out for the



Empire Vintage



All booted up at Retrostar Vintage

the buzz lifestyle

jaunty 1950's red-and-white spotted coffee pots (A\$195/S\$252) and the bathroom enamelware sets, which date back to the 1890s and are decorated with Art Nouveau nudes (A\$695/S\$899).

Shoppers searching for 1920s glam rather than understated French countryside chic will have a ball wading through the packed-to-the-rafters confines of **Empire Vintage**. The store – look out for the faded paint of the “Suit Hospital” sign on the wall outside – is a Melbourne shopping fixture thanks to the sharp eye of beehived owner Lyn Gardner. Lyn has collected an eclectic treasure trove of furniture, jewellery, ball gowns, hats, handbags, shoes and fabrics from the '20s to the '50s. Even if you manage to resist blowing a fortune on English linens from the 1920s or one of the chunky bracelets that are eye-catchingly displayed on French mannequins, this is a great place for generating ideas. And along with vintage goodies, Lyn also has a range of well-priced new handmade lingerie decorated with vintage lace and playful ribbons.

Thread Den is an amazing place. After making your choice from the shop's vintage fabric selection, you can take a sewing class and whip up your own masterpiece. The store, which was founded by four women who couldn't find anywhere convenient to sew, specialises in 1950's haberdashery. And there are racks of clothing from the same era, all ready to wear or ready to adapt. Adapting is done in the sewing lounge, where smooth-running Janome sewing machines are available to rent. Advice on how to tailor your purchases, along with soothing cups of tea, is complimentary. Thread Den has proven to be so popular with the fashionistas of Melbourne that



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Retrostar
Vintage

a second branch has opened on Brunswick Street in Fitzroy.

Perhaps Melbourne's most famous vintage store, **Retrostar Vintage** is jam-packed with clothes from the '40s to the '80s. Less pricey than some of the other boutiques mentioned here, Retrostar Vintage is hugely popular with Melbourne's student population, who come in droves to paw through the racks. And with new stock arriving every week, there's always something offbeat to

buy, from '80s-style power suits to – can you believe it? – shell suits which are apparently flying off the shelves. No matter

what trend you thought (or hoped) was long gone, you'll likely to find it in all its glory in Melbourne. 🍵

FIND IT

- **Gigi à la Maison**, 307 Coventry St, South Melbourne, tel: +61 (0)3 9699 9630, www.gigi.com.au
- **Empire Vintage**, 63 Cardigan Pl, Albert Park, tel: +61 (0)3 9682 6677, www.empirevintage.com.au
- **Thread Den**, Level 1, 16 Errol St, North Melbourne, tel: +61 (0)3 9329 5305, www.threadden.com
- **Retrostar Vintage**, 1F, Nicholas Bldg, 37 Swanston St, tel: +61 (0)3 9663 1223, www.retrostar.com.au