

# [British girls and women of the 90s](https://assignbuster.com/british-girls-and-women-of-the-90s/)

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British Girls and Women of the 90s – The Spice Girls, Girl Bands and their Influence on BritishCultureThe twentieth century will, without doubt, be viewed by historians as the Woman’s Hour. The status of women in Britain changed. More and more women started to leave their homes and join the labour market. They started to fight for their independence and political, economic and social rights. Women got more recognition from the society and they started to pursueequalitywith men.

They progressed from being (almost) possessions of men, with no legal status of their own, to being considered legal citizens in their own right. As far as the political background is concerned, it is worth saying a few words about Margaret Thatcher. Following the defeat of the Conservatives in 1974 election, Margaret Hilda Thatcher was elected as the new leader. She wentaon to lead the Conservatives toathe victory in the election of 1979 andathe party remained in power until 1997. Christopher states that, “ She was developing economicaideas which were guided by the fashionable theories of monetarism”(Christopher, 12).

These involved reducing inflation with high interest rates and submitting all aspects of the economy to free-market theories and the laws of supply and demand. Her economic and political ideas, which came to be known as ‘ Thatcherism’ began to be fully expressed and implemented. But in Britain, there were high rates of unemployment during the periods of the 1980s and early 90s. The jobs people lost were mostly skilled jobs in manufacturing industry, which were regarded as 'men's jobs'. Massive cuts in state spending led to job losses in the public sector, which affected women equally.

According to Christopher’s study: Because these jobs were usually semi-skilled or unskilled and low paid, the women were more interchangeable as employees and could find part-time office work or cleaning work, similarly low paid, elsewhere. (Christopher, 13) Women wereabeginning to occupy postsain traditional male-dominatedaareas such as business, alaw and banks. aMany of them couldaenjoy the benefitsaof increasing financialaand sexual freedom, aand were postponing marriageaand children. By 1986 the economy wasastrong. There was an airaof enterprise and optimism asaa new society emerged. aBritain became oreaaffluent, competitive andamore interested inacash. There was a newageneration of stylishaand image-conscious consumers, aand spending on restaurants, aclothes, cars, homes and holidays reached recordalevels. Many various feminist groups appeared and the third-wave offeminismin the USA began. In the early 1990s, an underground feminist movement called Riot Grrrl jumpstarted the idea of female empowerment. Riot Grrrl was anaunderground feminist punk rock movementathat originally started inaWashington, in the early to mid-1990s – it wasaoften associated with third-waveafeminism. According to some, “ Riot Grrrl. ands often addressed issues, such. as: domestic abuse, rape, sexuality, patriarchy, racismand female empowerment. Riot Grrrls were knownato start chapters, hold meetings, aand suport andaorganize womenainmusic. ”(Schilt, 6). Theamovement allowedawomen their own spaceato create music andamake political statementsaabout the issuesathey were facing inathe punk rock community asawell as inasociety. Those ideas soon entered Great Britain. Shortly after that, British marketers began latching onto the catchphrase ‘ girl power’ – which expressed aacultural phenomenon of the 1990saand earlya2000s. It is also linkedato third-waveafeminism.

The most memorable example of ‘ girl power’ is the Spice Girls. The Spice Girls wereaa Britishapop girlagroup formedain 1994 and the biggest popular cultural icons of the 1990s. As McGibbon mentions, “ performing pop music, Spice Girls achieved a worldwide success, selling over 55 million albums all over the world, the most from among all female singing groups in the twentieth century. ”(McGibbon, 23). Wherever they appeared, they could count on the support of the army of fans from all over the world, as well as the hysterical reaction of the media. The pop phenomenon – the Spice Girlsachanged the courseaof popularamusic andapopular culture.

Both albums and eight of their singles releases achieved number one chart position in the UK. No pop group since the Beatles attracted as much media attention as the Spice Girls. Ginger, aBaby, Posh, aSporty andaScary were international stars, adored and ridiculed in equal measures which was the ultimate expression of media fame in the Nineties. The girls have made many achievements such as Wannabe – the Spice Girls’ first single – and the most successful song in theircareer. It plays a crucial role in their fame. The single Wannabe toppedathe UK Singles Chartafor sevenaweeks and acquired a latinumacertification byathe British Phonographic Industry. Sinclair concludes, “ Itabecame theabest-sellingasingle by aafemale group, sellingaover six millionacopies worldwide. ” (Sinclair, 78). In June 1997 the Girls undertook to make a feature-length film called Spiceworld – The Movie. The film was directed by Bob Spiers (director of Absolutely Fabulous, Fawlty Towers, and Are You Being Served? ) and was a comical narrative from the Spice Girls’ real life adventures. According to some, ” the film was a runway success, becoming the second highest-grossing British film of 1997 (after Bean). (McGibbon, 45). Theayear 1997 sawathe Spice Girls capitalisingaon their fame throughaa multimillion dollaraphenomenon ofamerchandise, with hundredsaof official products. They may have made a great pop music, but if ever a group regarded their creative endeavours as a means to achieving a commercial end it was the Spice Girls. While pop stars through the decades have generally tried to a greater or lesser extent to protect their artistic integrity by not appearing to endorse unrelated or unsuitable products, the Spice Girls did the exact opposite.

They were up for anything. According to Sinclair, „ When it came to endorsements, it seemed that Spice Girls didn’t know the meaning of the word ‘ No’. ”(Sinclair, 50) There was apparently no product of consumer interest, however mundane or embarrassing, that it was beyond their ingenuity to adapt to the girl power credo. By the middleaof 1997, theaSpice Girlsahad signed up for product tie-in deals with Pepsi, Benetton, Feberge, Sony PlayStations, Polaroid cameras and Walker’s crisps. By the September 1997, the group were estimated to have earned $47 million by Forbes magazine, which ranked them at number 32 in their list of highest paid entertainers”. (http://www. sociology. org. uk/fchan1. pdf). This was a staggering achievement considering how little time they had been operating in the marketplace. All these achievements of the Spice Girls corroborate a huge potential of the band. Theaarrival of the Spice Girlsaadded to the new imageaand re-branding of Britain, aand underlined the growing worldapopularity of British, ratherathan U.

S. , pop music. aThis fact was visible at the BRIT Awards ceremony in 1997. aThe group won twoaawards but itawas Halliwell's Union Jack mini-dress which she designed herself thataappeared in media coverageaall over the worldaand eventually became a symbol of ‘ Cool Britannia’. They were the first pop phenomenon truly to understand the demands of the modern multi-media age, and to tailor their efforts accordingly. To their credit, the Spice Girls had an immensely powerful influence on children and teenagers. The girls were crazy about them.

The kids of a generation whose musical horizons had previously been restricted to Mr Blobby, a character from a television show Noel's House Party, and Sesame Street singalongs, became sensitised to pop music thanks to the Spice Girls. Teenagers modelled on the girls dyeing hair red, performing dances and dressing up as their favourite Spice Girls. There were many all-girl bands which appeared during the existence of the Spice Girls such as: Attomic Kitten, Sugababes or Girls Aloud and many of which were created after the collapse of the group. All or most of them modelled themselves on those five wonderful girls.

Despite the fact that there were, and still there are, many girl bands, none of them – also the aforementioned ones – has left such a big impression on pop music as the Spice Girls. As Sinclair states, ‘ They became, almost overnight, a fondly regard and instantly recognisable part of British pop's royalfamily. ” (Sinclair, 89). In summaries of their achievements ranging from the most informed biographies to the most aimless of pub conversations it was a generally held and often stated belief that, „ the group put British music back on the world stage and ushered in a global renaissance in pop. ” (Sinclair, 90).