





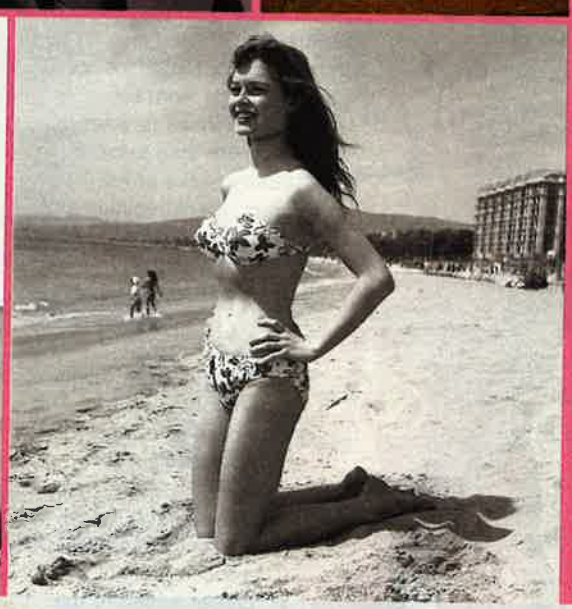

Opposite: Iconic Ursula Andress in *Dr No*. This page, clockwise from below: YSL's wedding bikini; *Beach Party* got the bikini on to the big screen, with Annette Funicello and Frankie Avalon; Brian "Itsy-Witsy" Hyland; the first modern bikini; its inventor, Louis Réard; a Roman prototype; Raquel Welch in *One Million Years BC*; "bikini girl" Brigitte Bardot

a collage of press cuttings.

To emphasise their smallness, Réard sold his first bikinis in matchbox-sized packets – but he didn't find many takers. In Catholic countries such as Spain and Italy the bikini was banned outright, while in America, religious pressure groups urged Hollywood to keep it out of the movies. One shocked commentator said that it revealed "everything about a girl except her mother's maiden name." And in 1949, an article in the Vatican's newspaper declared that "the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse are alive and well and have taken the form of the bikini."

Filmstar Fifties

In 1951, still a long way from achieving respectability, the bikini was banned from the Miss World contest, on the grounds that those wearing it would have an unfair advantage over their more modest competitors. And *Vogue* magazine sniffed: "We are quite sure our readers will have nothing to do with the infamous bikini – which never looked nice on any woman."

Vogue seems to have judged the mood about right. Ordinary girls were ignoring Réard-style brevity in favour of more chaste bandeau-style tops and modest shorts, culottes or skirts.

But although the public were wary of Réard's creation, the media began to take notice. Movie stars, never ones to hide their lights under more material than necessary, loved the exposure it offered. At the 1955 Venice film festival, British star Diana Dors was photographed in a bikini made from – of all things – mink. And a year later the paparazzi fell in love with a new starlet who soon became known as "The Bikini Girl", and men the world over thanked God for creating Brigitte Bardot.



Swinging Sixties

It wasn't until the decade of peace and love that the bikini really began to take off. Women were no longer afraid to show some flesh and, inspired first by Brian Hyland's 1960 hit song *Itsy-Witsy, Teenie-Weenie, Yellow Polka-Dot Bikini*, and then by the unforgettable sight of Ursula Andress emerging from the surf in the 1962 Bond film *Dr No*, they began taking advantage of the decade's more permissive climate.

A year later the first of Annette Funicello and Frankie Avalon's *Beach Party* films hit the big screen, complete with bikini-clad dancing girls and surreal, bikini-related titles such as *The Ghost in the Invisible Bikini*.

In 1966 a certain Raquel Welch became the most photographed woman in the world, thanks to the Stone-age fur bikini she sported in the film *One Million Years BC*, but as the decade drew to a close most lesser mortals preferred

