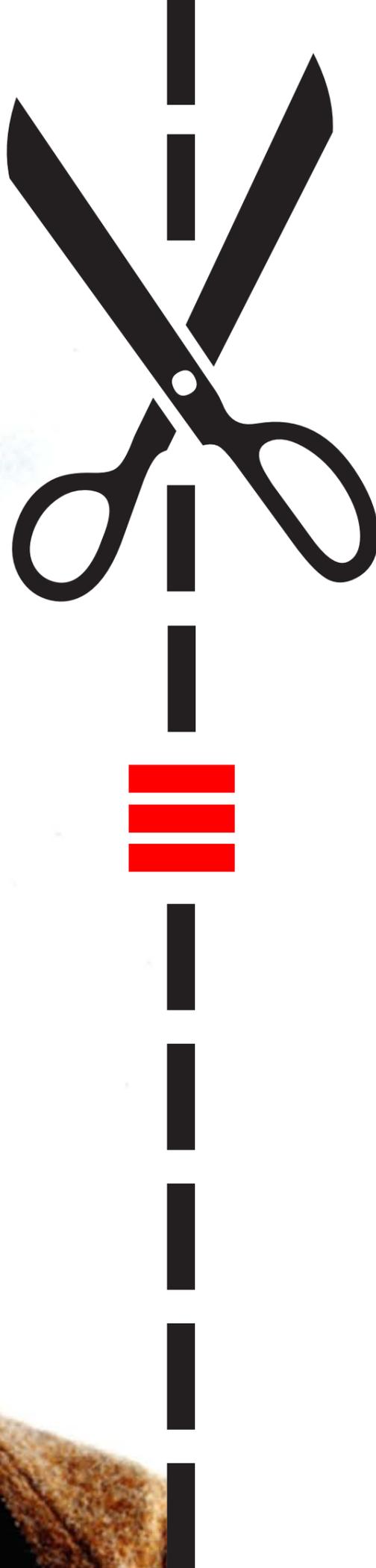




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CUTTING BACK

Sometimes you have to go back to find what it was that made things 'real' to begin with...

Produced exclusively for **Stuart Nishikawa**
Written exclusively by **Glenn Platt**

ESPRIT D'ESCALIER



Esprit shops in department stores were fitted with custom-designed fixturing. The slotted panels of these rolling carts held shelves, rods, baskets and hooks in many configurations to allow the shop staff to combine a wide variety of Esprit products, depending on what was in stock.



Esprit d'escalier is the French term for staircase wit - meaning a witty remark which comes to mind too late to be used. Redundant repartee if you will.

ESPRIT was once the early bird of retail environment, exalted when I was bright-eyed and bushy-tailed (I had cosmetic surgery in the 80s).

The strange thing, revisiting the stores, is to find oneself in a time warp. It's a bit like returning to a place that you knew as a kid; it's not as big or as bright as we remember it - and that reaction despite carrying an intellectual and emotional attachment for the brand.

But ESPRIT used to mean more than any mere style of shopfit could convey. So, it's that emotional positioning in the market place which we're seeking. And that emotional attachment can leverage the powerful consumer suction - based on environmental and social credentials stretching back over thirty years...

... that's a fair head start. But have you kept up the early momentum?

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AMERICAN'T?

Mind the



ESPRIT is David to GAP's casualwear Goliath, and yet the store by segment, range and inclination seems determined to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune by copying GAP?

ESPRIT don't need to copy *anyone*; originally you weren't 'just' originators you blazed a trail, pioneering advanced social views... long before people drew up CSR policies.

select a department ?

shop: men women gapbody maternity boys girls baby boy baby girl shopping bag



summer with a twist
clean effortless styles to take you through summer and into fall

[shop women →](#)





YOU COULD WIN A TRIP FOR TWO.
ANYWHERE IN THE U.S., CANADA, U.K., FRANCE, OR JAPAN WHERE THERE'S A GAP.

ENTER FOR A CHANCE TO WIN. PLUS, RECEIVE A SPECIAL FREE SHIP OFFER. NOW THRU JULY 29.

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CAN ESPRIT COMPETE? NO SWEAT

GAP are papering over the cracks in terms of a social responsibility position which was largely forced upon them. It's false, and thus their Achilles Heel. ESPRIT on the other hand have real credentials...

Gap Inc.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY REPORT



GAP INC.

BLACK AND WHITE AND RED



ESPRIT adopted NO LOGO sensibilities and acknowledged environmental concerns long before corporate social responsibility became a financially expedient 'good idea'. So, ESPRIT was 'being real' right down to their San Francisco roots - and authenticity is one key to a great brand.

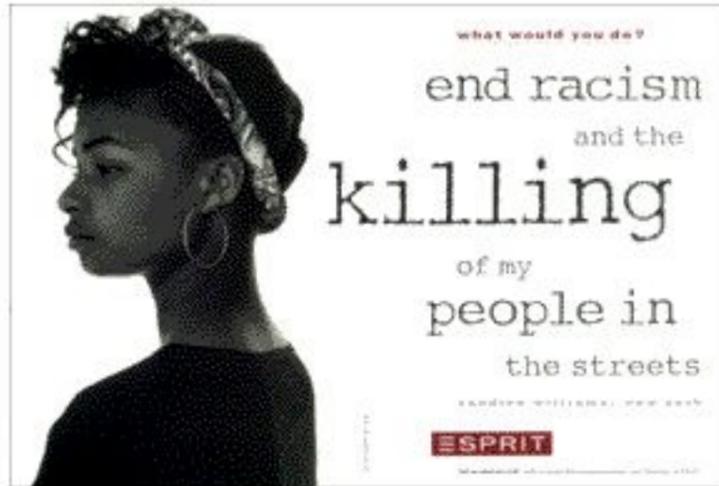
Los Angeles Times
Wednesday, June 27, 1990

Did Esprit Define the New Spirit?
Trends: In a move that may signal a new "environmentally conscious style," a clothing company has asked consumers to buy only what they need.
by Connie Koehnenn Times Staff Writer

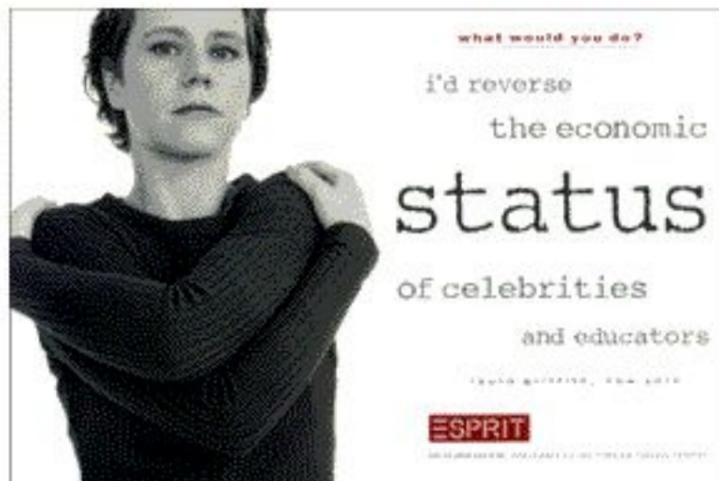
ESPRIT was asking their customers to be responsible - and in doing so recognised that their core customers were responding to different cues. They were also saying that our clothes are a durable quality product made to last - this is 'sustainable fashion' if we all buy just enough.

But the first law of consumerism is 'enough is never enough'...

THE SPIRIT OF ESPRIT



End racism and the killing of my people in the streets.
Candace Williams, New York



I'd reverse the economic status of celebrities and educators.
Laura Griffith, New York

ESPRIT were speaking out long before it became necessary to take a stance - their advanced viewpoint must be an advantage. Naomi Klein wasn't saying anything that ESPRIT hadn't acted on already...

... you walked the talk way back when.

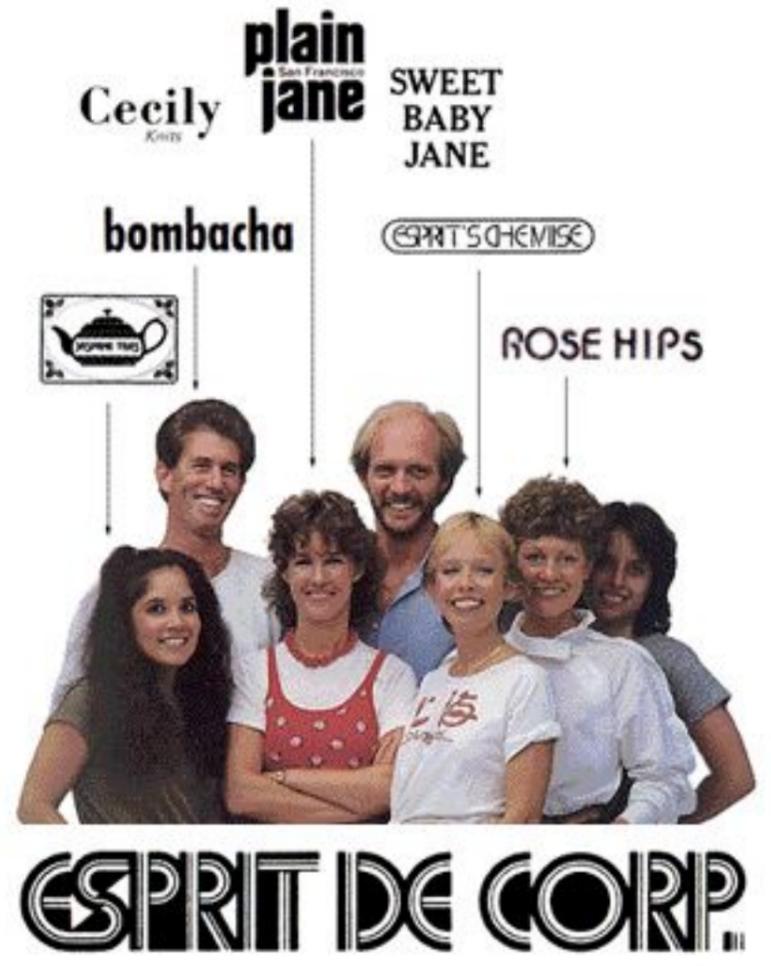
ESPRIT



DON'T LABEL ME; **ENABLE ME**

esprit de corps: the common spirit existing amongst the members of a group and inspiring enthusiasm, devotion, and strong regard for the honor of the group.

esprit de corp(oration)



Esprit design team, late 70's

Three rules to really successful retail:

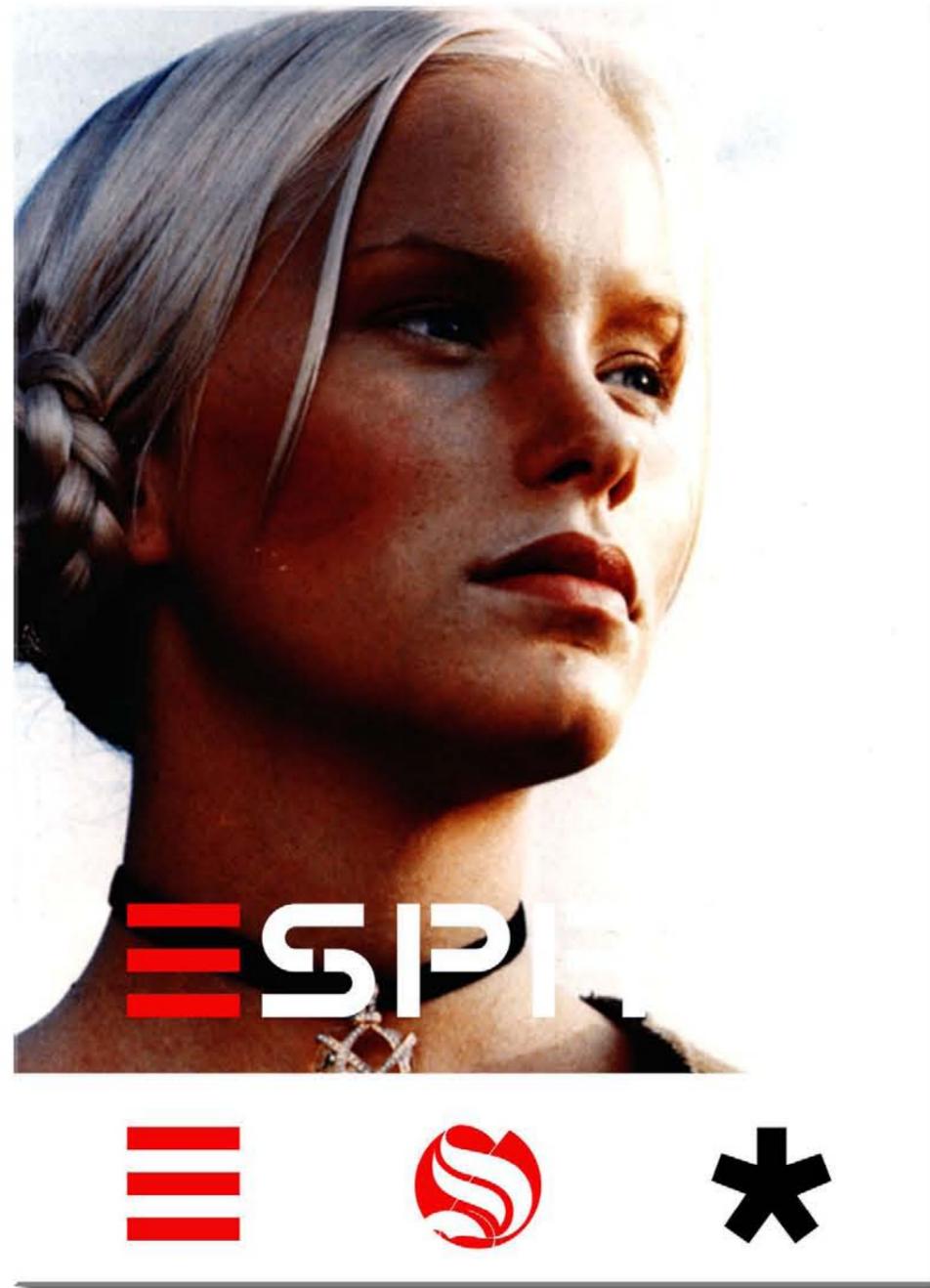
- Don't pander to me but give me what I want.
- Don't patronise me to get my patronage.
- Don't make me feel like I've made a dumb choice in shopping with you...

The last one is really tricky. No-one wants to feel they paid too much for anything - even prestige products can only attract the premium appropriate to their exclusivity and desirability.

At the other end of the scale, some trashy things are really cool. But they rarely buy into any environmental codes of conduct. Their values are frivolous, disposable rather than dependable.

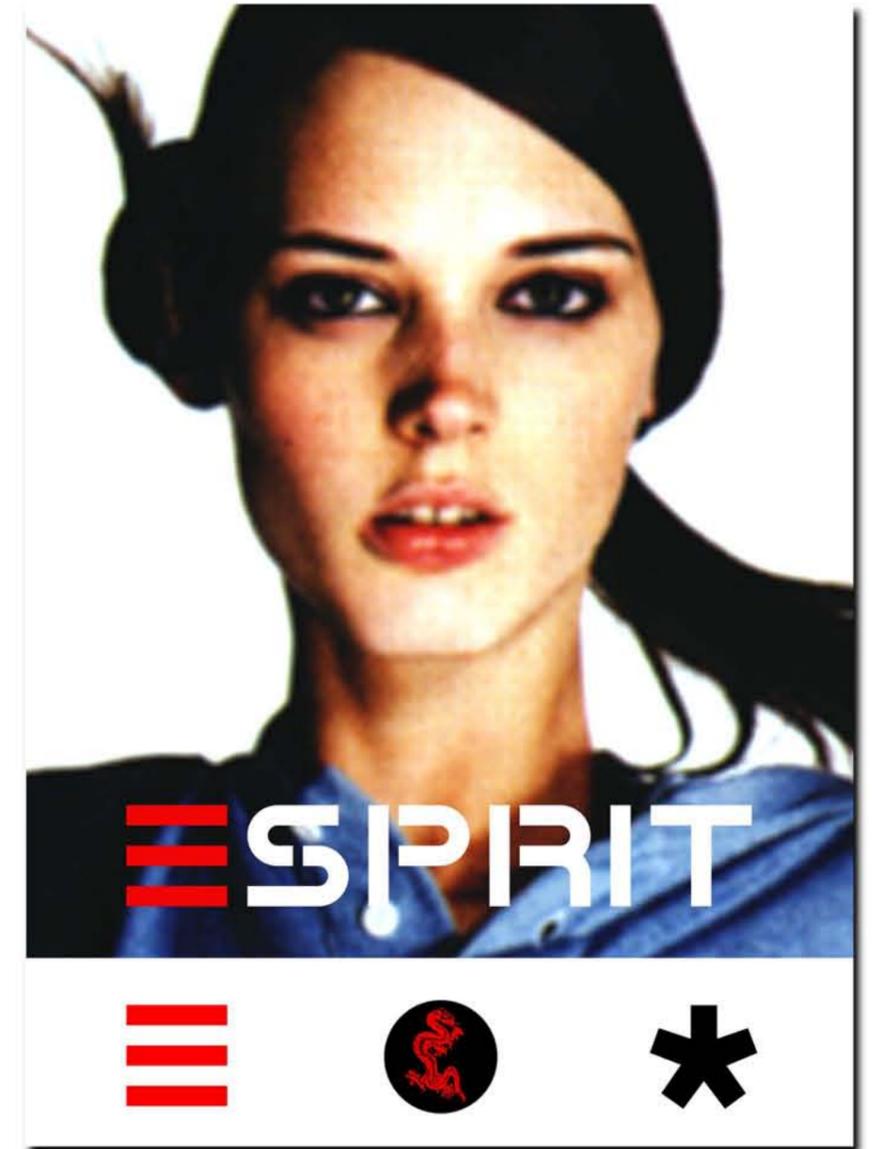
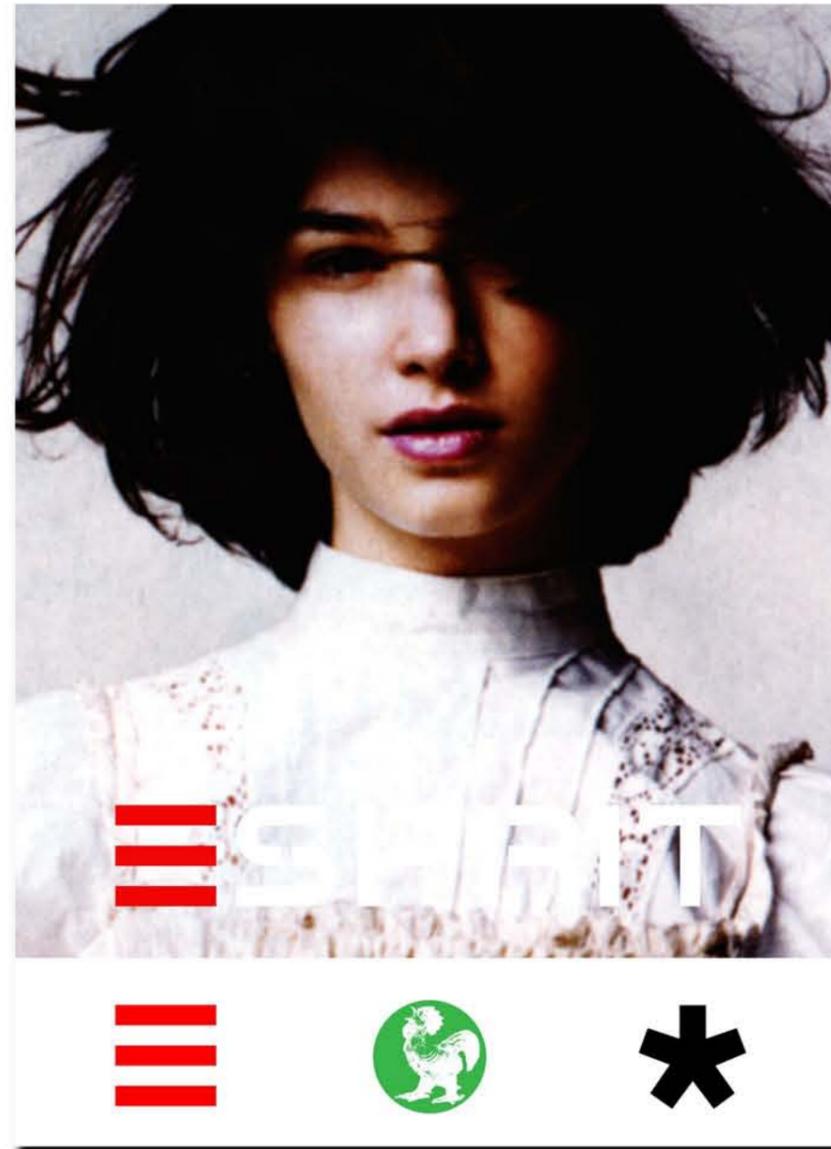
That isn't 'ESPRIT territory'. There's a difference between fun and the feel good factor. Some consumers now share a heightened sense of responsibility. They recycle etc. etc. Perhaps we can hallmark the core ESPRIT activities and capture the ESPRIT spirit?

INTERNATIONAL RESCUE?



ESPRIT are doing 'very nicely thank you' *outside* the UK. Here we're eclectic, savvy and once we say it's cool, it stays cool (or so we'd like to think).

ICONS > HALLMARKS



Since ESPRIT rules the roost in terms of West Coast Ethno-Americana we've seen Benetton fly the flag and raise a few hackles, and people herding towards MUJI. Those retail territories were created by ESPRIT.

PRECISION + PASSION



It's feasible. In the automotive sector the Teutonic prerogative of precision has now been blended with what has traditionally been the Latin Quarter Panel and trump card: Passion.

BMW have been willing to challenge the aesthetic sensibilities of their incumbent customer base in order to ensure that they can attract the next generation.

Some people think they're wide of the marque, and want to strangle Chris Bangle... but while BMW have played fast with the styling, they've never allowed themselves to become loose with the engineering.

All doubts about BMWs as the Ultimate Driving machine are dispelled when you drive one (once you've mastered the DisplayStation console). They promise to be uncompromising and they deliver.

ESPRIT have the combined assets of German commercial precision, and historic Hippy ethics from the West Coast. It's time to clean up...

SHARE + SHARE I LIKE...



David Abbott a very famous advertising man once said “A principle isn’t a principle until it costs you money.” This idea puts some of ESPRIT’s money where their mouth is to the advantage of all.

The idea is an to issue ‘shares’ that show you care. This is not a crass investment mechanic but a real fund which benefits the families of the people who make ESPRIT garments. The shares are attached as swing tickets to each garment, or accessory. Thus when a customer buys an ESPRIT product, they actually ‘buy into’ someone’s future, and that ‘someone’ feels more valued, and incentivised in their productivity.. The moral originality is that a share would also be issued to the person who made the garment so that they too gain a true global benefit.

The latter has an additional value as the imperialist Occidental swine - sorry - consumer can assuage their concerns about the conditions in which the garments were made - knowing that the seamstress or craftsman has shared a little in the process.

As ESPRIT sell more products the fund increases in value and the social contributions it makes can be demonstrated with an ESPRIT roadshow - so why not get this show on the road?

*www.esprice.com is available at the time of writing...

SAYS WHO?



Westwind label, ID and POS © Glenn Platt

Do you remember when everything was Organic? The very idea of synthetic foodstuffs was the stuff of 1950s B-movies. Now we accept, embrace and eat! irradiated food. But things are swinging back (I guess they had to, according to the Laws of Physics, having swung already in the 60s).

I understand ESPRIT's original ethos, a precursor to a return to 'native' wisdom and values. Our modern lives aren't as satisfying as all the advertising might have us believe.

Older, wiser tribes knew the importance of living in harmony with the world and migrating with the seasons to those places which would best reward them; they really knew their place.

Some of the people who we see as the most naive lived well in the most inhospitable environments; the aborigines believed that their ancestors had sung their world into existence and walked their 'songlines'. That belief allowed them to appreciate and respect the rhythms of the Earth.

The fact that the sum of all human knowledge is available online - doesn't create human wisdom? Choice is stress and we don't know ourselves well enough, or like ourselves enough to make sound decisions. Perhaps ESPRIT can lead the way again? **Glenn Platt**