Heron Preston for Calvin Klein: Season 2, breathable but maybe not bankable

By Godfrey Deeny - 21 October 2021

Soft-ball questions to a softly spoken designer sitting on a soft white couch over a soft white shag carpet showing a soft-centered collection, at the unveiling of the second collab by Heron Preston for Calvin Klein on Monday.

“This season is about layering… and warmer materials,” opined Preston, as he showed four series of looks in a setting made to look like a downtown loft in a Zoom with editors, embargoed until today. The brand also released a new ad campaign for Heron Preston for Calvin Klein: Season 2, including Savion Glover, an ace tap dancer, moving with great panache in a caramel denim combo from Heron’s latest Calvin ideas.

Since Calvin Klein no longer shows on runways as of September 2018 this is the nearest one gets to a designer presenting new Calvin Klein ideas.

With his ready smile, Preston extolled jackets lined with fleece “so they feel silk a glove”; carefully pointed out nipped-at-the-ankle sweats and proudly introduced ne-look carpenter pants with center front and back seams; slanted back loops; zip closures and rubberized buttons.

“We did a million fittings to emphasize the boxiness,” beamed Preston, as he walked editors though the gender-neutral collection, displayed in what he termed “metagroups” of models. Recalling his youth in San Francisco when he would don waffle-style cotton T-shirts, which he himself has been wearing again, now that the weather has turned a little autumnal.
A sustainable collection too, seeing as many denim looks were made out of recycled poly blend – made from recycled bottles.

“We conceived this collection from head to toe – and we even updated the socks into a chunky wool – that you can wear indoors,” insisted the 38-year-old Preston, a DJ by profession who continues to design his own eponymous label within New Guards Group.

One of the best looks were sweaters in fuzzy alpaca that again were in a recycled blend. Nor was the designer afraid to take a few risks in the color palette, displaying pale yellow tanks, bras and biker shorts.

However, what struck most was the relative simplicity of the concept. Underlined by how excited Heron got at his double-layered hoodies – sewn together for colder days – and the marginally wider elastic band used in baby rib Marky Mark underwear for men, and panties for gals.
Despite the modest novelty of the collection, the brand's managers clearly have confidence in this collab. Even allowing Preston to crunch up the logo and place it on an orange band, as he proudly pointed out, sitting beside Jacob Jordan, CK global chief merchant, head of product strategy and new product ventures.

“It's been a great partnership with Heron,” insisted Jordan, even as he added, “but I do like the idea of other people telling our story through their eyes. We’re working on a few things, but you’re just gonna' have to wait and see.”

Asked to define the DNA of Calvin Klein in three words, Preston replied: "Comfortable sustainable and er; um, and er, and let's see what's the third... timeless,” taking 10 seconds to find the final word.

“Breathability” and “breaking boundaries,” were words Preston emphasized as keys to this collection, which from its price point is targeted at CK consumers.
Moreover, the amateurish Zoom, and modest novelty of the clothes once again begs the question, what exactly is the management strategy for Calvin Klein? There was a time when Calvin and his immediate successor Francisco Costa staged highly influential runway shows. They may have sold in only a few boutiques, but they definitely set a fashion agenda, and helped burnish the reputation of America’s ultimate minimalist brand.

That approach all fell apart with Raf Simons, during whose tenure ambitious plans to rival major European runway houses with a chain of global flagships collapsed when his designs simply failed to find an audience.

However, to have then refused to appoint a successor and abandoned the New York catwalk season; then hand over the reins over a great American fashion maison to merchants and merchandisers, seems quite frankly like reductio ad absurdum.

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