Mixte celebrates its 25th anniversary, and a quarter century of Mixité

By Godfrey Deeny  -  18 November 2021

In a moment when many fashion magazines are slashing their frequency, laying off staff and beheading imperial editors-in-chief, it's refreshing to pick up a copy of Mixte, the Paris indie fashion title that celebrates its 25th anniversary this month.

The brainchild of a long-standing couple – publisher Tiziana Humler and editorial director husband Christian Ravera – Mixte is a testament to the power of a simple idea – Mixité, or mixedness - to inspire a magazine concept
and a title that’s become a cultural institution.

This week the magazine and their many contributors feted their quarter century with a party until 2 a.m. in No. Pi, a bustling club in Clichy, France, and live performances by Bergmann, Thee Dian and Mysterious Skin.

From its justly famous opening cover, featuring the late great Stella Tennant posed beside a hirsute handsome boy, shot in black and white by David Sims, the pair captured as two dandy tomboys, the magazine’s mixed vision has always been apparent. Issue 2’s cover had Naomi Campbell and dashing partner; and issue 3 Milla Jovovich with a handsome black model, and the tagline 'Black and Proud'. What’s more remarkable is how the title managed to presage by over a decade our current era’s predilection for inclusivity and gender blurring.

Mixte has gone through many periodicities and ownerships. It began life with two issues a year, before then going monthly for five years, and then returning to the twice-yearly format. All told, Mixte has published almost a hundred issues. The title began life as part of the Rizzoli group, before being owned by Emap and then Mondadori, but for the past 11 years it’s been an indie title controlled by the husband-and-wife team of the hard-charging Humler, the cerebral Ravera and art director Guy Guglieri.

“Our concept behind Mixte has always been relatively simple. An androgyne attitude and a ‘magazine de mode pour hommes et femmes’. So, our choice of fashion and the magazine’s design is always very trend-driven,” explains Humler over lunch.

The magazine even spawned a new term, ‘mixité’ – meaning to surf through life in an open-minded or gender-transgressing manner. Though the notion has certainly evolved through time.

“When we started it was back in 1996 when Calvin Klein had launched CK One. A time when the message of men and women together was suddenly beginning. When there was a new spirit of transferability – of men wearing women’s jewelry, or of women wearing men’s watches and jackets. But that idea has now gone so much further,” added Ravera.

The duo are a long-standing couple in the French fashion and media scene, who both previously worked within Condé Nast France; Humler as a publisher and Ravera as the art director of Vogue Hommes, regarded by many as the finest-looking fashion title in France back in the 1990s.

From the beginning, they developed a powerful in-house team – like the highly skilled Guglieri or Frank Benhamou, the magazine’s fashion director, noted stylist and ever-present figure in international front rows.

At its core, Mixte represents, to paraphrase General de Gaulle, a certain idea of France. As best expressed by its tagline – Liberté, Égalité and Mixité. It’s a polished-yet-punchy Parisian take on culture, cool and couture, with an international regard.
Its latest 25th anniversary issue boasts not one but nine covers – in both black and white or color – often featuring the major league brands that advertise within – Prada, Chanel, Miu Miu and Fendi. All covers are made up of couples, in multiple gender categories.

“It’s our homage to mixité - sometimes boy and boy, or girl and girl, or whatever. It’s the spirit of no gender,” stresses Ravera, at the lunch in the group’s office on rue St Augustin, in Paris’ hip new quarter in the eastern half of the 2nd arrondissement.

Though our vote for the gutsiest cover goes to the Vuitton selection, featuring some great Space Age bohemian outfits from Nicolas Ghesquière’s fall-winter 2021/2022 collection for the house. Shot on what looks like a distant galactic colony or maybe Joshua Tree but was actually photographed an hour south of Paris. The shoot, entitled 'Riders on the Storm', was shot by Mixte’s new favorite photographer, Bulgarian-born Bojana Tatarska, who lensed three features in the issue.

Throughout his career, Ravera has a long track record of supporting young photographic talent, even if in its early days Mixte featured major league photographers – Paolo Roversi, Corinne Day, David Bailey and Mario Testino. Initially, many advertisers hesitated to support the title, unclear whether the magazine was for men or women; a roadblock that disappeared as attitudes changed.
The title operates in part as a calling card for the group’s many commercial clients that include uber-tony jeweler Van Cleef & Arpels, baggage brand Longchamp and Italian shoemaker extraordinaire Gianvito Rossi. And like most magazines today, Mixte has plenty of native advertising, even including covers. Unlike many others, it’s honest enough to admit that.

Though every issue contains a full English translation of all articles, the magazine remains quintessentially French. However, Mixte is also a testament to their team’s all-encompassing vision, done with a very Parisian touch. Mixte’s print run is 60,000 copies per issue, with 40% of sales abroad and 60% in France, reaching literally scores of countries with an audience aged between 25 and 35.

In a telling comment on our times, Mixte’s local news agent above the Paris Metro stop Quatre Septembre closed this spring. So now Mixte also has a smart website, directed by Antoine Leclerc-Mougne, notable by the quirky digitalized typeface and innovative choice of subjects.

“To me Liberté stands for our independence. Egalité our choice of subjects and engagement and Mixité for our covers, and our future,” underlines Leclerc-Mougne.

Traditional French fashion monthlies slavishly repeat stories on the same small gang of celebrities – like Vanessa Paradis, Marion Cotillard or Isabelle Adjani. If you had a euro for every Catherine Deneuve cover, you could probably buy out Elon Musk.

Mixte, on the other hand is very, well, mixed. With in-depth features on chanteuse Bergmann; the spiritual art of Samuel de Saboia; hard-driven actress and beauty Garance Marillier; French musical collective Klon or the Muslim lesbian actress Fatima Daas. A nouvelle nouvelle-vague of path-breaking locals, and Mixte remaining very modern.
Bon anniversaire; and see you at 50.

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