Paris Menswear Day Four: Jil Sander, Paul Smith, Isabel Marant and Jeanerica

By Godfrey Deeny - 23 January 2022

Friday in Paris Menswear was a tour of the city from an evangelical cathedral, cut-stone mansion, Marais showroom and Place des Victoires townhouse. We caught up with Jil Sander, Paul Smith, Isabel Marant and Jeanerica.

Jil Sander - Diabolical mode in a Yankee cathedral

Masculine tailoring with feminine detailing in a sensational collection at Jil Sander, laced with frequently diabolical astrological signs, and staged inside the American Cathedral in Paris.
The looming gothic revival Yankee church illuminated by a giant cinematic light, the better to enjoy the power of this winter 2022 collection.

Composed with grand, but never grandiose, volumes, in cloak-like evil genius proportions, and made in opulent cashmere herringbones, sleek tuxedo wool and creamy cashmeres.

Working a dark palette of black, putty, burnt orange with a soupcon of ecru. Pretty well everything enhanced by lace or crocheted inserts, adding to the allure and aplomb. All looking very at home underneath the soaring oak vaults, stone chancel and marble columns.

Though the most brilliant ideas were eight funnel-neck coats, enveloping sweaters, cotton blouses and even pajamas covered in a brilliant stencils. Astrological signs of mean goats and naughty satyrs along with Taurus, Aries and Virgo.

All anchored by chunky boots with metal insignias, rectangular tool bag-style shoulder cases, and huge totes to give a utilitarian mood to the whole look.

Smartly styled, with multiple silk scarves as belts and straps, albeit with a hurried soundtrack, led by 'Summertime Clothes' by Animal Collective. For a winter collection? But, this is a small quibble about an impressive show and the strongest collection so far for the house of Jil Sander by their design duo of Lucie and Luke Meier. They took their bow with quiet dignity and then kissed as they strolled into the backstage sacristy.

Paul Smith - A Brit’s take on Breathless

It’s quite frankly a real pity that the pandemic prevented Paul Smith from staging a runway show and just presenting a nine-minute video, as this was the British designer’s strongest menswear statement in many years.
Inspired by the Nouvelle Vague and the great icons of indie cinema, all the way to some instant collector’s item silk and cotton shirts in bright graphic riffs on sixties French movie posters.

“Breathless was so modern. I first saw it when I was 18 and living in Nottingham and those French films were so fantastic,” enthused Smith, in a private presentation in his cut-stone Marais mansion Paris headquarters.

In the collection, he even worked in blue washes from David Lynch films and an oversized Prince of Wales double-breasted jacket that recalled, The Man Who Fell to Earth. The music for the video – where models marched in a ballroom - was composed exclusively by Paul’s old mate Richard Hartley, who did the music for Rocky Horror Picture Show and worked with Nicolas Roeg.

Lots of great hand-knit cable sweaters, caps and scarves - wonderful chunky knits handmade in Scotland in raspberry and Air Force blue.

Plus, Sir Paul created cunning volume, plaid trousers in wool crepe with unexpected inverted pleats, like the pants Bowie wore in that iconic image of the rock legend in Smith’s wide pants and very skinny sweater. Another cinematic reference were snug shearling jackets in maroon and red in the style favored by Jean-Luc Godard.

“What’s nice is that these guys were film critics, like Godard, who said, ‘I want to do something different.’ And he made his first film for something like 40,000 pounds. So, that was a huge inspiration to me to have a go and open my own store and brand,” explained Sir Paul.

Isabel Marant - Couches, not clothes

Perhaps it was the fatigue after 10 straight days of menswear shows and presentations, but at first glance the most interesting thing in the showroom of Isabel Marant were the couches.
Undulating, magnificent, worn pewter-hued leather couches; they had the retro-modern panache that the clothes badly lacked. This winter 2022 had plenty of chunky, comfortable woolens, but far too often looked, ahem, banal.

The one thing one expects from Marant’s clothes and shows is plenty of zing, but all the contrasting panel winter hoodies; oversized parkas in Verona yellow and blue; loose-weave après ski pullovers, were conventional, rather than cool.

That said, there were some great denim looks, with apache motifs; natty workerist over-shirts and blousons in khaki and some fine jeans in a cracked marble print. All based on the collection’s saving grace – some excellent high-tops, male versions of Isabel’s signature, world-wide-hit female sneakers.

Still, one’s abiding memory will always be the chaise longues.

Jeanerica - Euro denim in the Marais

True blue denim fanaticism at Jeanerica, a Swedish brand that is based on a never-ending love of the world’s most democratic fabric.
Launched in 2018 by a former Acne staffer and Scandinavian fashion expert, Jeanerica offers all manner of slim-line shapes made in high-quality Italian denim. Textiles that managed to be sturdy, yet supple too. Produced in Turkey, in sustainable inclined factories, the jeans and forgivingly cut blousons and safari jackets, all looked very swish, in a presentation in the Marais. Aided by a great mix of colors: bleu de nuit; pacific blue; bright ecru and washed azure.

Add in some great sweatshirts, created in combinations of recycled and reused cotton to "create a foamy hand and finish," explained founder Jonas Clason, the former head of Acne Studios. He founded Jeanerica as a European denim house with Lena Patriksson Keller, founder and chairman of the Patriksson Group and board member of H&M.

Jeanerica is certainly not generic.

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