London celebrates British fashion, from streetwear to Savile Row

By Dominique Muret - 12 June 2018

London Fashion Week Men's wrapped up beautifully on Monday. Having lost big names like Vivienne Westwood and Grace Wales Bonner, as well as Craig Green who was snatched up by Pitti Uomo this season, the British menswear event compensated for these absences with an exceptional opening show from Italian brand Iceberg, and a brace of emerging homegrown talents, such as A-Cold-Wall and Charles Jeffrey, whose job it was to close London's latest Fashion Week, dedicated to menswear collections for spring-summer 2019.
"It's true that we have fewer big names this season. But that gave more opportunities to our young designers, who are absolutely excellent," said Caroline Rush, chief executive of the British Fashion Council (BFC), to FashionNetwork.com. The British fashion authority was also able to count on support from David Beckham this year, recently named as the organisation's ambassadorial president.

Aside from the runway that he organised with the historic Kent & Curwen label that he part owns – one of this London Fashion Week's most exclusive shows –, the former footballer also showcased young designers on Monday morning during a lunch with the press. "Here, institutions give a lot of help to young designers. You have to admit that their creativity is incredible. I love what they do and how they present themselves," he told us during the laid-back event.

Among the emerging talents present at the lunch was Italian designer Luca Marchetto who has been in London for eleven years and launched the brand JordanLuca with English designer Jordan Bowen last year. As of this season, he has been supported by the BFC. "It's fantastic here. We feel really supported. The BFC helps us by bringing us into its showrooms, but also by putting us in contact with the press and buyers," he enthused.

Between streetwear, sportswear and tailoring, this twelfth edition of London Fashion Week Men's offered a complete panorama of the best of British fashion. However, there was perhaps a little less eccentricity on show than usual, with designers increasingly aiming to produce commercial pieces at this time of economic uncertainty.

Indeed, the heritage of Savile Row tailoring was an undeniable presence this season – in the collection presented by Oliver Spencer, for one, a label that boasts seven branded boutiques and 120 distributors. Checked suits abounded on this runway, along with short ensembles and trench coats, and there was no lack of Glen plaid, used, for example, on an embossed organic cotton, or houndstooth, which featured on a jacket. Everything had a light, carefree air to it, with daisy chains and natty scarves draped nonchalantly around models' necks, and shirts that were untucked or open to the navel. And yet the show never lost sight of that typically British aplomb, pairing outfits with impeccable mocassins worn without socks.

The same precision tailoring could be found at Chalayan, although combined with a greater emphasis on construction. The Cypriot-born Turkish designer received his guests at his London boutique, where he enchanted them with a collection that was simultaneously minimalistic and packed with innovative details. Highlights included a trench coat with oversized crisscrossed lapels, and bags that had been fused into shorts, trousers and jackets.
a trench coat with oversized crisscrossed lapels, and bags that had been fused into shorts, trousers and jackets like giant pockets with diagonal shoulder straps doing double duty as braces. Elsewhere, large belts and cords were integrated into jackets, cinching them in or ruching them.

In a similarly couture mould, a handful of new names also stood out, each offering up a radical reinterpretation of the menswear wardrobe. Alex Mullins, for example, who has rethought men's suits with creative flair, or Edward Crutchley, whose collections are shot through with both oriental and historical inspirations. The 32-year-old designer's label is present in some fifteen multibrand stores, including Paris' L'Eclaireur and Galeries Lafayette.

At his touch, clothes made out of luxurious fabrics, including Yorkshire wool and mohair, and Japanese silk, became fluid andairy. And the classic men's jacket, reimagined in an oversized format, deprived of its sleeves and belted at the waist, took on the air of a kimono. In the same vein, but with an added touch of humour, Daniel W. Fletcher managed to anchor the traditional menswear wardrobe firmly in the 21st century with his original collection.
Couture sportswear and streetwear were the other dominant presence at this Fashion Week. Leaders of the pack included A-Cold-Wall, last year’s Woolmark prize winner Matthew Miller, and Christopher Raeburn. And then, of course, there was Cottweiler. The label’s creative directors Ben Cottrel and Matthew Dainty revealed a sumptuous collection, breathing a good dose of spirituality into their sportswear wardrobe by starting with a darker palette before moving onto diaphanous ensembles in sunburst shades and almost impossibly intangible fabrics.

By mixing menswear classics with the world of hip-hop this season, Liam Hodges also offered up a refreshing collection, inspired by Las Vegas and featuring outfits in Hawaiian motifs alongside checked pyjama suits, dual-coloured pants, leopard-print shorts and patchwork trousers. The same mix-and-match spirit could be found with Martine Rose, who invited local residents to attend her show, organised in a cul-de-sac in Camden.

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