



Report on Berlin Fashion Week, July 2018

Berlin Fashion Week has been recently steadily becoming one of the most significant events on the fashion calendar. Whilst as with every event it tends to predominantly attract home buyers, over the past few years it has been gaining recognition amongst the international crowd as well. It is now a major trade fair and a must – go destination for the fashion companies who wish to reinforce their European presence.

The general make – up of the buyer group, as aforementioned, mainly consists of the German nationals. The Berlin fashion Week is also popular amongst the immediate neighbours – Austria, Switzerland, Poland and Netherlands. It is crucial to secure a presence at the show if a brand wishes to have a good relationship with the retailers in those countries as these particular buyers prefer to be able to make their selections when they are closer to home.

The event does however still attract many international retailers as well who come to the city to visit their regular brands as well as discover new ones who are redefining and creating new trends. From all of the trade shows accompanying the official Fashion Week circuit the Berlin's fair seem to welcome the biggest amount of designers challenging the status quo.

There are two trade fair groups involved in Berlin Fashion Week, working together. Whilst they compete for buyers, exhibitors and press, they align their dates and allow each others' shuttle services to be located close by. This season all the shows took place on the same four days in July. This is very much in line with Germany's preference for consensus.

Panorama

This is the biggest and most commercial of all shows. Hosted in a vast Expo City it spans 9 halls and includes Xoom by Innatex commercial ethical show, now in its second edition.

Many of the stands are run by German agents, which can be beneficial from the language and contacts perspective. Halls 1 to 5 primarily feature large mainstream menswear and womenswear collections including Emily and Fin, Brakeburn and Tom Joule. Footwear and handbags are mainly located in hall 6 whilst halls 7 and 8 are taken over by the ethical Xoom featuring brands such as Komodo. Finally the hall 9 houses Nova which is a section dedicated to newer brands and younger design – this year and up and coming British brand Pretty You London exhibited in that part.

The main difference between this and other shows is that the brands are encouraged to curate their own stands which results in all of the booths being branded and decorated in line with each brands' aesthetics. It does make for an interesting show as all stands do end up fitting well together.

This year has seen a slight decline of British exhibitors, however those in attendance reported having been satisfied with the show. Despite the size of the venue it did exude an atmosphere of energy and it was evident that it was being well attended. Most of the British brands have seen a steady stream of buyers, both old and new, visiting their stands.



Selvedge Run

Selvedge Run is a show located just around the corner from Panorama within the set of buildings belonging to the Expo City – its however being a completely separate and full of panache Palais am Funkturm, an events venue featuring Berlin’s largest ballroom.

SR is a show featuring high quality and heritage brands, heavily reliant on leather and denim. Highly curated SR is a selective show for a very specific buyer who is looking for premium to luxury product with unique yet classic design. Hosting mostly menswear and mens accessories SR showcases excellent craftsmanship evident on the attendance of such brands as Lair Hatters, Lewis Leathers, Simmons Bilt and newcomer Iron Heart.

The show is a mixture of Japanese and European brands and they all seemed to have been complimenting each other in the atmospheric venue. The designers have also reported good buyers attendance albeit it seem a bit quiet there – perhaps unsurprisingly given the fact that it is a little out of the way from all other shows and the neighboring Panorama attracts a completely different buyer. Having said that it seems that the visitors who did make it were there for a clear purposes of placing orders or at least committing to those.

Premium

Premium is the oldest show on the Berlin circuit. It features mainly high street to bridge proced contemporary menswear, womenswear and accessories. The halls are generally separated to accommodate different categories as well as house similar design and some of the areas feature very vast stands allowing the more established, and hence wealthier, brands to fully feature their collections.

As with most German shows, agents run the majority of the stands. Premium, Show and Order, Seek and Bright form part of the same holding company and buyers registered for one show can visit the others in the “family”. A reciprocal arrangement also exists for the same to apply to the Ethical Fashion Fair and Green Showroom, organised by Frankfurt Messe.

It is worth mentioning that it seemed to work best for the designers who have decided to use an agent but also attend the show themselves. This way they were making the best out of the contacts that the agents secure but also at the same time ensure that their stands are appropriately manned at all times and all visitors are paid equal attention (which, unfortunately, cannot be said for all of the stands looked after the agents solely).

This year the show featured a strong British representation in the form of Orlebar Brown, Onjenu, Hayley Menzies, People Tree, Pretty Ballerinas, Tateossian, Estella Bartlett, Religion and French Connection to name a few.

The opinions about the show were divided. Some of the most established brands seemed to have been disappointed with both buyers’ attendance and general amount of business conducted at the shows whilst a host of smaller and more independent designers reported an excellent performance with both old and new accounts coming through.



Show and Order

Located in the same building collection as Premium Show and Order serves as a fulfillment of the show by housing more of the younger and commercial brands, featuring all categories: menswear, womenswear, resortwear, jewellery and footwear. This year it did not really see too many British brands attending with only one present – Blank – which has however expressed general satisfaction with the show and the buyers visiting.

Seek and Bright

Seek and Bright are separate trade shows but they are both part of Premium and so they share a general location – they are located in separate buildings though.

Seek is the show that houses commercial to premium casualwear and heritage brands. It always features a great number of British companies this year including Far Afield, Hymn, Brooks England, Oliver Spencer, Lazy Oaf and Beaumont Organic. We have seen a couple of brands showing with a German agent but predominantly it is the brands themselves or a British agent representing their regular clients – like in the case of Polly King showing with Gola, Les basics and Nicce London.

Bright is a show who has always been exclusively streetwear related, with specific focus on garments and accessories relating to skatewear. It is perhaps the most relaxed of the shows where the culture of its main product seems to be seeping into the general atmosphere. It has, however, been in slight decline interest – wise over the past few years with some exhibitors suspecting it might end up falling out of the circuit before the next season. It did not feature any British brands this year. The exhibitors at Seek were happy with the general buyers' attendance, albeit they did comment on the fact that the extremely high temperatures caused the buyers spend less time with each brand trying to rush their visits through so they could leave. The Arena Berlin – where the show is located – does not benefit from air conditioning and a few fans placed around the hall were not enough to help with the heat gathering inside.

Ethical Fashion Show and The Green Showroom

Both the shows and the showroom are essentially part of the same show and form the only, currently, separate trade event dedicated to sustainability – and one taking place at the same time as official fashion week at that. July 2018 marks the second edition of the show taking place at centrally located Kraftwerk (about 15 minutes' walk from Alexanderplatz) which satisfied both buyers and the brands. The show also benefited from a shuttle service between other locations of the Premium family shows which greatly helped with ensuring that all visitors did circulate amongst the fairs despite the punishing heat.

This edition has seen 6 British brands in attendance – Rakha, Bluebuck, Cossac (returning after spending one season at Seek), People Tree, Re.sustain and a new comer Zola Amour. All brands have enjoyed a fantastic show making it an exception amongst other fair where the exhibitors have had varying experiences. We have had reports of both independent and big, established retailers visiting with all brands seeing a steady traffic at their stands for the majority of the time. The only complaints pertained to seminar and conference area and bloggers / influencers presence. The former has been placed in too close proximity to the main trade area and served as distraction at times. The issue with the bloggers attendance laid in the fact that they have enjoyed a separate event and visiting times which have not been announced to the exhibitors beforehand and resulted in their working day stretching to a 13 hours one. Additionally the invited influencers did not seem



to have the specific knowledge relating to the ethical and environmental issues within the fashion industry and did not instill any confidence in the exhibitors.

Below comments from some of the exhibitors:

It was a great show for us again, we consider ourselves very fortunate each time we go as we continue to get support from important customers as well as attracting new customers and of course networking.

Debs, Simmons Bilt, Selvedge Run

We enjoyed the Selvedge Run show, and got a few new leads, although the show was mainly valuable as a way of getting to talk to our existing clients (mainly European) and show them our latest collection.

Paula, Iron Heart, Selvedge Run

The show wasn't really profitable, unfortunately. We didn't pick up almost any prospects and took only one order. On a positive side, it was a good platform to catch up with existing German clients. As a matter of feedback, it seems like German buyers do visit this trade show but they are generally not prepared "to work" there. It is also definitely more of a local show and it is only worth doing to support the German market.

Alexander, Tateossian, Premium

Berlin was a bit disappointing as having not a corner stand gives much less impact.

Harry, Nougat, Panorama

The show is very good for us and we look forward to showcasing our collections there each season.

Ash, Native Youth, Seek