

Who's Next Paris & Première Classe (first edition)

19 – 22 January 2018





Background:

Who's Next Paris, which includes the first edition of the acclaimed accessories exhibition *Première Classe*, is the main international commercial womenswear and accessories trade show. It also features a number of unisex, homeware and gift collections as well as some menswear lines. The show is divided into sections, each with their own style and pricepoint across tailored essentials, contemporary collections, denim and streetwear. *Fame*, in a separate hall is home to more directional brands although not all are as expensive as one might think. *Première Classe* is the accessories area which includes shoes, bags, jewellery, scarves and other small goods. This show is often referred to as the "first edition" to distinguish it from the Paris Women's Designer Fashion Week shows (PFW) in March and October, which are effectively the "second edition".

This January 'first edition' takes place merely a month before the main Paris Women's Fashion Week, which has an impact on the type of buyers and press that it attracts. This is the more commercial show with brands ranging from high street to premium – based in the *Fame* area – and the more high – end collections. However as the lines between premium and luxury continue to blur, some of the brands who have historically exhibited at the first edition solely or in addition to the second one are told that may only have space the first. This "sharp" practice is not unique to this show but it has led a number of UK exhibitors to move to smaller shows or showrooms, which did not force them to invest in a first season event which may not suit their commercial interests.

Who's Next and *Première Classe* are generalist shows which aim to offer something for everyone. This large show format and out of town location seem to be losing popularity with some buyers who prefer smaller, centrally located shows and showrooms with a tighter edit. This year, the organisers worked on visitor services and attractions, including 'piano cafes' and 'Jazz and Sapeurs' entertainment. While this was interesting, many exhibitors felt it detracted from the business those placed closest to the performance areas complained that they were unable to hold a conversation over the loud music.

A series of short seminars and talks proved much more popular, with a breadth of subjects covering future trends and innovation with both visitors and exhibitors finding the time to attend selected lectures. This new feature was well liked by visitors and exhibitors and added a point of difference with the in-town showrooms.

The UK Group:

Whilst the UK group remains strong with nearly 60 brands exhibiting at this show, this was some 20 fewer than the previous season and only 11 of the brands were supported with Tradeshow Access Programme (TAP) grants from the Department of International Trade. This smaller grant-supported element is an important sign that new exhibitors do not automatically see Who's Next or the early edition of *Première Classe* as a useful sales venue. The group was spread evenly across RTW, jewellery and accessories including scarves, bags and shoes.

Buyer Traffic and Trends:

The organisers do not usually release complete attendance figures but the general impression from brands was that the show seemed much quieter than the last time. Some reported that they were visited by returning clients who placed orders at the show and some of the regulars also said they had met new customers and contacts, which is a positive sign.

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According to the UK exhibitors, it is clear that the majority of the buyers are still domestic (traditionally around 70%) but that the international make up is also changing. Asian buyers who used to visit en masse were all but missing, but the UK exhibitors said they had seen more buyers from Belgium (active across all shows this season), Greece, Switzerland and Spain. There was a handful of visitors from US with some brands reporting having spoken to major galleries and airlines. Within the show, Fame was busier than most areas. The boutique brands positioned there have a strong following with buyers. Première Classe was patchier, probably a result of the unsuccessful merging of the commercial Who's Next Accessories and Première Classe a few season ago, which remains an issue for those companies with higher priced collections.

What the UK exhibitors had to say about the show:

"The show was very quiet in terms of footfall and a little disappointing." **Natalie, Emily & Fin**

"The September edition was busier than this one and I think I am too expensive for this show. I would do better at Premiere Classe Tuilleries. I make jewellery in gold I am much more expensive than the other stands around me but I have seen a returning customer from Spain and a new one from Morocco" Laetitia, **Laetitia Uzan Jewellery**

"I am pleased to say that we have secured some new overseas customers – from Greece, Japan and France. This show has more international visitors than Pure London. We really need to be in "FAME" next time as our competitors show there.

We found the footfall was good and show layout bright and easy but a three day show would be better. " **Anne Marie, Brodie Cashmere**