

## Paris Men's and Women's Pre-Collection Fashion Week

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**16th – 22nd January 2019**

by Martial Ramage and Paul Alger

It was a lively season in Paris despite the uncertainty surrounding Brexit and the Gilets Jaunes movement, which has been disrupting Paris every Saturday since last Autumn. The uncertainty surrounding Brexit seemed to affect everyone. Those exporting to Japan reported that their Japanese customers have been quick to spot the news about the EU-Japan Free Trade Agreement and have been asking UK companies to register with the REX database to issue Statements of Origin and enable them to import the goods without duty.

More information on this can be found at [www.ukft.org/brexit](http://www.ukft.org/brexit). It remains to be seen whether the UK will remain within this highly beneficial FTA beyond 29th March and, if not, how the Japanese will react to British brands being as much as 12% more expensive than EU manufactured collections.

An increasing number of shows and showrooms now show menswear alongside womenswear pre-collections in January and June. As a result, many smaller brands now sell their men's and women's "Pre-fall" and Autumn-Winter collections in January and an edited or revised womenswear selection in March. This allows them to adjust to earlier buying times for womenswear and streamline production. This gives them two sales opportunities. Menswear brands do not have this comparative luxury.

This season, we have seen a continuation of heritage and workwear inspired collections along with Athleisure. There are signs that tailoring is slowly making a comeback in some areas but, in footwear, the ubiquitous trainer in all styles still reigns supreme.

### **Tradeshows:**

#### **Man/Woman**

Man/Woman Paris have increased their brand offering to such an extent that they were showcasing in three locations, two of them Place Vendôme and one Rue Cambon (about 5 minutes away). Heritage brands and workwear inspired collections are still the main trend displayed at Man Paris, with mid to high end collections from Sunspel to Lou Dalton, Oliver Spencer, Nigel Cabourn and Christopher Raeburn. Footfall was good and all three venues were buzzing with activity with a noticeably large presence of Japanese buyers.

## **Tranoi**

Tranoi has redoubled its attempts to ensure that buyers visit see all brands on both floors of the Bourse with a one-way system starting on the first floor. This system, which is well known to visitors of Italian trade shows such as White in Milan (one of the first operators to use the scheme in the sector) has the effect of spreading visitors between stands so that buyers have to see everyone. It also makes it more difficult for buyers to enter the show just to see one or two selected brands.

The layout also makes the show feel a little less buzzy, especially compared with Tranoi's women's events later in the season. Several brands said they didn't see the buyers they were hoping to and some of the menswear companies felt that they were crowded out by the womenswear and that many of those buyers were not looking for menswear. However, one brand (later seen at Scoop in London) was positively enthusiastic about their time at Tranoi and said they'd had a fantastic season.

## **Showrooms**

This season has seen some shifting of brands between showrooms. Polly King is now focusing much more closely on brands they represent throughout the year. For example, Innocenza moved from Polly King to show their "Pre-Fall" womenswear collection with The Alphabet showroom.

LYPH moved to YouConcept, an offshoot of Tomorrow Ltd, was delighted with the move and thrilled to be part of Tomorrow's brand list. The Alphabet have moved location and are now presenting a broader selection of brands, both edgy and more luxurious, in a considerably larger showroom. Awaykin showroom has also moved to larger premises with a more conventional space to enable it to expand.

Welcome Edition, which took place on Rue de la Fontaine au Roi north of République (a former Polly King venue) for its second season, was busy and saw a high concentration of young UK utilitarian/workwear/heritage brands, sometimes chasing the same trends. Also present were more established brands including Drake's and Baracuta, showing their collections in a more casual environment than usual. There was also a showcase of Barbour's recent collaborations with Engineered Garments, Margaret Howell and Hikerdelic. Independent UKFT member Barbara Alan were showing their men's and pre-fall women's collections in their own space on Rue Chapon and explained that they would also show an edited version of Pre-Fall for Spring Summer in March, helping them to streamline production.

## **Buyer Traffic**

Regardless of reports to the contrary from show organisers and the police, the impact of their disruptive presence of the Gilets Jaunes was felt all over town. Some Asian buyers decided to avoid Paris altogether while local buyers stayed close to their homes and stores.

Business was better on Sunday and Monday. Man/Woman had a good buzz at times, as did most of the showrooms even though it was evident that some of the independent brands which used to show in the Marais on their own had stayed at home or had moved into other showrooms. Tranoi Homme at the Bourse was quieter than usual but the designers at LondonSHOWrooms at Tranoi Week had seen some good international buyers and press. Whilst some menswear brands fared well, there is a feeling in some shows and showrooms that the increasing presence of women's pre-collections has taken the accent away from menswear. This trend was felt less in Man/Woman but a lot more at Tranoi and in some of the multi-brand showrooms.

### **View from the show**

#### **Oswaldo Mercuri, Cortili Menswear showing at Tranoi Bourse:**

"The overall atmosphere was nice, the location was gorgeous and the organisation was good (a lot of friendly staff happy to help etc.). However, the show itself was quiet, especially upstairs where my stand was located and there was much more of a women's focus than I had expected."

**Alex Beattie from Horn Please!, showing at Concrete Showroom:** "Paris AW19 was the first time we had shown at Men's fashion week. We met buyers from the UK and the rest of Europe, the Middle East, Asia and the US. There were some challenges in getting international retailers to buy into a relatively unknown label - although buyers were definitely still interested in finding and launching new brands as part of their overall label mix."

Beattie continued: "Authenticity seemed to go down well! One point of distinction was our involvement in all stages of the garment design and production (right back to making the jersey). It was also great to show the artisan quality of the screen-printing, and talk through how it was all done "hands-on" in London."

**Jennifer Kent at Welcome Edition:** "We exhibited at Welcome Edition in Paris for AW19 and found it a really positive and enjoyable experience.

"Welcome Edition is a private multi-label showroom presenting the best edit of premium contemporary menswear with a nice mix of emerging and established brands and a good selection of international buyers coming through.

"The curated feel of the showroom worked better for us than some of the larger-scale trade shows. Over the 5 days we met with current stockists from the UK, Switzerland and Japan and we opened new accounts in the US and Europe."

**Martial Ramage of UKFT** said: "With Brexit and the Gilets Jaunes, this has been a complex men's and women's pre collections week. The UK collections have been very strong this season but buyers have become extremely selective in where they will spend their time and budgets. As a result, some brands have done extremely well whilst other newer brands have been disappointed".