

THE WORD FROM JACKET REQUIRED

As ever, the brand and product mix was exceptional at the latest edition of London's only true menswear trade show. Tom Bottomley did the rounds to get the essential updates from some key exhibitors.



HANNAH ROBINSON,

Head of European Development, Spring Court

This year is Spring Court's 80th anniversary; is there a feelgood factor?

2016 is certainly a big year for us. As well as celebrating our 80th, we're now once again managed by the family of the original founder, and we opened our new store in Paris in June. We also have some really exciting collaborations coming up. People are really picking up on the brand again now. It feels like all the hard work that's gone in to the relaunch is paying off. People seem reassured that the product is right again, and we're getting in to some really great stores.

What's the real appeal of Spring Court's offer?

They are just simple, clean and comfortable. We've also introduced some new colourways for s/s 17, including some pastel colours. The heavy twill fabric is doing really well for us right now. It's basically the reverse of the canvas, so it has a slightly more raw feel and appearance. There are both low and mid cut styles and, where in the past the majority of interest has been for the low cut style, we're now finding there's more of a 50/50 split between the low and mid. We've also reintroduced the Velcro fastening style. It used to be in the Spring Court collection many years ago, but we've brought that back as part of our 80th anniversary celebrations.

What else is new?

We already introduced nappa leather and lambskin options in to the range, so it's a growing collection that is widening the appeal. The latest option is in Mongolian goatskin, and that has been really well received by the more premium accounts.

CRAIG FORD

Co-founder, Jacket Required, and owner, a number of names*

What have you brought to the show this time?

We've come with a slightly smaller selection of brands this time, but all strong. There's TSPTTR, Ebbets Field Flannels, Billionaire Boys Club and Native Shoes. We also have a fresh addition, Zespà, Aix-en-Provence - a new luxury sneaker brand, made in France. Personally I love the made in France angle, because of the history of adidas 'shelltoes', originally made in France. These are made out of a very old factory. I think it has more credibility than all the luxury brands making sneakers in Italy. France has a history of making athletic shoes, whereas Italy has more of a history of making designer shoes, so for me this is much more authentic than all these Italian fashion brands now making sneakers.

What is the new licence TSPTTR now have?

TSPTTR is growing season on season. This year they have a licence with New York City to use some classic New York iconography, branding and images. All the five boroughs in New York, Brooklyn, Staten Island, the Bronx, Queens and Manhattan have their own logo, and now they are using those logos in TSPTTR's new range for s/s 17. There is also a capsule collection based on the Travis Bickle character, played by Robert De Niro, in cult 1970s film Taxi Driver, shot in New York.

What's the latest with Billionaire Boys Club?

There's been big developments. We are now 100 per cent European licensees, so we are now designing, sourcing and manufacturing the whole collection. As a result, we've had the best sales this year that the brand has had in its 12-year history. We have also delivered really early in to Harrods for a/w 16; the earliest we ever have.

ROB HARMSEN

Co-owner, Eat Dust

How would you best describe Eat Dust and your offer?

We're motorcycle inspired, but we're a denim brand. We don't do technical motorcycle clothing. We've now got Bedford cords and cotton/linen mixes in the line, so there's also more dressed up interpretations of the core denim pieces we started out with. Japanese black denim is another strong area in the offer. We have jackets based on old mining garments with motorcycle-inspired details, waistcoats in various fabrics, heavy slub cotton Henley tops, carpenter-style pants, and we have now introduced a suede shirt - based on an old vintage shirt I used to wear that I bought in San Francisco about 20 years ago. There's a bit of an Easy Rider look going on too.

How is the brand performing in the UK?

It's getting better and better with every season. Sell-throughs have been successful and we are building more of a customer profile here. We're based in Belgium, but our biggest market is definitely Germany. We sell in about 75 stores in 14 different countries now.

How many different styles of jeans do you do?

We have four cuts in the denim. We started out with a loose straight leg, which we call the '67, the year I was born, and a loose tapered leg we call the '73, because that's when my partner, Keith, was born. We've also done a slim-straight fit, and a boot cut. We believe in the boot cut so much we've done it in four different colours, including white denim and a 70s-style lightweight 11oz blue denim. If you go to LA right now, all the girls are looking like 70s hippies. Men are a little bit behind, but Keith and I have been wearing boot cut for the past two years. It's slow to happen, but it's coming.

MARIA BAÑOS

Marketing Manager, Maians

How established is Maians in the UK market?

We started to work with some big accounts, such as Office, Kurt Geiger and Liberty five years ago, and we had great feedback, but we pulled out to refocus after one particularly bad summer in the UK. Now interest is coming back, and our offer has grown considerably. The UK is actually our second biggest market online, behind Spain where we are from, so there's clearly a big enough interest. People really love the product, and we have a lot of loyal customers. Once they've bought Maians, they tend to come back for more. We're in some key independent concept stores in the UK right now, so hopefully the bigger accounts will come back. We are now selling in 20 countries so the brand is getting more exposure in the right accounts.

How has the offer developed?

We now have some great suedes and leathers in the collection. Contrast colours are still a big part of the offer, but there's plenty of plain options too. Comfort and construction are very important, but our shoes also have a very distinctive look, and they last well. Price is another important factor, with retail prices generally between £50-£80.

What other plans are there going forward?

We may also do a pop-up showroom in London next summer so we can show the whole collection and tell the story of the brand in full. Our products are vulcanised and all handmade at an old footwear factory in Barcelona. We are the ultimate summer shoes, but we have now introduced some great leather shoes for autumn/winter as well.

TOM SUMMERFIELD

Commercial Director, Marshall Artist

How is business developing for Marshall Artist?

We've had some investment, and we've now paired up with 2 Squared Agency in Manchester. Their whole infrastructure and sales expertise have really given us a boost. We've also done a lot of marketing work, mainly digitally through the likes of Instagram and Facebook. There's a real sense of community out there with lads from 17 up to their mid-30s. A lot of our graphic tees span the age demographic.

What else has changed?

From a collection point of view, we've introduced new branding on the sleeve of our outerwear. It's a two-piece construction we've called the 'siren'. We first used it for a/w 15 and it's definitely given our offer a more commercial focus. It very much appeals to the lad culture, and since it's been implemented we've had a real uplift in sell-throughs. It's instantly recognisable. When a lad walks into a pub and he's got a good jacket on, he wants people to know what it is, and the new branding is making us more identifiable. We're not trying to necessarily attach ourselves to any kind of football culture, but it is resonating with that sort of demographic. We've now introduced a micro 'siren' version for use on polo shirts, shorts and so on.

Have you introduced anything else particularly new for s/s 17?

Moving forward, the 'siren' sweatshirt is going to be a key piece. Also new is a 'liquid nylon' that we've developed for our outerwear for s/s 17. It's got that shimmery effect and is influenced by Italian sportswear, but it's at a retailer-friendly price point. Our jackets retail from £75 to £145. It seems to be working, because we are now attracting some really good retailers that might not have looked at Marshall Artist previously.

DARREN BROWN

Sales Director, Overland Shoes (showing G.H.Bass)

What's your word on Jacket Required?

It's been a really busy show for us, so we're very happy with it. By mid-afternoon on day one, we'd seen at least six existing accounts and we'd opened five new ones. Our new positioning within the show has definitely helped because we're getting them from all angles - coming in and coming out. It's a good corner location.

How has the new s/s 17 product been received?

The feedback has been really good. In fact, customers seem positive in general. All our new Sportocasins category has been very well received. The Camp Moc and all the lightweight sole unit shoes are brand new and give us a really strong and fresh summer product offering. It's a complete story. Everything is referenced from archive products, but with new technology incorporated, so there's memory foam footbeds and EVA outsoles. One of the freshest looks is taking the knitting process and doing a handsewn knitted moccasin, which is brand new concept for anybody. It's about taking the classic silhouettes that Bass is known for, and introducing new technology.

What about the classic 'Weejuns'?

We obviously still do the classics, and they are very important to our offer and to our brand heritage. In terms of the Weejuns, we've introduced a new spring/summer version, called Palm Springs, which has a flexible outsole and softer leather. It's a more comfortable version of the classic loafer, in new colours such as chocolate and navy leather, and they have gone down very well with retailers.