

ICONIC BRITISH BRANDS



What makes a fashion brand both iconic and British in today's fast paced, ever evolving society? From new sportswear infused brands dominating our youth culture to established heavyweights representing British fashion on an international scale, both the original and traditional Brit-brands are still at the forefront of fashion.

THE NEW

As you veer off Regent Street, manoeuvre your way through London's famous Carnaby Street around tourists stopping for photographs and continue through roads sprouting off in every direction until you find yourself in the heart of Soho. This hub located in London's West End has brought fashion home to the streets. With contemporary labels paving the way for the future of British fashion, it has, for some time, been where only the coolest kids set up shop.

So, where to begin? Oi Polloi is just one exciting British brand to have opened in Soho. Delivering casual yet stylish daywear for men, Oi Polloi (taken from the Greek term 'hoi polloi' translating as 'the many') has been going from strength to strength with their minimal yet highly wearable clothes. Yet Soho wasn't the birthplace of Oi Polloi. Creators Steve Sanderson and Nigel Lawson opened their first store in Manchester in 2002 selling unique clothing to young men who wanted cool, modern pieces unavailable on the high street. "If someone didn't know what Oi Polloi was, I'd say it was a men's clothes shop that sells classic stuff and sports casual and work-wear from all over the world," Sanderson explains in an interview with Sam Walker for the Oi Polloi blog. "These were things that weren't open to us a few years ago."

Bringing brands together under one roof makes Oi Polloi the go-to place for shop-

ping the coolest labels all in one place. In November 2016, fans queued for over two days outside the Manchester store to get their hands on a limited edition 'Oi Polloi Adidas Manchester Marine Trainer' giving an indication of how in demand this brand is. Down the road from Oi Polloi are a handful of similar British brands forging a new direction for sportswear in-inspired design, such as Rabbithole London, Nigel Hall, who sell classic menswear famed for their well-cut blazers, and Jac+Jack. It's no surprise that in 2015 the British Fashion Council made Brewer Street Car Park, in the heart of Soho, the location for their biannual London Fashion Weeks, such as the: "vibrant, diverse and creative hub set within a mile of Bond Street, Dover Street, Mount Street, Oxford Street and Regent Street," proclaimed Caroline Rush, CEO of the British Fashion Council.

In the 1960s, Soho was famed for having over 100 strip clubs within its small, square radius, with magistrate Henry Mayhew describing the streets as, "a notorious place of ill-fame." Now, its busy roads are filled with Londoners and tourists alike in search of something a little different and quintessentially British in every way. MACHINE-A is another brand making waves. Located at 13 Brewer Street, this concept store stocks men's and womenswear both online and in store, with big designers J.W Anderson, Gosha Rubchinskiy, Ryan Lo, Christopher Shannon and Raf Simons all adding to

MACHINE-A's credibility as a distinctive place to shop the best designer labels.

Founded by Stavros Karelis, this independent store has amassed a huge social media following and scooped up a host of celebrity fans. Oversized jumpers, shiny PVC bomber jackets, baggy hoodies in muted grey tones and sculptural silhouettes hang proudly on the rails, contrasting against the white-washed walls. With its raw edginess and penchant for predicting which fashion designers people will want to wear in the future, MACHINE-A is one of London's most forward thinking fashion spaces. Where else can you find a Central Saint Martin graduate's collection alongside established brands such as Hussein Chalayan and Mugler? This mix marks it out as one of the freshest places to shop. Besides, there's no missing the bold store logo which lights up at night radiating white light onto the mannequins displayed in the shop window.

British writer and founder of the fashion blog 'Style Bubble', Susie Lau spotted MACHINE-A's appeal early on, hailing the store as the next big thing for London fashion. "MACHINE-A...reflects the gamut of styles that London Fashion Week currently plays host to," she explains on her blog. "Rather than concentrating on the very young fashion grassroots, Karelis has chosen designers that are strong but not necessarily household level yet. Christopher Raeburn's functional outerwear, Sibling's fun time knits, Louise Gray's print mix and Nasir Mazhar's sporty ready to wear and inventive millinery – it's great to actually see these London-based labels mix it up in a physical store."

Yet it has been the well-documented (and well-hash-tagged) rise and rise of Supreme and Palace Skateboards which has got London really setting the tone for all things street style. If you have teenage sons, nephews, friends... no doubt you'd have heard plenty regarding the cool factor of these two cult brands. If you haven't, then listen up. Although Supreme,





Lock & Co



founded in 1994, hails from the other side of the Atlantic, its appeal in Britain has catapulted its status to a whole new level. When it has a 'drop' of new stock in store, usually a weekly batch of limited pieces, most items are sold out within the hour; the fashion industry has certainly recognised the profitability and loyal following of this brand. In January of last year, Supreme made headlines by collaborating with luxury fashion powerhouse, Louis Vuitton, on a much talked about capsule collection. Merging Supreme's box logo with the iconic LV symbol, bags, jackets and skateboards all in a pillar box red stood out a mile off. Unsurprisingly when stock hit stores in a special pop-up on the Strand in July, it sold out almost immediately. "Putting on a new Supreme hoodie feels as good as wearing a new designer bag," agrees trendsetter and creative director Jen Brill. We won't argue with that.

The skateboard emporium, Palace, has also dominated British youth culture for the past two years with queues a regular occurrence outside its Brewer Street store. Founded by South Londoner, Lev Tanju, Palace has become the brand of choice for hip-hop royalty: Rihanna, Jay-Z, Kanye West, Drake and even little North West have all been spotted rocking Palace clothing. Stemming out of Tanju's love of skate culture, Palace Skateboards was born in 2009 with an aim to sponsor skaters needing a platform, selling skateboards adorned with funky graffiti imagery and baggy hoodies in an array of colours. Since then, the street-wear label has spiralled into a cult urban brand, with its triangle logo a respected symbol of underground style. Its flagship store in Soho, complete with monochrome tiled

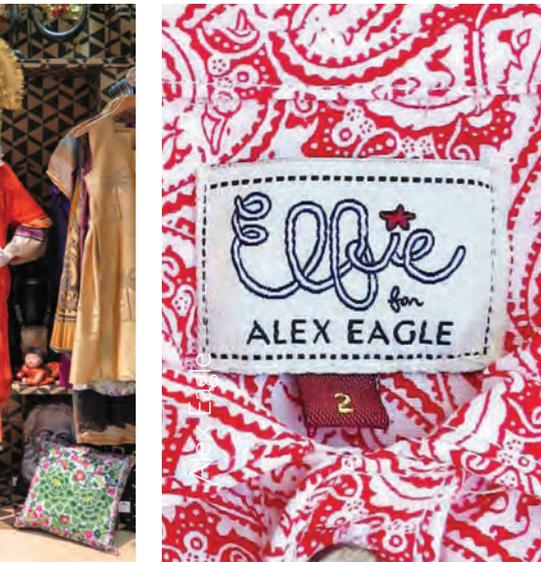
floors and sparse white walls, is a haven for loyal Palace shoppers. "We make it and that's it. If you want it, come to the shop," Tanju said simply when interviewed for *The Guardian*.

Tanju may regard the stock drop sell-outs as fast fun, but for Palace fans it can be an agonising disappointment when they just weren't fast enough to get their hands on a particular item – they do say, if you snooze, you lose. That's when Ebay comes into the picture, with fierce bidding wars a daily occurrence on limited Palace pieces, often heading into high triple figures. Another place you can purchase exclusive Palace items is at the home of avant-garde fashion, Dover Street Market. Situated in the basement of this modern concept store is a trove of the coolest labels in town, with Palace surrounded by the likes of Nike Lab, Craig Green, and Comme des Garçons as well as a vast sneaker space packed full of genius designs. Having previously worked at Dover Street Market, I can confirm that on many occasions when there were queues of eager shoppers camped outside the store early in the morning, they were heading for one place, and one place only: the basement. As soon as word is out that new stock has hit the shop floor, teenage boys and grown men alike are out in force to get their hands on a Palace sweater or limited Adidas trainers.

A quick note on Dover Street Market (DSM for short) for those who aren't in the know, it was founded by Comme des Garçon designer Rei Kawakubo and is named after the street on which it was originally established in London's Mayfair. Selling a wide range of contemporary

brands alongside luxury fashion labels such as Celine, Gucci, Valentino and Balenciaga, DSM prides itself on its innovative visual merchandising and stellar designer collaborations. Now located on Haymarket near Piccadilly Circus in the old Burberry headquarters, DSM is well worth a visit if only to marvel at the sculpted floor spaces and stylish designer wares. You will see eager tourists mingling with wide eyed students, with their cameras in tow, such is the growing popularity of this London landmark. The 'Rose Bakery' on the top floor is a great place to unwind after exploring the stores many hidden labyrinths. Just a word of advice before your visit – the entrance to the store is along a small side lane called Orange Street, as the front doors on the main road remain firmly shut at all times. Well, who wants to use the boring front entrance anyway?

Another store with a vast retail space and impressive fashion pieces is Alex Eagle Studio. Located once again in Soho, this store prides itself as a 'unique retail experience,' with modern furnishings, minimal fashion and decorative home wares all on display. Walking around feels as though you've just stepped into a very stylish home, such are the welcoming surroundings and plush surfaces cleverly thought out by creative director Alex Eagle herself. "The way we shop is changing," Eagle says. "Just fashion isn't enough. People want an edit across everything in their lives: clothes, homeware, furniture, books, art and music. With so much instantly available online, they crave a more inspiring environment when they shop in store, somewhere they can spend time and relax without the pressure to buy."



Needless to say, in 2016 the Business of Fashion included her in their pick of the top 500 names shaping the global industry – watch this space.

The brands mentioned here are just a handful of the movers and shakers of British fashion, making us question how we'd like to decorate our homes or style a particular piece and are fast on their way to becoming iconic in their own right, both at home and away.

THE TRADITIONAL

What springs to mind when you think of iconic British brands? There's quite a few to choose from. There are luxury car companies Aston Martin and Rolls Royce, confectionery like Cadbury, the classic Twinings and PG Tips (we Brits love our tea) or even the Royal Family. When it comes to fashion brands, the UK has quite a few of those too – not that we're boasting. Liberty, Burberry, Dunhill, Vivienne Westwood, Harrods, Alexander McQueen, Selfridges, Hardy Amies, Barbour ... the list really is endless. But a few brands, shrouded in heritage and tradition, stand out above the rest making them the bona fide iconic British brands which have shaped our fashion industry.

Department stores have long been an established part of the British high street. Two of the first were founded well before 1850 with Bainbridge, Market Street in Newcastle and Kendal, Milne & Co. in Manchester the first of its kind. In 1859, an unknown grocer from the East End of London named Charles Henry Harrod opened a small shop in Knightsbridge, which he called Harrods. Selling a range of perfumes, food and stationery, this iconic

store would of course grow to become one of the most respected and admired luxury department stores in the world, and a regular pit stop for visitors eager to get their hands on Harrods' famous loose leaf tea in the food hall.

Famed for its red brick exterior and rich, Egyptian themed interior, you can find just about anything in Harrods. Whether you're after a new cutlery set, a quality bottle of white wine, a sharp designer suit or that must have pair of Manolo Blahnik pumps...Harrods will be sure to have it. It is rumoured that Ronald Reagan, the then Governor of California and future US President, rang and asked for an elephant for a Republican Party rally. The reply, as it is told, was "Would that be African or Indian, sir?" The pet store is now closed but the array of products on sale under one roof is astounding.

Another much loved, and extremely British, department store is Selfridges & Co. You can't miss it on Oxford Street, with its large stone pillars and intriguing shop windows beckoning passers-by into its glossy façade. If you happened to watch the 2013 TV series 'Mr Selfridge' you will know an awful lot about the early years of this luxury store. Opened in 1909 by Harry Gordon Selfridge, an American expat, Selfridges offered consumers the opportunity to shop leisurely in an environment where just about everything was at their fingertips. Coining the now famous phrase, "the customer is always right," Selfridge believed that shopping was indeed a fun, enjoyable exercise, and whatever his customers wanted they would always get. "Give the lady what she wants," was another of his favourite catchphrases.

Fast-forward to the 21st century and Selfridges has grown to become one of Britain's most admired places for consumerism, with large stores in Manchester and Birmingham. You may even have seen footage of the Boxing Day sales at the London store. With shoppers diving on top of each other to get through the doors, mad rushes up the escalators, frenzied searches for sizes and hectic sales assistants tearing their hair out, the videos are well worth a watch if only to shake your head in sheer amusement. Grabbing a sales bargain at this store is well worth the wait – and the pushing.

Located in the Tudor revival building in Great Marlborough Street, Liberty was

also originally established by a merchant, Arthur Liberty, in Victorian times. The Liberty brand is principally known worldwide for its distinctive printed fabrics. Entering the magnificent building is part of the shopping experience. The three internal light wells divide the store into a number of welcoming and comforting spaces. Its heyday was in the 1920s when the store was very much associated with the Arts & Craft and Art Nouveau style. Today, the store champions a number of up and coming British designers in addition to those who are more well-known. Oscar Wilde famously said "Liberty is the chosen resort of the artistic shopper" and this is equally relevant today.

Stocked inside both Harrods and Selfridges, and with shops on Regent Street and New Bond Street, is Burberry, one of Britain's most iconic fashion brands. You really can't get more British than their classic beige trench coats, a style staple synonymous with timelessness, luxury and elegance. Its worldwide revenue was valued at £2.77 billion in 2017 by Statista, making Burberry the fourth largest company in the UK according to Fashion United. With prices for a classic trench coat hovering above the £1,000 mark, you are indeed buying an heirloom, with tradition and heritage weaved into one. All Burberry trenches are proudly made in England; Yorkshire to be precise. Waterproof cotton gabardine is carefully woven using more than forty looms and shaped into a Burberry trench, with the classic check under-collar stamping that British seal on the finished garment. Everyone from Rosie Huntington Whiteley and Keira Knightley to the Duchess of Cambridge have been spotted wearing a classic Burberry trench coat – and with the unpredictable English weather it's a handy piece to own.

It was Thomas Burberry, a former draper's apprentice who founded his company in Hampshire in 1856, selling outdoor apparel for a variety of sports. Yet it was during the first world war that the famous trench coat came about. The simple structure and waterproof fabric of the coat was designed to suit the needs of the army officers working in the trenches during the war. The coat later became available for civilians back in Britain to buy, proving big business for Burberry. Nowadays, the brand's creative director Christopher Bailey continues to rework

this classic garment into his collections for Burberry. "Bailey has always managed to straddle the past and the future with his designs, and understands that harnessing the brand's connection to its heritage will ultimately propel Burberry forward," agrees Vogue's Fashion News Director, Chioma Nnadi.

As Burberry goes from strength to strength so have a handful of British brands renowned for their luxury and quality. You can't beat Savile Row tailors Gieves & Hawkes and Hardy Amies when it comes to top-notch suiting, just as Hackett is perfect for fine shirts. Gun makers Holland & Holland hold two royal warrants and provide luxury leisurewear for a range of outdoor pursuits, Aquascutum are a great choice for winter coats, Mulberry and Aspree for leather handbags and Lock & Co for a great hat. They are of course all synonymous with English tradition. While at London Fashion Week, home grown brands such as Paul Smith, Vivienne Westwood and Pringle of Scotland provide the fashion pack with the best craftsmanship Britain has to offer. But it is Alexander McQueen whom we associate most with British fashion.

I know what you're thinking, McQueen is not old enough to be thought of as a 'traditional British brand,' but it is nevertheless iconic in its own right. Who can forget Kate Middleton walking down the aisle in that intricate lace McQueen gown at her 2011 wedding? Or Lady Gaga teetering across the red carpet in her McQueen armadillo shoes at the 2010 MTV Video Music Awards? There is no denying you can spot an Alexander McQueen piece a mile off - if you were lucky enough to visit the 2015 'Savage Beauty' exhibition you'll know what I mean. There is a certain style about McQueen, which is both unique and breathtaking. Ostrich feather skirts, tulle gowns, laser-cut dresses, tartan jackets, embellished clutch bags... the brand that the late Lee Alexander McQueen created fused fantasy and reality together in a way fashion had never seen before. "Fashion should be a form of escapism, not a form of imprisonment," Alexander McQueen would state and the house's current head designer Sarah Burton has done well to include those values into her current designs.

FOCUS' edit of the best British brands and where to find them:

OI POLLOI

1 Marshall St, Carnaby, London W1F 9BA
www.oipolloi.com

The Vibe: Casual, modern menswear with a touch of preppiness – think an off duty Jake Gyllenhaal, beard included.

MACHINE-A

13 Brewer St, Soho, London W1F 0RH
www.machine-a.com

The Vibe: Effortlessly cool pieces from an array of different designers – some established, some little known. If you want unique and exclusive, this is the place for you.

PALACE SKATEBOARDS

26 Brewer St, Soho, London W1F 0SW
www.palaceskateboards.com

The Vibe: A rappers paradise. Palace officially defines 'cool' with their graffiti embellished hoodies and clever skateboard designs.

DOVER STREET MARKET

18-22 Haymarket, London SW1Y 4DG
www.doverstreetmarket.com

The Vibe: Contemporary, avant-garde fashion in a very inspiring environment – you won't know where to look!

ALEX EAGLE STUDIO

6-10 Lexington St, Soho, London W1F 0LB
www.alex eagle.co.uk

The Vibe: A stylish mix of home designs and fashion, under the watchful eye of Alex Eagle. Follow her on Instagram at @eagle.tta.

HARRODS

87-135 Brompton Rd, Knightsbridge, SW1X 7XL
www.harrods.com

The Vibe: Pretty much just pure luxury. Did you know that Harrods even have their own motto: 'Omnia Omnibus

Ubique', which translates as, 'All Things, for All People, Everywhere.'

SELFRIDGES

400 Oxford St, London W1A 1AB
www.selfridges.com/GB/en/

The Vibe: Wonderful visual merchandising with just about every brand worth knowing stocked within its stone walls.

LIBERTY

Regent Street, London W1B 5AH

The Vibe: The store in the Tudor building which champions new British designs.

BURBERRY

121 Regent St, Mayfair, London W1B 4TB
www.uk.burberry.com

The Vibe: A classic Burberry trench coat will give you fashion brownie points for life. Other great pieces include their leather bags, cashmere scarves and check jumpers.

GIEVES AND HAWKES

1 Savile Row, Mayfair, London W1S 3JR
www.gievesandhawkes.com

The Vibe: Founded in 1771 this tailor offers the finest bespoke suiting and menswear. Expect to receive the best customer service.

ALEXANDER MCQUEEN

4-5 Old Bond Street, London, W1S 4PD
www.alexandermcqueen.com

The Vibe: The world of McQueen is indeed beautiful and empowering with a worldwide reputation as one of Britain's greatest fashion brands.

STELLA MCCARTNEY

30 Bruton Street, London, W1J 6QR

The Vibe: Beautiful clothes designed by one of Britain's inspirational women.

In a similar vein is the British designer Stella McCartney. Her appointment in the early part of her career as the creative director of Chloé surprised the fashion establishment at that time. This quickly led to her establishing her own fashion house. Her brand is worldwide as is the range of products she designs, from elegant dresses to sporting wear (she designed the British Olympic team's kit).

From Alexander McQueen, Aquascutum and Marks and Spencer (Britain's second biggest fashion company behind Next) to Hackett, Burberry and the specialist tailors on Savile Row, Britain is renowned for its fashion labels the world over. It's little wonder that Fashion United estimated the domestic market value of the British

fashion industry at a whopping £66 billion, employing hundreds of thousands of people up and down the country. And with the new, up and coming Brit labels on the rise alongside our high street giants, there is no denying that British brands are a force to be reckoned with.



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