

FASHION HANNAH TATTERSALL



Designs by Seafolly, main image, and below, Jayson Brunson creations. Photos Dallas Kilponen, Edwina Pickles

Threads in the City has makings of hit

Sydney is trying desperately to match Melbourne in the catwalk ratings.



On Monday morning Sydney's Martin Place was abuzz with Audrey Hepburn lookalikes who turned out to celebrate the actress and style icon's 80th birthday, her timeless look and her influence on fashion.

On Tuesday evening the public shimmied with celebrity fashionistas at the opening parade presented by designer Jayson Brunson.

On Tuesday they queued to glimpse designs by Seafolly, David Lawrence and highlights from Australian Fashion Week in the packed evening shows.

By the end of the week organisers hoped shows such as these and the sizzling Hot in the City lingerie parades had convinced the city to accept the Sydney Fashion Festival.

It's not as easy as it seems. Much is written about Melbourne being Australia's fashion capital and Sydney Fashion Festival organiser IMG is keen for Sydney to catch up.

And IMG knows there's more to creating a successful fashion festival than simply plonking a marquee in Martin Place.

The timing of this year's Sydney Fashion Festival was no coincidence. It's the first in a bevy



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of (unaffiliated) public fashion events around Australia.

Brisbane Fashion Festival starts on Monday, closely followed by Melbourne Spring Fashion Week and Perth Fashion Festival, both in early September. Sydney got in first. Sydney's Martin Place setting means the lunchtime shows attract city business people.

Last year the Hot in the City lingerie show, taking place at lunchtime on Friday, drew crowds of male office workers with digital cameras snapping madly at model Jennifer Hawkins in a variety of swimsuits.

But not all the lunch shows were a roaring success. This year IMG reduced the price of tickets to \$30 (\$45 last year). Evening shows cost \$35 at 6pm and \$45 at 8.30pm. This is the second year IMG has run the festival, which enables the public to view labels presented during the trade-only Australian Fashion Week in April.

While organisers of the not-for-profit Melbourne Fashion Festival could pinpoint the March festival as contributing \$69.9 million to the economy, IMG said it would not have definitive figures for the Sydney Fashion Festival until the third year.

Daniel Hill, IMG Fashion general

manager, says: "These things are notoriously hard to get because, for one thing, a lot of retailers won't actually share their figures with us."

But IMG has already begun making changes, suggesting they still have a way to go before being on par with Melbourne's events.

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Hill says 2009 was bigger than last year. The festival is now not just confined to city slickers in Martin Place but made use of Sydney's own fashion-savvy suburb, Paddington, this year with events taking place around Oxford Street. Ticketed ladies' lunches and conversations with designers were also added to the schedule.

For those in it purely for the love of attending a catwalk show, SFF probably didn't disappoint. Brunson's opening-night show was full of glitter and spark, classic dresses, high shoes and colourful make-up.

During the week all the names were there - Dion Lee, Bec & Bridge, Ellery, Romance Was Born. We'll just have to wait a little longer to find out how much the glitz and glamour is worth to Sydney.

TRAVELLER



Justin Birchmore

Position Since my initial career as a stockbroker in London, I've become involved in corporate reconstructions, commercial dispute resolutions and public listings.

Most frequented destination Singapore was a regular destination when I was involved in a start-up aquaculture project. These days, one of my interests is a start-up clothing business - Justin Paul - in Launceston, Tasmania. I visit at least once a month.

Advice for airlines I'd be happy to be paying a bit more if airline workers are calling for reasonable pay rises.

Favourite hotel Shangri-La in Singapore. The familiar faces were always smiling and never failed to provide me with my favourite room.

Best overseas dining I chase the local, hidden spots. In Asia I hired a driver. At lunchtime, the jacket and tie came off and we visited one of his local cafes - we sat on milk crates around a rickety old table for the best meal I'd had in ages.

To pack If I can travel without anything more than hand luggage, I'm happy.

In your spare time. I love music, so in Perth I try to dedicate one

evening a week to writing and recording music with a group of musos in a private studio.

Travel tips Take the aisle seat. There's nothing worse than having to manoeuvre around a fellow passenger if you need to visit the loo or get your laptop.

Technology My mobile, laptop and internet access is vital when travelling. If I can't make calls or deal with emails, things can quickly go pear-shaped.

Shopping Despite owning a women's clothing business I'm not a big shopper, although I do occasionally

succumb to the lure of a high-end shopping precinct like the Paragon shopping centre in Singapore.

Best travelling tale My father and I had a stopover in Mumbai airport. He spotted a briefcase in one of the shops and made the mistake of admiring it. The shopkeeper was persistent, but my father said he didn't need a new briefcase. When our flight was called, we thought that was our excuse to leave, but he offered to put us both up in his house overnight. I still wonder what sort of evening it might have been had we accepted.