

# Town and Country Looks Meld at ENK Show

by DAVID LIPKE

**TOGGLE COATS,** Fair Isle knits, tweed sport coats and unique accessories like vividly colored bags were key trends at the ENK NYC show staged earlier this week. The improved retail climate led buyers to take more chances on fashion and expand their buys beyond safe, key items, said showroom owners.

"Retailers are breathing a little easier because their customers are worrying a little less about their jobs," said Jon Kalupa, president of the Avalon Group showroom, which represents Fred Perry, D.S. Dundee and the Michael Bastian for Randolph Engineering eyewear line. "Buys are starting to broaden a little more. Inventory management has been the mantra of the day — and it still is, to a degree — but buyers are taking some more chances."

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— MICHAEL RYAN,  
BLUE AGENCY

Katie Liu, whose Black Dog 8 showroom sells J.W. Brine, Orciani and Volta, among other brands, also noticed an uptick in confidence. "More higher-ticket items are selling and there's a wider breadth of items selling," she explained, although she added that outerwear and heavy knitwear have been challenged, as those categories were slow sellers this past season, due to the mild winter.

That wasn't the case at Ted Baker, where sweaters have been among the British brand's strongest categories. Also trending well were its tailored sport coats in Donegal tweed or velvet, some with gold linings adorned with moose and elk patterns. The motif was apt, as "urban woodsman" was the theme of the fall collection, as seen in fake-fur trapper hats (\$85 retail), cable-knit cardigans, textured wool-cotton shirts and a peacoat with classic leather football buttons.

"It's countrywear with urban flair, for the rough-and-tumble guy who really isn't," explained Patrick Heitkam, Ted Baker's executive vice president of wholesale and licensing in the U.S.

Fashionable outdoorsmen were also the focus at Victorinox, although with more technical performance built into the designs. The Swiss brand collaborated with designer Christopher Raeburn on its "Protect" collection of water-repellent blazers and parkas, insulated overshirts, and raincoats and vests that fold themselves into bags — with everything made from sustainable and recycled materials. Useful details like storm cuffs at the wrist and interior security pockets are added features throughout the collection.

At the Blue Agency showroom, owner Michael Ryan was happy to report that sales of his brands were up sharply, with Parajumpers outerwear increasing 30 percent last season and the Benson sportswear and accessories collection expanding from 60 accounts last spring to 180 accounts this year, including Bloomingdale's, Saks Fifth Avenue, Kitson and Atrium. The Benson line for fall includes canvas and leather bags in bright shades of red, along with double-knit sweater jackets and a reversible, vegetable-dyed shearling leather jacket.

"If you have the right brands, you can do

business in any environment," said Ryan. "The important thing is to have brands that execute. They have to deliver on time, the fit has to be right and the sell-throughs have to be there. The product is important, but the execution is vital. You can't just show some cute product."

A new patent-pending design called Motion D Technology was the selling point at Equilibrio shirts. The "D" stands for "dimension" and consists of specially engineered side panels that allow for better fit and more freedom of movement.

"The body is three-dimensional, we all know that, but shirts have always been two-dimensional, until now," pointed out Paolo Dorigo, chief executive officer of Los Angeles-based Equilibrio.

Dorigo also showed a line of casual shirts under the spin-off EQ label, encompassing styles in washed piqué, mercerized stretch cotton, reversible nylon-cotton and baby corduroy. The line is in 300 specialty stores, including Nordstrom, Boyds, E Street Denim and Gary's in Newport Beach, Calif.

Baby corduroy shirts were also a key item at Splendid Mills, with linings in butter-soft T-shirt jersey and retailing for \$168. Corduroy was used for jeans at \$148, while color-blocked baseball T-shirts came in waffle thermal fabric for \$88.

Based in East London but inspired by Scotland, D.S. Dundee showcased handsome three-piece suits in sturdy tweed fabrics and slender fits, in rustic shades like charcoal celadon and burnt russet as well as Black Watch plaid. The nested jacket, pant and vest combo retails for just over \$1,000. "Hip, young guys are wearing vests again, and the three-piece suit is a natural progression of the tailored look that is popular now," said Avalon Group's Kalupa. "It's a way to stand out."

Coincidentally, Fred Perry's new designer, Kenneth Mackenzie, hails from Dundee,

D.S. Dundee



Scotland, himself. Mackenzie is the designer of his own Six Eight Seven Six line and will design the premium Laurel Wreath line for Fred Perry, which offers a more fashion-forward vision for the traditionally retro-inspired brand. The Laurel Wreath range for fall included Mod trousers, shirts in a micro-check pattern, polos lined with performance mesh and updated takes on the Harrington jacket. It is recognizable for its 30-point laurel-leaf logo in contrast to the 16-point laurel leaf on the core Fred Perry Authentic collection. The latter offered a capsule collection of 19th-century British workwear-inflected styles, including shirts in mattress ticking stripes, roll-neck sweaters and shawl-collar cardigans with copper zippers.