

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

Fashion brands are moving celebs from the front row to the runway

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Kyle MacLachlan and Jeff Goldblum recently bookended Prada's menswear show. Image credit: Prada

By NORA HOWE

High-profile celebrities have historically been front row at runway shows, seated among fashion's most elite figures, but now they are beginning to appear more frequently on the catwalk.

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More recently, however, brands have created buzz by further incorporating famous faces into their runway shows perhaps where they are least expected. Some industry experts speculate this is in response to pandemic-induced event restrictions, but there is a possibility it could last.

"With the continual postponement or cancellation of physical shows, brands have had limited opportunities to host in-person events and are eager to bring back excitement to the brand experience," said Alison Bring, chief marketing officer at [Launchmetrics](#), London.

"While the front row has been a spot reserved for celebrities, the shift to digital runways pushed brands to rethink celebrity value and their involvement in generating awareness and media buzz," she said. "By including the celebrities on the catwalk, brands create an amplification through media, garnering an echo-effect in not only reach, but awareness and conversation around the brand."

Front row to center stage

Most recently, and certainly still buzzing across social media platforms, was Prada's menswear fall 2022 show, which featured a number of actors including Jeff Goldblum, Kyle MacLachlan and Asa Butterfield.

"Prada's show generated a cross-pollination in online conversations," Ms. Bring said. "Jeff Goldblum's appearance was imminent considering he popularized Prada's Flame Shirt' in 2018, yet it surprised fans nonetheless, generating \$3.9 million media impact value since the show."

In addition to Mr. Goldblum, Mr. MacLachlan and Mr. Butterfield, the cast for Prada's show included other renowned Hollywood actors: Thomas Brodie-Sangster, Damson Idris, Tom Mercier, Jaden Michael, Louis Partridge, Ashton Sanders and Filippo Scotti.



The show featured a futuristic runway. Image credit: Prada

With the show and its models, designers Raf Simmons and Muccio Prada aimed to portray importance and valor through everyday reality.

While this strategy of bringing actors into fashion's limelight is picking up, it is not new for a brand like Prada, which, in its fall 2012 menswear show included Willem Dafoe, Adrien Brody and Gary Oldman.

In November 2021, Italian fashion house Gucci put on the ultimate parade celebrating love, complete with a star-studded cast and guest list.

To reflect the high-profile nature of Los Angeles and Hollywood, the brand called upon an impressive cast of musicians and actors including, but not limited to, Jared Leto, Jodie Turner-Smith, St. Vincent, Phoebe Bridgers, Macaulay Culkin, Steve Lacy and Jeremy Pope.

The collection, channeling old Hollywood glamour, illustrated an amalgamation of style from gowns, Gucci leggings and catsuits, and more. Cinematic touches were echoed through the use of cowboy hats, feathers and faux fur coats.

Entertainers including Billie Eilish, Miley Cyrus, Tracee Ellis Ross, Lizzo, Salma Hayek and more were in attendance ([see story](#)).

During Paris Fashion Week in February 2021, Kim Jones debuted his first couture collection as Fendi's creative director with the help of iconic supermodels, notably Naomi Campbell, Kate Moss and Christy Turlington.

Unexpectedly, however, the show opened with famed American actress Demi Moore.

Arguably one of the more memorable celebrity runway appearances in the last few years, though, was Jennifer Lopez closing Versace's spring/summer 2020 show at Milan Fashion Week.



Jennifer Lopez in a reinterpretation of the iconic green Grammy's dress at Versace's spring/summer 2020 show in Milan. Image credit: Versace

Wearing a replica of the iconic green plunging Versace dress from her red carpet appearance at the 2000 Grammy Awards, the world-renowned singer and actress was a massive surprise to guests in Milan and audiences worldwide.

"Jennifer Lopez's closing walk for Versace's spring/summer 2020 show generated a total \$9.8 million media impact value for the brand in just 48 hours," Ms. Bring said.

Versace's 2020 show marked the 20-year anniversary of the green dress' runway appearance. Shortly after its runway debut, Ms. Lopez wore it on the Grammys' red carpet a moment which ignited such high demand for pictures of the event that Google Images was launched a year later.

Social media impact

While fashion brands can generate natural buzz through surprise celebrity runway cameos, they should still leverage the power of social media to put themselves further ahead.

According to Launchmetrics' "YouTube's Effect on Fashion" report, luxury labels including Dior and Prada have successfully leveraged YouTube to boost their engagement and extend their reach.

With more than 2 billion monthly active users, YouTube has become a critical avenue for brands looking to create a strong video strategy that will build lasting momentum. Brands are turning to the video-sharing platform to create moments that are continuously rewatched and reevaluated over time, ultimately enhancing their performance in the long term ([see story](#)).

But brands should not simply stop at YouTube, in fact, Instagram is the largest social channel for both Europe and the United States, driving significant media value for both regions ([see story](#)).

"Celebrities and influencers play an important role in the Voice' mix by helping brands amplify their message and creating impact for their consumers," Ms. Bring said. "With brands looking to build a meaningful connection with their consumers, having a familiar face with a devoted following on the runway can bring them closer to their audience."

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