

90 YEARS *of Perfecto*

When it comes to famous jackets, they don't come much more famous than the Schott Perfecto, as worn by Marlon Brando in *The Wild One*, and every young rocker and pop star since. From Blondie in the 70s, to Lady Gaga, Rita Ora, Rihanna and Katie Perry now, it's a classic that has truly lasted the test of time.

With biker chic once again at the forefront of fashion, it's perhaps fitting that this year the brand's most recognised jacket celebrates its 90th anniversary, with an exhibition at the forthcoming Jacket Required show. The women's a/w 18 collection will sit next to the men's, though many styles are considered unisex as women opt to wear larger sizes, especially with the 90s trend now in full swing. Alongside some vintage gems, there will be 50 jackets on show, including some amazing collaborations over the years with the likes of Jeremy Scott, House of Holland, Vetements, Lady Gaga's Workshop for Barney's New York and Maje (currently stocked at Selfridges, Matches and Net-a-Porter). Many of the collaborations have sparked interest from celebrity followers, which has been a useful tool for creating greater brand awareness.

With the trend for all things 90s, and with the MA-1 jacket everywhere, Schott is now looking to push its unisex Nebraska puffer jacket for a/w 18, as well as its famed CWU jacket. Sometimes referred to as an MA-2, the CWU is the one that looks like an MA-1 with a collar and removable Velcro brand patch on the chest. Back in the mid 90s it was a big hit with women, brought out in a variety of bright colours. Schott UK sales agent, Marcus Harris, from agency Brand National, says: "Back then, shops had to remove the patches from the stock on the rails and give them to customers when they actually purchased the jacket. Such was the popularity, people were actually stealing the patches and then swapping colours about! In a way, the badges were like the fashion

Schott NYC is to celebrate its famous Perfecto jacket at premium trade show Jacket Required this month, with the a/w 18 collection ringing in a stronger focus on womenswear and unisex styles. Tom Bottomley gets the lowdown.

Pokémon card of the 90s." Because of that period, although Schott does an MA-1 jacket, and has done for many years, it's definitely better known for the CWU jacket. Harris says it's also a slight move on from the MA-1 trend, so the timing is right to bring it firmly back into the spotlight. With logos and bigger branding now prevalent in the fashion arena once again, the Schott Velcro chest patch fits perfectly.

Spotting the 90s trend gaining momentum with a younger customer, Harris says they also chose to reintroduce the Nebraska puffer jacket as an express package just before Christmas just gone. "It's a real oversized 90s puffer style, which actually wasn't initially included in our a/w 17 collection. We've put together an injection collection of it for 10 colours for the current winter season. There's pink, red, yellow, orange, baby blue and white included. It was a really quick turnaround and we didn't deliver it to stores until the end of November. Schott has actually just done a big pop-up in Citadium in Paris with it. We will be pushing it in a much bigger way for a/w 18 for women and men."

The women's collection is currently sold in Liberty London, but with the loose-fitting trend it's the unisex main collection that women seem to be seeking out more from retailers who've been selling the brand for years. "What we've been doing over the past few seasons is looking at the main men's collection, and introducing smaller sizes on some of the key styles for women, as well as putting in some more feminine colours," explains Harris. "The European fits of the women's collection come up very small, so we're finding

that women prefer to buy the men's jackets. It means we're offering much more of a unisex package, rather than simply focusing on the women's collection. As a result, for a/w 17, we actually added some unisex pieces to the offer in Liberty London within the womenswear area of the shop. It's subsequently had a better response, so we are looking to continue to work with them for a/w 18 and grow the business."

Aside from the classics like the Perfecto jacket, a lot of the products Schott tends to sell in the UK market is also more fashion and trend-driven than perhaps in the rest of Europe and in the home US market. The recent collaborations with other brands, such as Vetements and Maje, have also focused on a women's offer from a much more fashion-driven perspective.

Indeed, when it comes to collaborations and celebrity following, womenswear is very much a focus, despite the brand being more associated with menswear. "Vetements from Paris actually did a whole collaboration collection, whereby they picked what they called the best from each product category," says Harris. "So, they came to us for the leather jacket, they went to Champion for the sweatshirt, Juicy Couture for the velour tracksuit and so on. They picked every brand that they thought was the 'hero' in each field, and put together a whole collection of fantastic pieces. It was about doing it, but very much doing it in a Vetements way – everything

was massively oversized for women. For us, it was a challenge to make. We did a Perfecto that's completely oversized, cut very differently and with an extra long belt. There's loads of different elements to it that Schott would not normally do." Another collaboration with designer Jeremy Scott led to Rihanna, Alicia Keys and Rita Ora recently being seen wearing Schott jackets.

Jason Schott, the brand's Chief Operating Officer and a fourth generation of the Schott family to work for the business, says: "We do offer a separate women's collection, but in the UK we have found more of a demand for unisex styles, because the UK

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customer likes to wear things with a boyfriend fit. For this reason, for a/w 18 we are focusing on introducing some new unisex styles into the collection which we believe will hit the mark." The Schott NYC unisex collection is the most commercial Schott line, with the most competitive price points, as opposed to the higher end Schott NYC

Perfecto Brand heritage collection, and the contemporary Schott Limited Edition line. It's in the main unisex collection that customers can find some of the brand's most iconic styles from the 90s.

The Schott NYC company was actually founded in 1913 by Jason Schott's great grandfather, Irving, and his brother Jack Schott. It's a little known fact that Schott NYC was the first company to put a zipper on a jacket. "My great grandfather invented the motorcycle jacket in 1928, and we are very much looking forward to celebrating the 90th Anniversary of the Perfecto motorcycle jacket at Jacket Required." It couldn't really be a more fitting name for a trade show putting on an exhibition in honour of one of the world's most instantly recognisable, and much copied, jackets.