



A weekend for dedicated followers of fashion

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The **Dublin Fashion Festival** kicks off tomorrow and is a chance for Ireland to show that it does know a thing or two about style

WHAT DO London, New York, Paris, Milan and Tokyo have in common? They're listed among the world's top 10 most fashionable cities, according to an August 2011 study by the Global Language Monitor. What's more surprising is that Singapore – yes, Singapore, where chewing gum is illegal and tacky logo-laden handbags are must-haves – also makes the list. If you find that shocking, hold on to your hats, because Dublin doesn't make the top 10. Nor, for shame, the top 50, despite our bustling high street and exciting and lively home-grown fashion scene – bolstered in the past few months by the opening of the Project 51 designers' collective shop in Dublin and the launch of underground fashion magazine *Thread*.

This lack of fashion clout prompted the setting up in 2008 of the Dublin City **Business Improvement District**, tasked with running the **Dublin Fashion Festival**, a weekend of events to promote Dublin as a fashion capital. In short, it's about shopping.

This year's festival kicks off tomorrow with the inaugural Irish *Vogue's* Fashion Night Out in Brown Thomas, which will open its doors from 6pm to 11pm offering makeovers, styling masterclasses, fashion-themed cocktails and an al fresco cafe on Grafton Street for late-night shoppers. See brownthomas.com for details.

The festival itself will run for four days in locations all around the city: its HQ in the former Waterstone's building on Dawson Street will be home to fashion shows; a Barnardos pop-up vintage store; hair and make-up demonstrations from the Art Team and LA Make-Up Academy;

and, on Saturday, various style schools.

■ **Thursday** Start with the event's first catwalk show at Fashion HQ on Dawson Street at 12.45pm. TV presenter Sonya Lennon will talk you through the season's trends. Catch a demo by the Art Team and LA Make-up Academy before heading to the Westbury Hotel for a fashionable afternoon tea, from 2.30pm to 5.30pm every day during the festival.

Various shops around the city are offering promotions, discounts and freebies – including cupcakes and champagne – throughout the festival. See individual websites and dff.ie for details.

At 6pm, Brown Thomas's doors will open for *Vogue's* Fashion Night Out, with a fashion cafe, shows and an Irish designer installation.

■ **Friday** Today sees the first style school in Fashion HQ at 12.30pm – a masterclass by stylist Mark Andrew Kelly on shopping for your shape, followed by Louis Copeland on men's fashion and a talk by fashion designer Sinead Doyle of Project 51. While you're there, submit your entry for the festival's model search and check out Sonya Lennon's Style

Exhibition, showcasing some of her outfits.

From 4pm, Stephen's Green Shopping Centre will host the Strike a Pose competition; have your photo taken by a professional photographer to be in with a chance to win vouchers for the centre before skipping back to HQ at 6.30pm to hear Sarah Jane Wai O'Flynn talking about how to be a make-up artist.

■ **Saturday** You'd want to book now (01-6770392) for a free facial and skincare consultation at Lush on Grafton Street – you know, the one you could pass with your eyes closed and still know *exactly* where you are – between 10am and midday, using its range of natural products.

Fashion HQ will be doing its thing all day: catwalk shows, hair and make-up demos, while the White Door on Exchequer Street – home of Hello! SkinnyJeans, rumoured to be the most flattering jeans in existence – is holding a ladies' day, with free makeovers and cocktails for anyone spending more than €80.

On the northside, Jervis will host the Fashion Movement Catwalk at midday, with outfits from the shopping centre's

brands, and the Ilac Centre will be presenting live mannequins showing you how to "look fantastic on a shoestring".

On O'Connell Street, Clerys – this month celebrating 70 years in business – will bust out the moves with an instore DJ and beauty and style event, plus the chance to win a €100 voucher. At 4.30pm, blogger Laura Whiston of whisty.wordpress.com will be chatting with fellow bloggers in Fashion HQ about narcissism, journalism and criticism.

■ **Sunday** Fashion HQ will be open all day, with hair and make-up demonstrations – plus free makeovers for lucky HQ-goers – and the Barnardos pop-up vintage store will be open from midday until 6pm.

On South William Street, hip independent store Indigo & Cloth will have a changing room installation, and the Westbury Hotel will once again theme its afternoon tea to the fashion set.

At 3.30pm back in Fashion HQ on Dawson Street, a mini-catwalk show will be held for the finalists of Friday's model search, and a winner will be announced.

It's set to be a packed weekend, with Ireland's most stylish hoping to give Dublin a helping hand onto next year's list of the top 50 fashionable cities.

For full details and a programme of events, see dff.ie

