



Models present creations of Dolce & Gabbana during the Autumn-Winter 2023-2024 Men's fashion show as part of the Milan Fashion Week. — AFP photos

BOOM TIME FOR MENSWEAR AS PARIS FASHION WEEK RETURNS

The fashion juggernaut returns to Paris this week, with Saint Laurent rejoining the line-up and menswear on a hot streak, even if the industry remains wary of economic headwinds. The changing world of menswear is evident on red carpets around the world, where the likes of Timothee Chalamet and Harry Styles have helped redefine male style, ditching monochrome tuxedos in favor of daring outfits and bright colors. Just last week, Vogue declared that "the night belonged to menswear" at the Golden Globes, and stores have been reporting unprecedented growth in the sector for months.

So the buzz is deafening around the menswear shows hitting Paris from Tuesday, boosted by the return of two big

hitters in Saint Laurent on Tuesday's opening night, and John Galliano's Maison Margiela closing the week next Sunday. Saint Laurent has not presented a men's show in the official calendar since Belgian designer Anthony Vaccarello took the reins in 2016, preferring one-off appearances in exotic locations such as Marrakesh and Venice.

Succession talk

In Milan last week-where fashion shows have not even finished as the industry caravan decamps for Paris-the talk was all about who would succeed flamboyant creative director Alessandro Michele at Gucci following his recent surprise departure. In Paris, the big unanswered question is who will take over at

Louis Vuitton following the early death of Virgil Abloh in November 2021.

The label got fashionista tongues wagging when it announced that Thursday's show is being handled by wunderkind Colm Dillane, the man behind hot young Brooklyn label KidSuper-along with an accompanying film shot by French director Michel Gondry. While many are worried about the impact of possible recessions, tightening environmental regulations and inflationary costs, menswear is seen as a bright spot. "Saint Laurent, Gucci and Givenchy are working almost better in men's than women's at the moment," said Alice Feillard, director of buying for Paris department store Galeries Lafayette. "We've been seeing this exponential growth for two or three

years... It's really taking off," she added.

'New field of expression'

Even men's undies are gaining ground on the female market. Male underwear was up 3.3 percent in the first 10 months of 2022 to 400 million euros (\$435 million), against 2.5 percent growth in women's lingerie (to a still dominant 1.5 billion euros), according to figures from the Salon International de la Lingerie, which is held in Paris this month.

"Menswear has greatly evolved in recent years," said luxury expert Serge Carreira of Sciences Po university. "It has created a major new field of expression, innovation and research for the houses." Givenchy notably abandoned haute couture and took up menswear after the

arrival in 2020 of US designer Matthew Williams, known for his luxury streetwear. They stage their catwalk show on Wednesday, with key rival Dior strutting out on Friday.

One name that often comes up as a possible successor at Louis Vuitton is Grace Wales Bonner, who presents her own show on Tuesday. She is part of a growing trend of women designers who focus on dressing men, along with fellow Brit, Bianca Saunders. There is also excitement for the return of award-winning US designer Emily Bode, known for using recycled material, who stayed away from Paris during the pandemic.—AFP



Models present creations by Fendi during the Autumn-Winter 2023-2024 Men's fashion show, as part of the Milan Fashion Week, in Milan. — AFP photos

13th proves lucky for \$1.35bn lottery ticket holder in US

Friday the 13th proved lucky for one lottery player in the US state of Maine, whose winning ticket is worth an estimated \$1.35 billion, Mega Millions officials announced Saturday. The winner's identity has yet to be announced, but only one person matched all six numbers, thereby claiming the second-largest jackpot in Mega Millions history (someone in South Carolina won \$1.53 billion in 2018).

"Congratulations to the Maine State

Lottery, which has just won its first-ever Mega Millions jackpot," said Pat McDonald, lead director of the Mega Millions Consortium. "It's the fourth billion-dollar jackpot in Mega Millions history." The big win was the lottery's seventh on a Friday the 13th—a date normally considered unlucky—since the game began in 2002.

In the latest drawing, Mega Millions said, 14 people in 10 states matched the five white-ball numbers (30, 43, 45, 46, 61) to win \$1 million each, but only the single ticket-holder in the northeastern state of Maine also guessed the gold Mega Ball number: 14. The jackpot had been growing since October 14, when winning tickets in California and Florida shared a prize of \$502 million. The next drawing is Tuesday, with a jackpot set back to the starting value of \$20 million.—AFP

Harry reconciliation with royal family 'possible' before coronation

A reconciliation between Prince Harry and the British royal family could take place before the coronation of King Charles III in May, a report said on Saturday, following the publication of his scorching tell-all memoir "Spare". A source close to the king who also knows Harry and his wife Meghan told The Sunday Times they believed a meeting would take place in coming months before the coronation on May 6.

"It's going to take flexibility on all sides, but it can be done, it's fixable," the newspaper quoted the source as saying in a report published on its website. "It needs Harry over here, in the room with the King and Prince of Wales, a couple of other family members, some of 'his people' he trusts who always had his back, so he doesn't think he's being ambushed," the source added.

After months of anticipation and a blanket publicity blitz, Harry's book "Spare" went on sale Tuesday, clocking up a record 1.4 million English language sales in its first 24 hours. "Both sides need to hold their hands up and admit we didn't get everything right, and we got a lot wrong, and we have to say to him 'we

understand the pain you've been through'. The King can do it," the source said. Although the royal family has not commented on the book, the source said Harry's elder brother, heir to the throne Prince William was "burning inside" over his sibling's disloyalty.

the newspaper, Harry and Meghan—who quit royal life in the UK for California in 2020 — must be invited in before the historic royal event. If that didn't happen, the spiraling feud between the brothers would become "a circus and distraction". In his blockbuster autobiography, Harry



Prince Harry's memoir Spare is offered for sale at a Barnes & Noble store in Chicago, Illinois. — AFP

'Distraction'

"Not everyone here behaved well, but Harry's got to be able to sit down and say 'we didn't behave well either'. That takes a lot of academic flexibility, which Harry isn't great at," the source added. Harry, who accuses his brother in the book of pushing him to the ground in an altercation in 2019, has said he would like to be reconciled with his family but that he needs "accountability" first. The source said time was now of the essence. "We've got to move on it, and get it done by April. Then, we need to get the wives in. The King needs a clear run for the coronation."

Another royal source agreed, telling

complains bitterly of his treatment as the second son of Charles and the late Princess Diana.

The book also details a string of often petty grievances after he became engaged to Meghan who has also complained she was not supported by the royals. Public opinion in Britain has swung against Harry in the wake of the book's publication — in the middle of the country's most serious cost of living crisis in a generation. A YouGov survey published in The Times daily found only 24 percent of people now have a positive view of the prince—down from 80 percent a decade ago—with 68 percent critical.—AFP

