

NEEDLE AND THREAD

If there is an industry that contemplates body adornment as much as the tattoo world, it's fashion. Discover five cutting-edge brands—and the talented creatives behind them who mix ink with style. BY SUZANNE WEINSTOCK



DAFTBIRD “For me there was nothing sexier than a girl in a men’s woven button-down,” says Josh Christopher. And thus was born DaftBird. The self-taught designer spent nine years as a talent agent before transitioning into fashion. “That sucked—there was no loyalty,” Christopher says of his first career. So he walked away from corporate life and started a political T-shirt line, Apathetic, in 1999. “Lack of Interest,” the definition of *apathetic*, is tattooed across his chest. “I thought I was going to be some revolutionary activist,” Christopher says. Instead, he decided one voice does not, in fact, make a difference and funneled the proceeds first into a showroom and later into DaftBird. Christopher launched the line four years ago with three men’s T-shirts tailored to fit women, and now has a line complete with tweed trousers, button-downs, and, of course, lots of twists on the tee. This fall’s collection is an especially important one for Christopher, who says it marks the first time he’s really believed that DaftBird is going to live up to his vision. “If I were playing poker my whole hand would be in,” he says. “I’m going to do this right now and take this to the next level.”

MADE HER THINK

Meredith Kahn's jewelry line, Made Her Think, is all about infusing the dark and edgy with a touch of femininity and fantasy. "Living in New York City, you see there's so much beauty and grit, and they coexist. When I create stuff, if it doesn't have those elements together it doesn't feel right," the native metropolitan explains, describing herself as a diehard romantic who also sees life as "sludgy and dirty and spiky and painful."

The line went from hobby to hot in two months flat. In March 2004, Kahn took pieces she had begun creating for herself and friends to a Manhattan boutique where every piece got picked up. She followed up that success with a trunk show at Jill Stuart. By May, *Lucky* and *Vogue* were knocking on her door.

Kahn named Made Her Think's most recent collection "In My Delirium" after she had a moment of clarity while delirious with a fever. The pieces include knuckle-encasing rings and heavy cuffs accented by crystals and semiprecious stones, not to mention rough-cut diamonds—the perfect metaphor for the line's overall aesthetic.



DUCKIE BROWN "It's part what I want to wear and part a fantasy of what I want to wear," Steven Cox says of the cheeky menswear line Duckie Brown, which he started in 2001 with partner Daniel Silver. The spirit of the line also extends to Florsheim by Duckie Brown, a collaboration that lets the designers put their spin on traditional men's footwear.

Each season the duo tries to push the boundaries of what men are willing to wear with an intelligent sense of humor. Cox was schooled in England, where he was grounded in traditional tailoring and fine art, before coming to work for American

heavyweights like Ralph Lauren and Tommy Hilfiger. "Duckie Brown is part American sportswear, part traditional English tailoring, and part pushing the boundaries, combining things that shouldn't go together but do go together," he says.

The fall collection is a nostalgic one for Cox, full of U.K.-made tartans and wools and drawing inspiration from a group of his childhood schoolmates who favored pairing smart jackets with short, cuffed pants and high boots. And the designer's most recent tattoo, on his hand, expresses his contentment with the line: "I felt like I've done well, so I gave myself a star," he says.

CAST OF VICES

We've all heard the saying "wear your heart on your sleeve." Well, Cast of Vices prefers that you wear your poison around your neck. The tongue-in-cheek line offers metal casts of cigarette butts, beer caps, pharmaceutical drugs like OxyContin and Xanax, and even baggies of cocaine as charms.

The daring line is the brainchild of jeweler Jay LeCompte and photographer and creative director Christopher Glancy. Glancy was already in the process of developing a capsule

collection of jewelry when he met LeCompte in Venice, CA, and asked for technical advice. A partnership was born and the concept evolved naturally from there.

There's highbrow thought behind the lowbrow goods. "We'd like to think of Cast of Vices as a story of pop art and social commentary told through jewelry," says Glancy, whose preferred vices are coffee and Norman Mailer. "We call out contemporary culture's dirty little secrets by placing them on a pedestal, both to be admired and critiqued." But let's be honest—in the end, it's all in good fun.



PHOTO BY HARPER SMITH



PHOTO BY TOM MEDVEDICH

SCHOTT N.Y.C.

Greg Chapman looks as tough as the heavy-duty motorcycle jackets he's designing for Schott N.Y.C. as its new creative director. Big and burly with a lumberjack beard and ink all over, he's a vintage enthusiast and biker who, ironically, expresses his love of America with a British accent that gives away his roots in Manchester, England. "It's a true Americana brand, and we're bringing it up to date," Chapman says.

Schott produced the first-ever motorcycle jacket, the Perfecto (immortalized by everyone from James Dean to Joey Ramone), in 1928, and manufactured the iconic bomber jackets and naval peacoats that American troops wore during World War II.

"The line is getting some revamping," Chapman says of the face-lift he's giving Schott. "We're taking the heritage and making it a more accessible brand with new silhouettes."

The ultra-stiff, break-it-in-yourself Perfectos aren't going anywhere but, for those who want to cheat a bit, Schott's newest jackets have an aged, vintage feel. And coming in Spring 2011 is a new high-end outerwear brand, Perfecto Brand by Schott, that will expand the line from its faithful fan base to a new audience. Old-school Americana may be the brand's roots, but Chapman is on a mission to give it some wings.