



# MAD HATTERS

**THERE CAME A TIPPING POINT—OR WAS** it a tipping point?—in the fall collections when the runways started to look more like Royal Ascot, the annual British horse race event swarmed by hatted bluebloods. What started off as a mere tête-à-tête in New York (mini berets at Marc Jacobs, outsize fur trappers for The Row) morphed into an unabashed ode to millinery.

Indeed, over in London, Milan and Paris, designers adorned their collections with stylish lids. From cow-print caps at Burberry Prorsum to felt fedoras at Gucci and wide brims at Lanvin, the fashion world fell head over heels for hats.

Once upon a time, the accessory stood for convention and propriety; no dame would have dared leave the house bare-headed.

But now, in our era of casual cotton tees and jeans, elaborate headgear—from the staunchly stiff to the surreal fascinators sported at the Royal Wedding (we're looking at you, Princess Beatrice)—makes for some irresistible eye candy. "When I started at the Royal College of Art, they thought hats were only for old ladies," says Philip Treacy, the couture milliner behind Beatrice's quirky crustacean topper. "A hat can completely change the personality of the wearer, making them stand and walk differently. A hat can make that person feel interesting."

And lest anyone think this fascination with fascinators is limited to the other side of the Atlantic, consider Toronto-based designer Karyn Gingras of Lilliput Hats, who has already seen a "big time" upswing in business. "The [Royal] Wedding was a spectacle of great and poor taste, but above all it got people talking about hats," she says. "Once they try one on, they're hooked."

For Stephen Jones, the hat trick couldn't come at a better time. In September, London's legendary rad hatter brought his Victoria and Albert Museum exhibition, *Hats: An Anthology by Stephen Jones*, stateside to New York. So how would the natty milliner suggest wearing this season's must-have accessory? "With fun, humour and red lipstick." —Aya McMillan



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