



FAREWELL MONSIEUR FASHION

Jean-Paul Gaultier says Adieu to the Runway

On 22 January 2020, fashion icon, Jean-Paul Gaultier, said goodbye to haute couture with a final runway show at Paris Fashion Week.

With an array of major supermodels wearing his designs, including Karlie Kloss, Gigi, and Bella Hadid, fashion's original bad boy wrapped up his 50-year career with a spectacular show that celebrated the androgyny and sailor couture for which he had become famous.

The 67-year-old designer staged his swansong at the Théâtre du Châtelet, bidding adieu to the industry as loudly as he could by bringing the biggest names in fashion to Paris for what was clearly an entertaining evening. Boy George performed at the open and close of the show, setting the mood for the evening with Amy Winehouse's *Back to Black* and *Church of the Poison Mind*.

The designs of the collection were stunning and true to Gaultier's style, featuring fitted pieces, luxurious gowns, exaggerated shoulders, and much more. Supermodels were joined by celebrities, dancers, contortionists and drag queens on stage, for an unforgettable show that had the hundreds of audience members cheering non-stop for almost two hours.

For many, the show was an emotional goodbye, not only because Gaultier is beloved for his iconic designs, but also because he is one of the few living designers to be considered a national treasure, instantly recognisable to the public for his peroxide hair, Breton stripes and Cheshire cat grin.

THE INFLUENCER PIONEER

Although he may have always been famously described as the *enfant terrible* of fashion, today Gaultier is one of the industry's *éminence grise*. In many ways, it took the fashion world decades to catch up with him. As early as 1976, Gaultier was a pioneer of diversity, streetwear, gender-fluidity and recycling – all of which are now marketing buzzwords for fashion houses. He was often a champion of models who defied easy categorisation – whether that was in age, body, gender or race – regularly scouting them on the street too. His clothes were shown on both men and women, which led people to describe his work as “androgynous” long before “gender-neutral” was in vogue.





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When he showed men in skirts in 1984, it caused as much controversy as when Madonna walked on stage in his famous “cone bra” during her *Blonde Ambition Tour* of 1990, or when she appeared topless in the 1993 fashion show that Gaultier staged as an AIDS fundraiser.

Despite his iconoclasm, Gaultier is rarely spoken of with the same reverence as his contemporaries – such as the late Karl Lagerfeld or Azzedine Alaïa. That might be because

he appeared as a co-presenter on the satirical television show, *Eurotrash*, which was sneered at by the fashion world but managed to endear him to a mainstream audience and convey his naughty sense of humour. He later said that was the reason he missed out on the artistic directorship of Dior in 1996, which went to John Galliano instead.

Over the years, the Gaultier business dwindled, despite a steady income from his bestselling fragrances.





In 2015, he shuttered his ready-to-wear label and continued to produce only two haute couture collections a year.

Yet, his influence can still be felt across generations. The theatricality of his shows inspired designers such as Galliano and Alexander McQueen. Many fashion household names began their careers as his employees, including Martin Margiela and Nicolas Ghesquière, both of whom were present at his final show. They were also joined by heavyweights Isabel Marant, Dries van Noten, the shoe guru Christian Louboutin, Clare Waight Keller, Christian Lacroix, and the fashion couple, Viktor Horsting and Rolf Snoeren. All of them cheered, some of them cried, and even Anna Wintour could not contain her excitement as the show became more theatrical and camp as it went on.

Although this was the last Jean Paul Gaultier show, the designer has confirmed that there would be projects to come. For now, it is the end of an era. Fashion's *enfant terrible* has finally outgrown the industry that he revolutionised. 10