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Talking point: the return of real fur

Real fur - in every colour of the rainbow and endorsed by celebrities - has crept back into fashion. So what changed?



Singer Lily Allen drapes a fox fur coat by Hockley worth £2,111 over her shoulder at the 2014 NME Awards Photo: GETTY

Love it or loathe it, there's no denying that real fur is enjoying a fashion moment.

Be it draped off Lily Allen's shoulder in electric blue and green stripes on the NME Awards' red carpet, or showcased as next season's ultimate cover-up on the catwalks at London Fashion Week, fur is noticeably back and looking bolder than ever.

Three years ago, a poll by the RSPCA revealed that 95 per cent of people in the UK would refuse to wear real fur. But what would that figure be today? We are currently bombarded by images of influential celebrities unabashedly giving fur the thumbs up, and gone are the days when fur was just for wealthy women of a certain age who liked their cover-ups to be functional (i.e. warm), luxurious and evocative of old Hollywood glamour. Now, you can pick up a eye-

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poppingly colourful fox fur stole which won't break the bank, or order a coat so bright that it would make the characters on [Sesame Street](#) feel lacklustre.

Designers have become captivated by fur and the way in which it can be dyed and manipulated to form finished items that look completely unlike the animal at the origin. And of course it is undeniably warm - try telling your average American, Italian or Russian fashion editor to trade their fur coats for a down-filled jacket when it's minus 10° at New York Fashion Week and see how far you get. But this season, as Telegraph fashion editor Lisa Armstrong noted, even the British press were joining in: "The Brits never wore it, even those editing Vogue or Bazaar. Younger women steered clear... but now, not so much."

Take global superstar Rihanna, who has taken to sporting a Liberace-style, calf-grazing fur coat on several occasions this winter. Looked up to as a trendsetter by millions of fans, she's been captured in a hot pink bomber jacket by Tom Ford and wore a grey wrap to last night's Lanvin show at Paris Fashion Week. A photo of her skiing in a navy blue, fur-trimmed coat uploaded to her Instagram page didn't deter some 367,000 followers from pressing 'Like'. That's a whole lot of furry love.

Then there's Miley Cyrus, who has taken to wearing her own Liberace tribute coat on stage, while fellow singer Rita Ora flaunted a striking mink and beaver coat in white, black and grey rumoured to be worth £30,000 on several occasions during Milan Fashion Week. And model and 'style icon' Kate Moss certainly doesn't share the vegetarian values of her friend Stella McCartney - she owns a vast collection of furs and doesn't apologise for wearing them during England's generally mild winters.



Fur lovers Rita Ora and Rihanna. Photos: Getty

But fur wearers are not welcome everywhere; as of yesterday, London nightclub Mahiki - a favourite with the young royals - launched its anti-fur stance with the help of celebrity Meg Matthews and a neon sign with a slash running through the word 'fur'. Entrants to the club will not be admitted if they are wearing a real pelt, and staff have been shown how to spot real fur from its faux counterparts.



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The establishment's creative director, Michael Evans, felt compelled to highlight the cruelty around wearing fur when Matthews introduced him to the facts. "I was just so shocked and appalled by how horribly they [the animals] suffer, for what amounts to nothing really," he explains. "Since we have been around for eight years and have a huge celeb following, I thought it was the natural thing to do, to put the ban in place. I believe some people don't really understand, so teaching them and creating awareness around the issue is what we are trying to do."

Naturally, Mahiki's move is fully backed by The People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA). The organisation enjoyed public awareness globally with its 'I'd rather go naked than wear fur' campaign, which saw famous supermodels pose in the nude in the Nineties. But that proved to be just another modelling assignment in the eyes of Naomi Campbell, who went on to wear fur at her leisure and even posed for couture fur designer Dennis Basso wearing nothing *but* fur.

Has its message got lost? Does PETA believe it is losing the fight?

"Fur is so cheap these days that furriers have resorted to paying designers and celebrities to use it, but its cheapness is reflected in the world of Kardashian freebies and the shallowness of the wearer" said PETA founder Ingrid E Newkirk when contacted by the Telegraph.

Indeed, fur-lover Kim Kardashian, who just happens to be the second most searched-for celebrity online in America and one of the most photographed women in the world, is another devoted follower of fur. As is her other half, rapper Kanye West. And in this age of Instagram and 'selfies', is it any wonder that a new generation of fashion lovers are growing up non-plussed by fur's pervading presence?



Fur on the autumn/winter 2014 catwalks at Christopher Kane and Roksanda Ilincic. Photo: Isidore Montag

PETA advocates that animals are not for humans to eat, use for entertainment, experiment on, abuse or wear; in its eyes, the only people who should benefit from fur are the homeless via its 'fur kitchens', because they "cannot afford to make a compassionate choice."

There is some middle ground to be trod, however, in the form of two new London-based brands whose fake fur accessories have caught the imagination of fashion insiders and whose products have been snapped up by desirable stockists such as Net-A-Porter.com and Avenue 32.

[Charlotte Simone's](#) 'popsicle' scarves (which resemble animal tails with a boldly-coloured tip) come as standard in fur, but can be made to order in faux versions, and have found themselves around the necks of Sienna Miller and the aforementioned Rita Ora (the latter of whom will have undoubtedly opted for the real deal).



Olivia Palermo and Sienna Miller wearing Charlotte Simone

Designer Hannah Weiland however, will always be faking it. [Shrimps](#), her label of brightly coloured, striped coats have been welcomed into the wardrobes of model Laura Bailey and Net-A-Porter.com founder Natalie Massenet. Weiland doesn't judge others for wearing fur, but would never wear it herself.

"I decided to produce a line based on faux fur as I discovered a way to produce a collection that was as luxurious and soft as the real thing, yet purely faux" she explains. "I also could experiment more with colours, designs and my collection using faux fur which was interesting to me as a designer."

Weiland's colour combinations are crazy: she mixes orange with baby pink, camel with neon pink and baby blue with navy, making her coats utterly distinctive.



Natalie Massenet sports a coat by Shrimps; a clutch bag by the label

Several London Fashion Week designers were contacted to comment on their inclusion of fur in their most recent collections but at the time of going to press had not responded. At least one leading fashion editor is known to have boycotted the catwalk show of LFW's leading light, Christopher Kane, after seeing two fur sponsors listed on the invite.

Real fur is undoubtedly a tricky issue to justify in this day and age. As PETA put it to the Telegraph: "Who doesn't know that fur is not plucked from trees or dug out of the ground but is obtained in repulsive ways that fly in the face of how we define ourselves as a society and describe ourselves personally?". But ultimately, the choice is down to the consumer.

We just hope Kate Moss doesn't get caught out the next time she wants to join her pals at Mahiki.

<http://fashion.telegraph.co.uk/article/TMG1066276/Talking-point-the-return-of-real-fur.html>