

A NEW KIND OF FOLK

Thought bright prints, tribal motifs, and flowing fabrics were only for the warmer months? The fall collections, filled with a modern take on folksy staples, will make you think again.

By Akeela Bhattay



Pratap's fall collection titled Far East. Following a similar path, Maria Grazia Chiuri and Pierpaolo Piccioli of Valentino concocted delicate tulle gowns embroidered with hearts, hummingbirds, and butterflies inspired by the artist Giosetta Fioroni. Alberta Ferretti, too, paid homage to the magic of nature, with a palette of rich, earthy moss mixed with the vibrant colours of the ocean bed that dominated the chiffon gowns, brocade and boiled wool garments, all adorned with lace, embroidery, and prints depicting scenes of a fairytale forest and the sea. And let's not forget Sarah Burton's offerings at Alexander McQueen. Billowing sleeves, white petticoats, soft silhouettes, and folksy peasant dresses in *broderie Anglaise* were mixed with organza, brocades, and sculpted collars: A mesmerising look brought to the present with embellished ankle boots.

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discreet luxury. Don't overdose on folk though, asserts Laura Larbalestier, director of merchandising at the London department store Browns, for whom Dolce & Gabbana and Burberry stood out. "For the trend to be contemporary, it needs to be broken down into one folk piece per outfit," she says. You can either go with simple cuts in rich prints, or opt to mix everything to create a unique look. "Try to keep it fun; it shouldn't be too serious after all," she adds. Cinched waists will balance a float-y style, while knee-high socks and buckled shoes will add attitude. Think Rita Ora's John Rocha ensemble at the Brit Awards, Marion Cotillard in Mary Katrantzou at the New York premiere of *The Immigrant*, or Felicity Jones's Erdem gown at the New York premiere of *Breathe In*. Kate Moss and Sienna Miller have been pioneers of folk fashion for eons, so if in doubt, take your cue from these British style icons.

Whichever style you choose, have fun. At its most basic, folk fashion is about encouraging freedom of dress. This new revival honours that ideal with a fresh take, keeping the symbols of folk fashion alive. This season, it's all about making folk and boho styles luxurious and wearable at any time of day, anywhere, and beyond the summer months. ■

The arrival of fall usually means closing the door to bright summer hues and loud prints. Not this season. Designers across the globe came together with a modern slant on what we know as folk fashion. Even the Fashion & Textiles Museum in London and American Folk Art

Museum in New York got in on the act with their folk fashion exhibitions. And determined to tell the modern narrative, the likes of Dolce & Gabbana, Burberry, Etro, Sanchita, Kenzo, and John Rocha explored a new tale of folk.

This is a dramatic turn from folk's original guise: Kaftans, fringing, floral and tribal headdresses, and cheesecloth skirts of the late '60s and '70s, where designers unveiled looks inspired by the traditional dresses of Eastern Europe and the Middle East. The age of 'make love, not war' and 'Flower Power' transformed the fashions of the day (a trend depicted superbly in the final season of *Mad Men*). Halston experimented with flowing, tie-dyed garments, Yves Saint Laurent played with quilting, and Kenzo Takada sent out his patchworks and explosion of colours. All these elements have been revived and refreshed for this season, and we see shadows of this influence in Etro's tradition-inspired collection and Burberry's serendipitous '70s-plus-tribal lineup. In the most talked about collections, these folksy elements signal the arrival of a new kind of folk, one cocooned in fantasy.

Out of all the interpretations of folk this season, the magical and fantastic shone bright, bolstered by this year's big-screen fairy tales: Angelina Jolie's *Maleficent*, *Into the Woods* starring Meryl Streep, Emily Blunt, Anna Kendrick, and Johnny Depp, the much-anticipated *Beauty and the Beast* starring Emma Watson, and *Cinderella* starring Lily James, Helena Bonham Carter, and Cate Blanchett. "For this collection, our main sources of inspiration were fairies," says Domenico Dolce of Dolce & Gabbana. "We wanted to build a fairytale, and imagined a magical Sicilian garden, complete with animals, elves, and knights," he adds. Stefano Gabbana elaborates: "A garden of flowers, knights wearing beautiful hoods and fur, like a modern version of Little Red Riding Hood..." The easiest result of such an idea could have been caricature or costume, but we got subtle hints of the medieval and ethereal in modern and wearable versions.

Hong Kong-born Ireland-based John Rocha took this folk fantasy and combined it with the Gothic using sensual velvets in rich autumnal hues, layered tulle skirts, making them unquestionably lux (reminiscent of the McQueen dress worn by Elle Fanning at the Tokyo premiere of *Maleficent*). His delicate crochet dresses shimmered with silk velvet inserts, laser-cut dresses recalled Rob Ryan art, and 3-D flowers bloomed on billowing gowns. His was a look that emphatically roared fairytale-with-attitude, and closer home, we felt the same vibe in Payal

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