

Backstage at A-COLD-WALL*'s collection.
Photograph by Christina Fragkou

the unsung heroes of fashion week

With the clothes taking the spotlight of Fashion weeks every year, it has become far too easy to forget the unsung heroes of the catwalk: the musicians. This season fashion designers have amped up their gigs in the hope to make their audiences feel uncomfortable, emotional and nostalgic.

Musicians and fashion designers have a much closer relationship than we first thought, with new up-and-coming fashion designer Samuel Ross, from A-COLD-WALL*, really helping us to see just how important this relationship is when creating a stunning catwalk show.

A-COLD-WALL*'s show, presented at Old Temple Brewery, looked like a demolition site and the audience were given safety equipment to match it. Samuel Ross, the Creative Director, described this collection as “a sartorial somatization of the visceral emotion of physical space and architecture”, which basically means a ‘physical manifestation of distress’. This theme of distress was not just shown through his collection which was, falling apart, ripped at the seams with only metal chains, keeping the flailing plastic on the body; but also, through the use of an untuned violin and an electronic keyboard causing the audience to become distressed as well.

The constant screeching of the violin was Ross' own idea as he admitted in an interview with LOVE magazine that “I've scored all of my short films and all shows excluding AW18”. This disturbing accompaniment added a horror film atmosphere to the catwalk, and the ghost-like models, stomping around the room, did not help lighten the mood. Their washed out faces and scrawny physiques showed the theme of deconstruction

even within the human body.

As the violin reached its crescendo and the models all vanished, we were left to stomach a bloodied, naked man appearing out of a broken-down box. This vile sight was enough to put anyone off their dinner and most of the audience legged it out of this venue.

However, despite the music creating an uncomfortable atmosphere: would the catwalk have had the same impact if it had been shown in silence? Clearly the impact of all these aspects helped us to see how disturbed the inside of Samuel Ross' mind must be.



Mary Katrantzou, whose collection was described as “a continued conversation on old ideas” by Chelsea Carter at EDITORIALIST online, used the work of her old best friend, the legendary composer, Vangelis, to accompany her gorgeous designs. This helped create a stunning show to commemorate the 10th anniversary of her brand, making this show one of the most talked about at London Fashion Week.

The unpublished work of Vangelis was something none of us were expecting and left us all wondering, what could be next? Could Vangelis release an EP when Katrantzou releases this collection early 2019? It's plausible.

With his most famous pieces being the soundtracks to Chariots of Fire and Blade Runner, Vangelis is a collector's piece himself and therefore, Katrantzou really left no aspect of 'The Collection' unplanned. From postage stamps made from crochet, to embroidered butterflies trapped in netted shoulder pads, she made sure all kinds of collectors were referenced in some way.

By showcasing in London's Roundhouse concert venue, we can see how successful she was. When rock stars would first perform here the atmosphere was electric, and every seat was filled. This was the same today despite the event being completely different. Therefore, Katrantzou clearly understands that fashion really is the greatest gig of them all.



Richard Quinn aimed for a show that would deliver “high drama” and it looks like he succeeded. He had cascading floral installations, a lightning storm backdrop and the London Philharmonic Orchestra. Quinn made this all look effortless to the front row full of students but we all know that this was difficult to pull off.

Lana del Ray’s ‘Young and Beautiful’ played by an orchestra was something you never knew you needed to hear but everyone quickly fell in love with it. The bright, floral patterned maxi dresses (thanks to the Epson printing sponsor), followed by a darker toned, loose fitting, pant suit, perfectly matched the lyrics: “will you still love me when I’m no longer young and beautiful?”

Then by draping black stain capes over the top, adding in gimp masks alongside bouquets of black roses, we were able to fully understand the lyric “when I got nothing but my aching soul”. These models looked they were mourning the death of their younger selves and Quinn really couldn’t have thought of any more details.



Raf Simons however, didn’t just use music for dramatic effect. While still making his mark at Calvin Klein, he created a metaphorical ‘Jaws’ themed catwalk for his SS19 collection. He had everything from a blood-red carpet, to floor length film posters, which

all helped him to set the scene for the story he was about to tell. The use of neoprene on the bodysuits to look like wetsuits, and the jagged ripped edges of the t-shirts, made the models look like they'd just been through their own battle with a shark. Simons referred to Trump as the shark and used the same suspenseful music, by John Williams, to make everyone feel like they were Trump's victims. He filled the room with dread, unease and anxiety – much like how the original audience felt watching Jaws for the first time.

His music created a political statement and made the audience understand how he – and millions of others – feel in this Trump dictated America. Being a Belgian in a currently racist America, he knows first-hand what all this injustice feels like. Simons showed the vitality of music within catwalks, not just as a dramatic effect, but to help get messages across.

So next time you watch a catwalk show, make sure to listen out for our unsung heroes. The musicians aren't just there for you to ignore them -especially in Richard Quinn's case. From dramatic, nostalgic uses, to a much more serious political stance, this year's catwalks featured music in a much more powerful way than before. To find out who is a good designer, listen to their setlists.

Written by **Lara Brent**

Date: 04/10/2018

Written for i-D online.