



## This Week: Success and Failure at New York Fashion Week

The schedule is packed with brands that are riding the contemporary boom, but also emerging labels that face an uncertain future.

By Brian Baskin



Even in the era of tariffs and economic uncertainty, you can find success stories everywhere in American fashion. Only some of them will be on display at New York Fashion Week.

Let's start with who won't be there: Usually there's at least one or two runway collaborations with mass-market brands, or major activations. While it seems likely Gap will find a way to insert itself into the conversation, most mall retailers seem content without the fashion week halo effect. It's doubtful anything we see on the runway in the coming days will come close to touching the earned media value or sales generated by American Eagle's one-two punch of Sydney Sweeney and Travis Kelce.

New York is playing a bigger role in the boom in contemporary labels. Luxury's commercial and creative funk — and especially those price hikes — are playing to the American fashion industry's strengths. There are plenty of US brands that sell bags and clothes designed to appeal to consumers who can't or won't pay for Dior or Gucci. Ralph Lauren is showing on Sept. 10, right before the official start to the week; Coach and Tory Burch are back as usual, and Jenni Kayne is hosting a presentation as it embarks on an international expansion. The small list of non-US brands on the schedule is also tilted heavily towards minimalist contemporary labels, including the UK's Cos, Sweden's Toteme and Ukraine's Bevza.

For most of these brands, New York is one of many marketing moments, and probably not the biggest. The stakes are higher at Calvin Klein, which relaunched its higher-priced Collection earlier this year under creative director Veronica Leoni. It too is offering refined minimalism at a sub-luxury price point, but could use a buzzy runway to convince consumers the brand stands for more than underwear, denim and fragrance.

As for the emerging designers and small luxury labels that make up the bulk of the schedule, there is the usual churn, and the usual questions about whether the marketing pop is worth the trouble.

The dire state of wholesale is casting a longer shadow than usual this season. Ssense, which plans to file for Canada's equivalent of bankruptcy protection, carries about two dozen brands that are showing in New York, and is likely a major, if not *the* major, stockist for many newer and smaller labels. Its fate will be decided by a judge in the coming days. In a memo to employees, founder and chief executive Rami Atallah said it would be business as usual while the company works through its difficulties — but with sales plunging and lenders pushing for an acquisition, that may be cold comfort to New York brands that were hoping to sell their runway looks via the retailer.

*The Week Ahead wants to hear from you! Send tips, suggestions, complaints and compliments to [brian.baskin@businessoffashion.com](mailto:brian.baskin@businessoffashion.com).*

