From classic, clean lines to avant-garde shock value, from everyday items to haute couture, Swedish fashion brands such as (from left) Filippa K, Cheap Monday and Acne have built up a strong reputation around the world.

FASHION:

THE SWEDISH FASHION WONDER

‘Less is more’ accurately describes much of Swedish fashion. There’s a fondness for discreet colors and a pared-down, refined look. As with so many aspects of life, Swedes tend to take a practical approach to what they wear, but this doesn’t mean there is any lack of creativity.

About ten years ago, people started talking about the Swedish ‘fashion wonder’. Opinions differ as to what this actually means. Is it a reference to Acne’s fairy-tale success, to the huge quantities of clothing that H&M sells worldwide, or to artistic, avant-garde fashion?

Some people argue that there have in fact been several Swedish fashion wonders, although the generic term refers to the rapid development of Swedish fashion as a whole.

Filippa K and Anna Holtblad were among the trailblazers for the Swedish fashion miracle. Filippa K’s business idea is to design, manufacture and sell wearable fashion garments and accessories with a timeless style.

Early on, Filippa K made her name in Sweden with her characteristic women’s stretch jeans. A few years later, Filippa K Man was launched, and the brand began to spread across Europe and North America. Today, Filippa K clothes are sold in some 700 stores in 17 countries. filippa-k.com

Designer jeans have made a significant contribution to Swedish fashion exports. Acne Jeans, founded in 1996, placed Sweden on the international jeans map. Acne saw a rising demand for denim on the market and designed 100 different styles of unisex jeans. Once primarily a jeans label, Acne now produces internationally recognised fashion collections. shop.acnestudios.com

Anna Holtblad has received wide acclaim for her knitted collections. Holtblad sells her designs via her own shop in Stockholm and via retailers in Europe, North America and Japan. annaholtblad.com

About ten years ago, people started talking about the Swedish ‘fashion wonder’. Opinions differ as to what this actually means. Is it a reference to Acne’s fairy-tale success, to the huge quantities of clothing that H&M sells worldwide, or to artistic, avant-garde fashion?
LEARN MORE

STOCKHOLM FASHION WEEK

Twice a year, in August and in January/February, the Swedish Fashion Council organises Stockholm Fashion Week, an event for the fashion industry. In May and November, the council organises Stockholm Fashion Week Retailer Collections, aimed mostly at Swedish journalists and trade professionals.

stockholmfashionweek.com

MERCEDES-BENZ FASHION WEEK IN STOCKHOLM

Held twice a year. Its main focus is to get the international fashion community, including the media and fashion buyers, to take a closer look at the Swedish fashion scene.

mercedesbenzfashionweek.se

THE SWEDISH FASHION COUNCIL

Set up in 1979 to promote Swedish fashion in Sweden and abroad, the council analyses trends in fashion and interior design, and is a platform for cooperation in the Swedish fashion and textile trade.

moderadet.se

NORDIC FASHION ASSOCIATION

Founded in 2008 by five Nordic fashion organisations: the Danish Fashion Institute, Helsinki Design Week, the Icelandic Fashion Council, Oslo Fashion Week and the Swedish Fashion Council.

The NFA’s aim is to promote cross-border projects in the fashion field. One such example is NICE – Nordic Initiative, Clean and Ethical – a joint commitment by the Nordic fashion industry to take a leading role in social and environmental issues.

nicefashion.org

Designer jeans have made a significant contribution to Swedish fashion exports. WeSC and Nudie are among the biggest names in Swedish denim.

Cheap Monday’s characteristic unwashed slim jeans with the skull label have spread across the world since the brand was launched in 2004. Cheap Monday is now found in 35 countries with 1,800 stores. Today, it is owned by H&M.

cheapmonday.com

WeSC (WeAretheSuperlativeConspiracy) was founded in 2000. Initially flourishing mainly in street and skateboarding subcultures, the brand soon became internationally known as a result of clever marketing. Instead of regular advertising, WeSC largely relied on famous actors and artists to wear and thereby promote their clothes. Today, the brand has stores in cities such as Tokyo, Paris and New York.

wesc.com

Nudie Jeans, founded in 2001, was one of Sweden’s fastest-growing fashion companies in the early 2000s. Its long-term goal is to use organic cotton as much as possible in its garments.

For the spring/summer 2013 season, 100 per cent of Nudie’s denim garments were made from organic cotton.

nudiejeans.com

Whyred produced its first menswear collection in 1999 and its first women’s collection one year later. Whyred makes clothes inspired by art and music. The Whyred Art Project is a series of joint ventures with contemporary artists, including Jockum Nordström.

The company sells its wares in some 200 stores in more than 20 countries.

whyred.se

H&M HAS CONQUERED THE WORLD

For many, H&M is synonymous with Swedish fashion. The company has also become something of a breeding ground for young designers.

Hennes & Mauritz, or H&M, is a chain store whose low-priced clothing spread around the world as far back as the 1950s. The chain was founded by Erling Persson, who opened the first store in Västerås in 1947. Today, the fashion retailer has over 100,000 employees and more than 3,000 stores in 48 countries.

Several of today’s hottest Swedish designers have worked for H&M at some point, including Roland Hjort of Whyred, Ann Ringstrand of Hope, and Carin Wester. In recent decades, H&M has also collaborated with world-famous designers and pop stars.

Among them are:
- Stella McCartney (2005)
- Jimmy Choo (2009)
- Donatella Versace (2011)
- Isabel Marant (2013).

In May 2013, the company released a collection in collaboration with singer Beyoncé. H&M has also collaborated with Madonna and Kylie Minogue.

hm.com
MORE STARS ON THE FASHION SCENE

Hope, Carin Rodebjer, Carin Wester, V Ave Shoe Repair, Sandra Backlund and Ann-Sofie Back are some of the stars on the Swedish fashion stage.

V Ave Shoe Repair, started by Astrid Olsson and Lee Cotter, draws inspiration from sculpture and architecture. Deconstruction – using old clothes, taking them apart and putting them back together in new ways – is a recurring technique.

Vave-shoerepair.com

Ann-Sofie Back has attracted plenty of attention and made a notable international career. Back has also worked as a designer for Acne and is now creative director at Cheap Monday.

Annsofieback.com

Tiger of Sweden was founded 1903. It marketed something completely new – mass-produced suits – and met with success. After some ups and downs the company redefined its profile in the late 1990s. The idea was to take suits out of the bank and into the street. In 1997, Tiger launched its first women’s collection, followed in 2000 by the launch of Tiger Jeans.

tigerofsweden.com

Hope, comprising the design duo of Ann Ringstrand and Stefan Söderberg, has long been synonymous with Swedish and Scandinavian style. The two specialise in clean, simple lines and well-made details, and seek to produce garments that last.

Hope-sthlm.com

Carin Rodebjer’s formula is effortless elegance for all occasions for the modern and universal woman. In 2011, Rodebjer launched a web shop and established its first international branch in New York.

Rodebjer.com

Dagmar is run by three sisters and known for its modern take on knitwear. Seen on the likes of Beyoncé, the label’s sensual and unconventional designs have had considerable international success.

Houseofdagmar.se

Ida Sjöstedt combines ready-to-wear collections with couture dresses for private clients. She won the Guldknappen Readers’ Choice Award for best designer in 2011.

Idasjostedt.com

Menswear brand Common is giving street wear a Scandinavian spin with clean lines and modernist prints. Designed by Saif Bakir and Emma Hedlund, the label is showing in London.

Common-swdn.com

Sandra Backlund is known for her hand-knitted, oversized designs. Backlund has made a splash on the international scene and has worked with designers such as Marc Jacobs, Emilio Pucci and Louis Vuitton.

Sandra Backlund.com

Tiger of Sweden

Hope

Carin Rodebjer's formula is effortless elegance for all occasions for the modern and universal woman. In 2011, Rodebjer launched a web shop and established its first international branch in New York.

Rodebjer.com
LEARN MORE

UP AND COMING

Since 2005, the Swedish Fashion Council has been running the Rookies project, established to support small fashion design companies. The labels selected by the Rookies jury are presented at exhibitions, shows and other events. One of the labels is then chosen as Rookie of the Year. In 2013, the winner was Mes Dames, which received its award during the fall edition of Stockholm Fashion Week.

GULDKNAPPEN

A prize instituted by the Swedish fashion magazine Damernas Värld in 1982. Its purpose is to support individual designers and further their careers. In 2013, the prize went to Ulrika Lundgren and her label Rika.

SWEDISH DESIGNER OF THE YEAR

At its annual gala, fashion magazine Elle announces its choice of Swedish Designer of the Year. In 2013, the prize went to Ulrika Lundgren and her label Rika, for the second time.

FASHION BLOGS

The considerable allure of Swedish fashion is reflected not least in the rapid advance of the fashion blog. In 2009, the phenomenon exploded and there are now hundreds of fashion bloggers with readers both in Sweden and around the world. One of the most successful is Elin Kling. stylebykling.nowmanifest.com

USEFUL LINKS

asfb.se Association of Swedish Fashion Brands
beckmans.se Beckmans College of Design
hdg.u.se The School of Design and Crafts
ims.u.se The Unit for Fashion Studies
konstfack.se University College of Arts, Crafts and Design
mercedesbenzfashionweek.se Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week
mildadj.se The Swedish Fashion Council
moderat.se Nordic Initiative, Clean and Ethical
rohsska.se The Röhsska Museum of Fashion, Design and Decorative Arts
stockholmfashionweek.com Stockholm Fashion Week
stockholm-streetstyle.com Stockholm Street Style
sustainablefashionacademy.org The Sustainable Fashion Academy


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Further information about Sweden: sweden.se, the Swedish embassy or consulate in your country, or the Swedish Institute, Box 7434, SE-103 91 Stockholm, Sweden. Phone: +46 8 453 78 00; e-mail: si@si.se www.si.se www.swedenbookshop.com www.swedenabroad.com