

Lifestyle

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US actor Rob Morgan arrives for the premiere of 'Just Mercy' at the Roy Thomson Hall during the 2019 Toronto International Film Festival Day 2, in Toronto, Ontario. — AFP

Rihanna back as Ford promises new era for New York Fashion Week

Tom Ford, Rihanna, and the return of big names including Tommy Hilfiger herald a promised new era for New York Fashion Week which kicked off Friday after a run of underwhelming seasons. American designer Ford is credited with reviving Gucci in the 1990s and has quickly set about trying to do the same for Fashion Week, shortening its length and strengthening its diversity. "I want global exposure to the creativity that is in New York," said Ford, who in June became chairman of the Council of Fashion Designers of America (CFDA) which runs Fashion Week.

"Everything is too inward-looking in this country. So American star designers, they leave. Virgil Abloh, where is he? He's at Vuitton. "You go to Paris and you become global. You stay in New York, and you're in New York," he added in the interview with Vogue, published in August. Ford drove the CFDA's decision to cut this year's Fashion Week from seven to five days, a move insiders have been calling for years to strengthen the event.



In this file photo Barbadosi singer Rihanna poses during a promotional event of her brand Fenty in Paris. — AFP photos



In this file photo US fashion designer Tom Ford arrives for the 2019 CFDA fashion awards at the Brooklyn Museum in New York City.

The women's shows—which traditionally kicked off on a Wednesday night—began on Friday evening and will run through the evening of Wednesday, September 11. Ford's background is a significant departure from that of his predecessor Diane Von Furstenberg, who chaired the CFDA for 13 years. Her house "DVF" has called New York home for half a century, while Ford, a Texan by birth, worked in Italy and England for a time before settling in Los Angeles. New York is the first of the season's four big fashion weeks and tightening the schedule makes it more attractive to buyers and foreign media scoping out talented new designers.

Diversity

"A shortened week is more economical and expeditious for attendees, especially those coming to New York from abroad," said Steven Kolb, president and chief executive officer of the CFDA. New York has struggled in recent years with several leading designers opting to showcase their collections elsewhere, including in Paris and even Los Angeles. Abloh, Rodarte, Altuzarra, Thom Browne and Alexander Wang have been among high-profile names to skip the event recently, leading some commentators to speculate whether New York Fashion Week was over.

There are early signs that its revival has already begun under Ford with several famous designers returning to the event, such as Tommy Hilfiger who is back for the first time in almost three years. Pop icon Rihanna will present her bestselling lingerie line Savage X Fenty after it premiered in September 2018. Before the official kickoff by Ford, several collections were presented Friday, including Rag & Bone and Jeremy Scott.

Rag & Bone returned to the runway after a three-year absence, but with a new conceptual show that included dancers, an orchestra and an artificial intelligence camera that loomed over participants. The collection was in keeping with the cosmopolitan spirit of the label, and was characterized by light and breadth, in an ode to mobility. Far from the sobriety of Rag & Bone, Jeremy Scott lived up to his reputation as a troublemaker, with florescent prints and a retro-futuristic look. This year's line-up also includes the latest from acclaimed Haitian-American designer Kerby Jean-Raymond's Pyer Moss line. Telfar, Tomo Koizumi and Khaite are also high on the hot list.

Diversity will again be a major theme. The CFDA is committed to having a greater range of models from different ethnic groups and representing varied body shapes. The council recently appointed Jean-Raymond, Abloh and British designer Carly Cushnie, who are all black, to its board. Chilean-born designer Maria Cornejo also joined. "Diversity, inclusion, and model well-being are key to our efforts, as is showcasing young talent, which is core to our work," said Kolb.—AFP

Rapper *Nicki Minaj* announces retirement

Rap queen Nicki Minaj on Thursday shocked fans by announcing her retirement from music, saying she was going to focus on family. The provocative 36-year-old known for hits like "Super Bass" is engaged to music executive Kenneth Petty, and she recently said a wedding is in the cards in the coming months. "I've decided to retire & have my family," tweeted the wildly successful rapper raised in the New York borough of Queens. "I know you guys are happy now," she continued. "To my fans, keep reppin me, do it til da death of me, X in the box - cuz ain't nobody checkin me." "Love you for LIFE."

The surprising news fueled pregnancy rumors that had already been swirling since June after she appeared on a late-night television show and opted against drinking. She went Instagram-official with her partner Petty in December 2018, after rebooting the relationship decades after they were involved as teenagers. The rekindled romance raised eyebrows considering Petty's criminal

past: he is a registered sex offender in New York and was convicted in 1995 of attempted rape. Minaj dismissed criticism of her new relationship, saying "He was 15, she was 16 ... in a relationship. But go awf Internet. Y'all can't run my life. Y'all can't even run y'all own life. Thank you boo."

Walking exaggeration

Minaj's profanity-laced lyrics, skin-baring music videos and unique, animated flow first catapulted her to fame in 2010. Known for her bold sartorial style that includes neon costumes and wigs, Minaj—whose hits include "Starships," "Bang Bang" and "Anaconda"—is considered one of rap's most influential female artists. The Grammy-nominated artist born in Trinidad and Tobago cites Foxy Brown and Jay-Z as major inspirations, and has crafted a lightning-speed sound distinctive for her use of alter egos and accents, especially British cockney.

She's "a sparkling rapper with a gift for comic accents and unexpected turns of phrase," wrote a New York Times critic in 2018. "She's a walking exaggeration, outside in sound, personality and look." "And she's a rapid evolver, discarding old modes as easily as adopting new ones." Her brash personality and penchant for controversy also made Minaj a tabloid regular, especially for a feud at a Fashion Week 2018 after party that saw rap rival Cardi B throw a shoe and allegedly attempt to fight Minaj.—AFP



In this file photo US rapper Nicki Minaj arrives for the 2019 Met Gala at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.—AFP