

FIX UP, LOOK SHARP

Gab Ricci Cardigan, Farah Trousers, Kangol Hat and Bally Shoes

London, 1980s

The name 'Yardie' originates from the term 'the Yard', used by Jamaicans for the ghettos of Kingston. Jamaicans moving to Britain brought Yardie styling with them. Leaving behind its military influences, Yardie style here became smarter and more label-conscious. Among the most desirable items were Italian-knit cardigans by Gab Ricci, known as 'Yardie Cardies', Farah trousers and Bally shoes.

Museum no. T.935, 598, 182–1994; T.659:1-2–1995

Coat

London, 1980s

The camel coat is a quintessentially upper-class English garment. It has also been linked with an aspirational style of dressing favoured by 1960s gangsters such as the Krays. Within black British style, the coat was worn by male and female followers of the British form of Reggae known as Lover's Rock. The look was one of smooth urban sophistication.

Private Collection

Burberry Trenchcoat

London, 1972

Burberry Mac

London, about 1978-79

The Burberry coat represents an important stage in the development of black British style. With the confidence they'd gained through the Black Consciousness movement, young black Britons were able to bring English traditions into their wardrobes. As they began to wear the very English Burberry, black men and women were affiliating their own heritage with their country of residence. As nail artist Tina Daley notes, the Burberry helped in the transition to 'being ourselves'.

'I vividly recall going to Haymarket to purchase [my Burberry coat in 1979-80]: it cost £180 and was a sight to behold. Magnificent. Oh, man, I felt I had arrived. On the streets, how you dress is inextricably linked to how much respect you command, so I was always intimately fascinated by the latest fashions' (Chris Eubank, 2003).

Trenchcoat Museum no T.336-1979

Mac lent by Joel Karamath

Hat

Italy, 1980s

A must-have item from the late 1970s onwards was the beaver hat. It was worn by everyone from Rastafarians to followers of Lover's Rock. The exaggerated lines of this bowler-type hat and its smooth texture were equally respectable at a blues dance or a wedding. Animal protection of the beaver has meant that the hats are no longer produced.

Supplied by One of a Kind, London

Girls on the Block

Notting Hill Carnival, London, 1970s

Photograph by Horace Ové

Boys on the Block with their Sound System

Notting Hill Carnival, London, 1970s

Photograph by Horace Ové

During the 1970s young black people strove to find a place for themselves. Fashion items were worn alongside symbols of pride such as military clothing and head wraps. These two photographs by Horace Ové illustrate the variety of clothing worn by men and women and the striking visual impact their styles had on London's streets.

**Camouflage Jacket, Camouflage Trousers, Baseball Cap, T-shirt, Buckle Belt
and Army Boots**

Britain, 1988

In the late 1980s the black militant look was epitomised by the African American rap artists Public Enemy. On their first album, *Yo! Bum Rush the Show* (1987), they were dressed in army camouflage and black berets and were holding Uzi guns. The look became popular as an expression of black consciousness, continuing a tradition begun in the late 1960s.

Compiled by Normski and Four Star General, London

Museum no. T.1023 to 1027:1-2-1994; T.298-1993

Oranges and Lemons

Notting Hill Carnival, London, 1999

Photograph by Giles Moberley

Jackie, Jerome, Gari, Simone, Jasmine and Aaron at V&A Carnival Day of Record

London, 2003

Photograph by David Simmons

Camouflage and army surplus clothing made its first appearance in the black British wardrobe during the 1960s. Inspired by the rise of Black Power and Rastafarianism, it was worn to highlight increasing militancy among the black British population.

Army surplus and camouflage continue to play a part in black British style. They have lost much of their militant overtone, and clothes are now produced in camouflage patterns in fashionable colours. Combat trousers became a key element of black and white women's fashion in the late 1990s when they were worn by the girl group All Saints.

Graffiti Visor

London, 2004

The graffiti on this visor was commissioned by Mr. Gee of the shop Four Star General. Graffiti is generally used to 'tag' large spaces such as walls or tube trains. The originality of this artwork by Crymein lies in part from his creating it on something as small as a visor. Such work is changing the negative reputation of graffiti as the work of 'mindless vandals' to one of an expression of individualism in art.

Supplied by Four Star General, London

Fake Gucci Tracksuit Jacket and Dukie Rope

Britain, 1988

Paid In Full

Eric B and Rakim, 1986

She Rockers and Professor Griff

London, 1989

Photograph by Normski

This jacket refers to the seminal 1986 hip-hop album, *Paid in Full*, by African-American rap artists Eric B and Rakim. The men are featured on the front of the album dressed in fake Gucci tracksuits, accessorised with giant gold medallions, Dukie ropes and knuckle-duster rings.

The jacket and album attest to the desire for wealth and status. Black youths on both sides of the Atlantic are drawn to designer brands, taking the most expensive and conservative coveted labels and adding a 'street flavour'.

Museum no. T.103-1994

Album Private Collection

Barber Shop

London, 1998

Photograph by Liz Johnson-Artur

The wearing of designer labels is a key element of black style. It marks a sense not only of being in fashion, but of having 'made it'. In 1998 Versace dominated black fashion. The place of Versace clothing in black style was reinforced when referred to in songs by American rappers such as Jay-Z and Notorious Big. The label was also popular amongst followers of the black British music style Jungle. These particular trousers illustrate a willingness among black males to wear flamboyant styles and patterns.

Evisu Jeans

Britain, 2004

Dizzee Rascal

London, 2003

Photograph by Adrian Wood

Evisu is a Japanese brand which initially created exclusive jeans on old Levi's looms. Their distinctive 'seagull' has become a must-have logo, as the prominence of the branding on these jeans shows. The popularity of this label in jeans, tops and accessories is phenomenal amongst black British men and women.

In 2003 British Rapper Dizzee Rascal wore this style of Evisu jeans to the Mercury Music Awards ceremony. He wore them with a T-shirt on which was printed a photograph of his own face. Dizzee turned himself into his own advertising board and referenced historic T-shirts of iconic faces such as Angela Davis.

Lent by Evisu International (UK) Ltd.

Double Goose Country Jacket

USA, 1980

Puffa Jacket

London, 2004

Hi Jack

London, about 1988-89

Photograph by Normski

The leather goose-down puffa jacket of the 1980s was an essential item of clothing that signified an interest in hip-hop. Initially imported from America, puffa jackets were expensive and their availability was limited. In order to emulate the style of black American stars, black British youths showed their characteristic ingenuity by buying quilted anoraks from leading British clothing stores and wearing them inside out to show the padded side.

Puffa jackets attracted public hostility when it was suggested that their bulk was used to hide knives and guns. The puffa jacket continues to be a staple of hip-hop-based clothing in Britain today.

Museum no. T.132–1994

Puffa Jacket supplied by Four Star General, London

Outlaw Posse

London, about 1988

Photograph by Normski

In an attempt to move away from the showiness associated with hip-hop, some groups and artists looked towards a more politically 'conscious' image. This move was led by African American rap artists such as Arrested Development and Queen Latifah. To protest against South African gold, they wore leather pendants, beads and symbols representing African roots or political affiliations such as the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.

Burberry Jeans, Rocawear Hooded Top, Levi's Belt and Timberland Boots

London, 2004

Grime Connection, East London

London, 2004

Photograph by Liz Johnson-Artur

These clothing styles were developed through American hip-hop in the 1970s. Clothes expressed individuality, but also had a functional purpose. Fat-laced Pumas and sweat suits looked 'bad' (meaning good), but were also perfect to wear while, for example, creating and performing break-dance moves.

The 'hoodie' (hooded sweatshirt) worn with the hood up plays on a variety of cultural references and experiences of what it means to be black and engage in street fashion. Such is its overwhelming popularity that it is produced by both sportswear and fashion labels.

Supplied by Bison, East Street Market, London

Walé Adeyemi Tracksuit Jacket, Adidas T-shirt, D&G Jeans and Adidas Trainers
London, 2004

Adidas Hooded Top and Walé Adeyemi
Tracksuit Trousers
London, 2004

Brixton Boys
London, 2000
Photograph by Jennie Baptiste

It's thought that wearing baggy low-slung jeans was originally a critique by African American men on the American prison system. It is also believed to be an attempt to disguise the body. But loose jeans equally do the opposite, and show off designer labels when worn low enough to reveal the brand name emblazoned on the waistband of the wearer's boxer shorts.

Such was the cultural impact of low-slung jeans in black British style that in 2004 British rap artist Dizzee Rascal sang: 'I socialise in Hackney and Bow, I wear my trousers ridiculously low.' That year a particularly British slant was placed on the style when men in London wore jeans with a tighter fit, but still low-slung enough to show their underwear. These outfits styled by Cynthia Lawrence-John mix sportswear and designer labels. The Walé Adeyemi jacket and trousers are a fashion designer's take on the mass-market tracksuit.

Compiled by Cynthia Lawrence-John
Supplied by Walé Adeyemi, Adidas and Luke Nseki

Walé Adeyemi Caps

London, 2004

Walé Adeyemi Jacket

London, 2002

Young British designer Walé Adeyemi combines youth culture and fashion with his trademark graffiti print. The text he uses to decorate his clothes is a poem called Future which he commissioned from the graffiti artist Tudor.

Adeyemi met footballer David Beckham after styling his wife, former 'Posh' Spice Girl Victoria. Adeyemi gave matching 'father and son' jackets to David Beckham, who wore his to the press launch of his book in September 2003. Pictures of Beckham wearing the jacket were in all the newspapers and brought Adeyemi's designs to the attention of a wide public. His graffiti style was subsequently imitated by many high-street shops.

Lent by Walé Adeyemi

String Vest, Shorts and Nike Sandals

London, 2004

Children's clothes are usually selected by their parents and reflect their attitudes and beliefs. Increasingly children are aware of and want to follow the latest fashion. This boy's outfit is a balance between the parents' desire for practicality and a wish for something more fashionable, drawing on Rasta, ragga and sportswear influences.

String Vest Private Collection

Shorts and sandals supplied by

Ridley Road Market, London

Exhaust Shirt, Exhaust Jeans and Grinder Boots

London, 1992

This casual version of Ragga clothing draws on early hip-hop fashion with its loose-fitting denim clothes. Designer Danny Edwards bought the Exhaust jeans in Kingston, Jamaica, where they were a favourite with the Ragga crowd.

Museum no. T.950 to T.952:1-2—1994

Against All Oz Suit, Bally Shoes and Gold Chain

London, 1994

In a similar tradition to the rich colours and fabrics worn by West Indians on their arrival in Britain in the 1950s, men's Ragga styles incorporated patterns and fabrics not conventionally worn by British men.

'It's for the evening – I'd wear it to a blues or a dance, but I have worn it during the day, when I've rolled up the trousers, tucked in the shirt and worn it with trainers. In the evening I'd wear it with a pair of Italian-cut shoes' (Oz, 1994).

Museum no. T.157 to 158–1994; T.658:1-2–1995

Against All Oz Bra Top, Chaps and Shorts and Shelleys Mules

London, 1994

Dancehall clothes for women are revealing and body-conscious. Here the look draws on high fashion labels: 'We wanted a kind of cowboy look, so we made the chaps and carried the dancehall style through with gold buttons. Girls were wearing things like Wonderbras, so we decided to make it in Chanel-style quilted fabric with a sort of bustier top' (Pascale, 1994).

Museum no. T.159 to 161-1994; T.634:1-2-1994

Big Time Dress and Rouge Sandals

USA, 2004

Original Pinky (Dancehall Queen 1989-2003)

London, 2003

Photograph by Jennie Baptiste

Dancehall music is perhaps the most controversial style of reggae due to its salacious lyrics and sexually overt dance styles. Women's clothing associated with Dancehall, or Ragga dress as it is known in Britain, is equally sexually provocative. But it is seen by Professor Carolyn Cooper as a source of empowerment to the wearer.

This dress was made in the United States. Dressmaker and shop owner Judy brought it back to sell in her shop Judy's New Yorker Fashion, knowing it would appeal to the black British market.

Supplied by Judy's New Yorker Fashion

Oxygen Top, Suzie Shorts and No Doubt Shoes

London, 2004

Notting Hill Carnival

London, 2003

Photograph by Bryn Reade

The body-conscious styles of ragga dress have moved beyond the dancehall and onto the streets. Teenage girls are exploring their identity through these clothes. The limited income of most teenagers means that they are not able to afford the designer labels they would like to wear. Their style therefore emerges from wearing 'fakes' or having clothes customised to add the designer logos to them.

Customised and supplied by Tina Daley

Banshee Batty Riders

London, 2004

Cheroni at V&A Carnival Day of Record

London, 2004

Photograph by David Simmonds

This style of extremely short shorts was first seen on the dancehall scene in the early 1990s. The Jamaican word 'batty' means 'bottom', and batty riders got their name because their shortness reveals the wearer's behind. These shorts continue to make an appearance on the style stage each summer with customised decorative variations.

Customised and supplied by Tina Daley

String Vest

Britain, 2004

The string vest is a traditional English item of underwear, as its packaging shows. It is also a key garment from the archive of black style and has associations with a range of black cultures from Rastafarian through Yardie to Ragga. Although it is essentially a man's garment, it is also worn by women.

Private Collection

Tracksuits

Sportswear has played a major role in the development of black style. Influenced by American hip-hop, black people have been at the heart of developments in casual sports clothing since the 1980s. The black cultural currency of the tracksuit was confirmed by the release of Run DMC's 1986 song 'My Adidas'. But even earlier, in the 1970s, the two-piece had been worn widely by black men too, the most iconic being Bob Marley.

For many, tracksuits represent a form of brand affiliation. The label is as important as the look, and extends not only to new and limited-edition tracksuits, but also to vintage or 'old school' styles by Adidas and Puma.

Tracksuits are constantly being redesigned and updated, often in conjunction with developments in textiles, as the late 1990s shell suit shows. Styles and brands often have a close link to a particular location or music style. Oversized Akademics (as worn by Crazy Titch) are fast becoming, for example, the uniform of the East London Grime scene.

Adidas Tracksuit Jacket,

London, 1970s

Adidas Tracksuit,

London 1980s

RAP Tracksuit,

1989–90

Nike Tracksuit,

London, 1990s

Adidas Hooded Top

London, 2004

Patrick Kevin Tracksuit

London, 2004

London 1980s

Photograph by Harry Jacobs

King of Rock

London, 2003

Photograph by Vincent Dolman

Crazy Titch

London, 2004

Photograph by Tim and Barry

Mutya and Thug Angel

London 2004

Photograph by Gareth McConnel

Adidas tracksuit jacket lent by Norman Jay, MBE

RAP tracksuit lent by Hassan Hajjaj

Adidas and Nike tracksuits lent by Chris Coker

Adidas Hooded Top supplied by Cynthia Lawrence-John

Harry Jacobs photograph courtesy of the Photographers' Gallery

Patrick Kevin Tracksuit lent by Patrick Kevin Ltd.

Trainers

Like tracksuits, trainers were revived through their association with hip-hop. Trainers such as Adidas Sambas and Puma SPK Kings had been worn throughout the 1970s by black British youth. But it was an affiliation to trainers as casual wear and the endorsement of certain styles and brands by leading black sportsmen such as Michael Jordan that allowed for the massive explosion in trainers' popularity among both blacks and whites. Such devotion has led to trainers becoming a highly collectable commodity. People who hunt down exclusive and limited styles have become known as 'sneaker pimps'

Lent by Adidas and Nike

Trainers

Goldie was the first superstar of Jungle music, now more widely known as Drum 'n Bass. These trainers form part of Goldie's massive collection of about 1000 pairs. The collection mainly includes the brands DC, Puma and Adidas. Goldie never wears Nike. One particular pair features his signature and the logo of his record label, Metalheadz.

Lent by Goldie

Soul II Soul T-shirt

London, 1990

This Soul II Soul 'funkidred head' logo was originally designed by Derek Yates in 1986. It was a portrait of Soul II Soul's Phillip 'Daddae' Harvey. Yates 'tried to marry Harvey's ragga style to white London street chic' (Cynthia Rose). The funkidred image of dreadlocks and shaved back and sides created by Jazzie B and Aitch for the Soul II Soul crew 'incorporates the roots of their reggae culture and the style of the urban dance scene' (Jennifer Lewis). This T-shirt features the logo in an ornate gold version issued at the height of the collective's popularity.

Lent by Joel Karamath

Black Market Records Jacket

London, 1989

London's Black Market Records in Soho was an important place for black youth to congregate. The shop sold records not available in larger record stores and focused on black music. The Black Market jacket was based on US baseball jackets and was originally given to shop staff. When the jackets went on sale at £150, they were soon snapped up and became highly sought after.

The jacket is now a collector item.

Lent by Joel Karamath

The Astoria

London, 1987

Photograph by Derek Ridgers

The black MA1 flight jacket became the uniform of both black and white clubbers in London in the mid-1980s. In an attempt to differentiate themselves, some began a trend of customising the jackets, creating a look described in *The Face* as 'pure London a mutant blend of [Face stylist] Ray Petri's Buffalo look, retro rockabilly, fashion casualty and US B-Boy'.

Hats and Caps

Hats and caps chronicle the changes in the black dress aesthetic in Britain. It's not only a matter of what sort of headgear is adopted, but very much how it is worn. A baseball cap worn under a pulled-up hood or back-to-front can make very different fashion and cultural statements.

Black people have become experts on the ability of headwear to transform the expression and personality of the wearer. Hats are an immediate style announcement that 'this is what I am like – or this is what I would like to be'. Equally, hats and headgear follow fashions, with different styles or brands providing a key component of a music-associated look or group identity.

- 1 Stussy Baseball Cap, 1992
- 2 Ethos Baseball Cap, 2004
- 3 Clench Baseball Cap, 2004
- 4 KDS Sportgear Combat Cap, 2004
- 5 Fake Fendi Baseball Cap, 1988
- 6 Fake Burberry Baseball Cap, 2004
- 7 NY Baseball Cap, 2004
- 8 Von Dutch Baseball Cap, 2004
- 9 Pinwheel Baseball Cap, 2004
- 10 Fake Louis Vuitton Visor, 2004
- 11 New Era Baseball Cap, 2004
- 12 Combat Cap, 2004
- 13 Do Rags, 2004
- 14 Decorated Bandana, 2001
- 15 Bandanas, 2002-4
- 16 Baseball cap, 2004
- 17 Fake Dior Hat, 2004
- 18 Kente Cloth Skull Cap, 1980s
- 19 Homburg, 1980s
- 20 Black Seal Patchwork Hat, 1990s

1 Museum no. T.271-1993

2, 3, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 17 supplied by Bison

4, 7, 12 Supplied by Four Star General, London

5 Museum no T.748-1994

13 Supplied by Tina Daley, London

14 Lent by Sexie Booda

15 Lent by Carol Tulloch and supplied by Four Star General and Tina Daley, London

16 Supplied by Style, London

18-20 Lent by Shashi Nerurkar

Kangol

Kangol has been worn by black Britons since the 1970s. The British hat manufacturer's importance in black style greatly increased after the hats were adopted by African American rap artists such as LL Cool J, who wore one on the cover of his debut album. The Kangaroo logo was introduced in 1983 to distinguish Kangol hats from their imitators and in answer to the American demand for 'Kangaroo' or 'Kanga' hats and caps

One of the best known and most widely worn is the 504 cap. This style was designed by Kangol in 1954. It was named 504 after the hat block from which it was made.

- 1 Brown Wool 'Gatsby' Cap, 1980s
- 2 Navy Blue Wool Beret with Cotton Binding, 1980s
- 3 Green Wool '504' Cap, early 1980s
- 4 Navy Blue Furgora '504' Cap, 1990s
- 5 Yellow Ventair Beret, late 1980s
- 6 White Bermuda 'Bell', 1990s
- 7 Beige Tropic Monaco, 1990s
- 8 Blue Tropic Old School Stripe 504 Cap, 2004
- 9 Beige Ventair 'Spacecap', 2004
- 10 White Tropic 'Bin', 2004
- 11 Lilac Floral Embroidered Trilby, 2004
- 12 Denim Trilby, 2004
- 13 White Furgora Trilby, 2004
- 14 Red Furgora 'Bell', 2004
- 15 Grey Wool 'Army Cap', 2004

1, 2, 4–7 Lent by Shashi Nerurkar

8–15 Lent by Kangol

3–4 Museum no. No Number and T.182-1994

Sunglasses

Accessories are the magic touch which can perfect a desired look. Sunglasses are worn to add an element of 'sharpness' to an outfit. They also satisfy a desire for designer labels, as was evident for example when Eunice Abaka wore Mary Quant sunglasses in the 1960s. Certain brands and styles have been closely associated with particular cultural moments. Carzell, for example, were the must-have shades for followers of hip-hop in the 1980s.

- 1 Mary Quant, 1960s
- 2 Sunglasses, 1970s
- 3 Carzell, 1980s
- 4 Sunglasses, 1980s
- 5 Sunglasses, 1980s
- 6 Ray-Ban Wayfarer, 1980s
- 7 Farben, 1979
- 8 Gucci, 1994
- 9 Gucci, 1994
- 10 Gucci, 1999
- 11 Moschino, 1999
- 12 Chanel, 2002
- 13 Fake Burberry, 2004

- 1 Lent by Don Abaka
- 2 Supplied by Beyond Retro, London
- 3 Supplied by Four Star General, London
- 4 Lent by Blaise Simons
- 5 Lent by Dr. Margaret Busby
- 6 Private Collection
- 7–12 Lent by Barb N
- 13 Supplied by Bison, East Street Market, London

Jewellery

Jewellery is one of the most talked-about elements of black style. The term 'Bling' has entered the language as a celebration of conspicuous consumption and so called 'ghetto fabulousness'. The fashion was particularly visible from the 1980s, when hip-hop success incorporated over-sized, chunky necklaces or Dukie ropes, and dollar-sign pendants.

Jewellery has always been a key component in finishing an outfit. But the style is not all gold and ostentation. Increasingly silver is used, and jewellery designers such as Disa Allsop are providing imaginative and beautiful designs which draw on African jewellery traditions.

Goldie

Los Angeles, 1997

Photograph by Dean Belcher

- 1 Dollar Sign Pendant, 1988
- 2 Celtic Pendant by Slim Barrett, 1989
- 3 Dollar Sign Earrings, 1990
- 4 Dukie Rope, 1990
- 5 Gold Chain, 1994
- 6 Gold Chain, 1994
- 7 2Pac 'Bling' on Chain, 2004
- 8 Playboy 'Bling' on Chain, 2004
- 9 Silver Chain with Celtic Knot Pendant, 2004
- 10 Nike Swoosh Ring, 2004
- 11 'Bling' Earrings, 2004
- 12 Gold Hoop Earrings, 2004
- 13 Silver Hoop Earrings, 2004
- 14 Bead Bracelet, 2004
- 15 Chunky Silver Bracelet by Crazy Pig, 2004
- 16 Spaghetti Silver Necklace with Oxidised Silver Coil by Disa Allsop,
2004
- 18 Broad Bleached Silver Spaghetti Ring
by Disa Allsop, 2004
- 19 Six Coils of Silver and Gold Spaghetti Ring
by Disa Allsop, 2004
- 20 Malai Kenyan Garnet 18-Carat Gold Ring
by Disa Allsop, 2004

1 Museum no. T.1031-1994

2-3 Supplied by Four Star General, London

4 - 7 Museum no. no numbers

8-9, 12-13 Supplied by Tina Daley, London

10-11 Supplied by Cynthia Lawrence-John

14 Lent by Crazy Pig, London

15-18 Lent by Disa Allsopp