

The Moments Before *Fashion Week*

FASHION DESIGNERS SPEND MONTHS BRINGING THEIR STYLISH VISIONS TO LIFE. TAKE A FRONT-ROW SEAT TO PEEK INTO THE DAYS LEADING UP TO THE BIG SHOW. / By Illysia Neumann-Loreck

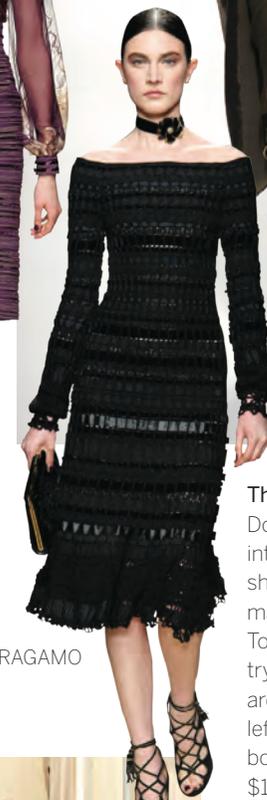
Fashion Week and its runway shows are not only a series of parties chock full of celebs and paparazzi, they're also some of the most important events that store buyers will attend during the year to view selections and choose their merchandise.

A lot of thought and effort goes into the designs, of course, but there are also months dedicated to planning the models' hair and makeup, along with the show's theme, music, and mood. In New York City, a lot of shows take place in tents at Lincoln Center that are specifically constructed for Fashion Week. Other designers pick venues such as warehouse spaces, hotels, or even the New York Public Library.

"The days leading up to Fashion Week are a science experiment for fashionistas," says Lubov Azria, chief creative officer of BCBG Max Azria Group. "I rely on my production team to get me through the final days. They do everything related to runway, outside of making the clothes. They've mapped out minute-by-minute the New York schedule ... music meetings; hair, makeup, and manicure tests; finalizing the cast; fittings; you name it, they've scheduled it. The runway schedule has everything but my bedtime slotted in."

Fashion Week typically runs in four cities: New York, London, Paris, and Milan. There are two major seasons per year — autumn/winter and spring/summer. The autumn/winter shows always start in New York in February, and spring/summer shows start in New York in September. Menswear runs the same time as womenswear because some designers feature both, and a lot of times, they will be in the same show.

Here, a typical timeline of the making of a fashion show during Fashion Week.



The best laid plans: Dozens of details go into the perfect fashion show, including hair and makeup, bottom. Far left, Tory Burch shoes await try-on. On the catwalk are a silk gold-lace dress, left, \$4,370, and silk lace bondage dress, top left, \$13,500, both from Salvatore Ferragamo. The top right look features MaxMara Arnica wool and cashmere coat, \$4,090, jersey skirt, \$475, Lambert striped sweater, \$495, Bolero wool cap with croco trim, \$395, and leg warmers, \$540.



The art of the look: Artists arrive several hours before show time to apply their magic. Burberry make-up, above, makes a hit. Top right: Models line up for a BCBG Max Azria fashion show. A recent men's Ferragamo look, left, includes a burgundy wool suit, \$2,790, grey slim button-down shirt, \$310, wool pattern knit sweater, \$850, and burgundy lace-up dress shoes with metal detail, \$1,600. Far left: Jacket, \$875, shirt, \$295, trousers, \$345, stole, \$225, and hat, \$235, are all available at Giorgio Armani.

COUNTDOWN to the SHOW

12 to 18

MONTHS BEFORE

Designers begin gathering inspiration and creating ideas on an inspiration board, either electronically or on an old-school bulletin board. Collections always have an inspiration, whether it be a point in time, a certain place, a color, a movie, etc.

4 to 8

MONTHS BEFORE

Designers make samples of their collection — about 35–50 outfits in all.

2 to 3

MONTHS BEFORE

The theme for the runway show is developed, along with the look for hair, makeup, and nails.

1 to 2

MONTHS BEFORE

The collection is in the final stages of design and production.

2

WEEKS BEFORE

The designer and their team cast and fit models and approve music.

1 to 2

DAYS BEFORE

Final fixes are attended to. Assistants pack clothes and accessories for the show.

“Packing up the collection is more than anyone could imagine,” says Max Azria’s Lubov Azria. “It’s like preparing for a trip (even if in the same city) for over 20 girls where you know what they’re going to wear, but you still have to pack the backup outfits. But we have it down to a science — it’s an assembly line from boxes to garment bags, shoe pads, tights, robes, lights, camera, and, yes, a lot of action.”

3 to 4

HOURS BEFORE

The clothes arrive. Production people

set up music and effects. Catering prepares and delivers food. Dressers steam and prep the clothes, making sure each look is ready. They also alert the design team if an item is missing or faulty. Security is on-the-ready to prevent unauthorized people from entering the show or dressing area.

2 to 3

HOURS BEFORE

Models arrive for hair and makeup.

2

HOURS BEFORE

Dressers arrive to prep and help models with their outfits (or “looks” as they’re known in the business).

1

HOUR BEFORE

Chaos abounds! Select media and celebs are allowed to preview the collection. Paparazzi shoot photos of the designer(s) and celebs. A few models rush in from other shows for which they’ve just modeled. Production

people run around attending to last-minute details. The design team makes sure each look is ready.

30

MINUTES BEFORE SHOWTIME

Someone calls, “First looks!” and models begin dressing (sometimes a model will have two or three looks in one show).

The show begins

AND LASTS 5 TO 8 MINUTES.

After the show

Models change into their own clothes as quickly as they can and dash off to their next show. Often, some 50 or so attendees are invited backstage to say hello to the designers and see the collection. After people leave, everything is packed up for return to the design house. The venue (especially if the show is at Lincoln Center) is prepped for the next show, and the cycle begins again.

SEE PARCEL PICKUP (PAGE 220) FOR SOURCES