

# DOES YOUR BAG HAVE 'IT'?



**Saint Laurent by Hedi Slimane Betty bag, ₹2,00,000 (approx).**



**Victoria Beckham The Victoria Mini tote, ₹2,23,000 (approx).**



**Céline Diamond flap clutch, ₹88,000 (approx).**



**Valentino Va Va Voom flap bag, ₹96,000 (approx).**

IMAGE COURTESY FROM TOP: SAINT LAURENT; VICTORIA BECKHAM; CÉLINE; VALENTINO.

There was once a time when logo-laden, big, slouchy bags that weighed more than the person carrying them reigned supreme. Those 'It' bag days are thankfully long gone. If anything, the new must-have holds are quite far removed from the fleeting trappings of the 'It' factor. Not screaming hoarse from a distance to validate our existence with flashy logos, unnecessary hardware, and gimmicky embellishments, this new slew of bags are streamlined, sleek, almost always without logos, and with a distinct back-to-the-basics feel. Case in point, Valentino's Va Va Voom flap bag. Perhaps sparking off the new trend in understated carry-alls, this modern, structured hold has been seen on practically every celebrity from Jennifer Lopez to Jessica Biel, and has even famously shared screen space with Blake Lively on *Gossip Girl*. And all it really is, is a small, smart, boxy bag with a cool rock-studded flap that you can carry as a clutch or wear on your shoulder. "Streamlined bags are the perfect accessory," says Sasha Sarokin, buying manager at net-a-porter.com. "Effortless, sleek, and stylish, these bags are no-fuss and complement all outfits."

While back in the day your bag's look-at-me quality may have scored you major fashion points, it's exactly that aesthetic that designers are moving away from now. It's all about quality and longevity—getting more miles for your buck so you don't have to get into a frenzied dash to grab the new bag every time a season rolls in. Take Céline's Diamond clutches for example. They are simple, minimal, envelope-style flap clutches that have been doing the rounds relentlessly amongst the fashion-set ever since Phoebe Philo, the French maison's creative director, unleashed them onto the scene. Made from the most exquisite hides, the piece simply switches a skin or colour or material every season. And you can gauge its popularity simply by looking at street style images from the past few seasons. The New York-based, on-the-rise bag designer Tonya Hawkes says she looks for simplicity when finding the perfect bag. "I love simple bags with beautiful construction and a genius twist. For this reason, I love anything Margiela designs. And while I love Jil Sander and Valentino, Céline takes home the grand prize for being fabulous in a minimal, streamlined way."

This season's standouts also echo the same stealthy characteristics. While they come in different sizes, the quality that unites them all is their understatedness and firm construction. Start your day with Victoria Beckham's The Victoria Mini tote. Its highly-structured silhouette redefines modern minimalism, and you will literally need a microscope to see her logo inscribed in tiny letters on the gold hardware on the bag's straps. Marni too has some stellar ladylike keep-alls in sombre greys, olives, and yellows. If a day clutch is more your style, then the versions at Jil Sander would be the need of the hour. Available in a stark white and black, this clutch is almost zen-like, owing to its clean and simple appeal. For the night, Hedi Slimane at Saint Laurent pulls out a real winner with his Betty. Spotted on Kate Moss on Valentine's Day earlier this year, it is already set for super-stardom. The bag is so slick, it's almost akin to the tailored perfection of the French house's legendary le smoking suits. "These particular styles are so functional and aesthetically appealing," quips Charu Sachdev, owner of the luxury store chain Kitsch. "We currently stock similar versions at the store from brands like Céline, Saint Laurent, and Chloë, and our buyers cannot get enough of them. I love that they are so smart, fuss-free, and easy to carry with room enough for all essentials."

The new 'It' bags are quite simply, low-key, high-impact investment pieces that are stripped clean of gimmicks, exquisitely crafted, and are going to last a lifetime in your wardrobes. ■

BY **Akshita Phoolka**  
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