

The Conscious Exclusive Collection for H&M: Hit or Miss?

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Thursday evening, April 4, H&M flagship stores celebrated the launch of their 2nd Conscious Exclusive Collection. Starting around 5 PM, shoppers were invited in to get their hands on the new styles—and give back too. Those who brought in old party dresses and unused clothing were given an additional 25% off coupon to use toward the collection. DJ Kissette was on duty, setting the mood with her chill beats, while the wine bar and hors d'oeuvres served by roving wait staff added a she-she vibe to the celebration.



The press was also eager to get in on the action, and we know why. The line of red carpet-ready partywear is made from “green” materials including organic cotton and (as unlikely as it sounds) recycled polyester chiffon. Eco-friendly fast fashion almost sounds like an oxymoron, but H&M is pulling it off and setting the bar for sartorial sustainability a little higher. That’s newsworthy.



The collection has also garnered several nods from the celeb set. In fact, Helen Hunt wore an elegant navy-blue gown from the collection to the Oscars this year. Victoria Justice, (who hosted the launch party at H&M's Sunset Plaza store in West Hollywood), Michelle Williams, and Chloe Grace Moritz (to name a few) have also represented the brand and the new line.



It seems there's a lot to love about it. The materials are ecologically viable and the looks are attainable. The flirty frocks feature Art Deco-inspired beaded elements and soft, feminine lines, draw on 1920s and '30s glam, and hit all the au courant design trends, such as lace overlay and the ubiquitous-in-2013 peplum. The color palette of creamy blushes, ivories, powdery sages, and striking blues intermingles with basic black-and-white pieces to lend the line a classic, natural look. The eco-friendly threads are surprisingly pretty—and they're selling out quickly.

For the fashionista-in-training, the collection is a perfect place to start. The trick is to know exactly what you're buying and why. If you're just itching for a one-of-a-kind vicuña shawl, lovingly knit together and hand-embroidered by Belgian nuns or some such, you might want to try Hermés. But if it's sweet, eye-catching, "fast fashion" statement pieces you're after, H&M will have what you want. And if your goal is to supplement your wardrobe with hot-off-the-runway looks for a fraction of the price you would pay for haute couture, you'll be able to achieve the silhouettes of the season without breaking the bank.



The Conscious Exclusive line has something for everyone, including men. Fitted slacks, sleek-looking blazers, vests, and bowties come in shades of black, white and ivory, and round out the simple yet strong collection of looks designed just for "him."

While the overall construction and quality of the garments are what you can expect from a multinational clothing retail chain—that is to say, "try before you buy"—their appeal is undeniable. The most appealing aspect of the Conscious Exclusive Collection, apart from its forgiving price tags, however, is H&M's commitment to creating clothing that gives a little more than it takes. According to Catarina Midby, head of fashion and sustainability at H&M, the

Swedish company began to dabble in eco-friendly fashion in the 90s when it launched its first line using organic cotton. "Ecology was more of a trend at the time," she told *New York Daily News*. "Now it's a long-term commitment. Material production is a big part of the environmental impact of a garment."

Make more than a fashion statement this summer; make an investment in the future. Fall in love with the new collection for yourself in stores or online at www.HM.com. H&M, Sunset Plaza, 8580 Sunset Blvd, West Hollywood. (855) 466-7467.