

It's a fashionable life

A year ago, **Henry Holland** launched himself at London clutching an unknown model and some T-shirts. Here the designer spills on the people, the parties and the panic...

A year ago, I was sat in my spare bedroom, where once slept an aspiring young model called Agyness. It was a week to go before my debut London Fashion Week show as part of Fashion East. My mum was in the kitchen trying to make sure I was eating and the odd supermodel was trying on a long T-shirt and walking the length of my lounge – which in model steps equates to about four.

Luckily for me, and the models who walk in my show, times have changed. T-shirts are now just a part of my collection and I have found myself with a fashion label to run. The past year has been lots of long days and nights, in the studio and on the dancefloor, and every second has been a blast.

Gareth Pugh and Giles Deacon had worn each other's slogan T-shirts ('UHU Gareth Pugh' and 'Get Yer Freak On Giles Deacon') to take bows at the end of their shows the previous fashion week. This helpful gesture would turn out to be a recurring theme. But I seemed to be a classic one-hit wonder – the Milli Vanilli of the fashion industry or a 'One Trick Pony' – the name I gave to my first show before the journalists got a chance.

So, with a lot to prove, I set about working towards a full collection of studded leather leggings, rubber swimwear and jeans so tight the models had to breathe in to get the suckers on.

In between all the hard work there was time for a party or two. The Elle Style Awards was a biggy at the Roundhouse in Camden – less than 100 metres from my front door. This was the first time I had seen anyone out in my designs – the model Georgia Frost wore one of my dresses. The party was packed full of my idols in the fashion world; Stephen Jones, Giles...

Kylie danced on the bar in a slashed leather Gareth Pugh dress

Then there was the V&A couture gala last September. I still have the invitation on the wall. This was a posh do, Aggy wore Burberry and was due to DJ at the MAC party at BoomBox later on. She finally got there in time to play about two songs.

All these amazing parties fall around Fashion Week which means, for designers, the inevitable inner wrestle of 'should I go when my show is six hours later or should I not?' Invariably, they go. Let us not forget 2007's fashion club BoomBox – Kylie

dancing on the bar in a black, slashed leather dress, by Gareth Pugh with a posse of club kids at Pugh's after-party will stay with me for some time.

The Met Ball was thrown at New York's Metropolitan Museum by Anna Wintour, editor-in-chief of *American Vogue*. Once you had scaled the red-carpeted steps (truly terrifying) you were led along a walkway lined with waiters – who Aggy and I couldn't resist saying the odd 'hiya' to – towards a wedding-style line-up. The bride could have been Miuccia Prada and the groom André Leon Talley. Anna Wintour was very charming and polite, Cate Blanchett was stunningly beautiful, and Nicolas Ghesquière just as beautiful.

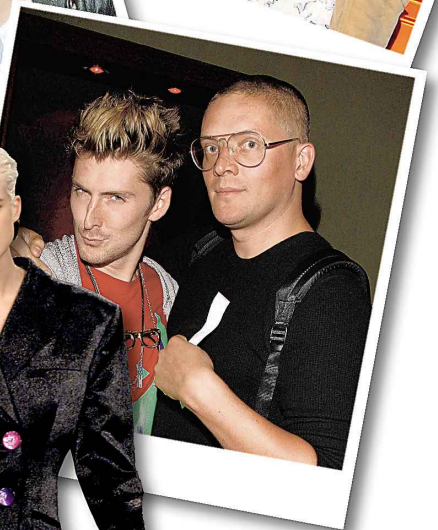
It felt a bit like being at the Oscars. Kirsten Dunst was parading round with Johnny Borrell, Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen actually said hello to us – I had interviewed them in my previous incarnation as a teen mag journalist.

In between courses we were treated to a performance by Jennifer Hudson (wearing Michael Kors). After dinner, feeling a little overwhelmed, Aggy and I took solace in the bathroom for a quick ciggy, only to find even more movie stars, models and designers in there who were doing exactly the same.

After dinner we found fellow Londoners (or should I say Scots) Christopher and Tammy Kane, the hilarious brother-and-sister duo who are one of the most exciting things in London, and amazingly talented Jonathan Saunders, who has won over the Americans so much he's showing in New York this season. Forming our little 'London on tour' group we collected in a corner and (discreetly) gawped at the room.

London Fashion Week A/W 08/09 (handily) brings us full circle on my year. This season I'm showing on my own without the stabilisers that Fashion East provides. The show is a lot more grown up than last season's. Having no formal fashion training, I feel as if my first two shows were my college collections and this season is my graduation show so I'm as excited as I am petrified.

But hey, it will all be over soon, and I'll be able to get back on the dancefloor without that knot of guilt in my stomach!



Henry Holland's days and nights, from top: with Agyness Deyn at the Haymarket Hotel; with Lily Cole at a party in Paris; with Giles Deacon at the Café de Paris; with Deyn for Gareth Pugh's Halloween party at Automat; and Agyness Deyn on the catwalk for House of Holland S/S 08