



Ben Sherman's New York Spring Street store plays up to the British mod theme, with Union Jack motifs, scooters and classic imagery. Cheaper rents in the US allow more space than in its UK stores



Flying the flag

Ben Sherman is taking its Brit connections to the max in its new flagship in New York

Outside Ben Sherman's New York flagship, a Union Jack flutters from a flagpole. Inside, an antique-style sofa and chairs, tailors' dummies and benches in the fitting rooms fly the flag in several colourful ways. There's even a flag motif in the wooden floor of the tailoring area. In supercool SoHo, one block from Broadway, Ben Sherman is proud to be British.

Ironically, the 40-year-old UK brand can afford to open this 5,300sq ft (plus 2,000sq ft of stockrooms) store at the corner of Spring and Mercer Streets because it has a wealthy American owner, Oxford Industries, which acquired it in August 2004. Oxford has seen the power of own retail with its Tommy Bahama casualwear, so the debut of Ben Sherman's flagship on March 16 was inevitable.

"This store is a great statement for us. We will take elements of it into our shop-in-shop and hard shop areas to look even better with our wholesale partners," says Paul McAdam, head of Ben Sherman's north American operations.

The brand has been wholesaling for five years in the US and is pitched higher, younger and edgier than at home. It has sales of about \$60 million (£36m) through department stores like Nordstrom and Macy's and about 1,000 independent doors.

The aim in north America is to split the business three equal ways between wholesale, licensing (which is growing fast) and own retail. A 2,500sq ft Ben Sherman store will open in the Beverly Center mall in Los Angeles in May, to be followed by a 5,000sq ft unit in the Desert Passage centre in Las Vegas in August (in time for the Magic menswear trade show).

"Elements of the SoHo store will be used, but we want each store to speak to its own environment. All our stores should be different, like Paul Smith's and Diesel's," says Miles Gray, Ben Sherman's chief executive. "We have taken our Mods In The Mansion theme forward here. In the UK we have to make the space sweat because of retail costs, but here we've the luxury of having space to play with." Spring Street has the same rent as Ben Sherman's store in the Trafford Centre, but about twice the space.

In the store, which was designed by Eric Mailaender of New York-based Resistance Design, the merchandise split is roughly 50% menswear, 30% womenswear, 10% men's tailoring, formal shirts and ties, and 10% denim and accessories, including shoes. Ben Sherman himself, whose image appears on a bench in one of seven changing rooms, would be impressed.

ERIC MUSGRAVE





Ben Sherman to expand upmarket

By Eric Musgrave
in New York

Ben Sherman is positioning itself around the world as a more upmarket, fashionable label than in the UK.

Each overseas market apart from the UK and RoI sells an international Black and Orange men's collection, which is younger, trendier, slimmer cut and more expensive than the general domestic collection. The newer womenswear range is the same in all markets.

Prices for men's and women's clothing and accessories are about 20% to 30% higher than in the UK, and the scale of the 43-year-old brand's international ambitions can be seen in its US flagship, which opened in Soho, New York, last month.

"We've been exceeding our plan since we opened on March 16," said director of retail stores Noah Rosenblatt. "The right customers have been coming in to the store – a fashion-forward crowd

that is into the music scene."

After five years' wholesaling in North America, Ben Sherman has about \$60 million (£36m) of sales. It has issued licences for accessories including bags and small leather goods, headwear, scarves and gloves, neckwear, watches,

sunglasses and formal shirts and tailoring – the last two licences are with subsidiaries of Ben Sherman's US parent company Oxford Industries. A licence for men's underwear is imminent.

Paul McAdam, Ben Sherman's north America president, said: "We want

to get into a position in the US where the business is split between wholesaling, own retail and licensing. In wholesale, womenswear only accounts for 18% of sales, but in the store it's been 30% so far."

● See pages 28–29 for *Drapers'* exclusive feature.

Brit Pack: North American president Paul McAdam (left) and chief executive Miles Gray





1 ON THE PULL AT BEN SHERMAN

Ben Sherman plays up its Brit credentials in the US, so it was no surprise to find British beer being served at the opening party for its store in Soho, New York, last week. The genial hosts were chief executive Miles Gray and US chief Paul McAdam (1). Sadly there was no lock-in, but a grand time was had by all. The brand's founder was not forgotten - Ben Sherman's likeness appears on a bench in one of the changing rooms (2).



OFF THE RECORD

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