

The prettiest fashion show on earth

Lace, chiffon, print – wow.
Corrie Jackson goes backstage at Erdem, London Fashion Week's hottest show

Mid-morning on a warm September day and the fash pack is descending on a leafy London square. With less than two hours until blast-off for Erdem's much-anticipated spring/summer show, the atmosphere is electric. As the current darling of British fashion, Erdem's the designer everyone wants a piece of. All those blurred, floral prints on the high street last summer? Inspired by Erdem. Sarah Brown, Samantha Cameron and Michelle Obama are fans. And it's not just political heavyweights. GLAMOUR Editor, Jo Elvin, wore one of his floor-length gowns to last year's Women of ▶

Photographs by Jason Lloyd-Evans



GLAMOUR



Clockwise from below left: Braided hair and pretty lace, so Erdem; the huge team of hairstylists and make-up artists; (right) Erdem's girls were towering Nicholas Kirkwood heels; (far right) the countdown begins as the models prepare to hit the runway



“Think delicate romance, but with an edge”

◀ the Year Awards. Keira, Gwyneth and Jessa Biel have all hit the red carpet in his creations. In the middle of the square, an enormous tented structure conceals a white circular catwalk. Someone is barking instructions that no one is allowed to step on the catwalk in case their shoes scuff the gleaming surface.

As I step backstage, make-up artists, models, hairstylists, photographers – as well as Erdem's team – all strain to be heard above the hum of hairdryers. Running through the middle is a bank of brightly lit mirrors where make-up artists are working their magic on models; nearby, seamstresses are frantically tightening hundreds of Swarovski crystals to ensure nothing drops off; rails of clothes – oh the clothes! – are being divided into each model's 'looks'. “There are 33 looks and 19 models,” says Erdem's PR, Justine Fairgreave. “We were still fitting the models at midnight.”

The inspiration for the collection is the Russian Ballet. After seeing the *Diaghilev And The Golden Age of the Ballets Russes* exhibition at the V&A Museum last summer, Erdem was captivated. The collection is so beautiful. Think delicate romance, but with an edge. A white lace dress, appliquéd with more white lace, then embroidered in red – creating layers of loveliness; a vibrant poppy print blouse; a heavily



GLAMOUR's Carrie Jackson catches up with Erdem backstage

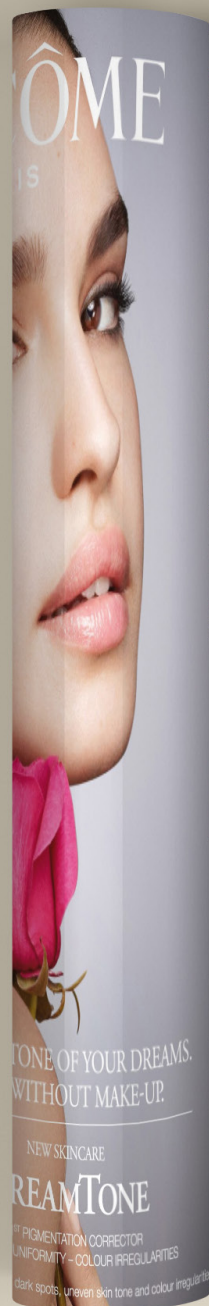


embroidered navy A-line skirt. Up close, the attention to detail is dazzling.

I spy the man himself. Dressed in a navy T-shirt, skinny jeans and his signature nerdy glasses, Erdem is studying the running order as though his life depends on it. The models in their shimmery, pale make-up look like wood nymphs – all Bambi legs and soulful fragility. “Erdem's girls are pretty, but with lots of strength and personality,” says casting director Holly Scott Lidgett. “We don't even have to give them direction before they step out onto the catwalk. The moment they're zipped into one of his dresses, they become an ‘Erdem girl.’”

Suddenly it's rehearsal time – 19 models drop everything (literally: some are halfway through make-up, others are mid plait) and line up in their bathrobes. It may be a practice run, but they still have to wear their ‘show’ shoes – gorgeous Nicholas Kirkwood heels with ribbons that criss-cross up the leg. Erdem watches everything on giant TV screens backstage, making tweaks.

Rehearsal over, the real countdown begins – 30 minutes to go. One of Erdem's 26 interns, Hadley Smythe, is giving me the lowdown. “Each intern is assigned a model; the more experienced interns will work with models who have to do a quicker change,” she says. On cue, one of the coordinators whirls past and asks whether Hadley's two dresses are simple to get in and out of. “Your model only has 15 seconds in between – it's an incredibly ▶



G BACKSTAGE



“Up close, the attention to detail is slightly dazzling”

Erdem's A-list army

The designer's romantic prints are a huge hit on the red carpet



From left Keira Knightley, Michelle Williams, Samantha Cameron, Sarah Brown, Kate Bosworth and Carey Mulligan



The girls dive into some pre-show pastries

◀ tight change," he warns. "Erdem's one of my all-time favourites – the prints, the lace, everything is unique. We were up til 4.30am sewing lace onto this white dress," she says.

Out front, people are beginning to take their seats. Somewhere I hear a make-up artist shouting: "I can't stress enough – lip balm,

lip balm, lip balm!" At 1.30pm, Erdem suddenly shouts, "Everyone get ready!" Models hurry to their assigned rails and start stepping into concoctions of lace and chiffon. Make-up artists and hairstylists crowd round, making last-minute tweaks; show coordinators are shouting into walkie talkies; photographers go wild, flashbulbs popping. Five minutes to go. As the models line up, Erdem gives them the final once-over, telling them: "You look so lovely, so beautiful, be confident." Two minutes to go. Kirby

Kenny, who is opening the show, is in the zone – she's shifting her weight from leg to leg, taking deep breaths. She reminds me of an athlete on the starting blocks. Thirty seconds to go. The whole room seems to hold its breath as the music is cued. The producer gives the nod and Kirby steps out onto the catwalk. Erdem is glued to the TV screens – his team crowding round in support. As the final model, Ruby Aldridge, steps out in a chiffon, floor-length gown, everyone backstage is already clapping. Erdem hugs his team, beaming with pride.

As the models slip out of the dresses, the fairytale is over. All that hard work for five fleeting minutes of magic. I bet whatever you fall in love with next season – skater skirts, embellished embroidery, '20s-inspired chiffon, lace-on-lace – was dreamt up in an East London studio long ago. One thing's for sure, with his eye for drama and detail, the world is a prettier place with Erdem in it. ☺

GLAMOUR