

Long before the Net was discovered in some geek's bedroom, we'd get our fashion fix from papped celebs in weekly gossip mags. These days, we have the World Wide Web at our freshly manicured fingertips, and there's a new breed of star to lovingly feast our eyes on – courtesy of street-style blogs. These sites are now the go-to destination for style inspiration, where their "real girl" creators or subjects ooze their own brand of cool. And they're not just changing the way we dress, they're transforming the fashion industry, one well-trodden street at a time. Meet the players.

the blogger

Hailing from the NSW Central Coast, 21-year-old Nicole Warne (left) started blogging her outfits late last year (garypeppervintage.blogspot.com). "I've always had a passion for photography and fashion, so posting about my looks seemed like a fun way to combine the two." Fast-forward 12 months and she now gets an average of 100,000 visits to her site each month, and has over 60,000 fans on Facebook.

"I like the idea of putting on an outfit because I love it, not because I'm trying to emulate anyone else, and I think that's why my blog is so relatable." Nicole says one of the marks of a good street-style blog is the consistency of the visuals, and, although she does take a lot of the pics herself, she's lucky to have a photographer boyfriend willing and able to help her out. "We'll actually source locations and match my clothes to them; a lot of thought goes into it, but it's no chore, it's just so much fun."

Not only does Nicole run a successful online vintage store, selling around 150 personally sourced items every couple of weeks, she also caught the eye of shoe company Jeffrey Campbell's creative director. "I got talking to the CD after he saw photos of me wearing their shoes. He picked my brain about Aussie style, and set up a collaboration with [shoe website] solestruck.com. I then took photos of myself wearing Jeffrey

want to be a style blogger?

You'll need: ■ Individual style
■ An eye for picturesque streets/alleys/carparks ■ A camera and a tripod ■ A commitment to post regularly ■ Photographer boyfriend (optional)
■ A nonchalant pout (optional)

Campbell, which they used in an online campaign – it was really exciting."

the industry

Chantel Covey, design manager at Scout, a boutique fashion trend-forecasting agency in Sydney, confirms street-style blogs are having a massive impact on the fashion industry. "Street-style bloggers give us fashion in a unique, colloquial tone. Everyone in the business is starting to see how street fashion isn't only inspiring designers and trendsetters, but also customers – a product on a top blog is just as valuable as having an ad in *Vogue* and it can sell out an item in minutes."

Print media is also starting to realise the influence of blogs. Eve Blecher, sales manager at photo agency Snapper Media, says there's definitely been a shift in the kind of pictures people are interested in and therefore what magazines are buying. "Photographers like Tommy Ton (from street-style blog jakandjil.com) are producing really beautiful images that illustrate that 'now' moment in fashion, [as opposed to highly stylised paparazzi shots]. The subjects bloggers photograph are wearing it first, before it gets anywhere near the red carpet on B-list celebs, or chainstores, and I think that's why people like these images – there's something real and immediate about them."

the consumer

Tessa, a 28-year-old graphic designer and recreational fashion connoisseur, loves the way street-style blogs demonstrate how to have fun with outfits in a real-life context. "Fashion doesn't exist solely for stick-thin models or famous people, so the sites are more approachable and

inspiring. You see a wide array of tastes, styles, body shapes, ages and quirks."

Nicole agrees and adds, "I think people are turning to these blogs because the girls featured on them are normal people dressing themselves; they aren't six-foot-tall models. Personally, I tend to read street-style blogs rather than magazines because blogs are very relatable and the outfits you see are not all designer, they're actually pieces you can afford."

Tessa says another alluring factor is that most sites are updated daily, providing continuous fashion ideas at the click of a button. "They're such a diverse source, full of interesting people and fashion placed in a day-to-day context. It's realistic, and, in the end, much more fun. Plus, you get all the perks of people-watching at your favourite cafe without the fear of being caught out staring!" □

the blogs

A few of the best street-style sites.



■ fashiontoast.com Creator Rumi Neely is so cool it hurts.



■ borderlinemag.com Edits from a range of street-style blogs.



■ thecherryblossomgirl.com So French, so chic.