



Tinie Tempah photographed for the Telegraph wearing Cutler & Gross glasses Photo: Neil Gavin

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3 Comments

"Four eyes."

It is a name that those who grew up wearing glasses may have heard a little too often. However, if he who laughs last laughs loudest, the bespectacled man now has every reason to throw back his head and bellow 'Mwah-ha-ha!' at his childhood taunters - glasses are officially cool.

How do we know this? Pharrell, for one.

The music mogul, so trendy he can turn a ridiculously oversized hat into 'a thing', chooses not to wear contact lenses, preferring to decorate his face with chunky, solid frames from designers like Tom Ford (himself a glasses man).

And take rapper Tinie Tempah and model David Gandy. Both frequenters of 'Best Dressed' lists aplenty and each a London Collections: Men ambassador, they are frequently seen proudly using eyewear to accessorise their outfits.

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The list - Ryan Gosling, Johnny Depp, Brad Pitt - goes on, putting the school bully firmly in his place.

"There has been a clear shift in attitude towards glasses over the last 20 years," says Jason Kirk, managing director of optics brand, **Kirk & Kirk**. "Whereas eyewear used to be considered a sign of weakness, it is now much more than a 'necessary evil' and both men and women will spend significant sums finding the

frame, or indeed frames, that reflect their personality."

The Kirk family has been in the eyewear business since 1919 and their designs are handmade in France using a specially developed acrylic. Their most recent project is a collaboration with adaptive lens makers, Transitions Optical, which hopes to combine the practicality of lenses that adapt to light conditions with a gorgeous collection of frames inspired by Victorian scientists, each with a suitable name such as 'Darwin' or 'Carson' (prices start at £375).

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Clockwise from top left: Oliver Peoples Scheyer grey, £207; Kirk & Kirk Carson, £375;

RockOptika Death Row, £249

Kirk & Kirk is not the only optics brand bridging the gap between practicality and style. **Oliver Peoples**, based in California, has been producing vintage-inspired frames since the 1980s and its Scheyer line (£207 at davidclulow.com) for Resort 2015, modelled in the **accompanying campaign** by Boardwalk Empire's Jack Huston, is an oversized frame inspired by 1980s Wall Street bankers.

At RockOptika, designer Tom Herrington took inspiration from classic record labels for his SS15 collection of frames which is "made to stand out," while being designed to work with both casual and formal outfits alike. His Death Row model in the Havana Social finish fits the bill (£249 at rockoptika.com).



Theo EyeWitness UC, £377

At Theo, Belgian opticians Wim Somers and Patrick Hoet strive to offer customers something different from the mainstream brands. Their Eyewitness UC frame (£377, theo.be) is asymmetric like the human face and comes in hot pink, lime green and red, but also in black, brown and cobalt blue for those who still want to stand out, just not quite so loudly. Their Mille frames come plain on the outside, patterned on the inside, like the lining of a jacket, for those who want to make a more subtle statement (£259, theo.be).



Cutler & Gross model 1159, matt black, £330

Graham Cutler and Tony Gross opted to hide their gold logo inside the frame when they launched their company **Cutler & Gross**, aiming to keep the logo from becoming a 'gaudy promotional sticker' like so many of the big name eyewear brands today. Their handmade specs have attracted attention both from loyal customers and from the fashion industry, with the pair frequently providing eyewear for the catwalk shows of LC:M designers such as Agi & Sam, Jonathan Saunders and Kent & Curwen.

Even the high-fashion online retailers are now stocking optics. At **MrPorter.com** you can pick up, among others, New York designer Thom Browne's round grey frames with multicoloured tips on the arms (£455) and Japanese brand **Eyevan 7285**'s half tortoiseshell frames with gold detailing (£340).



Eyevan 7285 model 308, £340

For Claire Goldsmith of **CG Eyewear**, the growing appeal of glasses as a fashion item is simple. "Spectacles are literally one of the most important accessories you can own," she says. "Everyone you communicate with will see them, that can't be said about shoes or a watch, yet not nearly as much attention is paid to glasses."

Of course we might not all be able to splash out on as many pairs of specs as we have shoes, but this is something Goldsmith acknowledges. "Glasses are expensive, not everyone can have a collection," she says, "but I would encourage you to go independent – you will be getting much more value for your money."