



Chrome of luxury

The latest eyewear from Chrome Hearts is a more subtle beast, as **Rory Brogan** finds out



1 Baby
2 Bjorn Again
3 Call Me Back Kate

The Chrome Hearts store within a store at Selfridges in London was an ideal venue to view the latest eyewear collection from the LA luxury brand.

In an outlet that sells Chrome Hearts' jewellery, clothing and leather goods it was perhaps surprising to hear that the top selling product is actually the brand's sunglasses, especially those priced around the £800 mark. If this seems expensive, international marketing executive for Chrome Hearts Eyewear Europe, Coralie Sancois, points out the high-end materials used in the manufacture of the Japanese-made pieces, with Zeiss lenses in the sunglasses. 'You need to understand what the frame is made from and that the decor is in sterling silver and gold plating, with some models incorporating six decors. Hand-stitched Italian leather is used with a number of designs, while others have seven layers of exotic wood in the temples. This makes it expensive and special.'

Spring collection

New for the spring season are 15 pieces, with a split of eight sunglasses and seven opticals. A first for 2013 is the use of black rhodium for the motifs in some of the eyewear. Already found in the jewellery, the finish works particularly well when teamed with matt black acetate frames.

One sunglass, Bjorn Again sports detailing on the inner frame, for example the signature three crosses in silver. Design Resurrectum is an acetate

model that comes in crystal options and has discreet etched plus motifs in the temples. The sunglass Balthy is a mix of beta titanium and acetate on the temples and thanks to this lightness a sterling silver decor has been added inside the temple as well.

Another sunglass, Bauner Doner, combines titanium and acetate, with hollowed out crosses in the temples and sterling silver decor. 'This is a kind of navigator shape which we have in all our collections, as well as aviators. We tend to use quite classic shapes as there is so much detail on the temples there's no need for complicated fronts,' she says.

The design Baby is more toned down in both name and look than some of the collection. An acetate frame, this has a keyhole bridge and sterling silver decor that also comes as a sunglass, again in crystal acetate options.

'When people don't know the brand they think it is all about Gothic and wood or rock and roll, but it's not that at all. It's a shortcut people are making. The collection displays exactly what you don't expect from the brand. In the beginning inspiration came from founder Richard Stark's interest in motorbiking, but it is definitely not like that any more. The crosses and symbols

on the product are not of religious significance or gothic, they are designs and patterns he has liked for a very long time,' she says.

Another sunglass, Call Me Back Kate, for example, features a new motif based on a jewellery design by Hollywood actress Kate Hudson. There are also two new interpretations of the Stains sunglass in models Stains II, a small aviator for men that comes in shiny silver and Stains III, a larger, yet still lightweight style for women and one of a number of feminine butterfly shapes.

'We like to have a mix of new styles and relaunched styles from the past that work, or new colours of existing styles. This time round very few models were removed from the collection.'

Obyardose is a large acetate for woman that is surprisingly light even with the sterling silver detailing. A more technical piece is Baldylocks, with leather covered sides and a titanium front with an enamel insert. The Instabone design has crosses cut out of the titanium sides and the bridge, with cross decor on either side of the front.

Micropoke is described as quite low key – an all acetate design with etching and silver motifs. For men, the Rupleforeskin design is a rectangular shape that comes in a smoke crystal and a matt black option.

While Sancois points out that Chrome Hearts is not aimed at any specific age group, she agrees that the new line will appeal to a wider range of people. 'Each model has lots of detailing and decor and still has a strong personality, but most of the styles are very wearable. It's an interesting balance.' ●