

Week gives valuable help in fashioning a career

From launching fashion brands and setting up their own production companies, to starring in television's Britain's Next Top Model, Norwich Fashion Week provides a platform for those who aspire to work in the fashion industry. **EMMA HARROWING** reports.

Norwich Fashion Week (NFW) has enabled people to discover what they want to do with their lives. A tall statement indeed, but according to Lorraine Sutherland, learning company leader for creative and business industries at City College Norwich whose students provide a lot of the live production for NFW including the live streaming of shows, this is not an exaggeration.

"The opportunity to work on live briefs such as NFW can alter the career paths of the students," explains Lorraine. "It gives them the chance to gain experience in live event management, promotional filmmaking, graphic design and much more. These kind of chances are truly unique and not always available in a traditional educational setting."

Since its inception, NFW has provided a platform for aspiring fashion designers, photographers and retailers. This year more than 75 work experience spaces

were available across fashion photography, hair and make-up, fashion communications and illustration and show production, with increased opportunities for up-and-coming fashion designers to showcase their work on the catwalk. Many could lead, as in previous years, to a career.

"We had one student four years ago who discovered a passion for producing and directing," says

Lorraine. "He moved on to work on

music videos including Iggy Azalea's. Other students have gone on to successful university careers, some specifically into fashion and art direction. Others have set up their own businesses

- working with clients met during NFW. Nearly all the students offer to help out the year after they have graduated - testament to their positive experience."

Past student Charlie Soffe found that his experience at NFW gave him the confidence to start his own skater fashion label KOTB, which is now sold online and



■ Model Georgia Butler who was the Face of NFW 2013 made it to the final 10 in this year's Britain's Next Top Model



■ Production students from City College Norwich who are running the live production at NFW 2016, with course leader Lorraine Sutherland and technician Derek Williams. Photo: PAUL BAYFIELD

at the Drug Store in Pottergate, Norwich.

"Working at NFW was an amazing eye-opener," says Charlie. "It can also provide a gateway into the creative industry by helping young artists mature and prepare for the real working world."

Matthew Potter, also a past student at City College Norwich agrees adding: "NFW is a great learning experience and gave me the confidence and knowledge to run my own business." While other past students, such as Ben Warrant were encouraged to continue with their studies.

Ben says: "The experience helped me grow as a person and I am now studying film at Norwich University of the Arts, which I never thought I would be able to do.

"I definitely wouldn't have had the

confidence to go to university without this experience at college."

Aspiring fashion designers who have taken the opportunity to have their designs modelled on the NFW catwalks have also found that the experience has given them the confidence to succeed in the competitive world of fashion.

Ellice Heaton, who has set up handmade lingerie label Ellicelydia, designed and made bralet tops as part of her collection for last year's NFW Designers Show: "I received lots of positive feedback about my designs I had created for my NFW collection that it inspired me to create my own label," says Ellice.


"It gave me the confidence to develop the brand and continue designing lingerie and intimate

apparel that girls of all sizes can feel comfortable and confident in."

Georgia Butler, from Drayton in Norwich, also designed piece for the NFW catwalk last year as part of City College Norwich fashion and textile label Cocoon. Georgia also modelled for NFW in 2013, winning the accolade of the Face of Norwich Fashion Week 2013.

She has recently found success on the current series of Britain's Next Top Model where she made it to episode six before being eliminated from the competition.

"Norwich Fashion Week certainly helped me gain experience of modelling on a catwalk and on fashion shoots," says Georgia. "When I had some of my designs take to the catwalk at NFW last year it gave me the experience of seeing

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FEATURE



■ Norwich Lanes fashion show at the city's arts centre
Photo: BILL SMITH



■ Above left, Model Georgia Butler who was the Face of NFW 2013 made it to the final 10 in this year's Britain's Next Top Model, Photo: STEVE ADAMS
■ Left, Amy Woodman at Paris Fashion Week.



■ Fashion label set up by fashion and textile students at City College Norwich takes to the catwalk at Norwich Fashion Week 2015.
Photos: PAUL BAYFIELD

two different sides of the industry." NFW is no stranger to Britain's Next Top Model as Amy Woodman, also from Norwich, made it to the eighth episode of series seven which aired in 2011.

Having modelled at NFW shows from 2012, Amy is now modelling for London and Paris Fashion Weeks, and has returned to the NFW catwalks this year at both the Dipple and Conway Hair Show and The Vintage Show.

Alex Hill, one of the directors of Norwich Fashion Week and BA (Hons) Fashion Communication and Promotion lecturer at Norwich University of the Arts, highlights the importance Norwich Fashion

Week places on providing work experience to those wanting to work in the fashion industry: "NFW is not just about the catwalk shows, fashion fads and looking good on the Frow, it's about giving opportunities for students, young people and all those wanting to break into the fashion industry the chance to work alongside professional teams and gain the experience they need to find work in all fields of fashion.

"Most of us who work on NFW are volunteers and have full-time jobs in the local fashion industry. Not only do students have many opportunities to have a real-life experience at fashion week, we can gain a new creative perspective from them too."

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