



## Is it 'cos they is black?

*In continental Europe, Caucasian mannequins are de rigueur, while in Saudi Arabia they prefer headless dummies*

AFP, PARIS

**A**s blue-eyed blondes increasingly hog the catwalks, discrimination is also at work in the weird and wonderful world of the fashion mannequin.

"Black mannequins don't sell," said Marc Lacroix, a manager at one of the world's leading producers, Paris-based Cofrad which also owns Los Angeles firm Patina-V, a maker of ethnically diverse fashion mannequins.

"Black and Asian models have been doing fine for a long time in the US, and we have customers in Britain. But in France, Germany and Austria, forget it!" he said.

"The Anglo-Saxon world, it seems, is more open-minded than the old continent."

Mannequins come in all shapes, colors and sizes but always come apart — just like jointed artists' models made of a head, body, legs and arms.

"We only sell headless, limbless bodies to Saudi [Arabian] customers," he said. "Couture clients too often like them headless as they want potential buyers to focus first on the clothes."

"Asian customers," Lacroix added, "which often represent big global labels, prefer European-looking mannequins as they have a more universal appeal."

Mannequins, nowadays generally made in environmentally unfriendly fiberglass, are relatively new in historical terms — as are the top models they more than often mirror.

Initially a tool for a tailor or seamstress, dummies made of cane surfaced in the 18th century before being made of wire and later cardboard. But it was only in the 20th century that couture came up with the idea of using mannequins rather than live models to display clothes to wealthy women at private showings.

Their widespread use in shops and shop-windows followed in the 1950s and 1960s, when couture and ready-to-wear labels multiplied, and big-name top models such as Twiggy emerged.

"Mannequins are very important," said Helene Lafourcade, who heads visual merchandising for French department store giant Galeries Lafayette. It uses 15,000 mannequins across its network, including 5,000 alone in its big central Paris stores near the Garnier Opera house.

"They're not just objects you stand up in the store. They're static salespeople," said Lafourcade, who reckons mannequins multiply sales fourfold.

Mannequins are crafted by sculptors in a process every bit inspired by a catwalk show.

A manufacturer calls a modeling agency, organizes a casting session and commissions the male or female model chosen to pose for a photographer. The sculptor uses the pictures to make a cast.

With an average life-span of three to four years, mannequins can cost anywhere from US\$220 to

US\$2,200 for the cream of the crop.

In the 1990s, said Franck Banchet, artistic manager for Paris department store Printemps, the trend was for hyper-realistic dummies.

"The Rolls Royces of the mannequins then were by Adel Rootstein in London, who used professional make-up artists and hairdressers to work on them."

When minimalism became the design statement of the day, mannequins too became streamlined, "their faces just an oval shape with a line for a nose and a line for a mouth," he said. "Top of the pops was a mannequin by Swiss firm Schlappi."

Couture king Yves Saint-Laurent's taste for such stylized faceless mannequins, often lacquered in white or black or gold, turned the tables on the trade.

"Most people nowadays use the cheaper stylized faceless mannequins," said Banchet.

In Paris to launch his new collection of mannequins called Madame, New York's Ralph Pucci said, "you have to create mannequins that are relevant to the times."

"Mannequins are about change, about art, about sculpture," said Pucci, who has worked with avant-garde artists such as Andree Putman, Ruben Toledo, Kenny Scharf and Stephen Sprouse.

"As for body shapes, every time we try different sizes, it fails. It's not relevant. A mannequin has to have personality and has to sell the clothes."



Patina-V's ethnically diverse mannequins are fashion forward and reflect the latest trends, from tween fads to sophisticated fashionista vogue.

PHOTOS: AFP

### [ MUSIC ]

## Tapping your inner Clapton

*iPhone music apps are mostly meant to be fun for people who are not musically inclined, but even working musicians are finding uses for them*

BY JASON TURBOW  
NY TIMES NEWS SERVICE, NEW YORK

There's something about an iPhone music app. For musicians, it's like having an instrument in your pocket. For nonmusicians, it's a way to coax sounds — often programmed to stay on key no matter what note one actually plays — out of what may be the only instrumentlike device they ever pick up.

A main goal for many of these apps' developers is to introduce nonmusical people to music, and musical people to different kinds of music. And when taken less as a serious instrument and more as a sampler for the wide world of music, these devices are wildly successful.

For those dying to shred, however, they leave something to be desired.

The majority of apps in this category try to cram a fully functioning instrument into an interface that, while touch-sensitive, is still only 3 inches wide. It's about the same width as a guitar neck, so six strings fit reasonably well. Still, only a few frets can be covered at once, and even the simple acts of plucking a string and forming chords take a significant degree of finger wrangling.

Similarly, while many apps offer recording features, synching up separate apps without external recording software is difficult, unless you spend a lot of time behind a mixing console.

So the essential question becomes, are music apps real tools for artistic expression, or are they in the same league as, say, *Bejeweled* or other time-killing games?

"When it all comes down to it, these are all games, pretty much," said Turner Kirk, community marketing manager for Smule, whose *Ocarina* is one of the simplest yet most inventive musical apps

on the market. "We'd like to think of them as expressive musical instruments, even though we might be limited by hardware. But really, it's like a toy."

*Ocarina* proves that simplicity works in this environment. An actual ocarina — a simple wind instrument, frequently found with only four holes — is among the simplest music makers, and its virtual version is perfect for the iPhone interface. One has only to blow into the device's microphone to control the instrument — almost identically to the way one would an actual ocarina.

Because it's an iPhone, of course, users can take the experience to different levels, with the ability to change pitch, upload their recordings and span the globe to listen to others' tunes. An online songbook lets even a beginner ocarinist play Beethoven's *Ode to Joy*.

Other simple apps that have been successful include Normalware's *Bebot*, where one can make a tuxedoed cartoon robot sing electronic notes by dragging a finger across the screen. Tones and settings are customizable; one option places strings across the interface. It's always perfectly in tune and is incredibly diverting. "Because apps like this handle the difficult part of making music — producing a good sound and playing the right notes — they free the user for the fun part of the process: getting expressive," said David Battino, co-author of *The Art of Digital Music*.

Even real musicians use *Bebot*; a recent *San Francisco Chronicle* article on musical applications led with Dream Theater's keyboardist, Jordan Rudess, playing it on the iPhone during a performance in San Jose, California.

Sheer simplicity, however, isn't the only route to success. *Moocow Music*,

which offers apps for bass, guitar, piano and organ, suggests on its Web site that its creations can be used "as a 'musical notepad' for working out riffs to play back in the studio on a real (instrument)." This is true. It's also a tacit admission that the apps are not meant to replace real instruments.

Still, the care that goes into these apps' creation is obvious. Rather than simply offering one sound per note, *Moocow* has loaded multiple guitar and bass samples for each fret and string, which are played randomly when that note is struck. Because real guitar strings are plucked or strummed slightly differently each time, this lends a subtle air of authenticity to the sound.

Several guitar apps feature preloaded scales, chord forms and tablature features for those looking to work out ideas. They make for terrific notation tools for pros and theory tools for novices. But as for actual instrumentality, well, there aren't many people who say an iPhone feels better in the hand than a guitar. Or a drumstick. Or a cowbell.

And this is where it gets back to being like a video game. Many musical apps offer the ability to record a track, then add layers on top of it. Doing this between disparate apps is impossible without external recording software, but a multi-instrumental app like *Moocow's* Band gives novices the opportunity to record and edit tracks with drums, bass and guitar, and make sure it all sounds pretty good (even if one doesn't know how to play a lick of music). It's as much a game as *Guitar Hero*, only instead of trying to keep up with prerecorded music, the goal is to make music of one's own.

If there's gray area, it's with the synth mixing and sound creation programs.

The *BeatMaker* from Intua, for example, combines drum machines, samplers and sequencers. It allows users to layer tracks, then loop them as one would in a full-fledged studio. It's a powerful application (and, at US\$19.99, one of the most expensive musical apps on the market), but it's all too easy for a novice to become lost in its features within moments of loading it up.

For companies like Sound Trends, whose *Looptastic* series allows for the creation of multilayered beats via mixing and matching of audio samples, there's little pretense of being a studio replacement.

"We wanted to capture something that's in the moment and fun," said Sound Trends' president, Aaron Higgins. "There are a few apps out there that are intimidating and lack the fun. You can play around with them, but once you open up the control panel it's like opening the hood of a car. We made a conscious decision that that wasn't the direction we wanted to go."

Reasons for that decision are plentiful, but one stands above the others: the casual novice market is a whole lot bigger than the hard-core musician one. The user who would just as soon loop a few beats together as blow up a virtual Russian army while taking the train to work is key to Higgins' reasoning.

The beautiful thing about these iPhone apps, however, is that even when it comes to the pros, it doesn't matter. What guitar player doesn't spend hours noodling until the moment inspiration strikes? Hardly an inspiration deterrent, the iPhone is actually just the opposite; it might not make for optimal musicality, but it opens up the possibility for one's muse to come calling in pretty much any setting.

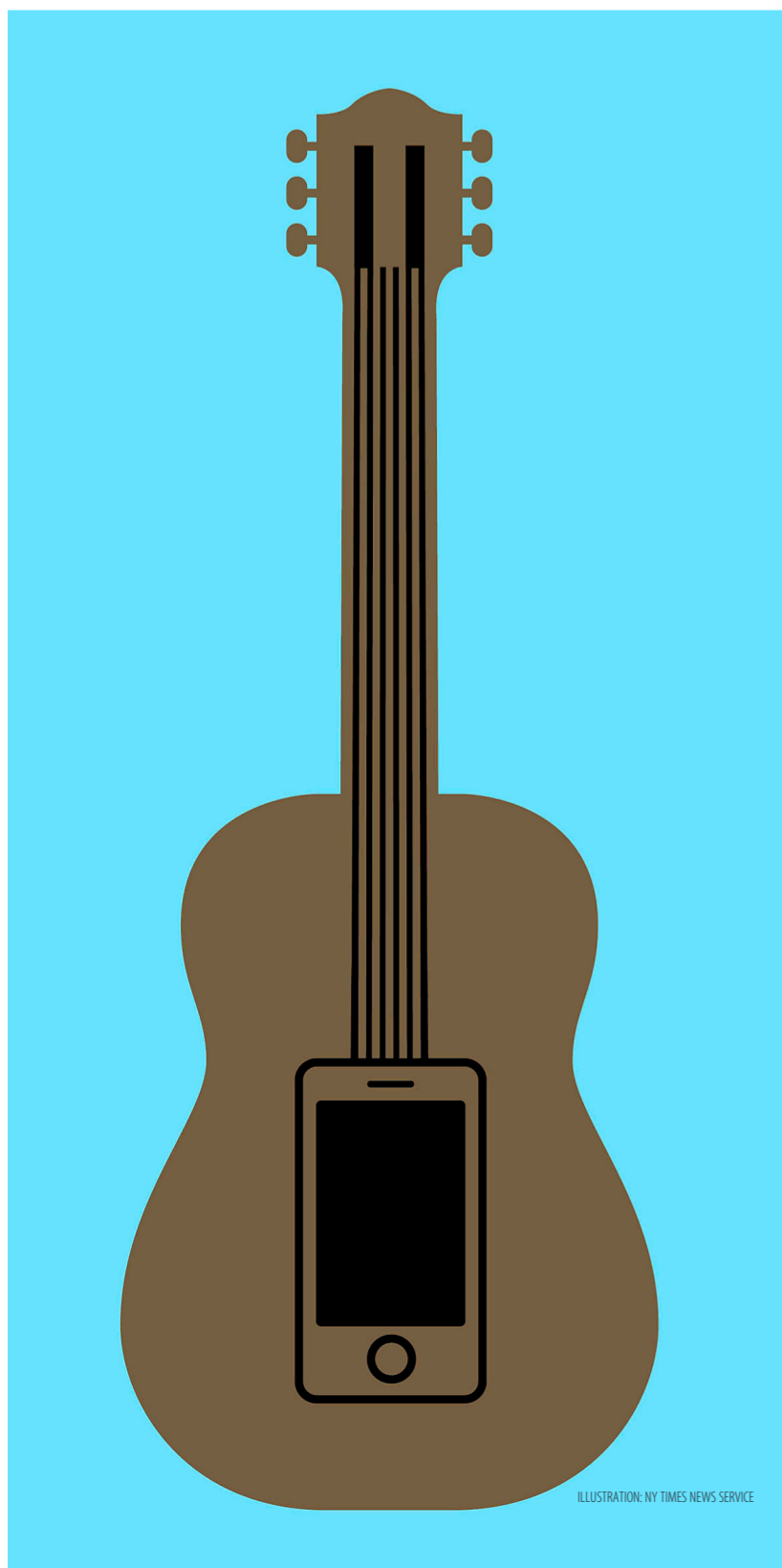


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