

REBEL ROUSER

The leather jacket's many degrees of cool on exhibit.

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The "Art is Love" black leather biker jacket by designer Franco Moschino (1990).



Leather jackets like this were issued to naval aviation officers around 1940-42.



An Oshwahkon leather jacket is paired with a Harley-Davidson vest and buttons.

Timeless. Classic. And with major attitude. It adds an instant cool factor to a simple LBD as well as to a full-on punk ensemble. The not-so-secret weapon of many fashionistas, the leather jacket is getting newfound attention thanks to an exhibit at Muzeo in Anaheim.

"Worn to be Wild: The Black Leather Jacket" runs through Jan. 12 and showcases the evolution of the outerwear from the functional piece worn by bikers to one of the most coveted fashion looks that has little to do with protection from the elements and all to do with being hip and rebellious.

The exhibit is a brainchild of the people at the Harley-Davidson Museum in Milwaukee, who partnered with the EMP Museum in Seattle and brought it to Orange County's Muzeo. It features movie memorabilia, vintage motorcycles and more than 50 jackets, many worn by celebrities on-screen, onstage or in their personal lives. Plus, several high-end designer couture looks. From Elvis Presley's 1950's jacket to Arnold Schwarzenegger's tough-guy/robot "Terminator 2" wardrobe and Fergie's studded-leather stage costume, the exhibit is a fun history and pop culture lesson on the rebellious apparel.

"I've always been interested in how the motorcycle jacket continued to be adopted into pop culture," said Jim Fricke, the Harley-Davidson Museum's curatorial director. "I was shocked that no one has done a comprehensive look at how this developed and became such an icon."

Ever wondered how the moto design came to be? Check out the "anatomy of a jacket" display on the wall. It breaks down the form and function of each piece of the garment as it was originally meant for bicycle riders.

"All those details that were developed for practical purposes are now just cool references," Fricke said.

Leather or not, the motorcycle jacket is not likely to ever disappear off the fashion scene. So, just what makes it so irresistible?

"The way the combination of materials and the way the jackets are cut, they accentuate. The way they tighten up at the waist, they create the silhouette that we associate with toughness and attractiveness," Fricke said. "That kind of cements that image in people's minds. This is kind of the uniform of rebellious cool and if I'm putting that on, I exude those characteristics."

Designer Agatha Blois, who created jackets for Fergie and the film "The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo," couldn't agree more.

"They make everybody look pretty sexy when they put it on," Blois said. "Instant tough-guy appeal."

"Worn to be Wild" is divided into sections, including form and function, archetypes, pop culture, punk/sub cult and fashion. Style mavens are likely to be attracted to the couture pieces on the runway. Alas, you can't try on the beautiful and edgy two-piece Jean Paul Gaultier from the ready-to-wear fall/winter 2001/2002 collection, or the studded Gianni Versace from the ready-to-wear fall/winter 1991/1992 collection, just to name a few of the fabulous style. This is a museum, after all. But if you want get in touch with your inner biker at least for a moment, the clever folks at the Muzeo have you covered. Just pick one of the leather jacket hanging on racks in another section of the museum (they have men's and kids' jackets, too) and hop on the nearby motorcycle for a picture.

Marybeth Muller, Muzeo's marketing manager, said she doesn't see the leather jacket going out of style anytime soon.

"It's a personal investment and it's kind of like a car in terms of style symbol," she said. "When people wear it, it suggests the type of character they have."



The "Worn to be Wild" exhibit at Muzeo includes these punk-inspired leather motorcycle jackets that were created by individuals in the Seattle area during the 1980s and '90s.

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