

First Draft

Ethical and Fair-trade Businesses in Bristol

Should you be thinking more about where your clothes come from?

After watching several documentaries and hearing constantly about the effects of fast fashion on the environment, people and animals it may be time we start doing something about it. I will be looking in to which brands we should be buying from, who makes our clothes and why Bristol is the best place for upcoming ethical brands.

Fast Fashion depends on consumers but what a lot of consumers are naive about are the effects that this industry has on the environment and people making the clothing. Bristol has been a FairTrade City since 2005, but we do not consider buying and thinking as ethically as we live.

Fast Fashion effects many things; you, the 'consumers' who buy cheap disposable textiles for the season only to be discarded at the back of your wardrobe when its no longer making you the envy of your friends, you're all wasting your money. The workers, the workers risk serious health issues, death, inhumane conditions and very low pay. 21 million of these people are victims of forced labour and 26% are children, this is on the rise. Animals, many are caged in tiny spaces, never learning to walk, being ridden with disease and starvation to be skinned alive or inhumanely killed, most of the time with exhaust fumes. The environment is also effected, from the pesticides that ruin the soil and makes water toxic to the harmful chemicals of the leather dying process doing the exact same thing. This article is not to make you feel bad for buying from large high street brands, but to inform you and give you the chance to make better choices.

Thankfully it's becoming much easier to access ethical clothing and I'm going to make it a lot easier for you.

Not many people know about the impact they would have if everyone switched to ethical clothing or even where to find it. Starting with a Clothing shop that I have already been in contact with, Brothers We Stand have an extensive range of menswear, tagging each item with a description of the impact, so that you can make an informed decision (Of course it would be easier if all products had a label on them but unfortunately this is not the case.)

The menswear brand Brothers We Stand was set up in solidarity with the men and women who make their clothes. Their vision is to support the public to build a wardrobe of stylish and sustainably made menswear. Carrying out rigorous research on every product in their collection ensuring each product meets the following three standards:

Ethical production - Manufacture respects both people and planet.

Designed to please - Products look good and perform the jobs they were created to do.

Created to last - Clothes are made to be enjoyed for many years.

I was able to get in touch with them for an interview:

Can you tell us a bit about yourself and what made you get in to ethical fashion?

I've always been creative, so have loved all things art and music growing up, fashion was naturally an extension of that. Then just before I moved to Bristol, I went shopping and my conscience would not let me buy anything I didn't know was ethical, I hadn't thought about the ethics of clothing before that, but from that point onwards I started buying from ethical fashion brands.

What makes your clothing ethical?

To get into our collection, all products have to have a positive social or environmental impact that sets them apart from the mainstream. That could look like a t-shirt made in a wind-powered

factory with a carbon footprint 90% lower than that of a conventional t-shirt or a pair of trousers hand-made by the designer in London using locally sourced fabrics.

The goal is to make ethically produced clothing as accessible as possible, I think one of the best ways to do that is having places where people can see, feel and try on clothing. So we would love to continue opening stores all over the country and give people a genuine ethical alternative on the high street.

Who or what has inspired you in the fashion industry the most?

Ed Vickers, who actually introduced me to Jonathan who founded Brothers We Stand. He runs Jollie Socks and I interned with him a while back. He has created such a strong brand identity and that comes across every time you chat to him. He's also ran with his idea with such confidence that he's now got Jollie's in Fortnum & Mason, John Lewis etc. and very soon they'll be at Brothers We Stand!

Will you be bringing out a womens line in the future?

We'd absolutely love to at some point. There's just two of us guys currently running the business so we'll definitely need some female input before embarking on that venture!

Brothers We Stand are located at Unit 20, Cargo 2, Museum Street, Bristol, BS1 6ZA. Visit their website at www.brotherswestand.com and keep up to date through their social media accounts on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

Each item on the site has a footprint tab detailing its social and environmental impact. listing the use of pioneering ethical practices as well as the aspects of manufacture that could be further improved. Aiming to provide customers with a transparent window onto the supply chain of the products the public buy.

The Bike Spoke

New Bristol Based Ethical Cycling Clothing Brand The bike spoke is founded by a current UWE Human Geography Student, Ceri Middleton has launched a new ethical cycling clothing brand, The Bike Spoke. The Bike Spoke focuses on creating stylish and comfortable cycling clothing, which are both ethical and eco-friendly.

First launching with their line of Bamboo t-shirts, The Bike Spoke aim for important qualities we can enjoy; with a super soft feel and breathable material, Bamboo is also well known for its ethical qualities; needing limited water, growing fast and helping the sustainability of the soil making it a great environmentally friendly material.

The t-shirts are accredited to the Fear Wear Foundation, meaning they are made in a safe working environment and the employees are looked after fairly. Fear Wear Foundation ensures social responsibility in manufacturing. Some of the standards include legal contracts, living wage, no child labour, no forced labour, no excessive work hours, safe working conditions and no discrimination against employees.

Their t-shirts are hand printed in Bristol and celebrate Bristol's cycling and environmental achievements.

“Being England's first cycling city and then having being Europe's Green Capital in 2015, this is something we are proud of! I wanted to create a t-shirt which celebrates the city and encourages more cycling, both commuting and for pleasure”

Chandni Chowk specialises in textiles, hand made in India by wonderfully skilled crafts people to a very high quality. They are a fair trade company producing two main fashion collections annually, along with several satellite collections usually with something extra special about them such as their Organic cotton range.

Antiform is a forward thinking fashion company with an irregular twist, pushing the boundaries of ethical, sustainable design by using reclaimed materials and mixing fashion forward shapes with heritage craft. All of the materials and workmanship involved in the production of Antiform clothing is sourced within the UK, and local to their studio if possible.

Check out their website to see their latest works Antifoam x Bristol Weaving Mill

They also have an interesting article 'Sewing in the city – how Antiform and Bristol work together'

Brands such as 'People Tree', Founded by Safia Minney, are very big in the ethical fashion industry and you can find their clothing at popular shops such as House of Fraser and ASOS. As seen on the documentary 'The True Cost', Safia Minney founder of People Tree, has been working with women and men in 17 different countries to promote better working conditions. She has now published the book 'Slave to Fashion' to inform people about the serious matters of Fast Fashion Consequences.

Laidback fairtrade fashion that's simple yet stylish, and very wearable. All of Bibico's items are made from natural materials so you won't find any synthetics in their online shop, or in their bricks and mortar shop in Bath.

They have a lovely range of organic cotton clothing. As well as their range of Fairtrade clothes, they also have some beautiful ethical jewellery brands including: Made Jewellery and A Beautiful Story.

Formally known as Braintree clothing, have not only created a long line of ethically sourced clothing and Vegan clothing but help many Charities and small businesses in the fashion industry. from opening pop-up shops on London's famous Portobello Road and at Camden Lock market. With countless phone calls and hard work, a flurry of independent boutiques soon stocked the growing collection. Today their collection is in over 1,000 shops all over the world.

You can find out more of what they do on their website; read about their partners and how they help not only the workers behind our clothing but charities too.

There are many other Brands small and well known that are becoming involved in the movement. The main brands defending workers rights and putting a stop to the Fast fashion impacts are mainly available online, but some have now made it to the high street, this can only happen when they have been noticed enough for their hard work. Below are the main retailers to date:

Everlane USA, Elizabeth Suzann USA, Raven + Lily USA, Mayamiko UK, Apolis USA, Naja USA, Eileen Fisher USA, SiiZU USA, Symbology USA, Indigenous USA, Mata Traders USA, Gamine Workwear USA, Wallis Evera Canada, Gather and See UK, Sweater Company USA, PACT Apparel USA, Krotchet Kids intl USA, Nisolo USA, Alternative Apparel USA, People Tree UK, Tribe Alive USA, Fair Trade Winds USA, HOPE Made in the World USA, Encircled Canada, Tradlands USA, AGGATI USA, YSTR USA, Thought UK, DL1961 USA, Bead and Reel USA, Groceries Apparel USA, Karen kane USA, Christy Dawn USA , Able USA, SlumLove, Reformation USA

Alternatively, using the search bar, find out which big companies provide vegan, fair-trade and ethical alternatives.

Starting off small can mean buying clothing from Charity shops instead, or attending clothes swap evenings. All of these options help work towards creating a better life for the people that make our clothing.

Final Draft

Should you be thinking more about where your clothes come from?

Fast Fashion affects many things; you, the 'consumers' who buy cheap disposable textiles for the season only to be discarded at the back of your wardrobe when its no longer making you the envy of your friends, you're all wasting your money. The workers, the workers risk serious health issues, inhumane conditions, preposterously low pay and even death. 21 million of these people are victims of forced labour and 26% are children, this is on the rise. Animals, many are caged in tiny spaces, never learning to walk, being ridden with disease and starvation to be skinned alive or inhumanely killed, most of the time with exhaust fumes. The environment is also effected, from the pesticides that ruin the soil making the water toxic, to the harmful chemicals of the leather dying process doing the exact same thing. This article is not to make you feel bad for buying from large high street brands, but to inform you and give you the chance to make better choices. Many people do not know the devastating effects of buying cheap fast fashion and textiles, read on if you'd like to find out more...

Silk is made from the cocoons of silk worms, most popularly used are the Bombyx silk worms. Reared in captivity and solely in captivity, there are no wild Silk worms alive. When force fed Mulberry leaves, silk worms will shed four times in the weeks that they are alive and then create a cocoon, before hatching, they will be boiled alive. 2500 silk worms are needed to make one pound of raw silk.

The dying process of leather has huge effects on peoples health. Workers are 20-50% more susceptible to cancer due to being exposed to the chemicals. These chemicals flood into the rivers where many people drink, wash and clean their clothes.

Bristol's Ethical Fashion and where to find it part one...

Brothers We Stand interview. BWS was set up in solidarity with the men and women who make their clothes. Carrying out rigorous research on every product in their collection ensuring each product meets the following three standards:

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I was able to get in touch with Sam Mabley, owner of the Brothers We Stand store in Bristol, for an interview:

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with 250 million people working in the cotton industry, you can imagine the magnitude in which people around the world consume clothing, taking advantage of the hard work people do. Cotton affects everything, with it being the most widespread non-food crop in the world, we do really take it for granted. The environment is effected by the enormous amount of pesticides used, threatening the quality of the water and soil. The farmers and workers that deal day to day with pesticides are in more danger of having cancer and other health issues. Its not only the workers that need to worry about their health, people from nearby villages and cities use this toxic water for drinking and washing.

Ethical clothing in Bristol

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