



Amy Flurry

Posted February 02, 2010 in Fashion



John Galliano Fall 2010 (Photo by Eric Ryan/Getty Images)

A few months ago, a [little birdie blogger](#) I know predicted that the science fiction sub-genre called steampunk would "hit fashion hard." Steampunk, you say? Yes, in this fantasy world, set against an industrial, neo-Victorian backdrop where steam is the sole method of energy production, scientific romanticism collides with an imagined future. Here, flying machines, time-travelling contraptions and a turn-of-the-century aesthetic of brass timepieces, corsets, aviator goggles, pith helmets, buckles, boots and Bowler hats rule. Take Jean-Pierre Jeunet's film, [City of the Lost Children](#) or the post-apocalyptic scavenger looks of Mad Max. Now combine that with the sweet, can-build-anything spirit of the early 1970s children's book, [Me and My Flying Machine](#), and, well, there you have it—a state of mind that is at once nostalgic and wildly forward-thinking.

Since my friend is eerily spot-on in her fashion forecasts, I've been keeping my eyes peeled for references to this H.G. Wells-inspired sci-fi style. Suddenly, they are everywhere, in media and fashion alike: The lavish sets and costumes of Guy Ritchie's latest film, *Sherlock Holmes*, staged in the industrial projects and factories of Victorian London, are a showcase of steampunky costumes and gadgetry. According to blogger [lo9](#), "packed with Victorian gadgets, awesome fights, Illuminati-style conspiracies, and lots of incredibly sexy tweed outfits, the new *Sherlock Holmes* flick is James Bond for the steampunk set."

And in the past few weeks, the embrace of this subculture—one quickly outgrowing its niche status—was on display in Paris, nowhere more evident than the theater of John Galliano. For his fall-winter 2010-2011 menswear collection, Galliano sent models storming down the runway in heavy tweed overcoats, Holmesian capes, long-stemmed pipes, deerstalker hats and lace-up combat boots—looks that punctuated the somber, urban punk in this style equation. Just on their heels, he trotted out a dandified set of men in skinny three-piece suits with umbrellas and bowler caps—these a nod to the structure and formality of a Victorian age.

On the street, where movements like these truly begin, many who have adopted the steampunk style have also embraced the lifestyle, like shaving with straight razors, smoking chuckwarden pipes or exchanging calling cards. Some modify modern technology into fantastical contraptions or assume affectations of steampunk within modern technology, like this [steampunk-themed skin for an iPod touch](#). I've found [blogs completely devoted to the steampunk culture](#).



And on eBay, there currently are over [4,200 listings with the term "steampunk."](#) Further, over the past 90 days, there were over 20,000 listings with the term and over \$311,000 in total sales. Among the most expensive items sold: a [Steampunk Fairy Mechanical Angel](#) original painting for \$1,500 (above, left) and [Custom Strider Steampunk Knife](#) for \$2,400 (above, right).

Does steampunk have staying power? We think so. Perhaps beyond its romantic and otherworldly visual charm, the movement's foundations—the enterprising spirit, the appreciation of craftsmanship and championing of scientific progress—will resonate as we gear up and use our imaginations to pull out of environmental catastrophes and the recession. You read it here first.

A few months ago, a [little birdie blogger](#) I know predicted that the science fiction sub-genre called steampunk would "hit fashion hard." Steampunk, you say? Yes, in this fantasy world, set against an industrial, neo-Victorian backdrop where steam is the sole method of energy production, scientific romanticism collides with an imagined future. Here, flying machines, time-travelling contraptions and a turn-of-the-century aesthetic of brass timepieces, corsets, aviator goggles, pith helmets, buckles, boots and Bowler hats rule. Take Jean-Pierre Jeunet's film, [City of the Lost Children](#) or the post-apocalyptic scavenger looks of Mad Max. Now combine that with the sweet, can-build-anything spirit of the early 1970s children's book, [Me and My Flying Machine](#), and, well, there you have it—a state of mind that is at once nostalgic and wildly forward-thinking.



[Goth Industrial Necklace](#) (starting bid, \$19.90) Exposed gears and metals are hallmarks of steampunk accessories. Necklaces may begin with a watch part or half of a vintage pocket watch or "clamshell" and then embellished with different metal flourishes.

