THISDAY

Style

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SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 2026

BOVI UGBOMA

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COVER NOTE

Bovi Ugboma knows how to command a room. Give him a microphone, an audience, and a good story, and he can keep thousands entertained for hours. It is a skill he has spent nearly two decades perfecting, turning everyday experiences, relationships and the peculiarities of Nigerian life into comedy that audiences are willing to travel and pay good money to enjoy. His recently concluded Guilty as Charged world tour is further proof of that appeal.

Lifestyle & Fashion

The Finer Details Of Men's Grooming 3

MSS Marks 20 Years, Unveils New Brand Identity 4

Andrea Iyamah Celebrates 15 Years With Anniversary Runway Show At Isimi Lagos 6

Kimono Kollection Celebrates 16 Years With Debut Runway Show 7

All Boys Out: Atafo Unveils SS '27 Womenswear Collection 8

Aisha Ayensu: Christie Brown & The Business of Return 10

Are Men Finally Having More Fun with Fashion? 18

Opinion: The Fashion Copycats: Where Does Inspiration End And Imitation Begin? 19

Nigerian Labels Worth Discovering 20

What Deserves A Bigger Fashion Budget? 22

THISDAY Style

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EDITOR'S LETTER

Hello November

If there's one thing fashion season guarantees, it's that Lagos will have plenty to talk about. Between the collections, the guest lists, the front-row fashion and the occasional questionable outfit, there is never a dull moment. I am especially looking forward to seeing what our designers have been working on. Some have been noticeably quiet, others have been teasing us with glimpses of what's coming, and a few have already given us reasons to pay attention. I have my expectations, naturally, but I am more than happy to be surprised.

Beyond the excitement, though, I think this is a good time to appreciate the industry we have built. Nigerian fashion has become a serious business, with designers creating jobs, developing recognisable brands and producing work that can compete internationally. It isn't all glamorous, and running a fashion business here is no joke. Which is why I hope we do more than applaud the clothes this season. Attend the shows, visit the pop-ups, explore the collections and, most importantly, patronise our designers. We cannot keep praising Nigerian creativity while expecting compliments to pay the bills.

And there is certainly no shortage of designers to support. In fact, I sometimes think we have become so accustomed to the same familiar names that we overlook some of the interesting work happening elsewhere. There are brands quietly making beautiful clothes, experimenting with fabrics and finding their own place in an increasingly competitive industry. Not every good designer has a celebrity clientele or an enormous Instagram following, and that is precisely why discovering new labels can be so rewarding. In this issue, we introduce you to a few Nigerian fashion brands worth knowing. Do read the feature. You might just discover your next favourite.

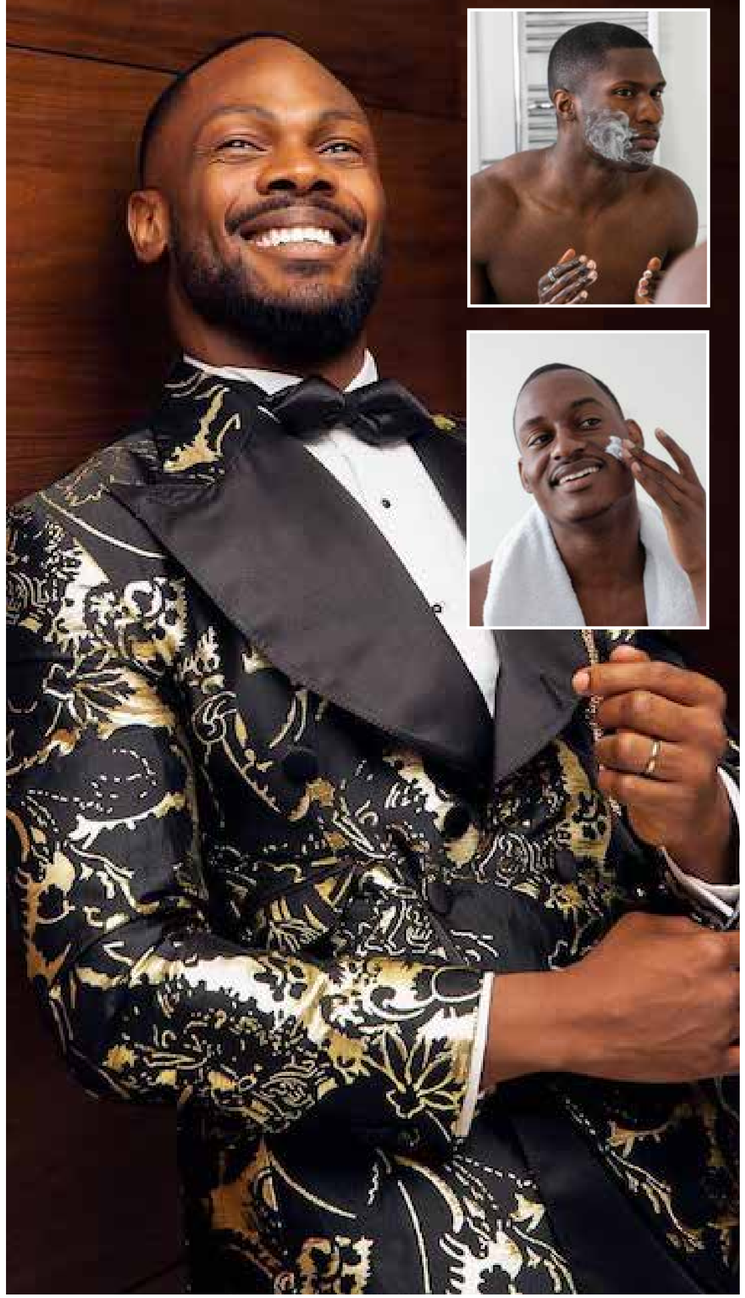
But as more designers find their footing and establish recognisable identities, another issue becomes difficult to ignore. What happens when the very designs that distinguish a brand become someone else's next collection? Fashion has always thrived on shared influences, and no designer creates in complete isolation. Still, there is a difference between interpreting an idea and reproducing another person's work, even if that difference isn't always easy to define. Add the commercial realities of customers wanting similar looks at different price points, and the conversation becomes even more complicated. My opinion piece, The Fashion Copycats: Where Does Inspiration End and Imitation Begin?, examines this familiar but rarely straightforward aspect of the Nigerian fashion industry. I think it is worth your time. As for November, I hope you're ready for everything the season has planned. My advice? Pace yourself. Lagos has a remarkable talent for making you feel like missing one event is a personal failure. Trust me it isn't.

Love,

Konye

THE FINER DETAILS OF MEN'S GROOMING

Looking good goes beyond a fresh haircut and an expensive fragrance. Sometimes, it's the smaller details that make all the difference. Men have become considerably more particular about how they look, and we're here for it. Barbers are booked out on weekends, skincare is no longer considered exclusively women's territory, and some men know more about fragrance notes than the sales assistants selling them. But there's another level to looking polished that has less to do with spending money and more to do with paying attention. It's in how a haircut grows out, how the skin looks after shaving, or whether a fragrance still works when the temperature hits 32 degrees. These finer details can make an already well-groomed man look even better.



1. Keep Your Haircut Looking Good Between Visits

A great haircut shouldn't only look good for the first three days. Pay attention to how your hair grows out, particularly around the neckline, temples and sideburns. A quick tidy-up between appointments can keep things sharp. Also, find a barber who understands your hair texture and face shape. Not every man needs the same fade.

2. Give Your Eyebrows Some Attention

Eyebrows can make a surprising difference to the face. We're not suggesting perfectly sculpted arches, but trimming unusually long hairs and tidying the space between your brows can create a cleaner appearance. The goal is subtle maintenance, not a completely different expression. If nobody notices you've done anything, you've probably got it right.

3. Don't Ignore the Skin Beneath Your Beard

A beautifully shaped beard can be a man's best accessory, but the skin underneath deserves attention too. Dryness, irritation and flaking can develop beneath thick facial hair. Cleanse regularly, moisturise underneath and use a beard conditioner if necessary. And if you're noticing grey strands, decide whether to embrace them or colour them. Either works.

4. Pay Attention to Your Hands

You don't need weekly manicures, but neatly trimmed nails, tidy cuticles and moisturised hands are worth maintaining. This becomes particularly noticeable when wearing rings or an expensive watch. A little hand cream goes a long way. It's one of those grooming details that rarely attracts compliments but contributes to an overall polished appearance.

5. Master Shaving Without Irritation

For men with coarse or curly facial hair, shaving can leave behind razor bumps and dark marks. Instead of chasing the closest possible shave, consider what works for your skin. Shaving in the direction of hair growth, using a suitable razor or electric trimmer and avoiding repeated passes can help minimise irritation. A clean neckline is attractive; an irritated one isn't worth the trouble.

6. Take Your Scalp Seriously

Your scalp deserves as much attention as the hair growing from it. Product buildup, dryness and flaking can affect how your hair looks and feels. Use a shampoo appropriate for your scalp and avoid piling on oils when the underlying problem needs treatment. Men who shave their heads should also remember sunscreen. A bald head still needs skincare.

7. Know When to Change Your Fragrance

That rich oud you love may smell incredible at an evening event but overwhelming during a hot afternoon. Fragrance should suit the occasion, weather and environment. Lighter scents often work better during the day, while richer compositions suit evenings. And you don't need ten sprays to make an impression. Sometimes, the best fragrance is one people notice only when they come closer.

8. Don't Overlook the Finishing Touches

A few details are easy to miss: dry lips, stray nose or ear hairs, an untidy neckline or facial hair that needs a quick trim. None requires an elaborate routine. A lip balm, a small grooming kit and an occasional mirror check can take care of most of them.

MSS MARKS 20 YEARS, UNVEILS NEW BRAND IDENTITY

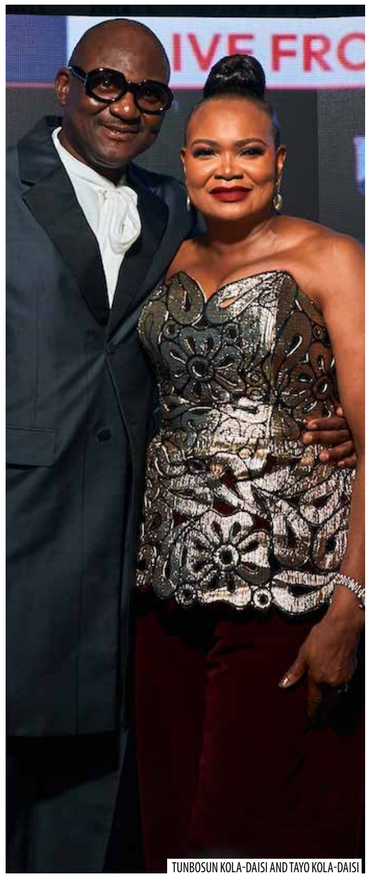
Mobile Screens and Sound Limited (MSS) celebrated its 20th anniversary with a gala at Harbour Point, Victoria Island, Lagos, on October 8, unveiling a new brand identity and plans for expansion across Africa. The event, themed The Art of Experience, brought together business leaders, government officials, clients and industry stakeholders to celebrate the company's contributions to Nigeria's event technology industry.

Founded by Tunbosun Kola-Daisi, MSS has grown from an early provider of LED screen technology into a major player in sound, lighting, staging and live event production.

Speaking at the celebration, Kola-Daisi reflected on the company's early challenges, revealing that it took nearly five years to break even. He also outlined plans for further innovation, expansion and talent development. The evening featured immersive installations and a drone display unveiling the refreshed identity.

MSS also highlighted its Event Tech Academy, developed with KolaDaisi University, which recently graduated over 60 students, five of whom secured employment with the company.

Benin City.


TUNBOSUN KOLA-DAISI AND TAYO KOLA-DAISI

DAREY ART ALADE

DAVID YIN

AKIN OSUNTOKI AND LEKAN ADEGBITE

KENNY BLAQ AND SOLA SCHULLZ MOGAJI

H.E. BAMIDELE ABIODUN & BIMBO SOMOLU

ODUNLAMI KOLA-DAISI AND AMB. FLORENCE AJIMOBI

POSI WILLIAMS, DANIELLA ANWULI UJLENHOED, DUNTAN WEST

EZINWA IWELU

DEYEMI OKANLAWON

BUKOLA ADEBIYI

KEMI OGUNYEMI AND FEMI OGUNYEMI

ROTIMI ASHAYE

KOLAPO KOLA-DAISI

KEHINDE SANUSI

SEUN SOMOLU

YINKA ONIWINDE

ANDREA IYAMAH CELEBRATES 15 YEARS WITH ANNIVERSARY RUNWAY SHOW AT ISIMI LAGOS

Nigerian fashion designer Andrea Iyamah celebrated 15 years of her eponymous label with an outdoor runway show at Isimi Lagos in Epe.

The anniversary presentation showcased the brand's nature-inspired Fall 2026 collection, Rooted, alongside a preview of its Spring/Summer 2027 designs. The runway featured vibrant colours, flowing silhouettes, sculptural details and organic forms that reflected the designer's signature aesthetic and longstanding appreciation of African culture and nature.

The celebration, held in partnership with Moët & Chandon, also treated guests to a farm-to-table dining experience, bringing together fashion, nature and hospitality.

Since launching her label 15 years ago, Iyamah has built an internationally recognised brand celebrated for its distinctive swimwear, resortwear and contemporary womenswear.

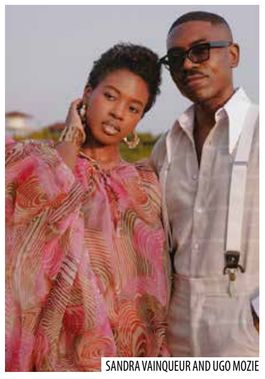
ANDRE IYAMAH

ENIAFE MOMODU

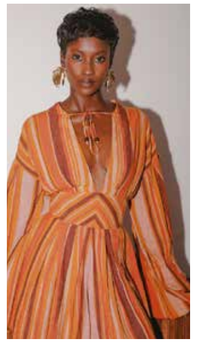
SOMKELE IDHALAMA AND RONKE BAMISEDUN

ZARA ODU

OSAS IGHODARO


SANDRA VAINQUEUR AND UGO MOZIE

ENIOLA POPOOLA AND DODOS UVIEGHARA



KIMONO KOLLECTION CELEBRATES 16 YEARS WITH DEBUT RUNWAY SHOW

Nigerian menswear brand Kimono Kollection celebrated its 16th anniversary on Sunday, October 25, with its first-ever runway show, Threads of Time, held in Victoria Island, Lagos.

Founded by Hakeem Balogun, the brand marked the milestone with the unveiling of its Spring/Summer 2027 collection, featuring 70 looks in shades of black, cream, brown, green, burgundy and grey.

Hosted by actor Tobi Bakre, the evening featured runway appearances by Wale Ojo, Efe Iwara, Leo Da Silva, Cross Okonkwo and Saskay. A surprise appearance by Dipo during the black-themed segment added to the excitement.

Guests included designers Mai Atafo and Lanre Da Silva, alongside Akin Faminu, Dabota Lawson and other fashion personalities.

A documentary tracing Balogun's journey in fashion was also screened. Closing the show, the designer reflected on his passion for craftsmanship, declaring, "Give me thread and needle and the rest is history."

HAKEEM BALOGUN

AKIN AND KIKI FAMINU

BIZZLE OSIKOYA

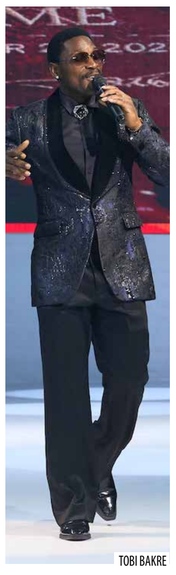
AMDIDDY , ESTHER UDEJI

DABOTA LAWSON

KIMONO KOLLECTION

KIMONO KOLLECTION

KIMONO KOLLECTION


TOBI BAKRE

MIKE AFOLARIN

SEYI VODI AND HAKEEM BALOGUN

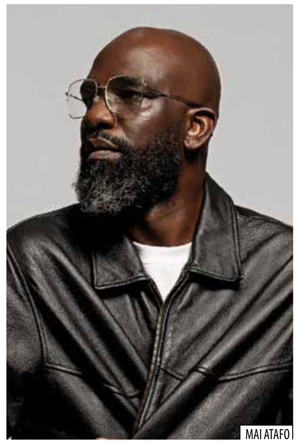
ALL BOYS OUT: ATAFO

UNVEILS SS '27 WOMENSWEAR COLLECTION

Mai Atafo knows how to get people talking, and this time, he managed to do so before a single model stepped onto the runway. The invitation to his Spring/Summer 2027 womenswear presentation came with an instruction that was difficult to ignore: "All Boys Out." It sounded playful, perhaps even a little provocative, but Atafo was quite serious. There were no men in the audience. For one evening, the front row and everyone behind it belonged entirely to women.

It was an interesting way to kick off Lagos fashion season, and certainly one that set the presentation apart from the usual runway affair. But beyond the unusual guest list was the collection itself, aptly titled A Measure of Her, which placed the spotlight on ATAFO's approach to contemporary womenswear.

Atafo has spent years establishing himself as one of Nigeria's most recognisable names in contemporary tailoring. His reputation rests largely on his ability to create clothes with structure, precision and a polished finish. Although menswear remains an important part of his identity, his bridal and womenswear designs have also earned him a loyal following. With A Measure of Her, the attention shifted to the possibilities of translating that tailoring expertise into a broader fashion conversation.



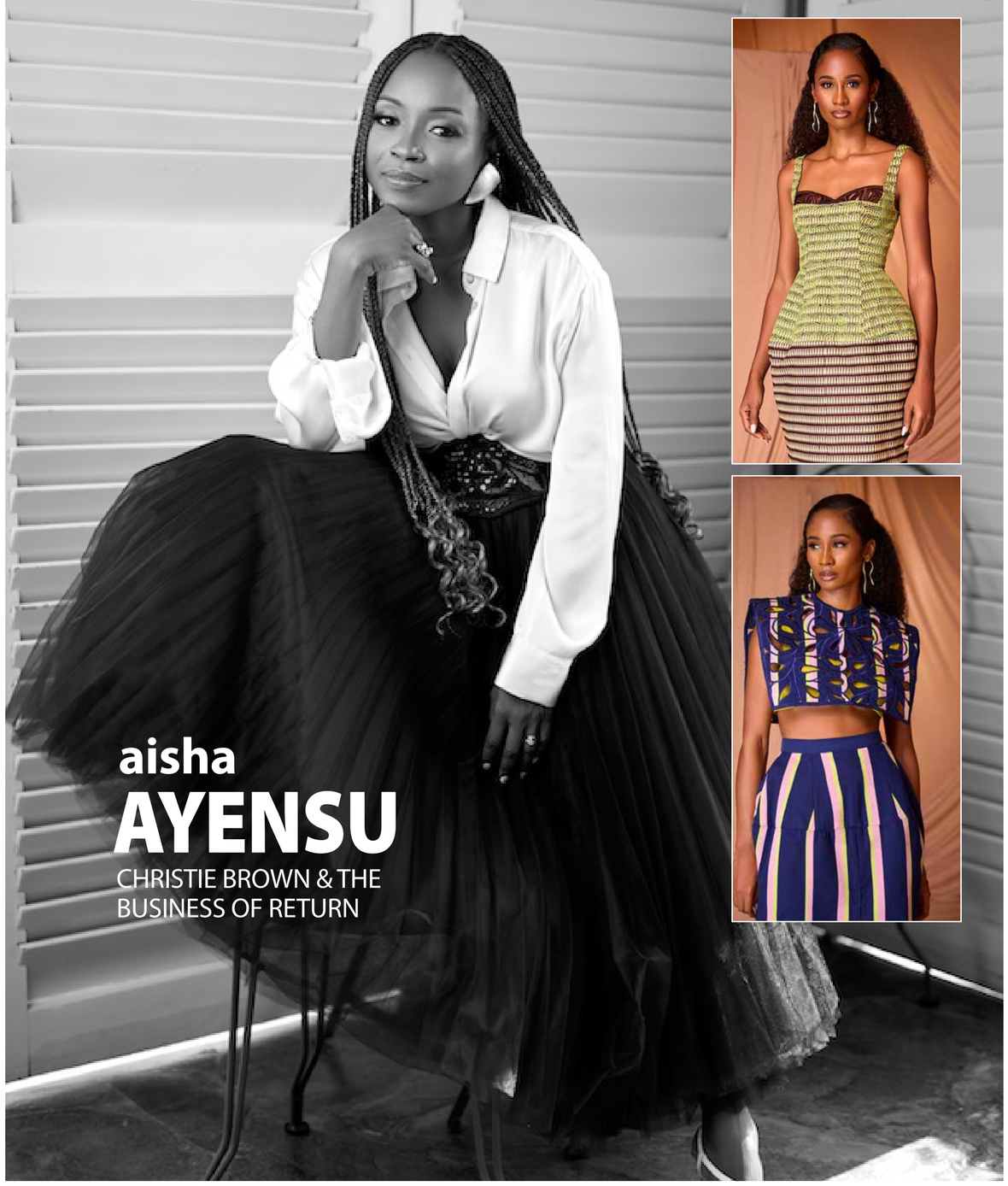
MAI ATAFO

A beautifully cut jacket, a flattering silhouette, or an outfit that sits exactly as it should can make as much of an impression as elaborate embellishment. This appreciation for construction has always been one of ATAFO's strengths, particularly in an industry where dramatic designs and extravagant detailing often command the most attention.

His aesthetic is generally more controlled, relying on proportion, clean finishing and an understanding of how clothing should complement the body.

The collection's title was particularly fitting for a designer whose career has been built around the importance of fit. Measurements are fundamental to good tailoring, but the real skill lies in knowing what to do with them. The difference between an ordinary outfit and an exceptional one often comes down to the smallest details: where a shoulder seam falls, how a waist is defined, or how fabric moves when worn.

Beyond the clothes, the presentation demonstrated Atafo's understanding of fashion as an experience. The "All Boys Out" concept was clever marketing, creating curiosity ahead of the show and giving the event a distinctive identity. It also offered another opportunity for ATAFO to reinforce its position in Nigeria's increasingly competitive luxury fashion market.



aisha AYENSU

CHRISTIE BROWN & THE BUSINESS OF RETURN

Aisha Ayensu
Christie Brown & The Business of Return

For Ghanaian fashion designer Aisha Ayensu, returning to Lagos is about more than putting Christie Brown back on the shopping map. It is an opportunity to reconnect with a fashion audience that has grown considerably since the brand last showed in Nigeria, and to test what a more permanent presence in one of Africa's most competitive fashion markets could look like. Since founding Christie Brown in 2008, Ayensu has built a distinctive fashion house known for its craftsmanship, expressive silhouettes and contemporary interpretation of African design. But the brand is also evolving. Prints, once central to its identity, now share the spotlight with architectural shapes, intricate detailing, and a broader approach to luxury. Behind the beautiful clothes is an equally ambitious business, one navigating the realities of manufacturing, international retail and the demands of building a lasting African luxury label. With a shopping event and a six-month residency at Temple Muse marking its return to Lagos, Christie Brown is making a considered move rather than a fleeting appearance. Speaking to THISDAYstyle, Ayensu discusses the business behind the brand, the changing face of African luxury, the possibility of a permanent Lagos store and why, after nearly two decades, she is still thinking bigger.

Let's start with your upcoming event at Temple Muse. Everyone does a pop-up. Why choose a shopping event and then a store strategy instead of going direct-to-consumer with a Lagos e-commerce drop?
Because I want her to try on the dress! There is so much about Christie Brown that comes alive when you experience the clothes in person—the texture, the embroidery, how a piece moves and how it makes you feel.
We're returning after quite some time, and I want to reconnect properly. The shopping event gives us that first moment together, and our six-month residency at Temple Muse means she can come back, discover more and build a relationship with us. Online shopping is part of the picture, of course. But I want Christie Brown to become part of her life in Lagos. There's something lovely about having a place she knows she can find us.

Lagos Fashion Week 2026 is leaning hard into circular futures. Your brand uses deadstock wax, exquisite silks, denim - how are you actually solving for waste in Accra? Are we talking upcycling or real systems?
I think the honest answer is that it's a work in progress. Using leftover fabric creatively has value, but we also have to look at the decisions that create waste in the first place. Are we buying well? Are we producing quantities that make sense? How much reworking happens because something wasn't resolved properly during development? Those are the less glamorous questions, but they matter.
As we strengthen the business, that's where I want more discipline. And creatively, I'm always thinking about longevity. I love hearing from a woman who still wears a Christie Brown piece she bought years ago. I want us to make clothes she keeps finding reasons to wear.

A Christie Brown dress at Harrods is priced in pounds, at Osu in cedis, and soon at Temple Muse in naira. How do you price African luxury honestly across three economies without alienating your home customer?
It's a careful balance. The craftsmanship has a value wherever the dress is sold. The materials, hours, and skill that go into it all have to be properly accounted for.
Then there are the costs of getting that dress into each market: shipping, duties, taxes and the retail relationship. So the final price cannot always be a straight currency conversion.
But I'm very conscious of the woman in Accra who has supported us from the beginning. Growing internationally comes with a responsibility to keep serving her well. For me, honest pricing means being clear about what goes into the garment and ensuring the quality and experience justify what we ask her to pay.

You haven't shown in Nigeria since 2017/18, a period when Nigerian fashion retail was heavily reliant on multi-brand boutiques. Since then, new spaces like Alara, Temple Muse & Zinkata have evolved. What are your hopes for the Lagos retail scene now?
I hope it continues to become a place where African brands can build lasting businesses. Lagos has women who love fashion, understand it and enjoy discovering something special. That is a wonderful starting point.
A good retailer brings so much to that relationship. They understand their customers, know how to present the work, and can tell a designer things she might never learn from sales figures alone.
I would love to see more of that exchange, especially across our region. A woman should be able to walk into a beautiful store in Lagos and discover exciting work from Accra, Abidjan and beyond. There is so much talent within reach.

You built your name on print, but Resort 2026 and FW26 'The Crossing' were almost print-free - all pleats, gingham, balloon skirts, architectural whites. Are you deliberately moving Christie Brown away from being read as an 'African print brand'?
I'm giving myself room to express the full range of what interests me. Print is part of our story, but so are embroidery, texture, shape and construction.
Sometimes I want the fabric to speak. Other times, I want you to notice the curve of a sleeve or the way a skirt holds its volume. That's the pleasure of designing…finding the right expression for the idea.
And I do think we need a broader understanding of what African design can look like. My perspective doesn't disappear because I've chosen a plain fabric. It's still there in the choices I make. I want people to recognise Christie Brown through that whole design language.

The Ghanaian cedi, naira volatility, import duties on silk and chiffon - every West African designer talks about manufacturing challenges. You still manufacture fully in Ghana. Is that a romantic decision or a profitable one?
There is certainly love involved, but love also needs a working business behind it! I should clarify that Ghana is our creative and operational home, and we also work with external manufacturing partners. Building Christie Brown has taught me to be very honest about what we can do well ourselves and where a partnership can help us deliver better.
I care deeply about the skills and livelihoods we're developing in Ghana. I also want the business to be strong enough to sustain them. That means paying attention to quality, productivity and cost. My ambition is to build a fashion house rooted here that can grow and help make that path more possible for others.

Temple Muse can sell out a piece in 48 hours. How are you structuring inventory between Accra production, Harrods re-orders, and now Lagos?
That is the work behind the beautiful pictures! Every new market is exciting, but it also means more women expecting us to deliver.
We're being deliberate about what goes where, what can be replenished and how long that will take. Some pieces are easier to repeat; others require craftsmanship and more time. We have to respect that in the promises we make.
A quick sell-out would be lovely. But I also want the woman who comes in afterwards to have a good experience. Growth asks us to become better at anticipating demand and planning for it. That's a big part of the work happening inside Christie Brown now.

Let's talk collaborations…you just did a custom Christie Brown x Khoi Kouture bridal look for a high-profile wedding in Accra. Should we expect a Nigerian designer collaboration when you land - perhaps Ejiro Amos Tafiri, Onalaja, or even a menswear designer?
Yes, actually... there's a collaboration happening before the end of this year that I'm very excited about. I'll keep it a little mysterious for now, but you won't have to wait long.
And while we're in Lagos, we plan to explore many interesting projects with brands here. I'm curious what happens when our perspectives meet: what we each bring, what we challenge in one another, and what we discover together.
Lagos has such a distinct creative energy. I want us to participate in that, build relationships and make things that come out of those relationships. That's a very exciting part of this return for me.
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For a Lagos store in 2027. Location is everything. VI, Ikoyi, or Eko Atlantic? And will it be just retail or an atelier where a Lagos woman can get fitted the way women do in Osu?
You're already asking me to choose an address!
We haven't committed to a location or an opening date yet. Our time at Temple Muse will help us understand how our customers shop and what they want from us. But I have thought about how a Christie Brown space in Lagos should feel. Our store in Accra is called The Residence, and that sense of welcome is important to me. I want a woman to feel comfortable, be looked after and enjoy discovering the clothes. Fit and personal service would absolutely be part of that thinking. Whether it includes an atelier is something we would need to explore properly. I'd want the space to make sense for the women using it.

You've said Christie Brown is 'a movement in movement.' In 2008, that movement was about proving African fashion could be luxury. In 2026, what is the movement about?
Today, I'm thinking much more about what we're building for the long term. The clothes remain at the heart of it, but around them are people, skills, livelihoods and opportunities. I want Christie Brown to become a fashion house that endures. I also want the work we're doing to offer something useful to other fashion businesses on the continent; a clearer sense of how creativity can be supported by a profitable, scalable business.
And our purpose remains very personal: we exist to remind women that they are invincible. She already carries so much within her. I want our clothes to meet her there and to help her feel that confidence and enjoy expressing it.
In 2026, the movement is about carrying that purpose further and building the strength to keep going.

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STYLIST: Moses Ebite

BOVI UGBOMA

THE SHOWSTOPPER!

BY **KONYE CHELSEA** NWABOGOR

Bovi Ugboma knows how to command a room. Give him a microphone, an audience, and a good story, and he can keep thousands entertained for hours. It is a skill he has spent nearly two decades perfecting, turning everyday experiences, relationships and the peculiarities of Nigerian life into comedy that audiences are willing to travel and pay good money to enjoy.

His recently concluded Guilty as Charged world tour is further proof of that appeal. After selling out Indigo at The O2 in London and six shows across Canada, Bovi returned home to wrap things up with a grand finale at the Eko Convention Centre in Lagos. It was another successful outing for a comedian whose shows have grown into major entertainment events, attracting audiences who come expecting much more than a few good jokes.

But comedy is a demanding business, particularly when you've been doing it long enough for an entirely new generation of comedians to emerge. Audiences are changing, social media has transformed how people consume humour, and staying relevant requires more than relying on past successes. Bovi, however, has continued to find ways to keep his audience interested while building a career that extends well beyond the stand-up stage.

In this conversation with Konye Nwabogor, the comedian, actor and writer reflects on his successful world tour, the evolution of Nigerian comedy, the business behind the laughter and what it takes to remain a major name in entertainment.

You have just concluded Guilty as Charged with a successful Lagos finale, following sold-out performances in the UK and across Canada. After taking the show through different cities and audiences, what did this tour reveal to you about your comedy and the kind of entertainer you've become?

It makes me realise that I haven't just grown; I'm still growing because there are new audience members. People who have never been; people who are discovering me every day and saying, 'Oh, I knew you as an actor; I didn't know you were doing stand-up comedy.' I find that very fascinating because my acting career is as long as my comic career. I'm just happy that I still have something to give my audience, and we're growing. Comedy is still alive. I say this because the turnout was pretty much the largest we've ever had in Lagos.

Your Lagos shows have grown into major entertainment events, attracting audiences who come for much more than a few hours of laughter. How deliberate have you been about building that experience, and what do you think makes a Bovi show different?

I've always maintained that comedy is one art form that is very intimate. People want to connect; they want to be told stories that are funny. People want to relax by laughing, so I always make sure I prepare for my audience. I always make sure I give them what will make it memorable. As for what makes me different, I really don't know. All I know is that I enjoy watching comedy, and I enjoy watching every other comedian, and I think what I just do is I don't take my audience for granted. I make sure I cook an album for them so they get their money's worth.

Nigerian music has successfully positioned itself as a major cultural export, while stand-up comedy is still finding its place internationally. Having sold out venues abroad, what do you think is holding Nigerian comedy back from achieving similar global recognition?

I think we have a structure problem here which is not entirely the comedian's fault. We don't have purpose-built venues that can host comedy shows, and when I say purpose-built, I'm talking about venues with capacity.

Doing a comedy show is almost like spending double because you have to build the seating arrangements like I do. Comedy is a very selfish art; it requires 100% attention. It's not like music. If the seating is not right, if you don't have that theatre-style seating, you have a problem. There are so many good comedians out there, but they're doing very many small venues, and I just believe if we had bigger venues, it would gain more traction, more recognition.

On the comedians' side, I feel they should do more with their material and spend time giving a commanding performance. Only that can make people say, 'Oh wow, this is not an appetiser; this is a main dish.' It will help them.

You've spent nearly two decades at the forefront of Nigerian comedy. What has changed most about your understanding of success, and are the things that motivated you ten years ago still important today?
I think success is a mirage: the closer you get, the more it disappears, then appears again. The goalpost keeps moving. So, you have to keep moving because the day a man stops being ambitious is the day he starts winding down in life.
It's a never-ending chase, but it's a chase one must do with contentment. I think I'm a very content person, and I think I invest for the future. When I do my gigs, for example, I'm not crazy about the returns from the gigs.
I'm crazy about the products that we're getting out there because this is going to last a lifetime. It's going to live beyond me, I hope. My idea of success is to invest in the future. I try to study my environment, comedy-wise. I try to know what's going on. I think that's one way you can stay fresh.

Your comedy has always drawn from everyday experiences, relationships and social observations. As your fanbase grows daily, is it harder to stay connected to your audience's experiences?
I wouldn't say it's harder because, first of all, my audience, my age range, has been very loyal since I started. I'm an empathetic person. I like to connect with people. With the younger generation, I'm quite in touch with their lifestyle, what makes them tick, what they like, and what they don't like. When you study the younger generation, you realise they're not so different from us. The only major difference is that they're born into a technology era that didn't exist when we were younger, so their thought processes are different. You can tell young people how you had to go to four places to do stuff in university, and they'll reply, "Why didn't you just send a text or call?" or "Why didn't you order it online?" When we were in school, we used to take our course registration forms from office to office for lecturers to sign. Now, they're like, why didn't you just send an email? Why didn't you sign it and send it back to the lecturer?

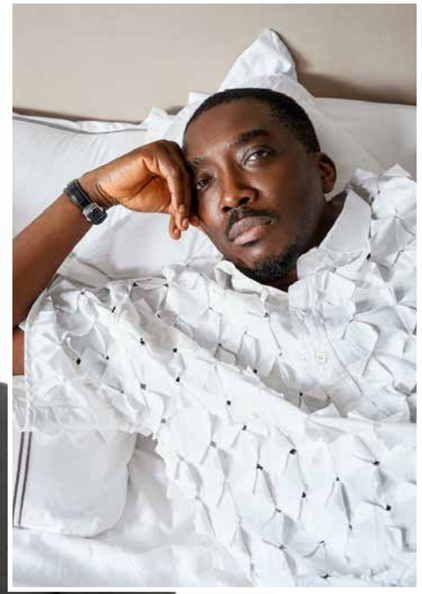
Guilty as Charged is an interesting title. What inspired it?
Many of the jokes were about people who have been found guilty. Some of them are my personal experiences, but if you look at the jokes I cracked, they were basically about people crucified on social media, from Jude to Frank Edoho to the girl who called Mr. Elumelu by his first name. Social media crucified them alive.

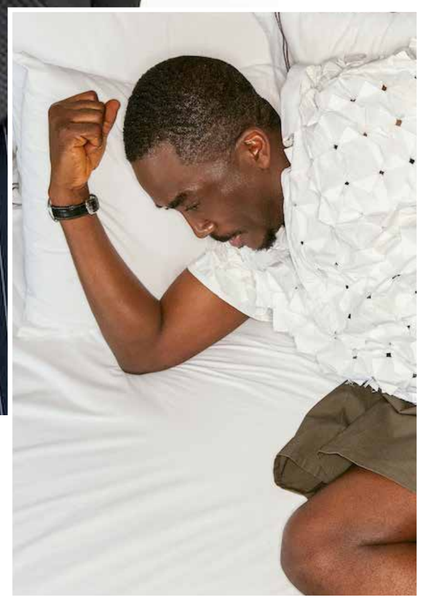
There is a difference between being funny and commanding an audience for an entire evening. What do you believe separates a truly great stand-up comedian from someone who simply knows how to make people laugh?
You already said it: the ability to command the audience even when you're not cracking a joke. The ability to leave an impression on your audience for a long time. When people leave the venue saying, 'Ah, this guy said this, said that.' You know, one time I heard Dave Chappelle tell Will Smith that when you're not being funny, make sure you are being interesting. That's the way to get your audience to pay attention. I think I'm a compelling storyteller, so I just consider myself lucky. Sometimes it still scares me when I'm talking, and the audience is just quiet. I'm like, 'Okay, they haven't laughed in a while.'

Do you sometimes get nervous when you get on stage?
No, not anymore. That's when I was way younger. Now, I have prepared so much, not just for each event, but for my whole life, that I can read an audience and tell what to do, and what not to do. I'm not bulletproof, but I'm just saying there are ways to get out of such tight situations.

The rise of skit makers and digital creators has completely changed the comedy industry. Would you say social media has strengthened Nigerian comedy, or has it created a culture where popularity is sometimes mistaken for talent?
Skit making is a very beautiful addition to the comedy space. When people say it has come to halt stand-up comedy, I just laugh because I don't understand where such an analogy is coming from. It's because we are too driven by popularity. Fame is cheap; anybody can be famous. Skit making became an art form because of social media, and it's a blessing.
There are so many skit makers who originally wanted to be stand-up comedians, but they chose to do skits because it was easier to reach an audience through that means. Skit making in the long run is complementing stand-up comedy. It's not taking from it.

In an age where jokes can quickly become controversies, have you found yourself becoming more careful about what you say, or do you believe comedians should be free to push boundaries?
Comedians should be free to push boundaries. I have always been careful about what I say because it's a thin line between being funny and being insulting, and I don't want to insult anyone. So, I've actually always been careful, but if you say all topics are off-limits. I don't think any topic is off-limits, but how you present the topic is what will determine if you are out of line or not.
The most important thing to note is that comedy is for people to come and laugh. So, if you can't stand the heat, don't get in the kitchen, because everything that happens comedy-wise is actually light-hearted.





At your level, comedy is both an art and a serious business. How involved are you in the commercial decisions behind your productions?
100%. I used to shy away from it, but now I realise it's how I like to do things, and the only way my team can catch up with the vision is if I do it myself for them to see. So, I'm 100% involved.

What have you learned about turning creative talent into a sustainable business brand?
I've always known that creative talent, when put together, is an art form. If the painter can sit down and paint, the sculptor can sit down and carve, right? Why shouldn't the actor in me make work that will last a long time, and the comedian in me as well, and the writer in me? These are things that I have always known. It pretty much goes without saying. There are people who have been ahead of me. Until today, we watch their stuff.
Richard Pryor's stuff is still out there making money, and Murphy's stuff is still out there making money. These are people who thrived in the 70s and 80s. The evidence is there to show that if you want to be remembered, you have to do your work in a way that will be presentable to the next two generations.

Success brings recognition, money and opportunity, but it can also change relationships and expectations. What has been the most unexpected personal cost of becoming Bovi?
I don't think the question applies to me because I have tried my best to maintain most relationships, but the truth is that the ones that faded had nothing to do with success; they had to do with my growth. Mentally, I grow. I try to learn new things all the time. Sometimes, you realise you can't have the same old conversations you had 10, 15, 20 years ago because you have grown. So, the friendships filter themselves. I have friends who have filtered me out of their lives, too. That's it for me. I'm grateful for everything that entertainment has brought me. If I had my way, I would control the fame and just be like everyone else because sometimes you're not in the mood.
However, I'm also grateful for the times when being famous has helped speed up whatever I was chasing and opened doors so I could move faster than I would have. They come with privileges. I'm thankful.

You've worked across stand-up, television and film, yet the stage remains central to your career. Is that where you still feel most creatively fulfilled?
I feel creatively fulfilled in everything I do, from stand-up to movies to writing. I've written everything I have executive produced. So, that's my life. It's like having three wives and loving them equally. It's like marrying three wives on the same day.

Are there other aspects of entertainment you're increasingly drawn to?
Yeah music. I will drop my album one day.

You've achieved the kind of success many entertainers aspire to, but you don't strike me as someone ready to settle. What still feels unfinished, and what would genuinely excite or challenge you at this stage of your career?
Nothing feels unfinished. I just am passionate about what I do. I love what I do. It defines who I am. I've always told people to find what you love, and you will never really get tired of doing it. You can do it for free, even though others get paid. You do it easily, but it's hard for others. That's what you should spend your life doing, you know. I had a friend. I said the same thing, and she said she has thought about it, and she likes to talk. I said, all right, talk to young girls in secondary schools that are about to attain puberty. Educate them. She came back, and the school said she had to get permission from the ministry—all that stress. I said go to private schools and leave the government schools alone if they can't let you come and give a talk. It's not like it's wrong to go get permission; it's the hectic nature of our system. After that, I introduced her to my friend who works on the radio, and she interned there. I always tell people that what you are crazy about, what you're passionate about, may sound stupid in the eyes of man, but trust me, you can hone it into a commercial skill. And that's it. I'm passionate about what I do. If I get tired, I don't know, because I know I'm really passionate; and judging from my last event, it made me realise, okay, I'm still doing something right. For 18 years, I've been doing stand-up, and my audience hasn't dwindled.

Should we expect anything new from Bovi Brand in the next few years?
More movies, more comedy, more online shows. I have a new show I'm keeping close to my chest, and it will be the first of its kind. So, you'll have to wait and see.

ARE MEN FINALLY HAVING MORE FUN WITH FASHION?

Men's fashion is getting much more interesting, and Nigerian men are certainly joining in. From statement jewellery and colourful tailoring to stylish bags and unexpected silhouettes, the rules are changing. Men are experimenting more, taking greater interest in their appearance and becoming less concerned about what is considered too fashionable. Here are seven ways they're having more fun with their wardrobes.

NOBLE IGWE.

DANIEL OBASI

MAI ATAFO

UGO MOZIE

NGOZI EJIONUEME

1. Colour Is No Longer a Risk

Black, navy, grey and white will always have their place, but men are increasingly exploring the rest of the colour chart. Burgundy suits, pastel shirts, emerald-green kaftans and even pink trousers are finding their way into wardrobes. The interesting part is how confidently these colours are being worn. A man in a beautifully tailored lilac suit no longer necessarily looks like he's trying too hard. Sometimes, he simply looks better dressed than everyone else.

2. Jewellery Is Getting Serious Attention

A wristwatch and wedding band used to be enough. Now, necklaces, rings, bracelets, brooches and even pearls are becoming part of men's styling. Some prefer discreet gold pieces, while others enjoy chunky chains or unusual accessories. A simple outfit can suddenly become much more interesting with the right jewellery, and men are discovering that accessories aren't exclusively women's business.

3. Tailoring Is Finally Loosening Up

For years, the ideal men's suit was fitted, structured and preferably accompanied by a tie. That formula still works, but designers are offering alternatives. Relaxed jackets, wide-leg trousers, cropped blazers and softer silhouettes are making formal dressing less predictable. Even traditional outfits are being reinterpreted with interesting cuts and proportions. The result is clothing that allows more movement, personality and, thankfully, breathing space.

4. Men Are Paying Attention to Bags

The days when a man carried everything in his pockets may not be completely over, but there are certainly better options now. Crossbody bags, leather totes, stylish backpacks and compact designer bags have become increasingly visible. And why not? Men have phones, wallets, keys and other essentials too. A good bag can be practical without looking like something borrowed from an office supply cupboard.

5. Traditional Wear Is Becoming More Creative

This is one area where Nigerian men have always enjoyed showing off. But designers and stylish men are taking things further with embroidery, unusual fabrics, contemporary cuts and unexpected colour combinations. Agbadas are becoming more elaborate, kaftans more versatile, and traditional accessories are being styled with greater imagination. The best looks manage to feel modern without losing their cultural identity.

6. Casual Dressing Has More Personality

A T-shirt and jeans are perfectly fine, but casual menswear now offers considerably more variety. Knitted shirts, coordinated sets, oversized trousers, interesting denim, textured fabrics and statement sneakers are changing what men wear outside formal occasions. Even the simplest weekend outfit can look thoughtfully put together without appearing overdressed. The secret is often in the fit, fabric and combination rather than the price tag.

7. Men Are Dressing More for Themselves

Perhaps this is the most significant change. Men seem increasingly willing to wear what appeals to them without worrying quite so much about whether it looks too fashionable, too colourful or too unusual. Social media, designers and style-conscious celebrities have helped broaden the possibilities, but personal confidence is what makes the difference.

THISDAY Style

OPINION

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BY **KONYE CHELSEA** NWABOGOR

THE FASHION COPYCATS:
WHERE DOES INSPIRATION END AND IMITATION BEGIN?

Somewhere in Lagos, a designer is probably working on a collection another designer will eventually profit from. Not because they collaborated or even know each other, but because one will take the creative risk and the other will recognise a commercial opportunity.

It is one of the less glamorous realities of Nigerian fashion, where a successful design can quickly become everybody's business.

A dress goes viral, and before long, versions appear across Instagram, in boutiques and in competing fashion houses. Some are almost identical to the original, others are cheaper interpretations, and a few are arguably better executed. The customer often knows exactly what she is buying. She admires the original but wants something similar without necessarily paying the same price.

But reducing this to customers looking for bargains would miss a much bigger story.

Copying is not confined to neighbourhood tailors. Established designers borrow from emerging labels, younger designers study successful fashion houses, and brands competing for the same clientele sometimes produce remarkably similar collections. The obvious explanation is money, but the economics are more interesting than that.

Before a designer produces something worth copying, there may have been months of research, sampling, fittings and expensive mistakes. There is no guarantee that customers will respond. Once the design becomes successful, however, another business can reproduce it knowing that demand already exists. The first designer pays for the uncertainty; the next benefits from the certainty.

And sometimes, the price difference is substantial. The original may reflect expensive fabrics, production costs, branding and exclusivity, while a reproduction offers a similar appearance for considerably less. For customers, particularly in an economy where spending on fashion competes with more pressing expenses, the choice can seem perfectly reasonable.

But fashion is also about belonging. When a particular outfit dominates social media, people want to participate in the moment. In Nigeria, our longstanding relationship with bespoke tailoring makes that relatively easy. A photograph, a trusted tailor and a few fittings can produce something remarkably close to the original.

However, there is a distinction between recreating a garment for an individual customer and building a fashion business around another label's successful designs. One fulfils a personal commission; the other may compete directly with the business responsible for developing the original product.

Of course, fashion has always borrowed from itself. Corsets, dramatic sleeves, sculpted hips and elaborate draping existed long before today's designers. Even prestigious international fashion houses regularly revisit historical references and reinterpret earlier collections.

So is any design entirely original? Probably not. What matters is the creative contribution made to an existing idea. A familiar silhouette can become distinctive through its construction, proportions or detailing. The difficulty arises when those elements are reproduced so closely that the finished garments are practically interchangeable.

Legally, the situation is equally complicated. Nigeria's Copyright Act 2022 protects qualifying original artistic works, while the Patents and Designs Act provides protection for eligible registered industrial designs. But general fashion concepts and familiar garment shapes do not automatically qualify for exclusive ownership.

Even where protection exists, enforcement can be expensive and time-consuming. Designers must consider legal fees, evidence and whether pursuing a dispute makes commercial sense. By the time a case is resolved, the trend may have passed.

Interestingly, imitation does not always damage the original designer. A widely copied piece can strengthen a brand's reputation and establish its influence.

Some of the world's most recognisable fashion houses have been imitated for decades without losing their prestige. But recognition does not necessarily compensate for the investment behind a collection.

There is another consequence we rarely consider. When several labels begin offering similar designs, price becomes one of the easiest ways to compete. Customers compare garments that look almost identical and understandably gravitate towards the cheaper option. Yet two dresses may appear indistinguishable in photographs while differing considerably in fabric, construction, fit and durability. Equally, a higher price does not automatically guarantee better quality.

It would also be unfair to ignore the pressures facing Nigerian fashion businesses. Rising production costs, inconsistent infrastructure and customers with limited spending power make experimentation financially risky. For some smaller labels, reproducing what already sells may seem less like creative laziness and more like survival. Understanding that reality does not mean the practice should escape scrutiny.

Perhaps the greater concern is what widespread imitation does to the industry's willingness to experiment. If developing fresh ideas is expensive while reproducing successful ones is profitable, why would every designer choose the harder route? An industry can remain commercially busy, producing beautiful clothes and impressive fashion shows, while gradually becoming less adventurous.

Better intellectual property awareness and clearer professional standards would help, but customers also influence what designers produce. When we continually request exact replicas, businesses respond accordingly. There is room to admire a garment without insisting on owning its twin.

Nigerian fashion has ambitions that extend far beyond dressing fashionable women. We want stronger international recognition, greater investment and brands capable of competing globally. Those ambitions depend partly on recognising the commercial value of creative work.

Copying may be profitable in the short term. But if everybody is waiting for someone else to produce the next successful design, who will be willing to take the risk of creating it?

iremitidé

NIGERIAN LABELS
WORTH DISCOVERING

With so many Nigerian fashion brands to choose from, finding one that genuinely speaks to your personal style can be quite exciting. And while the familiar names continue to dominate our wardrobes and fashion conversations, there are plenty of other labels doing interesting things with design, fabrics and silhouettes. From statement occasionwear to beautifully made everyday pieces, these five brands each have something different to offer. Whether you're looking to refresh your wardrobe or simply discover something new, they're well worth a closer look.

IREMITIDE

If you appreciate occasionwear that makes an entrance, Iremitide deserves a closer look. Founded by Modupe Oreoluwa, the Lagos-based fashion house creates bridal, bespoke, and made-to-order pieces, emphasising striking silhouettes and elaborate detailing. Its designs are particularly suited to women who enjoy dressing up and aren't afraid of a little drama. Think structured gowns, generous volumes and beautiful finishing that makes an outfit feel special. The bridal offering is another reason to pay attention. Beyond conventional wedding dresses, the label caters to women looking for distinctive outfits for their celebrations. Its runway presentations have also demonstrated a willingness to experiment with colour and construction.

BIAGELI

For women who love prints, Biageli offers something particularly appealing. Founded by Nigerian-American designer Shells Naija, the label takes an artistic approach to womenswear, developing original prints inspired by African landscapes, nature and personal experiences. Named after the designer's mother, Obiageli, the brand launched in 2025 with its Electric Indigo collection. Its colourful kaftans, flowing dresses, coordinated separates and striking patterns are designed for women who enjoy making an impression.

NINIE

Ninie is one of those labels that makes you appreciate just how versatile Aso-oke can be. Founded by Benzito Benson, the brand blends traditional Nigerian textiles, contemporary tailoring, and streetwear influences. Although it initially built its identity around menswear, its aesthetic extends comfortably into womenswear and gender-fluid dressing.
The beautifully constructed Aso-oke pieces are a particular attraction, with their rich textures, interesting proportions and modern interpretations of traditional clothing.
But Ninie isn't only about elaborate designs. Its more relaxed offerings, including unisex T-shirts and everyday basics, bring that same contemporary sensibility into casual dressing.

BREE THE LABEL

Not every wardrobe needs another dramatic dress. Sometimes, what you really want is a beautifully cut outfit that works without much effort. Bree The Label, a Port Harcourt-based brand established in 2021, offers contemporary womenswear with an emphasis on thoughtful design and versatility. Its collections include coordinated sets, relaxed trousers, interesting tops and dresses that combine clean silhouettes with subtle design details. The brand also works with independent women artisans, incorporating ethical production into its approach.
Bree is particularly appealing to women who enjoy understated fashion but still want something distinctive. These are the kinds of pieces that can move comfortably between different occasions depending on how they're styled.

SHEYE OLADEJO

Founded by Oluwaseye Oladejo in 2016, Sheye Oladejo has developed a recognisable approach to luxury womenswear, particularly bridal and bespoke couture. The label is known for sculptural silhouettes, intricate handwork and thoughtful fabric manipulation. Its designs often balance softness with structure, creating pieces that are feminine without being predictable. What makes the brand especially interesting is the attention paid to construction and detail. There is a deliberate quality to the clothes, from the way fabrics are shaped to the embellishments that complete each look. The brand also has a separate ready-to-wear label that offers a more accessible expression of her design sensibility, with contemporary pieces that have drawn attention for their distinctive cuts.

WHAT DESERVES A BIGGER FASHION BUDGET?

Every fashion girl⁹ has a wishlist. The handbag she's admired for years, the Cartier watch she keeps trying on whenever she travels, the beautiful designer shoes she has convinced herself she'll buy someday. Some purchases are practical. Others are pure desire, and there's absolutely nothing wrong with that.

Then comes the lovely moment when your income improves, and some of those things no longer seem quite so impossible. You can afford to indulge your taste a little more. But just because you can spend more doesn't mean you should spend more on everything.

The trick is knowing which purchases genuinely deserve a bigger budget, which ones are worth saving for and which are simply expensive for the sake of being expensive.

1. A Serious Designer Handbag

If you've always wanted a particular designer handbag, increased disposable income might be your opportunity to finally buy it. But choose carefully. A beautifully constructed bag in a classic shape and versatile colour will probably get more use than something purchased because it's trending. Consider the leather, craftsmanship, aftercare and how often you'll actually carry it. And while certain Hermès and Chanel bags have strong resale markets, most designer handbags shouldn't be treated as financial investments. Buy something you genuinely love.

2. Fine Jewellery

There comes a point when buying another collection of costume jewellery becomes less appealing than owning a few beautiful pieces you can keep for years. Solid gold earrings, a delicate diamond necklace, a tennis bracelet or a distinctive ring can become part of your everyday style. Unlike plated jewellery, precious metals can retain material value, although retail markups mean you shouldn't assume you'll recover what you paid. Start with something you'll wear regularly rather than saving everything beautiful for special occasions.

3. A Proper Luxury Watch

A beautiful watch is one of those accessories that can quietly transform an outfit. Whether your taste leans towards Cartier, Omega, Rolex or a less obvious watchmaker, take your time choosing. Consider the movement, servicing costs, proportions and how the watch looks on your wrist. Not every expensive watch appreciates in value, but a well-chosen piece can remain stylish and functional for decades. Sometimes, one exceptional watch is more satisfying than a drawer full of fashionable alternatives.

OZINNA ANUMUDU

ESE AMBROSE

OSAS IGHODARO

4. Made-to-Measure Clothing

There is something wonderfully indulgent about clothes made specifically for you. Not simply choosing a design and having it reproduced, but working with a skilled designer or tailor who understands proportion, fabric and fit. Think perfectly cut trousers, an exceptional blazer, a beautiful silk dress or traditional attire that fits exactly as it should. This is particularly worth considering for women who struggle with standard sizing. The luxury is in having clothes that feel entirely yours.

5. Shoes You've Always Wanted

Yes, you can finally buy those Manolos, Jimmy Choos or Louboutins you've admired for years. But before spending a small fortune, ask yourself whether you'll actually wear them. An expensive shoe isn't automatically comfortable or better constructed. Sometimes, the smarter purchase is an elegant pair of designer flats or beautifully made leather sandals you'll wear constantly. Spend on craftsmanship and genuine pleasure, not just the famous red sole.

6. Exceptional Pieces From Designers You Admire

Perhaps you've always loved a particular designer's work but settled for more affordable alternatives. Now might be the time to commission or purchase something special. It could be an intricately embellished piece from a Nigerian designer, a beautifully constructed evening dress or a distinctive creation from an international fashion house. Look beyond the label and appreciate the technique, fabric and creativity involved. The best purchases are often the ones that still excite you years later.

7. A Wardrobe That Reflects Your Lifestyle

One of the smartest ways to spend more is to stop shopping for an imaginary lifestyle. If your calendar is filled with work meetings, lunches and occasional evening events, those are the clothes that deserve attention. Perhaps you need exceptional tailoring rather than another elaborate party dress. Or maybe your social life genuinely calls for beautiful occasionwear. Let your actual lifestyle determine where the money goes, rather than what everyone else seems to be buying.

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