

IMPRESSIONS FROM THE BERLIN OUTPOST OF CHEAP MONDAY'S "10 MINUTE POP-UP"



# A SUDDEN SURPRISE HOW POP-UP STORES TOOK OVER THE RETAIL SCENE.

BY ELENA REUDENBACH

> They have been around since the early 2000s, sprouting up as temporary retail spaces to sell products of any kind, but for the fashion world pop-up stores have become ubiquitous.

Being the pioneer in the pop-up retail scene, US company Vacant has managed to expand the pop-up idea into a real business. Established in 1999, it opened up its first shop with limited merchandise from niche retailers and closed as soon as the products were sold out. Since then the company has built temporary shops for well-known brands such as Under Armour and Puma.

While retail stores have to stick to a store concept, pop-up stores constantly reinvent themselves. From the XL Adidas shoe box in Buenos Aires to a moving bus containing a Beatles exhibition in New York City and Los Angeles, the possibilities are seemingly endless. Through new technology and social media the pop-up phenomenon reached another level. Pop-ups are now equipped with the latest technical fixtures—iPads, interactive walls, QR-codes—that simplify the purchase while offering a modern shopping experience. Denim brand Cheap Monday took advantage of social media and recently launched its "10 Minute Pop-up." In rented store spaces in ten different cities worldwide, Cheap Monday gave away free jeans for "social currency." Customers were asked to tweet out pictures with the products, like the Facebook page or tag the brand on Instagram to expand the brand awareness. And the offer was taken generously.

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—Anna Norling, Cheap Monday

"I think the surprise and the not-forever-part of it contributes to pop-ups being successful. It feels like the modern store—changeable," says Anna Norling, brand director at Cheap Monday. If a product is only available for a certain time it becomes more desirable. Time is the key term. Pop-up store durations last from one day to up to three months or even longer. Plus, shopping becomes a real sensation. Locations are often unexpected and unique, providing the desired excitement effect.

For retailers, pop-ups offer a lot of benefits. According to Storefront, an online marketplace for brands and merchants, it's 80% cheaper to launch a pop-up than a traditional retail store because the interior is often improvised and doesn't cost as much as hiring a shopfitter. Furthermore, labels economize on advertising. Rather than spending money on billboards and TV commercials, pop-up stores are announced through social media and buzz marketing. Other benefits include building a closer connection to the customers and greater brand awareness. Pop-ups also offer the advantage of testing a new market and simplifying the launch of a new product. This is especially useful for online brands, to experience real life customer contact, before opening up a store.

But there is always the chance of a creative concept going mainstream. When Rei Kawakubo opened her first Comme des Garçons guerilla store in 2004 it was a surprise. Nobody knew when he or she would accidentally run into a temporary shop or how long it would last. Now, pop-ups are meticulously planned and often announced way ahead of the actual happening—taking away the surprise element.