While around 11 brands have left the Milanese podium this season, those who have stayed on the calendar have stepped up their game. Never has there been so much expenditure and effort poured into runway shows and after-show events during men's fashion week in Milan.

Champagne flowing freely, dancers, music, technological prowess, not to mention the celebrities…

Designers were competing for creativity by offering unforgettable shows and moments to their guests. Even if it meant patrons were more focused on the special effects than the collection itself.
The party atmosphere was already felt in Florence at Pitti Uomo, between the "rave party" show at Raf Simons and the choreographed musical displayed by Japanese brand Visvim.

For his first-ever show, Hiroki Nakamura managed to lift spirits with a wild boogie-woogie, danced by American army recruits and marines, as the models walked. One of the most beautiful events of the trade show, according to regulars attendees.

Opening the Milanese week on Friday night, Dsquared2 set the tone with its turn. To get to the parade, patrons had to walk through a long, dark tunnel, which felt like a nightclub.

Inspired by the London music movement of 1960-70-80, the collection offered a mix of nostalgic pieces, commercial pieces and eccentric ones too.

All styles made an appearance: a pork pie hat and checkered shirt with spaghetti straps for the Mod look; and jeans torn and stained with bleach, the models with piercings and chains around their necks so to mimic skinheads.

But also blousons and sequined camouflage parkas represented disco boys, worn over pants and with silver lurex knits. And, the cherry on top, towering and glamorous fuchsia heels, for a solid drag queen effect.

Before leaving the show, spectators were invited by the designers Dean and Dan Caten - wearing glistening thigh-high platform boots - to meet on the rooftop of their Milanese headquarters inside the Ceresio 7 restaurant. With a pool and a view overlooking the new Milan skyline, a young London DJ awaited guests who danced until midnight.

The following day on Saturday June 18, Domenico Dolce and Stefano Gabbana rocked show goers too, transforming their theatre (the former Metropol cinema ) into a 1920s club with jazz band, Hot Sardines.

The six musicians, lead singer and tap dancer accompanied the live parade, which closed with the two designers walking onto the podium with open champagne bottles and offering cups to all the guests in a shower of gold confetti!
In the afternoon, it was Versace’s turn for a grandiose show moment. On two huge white screens marched backstage images of the advertising campaign shot by Bruce Weber with Gigi Hadid and a group of dancers.

A choreographed parade followed, accompanied by a series of new Prince songs, sent by the singer to Donatella Versace more than six months ago.

Come the end of day, Philipp Plein - already a master of big shows - could only go one better. In a sign of extravagance, he transformed the old Milan Fair pavilion into a gigantic basketball court, like one from the American league, with a commentator, popcorn, cheerleaders and mascots appearing to guests as lasers flashed throughout the grand space.

It didn’t lack the inevitable celebrity attendance either: Paris Hilton, football player Mario Balotelli football, and rapper Busta Rhymes.

The parade started more than an hour late, and with top tier seats in the stands reserved for press and buyers, it was hard to distinguish the clothes.

But the show itself was important with light boards presenting each model as an NBA player and the incessant procession of models across the track in all directions decked in fluorescent looks for a wardrobe that felt sporty and technological.

Outside, waiting patiently for the show to end, an unending queue of young fans formed, hoping to gain entry to the Philip Plein after-party.

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The German designer, on the other hand, held a select dinner for guests at a long table set at the top of the stands with a plunging view of the party! And everyone taking photos and selfies, posted immediately on social media.

The looks from traditional runway shows, which until recently were up on the web straight after each parade, don’t seem enough for Millennials who are continuously seeking news and experiences. The battle looks to be a tough one for luxury brands.

By Dominique Muret