Ray-Ban Fetes 75th Anniversary

RAY-BAN WILL QUIETLY fete its 75th birthday this year with a new collection and advertising campaign that nods to its storied history.

The Ambermatic collection is inspired by Ray-Ban’s first aviator sunglasses, which were released in 1937. The capsule collection of four aviators incorporates a light-sensitive photochromic yellow lens that darkens depending on light and temperature conditions.

Available shapes include a classic aviator with or without curved temple tips, the shooter silhouette and the outdoorsman. All styles are gold-rimmed except the black-framed classic aviator without curved temple tips.

“People may not realize that Ray-Ban first started out from a military request for pilot’s sunglasses. This Aviator style is something that was developed long ago but that continues to be nurtured by the brand with new frame materials and lens development,” said Sara Beneventi, Ray-Ban brand director. “The relationship between Ray-Ban and the Aviator is treated with reverence. The Ambermatic is a testament to that commitment to craftsmanship and technical design.”

One of Ray-Ban’s older styles, the shooter includes a middle circle under the top bar, which doubled as a cigarette holder designed to free the hands of the wearer when hunting.

Like the shooter, the outdoorsman has top bar and temple end pieces covered in nacre, but it does not include the circle.

Set to hit Sunglass Hut, Henri Bendel and upscale department stores in June, the collection will retail for $219.

Ray-Ban’s new “Legends” ad campaign, which rolls out this month, will not only stage Ambermatic’s arrival, but also be a curtain raiser for the brand’s private book.

The “Legends” campaign tells the 75-year spirit of the brand’s “Never Hide” motto. Shot by Mark Seliger in Los Angeles, the campaign features seven images styled by Ariane Phillips. The photos capture seven historic moments, one per decade, and span from the Thirties to the Nineties. Images, some of them controversial, include a gay couple holding hands in the Fifties, a defiant, Ray-Ban wearing English socialite in the Sixties and white rapper performing in front of an African-American audience in the Nineties.

The limited edition private book, which will be available in September for VIP clients only, includes 18 rare photographs of historic figures wearing Ray-Bans, as well as a handful of 1,000-word essays by brand influencers such as Iggy Pop, Pharrell and Jann Wenner. Called “Legends: Untold Stories,” the book includes images of Ray-Ban wearing icons such as Amelia Earhart, Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall, Arthur Miller and Marilyn Monroe, James Dean, John F. Kennedy, Patti Smith, Andy Warhol and Michael Jackson.

“Beyond the public’s perception about Ray-Ban, whether they love wearing the Wayfarer or an Aviator, it’s essential to share the brand’s values, its history, really what defines it at its core, during this monumental anniversary,” said Fabio D’Angelantonio, who is the chief marketing officer at Luxottica, Ray-Ban’s parent company. “The pieces around this anniversary, the ad campaign, the Ambermatic, and ‘Untold Stories,’ are created to tell the brand story and serve as reminders of why consumers fell in love with the Ray-Ban in the first place.”

— ALEXANDRA STEIGRAD
The shooter aviator from the Ambermatic collection.