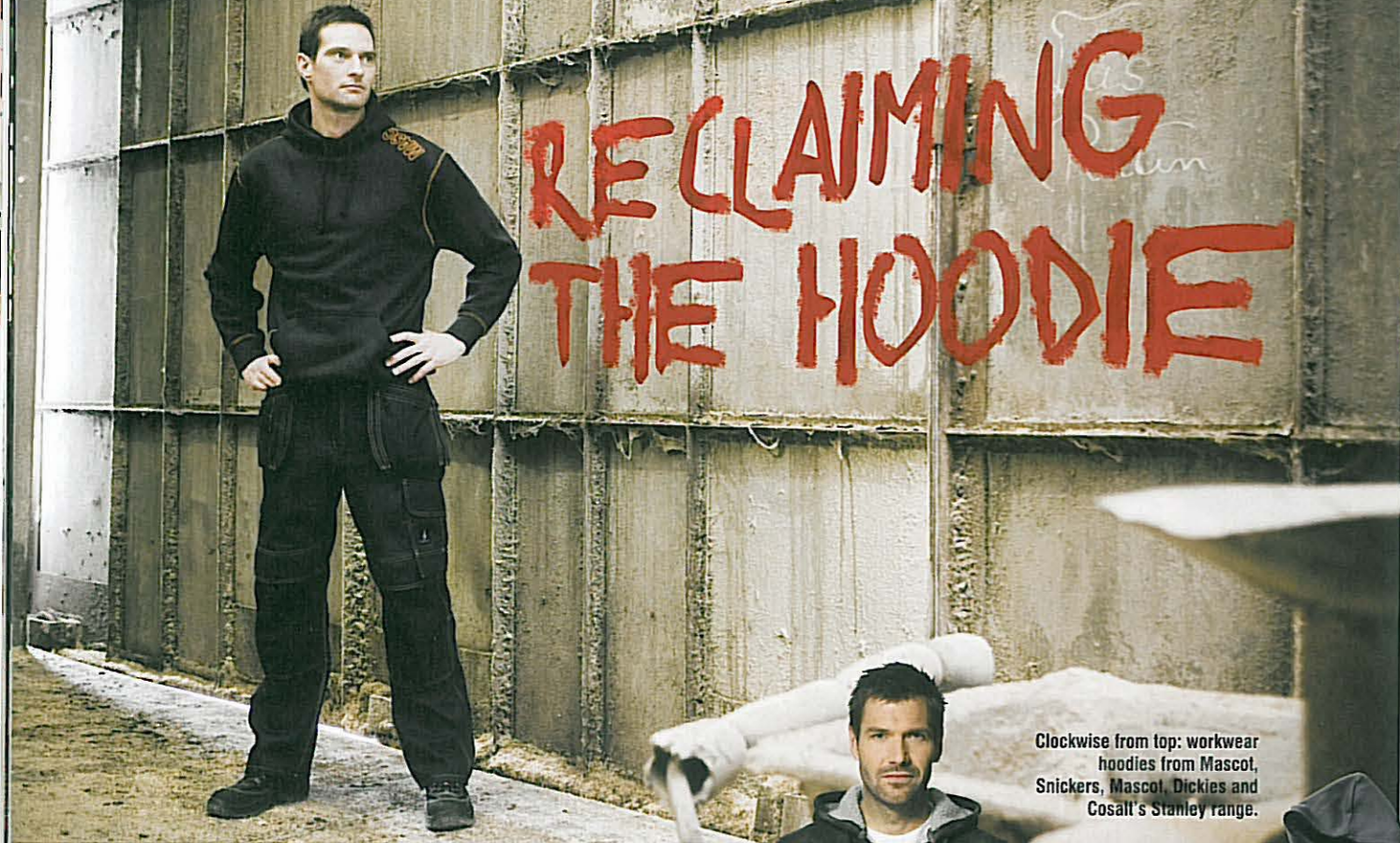


RECLAIMING THE HOODIE



Clockwise from top: workwear hoodies from Mascot, Snickers, Mascol, Dickies and Cosalt's Stanley range.

Far from the usual media portrayal, the hoodie remains a popular and useful garment, even if you can't wear one in Bluewater. Dan Worth investigates the options for the corporate buyer.

Hoodies have been getting a bad rap in recent years – the garment of choice for the trouble-making teen, used to hide the wearer's identity while they are up to no good, and so on.

Let's be honest, the hysteria got a bit out of hand. For such a simple garment to become a point scoring device in the political battleground suggests there has been a degree of overreaction somewhere.

But just how did the hooded sweatshirt come to such a pass, banned from shopping centres and identified as the uniform of the thug?

The hoodie actually has quite a venerable history, dating back, in its modern incarnation, to 1930s New York where it was worn by warehouse workers. In the 1970s, as a result of the evolution of hip hop culture, and the iconic image of Sylvester Stallone as Rocky in his hooded sweatshirt, the garment really took off, and began to be embraced by high profile fashion designers.

It found a home as a fashion item, a sportswear item, a college garment,

and, of course, as a cool, comfortable, slouchy garment that also just happens to hide your face.

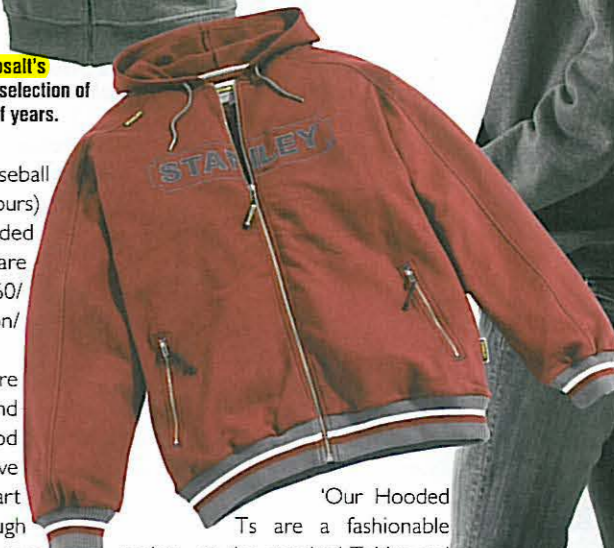
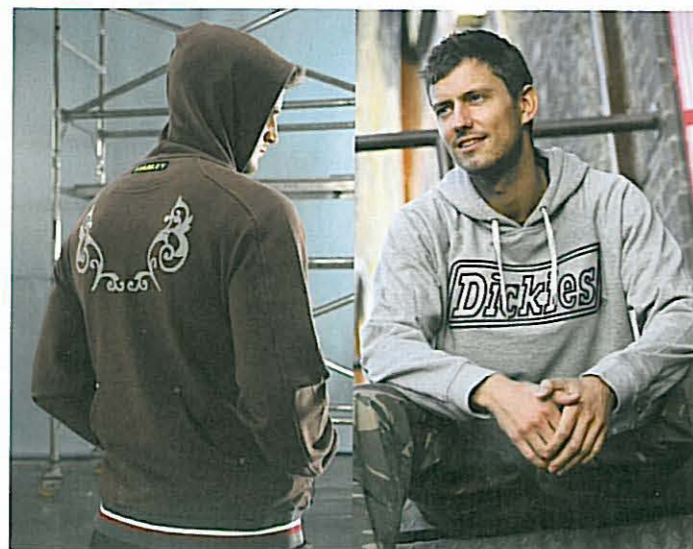
Hoodie hysteria was at its height in the UK a few years ago, but it has by no means dissipated. And yet, despite having so many detractors, it remains a popular fashion choice – Bluewater didn't ban the selling of hoodies – and is also experiencing great popularity in workwear. Why? Because people just like them.

CAT Workwear

Paul Bond from CAT is a big fan of the hoodie. 'I really can't think of an industry sector that we do not

already supply with our hoodies – everyone uses them. It's now a standard item in everyone's workwear range and our C838 hoodie is particularly popular. It consistently features in our bestsellers list, all year round.'

Paul believes the popularity of the hoodie is down to the fact that it is both a practical garment and one that is aesthetically pleasing to most people. 'Except, perhaps, *Daily Mail* feature writers.'



Clockwise from top left: CAT's hoodies are sold into almost every sector; Cosalt's Stanley hoodies have met with a positive reaction; IS Enterprises' stocks a selection of Gildan hoodies; sales of Dickies' hoodies have taken off in the last couple of years.

brick – strong Stanley zips for both the front and the pockets, and a tough drawstring cord. The top also features a unique reinforced back pocket where tools can be temporarily stored.

On the back of the hoodie is a modern, almost tribal design that gives the garment a contemporary high street look, but which actually dates back to Stanley's work in the 1870s. 'The filigree design is a pattern that Stanley used to include on its hinges. We thought it was a really unique look. It doesn't matter if people don't know the history. We feel it is a nice touch because of the link to Stanley.'

Fruit of the Loom

'Hooded sweatshirts have never been more popular,' says brand manager Alison McKenzie. 'The style appeals to both sexes and all ages and can be used for sports and training as well as dressed down corporatewear and fashionable leisure and streetwear.'

'Hooded sweats provide countless opportunities for decoration. Prints or embroideries onto the hood or along the arms create a very strong impression – which helps to get any branding noticed.'

Fruit of the Loom offers four Hooded Sweats for men, in a choice of three next-generation fleece fabrics. The Heavy Hooded Sweat is made from a 340gsm, 70/30 cotton/polyester fleece fabric, in three colours including new classic olive and chocolate.

The best-selling Hooded Sweat uses 80 percent cotton and 20 percent polyester fleece fabric, in 260/280gsm, and comes in 17

colours, while the Baseball Hooded Sweat (four colours) and Zip Through Hooded Sweat (nine colours) are constructed from 260/280gsm 70/30 cotton/polyester fleece fabric.

The garments are available in sizes S-XXL and have a double fabric hood with draw cord. They all have a front pouch pocket, apart from the Zip Through Hooded Sweat which has two front pockets. This style also features a full-length narrow front zip, which is covered to enable uninterrupted printing across the entire front of the garment. The solid colour styles have set-in sleeves, whereas the Baseball Hooded Sweat features contrast colour raglan sleeves, with cover stitching detail.

The Lady-Fit Hooded Sweat Jacket uses a next-generation 280gsm 75/25 cotton/polyester fleece fabric, which was developed specifically for the Lady-Fit range. The garment is available in sizes XS-XXL and five colours. It features a self-coloured herringbone draw cord to the hood; self-coloured YKK zip with removable branded zip puller; two front pouch pockets and self-fabric cuffs and waistband.

For something a bit different, the new Hooded Ts are tough to beat, says Alison. The men's Long Sleeve Hooded T is made from 160gsm 100 percent cotton, and comes in five colours and sizes S-XXL. The Lady-Fit Lightweight Hooded T uses Fruit of the Loom's newly developed lightweight cotton jersey knit fabric, in 125/135gsm and is available in five colours and sizes XS-XL.

'Our Hooded Ts are a fashionable update on the standard T-shirt and offer a great alternative to fleece hoodies in warm weather. They are already popular in retail, and we expect our new styles to prove equally successful in the corporate promotions market.'

Fristads & Co

'Fashion is definitely an aspect of the UK workwear market and our GEN Y range is a response to the trend for garments that are fashionable and functional,' says Laura McIlwrath, from Fristads & Co. 'Our product development team always has its eyes on the market and where it's moving, and the hoodies in the GEN Y range are the result.'

The hoodies Fristads supplies are the Kansas and Fristads GEN Y 2-699/ LY-783, and are aimed primarily at the younger generation of tradesmen. 'Because we have an extensive trouser offering with all the necessary functionality, we were able to introduce the hoodies to provide a fashionable and comfortable working garment.'

The hoodies in the Fristads range come in deep navy, dark grey and camouflage green and feature two front pockets with zips, an >>>



Top, from left to right: Gildan's G12500A and G18600A hoodies; Jerzees' 223M super heavyweight and chunky 575M hoodies. Side panel, top to bottom: Mantis World's collection of hoodies focuses on comfort and fashion. Bottom: Fristads & Co's GEN Y top.

➤➤ adjustable hood and a zip front. As they are lightweight in design, explains Laura, they can be comfortably worn as a middle layer while working.

IS Enterprises

IS Enterprises' range of hoodies includes a number of garments from Gildan. Jill Granger says: 'The hoodies we stock are always very popular for several industries. In some ways it is odd because of how the garment is portrayed, but it shows there are still people who see the benefits.'

Jill continues: 'Because the hoodie remains a trendy garment, ideal for younger markets and promotional purposes, we see it a lot in these areas. Hoodies are perfect for band merchandise, skateboarding or snowboarding, and other sporting activities. They have a large area for branding and keep the wearer warm and comfortable. The hood provides additional warmth and weather protection.'

There are a number of hooded options in the Gildan range. The G9500A Ultra Cotton Adult Hooded Sweatshirt is a cotton rich 325gsm top with a pouch pocket, draw string cord for the hood and a ribbed finish. It comes in 14 colours.

The G12500A Ultra Cotton Adult Hooded Sweatshirt is a lightweight version at 305gsm that comes in a 50/50 cotton blend with 15 colour choices. The colours range from basics like sports grey to more adventurous shades like maroon, light pink or safety green.

The G18600A Full Zip Hooded Sweat also comes in 15 colours with a zipped front, making it a popular choice with gyms and dance schools.

Jerzees Colours

As Jerzees Colours notes, the hoodie quickly became a streetwear staple after it rose to prominence in *Rocky* and has remained so ever since – despite demonisation from the British press and parliament.

The 575M is a chunky 50/50 polyester/cotton blend. It is a hardwearing garment available in up to 12 different colours. These include core workwear and uniform shades such as bottle green, bright royal and French navy, as well as fashion shades like pure gold and combat khaki.

Meanwhile, the Jerzees Colours Original collection contains the 223M, a 330gsm super heavyweight hooded sweat. To take the edge of its rough and tumble past it has been embellished with a satin trim on the inside neck and pockets.

Finden+Hales

Finden+Hales' teamwear selection uses hoodies to add another element of coordination and style for anyone looking to kit out their staff or team.

The Pull Over Hoodie (LV335) is a 80/20 cotton/polyester top that comes in four colourways, all designed to offer colour coordination.

Another product is the Full Zip hoodie (LV330) that is made from the same brush back fleece fabric as the

Pull Over hoodie, with contrast panelling to give it a stylish edge.

Lastly the Finden+Hales Sleeveless Hoodie (LV505) is perfectly suited for wearing on its own or over other garments for a different look.

Skinnifit

Skinnifit and Skinnifitmen have a range of hoodies that are perfect for layering in the winter and light enough to wear on their own in the summer.

The Skinnifit Hoodie is available for both ladies (SK050) and men (SF050) and the peach-back sweat fabric is both soft and cosy.

New for 2009 is the Premium Hoodie, which is available for ladies and men (Ladies' SK056, Men's SF056) with extra deep cuffs complete with thumbholes to keep hands warm, double-layered hood and long, lean silhouette.

For fitness fanatics there is the Skinnifitness Hoodie (SK410), and the Skinnifit Yoga range. This features the Yoga Hoodie (SK350) and the Sleeveless Yoga Hood (SK351) which are suited to either gym sessions or lazing about.

Dickies

Maurice Morton, Dickies' sales and marketing director, says that if anything the hoodie has been getting ➤➤





Top from left to right: **Cosalt's Stanley hoodie**; **Fruit of the Loom's Heavy Hooded Sweat** and men's and women's **Hooded Tees**. Side panel from top to bottom: **Fruit of the Loom's Baseball Hoodie**; **Workwear hoodies from Mascot and Dickies**.



➤➤ more popular over the last year or so. 'Sales were very slow when we introduced it three or four years ago, but with some re-designing to feature the brand logo it really took off last year.'

Maurice believes this is due, in part, to the adaptability of the garment. 'Its uses as both an outer garment and a layering garment – with the added attraction of greater protection around the neck, ears and head when it is very cold – is no longer seen as uncool.'

As a result Dickies has seen the hoodie become a popular seller in a number of key market. 'We mainly sell to builders' merchants, and site workers could be using this in a number of associated building trades. We also have good sales in the agricultural sector, highlighting the practicality of the jacket as both functional and fashionable workwear.'

Mascot

Mascot's range of hoodies is designed to bring together elements of leisurewear and workwear to provide wearers with the best of both. Sales director Mike Tottman explains more: 'By choosing a durable fabric construction we have made the garments functional as well as fashionable. Hoodies have become a popular garment in the Mascot Young range, which is aimed at tradesmen aged 18-30.'

This range includes the Nela hoodie which is a 60/40 cotton/polyester combination with a drawstring hood, front pouch pocket and contrast seems. The Almeria is also a 60/40 blend, available in 360gsm fabric in sizes S-4XL. It comes in a range of colours including navy, khaki, white, black and anthracite.



The Beja hoodie is a 65/35 polycotton blend, also in sizes S-4XL and available in dark brown, dark olive, navy, black and dark anthracite.

'All the garments feature the Mascot strapline "Tested to Work" and are designed to coordinate with other products in the range. Wearers can create their own look that they will be just as comfortable wearing to and from work as while they are working.'

Snickers

'The hoodie has become part of the tradesmen's look,' says David Clark, managing director of Snickers Workwear in the UK. 'They remain a popular garment choice for many workers.'

Snickers' range of hoodies includes the Zipped Hoodie with a smart internal phone pocket. It is made from a 80/20 cotton/polyester blend for comfort and durability, with reinforced elbows for extra strength.

Another popular garment is the Hoodie Jacket with Pile, made from a pile and jersey bonded fabric for extra warmth and featuring the Snickers logo embroidered on the front.

Mantis

Mantis World's collection of hoodies focuses on comfort and fashion. For both men and women, the Stretch360 French Terry combines breathable cotton with elastane for a fabric that moves with the body. Then there's the M52 (Men's) and M53 (Women's) Contrast Hoodies, which are available in corporate colours such as red/white and black/white, as well as eye-catching combinations like black/lime, that can be used to dress staff at corporate events or promotions.

An alternative to the Contrast Hoodies is the M63 Women's Pull-on

Hoodie made from a cotton/polyester blended loop back fleece. It has wide, stretchy rib cuffs and bottom hem for a better fit, and a functioning drawcord to close the hood at the neck. This is an ideal garment for promotions or corporate uniforms, says the company. The style is warm and hardwearing and offers opportunities for creative branding across the front chest or back, on the hood or kangaroo pouch pocket and even down the sleeves.

The M63 colour range has been extended to include two new colours, dusty blue and camouflage green, adding to the existing choice of white, black, heather grey, melange and raspberry. ■

AT A GLANCE – THE HISTORY OF THE HOODIE

1930s: First manufactured by Champion, primarily for workers in New York who worked in frozen warehouses.

1970: The film *Rocky*, starring Sylvester Stallone, is a massive hit and brings the hoodie into the public eye as never before.

2005: Bluewater bans those wearing hoodies from its door, prompting widespread media discussion on the issue. The move is supported by Tony Blair and John Prescott.

2006: David Cameron delivers a speech that leads to the coining of the term 'hug a hoodie'. ■