

London Calling

Fair Weather on Great Britain's Modeling Front

Time was tight on my quest to suss out the London modeling scene, and with nary a model to be seen in the streets, on *the tube* (subway), or lolling about the agencies, the pulse of the industry eluded me at first. I drew a few hasty conclusions: a. in a city which requires an encyclopedia-size map, masses of models could be hiding in the *mews* (tiny streets designed for shredding off the doors of any automobile larger than a mini); b. the extensive underground labyrinth could be carrying a number of gangly stow-aways on one of ten other lines or umpteen other stops besides mine; c. perhaps the drizzle was keeping everyone indoors in front of the tele (a daft lot, if they've yet to learn that

Frequent mid-day model sightings can only mean over-beautipopulation, i.e. starving models, e.g. South Beach. Not here. Phones are singing, bookers are bustling, models are in studios signing vouchers. Genial, genuine, proper, professional—this is the refreshing London vibe. Agents here will tell you honestly if—and when—you should give it a go.

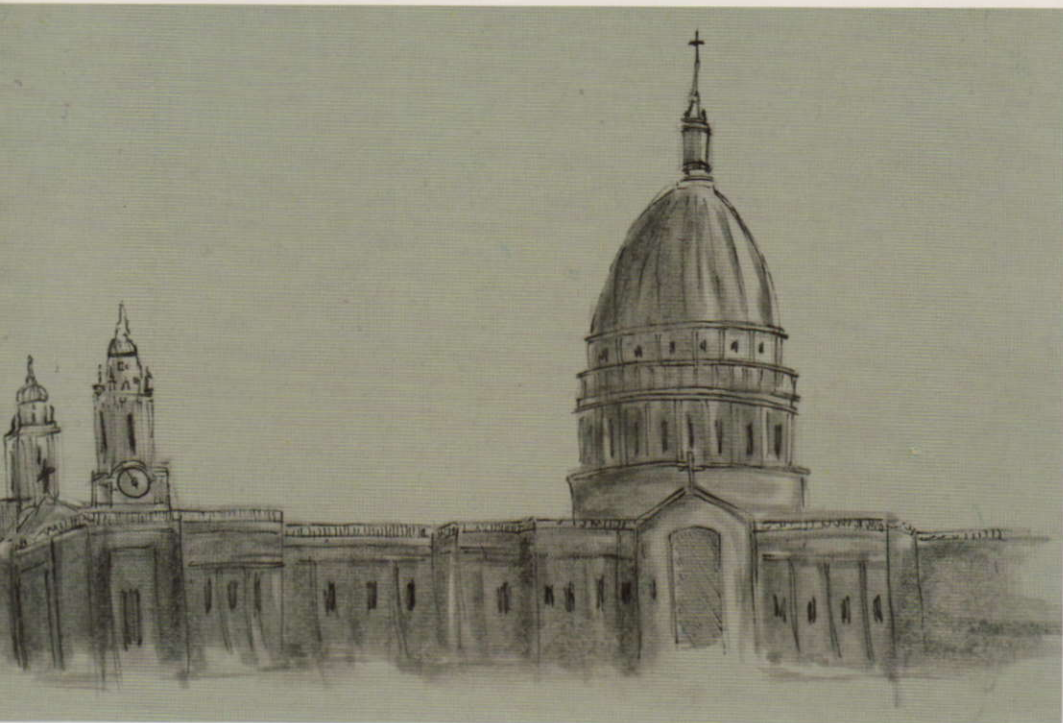
If you do, here are a few travel tips. Trans-Atlantic flights are dirt cheap in the winter (with freezing drizzle, not just plain drizzle, acting as a deterrent to many tourists). Shop around for fares of \$300 *return* (how the Brits say “round-trip”), including taxes. May may bring double the price—but also double the sun. The frequent 15-minute express



The opening of a new agency always causes a stir, particularly when the new kid in town boasts a big name like **Next**. Next London officially opened on February 22, and more than a few girls who are part of Next's international network were nicked—or, euphemistically speaking, *returned*—from top rival agencies. The agency is in Sloane Square (conveniently located right next to Kookai, which is a great place to spend your paycheck and acquire a sleek new European wardrobe) and is staffed by a small group of friendly, organized bookers (Next London reps only women now, but a men's division may be in the works).

President Stefano Cecchi describes the “Next” generation of models: “We develop and groom our models starting from age 14 through the early 20's. Our type of model varies, but underlying each ‘Next’ model is the strength of character, freshness, and uniqueness that create the foundation on which we build a super-model.” Of the work in London, Cecchi says, “The client list is extensive, varying from catalog, advertising, and campaigns, to television commercials, and we are able to boast about having one of the strongest editorial markets in the world. There is no doubt that the best of British has infiltrated all of the international markets.”

Models 1 just celebrated its 30-year anniversary last year, and headsheets of classic beauties with bad 70's hair-dos reaffirm that these pros have been ensconced in the London modeling market longer than most of us have been alive. This sizable agency represents about 250 women in total, with 50 in town, and about 100 men, with 40 in town. For those of you who were alive when Models 1 opened, don't fret, there's room for you as well! Models 1 Management division represents 60 women ranging from age 30 to 70+. This division reflects the trend toward using



snooker viewing is dry but dull, and the weather will not be changing in this model lifetime).

But, then, in the midst of a cacophony of ringing agency phones . . . I put my finger on it: the pulse of London's fashion biz is so strong that everyone's working!

train makes getting from Heathrow to Paddington Station a breeze (£10, one way), and a Zone 1 & 2 day pass (good for both buses and underground, £3.80) simplifies travel around town—both relatively cheap, which doesn't mean much, as most everything here is very dear!

PADDINGTON

PHOTOGRAPHER: Fabrizio Rainone **HAIR:** Damien Carney at Rockit **MAKEUP:** Charlotte Day at Transit
STYLIST: Faye Sawyer at Transit **MODEL:** Sarah T., Elite Premier, London **LOCATION:** Hyde Park Rooms Hotel

“older” women in advertising (including catalog, commercial, and editorial), and not only fresh-faced school girls. One septuagenarian is receiving a tremendous response from her edgy editorial comp, which includes tears from British *Vogue*.

Goodfellas, as the name implies, is mostly a men’s agency, but a small women’s division may give you the special attention you need. With about 100 men (25 in town) and 25 women (10 in town), no one gets lost in the shuffle. Goodfellas’ head bookers and part-owners Tuty De Sa and Barbara Fisher were wonderfully welcoming, clearing me a place at the booking table and introducing me to everyone in the room. The one-big-family feel is appealing, and Tuty, with 18 years experience as a model in his past, has *been there* and is sure to have all the advice of a wise, warm big brother.

Tuty says, “We go for good-looking guys and girls who make money.” Tuty and Barbara lament the bizarre looks of late which have every weird orange-haired, eyebrow-pierced Joe Blow walking through the door ready to become an overnight success. They also like their models “without attitude problems.” Goodfellas’ clients run the gamut: magazines, catalogs, advertising, show producers, and commercials Europe-wide. Except for the shows and some catalog, work is year-round.

Goodfellas’ bookers advise models to come with “plenty of money, as London is a very expensive city,” and, if needed, “arrange for a work permit before departing.” The British officials are sticklers about this. I’ve heard of models arriving in Heathrow, having their portfolios promptly discovered by customs, and—sorry mates!—being sent straight back on another 8-hour flight: do not pass go, do not collect \$200, do not change your watch or your money, or stretch your stiff legs.

On a lighter note, the good people at Goodfellas add: “London is a truly cultural city, with many beautiful museums and art galleries. It is also a great shopping opportunity, and there are lots of clubs for models’ leisure.”

IMG has a large London office (hidden in one of those quaint mews I mentioned—have a magnifying glass handy when locating it on your map). However, blokes are out of luck here (unless they’re looking for girlfriends rather than agents). “Primarily, we are looking for young, individual, editorial styles of girls,” says Managing Director Jonathan Phang. The bookings his models land include “very creative young editorial magazines,

pop videos, lots of European commercials, catalogs, and designer campaigns.” I asked Phang whether the London market is seasonal. “Not really,” he responded, “but August and January tend to be quite quiet. Girls can also be quiet during the shows, depending upon which stars appear on the scene.” And if, unlike a star, you’re a bit green, is London the place to be? “London is an expensive city, but it is far gentler than a lot of other cities,” says Phang. “However, a young model must be patient; it can take a good month to gauge a proper response.”

Phang’s words of wisdom support the general consensus: you may go

broke, but you won’t be bored. “Perhaps I am biased,” he says, “but I think London is a fantastic city. It has great museums, theatres, restaurants, and a very innovative music scene. There is very little one cannot do.”

Work hard, count your pence, and if you do find yourself with time off, don’t squander a second watching snooker; London and Great Britain beyond will fill your days with fascinating history lessons and stunning scenery, at least until pub pint time (sip—don’t chug—fair ladies and lads, *stout* is a good description for a lager, not a model).

—jill johnson

The Latest Looks of London

IMG

Goodfellas

Next

Models 1

