

Ralph Lauren: The Stadium Collection

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Abstract

Ralph Lauren is a successful designer known for his popular lifestyle brand that has been active for the past 50 years. He has created collections throughout the years that have been truly iconic and garnered high recognition. One of his best works remains to be the 1992 Stadium Collection. These pieces heavily influenced streetwear of the 1990's. The collection remains attached to the culture of a group known as the *Lo Life's*, who cherished the brand and would obtain it by any means. The collection was such a hit that Ralph Lauren brought it back for a limited time, creating a commotion as it quickly sold out. The pieces present a strong connection while merging the brand and hip-hop culture. Wearing Ralph Lauren was a representation of status, letting the world know that you made it. The designer has made an excellent product through his classic pieces that provided unmatched value to his consumers.

Ralph Lauren

Ralph Lauren is a popular designer best known for his lifestyle brand that is easily recognizable by its classic polo player logo. The brand sells a variety of products through different labels from ready to wear for men, women, children, fragrances, and home décor. The brand itself does an excellent job at targeting different consumers through different labels from Polo Ralph Lauren, Double Ralph Lauren, Lauren Ralph Lauren, and the Purple Label (“Designers Men’s...”, n.d). Ralph Lauren’s designs offer a luxury, prestigious style that coincides with the American dream.

Ralph Lifshitz was born on October 14th, 1939 in New York City. Ralph changed his last name to Lauren once he turned 16 due to his classmates teasing him. Years later, he went on to study business for two years at Baruch College in Manhattan before taking a sales job at Brooks Brothers (Ralph Lauren, 2019). In 1967, Lauren persuaded his employer to allow him to start up his own tie company. He began designing his own ties but slowly expanded into menswear. Ralph Lauren chose the name ‘Polo’ for his line as he claimed that it had an English feel to it (Ralph Lauren, Through the Years, 2015). As his business began growing, he obtained an in-store boutique at Bloomingdales. The brands signature logo, the polo player, was attached to the line in 1972 with the first fragrances premiering a few years later. The brand continued to expand by opening boutiques worldwide. On June 11 1997, Ralph Lauren stock went public trading on the New York Stock Exchange with a value of 465.4 million dollars (Ralph Lauren, Through the Years, 2015). Since then, Ralph Lauren has opened bars and restaurants giving a new meaning to a lifestyle brand, as well as expanding the brand through different labels. These efforts helped to target a wide variety of consumers. With hundreds of stores, a broad consumer base, and high brand recognition, Ralph Lauren has achieved tremendous success.

Ralph Laurens philanthropic efforts include the pink pony campaign of the *Polo Ralph Lauren Foundation* that was created in the early 2000's. This campaign fought against cancer, funding programs regarding treatment, research, and education (Ralph Lauren Through the Years, 2015). Although Ralph Lauren is associated with luxury and an upper class, he has been very generous through the creation of the *Ralph Lauren Foundation* that has given back to the public.

One of Ralph Lauren's most significant collections was released in 1992 known as the stadium collection. The early 90's collections were massive hits and heavily sought after. He also pushed other significant lines at the time including the *Snow Beach & Indian Collection(s)*. This original stadium collection drew inspiration from the Olympic summer games located in Barcelona, Spain. It referenced original uniforms worn by American athletes in the earlier decades of the 1920's and 1930's. The color scheme was red, white, and blue symbolizing American spirit. The pieces in the collection also include p-wing graphics (Braun, 2017). The p-wing first premiered in this collection and is known as one of the most iconic and collectible graphics. This addition presents an "iconic street meets sports perspective" (p-wing, n.d.).

Ralph Lauren's advertisements had typically targeted upper-class white males but the stadium collection found appeal within a different group. The *Lo Life's* were a gang of Hispanic and African-American individuals based out of Brownsville and Crown Heights. They were enthusiastic over Polo and would strive to obtain it. The *Lo Life's* were always wearing Ralph Lauren merchandise, which they hardly ever paid for. Over the years, the gang lost some of their reputation and were just known for their high-low fashion tradition (Backman, 2018). Their devotion to the brand was unmatched, even as Ralph Lauren never acknowledged the group as

being a core consumer or inclusive of their image. Overall, the stadium collection embraced streetwear and Ralph Lauren achieved street credential through the *Lo Life's* (Backman, 2018)

The stadium collection was such a hit that as years went by, obtaining a piece would have cost thousands. Ralph Lauren had a re-release of the collection featuring 12 limited edition pieces at the beginning of this year on September 21 (Woolf, 2017). The *Lo Life's* were thrilled on the release as they claimed Ralph Lauren was paying attention to hip-hop culture and felt that they could relive that era.

The garments within this collection reflect 90's street style. As mentioned previously, the color scheme involved red, white and blue with the Polo logo and often the p-wing graphic located on the pieces. From windbreakers to Polo's, these products raised appreciation from various audiences. The classic 1992 windbreaker, worn by many *Lo-Life's*, helped to propagate the style. The jacket was red with a p-wing graphic located on the left breast. There is a blue block underneath signifying it is a Ralph Lauren piece with RL67. The bottom half of the windbreaker is white with 1992 printed across. The jacket is a statement and is reflective of the hip-hop movement. The red stadium polo hat was also a timeless piece. The cap has an extended bill, with a blue 1992 imprinted on the top. The RL67 graphic also appears on the front base of the hat. The track-inspired p-wing sweaters were also a huge hit within the collection. The piece resembles a varsity sweatshirt from the 1960's. This piece is also red with blue detailing and the signature p-wing right in the middle of the sweater (The Stadium Collection, n.d), These signature items from the stadium collection are highly recognized and are placed at a high value. Rappers and *Lo Life's* found these items to fit into their sense of style as they wore bright colors, tracksuits, baggy clothing, baseball caps, all paired with accessories such as chains. Rack-Lo, notes that they were attracted to the collection because it "stood out, they felt that they could

truly express themselves” (Cheng, 2018). The collection does not only represent a time-period, but they reflect a culture of streetwear (see Figure 1).

The stadium collection gained positive recognition from the public as it was considered one of the most iconic lines ever released by Ralph Lauren. The brand had embodied the American spirit and Ralph Lauren, who had previously been known as the “Godfather of prep”, underwent a profitable branding change (Cheng, 2018). With *Lo-Life’s* acquiring the brand in the 1990’s, there was a change in perception with an association to street culture. The ascension from sportswear into streetwear gave Ralph Lauren a fresh image as the brand entered hip-hop fashion. Although the brand never intended to market directly to the consumers the collection attracted, it became a symbol of success in the hip-hop world. Wearing Ralph Lauren signified that you made it (Cheng, 2018). This meaning made the brand have an even larger appeal and although the Lo Life’s stole lots of merchandise, they were walking advertisements to a different target audience. The brand and its iconic 1990’s collections are attached to a hip-hop lifestyle that will never go away.

Overall, Ralph Lauren is a significant designer that has pleased every type of consumer. The lifestyle brand has been cherished by those attending Ivy League Universities to those coming from the streets of Brooklyn. Ralph Lauren has inspired people of every background through the creation of timeless pieces. In the past 50 years, Lauren has made his mark on the fashion industry. To remain relevant, the brand is bringing back older collections, beginning with the Stadium Collection (Designer Men’s..., n.d). The 1990’s represent a high point for Ralph Lauren with the success of colorful pieces, large logos, and untouchable style. The brand was one of the first that embraced streetwear prior to the popular trend that it is today. Ralph Lauren is not just a designer of fashion, he is a designer of a lifestyle that has affected culture, celebrity

style, musicians, and countless individuals in a way no other designer could. As Ralph Lauren stated himself, “I don’t design clothes, I design dreams” (Designer Men’s, n.d).

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Figures



Figure 1. A group of ‘Lo Lifes’ wearing the Ralph Lauren’s stadium collection. Retrieved from LO-LIFE HISTORY. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://lolifespain.blogspot.com/2011/02/prueba.html>