

GOOD SHOP BAD SHOP



Sal Thomas Creative planner, Blue Chip

Cotswold Outdoor, Manchester

The staff at Cotswold Outdoor in Manchester city centre have taken their corporate-issue store and made it their own – but in a way that shouldn't have the brand's managers turning in their revolving desk chairs.

Hand-made 'Team Pick' shelf barkers hang over products, with personal reviews and pictures of the staff.

Papel picado banners – that I'm pretty certain travelled back from Mexico in someone's rucksack – hang across the underside of the stairs.

It gives the sense of a brand that puts substance before style, shopper before showboating, and possibly even people before profits.



Blacks, Manchester Stepping into a post-JD Sports takeover store is like stepping into the walkers' equivalent of Hollister – all dark colours and muted lighting.

The signage is superb and vibrant. But there is an element of style over substance. Entire ranges are folded neatly and stacked into crates. They look attractive, but who wants to spend time having to unveil the goods on offer? This is retail, not striptease.

There's also the added bugbear of categorising clothing by brand rather than product type meaning that customers have to work their way through the rails to determine exactly what is on offer.