

THE BRANDS OF WINDSOR

For the moment, Prince William and Kate Middleton are more than the world's most famous betrothed. They're the most effective piece of brand marketing machinery we've seen since Sarah Palin prompted a rush on Kazuo Kawasaki No. 704 rimless glasses. Middleton's already caused shopping stampedes over the coats and dresses paparazzi have captured her wearing, and the talk is endless over what brands will stitch the actual threads for the April 29 wedding.

Yet the names lucky enough to be included—in William and Kate's actual closet or the chatter over their nups—have enjoyed the best kind of advertising there is: the free kind.

"The wedding has given those brands a halo effect," observes Neil Saunders, consulting director of London-based Verdict Research. "Globally, that kind of advertising would cost a fortune if you paid for it."

Funny thing is, you *couldn't* pay for it—literally. In January, the palace announced that any brand caught using William or Kate's names as part of its marketing can expect a king-sized lawsuit. As a result, Windsor-family brand making is necessarily rooted in rumor and inference. It also, oddly, involves labels at opposite ends of the branding spectrum—outfitters so legendary they scarcely need the publicity and ones cranking out mediocre knockoffs no crowned head would touch. "Only a small percentage of the population can afford to buy marquee brands," says Debra Coughlin, global chief marketing officer for Draftfcb. "It's not surprising mass marketers are copying styles and selling them at lower prices—that's business."

Indeed, it is. Below, a peek at the royal branding process.

—ROBERT KLARA

SHIRT

Turnbull & Asser makes shirts for the royal lads, and Prince William has often been photographed wearing them. It's all bespoke, of course, but the average dress shirt goes for about **\$350**, depending on the fabric.

SHOES

There's been little to no talk about Prince William's footwear, but just for the record, 182-year-old cobbler **Trickers** holds the royal warrant for the Windsors' wingtips. A handmade fine pair of leather shoes (and that's all they sell) will run you between **\$300-\$500**.

SUIT

Prince William will be wearing a military uniform, though it's not certain if it'll be for the RAF, the army or the Royal Navy (he's served in all three). But the clothier sewing the uniform is tailors **Gieves & Hawkes** of Savile Row. They'll be happy to make you a Prince William-style suit for about **\$4,500**.

ENGAGEMENT RING

Seemingly within hours of William's engagement to Kate, brands the world over scrambled to create a knockoff of the diamond and blue sapphire engagement ring that Princess Diana wore in the early 1980s. **(The original was made by Garrard and valued at \$250,000.)** Among these, U.K. retail giant **Tesco**. In the U.S., **QVC** also put a replica on sale—for \$39.54. Since then, countless other brands have gotten into the act and sales of "copyKate" rings are up 800 percent.

TIARA

Sorry, no brands here, kids. Reports are that the Queen may (or should) let Kate choose a diamond tiara from the **Crown Jewels**.

THE KATE MIDDLETON EFFECT

Middleton has already given a royal lift to sales of various apparel brands merely by putting them on and letting the tabloids and bloggers do the rest. Among them:

BURBERRY When Middleton appeared in Belfast on March 8 wearing a ruffled-bottom Burberry trench coat (\$995), the coats sold out in every size within hours. Part of the problem shoppers had was that the coat was *gasp!*—from last year's collection.

ISSA LONDON This is designer Daniella Issa Helayel's brand, and when Middleton wore its "Sapphire" dress for her public announcement of her engagement in November, the dress (\$615) sold out on both sides of the pond. Tesco saved the day by cranking out a replica for \$26 under its store brand, **F&F**.

REISS The \$329 Reiss dress Middleton wore in her official engagement photo has vaunted this U.K. bridge label (along with **JIGSAW** and **WHISTLES**) into the international spotlight. Caught off-guard by the exposure, Reiss reintroduced the dress. Now the brand, which has nine U.S. stores, has plans to expand its stateside presence.

THE ROYAL POTS AND PANS

Carolyn Robb, onetime chef to the Windsors, has left the stove to start The Royal Touch, billed as "the ultimate stamp of approval" for culinary products. Robb is at work on a series of books, and there's talk of a TV series. "When you serve the royal household, quality is second to none," says business partner Bill Schwartz. "Any product Carolyn is involved with must be worthy."

DRESS

Speculation over who's going to sew the royal wedding gown has been endless, but the *Sunday Times* recently reported that it'll most likely be **Sarah Burton**, who has helmed superbrand **Alexander McQueen** since February of 2010 when the designer committed suicide. Burton also created Michelle Obama's red silk and organza state dinner dress.

SHOES

Middleton has had four pairs of shoes commissioned, with varying heel heights. Westminster's fabled floors are slippery, so the bride will wear silk slippers under her dress. The honor of making the royal flats will likely go to one of two brands—**Georgina Goodman** and **Aruna Seth**, the latter favored three to one.