

May 2026

# Runway To The Future.

How the World's First AI-Driven,  
Immersive, Shoppable Catwalk  
Redefined the Future of Brand  
Experience



THG  
STUDIOS



# Introduction

On 26 February 2026, THG Studios transformed its 200,000 sq.ft. creative campus in Manchester into the stage for a defining moment in modern brand experience. The production, officially certified by the World Record Certification Agency (WRCA), was the World's First AI-Driven, Immersive, Shoppable Catwalk: a live demonstration of the future of commerce, built on the belief that the gap between inspiration and transaction can, and must, close.

The 'Runway to the Future' event, headlined by Topshop and presented in partnership with PayPal and Google Cloud, collapsed the traditional boundaries between fashion show, brand activation, and ecommerce platform. Guests did not simply watch a runway; they participated in a fully connected, shoppable ecosystem, guided by the bespoke 'Front Row AI' app, developed by THG Ingenuity. Every look on the catwalk was immediately discoverable, try-able, and purchasable in real time.

This case study details how THG Studios, operating as both the venue and the end-to-end creative, production, and technology partner, delivered a world record-breaking event. It sets out the tangible proof of what is possible when world-class studio infrastructure, creative vision, and proprietary technology converge.

# Industry Challenge: Closing the Gap Between Inspiration and Transaction

The most progressive brands in the world share a common ambition: to make inspiration instantaneous. To ensure the moment a consumer sees something they love, they can own it. Yet for most, the journey from runway to doorstep remains fractured, slow, and full of friction.

The traditional fashion show, for all its spectacle, is an exercise in deferred desire. A look walks the runway in January; it arrives in store in June; the consumer has long moved on. In an era defined by immediate digital gratification, the luxury of time is a liability no brand can afford.

This is not simply a fashion industry problem. For brand leaders across beauty, CPG, sport, wellness, and retail, the fundamental challenge is the same: how do you turn a brand moment into a commercial one? How do you convert the energy of a live experience into measurable, attributable revenue? And how do you prove the ROI of creativity?

The answer, increasingly, lies in the fusion of technology and storytelling. But knowing this and doing it are two different things. The infrastructure required - the studio space, the creative capability, the commerce technology, the logistics network - is beyond the reach of most organisations to assemble independently. That is precisely the problem THG Studios solved.



**“By integrating a direct path to purchase and capturing rich behavioural data, we are creating a model for directly measurable ROI from a live brand experience.”**

- Cat Mellor, Director of Creative Services, THG Studios.



# THG Studios: Infrastructure at the Scale of Ambition.

THG Studios is an award-winning creative marketing agency, operating from over 200,000 square feet of purpose-built creative space in Manchester, UK. It is not a traditional agency, nor simply a venue, it is one of the UK's most innovative content creation hubs. It is a fully integrated creative ecosystem, one that combines strategy, creative production, content, and technology under one roof, available to global brands to hire.

The scale of the THG Studios estate is deliberate. The infrastructure supports productions of every magnitude, from intimate campaign shoots to the kind of landmark, multi-zone brand experience that took place on 26 February 2026. The space is engineered for transformation: configurable, technologically connected, and capable of hosting simultaneous activations across creator studios, catwalk environments, immersive brand zones, and live-streaming facilities.

# Studio Hire: Your Vision, Our Infrastructure.

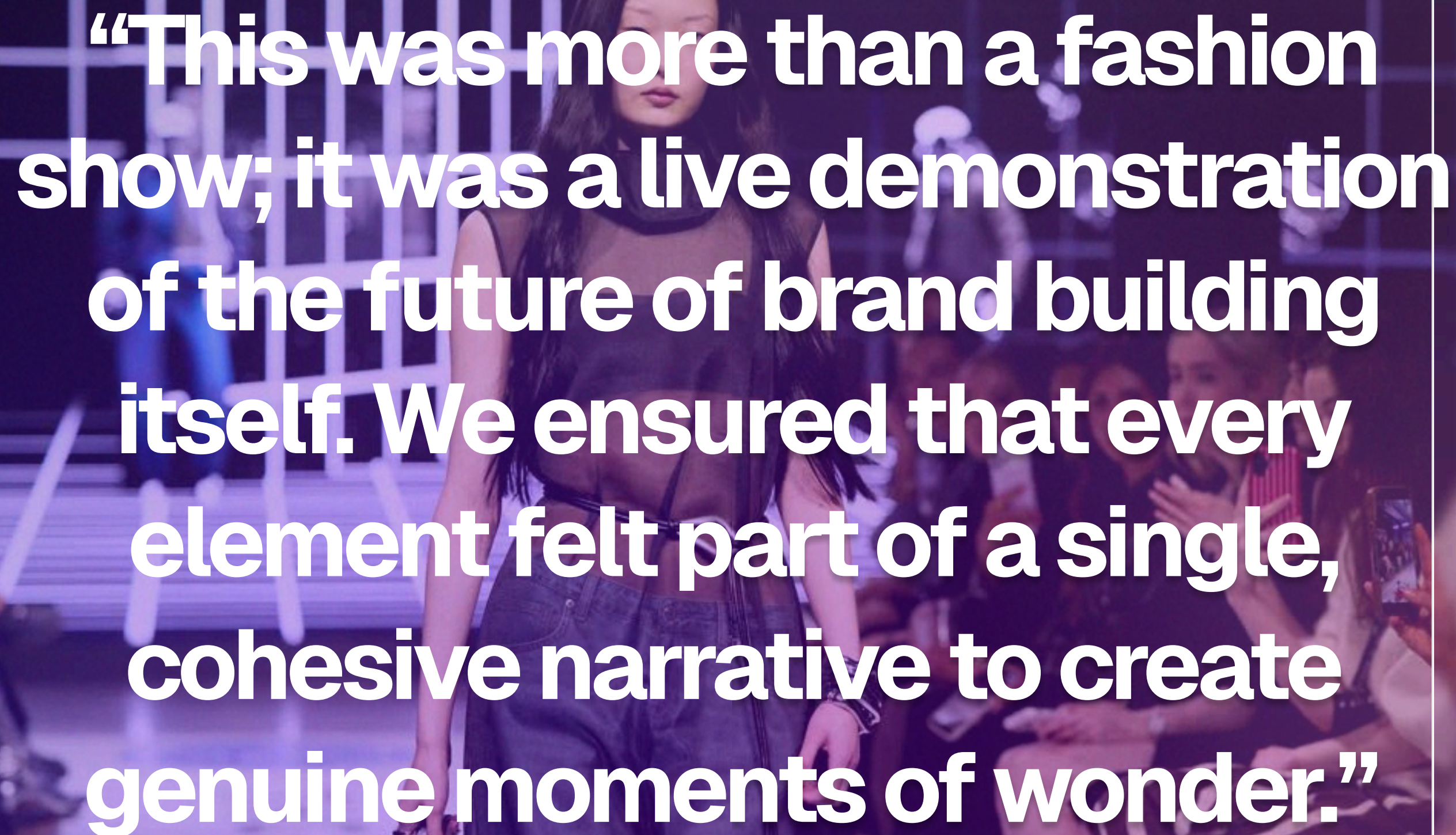
For brands and creative agencies looking to bring ambitious concepts to life, THG Studios offers a world-class studio hire proposition. The facility provides the canvas; clients bring the creative direction.

What brands gain access to:

- 200,000 sq ft of flexible, fully configurable creative space
- State-of-the-art creator studios with professional broadcast and live-streaming capability
- Dedicated zones for catwalk, experiential, interactive, and retail activations
- In-house technical and production expertise available on demand
- Seamless connectivity to THG Ingenuity's commerce and AI technology stack
- A globally recognised hub for commerce and innovation

The Runway to the Future event stands as the definitive proof of what the THG Studios estate can accommodate.





**“This was more than a fashion show; it was a live demonstration of the future of brand building itself. We ensured that every element felt part of a single, cohesive narrative to create genuine moments of wonder.”**

- Cat Mellor, Director of Creative Services, THG Studios.

# The Event: Runway to the Future.

On the evening of 26 February 2026, THG Studios opened its doors to an exclusive audience of senior marketing and technology leaders, content creators, cultural figures, and brand partners. What they encountered was not a fashion show. It was a fully immersive, interactive commercial ecosystem - a live case study in the future of brand experience.

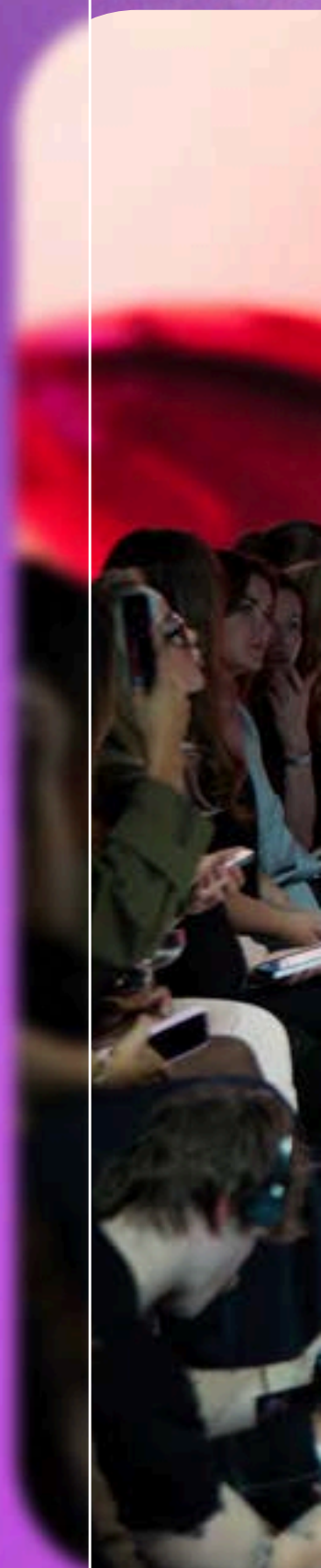
The production, officially headlined by Topshop, sponsored by PayPal and Google Cloud, transformed the THG Studios campus into a series of interconnected experiential zones, each demonstrating a different dimension of next-generation commerce.



## The Scale of the Production.

Delivering the World's First AI-Driven, Immersive, Shoppable Catwalk required a level of planning, coordination, and creative ambition that sets a new standard for the industry. The production involved:

- Global partners and sponsors, including Topshop, PayPal, Google Cloud, Evri, Geek+, Zencargo, THG Fulfil, Noonah, Insert Productions, Shark Beauty, Boss Models and Coupe
- 30 live in-person models walking the runway alongside AI-generated digital avatars
- AI-assisted generative workflows embedded throughout pre-production, from concept development and narrative structuring to environmental design and lighting simulation
- Multiple simultaneous experiential zones operating concurrently across THG Studios
- A live social commerce broadcast running on TikTok, demonstrating reach beyond the physical event
- A finale designed and presented by students from the University of Salford and Manchester Metropolitan University, in a commitment to nurturing the next generation of creative talent



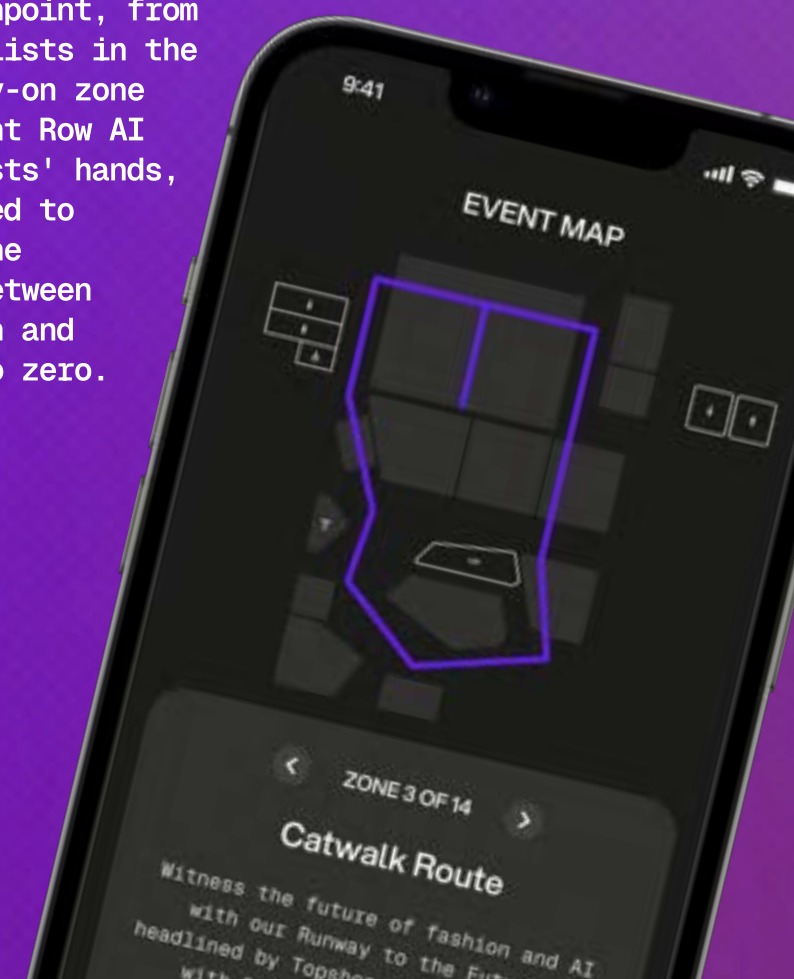


## A New Kind of Runway

The catwalk itself redefined what a runway can be. Hosted jointly by an AI entity and content creator and entrepreneur Patricia Bright, the show featured a seamless blend of human models and AI-generated virtual avatars, creating a hybrid format that demonstrated the future of fashion presentation. Of the full Topshop and Topman collection featured, 85% was made immediately shoppable on the night, directly from the runway, in real time.

The experience was engineered around a central theme: 'see it, try it, buy it'.

Every touchpoint, from the AI stylists in the virtual try-on zone to the Front Row AI app in guests' hands, was designed to collapse the distance between inspiration and purchase to zero.



## Interactive Experience Zones

Beyond the runway, THG Studios hosted a series of immersive zones, each showcasing a different capability:

- Powered by Google Cloud technology and delivered by Noonah, interactive screens provided guests with a virtual changing room experience. Guest photos were uploaded instantly, and the Topshop collection was made available for virtual try-on via an AI stylist.
- A dedicated zone to provide senior marketing decision-makers with a curated, behind-the-scenes journey through the commercial architecture of the event.
- An AI-powered photo experience delivering instantly shareable content to guests via a Glamdroid AI photobooth, powered by Noonah.
- A live TikTok Shop broadcast from the THG Studios creator studio powered by Shark Beauty and LOOKFANTASTIC, demonstrating how cultural moments can be converted into instant, measurable sales for a global online audience.

**“The show marked a defining moment for Topshop. Bringing an AI-powered, fully shoppable runway to life in Manchester proved what’s possible when fashion embraces technology with ambition.”**

- Moses Rashid, Global Marketing Director, Topshop & Topman.



# The Technology: AI at Every Touchpoint.

From the earliest stages of pre-production through to post-event content deployment, AI served as the connective tissue for the entire Runway to the Future experience. The result was a production in which technology was, as CTO Jo Drake described: “so seamlessly integrated that it feels like magic.”

## Front Row AI: The Event App

Central to the guest experience was Front Row AI, a bespoke event app developed by THG Ingenuity specifically for the Runway to the Future production. Conceived as the ‘central nervous system of the guest journey, the app was not an add-on. It was the primary tool through which every attendee interacted with the event, from the moment of arrival to after the show concluded.

The app was built on THG Ingenuity’s proprietary platform and integrated with Google Cloud’s AI ecosystem, with Google Gemini powering its conversational intelligence.

Its core capabilities included:

**AI Conversational Search:** Guests could query the collection using natural language, with Google Gemini-powered search delivering contextually relevant results in real-time.

**Virtual Try-On:** A fully integrated virtual try-on feature, allowing guests to see Topshop and Topman looks on themselves, both individual products and complete outfits, using their device camera and AI-generated overlays.

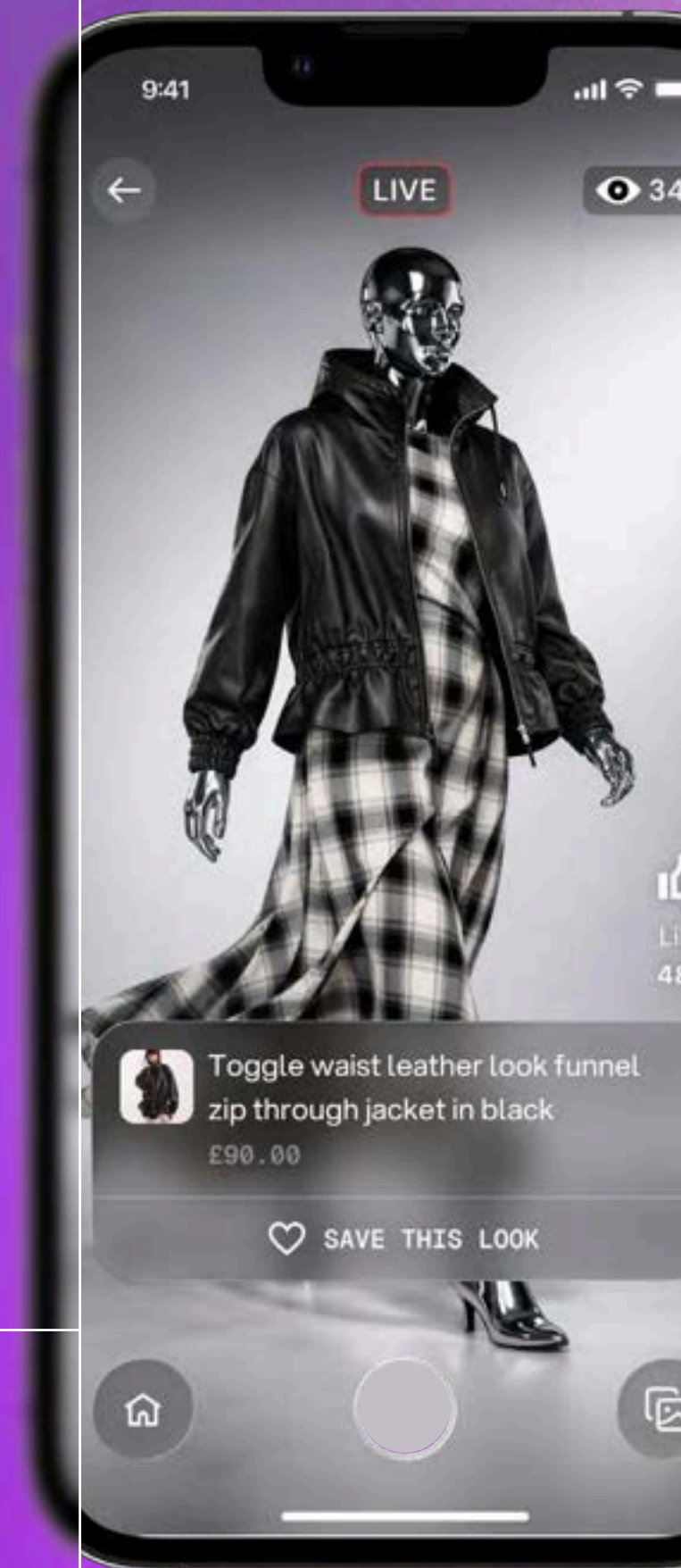
**Live Catwalk Shopping:** As models walked the runway, guests could capture looks in real time, add items to wish list or favourites, and proceed directly to purchase.

**Live Data Dashboard:** The app’s home screen transformed into a real-time data display during the event, surfacing trending looks, and conversion metrics.

The commercial ambition behind Front Row AI was precise: to solve a fundamental retail problem.

**“This wasn’t about tech for tech’s sake; it was about solving a fundamental retail problem: the gap between inspiration and transaction. Front Row AI was this bridge.”**

- Jo Drake, CTO - Platform, THG Ingenuity.





## Virtual Try-On and Vertex Commerce Search

Two of the most significant technical capabilities deployed at the event were Virtual Try-On and Vertex AI Search, both powered in part through THG Ingenuity's integration with the Google Cloud AI ecosystem.

The Virtual Try-On experience was available both within the Front Row AI app and through the dedicated AI Stylist zone, powered by Noonah. Guests could upload a photo and see themselves wearing any item from the Topshop collection, individually or as a complete outfit. The experience demonstrated the maturity of this technology; not as a novelty but as a genuine tool for purchase confidence and friction reduction.

Vertex AI Search, Google Cloud's enterprise-grade commerce search platform, underpinned the conversational discovery experience within Front Row AI. Rather than requiring guests to navigate traditional browse categories, natural language queries were interpreted and resolved against the live product catalogue with high precision. The combination of conversational search, real-time product data, and seamless checkout created a genuinely frictionless discovery-to-purchase pathway.

## AI Across the Entire Production Lifecycle

What distinguished the Runway to the Future from comparable productions was the depth and breadth of AI integration across every phase of the project:

Phase	AI Amplification
Pre-Production	AI supported concept development, narrative structuring, and world-building. AI-assisted creative workflows informed visual language, motion concepts, and digital environment design. Lighting, sound, and spatial moments were designed using AI-enabled simulation and generative tools.
Live Event	Front Row AI served as the guest co-pilot. The AI Host orchestrated the show narrative. AI Stylists enabled virtual try-on. Virtual catwalk avatars extended the runway into digital space. Live AI shopping allowed real-time capture and purchase of looks.
Amplification	AI captured and formatted content in real time via the AI photobooth and AI-generated mini-movies (Noonah). AI-generated visuals were produced for instant social sharing, transforming the event into a continuous content engine.
Post-Event	The show's content archive was made shoppable post-event. Data captured across all interactions informed follow-up targeting and creative optimisation. AI insight fed directly into sales pipelines and future campaign planning.

**“It proves that a fully shoppable, data-driven brand experience is not just possible, but the new benchmark. We created a new model for retail and marketing, and THG Ingenuity and THG Studios are uniquely positioned to deliver it for other brands.”**

- Jo Drake, CTO Platform, THG Ingenuity.



# The Results:

The Runway to the Future event delivered measurable impact across media, cultural influence, and commercial proof of concept. Within one week of the event, the results underscored the power of the model:

**93**

Press Articles  
Published

**10.5M**

Total  
Media Reach

**25**

Influencers  
Attended

**10.6M**

Combined Influencer  
Followers

**66**

Instagram  
Stories

**10**

Instagram Grid  
Posts

**25k**

Instagram Views

**6k**

LinkedIn Views

**WRCA**

Official World  
Record  
Certified

## World Record Certification

The production was officially certified by the World Record Certification Agency (WRCA) as the World's First AI-Driven, Immersive, Shoppable Catwalk. Achieving the certification required meticulous documentation of every AI integration, every shoppable element, and every interactive feature. It was, as Cat Mellor described, "an external validation of our claim to be a genuine world's first," an irrefutable proof of innovation that serves as a powerful and permanent commercial credential.

## A New Commercial Model for Experiential

Beyond the headline metrics, the deeper significance of the event lies in the commercial model it established. By integrating a direct path to purchase into every moment of the experience, and by capturing rich behavioural data across all guest interactions, the Runway to the Future demonstrated that experiential events no longer need to rely on brand awareness alone as their measure of success.

The event created a framework in which:

- Every creative moment had a corresponding commercial layer
- Purchase intent was captured and acted upon in real time
- Content generated during the event continued to drive commercial value post-event
- Data collected across the guest journey informed follow-up targeting and future campaign strategy

This is the model for the next generation of brand experience, and it was built, tested and proven at THG Studios.



# TOPSHOP

## The Partner Ecosystem: A New Standard For Collaboration

The Runway to the Future event demonstrated THG Studios' ability to convene and orchestrate a world-class ecosystem of partners across fashion, technology, finance, logistics, and the creator economy. The production brought together:

**Topshop:** Providing the headline fashion collection, with 85% of looks immediately shoppable on the night. The event marked a new chapter for the brand, returning to the cultural conversation with innovation at its core.

**PayPal:** Headline sponsor and payment infrastructure partner, providing the secure, seamless checkout layer that underpinned the shoppable experience.

**Google Cloud:** Technology partner, powering the AI capabilities at the heart of the event – including the Google Gemini-driven conversational search within Front Row AI and the AI Stylist virtual try-on experience.



**Evri:** Final-mile delivery partner, spotlighting the critical importance of post-purchase experience in an instantly shoppable world.

**Geek+:** Warehouse robotics partner, operating live within the Fulfilment Zone and demonstrating end-to-end automation capabilities alongside THG Fulfil.

**Zencargo:** Supply chain visibility partner, illustrating the role of real-time freight intelligence in the future of instant commerce.

**THG Fulfil:** THG Ingenuity's world-class fulfilment and courier management division, demonstrating integrated logistics capability.





Shark Beauty x LOOKFANTASTIC: Live social commerce partners, hosting a concurrent TikTok Live shopping activation broadcast from the THG Studios creator studio, converting the event into a measurable commercial moment for a global online audience.

Noonah: Technology partner delivering the AI photobooth and AI mini-movie creation experiences, as well as supporting the AI Stylist virtual try-on zones.

University of Salford and Manchester Metropolitan University: Education partners, whose students designed and presented the event's finale – underscoring THG Studios' commitment to Manchester's creative ecosystem.

This breadth of partnership, spanning fashion, payments, AI, logistics, creator content, and education, reflects both the scale of the production and the depth of THG Studios' convening power. It also reflects a broader truth: the future of brand experience is not built by one organisation alone. It is built by ecosystems, and THG Studios is positioned at the centre of one of the most powerful.



# What This Means For Your Brand

The Runway to the Future event was not designed as an isolated showcase. It was designed as a proof of concept - and an open invitation. Every capability deployed is available to brands that choose to work with THG Studios.

Whether you are a CMO looking to redefine your next flagship event, a creative director seeking a studio infrastructure that can match your ambition, or a brand team ready to prove the ROI of experiential for the first time, the infrastructure, the technology, and the expertise are ready.

## Studio Hire

THG Studios provides brands with direct access to some of the UK's most sophisticated creative estates. THG Studios offers:

- 200,000+ sq ft of configurable creative space, from intimate content studios to full-scale event environments
- Professional broadcast and live-streaming infrastructure
- A proven track record of delivering world record-level productions
- Flexible engagement models, from full-service partnership to dry hire

## AI-Powered Brand Experiences

For brands seeking to integrate AI capabilities into their brand experiences, THG Ingenuity offers a technology stack that has been tested at the highest level:

- Bespoke app development, including Front Row AI-style shoppable event applications
- Virtual Try-On integration, powered by Google Cloud AI and proven at scale
- Vertex AI Search (conversational commerce search) for event, retail, and digital environments
- Real-time commerce infrastructure, including live payments via PayPal integration
- Data capture and analytics across every touchpoint of the guest journey
- Post-event content deployment and personalised commercial follow-up

Together, THG Studios and THG Ingenuity represent a uniquely integrated proposition: the only partner capable of delivering the physical infrastructure, the creative vision, and the AI-powered technology to make a brand moment genuinely, measurably commercial.

**“This event is tangible demonstration of our capabilities. We are showing, not just telling, how we can deliver complex, integrated solutions that connect content, commerce, and creativity.”**

– Jo Drake, CTO - Platform, THG Ingenuity

# Conclusion.

The World's First AI-Driven, Immersive, Shoppable Catwalk was not just a landmark event, it was a live proof point for a new model of brand experience: one that is creative and commercial, physical and digital, immediate and data-driven.

The Runway to the Future demonstrated that:

- The gap between brand moment and commercial moment can be closed to zero
- AI, when integrated with intention and expertise, makes experiences more human, not less
- Experiential events can and should deliver measurable, attributable return on investment

For brands, the question is no longer whether to embrace this model. It's how quickly you can get there, and who you trust to take you.

THG Studios has already shown what's possible. The next production is yours to define.



## Explore THG Studios

Discover how to bring your most ambitious brand experience to life in one of the UK's most advanced creative spaces.

Contact us today.

<https://www.thgstudios.com/contact>

[info@thgstudios.com](mailto:info@thgstudios.com)

TOPSHOP PayPal Google Cloud

EVRI zencargo THG FULFIL Geek+ noor Shark BEAUTY

LOOKFANTASTIC WGSN [INSERT] BOSS Shark

University of Salford Manchester Metropolitan University



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**THG Studios Case Study: Runway to the Future**