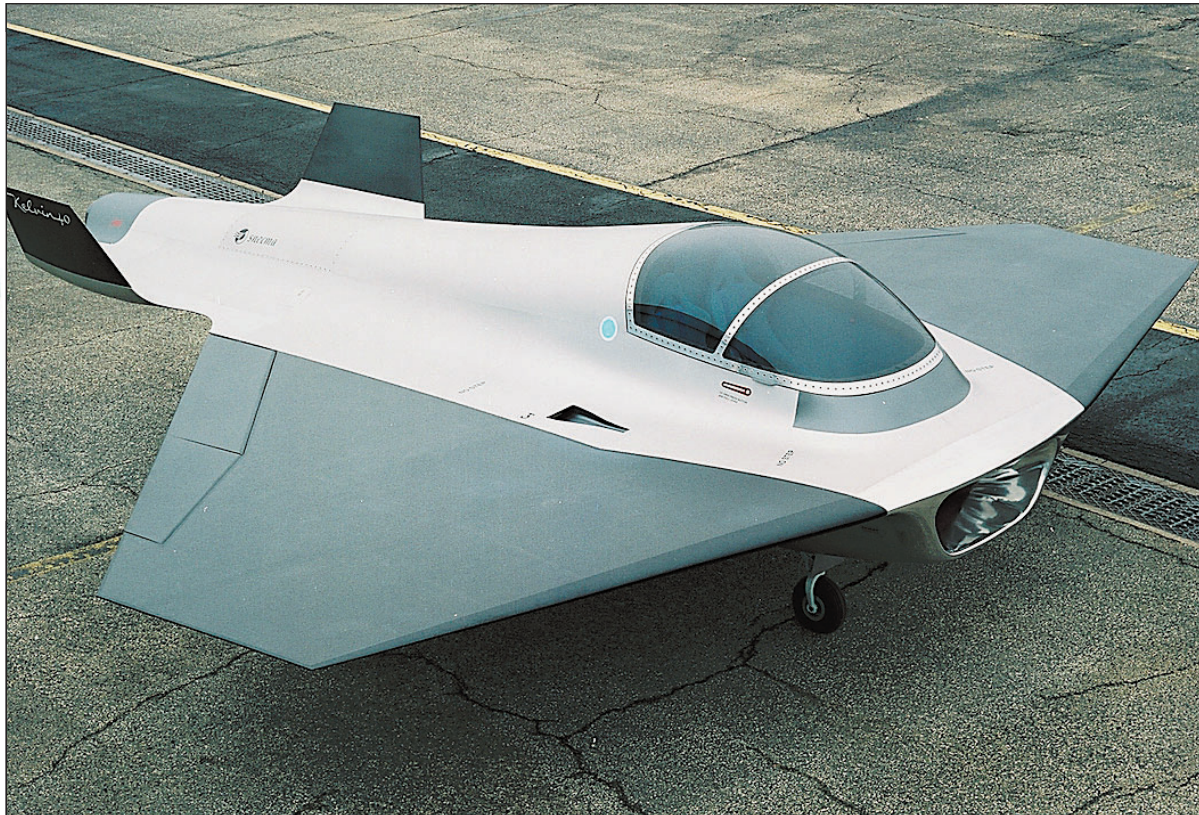




From a chair to the air: AluFelt chair, manufactured by Pod in 1993 and, right, the Kelvin 40, made this year for the Cartier Foundation of Paris, pictured at Orly Airport



A happy combination

Evening Standard

WINTER FASHION WEEKEND

18-21 November 2004, Olympia 2

Designer Christmas Shopping!

Over 80 Top Fashion designers selling clothes and accessories at reduced prices.

18-21 November 2004

Thursday 18th November 6pm – 9pm
Friday 19th November 10am – 6pm
Saturday 20th November 10am – 6pm
Sunday 21st November 10am – 5pm

Olympia 2, Hammersmith Road, Kensington
Nearest BR and Underground Station:
Kensington Olympia

Tickets: £7 when booked in advance.
Ticket Hotline: 0871 222 3214
Online: www.lastminute.com/winterfashion

AS ONE of the world's leading designers, the 41-year-old, Australian-born Marc Newson has shaped a host of products for a range of companies from Idée and Alessi, to corporate giants less known for being aesthetically adventurous, such as Ford and Qantas.

Everything — watches and phones, lights and seats, cars and planes and, in one notable instance, vibrators — seems to have been given the Newson touch. That touch, which has been à la mode since the early Nineties, is one that was first shaped by his early influences: modernist architecture, surfing and the kind of Utopian, futuristic vision of the Fifties and Sixties that foresaw a world of bubble cars and pod-like skyscrapers.

Later it was honed in Japan, where Newson worked for a while, with its odd mix of pure modernism and ultra-commercial kitsch. The resulting aesthetic is bright, colourful, shiny and superficially simple, in love with

EXHIBITION

Marc Newson
Design Museum, SE1
Nick Hackworth

curves and synthetic materials — a kind of commercial aesthetic paradise in which all products look happy.

The Design Museum's exhibition provides a chronological walk through an array of Newson pieces, from his early sculptural furniture, including his breakthrough piece, Lockheed Lounge from 1986, a curving, bulbous, metallic update of the chaise longue, to Kelvin 40, a retro-looking, concept two-seater plane developed for the Cartier Foundation in Paris this year.

In between sit bottle-openers and soap dishes, images of Newson-designed restaurants such as Coast in London and a prize-winning concept car for Ford.

While the display matches the

work for its simplicity, it provides no wider context and, inevitably, with the work of such a popular and populist designer as Newson, you are likely to be familiar with many of his designs.

It would have been interesting to have seen an attempt to explain why such an aesthetic — of which Newson is a leading exponent and not inventor — has become so popular with producers and consumers.

That explanation might have looked at the link between Newson's preference for curves and the ubiquitous rise in social informality, or the connection between the playfulness with which he invests his products and the birth of a generation who have emotional relationships with mass-produced products. But at least the products were spared the in-depth analysis, which would have only left them depressed.

● Until 30 January.
Information: 0870 833 9955.

Asian touch adds excitement

HAILED as "the Asian Craig David", London-born former medical student Jay Sean has tapped into the mainstream pop scene more deeply than any previous Asian singer. His second single, Stolen, has just reached number four in the charts and so it was understandable that at his show last night, his manner was just on the charming side of cocky.

Backed by a full band, including Asian super-producer Rishi Rich on keyboards, he was playing to a two-thirds-of-capacity audience, 80 per cent Asian and 70 per cent female, most of whom seemed to know the lyrics to the songs on his new album, despite the fact that it was released only yesterday.

Now it would, of course, be ridiculous to suggest that all

POP

Jay Sean
Scala, N1
Chris Elwell-Sutton

Asian singers should stick to Asian-influenced music, but the fact remains that Jay Sean's most thrilling moments were when he injected proceedings with some Indian flavour. It was his stripped-down, a capella version of Panjabi MC's monster bhangra hit, Mundian To Bach Ke, that really had the crowd screaming.

Joined by charismatic collaborator Juggy D, who sang the Punjabi chorus with gusto, Sean let loose with a brilliant human beatbox routine, which

recreated the track brilliantly. Juggy D's energy, showmanship and sense of fun, seemed like a catalyst for Sean's creativity and another highlight followed as he went on to deliver a wonderful one-man version of Kelis's Milkshake, complete with rap.

With his good looks, confident swagger, and smooth R&B sound, his cross-over appeal was not hard to fathom. At times, though, his performance felt too safe, too innocuous.

It would be a great shame if, in his pursuit of teen-pop stardom, he were to neglect the Indian and hip-hop sounds he does so well. Ultimately, it was when he dropped the crooning and got gritty that Jay Sean really shone.

Singers of the old South Africa offer hope to new order

WORLD

Ladysmith Black Mambazo and Vusi Mahlasela
Barbican
Jane Cornwell

SOUTH Africa has the greatest profusion of musical styles on the African continent, of which the Zulu a capella harmonies of Ladysmith Black Mambazo are merely one example.

Here in the West, however, Joseph Shabalala and his 10-man troupe are considered typical, largely because their soothing, soaring melodies have been used to sell everything from soup to computers, lend exotic backing to Paul Simon and Dolly Parton, entertain kings, a Queen (ours) and presidents.

They also tend to tour rather a lot. Indeed, here they are again, surfing the wake of their last sell-out UK shows, as rich-voiced, tennis-sneaker agile and sold out (all 33 dates) as ever.

One of their number — Joseph's brother, Jockey — is missing, laid up by illness, but Ladysmith don't miss a beat.

Formed by Shabalala back in the 1960s, the group have progressed from winning regional competitions in isicathamiya — a music with origins in the miners' hostels of Natal Province — to becoming world-famous Grammy nominees.

They perform like a well-oiled machine. Before pastel projections of sunsets and forests, they croon, growl, whistle and harmonise their way through a selection of hits — Wenyukela; Rain, Rain, Beautiful Rain; Homeless — that combine the comfort of lullabies with a stirring, stoical beauty.

It is the old South Africa offering hope to the new, give or take the occasional lapse into cheese ("This is about a woman with a beautiful set of teeth").

Their support act, too, is terrific. Vusi Mahlasela is a big man from Pretoria, a poet and protest singer/songwriter with a voice of a sometimes fallen, often airborne angel.

In South Africa, where he's regarded as a national treasure, Mahlasela is known as simply that: the Voice. His first three CDs have just been released in the UK. He deserves — and may well achieve — the popularity of Ladysmith.