

BRIDES BEWARE CAMPAIGN

Thanks to Bridal Buyer magazine September / October 2018 for encouragement to share this information.



The British Bridal Suppliers Association (<https://www.bridalsuppliers.co.uk/>) set up the Brides Beware campaign in 2013 to help raise awareness of the risk of purchasing fake wedding, prom and bridesmaid gowns online. The main message is that if you see a gown in a boutique for £800 then online for £250, there WILL be a catch. Fake gowns will be substandard, using both poor quality fabric, lack of underskirts and structure, have shoddy manufacturing standards, and dreadful lace and beadwork.

Copycat websites use photography which is owned by the authentic designers and manufacturers. They claim that they are going to supply the original dress, when in fact they are only creating a shoddy copy. The BBSA campaign is helping to inform brides of the dangers of wasting their precious wedding budget on a copied gown through their Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/BridesBeware/videos/604720516228259/>), Twitter and Instagram, and have exhibited at many bridal events throughout the country to raise awareness.

At APC, we have seen evidence of counterfeit gowns, and have had to do substantial re-work to them, which adds considerable cost and anxiety for the bride. Even when a gown is supposed to be "made to measure" by these counterfeit manufacturers, they can require us to give a full re-fitting service. Whilst this brings us trade, we would much prefer brides to be happy with their first choice of gown, and to require minimum rectification after purchase from the wedding gown supplier!

Advice for Brides

- Buy from a reputable shop not from an online dealer. Don't be tempted to purchase the most important garment you will ever wear online – if it is a fake, you will be extremely unlikely to be able to get your money back from unscrupulous traders, and you will have to pay for the return of the dress yourself.
- Try to get a good fit on the bust as this is a trickier alteration than other aspects of the dress.
- If you have bridesmaid dresses to buy, arrange for them to meet with you at the shop to see that the style and fit is suitable for everyone. It is a false economy to purchase online only to find that nothing fits or suits anyone, and that the fabric and manufacture are poor quality. You may end up spending more on alterations than on the original dresses.
- Consider how the gowns must be getting manufactured for the price you are buying at online. How much might the workers actually get paid, and who is regulating their working conditions and the quality of the products? Reputable companies care about standards.
- Just because a site says it is based in the UK, it may be using a fake UK postal address and phone number. Enter the address into your search engine and see how many similar sites are using the same address. Many counterfeit garments are actually manufactured in China.

- Warning signs that you are looking at a counterfeit site: a website with 300+ styles available; often in \$ and available in any size, any colour; using a mixture of different image styles on one page; a website claiming to be selling lots of different designer collections, using them by name; no contact phone number or email address; spelling mistakes or misinterpreted text; free shipping and money off offers; having a Live Chat option available.