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Designer security War on street crime gets fashionable



A lingerie style cotton belt holds mobile phone, credit cards and keys in separate compartments Photograph: Karl Prouse

Andrew Glennell

Fagin would be mortified. Two London clothing designers, acting with the help of police and the Jill Dando Institute of Forensic Science, have put together a set of body-hugging carry-bags they believe can thwart the country's most able pickpockets.

Adam Thorpe and Joe Hunter, of Vexed Generation, have worked for a year to create their products, which include a cotton lycra "stealth belt" intended to resemble lingerie around a woman's waist.

The woman's waist hand-bag known as Body Safe is meant as a fashion accessory and can be worn in and out of jeans, said Mr Thorpe yesterday.

"If you go to a nightclub, it might be more useful having that than a hand-bag," he said.

Conscious of police figures indicating a mobile phone is stolen every three minutes in Britain, the designers have produced wrist bands which keep mobile phones out of snatch and grab reach. The phone goes into the band and the user can raise the wrist to his or her ear when it rings.

A laptop case known as the Karryfront Screamer sets off an alarm when someone tries to snatch it, and the designers have also created bags with stainless steel inside to prevent thieves slashing them.

Police working with the designers on the project put the style of theft being countered into four categories — the dip, lift, grab and slash.

A crime prevention officer, Constable Richard Flynn, said police had worked for years with architects and planners to ensure areas were less susceptible to crime.

There was no reason a similar cooperation could not exist with designers to counter petty theft.

"This is not a new problem, what's new is we have an ability to work in partnership with designers and academics to [attack the problem]," PC Flynn said.

The clothing range will be available within a month at Selfridges in London and Fonehouse Stores around the UK.

The products, unveiled at the Design Council in London yesterday, cost from £11.99 to £115 for the laptop bag.