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There's a shock in store for bag-snatchers

FOR a few seconds everyone, it seemed, stopped and stared.

Someone had just snatched my bag — and as he ran off along the street with it, there was the continuous sound of a 138-decibel ear-piercing alarm — that's worse than standing right next to a pneumatic drill.

Shoppers in Glasgow's Sauchiehall Street span around to see what it was when they heard the loud wail. Security guards rushed to the front of the store.

Luckily it was soon apparent that I had not, in fact, been robbed. The "thief" was a colleague and I was testing out a new safety bag called the Karryfront Screamer.

Scream it most certainly did. The newly-designed red and black bag can be used to carry your laptop computer and has a two-way strap so it can be worn across your front or back.

It's made by Vexed Generation. They specialise in fashionable designs that respond to social issues as well as setting new trends.

The company was started seven years ago by designers Adam Thorpe and Joe Hunter. They were behind the Velcro cross-strap bag which has now been used by a variety of mainstream manufacturers.

Practical

Adam says this time they wanted to devise something that helped people. "Street crime in the Hackney area of London where we are based went up by 42 per cent from March 2001 to 2002. We wanted to design something that was practical and helped people and would hopefully make it harder for the criminals."

Idea behind the screaming bag is that, if someone grabs it, the strap comes away and an alarm inside the bag is set off.

This not only renders the bag useless to the thief, as the alarm comes with a lock, but they are left carrying a bag with an alarm screeching at them.

Mind you, it's not cheap at £109, but deafened passer-by Eileen Clark, from Kirkintilloch, was impressed with the Screamer.

By Fiona Miller

"It's a good idea," she said. "I might think about using it — but at the moment it's still a bit expensive."

Another witness to my apparent mugging was Denise Marshall, from Ayr. She said, "This is a really good idea. I would think about getting one for my teenage daughter."

In my dummy run my would-be assailant found it difficult to actually snatch the bag from me, at one point almost having to knock me off my feet.

I explained to Adam that we had this problem with the strap. He said, "The strap can be adjusted at the Velcro part depending on a person's weight, so you wouldn't be knocked off your feet."

The one I tried had last been used by Adam in some tests — he's 16 stone so that's why the Velcro strap was tight.

Problems

He also explained how they overcame certain problems, such as making sure the alarm doesn't go off if you accidentally bang into something or someone.

"The alarm is protected by extra material and the cord runs down the inside of the strap meaning it can't be pulled by accident."

The company plan to bring out smaller handbag-sized versions of the Screamer and extend the colour range and designs.

Inspector Colin McDougall, of Strathclyde Police's Community Safety Department, said, "The principle of the Screamer bag has good crime prevention methods and heightens the owner's attention to taking precautions."

"We always tell people not to hang on to their bag if it is snatched — losing the bag is an inconvenience but it's better than getting hurt."

He added, "The noise of the alarm is good. A would-be thief doesn't want to attract attention and this alarm would do just that."

So would I buy one? When the handbag version comes out I would definitely think about it for the dark winter months.

■ The Karryfront Screamer is available from Selfridges or you can order on the Internet at www.karrysafe.com

■ The would-be mugger got more than he bargained for when he triggered the alarm on the Screamer.

