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Return to action

Dexter Wong reveals all about his comeback collection

Interior designs

Behind the scenes at four of the UK's hottest new stores

5

COMPANIES TO
GIVE YOUR
STORE AN
AUTUMN BOOST

NORTHERN LIGHTS

THE MANCHESTER GUYS PUTTING THE
COOL BACK INTO TAILORING

PLUS: J SHOES FOOTWEAR PEOPLE SHOW REVIEWS RETAIL NEWS INDUSTRY OPINION

Tailor made

WITH TAILORING BACK AT THE FOREFRONT OF BRITISH FASHION, YOUNG TAILORS ARE EMERGING AS ICONS OF THE DAY. BUT SAVILE ROW HASN'T SEWN UP ALL THE TALENT – KAREN CAMPBELL CAUGHT UP WITH TWO OF THE GUYS MAKING THEIR MARK UP NORTH.

Nick Jones

NICHOLAS JONES BESPOKE

There is something immensely attractive about Nick Jones' shop situated in St Ann's Arcade slap bang in the middle of Manchester city centre. This could be due to its bold, gold-framed suiting adorning the window displays, or the 1964 Lambretta parked in the entrance, or even the pink and black colour mix that catches your eye as soon as you walk in the arcade. But the real attraction here is the reality of a young, cool, bespoke tailor away from the Savile Row-dominated capital, both in price and design.

Nick Jones is a charismatic, cheeky chappy with an effortless air of cool about him. Lincolnshire-born, his background is pure tailoring: trained by old-school Manchester tailor David Mason, he went on to start out on his own, taking a few clients with him, expanding to America and increasing his client list, returning to Manchester, finding a location and a business partner and opening his first store, Nicholas Jones Bespoke. Not a bad effort for a guy in his mid-30s.

The store itself is a relaxed affair with a defining air of chic thanks to Jones' and business partner Nick Hartshorne-Evans' vision of a welcoming interior, yet adorned with press cuttings from the local paper as well as a feature in *Arena* magazine – and Hartshorne-Evans' runner-up certificate in the regional final for entrepreneur of the year in the National Business Awards.

Hartshorne-Evans' is not a tailor himself but was one of Jones' clients – and great fan of his work – and has an impressive history in setting up his own recruitment firm. He made an offer to go into

business with Jones on a 50/50 basis, which, after a successful supply trip to Milan, was accepted. They now run the store with the help of a travelling tailor and a trainee tailor from Heriot-Watt University. The shop has been open for two and a half years, with Hartshorne-Evans coming on board in August 2005, and success has inspired the two to think of expansion on a national scale.

"In the last 12 months, the tailoring industry has altered," explains Jones. "We now cater for people wanting a hunting jacket or young, twentysomething entrepreneurs wanting something that bit alternative. There are more and more young guys who are incorporating tailored items into their wardrobe and they like the idea of buying it from a youngish guy who is in modern surroundings."

Both Nicks agree that the secret to their success is appealing to a broad spectrum of customers, with the older guy appreciating the quality and skill of the craft and the younger one drawn by the alternative to a designer suit.

"We are lucky enough to be able to talk just as well to 28 year olds as to 70

"There are more and more young guys who are incorporating tailored items into their wardrobe and they like the idea of buying it from a youngish guy who is in modern surroundings"



year olds and we attract a great number of age groups in the store. We offer traditional cashmere alongside modern, quite 'out there' fabrics that some younger, maybe more eccentric, guy would go for. We can have a managing director of a company one minute or a leading celebrity the next. It certainly makes our job interesting."

Today, Jones is dressed casually in a shirt and jeans and explains that he just goes with how he feels on the day, "I either wear a smart waisted suit that reflects the brand or on the other hand I can market the jeans, shirt and jacket look, it depends how I feel."

But when it comes to tailoring, Jones is very serious indeed. "I am very aware that people want to move away from the high street. Men are still paying up to £1,000 for a designer suit and a lot are steadily realising that for the money, they can get something unique to them that has style, quality and that all-important perfect fit."

The business is opening a 6,000 sq ft factory in Leeds this month. "We really want it to be used as an area for people to come and learn hands-on and we have already approached schools and colleges in the area to work with us," says Jones. Both also plan to open new shops in centres including Leeds, Newcastle, London and Glasgow, with the next store set to open in Birmingham early next year.

"We have clients from around the country that are constantly telling us there are no tailors where they are that truly understand their needs, so we take this information on board and work with it to plan our retail strategy. We will be national, through our own stores and concessions and we'll bring British tailoring back to the forefront."