

GENTLEMEN'S PARADISE

Being the guy responsible for turning around the fashion statement for the whose and who's of the industry isn't an easy feat. Kunal Rawal brings in his flurry of creativity in luxury menswear.

BY CHITMAN KANWAR AHUJA

On a rainy day, we stepped out on the busy streets of New Delhi, to meet a young designer. A new buzz in the B-town, as we had heard, Kunal Rawal, stands true to being the design genius that he is. Inspired by the Indian army, and their sartorial ways, his stores too are designed with a similar representation. With morse code transmissions on the floor and an automatic trail of ensembles hanging from the ceiling, they exuberate the new age sporty yet dapper vibe.

After meeting Kunal, who himself parades the hippie and 'oh-so-cool' demeanor, we were sure that this next gen designer is here to change the norms of conventional menswear silhouettes, for good. Edited excerpts...

You are the youngest designer to debut on the runway for Lakmé Fashion Week. When did you realise that design was your calling?

As long as I can remember, I've always looked up to my dad—he's always been my style inspiration, and before I knew it, his aesthetic got engraved in my design language.

I definitely made some questionable choices



as a kid. I experimented with hair extensions and braided my hair too. My dad had an export house, where my sister and I would accompany him often. I so vividly remember one room, which used to be filled with different fabrics, just layers and layers of it, and we used to jump around and play a game of guessing the fabric by only its touch and feel.

I have been around fabrics since I can remember, which gravitated and evoked an interest towards fashion for me at an early age.

Take us through the inspirational board that lets you redefine menswear fashion.

I am my own muse and that's my inspirational route. Also, nowadays men are open to experimenting with different variants. They are far more aware and confident of what they want to wear or what will work out for them. My designs can be worn in multiple ways, for various occasions which work with different personalities. Versatility is my key focus while designing.

Your menswear collection caters to the desires of the modern 21st-century man. How would you define the ideal muse adorned in your creations?

The kind of man who enjoys experimenting with functional details and uses versatile pieces to create his look for multiple occasions. Someone who also gives importance to comfort and pays attention to unique fabric details and motifs.

You have brought a sleek and edgy style definition to traditional menswear silhouettes. Is modernising traditional ensembles the mantra in fashion?

There is no *mantra* in fashion, my designs have given a new vibe to traditional menswear. As they speak volumes of the new age man, who seeks individuality. A traditional *sherwani* will be as relevant as my oversized *sherwani* or a sleeveless jacket.

Your designs also seem to revolve around the usage of prints. How do you mix and match different prints on an outfit?

We give in a lot of attention to prints and patterns ensuring that my signature elements of versatility and flexibility are fully incorporated in all of my designs. Different combinations of prints and fabrics add an element of drama to one's look. Our deconstructed silhouettes are in demand



1. Designer Kunal Rawal with Aditya Roy Kapur as his showstopper for Future Past 2019 collection, at Lakmé Fashion Week Summer/Resort 2019
2, 3, 4, 5 & 6. Models in Future Past 2019 collection, at Lakmé Fashion Week Summer/Resort 2019

for the nuptials as it provides the look of *bandhgala* or *sherwani*, but adds comfort by breaking up the pieces.

You are one such designer who is very particular about the footwear and the accessories that you use. According to you, how important is accessorising for men?

Accessories plays a very crucial role in terms of collating an entire look. It's not necessary that they have to match your outfit perfectly, but they can also work by contrasting one's whole look. Men have a lot to experiment with accessories and there is a sense of apprehensiveness from their end. Through

“THE MODERN MAN IS OPEN TO EXPERIMENTING WITH FUNCTIONAL DETAILS, WHILE ALSO USING VERSATILE PIECES FOR MULTIPLE OCCASSIONS.”

my designs, I tend to fade away this fear.

What are the go to must have's for men during the festive season?

I'd say, lighter Indian pieces such as a texture printed *kurta* shirt with double sleeves—paired with a classic *bundi* or a half sleeves *kurta* with a back zipper which can also be paired with a waist coat *bundi*. Such pieces bode as casual wear for men while sustaining a traditional touch.

Give us a hint of your upcoming collections.

The outfits are inspired by the voice of the label and the inspiration from functional and industrial elements. One can see fabric manipulation and washes. The collection sees functionality and comfort in a slightly more wholesome way with new silhouettes and techniques amalgamated with the label's aesthetics and the need of the market. The end consumers, usability and functionality of the garments are always a strong inspiration for us.