

ATTENTION TO DETAIL

From humble beginnings, we introduce bespoke tailor Stephen Williams who is putting his own stamp on the tailoring industry.

By Daniel Moore

Renowned for his elegant and avant-garde designs, Stephen Williams has taken the industry by storm having mastered the craft of bespoke tailoring and producing suits for over 30 years. With his great knowledge and expertise, he is now on a mission bringing a contemporary twist to old traditions of tailoring.

His objective is achieved through fun and funky imagery while utilising luxury Italian fabrics to craft beautiful bespoke garments. Stephen's skull designs have become a popular choice over the years, whether it's placed on the inside lining of a suit jacket or one of his new hand-stitched bags in the collection. Animal linings are also on trend with parrots and tropical prints growing in demand over the summer months.

Another craft Stephen uses is hidden monogramming embroidering names, initials and secret messages to commemorate those special occasions. Providing further insight, he said, "For

wedding suits, I have embroidered names and dates of weddings as well as hidden messages under the felt collar. I once had a client ask me to sew 'I give it a year' onto his suit". In addition, Stephen also engraves buttons and cufflinks for that finishing touch. It is clear what has made the designer such a resounding success is his attention to detail ensuring every suit, shirt and accessory is personalised and perfected in line with the customer's vision.

The designer takes inspiration from East London fashion trends, catwalk shows and fashion publications which are used as a stimulus to craft unique and beautiful garments. One of his recent works, 'The Julien Jacket', was named after a work colleague's 'bloody' red and orange backpack, where Stephen took the design and imprinted it onto a suit jacket. He is also influenced by GQ's South Africa edition when it comes to researching seasonal trends.

The designer first discovered his craftsmanship when he started working in his mother's shops at the age of 11. Both his parents were working in the wool trade at the time. When he was 16 years old, Stephen knew the business inside out and began managing his mother's shops on his own. He later joined Next in 1985, who were on a rapid expansion plan; acquiring a number of old Hepworth tailors. Stephen took this opportunity to train up and educate himself on the 'made to measure' processes. Explaining his reasons for doing this, he said, "Some of the Next men shops offered 'made to measure' services so I joined the retailer. When I was 21, I decided somebody had to learn how to do this because it was a dying trade and nobody wanted to do it". He continued, "I realised very quickly that I was good at it and the passion working with my mum in the wool trade, it became very easy to do".



Stephen departed from Next in 1989 but not before appearing in the Next Directory after acquiring some modelling work. He went on to master the art of bespoke tailoring at one of Europe's largest garment manufacturers before honing his skills on London's iconic Savile Row, where he learnt about fabrics and was put in charge of the Burtons Menswear account – One of the largest high street retailers at the time. The company also commissioned suits for the likes of Calvin Klein, Debenhams and Marks and Spencers. A lucky break came after he appeared on a 1980's television programme, which opened up many doors for the designer and his career. Stephen provided further insight, "I was asked to do a television programme in 1989 called 'Blind Date'. I was Stephen, number two from Cheshire, and I won". He went on to say. "When I used to go to all these Marks and Spencers and Debenhams stores, I was young and they would always say 'there's no buyers available today'. However, after I did the TV programme they would say, 'your Stephen from Blind Date' and then the doors were opened".

With his extensive skill-set and television appearance, the Burtons

account became Stephen's and his company's biggest account. The designer was later headhunted by Giorgio Armani and enjoyed the taste for premium brands while he created suits in a high paced and pressured environment. However, he cut his employment short when his old firm got in touch asking him to come and get the Burtons account back which they had lost. Stephen was triumphant and went on to enjoy a further three years at his former company.

"I realised that so many people were shown the door because the average price of a suit on Savile Row ranges from £3,500 to £4,000."

The tailor has also collaborated with Irish designer Paul Costello on his men's collection, followed by a lucrative career in modelling; allowing him to purchase his East London studio that he operates from today. Stephen eventually returned to his nesting ground working for a tailoring firm on Savile Row. However, after reconnecting with some old business associates, the tailor soon learnt about laser precision and



Stephen Williams London - Cufflinks

the latest technologies to produce bespoke garments quicker and at an affordable price. Speaking of his findings, he said, "I realised that so many people were shown the door because the average price of a suit on Savile Row ranges from £3,500 to £4,000. People would come in and have saved around £1,500 for a wedding suit which was out of their budget".

In 2010, the craftsman opened his first shop in Mayfair called 'Terence Trout' – named after one of his father's customers whose elegance impressed him so much, he couldn't think of a better name to call it. Stephen immediately stood out from other tailors on the block as he showcased his edgy suits putting a spin on classic lines. He accomplished this by giving his jackets sharp, diagonally-cut pockets for a sleek style, cavalry-cut trousers, complemented with covered buttons, an avant-garde lining topped off with one of his 'signature' collars.

The designer now operates under his new brand 'Stephen Williams London' based at his new digs in Shoreditch. Since launching his latest brand in 2014, the bespoke tailor has designed and



Stephen Williams London - Tropical Print Bow Ties and Shirts

perfected garments for a range of celebrities such as style icon David Beckham, actor Benedict Cumberbatch, Sir Patrick Stewart and Olympic athletes Louis Smith, Greg Rutherford and Colin Jackson. In fact, one of his works last year involved creating capes for 39 A-list celebrities as part of the 400th

milestone of William Shakespeare's death. The photograph will be released later this year in the style of 'The Last Supper'. Aside from his celebrity following, the tailor is highly regarded in Mayfair, notably for his formal suits designed for staff at the Dorchester Collection's chain of luxury hotels in London's

royal borough. He is now the group's tailor of choice.

After 30 lucrative years in the tailoring industry, Stephen looks forward to his next challenge which involves driving his brand presence online through his website and social media channels as well as on boarding young apprentices to teach them the tricks of the trade as well as those skills that may otherwise get lost in the years to come.

The artist will continue bringing his contemporary pieces to life while he focuses on his Autumn/Winter 2017 collection, which brings new tones, patterns and excitement to continue his 'classic with a twist' ideology. Speaking of his new designs, he reveals. "The materials for my winter collection have just arrived. I'll be using grey for the outside of the suit, with a camouflage print on the back. I'll also do an unstructured jacket so there will be no lining on it but it will be a funky cut and design". For the current season, Stephen is working with lightweight and cool wool fabrics to deliver bespoke jackets that can be worn either for that special wedding day or for that great weekend getaway.

For anyone wishing to enquire about fittings or book an appointment can do so by visiting: www.stephenwilliams.london/. The site contains links to Stephen's Facebook, Twitter and personal blog where visitor's can research current trends or ideas to spruce up their wardrobes. The link also provides access to Stephen's extensive portfolio from beautiful bespoke suits and fitted shirts to collars, cufflinks and perfumes. Whatever concepts you have in mind to create that perfect suit, rest assured you'll be left in safe hands with one of London's most prestigious tailors of our time.



Stephen Williams London - Tropical Print Jacket