

Dedicated followers of fashion

Fashion fans get your diaries at the ready, here is a stylish event you will not want to miss – the Edinburgh International Fashion Festival. Susan Mackie talks to a north-east designer who is preparing for the event

PRESENTING: Designers including Vivienne Westwood and Jonathan Saunders will inspire the masses with their collections, or will a whole host of Scottish designers at the Edinburgh International Fashion Festival next week.

For Aberdeen-based fashion designer Isabelle Randall, this is certainly a busy time. The 34-year-old is preparing to showcase her work at the festival, which runs from Wednesday, April 26 to Saturday, April 29.

Isabelle's collection will be shown at The Marketplace with other up-and-coming Scottish designers on Wednesday, April 26 and Thursday, April 27.

Born in 1972, the budding fashionista was raised in Moson, Norway and the UK. She realised her dream at the tender age of 12 years-old, and by 14 had won first place in a competition for most original designs.

Commenting on that life-changing childhood moment, she said: "Watching those amazing creations glide down the catwalk made me shiver."

In her adolescence she went on to study fashion at a number of English educational institutes, including the London Royal College of Art.

Her decision to move to Aberdeen was a lifestyle choice. "Having lived in London for many years I really needed the change. You cannot live healthily down there."

"I love Aberdeen. There is a great contrast between the city centre and the nearby countryside. I was drawn to the nature. I also have some family up here."

She says many designers are now returning north due to the increase in the use of the internet, enabling remote working. She believes that the Edinburgh International Fashion Festival will remind people that Scottish designers are still thriving.

"I am really looking forward to the show. I am quite isolated here from the buzz of the fashion world and it will be great to network with other

Isabelle Randall
PHOTO BY ANDREW HUNTER



CAPITAL TO GET DRESSED UP

designers and like-minded people. "People do not realise how much Scotland has to offer, there are so many designers up these parts and almost every area will be represented at the show, from Orkney to the Borders."

Isabelle is hoping that the Edinburgh event will increase her profile with buyers from fashion retailers such as Harrods and Harvey Nichols.

"The exposure that the Festival will bring will, touch wood, put me in touch with the right people to get my clothes out there. It is a good business opportunity."

"I dream of building an empire. I want to expand my stockists, get into the big stores, and hopefully, one day, have my own shops. My dreams are big."

Isabelle's latest collection, Mademoiselle, is a wash with silk mixed with fabrics such as jersey. The pieces are tailored, but also free-flowing, in pale cream and blue hues.

Asked how her designers are inspired, she said: "My inspiration comes from the individual identity of every person. My separates can be mixed and matched, accessorised to the taste of anyone. I aim at a market of 18 to 68-year-olds; my designers are not just age or size. They are not even particularly about trends. I would say that they are timeless."

"My diverse upbringing has certainly been an influence on my clothes. They have a certain continental feel with the mixing of colours and accessories which is not an essentially British thing."

Isabelle also offers a made-to-measure service and bespoke tailoring for men.

Her designs were shown last night at the Aberdeen Art Gallery for the launch of the Robert Gordon University web portal Creative Cultures.

As well as showcasing up-and-coming Scottish designers, the festival has drawn fashion bigwig Vivienne Westwood, Matthew Williamson and Jonathan Saunders north of the border.

Isabelle says it is great Scotland is finally being recognised for its fashion input. She said: "This show really is music to my ears. Everything has been so London-based for so long it is about time Scotland had something of its own."

WHAT: Edinburgh International Fashion Festival.
WHERE: Various venues across the capital.
WHEN: Starts Wednesday, April 26 and ends Saturday, April 29.

HOW MUCH: Ticket prices vary from around £5 to 140 depending on the event.
CONTACT: Visit ediniaffest.com or call 0131 228 1155.



One of Isabelle Randall's creations