

MATERIALS TEXTILES INDUSTRY

Profile: Dashing Tweeds, London

SARAH DENNIS, WGSN 03.05.07

A trend towards responsible lifestyle choices and restoring traditional crafts has seen a resurgence of luxury brands with sustainable intentions. WGSN speaks to Guy Hills, co-founder of an innovative new company designing tweed for the 21st century.

To counteract fast fashion and the cheap reproductions that are flooding the market, a growing trend for **good quality and long-lasting pieces** has become a more appealing lifestyle choice. Leaning on **traditional crafts and fabrics**, the ultimate in timeless quality is **handcrafted, bespoke clothes** made from the **finest materials**.



Studio space in Hill's house

Kirsty McDougall and Guy Hills

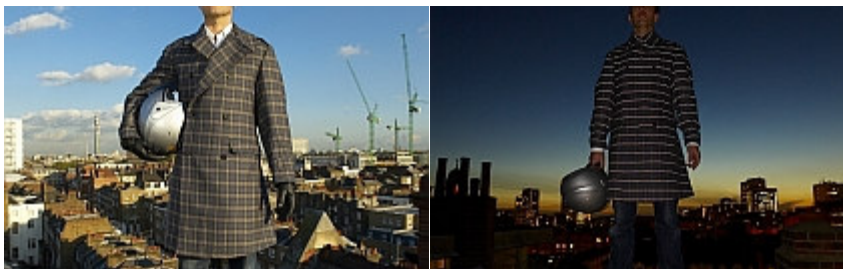
A photographer and stylist for 15 years, Guy Hills saw a gap in the luxury market for traditional fabrics and, via a collaboration with RCA-trained weaver Kirsty McDougall, has developed a range of "**classic tweeds with a twist**" under the label **Dashing Tweeds**.

Company philosophy

Restoring the elements of craft and **keeping the production of fabrics in the UK** is very important to Hills and McDougall. They source **100% wool worsted** yarns from North Yorkshire and then have the fabric woven by **Lochcarron of Scotland** - the largest manufacturer of authentic tartans.

While the UK textile industry has been struggling in recent years, Hills believes British designers are some of the most **creative and experimental** in Europe, and that companies like his will **inject new energy** into what is perceived as an old-fashioned industry.

"People can see we've got vision and they're willing to work with us", he commented, on the encouragement they have received from the mills.



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www.lochcarron.com

www.carreducker.com

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The scooter coat (day)

The scooter coat (night)

The set-up of the two designers allows them to **respond to new ideas very quickly**, and McDougall creates hand-woven samples on a loom purchased with a Crafts Council grant. Avoiding the generic fashion trends, Hills and McDougall create **thoughtful and quirky designs** that come from a "fresh urbanite" way of thinking and a less-is-more attitude.

Fabric collections

Originally designed to blend into the countryside, Dashing Tweeds' version of the iconic fabric **merges with the city environment**, with a contemporary and innovative twist developed from Hills' combined love of wearing traditional fabrics and cycling around London.



Tee total

The dandy



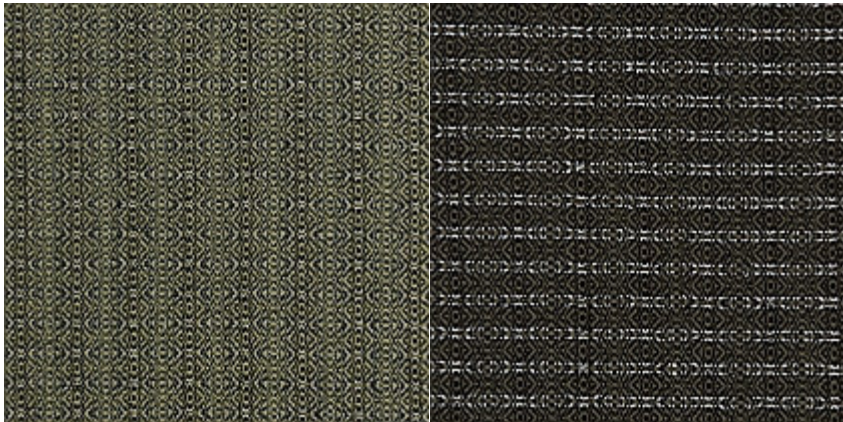
The new wave

The district

The **Urban Tweed** collection is accented with brightly coloured checks and pinstripes in shades such as **double yellow lines** and **red route**, which are actually pantone-matched from bits of chiselled-up road paint.

Sporting Tweed creates a **humorous twist** in the conventional tartan, with large-scale, colourful checks in luxury fibres. "If you wear tartan, you get funny looks," Hills explains, slightly tongue-in-cheek.

Other designs have city-inspired names such as **The Smoker**, **The District** and **Tee Total** - a haphazard combination of checks and chevrons that make you feel slightly cross-eyed.



The raver (day)

The raver (night)

While the designs draw on tradition, the **incorporation of modern technology** has enabled the fabrics to be more than just re-coloured archive swatches.

Taking the idea of creating **stylish and protective outerwear** for the cyclist or pedestrian, Hills sourced **retro-reflective tape** from 3M, which can be woven into the fabrics as a yarn. Marketed as Lumatwill, the yarn is a subtle silver colour in the day, but when illuminated at night the reflective tape shines through the fabric.

Tailoring

With the desire to help restore British heritage and craftsmanship, Hills' is also passionate about **reviving the art of the dressmaker**, and draws inspiration from bespoke tailoring of the 1920s and 30s.

Hills is the epitome of the modern-day dandy, dressed daily in breeches, waistcoat and fitted jacket. He is currently collaborating with the finest **Savile Row tailors** to create a **range of bespoke outfits** that show the potential of the fabrics.

Head cutter Russell Howarth from military tailors Kashkets has designed the **Scooter coat** based on the **household cavalry greatcoat** and using Lumatwill fabrics with Teflon coating for the ultimate in stylish attire.



Double yellow lines

Cycle suit

Red route



Dandy jacket



Sport portrait



Sporting tweed

Due to difficulty in the mass market, the tailors of Savile Row have set up an organisation called Savile Row Bespoke, which aims to **protect and develop the art of bespoke tailoring**. Hills has had an active role in the development of this organisation, taking all the photography for the website and highlighting the work of the tailors through collaboration with Dashing Tweeds.

In line with the launch of this organisation, Italian menswear show Pitti Immagine Uomo also highlighted the refined skills and British heritage of Savile Row tailors in an exhibition called The London Cut, at its January edition earlier this year.



Dashing boots by Carréducker



Tweed shoes by Crockett & Jones

Dashing Tweeds has **collaborated with smaller bespoke companies** in the footwear and accessories markets - acknowledging these lesser-known companies and **illustrating the versatility** of the fabrics.

Crockett and Jones and small bespoke company **Carréducker** have integrated the tweed into shoe designs, while **Flora McLean** has created contemporary hats complete with bright acrylic bows, that are sold in Browns.



Tweed and acrylic bow hat by Flora McLean

Hills also hopes to work with newcomer **Kate Starkey**, who has set up a **womenswear couture company** with a similar philosophy to Dashing Tweeds - working with the **traditional values of simple cuts and good**

quality fabric.

Alongside the Dashing Tweeds label, Hills and McDougall also offers a

bespoke weaving service, designing for industry or on commission.

WGSN comment

While the fabrics are fresh and innovative in their colour usage and design, it is the **entire concept of the company** - the inspiration, marketing and desire to restore traditional craftsmanship - that gives Dashing Tweeds an edge in such a saturated market.

The company's philosophy echoes **WGSN's autumn/winter 2008/09 Early Research trend Curated**, which takes **inspiration from the past** and **utilises traditional practices** in order to create beautiful, well-designed products.

"Sustainable businesses will help us to escape this addiction by offering carefully designed products and services that bring the world to us and nudge us towards responsible choices".

- Linda Stone, former Microsoft Researcher
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