

Style&Fashion

Barely known in the UK, Bodyamr is taking the international fashion world by storm. **Eman Akbar** meets the man himself

It is the year 2005, and a label called 'Bodyamr' (pronounced body armour) is taking the fashion world by storm. Hailed as 'one to watch' by Vogue, Harpers Bazaar also sang the label's praises, and Harrods completely sold out of its first collection within a week.

Three years later, I find myself standing in the middle of Tottenham Court Road, struck with panic, just seconds away from meeting Amr. This is a man who created the fashion of tomorrow, yesterday. He pioneered the collaboration of Swarovski crystals on vintage Rolling Stones t-shirts, and his delicate silk jersey jumpsuits have just recently been featured by major players in the fashion industry, such as Versace and Yves Saint Laurent. Is this an irritation or a compliment? Amr does not answer, but merely smiles.

'Where did the name Bodyamr come from?' I ask, as Amr lights a cigarette from behind a majestic wooden desk. His look is subtle and refined, encapsulated by the elegant gold Rolex he wears with an eclectic selection of bracelets. His answers exude a calm and quiet confidence, his Oman origins untraceable in his accent, the result of a life spent travelling. Amr explains modestly how working for Nicky Haslam's interior design company, NH, and Nicky's encouragement to develop his talent eventually led him into the fashion world. The name, he casually explains, was suggested by Annie Lennox while dining

with her and Nicky one evening. Bodyamr she suggested, and so Bodyamr it was.

Amr rarely mentions the various international celebrities he has dressed, emphasising instead who the Bodyamr woman is. He explains that she is not necessarily led by trend, but that she makes each trend unique to fit her own style. Above all however, the Bodyamr woman is independent and sexually confident: the kind of woman who walks into a room and makes heads turn. Amr demonstrates not only an intimate knowledge of the female form, which he accentuates through skilful cuts and delicate tailoring, but also of the female mind. This combination epitomizes the Bodyamr woman, and it is this that is his inspiration.

As the conversation turns to the topic of muses, I wait with baited breath for Amr to name a famous celebrity. It was somewhat of a humbling surprise to learn that an old family friend, Shareen, is his ongoing muse, and has been since the time not so long ago when the world of Bodyamr was created. The existence of muses in today's celebrity obsessed culture is increasingly a commercial tool wherein the muse is used to gain publicity. The innocence of inspiration, although lost by some, has been maintained by Amr. He stresses that Shareen's input of total honesty is key to his collections, providing him with continuous inspiration.

The influence of numerous cul-

Snapshots of Bodyamr's very wearable A/W '08 collection

tures on Amr's personal life has enabled him to create a truly international fan base; with his creations being sold in England, America and the Middle East. The recent Paris Fashion Week also saw orders for stock coming in from everywhere from China to Russia.

Amr was kind enough to show me two pieces Autumn/Winter '08 Bodyamr collection. They indicate a collection which he describes as "*Pretty Woman meets Blade Runner*"; wardrobe staples with a futuristic twist. The tasters leave me excited, mostly because it is so wearable. If you want to be the woman that wore the waisted belt seasons before it came into vogue, then take yourself to Harrods or Net-a-porter.com and invest, invest, invest. His success is merely a foreshadowing of what is to come. Supermodels such as Claudia Schiffer and Jodie Kidd chose Bodyamr to make statements of empowerment on the red carpet. Mercedes Benz chose Bodyamr to dress their models for advertising campaigns which accentuate the curves of their vehicles in the same way Bodyamr's dresses accentuate the female form. London Fashion Week also chose Bodyamr to front their advertising campaign. So what is there left for me to say? Only to watch this space: Bodyamr is here to stay.

His A/W '08 collection will be in stores this September. He sells exclusively in Harrods in the UK, but can also be bought on net-a-porter.com.

ONES TO WATCH

by Liam O'Brien

DESIGNER: JAMES LONG

Formerly bereft of the capacity to mix and match, Gareth Pugh fanatics have mobilised and found a new designer to complement the metagoth look. RCA menswear graduate James Long got a bit of media attention recently as his collection for Man by Topman was stolen hours after it debuted at London Fashion Week. A look at his graduate collection and his shoot with Dazed and Confused, however, show where his heart lies: leather, harnesses, S&M, exaggerated silhouettes and the notion of "approaching the body in totality."



MODEL: MIA NIARA

Discovered by Alber Elbaz, creative director at Lanvin, Mia Niara was exclusive to his fashion house for her first year in the business. Though she by no means gets the most campaigns, shows or shoots, Niara's portfolio is fantastic: she closed a Gold Label Vivienne Westwood show and modelled couture for Jean Paul Gaultier. Let's hope she can help reverse the trend of using less black models on the catwalk.



SHOP: PRIESTLY'S

Whilst a lot of it looks like it wouldn't be out of place in Oxfam's 99p bargain bin, the fun with vintage shops like this is to have a rummage and find the good stuff. A pair of snake-skin cowboy boots and a large range of cocktail and ball dresses are highlights. Old suitcases, taxidermy and worn-out shoes decorate this Grape Lane treasure, which though not perfect has a nice ambience and enthusiastic staff.



TREND: ORIENTALISM

Two of the most consistently well designed ready to wear collections are John Galliano's own label and Alexander McQueen. Both recently contained obvious oriental strains: McQueen's in the elm-patterned fabric and ornate headpieces, and John Galliano's reflected in shockingly bright feathers and houri pants. Expect tatty high street dresses and Willow Pattern ceramic jewellery to follow soon.



VENETIA RAINEY & CHARLIE KIRKBRIDE

Spring has finally arrived. Following a long, cold, dark winter which saw the loss of all body shape in a cloud of warming wool, Miss C and Miss V were finally able to step out of their front door into a more temperate climate. A climate which seemed to foster the never-acceptable but forever self-perpetuating cut-off tights and skirt combo. A climate which also, unfortunately, necessitated the use of umbrellas, raincoats and Wellington boots. But Miss C and Miss V would have not just any old umbrellas, raincoats and Wellington boots, They desired the very best pluie-proof

plastic paraphernalia, the kind that would repel rain and force it to bounce and shatter into tiny imperceptible little droplets of moisture. Power waterproof wear, if you will; the kind that fights your battles for you, and then folds back into a pretty necklace, like something out a Gareth Pugh catwalk show.

Alas, Mr. Pugh was entangled in yards of black wool and barbed wire, busy submerging himself in a particular gothic subgenre for his next show, and therefore could not be contacted. So Miss C and Miss V found themselves once again on

Shoppingate in York, conducting a search for the impossible.

The results were of notable interest. Transparency was a marked theme. Taking inspiration from the famed tale of the Emperor's clothes, the idea seemed to be that by putting on a see-through tainted pink mackintosh, you would feel as if you were wearing something water-resistant, and that this would have the same effect as if you actually were. Strangely, this proved to be correct, although clothes that are real, tangible, and perhaps even opaque, are strongly advised to be worn underneath.

The rubbery material that such items are made of, however, led to an awkward and rather grating squeaking sound being produced upon movement, and it is for this reason, unless you enjoy being proclaimed a walking condom by all and sundry, that Miss C and Miss V would advise the postponement of such a purchase indefinitely.