

# Stepping out

ASSIA BENMEDJDOUB SPEAKS TO A FORMER AND CURRENT FASHION DESIGN STUDENT FROM THE **MELBOURNE SCHOOL OF FASHION** ABOUT WHAT IT TAKES TO WIN.

**BRIDGET HALL** STILL GETS A CASE OF THE BUTTERFLIES when she enters the Melbourne School of Fashion. An undergraduate there since early 2005, the student says despite many years of training, the challenges never stop.

"Each and every day I go home having learnt something new – from altering patterns, fitting garments, exposing and cleaning screens or just sewing the last stitch. That is rewarding in itself."

As a recipient of the Student of the Year award in 2006, it's fair to say Hall is headed in the right direction. Along with her studies, she regularly volunteers for work at Australian Fashion Week, school expos and internships with mainstream designers and photographers.

When it comes to graduation time, Hall believes this portfolio of experience will help push her into the competitive workforce.

"My parents have their own business and I know the value of practical experience. Fashion is a language I'm still learning to speak but I express myself nevertheless through it with as much spirit as I can."

Eventually hoping to gain employment at a "renowned" fashion company upon graduation, Hall says she also wants to set up her own label further down the track. With "too many" options on the radar, the designer has yet to decide her specialty; whether it be couture or even childrenswear. What she's certain of is a desire to be mentored, challenged and gain professional respect.

"I can't wait to influence and inspire others to grow in confidence through fashion and find their identity. I know that everything I create will have a real handmade quality to it with a sense of history, soul and art."

In the meantime, Hall says she is looking forward to graduating with an advanced diploma of fashion at the end of 2007.

"It will be so exciting.

Although a chapter of my life will have finished, a new one will begin. Even though I can't see the entire staircase, I look forward to climbing it."



Above Bridget Hall.  
Right Jake Mason.

**FIVE YEARS** AGO, JAKE MASON WAS CONTEMPLATING his final season as a competitive junior surfer. Perched on a strip of sand along Australia's scorching west coast, the Perth born and bred boy said he was forced to make a tough choice about his future.

"I was 20-years-old and I had decided I was not good enough to make a career out of [surfing]," he reflects. "I wasn't particularly interested in fashion but I enjoyed drawing and design so fashion was another way of making a living off something I enjoyed."

Bittersweet as it was, that decision is starting to pay off. Early last year, Mason, a 2005 graduate of the Melbourne School of Fashion, strayed from the work experience path and went on to launch his own menswear label instead. Much like his tough slog in surfing, the brand, dubbed Mayson, took off in true bread-and-butter style.

"I started in Melbourne with my first range – walking the streets with a suitcase and look book. I picked up a few accounts and then went to Sydney and got a couple more then on to Perth and so on."

Along with his mushrooming base of local clients, Mason has also recently secured a further 12 accounts in the UK market. Spurred by this success, the young designer is now planning to venture into womenswear for spring/summer 2007/08. While the range is still in its early stages, Mason describes his initial experiences as "very rewarding".

"I wasn't sure how I would go with womenswear but it's coming out really good."

In the meantime, the Melbourne-based designer is also busy pushing his winter menswear collection through local and international boutiques. Available from mid-March, the rock-inspired range features skinny jeans and pants, boxy jackets and long knits.

The key to both his design and business philosophy is simple, he says.

"If you're going it on your own without prior experience, be a sponge – a lot of people can be really helpful in the industry, others won't be. Listen to the ones that are helpful and milk them for advice. Don't let the wet blankets get you down."



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