

The INDIE TAKEOVER

WE CHAT TO THE INDEPENDENT PATTERN DESIGNERS WHO ARE
TAKING THE DRESSMAKING WORLD BY STORM

For many years, dressmakers have seemingly been restricted to garment designs produced by a few big name, overseas pattern houses, also known as the 'big four'. However, a growing number of British stitchers are setting up their own labels to offer a new wave of unique, accessible and contemporary patterns. We speak to the women who are changing the face of modern dressmaking to find out what it means to buy 'indie'.



By Hand London



By Hand London is a trendy label set up by three friends from the capital. We caught up with Victoria Elliot to find out why they love sewing in the city.

"Charlotte and Elisalex went to school together, and although they never moved in the same circles, it later transpired that they both hoarded secret style crushes for each other! Then in August 2012, Charlotte caught up with Elisalex to pick her brain regarding a 'harebrained scheme' of hers and they very excitedly decided that they wanted to go into business together. I came along about six months later, starting out as an intern working with the girls, and a few months down the road they asked me to join them, so it's been the three of us ever since!

"In terms of inspiration, it's really a bit of a free for all as we all have wildly different tastes and figures. We look a lot at vintage, but also at what's in fashion magazines, high street shops and in our own wardrobes. We don't really design for a certain demographic, we simply aim to create something that is as universally flattering as possible and that makes women feel good about themselves in a world where we're constantly reminded of our flaws and imperfections.

"Despite all having very different backgrounds, London has brought us all together and it's where we all call home! As far as style is concerned, it



really does have it all, the sheer size and mix of the city's people just makes it endlessly inspirational. However, there's no denying it can be a tricky place for a start-up, so we like to give ourselves extra high fives for still being around whenever we have a nervous moment.

"We like to keep a constant open dialogue with the sewing community and welcome feedback, negative or positive, and luckily our customers are very vocal! Some bloggers have even become pattern testers for us and we also have our sewalongs to accompany each pattern which Elisalex writes as she loves to get stuck into the in-depth sewing technique geekery!

"Generally speaking, I think indie designers have been championed for providing more up-to-date and relevant designs, thoughtful packaging, clearer instructions and better customer service. However, the 'big four' have an unbeatable library of affordable designs that span over 100 years of the sewing pattern industry. I think from the point of view of the home sewist, the more the merrier!"

Visit www.byhandlondon.com

Victoria's key advice

"Don't do it alone - working with other people you trust are aiming towards the same goal means you always have someone to tell you when you totally nailed it or you're being a bit ridiculous."