

CLANDAR CLASSICS

Emma Clegg talks to Rianna Pritchard, managing director of Clandar, and discovers the finest quality British tweed, wool and cashmere crafted into classic clothing and accessories that will become wardrobe stalwarts

A career move from law to fashion is quite a gear change. As a law student Rianna Pritchard had imagined a life along the lines of *LA Law*, but found the working week of a lawyer lacking in glamour, intrigue and drama.

“I joined a large, international, corporate law firm after graduating from university and law school and naively thought it was going to be like *LA Law* or *Ally McBeal*”, says Rianna. “But of course it’s not and in reality most of the time is spent drafting letters, documents, agreements. It wasn’t for me and I needed a career where I could be creative and able to build something.”

Rianna opened her shop, Clandar, in Cheap Street in 2012. This is a niche fashion house offering the finest British tweed, British wool and British cashmere. The shop designs and tailors all its own tweed ranges, a style that majors on classic British design with a contemporary, flattering twist. Think the polar opposite of mass-manufactured clothes and you have caught the spirit of the operation. “Being an independent, we can’t afford to make 500 of each item,” explains Rianna, “so we’ll make between 30 and 50, but focus on making them to the best of our ability, using the best fabrics and techniques at every stage. The advantage is that it allows our customers to acquire pieces that are exclusive and made in small batches – which makes them extra special.”

The challenge of starting a new business wasn’t an alien concept to Rianna who has been fascinated by business from an early age: “I had grown up in a family business – initially an off-licence and then hotels – and we were always discussing business, which I found exciting and my father took me along to business meetings from a very young age, as he was keen for me to learn. So doing business just seemed a very natural thing, and combining it with creating our own designs and working with wonderful historic British mills and gorgeous fabrics is just a dream come true.”

As well as leading the business side of things, Rianna designs all the tweed ranges. “I’ve had a lifelong interest in how different cuts and styles work on the body and also colour and pattern. The cut is of paramount importance and is always the starting point.” She loves to use cuts that flatter and skim the body to enhance the figure: “I want to create pieces that don’t just look good on tall, thin, size 8 models, but look great on ‘real’ people, whether they are a size 8 or 16 and whether they are short, tall, have wide hips

or a tummy. It’s the same with the Clandar menswear where the slim cuts look sharp on gentlemen with a smaller 36-inch chest, but streamlined and flattering on gentlemen with a larger 48-inch chest.”

Clandar takes considerable pride in its use of fabric from British mills, and there’s good reason for doing this, Rianna explains: “British mills produce a superior quality of fabric. It comes down to the techniques they use and also the quality of the fibre. Many of the mills we work with were founded over 200 years ago and their techniques and skills have been passed down through the generations. They still employ long, complicated processes that focus on producing the finest finish possible. For example, some British cashmere mills wash their cashmere in spring water and even roll the dried seed heads of a certain flower over the fibres to carefully fluff them up. British cashmere mills also use the highest quality cashmere fibre, combed from the underbelly of the cashmere goat where the longest, softest and finest fibre is found. Only around 5% of the world’s cashmere is of this quality.” So it’s the long, skilled processes and the use of high quality fibres that make British made fabrics so special and desirable.

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Clandar’s 100% wool scarves are made from merino wool, one of the finest sheep’s wools in the world. It’s also lambswool, which is even softer.

I asked Rianna to explain the process that a new design goes through: “With the latest production of our classic ladies Harris tweed coat, I wanted the collar to be fuller and more voluptuous and wanted a very particular cuff, so I sent sketches to our pattern maker and they turned those ideas into workable patterns.”

“With our last House tweed, I sent the British tweed mill sketches of the check pattern I wanted along with the colour profile and then visited the mill to go through the hundreds of coloured yarns they had to make our selection.



“I wanted a deep, sumptuous navy blue background, but they didn’t have one woven, so it was decided we’d weave navy along the warp and charcoal along the weft, to get the depth of colour. Then for the over check I wanted a very particular shade of duck egg blue, so they set about spinning various shades of blue together to create a new yarn that was just the right tone and shade. It’s a wonderful and very exciting process.”

How much do current fashion trends affect the Clandar designs? “I regularly visit the high street to see what is current, but as our items are investment pieces they must look wonderful now and also in years to come. So, I ignore fads and passing trends and focus on what is simply pleasing to the eye.”

Even once a design is in production, it can take up to eight months to do one production run. “If we are using one of our house tweeds, we first of all have to get the tweed woven, which means placing the order around six months before we need it. Then we have to order in the lining, order in the buttons, have our Clandar woven labels made and book in a production slot with our tailors.”

If you need a versatile, timeless classic to enhance your wardrobe then head towards Clandar. ■

Clandar, 15 Cheap Street, Bath; clandar.co.uk



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT AND RIGHT: Merino lambswool scarves; house tweed jacket in navy/charcoal with house tweed jackets in brown hanging on the rail; Clandar classic ladies’ coat in Harris tweed; tweed ties; and house tweed jacket in navy/charcoal



Interior images by TBM; product photography by Clandar