

A passion for fashion

From big-hitters to small independents, they're all there in a stunning celebration of the best of contemporary style, says **Alice Wyllie**

THE world of fashion is a busy place and it's growing ever more crowded.

An increasing number of educational institutions are offering an increasing number of fashion-related courses, and even couture is moving into the mainstream, with major newspapers devoting more of their pages to covering fashion weeks.

No longer the preserve of heiresses and socialites, fashion publications such as *Vogue*, *Elle* and *Harper's Bazaar* are pulling in a wider audience, thanks in part to the use of pop culture icons such as Cheryl Cole and Victoria Beckham on their covers. The demand for fashion is so high that in the past few years weekly glossy fashion magazines have been launched in order to sate our appetites.

Quite simply, the fashion world is saturated, and the number of working designers continues to grow. So how exactly do you edit the thousands of designers working today down to an exclusive list of an elite 100, while still managing to include everyone from Parisian couturiers to edgy London designers living on baked beans?

It was a challenge that Terry Jones, the founder and creative director of *i-D* magazine, relished when he came to edit a new fashion tome from **Taschen** entitled *100 Contemporary Fashion Designers*. For the two-volume compilation he picked out highlights from Taschen's *Fashion Now!* series to create the ultimate guide to the best fashion designers working across the globe today.

"This was a very tough one to work on and we were switching names up until the very last minute," he says. "The main criteria for us was to get a real cross-section of designers. We wanted to include younger designers and we were also keen to include people whom we felt would have longevity, who would be around for a while. Of course, there are some designers in

there that I wear regularly – Yohji Yamamoto and Commes des Garçons – but from a creative point of view there were just so many to choose from."

Featuring the very best of fashion photography – from the beautiful to the quirky and even the downright odd – the book showcases the work of designers, photographers and stylists, all working hand in hand to create beautiful images. Following an A (Haider Ackermann) to Z (Italo Zucchelli) format, its success lies in the selection of designers, which range from fashion's big-hitters to smaller independent labels.

Alexander
McQueen



There are the ones you will have heard of, the ones that might ring a bell and the ones you should be watching in the future. Big cheeses Karl Lagerfeld and Alber Elbaz sit alongside smaller designers, including Scots Christopher Kane and Jonathan Saunders.

It may be a fashion bible that would buckle many a coffee table, but one of the book's most attractive selling points is its price: just £34.99 for two hefty hardback volumes that come in a hardcover slipcase. This was an important factor for Jones, who wanted it to appeal to everyone from the impoverished fashion student to a person with just a passing curiosity about fashion.

"I find the book very accessible; I love that people who don't know about fashion can be interested in it," he says. "The price is amazing, and perfect at the moment of course. You can't escape the recession and fashion is always very much a mirror of our time. It feeds our fantasies and it's interesting to see how designers respond to that.

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● *100 Contemporary Fashion Designers* is published by Taschen, priced £34.99 and is available now.