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ISSUE 49 DEC 2011

26 AMAZING
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MAKES

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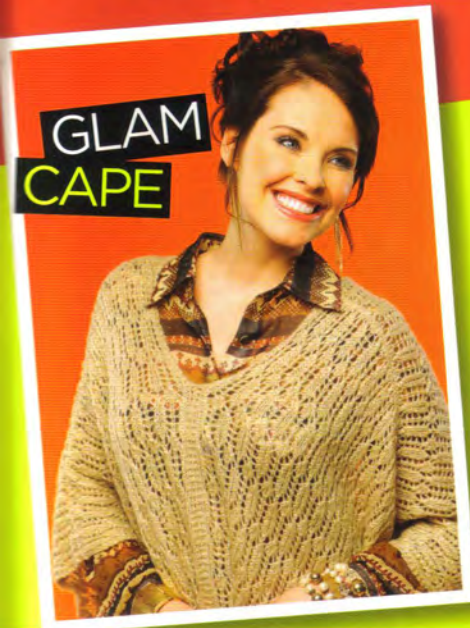
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Unravelled... Jo Storie

Designer **Jo Storie** talks about her fashion background and new collection of knitting patterns

The lure of the fashion industry caught me at college.

I studied textile design and could have been a woven textile designer but chose to specialise in knitting which is more appropriate for fashion and seemed more glamorous. I have worked for a number of high profile luxury knitwear brands in both London and New York and in 2004 I decided to move back home to Scotland and set up on my own. It was something I'd always wanted to do. Every designer has a hankering to see their own label in the back of a sweater.



I used to say my designs were 'classics with a twist' but now I think they're more fashion forward.

I like to describe them as 'catwalk quality knitwear for the handknitting industry.' The design process has been drummed into me and I approach my knitting patterns in the same way as I would if doing a full collection for a client. I start with yarn shows like Pitti Filati in Italy and keep a sketchbook. I also do concept boards and a lot of swatching. I really enjoy that part and like experimenting with different textures and yarn weights. I use a lot of chunky yarns as I like to see the results quickly. I have a love of interesting stitches but also like to play around with silhouettes. In the fashion industry, the design is mainly focused on the silhouette and shapes that can be created. This is because you are more restricted in terms of the stitches available to use.

There's a lot more freedom when working on your own collection.

I used to be given really tight design briefs. Even if I had a couple of hundred pieces to design they would each have a particular role to fulfil within a shop floor or marketing plan. It can be really off-putting to have such strict guidelines, but when you're doing it for yourself it's all about what you like, what

you're passionate about and what excites you.

I mainly use natural fibres and those that are ecological.

I use a lot of British yarn, usually pure wool, and at the moment I'm really drawn to alpaca. The choice of fibre depends on what I'm trying to achieve - if I want a clean, sharp look then I'll go for a wool with a certain twist or if I want something fuzzy I'll go for mohair. Sometimes I'll choose an organic cotton but it's always natural.

I find womenswear is the easiest to design but lately I've been doing a lot of accessories.

I like to think of the end knitter and whether they can achieve the design fairly quickly and if it's affordable. My family has lots of knitted clothes and they've all put in requests which must be a good thing! For myself I tend to make a lot of big coats and cardigans and quite extreme pieces because they are the hardest thing to afford to buy in the stores yourself.

There has been such a great response to my first collection of knitting patterns.

I'm now putting together some more designs and hopefully will be doing a book. We're going to do a mini production run of my Cove hat pattern (top) which has turned out to be one of the most popular designs. I'm excited to see how that takes off. The next step is to attend some of the key shows and raise my profile. It's all very new and there's so much to do but I'm really enjoying it.

To see Jo's full knitting pattern collection visit www.jostorie.com or find her on Facebook at www.facebook.com/jostoriehandknits and Twitter @jostorieknits



Getting to know you...

Describe yourself in three words:

Curious, creative and crafty

Favourite place in the world?

Florence

Favourite colour?

It has always been green



When you were a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?

A policewoman

The first thing you ever knitted?

A double knit cotton string bikini!

Desert Island Yarns:

Rowan's new Alpaca Chunky, Amy Butler's Belle Organic Aran cotton/wool blend and pure British wool



TOP TIP

Take calculated risks, don't sweat the small stuff and learn from your mistakes.