

Surface-treated cotton trench coat, 1610 euros. Knitted cotton sweater with zip and leather details, 567 euros. Cotton poplin shirt, 298 euros. Checked wool tie, 191 euros. Wool tweed trousers, 511 euros. Brown and black leather laced boots, price on request. Umbrella and bowler hat, price on request.



JEAN-PAUL GAULTIER

# WHO DARES WINS

He's famous for his provocative fashion but also for his perfect tailoring. In an exclusive interview with DV Man, Jean-Paul Gaultier talks about his accomplishments – and fashion in an increasingly commercialised age.

BY CAMILLA ALFTHAN FASHION: ROBERT NORDBERG PHOTO: OLEG COVIAN/OLEGCOVIAN.COM, BULLS



**L**OVE THE CREATIVE side of the job. For me it's not work. I'm always designing when I'm at home or on a trip. Here at work I only have time for interviews, clothes samples and other practical things, says Jean-Paul Gaultier with a crooked smile as he sits in the low black sofa in his magnificent headquarters on rue Saint-Martin in Paris.

The walls are white and the furniture is draped with fabric, making it look like the work by installation artist Christo. Tailor's dummies are dotted around, dressed in delicate couture dresses inspired by *The Little Mermaid*. A line of androgynous suits hangs along a wall. Nobody can make a jacket with finely fashioned shoulders like Jean-Paul Gaultier. His first male customers bought jackets from his women's collection.

– Even though the fabrics were masculine they had a twist or something that was a little different that the guys liked. That was one of the reasons why I started making men's clothes, he says.

Gaultier's autumn collection is inspired by his close friend, singer Fred Chichin, who died after a protracted illness. He was one half of legendary French pop duo Rita Mitsouko and a Parisian style icon and dandy. The collection is an example of how Gaultier takes classic components and gives them a modern feel with elements of streetwear and pop culture, all worked together in a nonchalant style. The suit trousers are stuffed into brown boots and the camel wool coats have

black leather details. Dark jackets are matched with a white and navy sailor sweater, Gaultier's signature garment. Head scarves are combined with bowler hats and black leather jackets with light, shaved mink.

– For the women's fashion I have always shown a masculine side, for the men's fashion a feminine side. It's my style, if I have one, the mixture of masculine and feminine. For me that is always important, it's the starting point. The difference is that for the women's fashion I have much more material and many more possibilities.

**YOU CAN TELL THAT** Gaultier cares about this. He talks quickly and enthusiastically about how he works with the differences and similarities between the sexes.

– A masculine woman can be very sexy and for women it was about liberating themselves. I have always made men a little more sensitive.

Most people know that he has been called the "enfant terrible of fashion". Over the years he has enraged colleagues and caused a commotion with erotic and unconventional references and models, which have included dwarves and cattle. In 1993, a few years after the terrorist bombings in the Jewish Marais district of Paris, he shocked the fashion press with coats and hairstyles inspired by Hasidic



Jews who wear black clothes with long ringlet sideburns. This was provocative because fashion and models usually stay within fairly conventional boundaries. The clothes were inspired by the beauty of the people's self confidence, Gaultier explained. In recent years American animal rights organisation PETA has demonstrated against the Frenchman because of his regular use of fur.

One reason for his troublesome relation- →



Tailored fine wool coat with leather details, 1 785 euros.  
**Leather trousers** with lacing and knitted details, 3 340 euros.  
**Cotton poplin shirt**, 298 euros.  
Pinstriped wool waistcoat, 515 euros. Patterned silk tie, 243 euros. Patent leather sneaker-style shoes, bowler hat and umbrella, price on request.

Left: Cotton/silk trench coat, 1 725 euros. Fine-knit wool sweater, 239 euros.





## JEAN-PAUL GAULTIER

**BORN:** 24 April 1952 in Arcueil outside Paris, raised in a close-knit middle class family.

**CAREER:** Started out as assistant to Pierre Cardin in 1970 and later Jacques Esterel and Jean Patou. Launched his first collection in 1976 and presented his first men's clothes in 1978.

**OTHER QUALIFICATIONS:** In 1989 he recorded the album *Aou Tou Dou Zat* with Tony Mansfield and a few years later he presented cult TV show *Eurotrash*. Had a part in sitcom *Absolutely Fabulous* in 2001.

**CHARACTERISTICS:** Perfectly cut suits. The skirt for men, which he launched in 1988. Stripy sailor sweater from Breton.

or a magnificent tie and a hat that looked Chechnyan. My style always moved between different strong personalities and it was also a little oriental, says Gaultier.

He made his debut during a period when fashion and women's perception of men was changing.

– It was a fun time. It was around this time, in the late 1970s, that men started to be seen as sex objects. Men were no longer afraid to show that they were attractive and women started to say that they liked a beautiful man.

Gaultier has often been told that he creates fashion for homosexuals, but he strongly denies this. It was the heterosexuals who first started showing their feminine sides.

–The Italian man, for example, has always been very careful about his appearance. He is raised that way. Not at all like in France, where it was considered suspicious if a man bought his own clothes. They always had to be bought by his mother, his girlfriend or wife.

Strong women have always played a decisive part in Gaultier's fashion, as has equality between women and men. As a young clothes designer it bothered him to see women presented as cute little princesses.

– I thought that it was unfair, a scandal, because they weren't the kind of women that I saw in my everyday life. I have known girls who were like boys and who played football. I thought that they were more interesting and had had a better, freer upbringing.

In 1989 Gaultier brought out a skirt for men and a few years later he introduced the first line of makeup for men.

– I have always said that there are no restaurants for only men or women, or for different religions. People mix, and it has to be the same way in fashion too. I was born in an age →

ship with the fashion world (there are several) is that Jean-Paul Gaultier doesn't have any classic training. He has almost always done things his own way. He started sketching clothes when he was a child, often quite experimental ensembles, although most of his inspiration came from traditional fashion magazines and his elegant mother and grandmother.

**WHEN GAULTIER WAS 17** he sent a few sketches to legendary fashion designer Pierre Cardin, who took him on as an assistant and taught him the basics of fashion design. Over the next few years he worked for Jacques Esterel, who influenced his personal style, and Jean Patou, who took him to the Shah of Iran to show him clothes and furs. He founded his own fashion house in 1976 and showed his first men's collection two years later.

– In those days fashion was almost exclusively about women. Men had left strict suits

“ It was around this time, in the late 1970s, that men started to be seen as sex objects.

behind and mostly wore leisurewear. Older men wearing jeans and a sporty sweater... I thought it was scary. I thought that they needed a good suit, so I started with the classic wardrobe basics: waistcoat, shirt, jacket. But I changed the proportions. That was the whole point.

– I wasn't afraid to show refined materials



Reversible coat, leather and astrakhan, price on request. Fine-knit v-neck sweater with hood, 287 euros. Surface-treated cotton cargo pants, 667 euros. Aged leather boots, price on request.



Aged leather and fur coat, price on request. Patterned silk shirt, 540 euros. Stripy wool tie, price on request. Stripy wool trousers, 403 euros.

Right: Fur-lined leather jacket with fox-fur sleeves, price on request. Stripy wool trousers, 479 euros. Fine-knit wool polo neck, 397 euros. Lace-up treated leather boots, price on request.

## SCOTT BARNHILL

When you shoot Gaultier clothes, Scott Barnhill is the go-to model. At least if Monsieur Gaultier has anything to say about it. He's used the American for seven campaigns. Scott is from Chicago, has a skateboarding background and has also worked with Versace, Yves St. Laurent and Dolce & Gabbana.



Wool/cashmere Spencer jacket with leather details, 1360 euros. Cotton shirt with button-down collar, 297 euros. Fine wool v-neck sweater with hood, 371 euros. Narrow wool tie, price on request. Narrow cotton/elastan velvet trousers, 414 euros. Bowler hat, price on request.



when the transformation of men began. They started using aftershave, which was really perfume. But then they didn't use the word perfume: that would be too feminine. Beards are virile.

I remember a young man in an advert for the Eminence fragrance, I think. He was only wearing underwear, which caused a scandal. The picture looked like a Greek statue and people wondered if he was gay. Showing a man undressed, and as an object, was something new.

**A LOT HAS CHANGED** since Jean-Paul Gaultier launched his own label 32 years ago. As a young man he could only dream of having his own fashion house and selling clothes all over the world. But that is what has happened. Today the Gaultier empire covers all the various aspects of fashion. Women's clothes, men's clothes, haute couture, perfumes and the more youthful JPG line. In 1999 Hermes invested 15 million dollars in the fashion house and offered Gaultier 35 percent of all royalties plus the rights to all new designs.

Since 2003 he works one day a week as head designer for Hermès. This isn't entirely unproblematic, he says. Globalisation and tougher competition mean that fashion houses today need to invest huge amounts in order to be able to expand. And in the clash with the money people, the financiers, there is a palpable risk that designers lose control of their houses and are forced to leave. This has been the fate of fashion designers like Hubert de Givenchy, Jean-Louis Scherrer and most recently Valentino, while 1980s star Thierry Mugler only remains as the name of a perfume.

So as a designer it is important to keep your integrity.

– When I was with Jean Patou in 1972, for a short period the company didn't have an art director, and worked with a licence manager instead. One day he showed me a skirt from Celine, a very ordinary model, and told me: "This sells – you must make the same thing." I was super-shocked and wondered why he was interfering with my job.

– You should never listen to that kind of

“ Since I was 15 I have looked at magazines and dreamed of doing what the couturiers did. I never wanted to be famous.

person. I never have done. I would rather change job and make theatre costumes or do something completely different.

But he didn't have to. Today Jean-Paul Gaultier is one of the last big-name designers still active under his own name. He is also one of the few to learn the profession straight from the legendary fashion designers.

His interest in the craftsmanship and haute couture led him to invest in his own couture studio in 1996. At the time other fashion houses closed their haute couture departments because they were considered too expensive. Gaultier's move was a bold one but it was a great success and afforded him renewed respect.

**THE QUESTION IS** whether it would be possible to create a new international fashion house with a young new designer today. Today fashion is about keeping the well-known international brands going. Once the founders are out of the picture the houses keep going, staffed by a growing army of young designers who have a completely different attitude than the old fashion designers had.

–In the old days when I needed an assistant the people who applied for the job wanted to be like fashion's big names. They wanted to make clothes in the same way and learn the craft. Now they have completely different goals. Now they want to become famous first and foremost.

– Maybe it's because of the fashion schools, I don't know. I am 56 now. Since I was 15 I have looked through magazines and dreamed of doing what the couturiers did. I never wanted to be famous. Now it seems to be the other way round. □

PHOTO ASSISTANT: **XAVIER PRUVOT**

MODEL: **SCOTT B/NEW MADISON**

GROOMING: **MILY SEREBRENK/MOD'S HAIR AGENCY**