

IF YOU CAN DREAM IT

by Silvia Bombardini



"I like to think I was prepared, but in all honesty it was really overwhelming," says London designer Bobby Abley. "I kinda came out of nowhere and to all of a sudden have all this praise from the industry is a lot to handle. I knew it was going to be tough and amazing at the same time. I was fortunate enough for the opportunity so I ran with it. I thought 'Okay, I'm gonna land a fucking spaceship in the middle of all this.'" There are ways to handle the lofty expectations of the fashion world, and then there's the Bobby Abley way: Attuned as it is to all there is that sparkles, catching the attention of the London scene might be tricky at best. However, landing your own tinfoil spaceship in a Georgian townhouse just around the corner from Buckingham Palace would seem like a proven way to go about it: just ask Bobby Abley and his army of Charming Princes. Under the wing of Lulu Kennedy, Abley made his debut at Fashion East's Menswear Installation for FW '13 with outfits inspired by early sci-fi and a glittering nostalgia for the cosmos. Bobby's astronauts surveyed the scene politely perplexed, their hair covered in stardust, their jumpers embroidered with the solar system, and trousers cut short at the ankle in a witty Star Trek nod. "The spaceship was really important, not only to complement the collection but to not so quietly say, 'I've landed and this is what my menswear looks like,'" says Abley. "Imagine an old black and white space movie with The Jetsons flying through it in full color." Cartoons and magic kingdoms in fact, if arguably unacquainted as yet with a grown man wardrobe, are instead a constant presence in the life and work of Bobby Abley, whose graduate collection featured a classic shirt printed all over with a picture of himself yawning — a garment that perfectly encapsulated the general breakthrough attitude of London's menswear renaissance. "London is a city that is constantly changing," he says. "If you compare it to Paris and Milan, it looks like a place from the future." "We are more open to the new," he adds. "I think London designers are great at mixing classic with youthful effortlessly. That's the way forward." And Abley is well on his way. After a capsule womenswear collection for Lulu & Co, his proposal for spring is a medieval parade of valiant knights dusted in pink. When I ask for a clue of what he's currently working on, he answers hermetically "erm... R.I.P". Now we'll just have to wait and see what that means. As Walt Disney said, "If you can dream it, you can do it." Bobby Abley certainly can.

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