

Alexander McQueen

Sorry, I love you



photo by David La Chapelle, 1996, The National Portrait Gallery, London

An exposé by Elena Kupriakhina and Michael Kliehm

Alexander McQueen

Sorry, I love you

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Alexander McQueen- Sorry, I love you

Introduction

Born as the 6th kid to a cab driver, but became **Creative Director of Givenchy**, Paris.

Raised in London's working class East End and went to a state school, but died in a £ 7,25 million villa in London's Mayfair embassy district and his memorial service was attended by Kate Moss, Naomi Campbell, Sarah Jessica Parker, Daphne Guinness, Anna Winthur, Stella McCartney, Bjork and Lady Gaga.

Abused by his uncle, honored **by the Queen** as a Commander of the Empire and four times as British Designer of the Year.

Hooligan and anarchist, but apprentice at **Prince Charles' tailor** and perfectionist.

Said to hate women, but loved his mum and created dresses for untouchable alpha-females from another galaxy.

Lonely and individualistic, but charismatic team leader with a contagious laughter.

A life full of contradictions, made possible by the fashion industry. And in the end, killed by it. The stuff for a movie.

"Please look after my dogs. Sorry, I love you. Lee. P.S. Bury me in the church."
Alexander McQueen's suicide letter

Alexander McQueen- Sorry, I love you

A life full of contradictions

Fashion documentary

The documentary explores the contradictions in Alexander McQueen's life - by interviewing celebrities like **Tilda Swinton**, **Bjork** and **Kate Moss** during the London Fashion Week as well as neighbours of the McQueen holiday cottage on Skye with puffy red cheeks and rubber boots.

By filming on locations like his working class home next to a tower block, his state primary school in South London, the run-down St Martin's College, the barracks and industrial sites of his 1st fashion shows and in comparison, his mansion in Mayfair, the **Hilles Castle** of his muse Isabella Blow and **Givenchy in Paris**.

All of this accompanied and interrupted by numerous archive clips from his fashion shows with pounding house and electronic beats and **breathtaking visuals**.



"Fashion's greatest performance artist"- Marie Claire magazine

The movie

"Fashion's a scary industry to be in, especially if you've not grown up with it" *Alexander McQueen*

Alexander McQueen was a master of ceremony, during his time at Givenchy, he did up to 14 shows for the Paris label and his own brand in a single year. We take archive material from these shows as the continuous thread.

"London was so boring then. But with McQueen you were part of something new, something very exciting. Here was this guy who not only showed clothes but put emotion onto the catwalk, whose own soul had been shaken by life and who knew how to shake people up because of that. The models wore black contact lenses and the way they walked, the tartan, the military influences. It was like, oh my god, really? A fashion show can be this way?" - *Sebastian Pons*

In intermittent interviews, we present the backers and the team behind the shows: his muse Isabella Blow (died to her own hand after drinking weedkiller, but still very much alive in the memories of her husband, the extrovert and very British art dealer Detmar Blow), the fashion designer Sarah Burton (who designed Kate Middleton's wedding dress and is now creative director of the brand Alexander McQueen), the stylist Katy England (McQueen's right hand and creative

mind behind most of his shows), the jewellery designer Shaun Leane or the makeup artists Val Garland and Peter Philips (honored in the 2015 exhibition "Warpaint: Alexander McQueen" at London's Fashion Space Gallery).



The Widows of Culloden,
Autumn/Winter 2006

All of these unique creative personalities would be worth exploring on their own, but we use them for close insights into the life of Alexander McQueen and the fashion industry.

"It's good to know where you come from. It makes you what you are today. It's DNA, it's in your blood." - *Alexander McQueen*

There was this other side of Alexander McQueen, something very common to creative minds and to people all over the world: the tornness, two minds sharing a single body.

Born into poverty and abused as a child, McQueen couldn't cope well with his newfound wealth, the public attention, the pressure, false friends. Nonetheless he tried to excel each of his previous creations with every new show. McQueen dealt with this by more abuse, consuming huge amounts of alcohol, cocaine and sex, leading in the end to AIDS and suicide.

Lee was always looking to be loved. When someone told him backstage that his current show wasn't the greatest so far, he fell into tears. He got his mum and sister front row seats for every show and even while his models sometimes looked like rape victims and brought him a lot of feminist bad press, his stance was different:

"I want to empower women. I want people to be afraid of the women I dress." - *Alexander McQueen*

"The McQueen woman doesn't want to feel casual. It's not that kind of world. When you put on the clothes, they make you stand differently, feel differently. It was about how to do that but make it feel light." - *Sarah Burton*



Bumsters, 1996
Styling by Katy England

So we also look into his origins, where he was brought up, to understand why he put so much effort into escaping this suburb world of cab drivers and carpenters. We compare these to his new world that included Bjork, David Bowie, Kate Moss and Daphne Guinness, and we travel to his escape hatches near Hastings and on Skye. In short: a multi-facetted view of a short, but very bright life.



Autumn/Winter 1998
Styling by Katy England

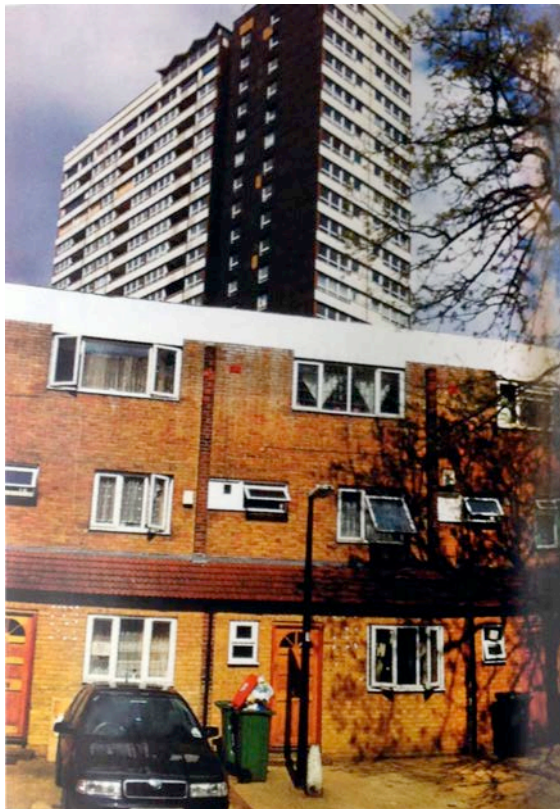
So why would a Russian audience spending big amounts on fashion and beauty be interested in watching a documentary about Alexander McQueen?

It's about educating people, says McQueen:

"If people are going to invest in fashion now... then they need to know it's worth it. They're not going to want to buy a cashmere coat they can wear any season, they are looking for something more individual than that, and from a more individual designer. Fashion is about fantasy as well as being commercial. We don't all want to dress like soldiers in the same uniform. There is a viewpoint that people should play safe because they can't afford to frighten their customer but, in fact, the opposite is true. You have to push forward and realise the power of fantasy and escapism." - *Alexander McQueen*

A life torn between the extremes

Born on March 17th 1969 as the 6th child to the Scottish cab driver Ronald and the social science teacher Joyce, Alexander McQueen grew up in Stratford in East London. At 16, he left Rockeby Comprehensive school with an O-level in art and became an apprentice at Savile Row tailor Anderson & Sheppard.



11 Biggerstaff Rd in Stratford, where McQueen grew up.

"Where I come from, a woman met a man, had babies, moved to Dagenham, two up two down, made the dinner, went to bed. That was my image of women and I didn't want that. I wanted

to get that out of my head." - Alexander McQueen

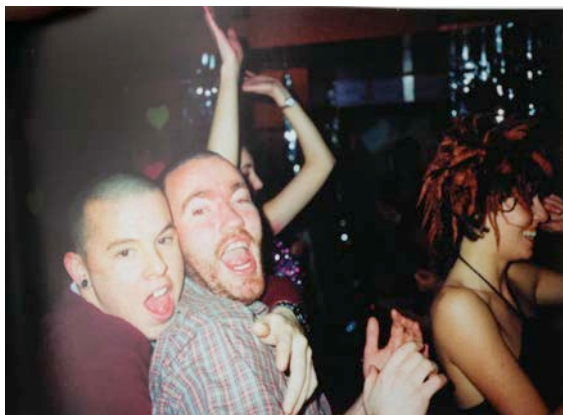
After a stint at Gieves & Hawkes, he worked for theatre costumier Angels & Bermans before becoming a pattern-cutter at Romeo Gigli in Milan. When returning to London, aged 21, he applied for a job teaching pattern-cutting at Central Saint Martins. Instead, he was offered a place on the school's prestigious MA course.

On graduation, his first collection was bought in its entirety by the legendary fashion editor Isabella Blow, who would go on to become his friend and mentor.



Alexander McQueen & Isabella Blow

Blow convinced him to change his name from Lee to Alexander and after Icelandic singer Bjork wore an early design for the cover of her album Homogenic, the Alexander McQueen was label born.



McQueen with boyfriend Andrew Groves

In 1996 LVMH chose McQueen to succeed John Galliano as head designer at Givenchy. He caused a stir at the fashion label and was forced to tone down his act after telling Vogue that his first couture collection was 'crap' and dismissing Hubert Givenchy as 'irrelevant'

McQueen eventually parted ways with Givenchy in 2001, when he claimed his contract with the French label was 'constraining his creativity.'

Under his own label, and with the help of the Gucci group, which acquired a 51 per cent stake in the business, he built a fashion empire, with stores in cities

across the world, including London, New York, Los Angeles, Milan and Las Vegas.

Designs such as his skull-print scarf and the Novak bag were widely imitated, and celebrities from Kate Moss, Sarah Jessica Parker and Victoria Beckham to Rihanna and Lady GaGa can be counted among his biggest fans.

“Some designers are so airy-fairy people can’t connect with them. I hope people can relate to me, to a normal person who just happens to be a fashion designer, that people can take me as they find me. It’s not the designer’s job to care about what people think.

Whatever else I’ve done, I’ve never tried to be something that I’m not.” -

Alexander McQueen



Lee with his dog Minter