

■ STAR LIFE

Reynold Pearce and Andrew Fionda

*Designers who
are putting
the buzz back
into British
fashion.*

*Photograph by
Richard Croft*



THE CLOTHES SHOW recently showed a clip of two young men looking dazed but elated as they faced the camera. They were Reynold Pearce and Andrew Fionda. Days before, they had been hard-working but unheralded designers, hawking away at their first collection. And then came London Fashion Week. As Pearce Fionda's designs — black and white, glamorous and evocative of the Forties — were walked down the catwalk, press and buyers sat up and recognized sharp new talent of the sort destined to put the buzz back into British fashion. The clothes were witty, wearable and well made. "They're so well trained," said Dawn Mello, president of New York's Bergdorf Goodman. "We come to London for great technology as well as innovative design." She went on to thank Pearce Fionda in New York, while Neiman Marcus has it in Beverly Hills and J. P. Morgan in Hong Kong. Liberty has it here, Harvey Nichols is interested and Harrod's wanted the accessories — more only to discuss the show. "I think people were quite impressed," says Fionda, 26, with charming understatement. Mello was right about the training. There is nothing such about

these boys, who blanch just thinking about people who embark on businesses both out of college. They met while doing fashion at Town Polytechnic. (Asked about their backgrounds, Pearce says his mother is a designer, while Fionda groans and says, "I come from Middlesbrough, I mean, we're talking steel-works.") They were friends then, but their design instincts were different, and on graduating they went their separate ways to gain MA's and experience: Pearce at St Martin's, John Galiano and Robert Kahn, and Fionda at the Royal College of Art and — among others — Aleson.

But they remained in touch and, in 1993, with a friend to back them, they decided to work together. "We couldn't say 'that's mine' or 'that's his'," says Pearce, 27. "I think in persona and dimension and Andrew is calm and steady." Fionda adds, "It's the same with business. Benny's good at accounting, I'm good at production." And that is their next big battle, he says. Fionda says that once the production headaches start, everything suffers, including your own collection. "We've determined that's not going to happen to us." **SHARON ALLEY**