

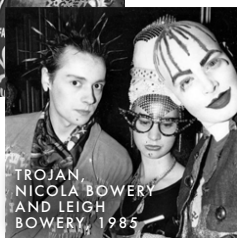
When John Galliano had just been appointed creative director of Christian Dior, he asked me to come for lunch. I walked up the grey-carpeted staircase, past huge photographs of Marlene Dietrich, Ava Gardner and Grace Kelly sitting in the place I was at that moment, and thought I'd hit the mother load.

In the tremendously chic private dining room, we felt as though we were having a drink in the headmaster's common room, like we were doing something very sneaky. It all seemed incredibly grown-up. 'Please come and work here, we'll have a wonderful time,' John said. It was as completely exciting then as it is now, 21 years later.

There's a story John tells, that he asked me to make some hats for him while dancing at Taboo club in Soho in the Eighties and I turned and said, 'I don't think so, dear.' I can't actually remember that moment, but everybody thinks it's true! John and I had known of each other for years before we started working together. London is a huge place, but small, too. My hats were stocked at Browns, and the founder, Mrs Burstein, bought his entire Central Saint Martins (CSM) graduate collection and told me of 'this extraordinary man, John Galliano'.



JOHN GALLIANO, 1992



TROJAN, NICOLA BOWERY AND LEIGH BOWERY, 1985

In 1993, his assistant, Steven Robinson, called asking if I'd be interested in working with John on his eponymous label in Paris. When we finally met, we chatted like we were like old friends, only realising two hours later that we were supposed to be talking about hats.

The second Galliano show I worked on, the AW94 collection, has since been dubbed the original 'fashion moment'. John showed 18 outfits, all in black, which was extraordinary for the time. I vividly remember us pinning a sash around Kate Moss's waist. He was holding it and I was pinning it, like two people playing a duet on a piano. We looked each other right in the eye and just smiled. We knew we were on to a good thing.

Until then, I had always thought I should perhaps be designing clothes instead of hats. I studied fashion design at CSM and was completely terrified on my first day there in 1976. I walked into the classroom and felt as though I was goofy, badly dressed and didn't know anyone. On one side there were all these girls wearing head-to-toe beige and being very Chelsea-ish. On the other side of the room, there were four punks. I literally came to a fork in the road; I turned towards the punks.

Fashion design in general was not easy for me. I had a tailoring tutor called Peter Crown, who owned a couture house called Lachasse in Berkeley Square. He came to me after a few months and said if I didn't improve my sewing, I was going to fail the first year. So I went to do work

experience with him, and next to the tailoring work room was the millinery work room. So I transferred from one to the other and realised then what I really wanted to do.

Many years later, watching John work,

confirmed my hunch: I couldn't be the best fashion designer in the world because he was, so I didn't want to try. We went on to do four amazing collections together at Givenchy when he was appointed creative director in 1995, before leaving for Dior in 1996.

We absolutely thought Dior was forever. We believed that John was becoming Christian Dior, in the way that designers don't now because they know that their tenure is temporary. John was there for 15 years, which, in today's terms, is forever. There was a blissful ignorance. That's how the world was; we were doing something for the long haul and we had to get it right.

Finding the new language of Dior was a big challenge. We knew the first show, SS97 haute couture, had to be spectacular; Mr Arnault [Chairman of Dior] had told John it had to be on the front pages the next day. It was total panic; John was in a state of complete excitement and nerves. Even though I was the milliner, I was really part of the whole team, working on anything that was constructed, like corsets made using an African beading technique.

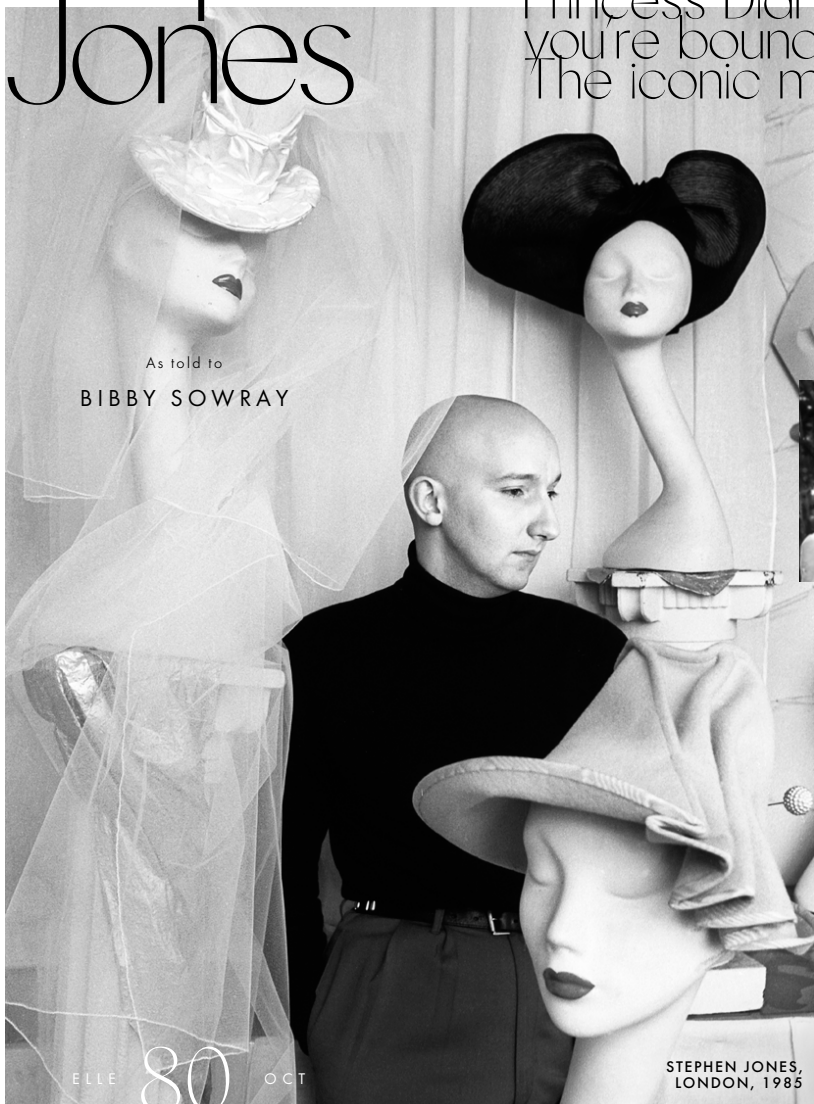
I spent a month making a trilby out of tiny loops of telephone wire, worn by Debra Shaw in the show. John still has it. I made a huge flower to go on her dress, but the stem looked like a stick of celery; everyone said, 'Have you got a bloody Mary to go with that?!'

Now, I'm part of Dior and Dior is part of me. For somebody who grew up in the arse-end of nowhere on the Wirral peninsula, it's fantastic. Last week I was sitting on the floor of Rihanna's hotel room at 2am, sewing a hat for her to wear with a Dior outfit hours later. 'Funny how life turns out,' I said to her. 'Tell me about it!' she chuckled back.

Fashion Memoir:

Stephen Jones

When your career spans working with John Galliano, Princess Diana and Rihanna, you're bound to have stories. The iconic milliner opens up



As told to

BIBBY SOWRAY



KATE MOSS IN GALLIANO, AW96 COUTURE



DIOR SS17

STEPHEN JONES, LONDON, 1985