

FASHION

Albam

MODERN MENSWEAR

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“To be honest, there’s so much more to life than clothes” – not, perhaps, what you would expect to hear from someone who designs garments for a living. However, James Shaw and Alastair Rae, founders of independent British menswear outfit Albam, don’t have a dash of fashion elitism about them. Rather, the pair are passionate about developing design to the point of invisibility – as James says, “Good design is something you never see” – so that each pared-down, stripped-back piece does nothing but function silently and immaculately. It’s design that leaves the wearer free to forget about the shirt on their back and do their thing, whatever that may be.

Born in 2006, this Nottingham-based menswear label began by seeing their customer base as creative professionals, then watched it grow to include everyone who appreciates a polished, high-quality product. “Often, design pares itself down – our aesthetic is very clean,” James says. “Take out anything that’s unnecessary, fiddly and without purpose.” Stripped of bells and whistles, Albam’s philosophy simply leaves the fine materials and craftsmanship of the product behind to admire. Albam’s Flight Bag is a perfect case in point. Created by the design team from their own experience of what makes luggage just right for plane travel, the design of this hand-finished piece is minimised to the point of purity, which in turn highlights the quality of each component – in this case, the supple Belgian bridle leather, and the water repellent technical canvas.

Through its minimalism, the Flight Bag gains universal appeal. Without trinkets and extras to pigeon-hole it into a single demographic, the bag becomes the perfect choice for the stylish everyman on the go. As James says, “You can’t not like it, in a way, because it does everything it needs to do.” Along with broadly appealing to those looking for high-end basics that work, last, and adapt to their needs, these products equip their wearers for a spectrum of active purposes. “We make our t-shirts without seams in a sportswear factory – anything unnecessary is removed. We aim to make products multi-functional, without them becoming overly technical,” explains James. It’s easy to imagine piecing together a purely Albam travel capsule wardrobe to stash in your Flight Bag. James picks out a simple, functional selection. “I would team a shirt, pair of jeans, and low key trainers with a blazer, and maybe a scarf. With these things I could go most places. Travel is really important to me,” enthuses James, explaining his passion for Albam products that seamlessly combine a timeless style with practicality. “I use our products for a whole range of things sports-wise, especially running and climbing. The great thing about outdoor pursuits like these, is that they allow you to visit places and see a different side to them. Rather than just being a tourist, it allows you to explore a real breadth to a place.”

Albam’s success, James says, is tied up with the small crew he and Alastair have gathered around them. “For us, it’s about the craft and the people. Because it’s smaller scale, you get all those nuances that are lost in mass-produced goods. We’re very close to our customers, and we listen to them carefully because we want to improve.” It’s the people involved – customers, designers, craftspeople – that inspire their work. “Most people don’t enjoy what they do five days a week, so it’s flattering when people spend that hard-earned money on our products. I’m inspired by people who do what they love doing. If you love what you do, you’ll want to do it really well.”

albamclothing.com

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