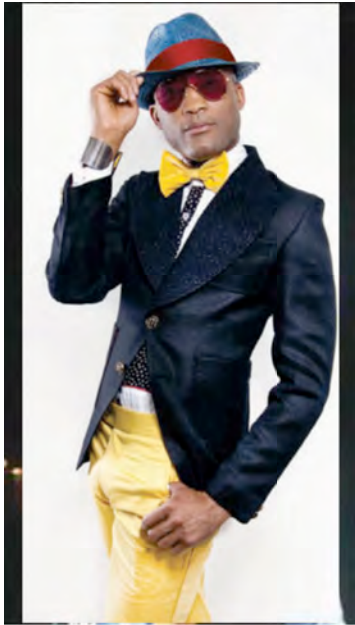


Emmy Collins Spring/Summer 2011

If Fela Kuti were alive today he'd proudly wear Emmy Collins



Legendary Afro beat musician Fela Anikulapo Kuti was probably known mostly for his musical talent and knack for challenging the political status quo of his time. But clouded by all his inflammatory music and controversial lifestyle, most observers probably missed his sartorial penchant for smart, well fitted clothing often embellished with afro centric embroidery. Oddly, with the exception of his son, not very many have dared copy Fela's brand of music or imitated his flamboyant sartorial choices. In steps Emmy Collins London.

Born Nigerian and growing up during Fela's prime, his sneak outs on many a night to watch the Afro beat king play at his "Afrika Shrine" club influenced Emmy so much that from his teens together with his neighbourhood friends, he developed clothing styles unique to his time and brought to life by a local machinist friend. Emmy Collins' work today is not a copy of Fela's sartorial sense. Instead he has honed his creative skills while borrowing from some of his personal childhood creations and allowing memories of his music icon to inspire his original designs today. These influences have never been more evident than in his Spring/Summer 2011 collection recently unveiled at the Pitti Immagine Uomo 78 men's apparel fashion show in Florence, Italy.

Emmy's latest creation did not hold back on the colour swatch. It is as usual both fresh and daring, bordering on the debonair but decidedly cutting edge. His is one

of those that would have the typical dandy leave the store wearing the garment he'd just purchased. Indeed if Fela Kuti were alive today he would proudly wear Emmy Collins.

In his latest collection, the designer incorporated specific details that can be traced back to his aforementioned teenage designs. His ensemble includes drainpipe trousers reminiscent of styles that epitomized the spirit of 1950's rock and roll. These colourful trousers made from the finest wool fabrics, come without waistbands or belt loops but with buckles for adjustment. They are cut slightly short to provide subtle yet conspicuous peeks at the wearer's socks or sockless legs. Others include jazzed up tuxedo trousers, black wool trousers contrasted with black velvet pocket trims and domestically bleached but just so slightly distressed denims.

His signature retro wide lapel jackets are very visible in this current collection and Emmy acknowledges that although these exaggerated lapels make very bold statements, he is not averse to slimmer lapels that accentuate the masculine silhouette. In addition to the appetizingly classic fit of the jackets, much attention was also paid to smaller yet ever so distinguishing details like his polka dots linings and the use of colourful 100% pure satin trims. A biker jacket made of bleached blue denim mix with a silhouette cut to fit like a second skin will invoke appreciative glances on the high streets.

For the first time Emmy Collins blazed inroads into accessories and as usual he did not disappoint. The resulting output include silk print skinny ties and

chunky bow ties that come in an array of black, plaid and neon colours for that added touch of colour and spice to outfits.

His now infamous well fitted shirts come with cuffed short sleeves and pin tuck bibs with insertions around the bibs. These are available in colour mixes like black/polka dots, plaids/solids and prints/solids. Probably for the heck of it, Emmy also threw a soft sheep skin shirt into this latest collection.

Also this season, in a rare and maverick break from his strictly avant-garde designs, Emmy introduced darker pieces in shades of black, grey and earth tones into the mix. Proving that he can make even neutral coloured garments exciting, tasteful and wearable. This should come as a sweet surprise to that stylish but more discreet male who itches to wear an Emmy Collins but can't

quite bring himself to take the plunge into daring colours. With the added choice of more subdued colours, the wearer now has the opportunity to define his own style - whether toned down or colourful. Emmy insists he decided to reach out to different sides of the fashion isle without losing his identity. "It's really all about the cut and construction of the garment and not the colours" he quipped.

With Fela the musical presently playing at Oliveira theatre London after much success at Broadway, New York, the British fashionistas might find it easier to appreciate the origin of Emmy's knack for perfect silhouettes.

The Emmy Collins London collection can be viewed at his eponymous showroom opening this August at: 87 Great Eastern Street, EC2A 3HY
