

SHAWN ELLIOTT LUXURY



THE LEISURE ISSUE

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VICTOR TALBOTS:



HAUTE COUTURE FOR THE FASHION FORWARD GUY

BY LINDA SASLOW

Victor Talbots, the couture fashion establishment in Greenvale, personifies elegant menswear. But many wonder whether there really is a man behind the name.

Indeed there is. Just ask any savvy gentleman who has been fitted there for a tuxedo, had their clothing made to measure or shopped for fine mens suiting with labels like Brioni, Kiton or Ralph Lauren Purple Label.

Victor Talbot Scognamiglio is a visible presence in the clothing store that bears his name. While he wears many hats—including those of designer, buyer, marketing director, image consultant and chairman—at least half of his week is spent on the floor beside his sales team.

"I want to hear what my customers

think," said Victor. "I am privileged to have an audience who appreciate unique things. And to be effective, you have to be hands on."

The legendary business, now located in a historic building on Glen Cove Road, was founded 28 years ago as an at-home shopping service.

"I always had a love for clothing," said Victor, now 51. "In college, when I got my first job at a formal men's shop, I realized that I had a knack for business and I recognized the importance of detail."

After graduating from college, Victor got his first job in finance but longed to start a business of his own. For more than a year he moonlighted on weekends, calling prospective grooms and selling them elegant evening wear

for their upcoming weddings.

When Victor learned of the finance company's plans to relocate to Oregon, he took it as a sign: it was time to turn his dream into a reality. With a loan of \$20,000, a van and one tailor, he started a traveling menswear company. Victor Talbots was born.

By word of mouth his business grew. Several years later, Victor opened his first shop, committed to providing an environment befitting his designs.

"It's like a restaurant," said Victor. "You can have the greatest product, but if the service is lacking, you'll never go back."

Loyal customers have recognized the quality and integrity of the fashions, and have appreciated the expansion of Victor Talbots to include outerwear, accessories, shoes, and more casual

attire. Beyond the made-to-measure custom clothing department and the usual personal shopper, Victor Talbots offers a concierge service that analyzes your closet and helps to create an updated wardrobe.

"Our customers like to see continuity," Victor said. "A man likes to know that the same salesman who sold him his Bar Mitzvah suit can now sell him a tuxedo for his wedding."

Mark Zelniker, of Syosset, has been a Victor Talbots customer for more than 20 years, relying on the expertise of Darren, his favorite salesman.

"He knows what works, and he has great taste," explained Mark, who bought his first tuxedo for his son's Bar Mitzvah, and has since brought both of his sons to the men's boutique to share the experience. "I would never think of working with anyone else," he said. "I may pay a little more, but it's worth it."

The business has recently expanded in several new directions—launched its own shoe line and fragrance, and will soon add a salon equipped with shave and shoe shine. A new E-commerce venture, GroomStars—a shopping service for grooms—is a joint venture among several vendors and as Victor explains, "a way to stick our toe in the water."

There is no stopping Victor Talbots. "You constantly have to re-invent yourself and stay current," Victor emphasized.

Then there are the younger customers who need more affordable fashions. "There is an entire generation of 19-21 year olds, who have never put on a suit or tie," Victor explained. "We have partnered with Hugo Boss and J Brand to create an experience for this younger generation and to open up the playing field for them. As they get older and make more money, they will hopefully grow into our label."

With one of his three daughters interested in joining the business, Victor is now looking at a space in downtown Manhattan, with plans to open a second Victor Talbots in the near future.

"I'm proud of my products and I love what I do," said Victor. "It's not work, but an extension of my enjoyment." *SE*

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