Oliver Spencer definitely qualifies as being a designer, even if he occasionally dismisses himself as just a retailer.

Spencer is certainly self-deprecating, which is somewhat unfair to himself, especially after seeing his latest clever collection from his eponymously named brand.
An homage to Wong Kar-wai’s *In the Mood for Love*, the show was set inside a wacky London food market in Shoreditch called ‘Dinerama’, decorated with Chinese balloons, birdcages and Hong Kong movie posters.

Pre-show, waitresses served drinks with names like a ‘Goldie’, which turned out to be a ‘slushy’ laced with a double-shot of Jack Daniels. Post-show, Spencer generously fed everyone from various stalls.

“I got the inspiration for the collection after a trip to Hong Kong. It’s the nearest thing I could find to an Asian night market in London, and I thought perfect for this collection,” explained Spencer.

To first chords of the film's theme music, Olivier sent out some fresh deconstructed tailoring, reworking traditional
fabrics with novel hands. What worked best were the hyper wearable plaid micro jackets made of light seersucker, or the teal and burnt orange sportswear with tech-y finishes.

Spencer cuts a great easy suit, with shortened, enveloping pants and a precise-shouldered jacket. Flattering to both the average guy and the cast of often-experienced models that marched in this show on a sunny evening in London.

The whole ensemble captured the easy nonchalance of Spencer’s buddy, William Gilchrist, the London stylist who dresses many of the Rolling Stones on their concert tours, and who styled this show.

This is a designer who doesn’t take himself too seriously. When you ask him what is the DNA of Oliver Spencer,
he chuckles: “Me and William!”

Spencer began in fashion selling vintage clothing in the hipster market of Portobello Road back at the beginning of the century. He claims he would scour obituary columns and auctions to gather up clothes from country houses and well-dressed gents. “I’d love it when I discovered a departed admiral or general, because you knew they have a great wardrobe of clothes!” he said with British black humor.

His first store was for his other brand Favourbrook, which he opened in Piccadilly Arcade, specializing in formal wear with off-beat exotic fabrics. It’s still there more than a decade later. Plus, Spencer has another London-located Favourbrook at 16-17 Pall Mall, in tony St James.

“We’ve had our ups and down, though what saved us was Four Weddings and a Funeral. Why? Because guys
starting dressing up more again,” he smiles.

He launched his own named brand in 2002 and today boasts seven fully owned boutiques and over 120 accounts worldwide. Nordstrom’s will shortly start stocking Oliver Spencer in over a half dozen of their department stores.

From his original shop on London's Lambs Conduit Street, Spencer has gone on to sell in Selfridges, Liberty of London and Mr Porter. Oliver has also been nominated for British Menswear Designer at the British Fashion Awards. His clothes source from British and Italian mills, and around 40% of the collection is made in England.

An avid sailor whose success has funded a house on the Isle of Wright, Spencer is an impressive fashion entrepreneur. And, yet another very good reason why true menswear aficionados will always come to London Fashion Week Men’s.

By Godfrey Deeny

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