



The TUMULTUOUS TREVOR PICKETT

"I've gone from TOWIE to Downton Abbey."

The City Magazine's **Hugh Francis Anderson** talks to Trevor Pickett about the rise of his luxury small-goods emporium, Pickett

"G&T, darling?" asks Trevor Pickett as we meet in his Burlington Gardens boutique. It is abundantly clear from this initial encounter that Trevor's flamboyant persona is utterly fundamental to the success of his brand, Pickett. After 25 years in the Burlington Arcade, it has upsized to the end of Savile Row to continue its life as London's luxury, personal leather emporium.

Trevor's life has always revolved around the luxury retail world. "I've been in the business for 35 years," he says with a slight roll of the eyes. Although time may have passed, his drive appears as strong as ever. Moving from Southend to London at the



Roll Up Backgammon,
£295

age of 16, Trevor began working in a tiny leather shop called the Unicorn Leather Company in the Burlington Arcade. Within six months Trevor was manager and a mere eight years later he purchased the business and rebranded it Pickett. "I created Pickett in 1988 through a management buyout," he explains. "Fortunately my current business partner and friends, including my old boss, helped fund it." In a style that I am beginning to understand as 'typical' Trevor eccentricity, he stops our chat intermittently to offer a new customer a stiff drink and a friendly one-to-one; a true purveyor of exquisite retail therapy. ☺

Trevor has found the holy grail of retail stardom, a white knight, if you will, on the battlefields of personal couture

⊙ Regaining his attention, I ask him about his working philosophies. “It’s very much a reactive business, and we have to guide our customers through. You’re not allowed to come in here and serve yourself; there is a sense of serving you – there has to be at this level.” Perhaps Trevor’s attempt to preserve a bygone era is why he has recently been gaining a lot of press attention, appearing in *The Financial Times’* Diary of a Somebody, BBC Radio 4’s Midweek show and on the recent Channel 4 programme, *The Auction House*, to name but a few. Trevor’s cheerful peculiarity has wonderfully caught on, and with it his traditionalist brand.

Although Pickett is a ‘new’ brand, it is still one of the only lasting manufacturers of 100 per cent British-made leather goods. Pickett propagates modern antiquity, using artisans from a whole host of small workshops across the country to formulate its trademark goods. From luggage, briefcases and toilet bags, to Kilim shoes, Whangee umbrellas and leather backgammon boards, Pickett is a true emporium of gentlemanly delights, and its young age is of little importance. It has, as Trevor says, “got the delusion and air of history”. Whether young or old, Trevor’s unquestionable pursuit of the ultimate customer experience is duly timeless. The new Burlington Gardens store features a leather room, where customers can procure their favourite items in any finish they please, and if something entirely bespoke is being sought, Pickett with gladly oblige.

“We have such a level of expertise, that we can guide a customer through the story, and if we don’t have what they want, we can make it for them.” The key, it appears, is adaptability. “Things change. Nowadays, we don’t really sell suitcases because of hand luggage restrictions, but if someone wants a suitcase, we can make them a suitcase.”

Alas, Trevor’s pursuit of the ultimate retail experience continues to fortify. “There’s even a back catalogue of leather and canvas,” says Trevor excitedly, “so if you bought a bag now, and



Eros Holdall,
£719



Bridlehide Briefcase, £895



Piccadilly Holdall, £750



Ostrich Leather Folio,
£1,495



Classic Holdall,
£515

in 20 years you wanted another one, it’s highly likely we’ll still have it.”

So the Pickett brand is going from strength to strength. With the recent upscale to Burlington Gardens, and with the Sloane Street branch booming, Trevor seems to be doing something right. I ask what inspires his designs and makes them blossom. “Without being funny, there’s only so many ways you can turn canvas or leather into a bag, so I call it evolve, with a back catalogue of history.” Yes, evolve is the correct word to describe Pickett and its short but varied history. In the late ‘80s, Trevor, in partnership with designer Georgina Von Etzdorf, was one of the first to bring pashminas to London, and the two designed luxury scarves for an exclusive audience, including Princess Diana. By the mid-90s, its reputation as one of London’s finest luxury emporiums had rocketed to the top, and Trevor slowly began introducing an increasing number of bizarre and wonderful products, elegantly marching Pickett into the realm of the boutique elite.

Pickett’s new home has come at a poignant time in the history of London’s luxury retail market. Since 1819 the Burlington Arcade has been home to London’s extravagant retailers, with a vested interest in small-scale antique, watch and leather industries. As a remnant of London’s regal heritage, tourists actively seek out the arcade to get a glimpse of London’s elite past. However, in a not so surprising turn of events, rental prices have been increased at an astronomical rate, with local tenants unable to pay the extortionate fees and eventually usurped by vast fashion conglomerates. Ever the optimist, Trevor always sees the upside. “I feel on a trajectory to move forward. I see a bigger world now – this is an adult step. I was limited by the Burlington Arcade and this has given me a new beginning.”

This new beginning is founded on the pretence of joy, happiness and fun. Trevor’s own demeanour is one that yearns for simplicity, for the pure enjoyment of a working life. “I’ve got to enjoy this. I’ve got to enjoy the people around me, because if I don’t, then I’m not having fun.” Alas, with the pursuit of ‘fun’ as a primary motivator, there is very little left to question: Trevor has found the holy grail of retail stardom, a white knight, if you will, on the battlefields of personal couture.

When it comes down to it, Pickett signifies all that is great about London’s boutique culture; it always has, and hopefully always will, be about characters such as Trevor, and about the unbridled passion for their brand and their customers. “The whole point of this is to meet people,” says Trevor. “My work is my pleasure and my pleasure is my life.” As I get up, Trevor extends a warming hand: “Come back for a drink anytime you want,” he says with a radiant smile, and I leave feeling that any customer would receive the same care and attention that I had received from the tumultuous Trevor Pickett. ⊙

pickett.co.uk

