

DESIGNS ON A FABRIC PRIZE

From a long-established firm to a label set up last year, the diverse nominees for Textile Brand of the Year at the Scottish Fashion Awards have quality in common, finds **Elizabeth McMeekin**

Forget Christopher Kane and Holly Fulton – it's the array of authentic textile companies that really make up the heart of the Scottish fashion scene. From weavers to cashmere makers, it is these home-grown industries that have always ensured Scotland has a place in the international fashion community.

The nominees for the Scottish Fashion Awards Textile Brand of the Year category, which is sponsored by The Herald, are no different. From the Borders knitwear company that's winning awards left, right and centre to the Ayrshire fabric maker famed for its impeccable quality, the Scottish textile industry hasn't looked this strong in years.

In the past this award has been won by companies such as Johnstons Cashmere, which produces top-quality woollens for labels such as Chanel, and this year's nominees are equally impressive.

Selkirk-based company Lyle And Scott won a Drapers award last year for its popular casual designs, which include slim-fitting, retro-inspired polo shirts and sports jackets. The company, which was founded in 1874 in the nearby Borders town of Hawick and uses a golden eagle motif on its designs, has also recently launched a successful shopping website. In the past, it has collaborated with Christian Dior.

From trendy sportswear to sumptuous cashmere, fellow nominee Begg Scotland is another well-respected name in the Scottish textile industry. Founded in 1869, the Ayrshire-based company has gone from making Paisley shawls to creating top-quality cashmere for some of the most prestigious designer brands in the world. Founded by Alexander Begg as a weaving company, it predominantly produces fabrics for other design companies to use, but also makes its



East London-based label DS Dundee draws inspiration from Scottish textiles

PHOTOGRAPH: GRAHAM WYLIE

own small collection of scarves, shawls and throws.

The next nominee, Angela Cassidy, only set up her textile label last year. A graduate of Glasgow School of Art and the Royal College of Art, where she graduated in 2006 with an MA in knitted textiles, Cassidy's label focuses on her modern knitted designs. She has been tipped as one to watch since

launching her first collection at London Fashion Week in February.

Knitwear label William Lockie is not quite as new as Angela Cassidy – it was established in 1874 – but then this company is better known for its exceptionally high standards than its cutting-edge designs. Based in the Borders, it creates fabric for other fashion companies as well as producing its own classic cashmere designs.

Compared with some of the other nominees on the list, Studio Roam is a small, little-known operation. However, this company, which was established by textile and knitwear designers Sonia Ambrosano and Lachlan Munro and is based in the Borders, has bags of potential. Using traditional techniques, Studio Roam makes beautiful scarves and blankets, but gives them a contemporary edge with quirky printed designs.

The final nominee, DS Dundee, knows a thing or two about luxury in Scotland. This top-end menswear label is based in east London, though takes inspiration from Scottish textile history and "traditional country style". The company was founded in 1994 by Jim Pickles and Oliver Pilcher, and has been going from strength to strength in the last couple of years, culminating in a critically acclaimed autumn/winter 2010 collection. ■

The nominees for Scottish Fashion Awards International Designer Of The Year sponsored by Mercedes-Benz West of Scotland

- Markus Lupfer
- Peter Jensen
- Rodarte

For more information visit www.scottishfashionawards.com.