

## Royal Dress: A Welcome Change

**Australian bridalwear designers have lavished praise on the wedding dress worn by Catherine Middleton, and hope it will herald a move away from the strapless bustiers chosen by many brides in recent years.**

A stunning construction of ivory and white satin gazar, with floral embroidery, a plunging neckline and lace-covered sleeves that ended at the wrists, the gown had been kept secret until the bride stepped out of London's Goring Hotel.

It was designed by Britain's Sarah Burton, creative director at Alexander McQueen.

"I think it was absolutely beautiful, kind of reminiscent of Grace Kelly when she got married," Sydney-based designer Collette Dinnigan told AAP.

But while classic and timeless, Dinnigan said the dress was at the same time modern and fresh, a balance achieved thanks to the designer's skill.

"I think it was very fitting that she chose the house of Alexander McQueen, given his passing. He was an amazing designer and very much the designer of the time right now."

McQueen, best-known for his in-depth knowledge of bespoke British tailoring, committed suicide in February 2010.

"His craftsmanship is amazing. A lot of his designs have a lot of embellishment and a lot of detail," Dinnigan added.

"I'm sure there are some people who'll say it wasn't dramatic enough or big enough for Westminster Abbey, but I don't, I think it was just so elegant. If you think of Princess Diana and her huge train, I feel like she got lost in the fabric."



Anneliese Bridgman, creative director at Melbourne-based designer Mariana Hardwick, believes the dress was perfectly fitting to the occasion.



"It appeared quite traditional but when you looked with a bit more detail you could see it was a combination of both traditional and contemporary elements, which is a signature of Alexander McQueen," she said.

Sydney-based Laurence Shiels agrees that while the dress "wasn't anything radical or out of the blue", it was "classic, timeless and totally appropriate".

"The style of the dress was almost classically 1950s," he said.

"I think Sarah Burton pulled it off, there was nothing that looked excessive, theatrical," he told AAP. "I think we saw the full effect of the dress when she was coming back through the arch (of the abbey) and the hem was perfectly done, there was nothing pulling or dragging ... everything was excellent."

The dress of Catherine's maid of honour, Pippa Middleton, was also "superb", he added.

The sister of the bride wore a simple column dress in ivory and white satin, also with a deep neckline and also created by Burton.

Bridgman thought the bridesmaid's dress offered the perfect balance to the bride herself. "I liked how it was in a more fluid fabric, it showed off her figure," she said. "It was an understated elegance that the bride also had. It complemented the bridal gown but didn't upstage it."

But Shiels says he would have made a few small changes to the bride's look, including a longer train and pinned-up hair. Middleton's hair was lightly curled, partly pinned up and decorated with a Cartier tiara lent to her by the Queen.

"For the scale of the abbey and for the scale of the wedding, I would have had the train a metre longer, just to give more impact," said Shiels. "Another metre would have been sufficient."

"And personally, I'm not a fan of the hair hanging down. I think when something is high-necked and covered, when the hair is hanging over the shoulder it looks untidy."

Bridgman disagrees with the criticism, believing the train was in proportion for the rest of the design; it was also a practical length, she says.

And she thinks it was fitting for Middleton to wear her hair down because that is her normal style. "I think it was a good thing for the public, too, because they could easily identify with her with her hair down. She's still a young woman so it's nice to have her hair in a less formal style."

But she did agree that the back of the bride's dress, a key element to the design, was often concealed - mainly by the veil, which was a shame.

All three designers say they hope Middleton's gown will herald a return to heavier fabric and sleeves in bridalwear.

Sleeves have been left by the wayside in recent years - and it's not just because of fashion; shoulder, neck and sleeve fittings can be costly and time consuming.

"Sleeves have totally died out in the last few years but now you might get more girl asking for sleeves, longer trains even," said Bridgman.

"I really hope that (Middleton's dress) will bring back off-the-shoulder capped sleeves or even in sheer, bring back a sleeve," said Shiels.

"It's been a whole generation really where the dress has become so open. The bustier, as beautiful as it is, has been totally flogged to death.

"It's got to the point where let's take the back out and put a split to well above the knee, and the armpit and the bust are bulging out ... I think sometimes in a generation people will look back at their wedding photos and think what was I thinking."

Dinnigan agrees that sleeves will help some brides to "pair down" their look.

"A lot of brides aren't in their twenties and people do want to cover a bit more and I think lace is a such a great way to do it because it's still very feminine and it doesn't feel heavy.



"I think elegance and timeless has so much more to say when you look back on your photos."



By Caroline Berdon  
SYDNEY, AAP

#### Trending This Week

**The rise of the male cosmetics counter**

**The seven most stylish on the Emmys red carpet this year**

**This purifying pink clay mask had a huge wait list, here's why**

**Rihanna's Fenty Beauty line has landed in Australia**