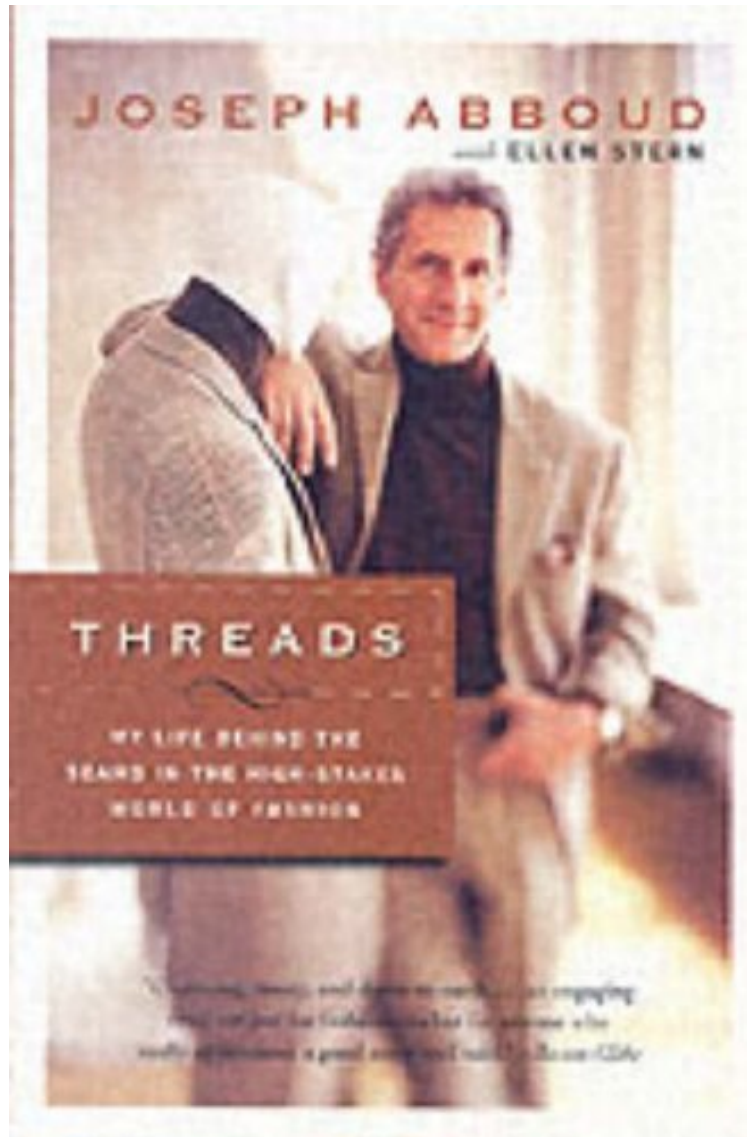


(Mobile book) Threads: My Life Behind the Seams in the High-Stakes World of Fashion

Threads: My Life Behind the Seams in the High-Stakes World of Fashion

Joseph Abboud, Ellen Stern

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Designers are great white sharks, and we roam the waters ourselves. We often pretend to like and admire each other, but sometimes we don't even bother to fake it. The fashion industry is as hardworking, incestuous, and political as any other, and it's virtually impossible, given the size of designers' egos, to sincerely wish someone else well, because behind every false tribute is 'It should have been me.' So writes Joseph Abboud, who fell in love with style at five. There in the dark of the movie house, he wasn't just some Lebanese kid with a babysitter. He was the hero, in tweeds and pocket squares. That's where he learned that clothes represented a better life; a life he wanted, and would grab, for himself. From his blue-collar childhood in Boston's South End to his spread-collar success as one of America's top designers, he has forged a remarkable path through the unglamorous business of making people look glamorous. He transformed American menswear by replacing the traditional stiff-shouldered silhouette with a grown-up European sensuality. He was the first designer to win the coveted CFDA award as Best Menswear Designer two years in a row and the first designer to throw out the opening pitch at Fenway Park. He's been jilted by Naomi Campbell (who didn't show up on the runway for his first women's fashion show) and questioned by the FBI (who did show up in his office right after September 11 because he fit the profile). He's soared and sunk more than a few times; and lived to tell the tales. *Threads* is his off-the-record take on fashion, from the inside out. With breezy irreverence, he looks at guys and taste, divas and deviousness, fabric and texture, and all those ties. He takes us to the luxe bastion of Louis Boston, where he came of age and learned the trade, and to the seductive domain of Polo Ralph Lauren, where he became associate director of menswear design. He reveals the mystique of department-store politics, what's what at the sample sale, and who copies whom. He explains the process of making great clothes, from conception and sketch to manufacturing and marketing. Whether he's traveling by daredevil horse, plunging plane, Paris Meacute;tro, or cross-country limo, Abboud is an illuminating guide to a complex world.

From Publishers Weekly "All clothes make a statement. The right clothes make a statement that will open doors." With his user-friendly advice, Abboud, chairman emeritus and creative director of the men's clothier Joseph Abboud Company, revisits his past and, concurrently, shares fashion tips. Clients like Tom Brokaw and Wynton Marsalis are testaments to Abboud's elegance-with-an-edge style. His love affair with clothes started when he was growing up in Boston's South End in the 1950s and '60s, and he parlayed a passion for design into a job designing menswear at Polo/Ralph Lauren. When Abboud presented his own collection in 1987, he encountered the cutthroat practices of multimillion-dollar fashion empires. Abboud openly admits his career disappointments, including his foray into the lion's den of women's clothing and his trials launching a men's fragrance. Such honesty is refreshing, and Abboud's devotion to family and die-hard support for the Red Sox add to his charm. Readable and fun, the book offers lessons from Abboud's experiences to would-be designers. Bottom line: no element is inconsequential, whether it's a shoulder seam or the layout of a store display. For consumers, Abboud's credo is: "Style ought to be personal. It defines you to yourself, not to somebody else." Copyright copy; Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From Booklist Another tell-all tome about the fashion industry, but this time from the fingers of a well-known menswear designer (with acknowledged help from an established writer). Boston-born Abboud leads the reader through a gossipy stream-of-consciousness narrative that inexplicably holds together--and entrances. It might be the chapter about his first retail job at Louis Boston, one of America's great high-end specialty clothing boutiques. Or his saga about his parents: Mother Lila a seamstress, and Father, once a master mechanic, unfortunately disabled. Or, perhaps, the behind-the-scenes anecdotes about the semiannual New York Fashion Weeks. Even the comments about important shirt-tailoring touches--four sleeve buttons that are cross-stitched and "kissing," for instance. The tales ring true, as does his passion for the business. A healthy ego is a boost, yes, but it's one tempered with humility. Barbara Jacobs Copyright copy; American Library Association. All rights reserved A lively, confident memoir seriously explores the realities of the fashion industry... and just enough of the trade's time-tested potshots. -- Kirkus (starred review)