



# A passion for TEACHING

**AFTER JUST 15 MONTHS, THE LONDON SCHOOL OF BARBERING HAS ACQUIRED A FIRST-CLASS REPUTATION ON AN INTERNATIONAL LEVEL**

It takes creativity, a passion to teach and business acumen to launch and maintain a successful barbering academy – and between them Michael Kontos and Justis McEvelly, directors of the London School of Barbering, have all three – in bucket loads.

Michael is the hairdresser of the pair, with a career history that includes Sassoon and HOB Salons; US-born Justis comes from a business background and is a great believer in having structure and efficiency at the basis of everything the academy does.

Says Michael: “I’d worked for other academies and felt I could do it better. Often, the standard of haircutting was excellent, but the management and efficiency weren’t always in place.”

Enter Justis, a one-time client of Michael, with years of experience working for blue-chip corporations. “I sat in his chair and had the best haircut

I’d ever had,” recalls Justis. “Plus, I actually got on with my stylist. Michael and I became friends and he chatted to me about his passion for training.”

This passion is evident from the moment you set foot in the first floor academy in a Covent

Garden side street. There is a tangible buzz and a sense of constant activity, as students and tutors work on creating looks for their clients and models. The London School of Barbering officially opened on 1 December 2012 with an initial



enrolment of just five students and Michael the only tutor. Evidently these initial five students left happy, as word of mouth soon saw the enrolment increase to two classes of six.

Today the academy offers three classes of eight students each.

“The graduating students told their friends and posted pictures on Facebook, and word just spread,” says Michael. “Foreign students found us through our website.”

Students travel to the school from some of the traditional barbering hotspots of the world, including Turkey and Cyprus. “They can’t get the training at home,” says Michael. “They want to be up to date with the latest techniques.”

Helping deliver these techniques are the school’s manager Kelly Bushnell, who came on board in February 2013, and master barber Theo Vassiliou, who joined the team in July of last year.

The mix of tutors has been carefully created. “We are very picky about who we hire. They are chosen for their technical skills but we also want students to like them,” says Michael. And according to Michael, it is no coincidence that the students seem utterly focused. “The good thing about a private academy is that all the students are determined – they want to get it right. Everyone wants to learn and they are focused. Some of the younger students who are here because their parents have paid for them to attend are more of a challenge and we may have to crack the whip sometimes, but it’s for their own good. They need to be prepared for a real barbershop or

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hair salon.” Part of this preparation for real salon life involves treating the models used for training purposes like real clients.

“We want every model to be able to request whatever they want, which means the students being trained to execute all these styles,” says Michael. “Clients love it here because the

students take their time. We give each student one hour to do a cut and if it takes an hour and a half at first, that’s fine. Clients come back, even though it’s a student haircut.”

Adds Justis: “Models and students say there is a spirit and feel to the place that is hard to articulate. The last thing we want is a sterile environment. It’s a careful recipe of making it relaxed but disciplined.”

With a successful template in place, the directors are considering new ventures. Says Justis: “We would eventually like to have international locations. I believe we have something that everyone involved loves.”



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