

# Belgian sweet treats

*You want to stand out? The lines you carry can make a difference, elevating you from one of the many to something in a class of its own. Take a look at these two labels from the Belgian house MRFG that puts statement-making style as key to its offering*

**M**RFG stands for Marylise & Rembo Fashion Group, and the name stands for bridal fashion extraordinaire. This is the house that introduced V-neck sweaters to bridal (well okay, they were of the finest cashmere) – and took catwalk stories down the aisle.

Edgy would be a good description. Adventurous another. Convention does not get a look in, thanks to the design dream team of Geraldine, Manon and Ruth, each with their own individual approach, their own personality, their own unique vision. The three come together and creative sparks fly.

Let's talk about them for a minute, because when you understand where they're coming from, you'll understand where they are going.

Geraldine: this Parisienne launched her first capsule collection for MRFG in 2011. It was fresh, unaffected, and a big, beautiful hit. There's no place for frills in her work – she wants a bride to be as comfortable and relaxed in her chosen gown as she would be in a favourite t-shirt.

Manon is all about 'natural romanticism'. Her look is refined and detailed – think underplayed girliness fused with subtle sexiness – and haute couture features coupled with finishing touches without the heavyweight price tag.

Ruth is the youngest of the team; she joined MRFG right out of college

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– the famous Fashion School of Antwerp. Since 2014 she's been bringing her rock 'n' roll sense of cool into the design equation.

Been to Barcelona Bridal Week? Seen Marylise and Rembo Styling performing in the fashion show arena? There is no mistaking star material when you see it – or when you hear the applause that greets it. By

bringing together different designers and building a collection that encompasses varying perspectives, the result is a powerful collection that ticks every box.

The seamless way in which the various divisions of the business come together has created a unique production process. "Designed with passion in Belgium. Made with love in Portugal" is MRFG's appropriate slogan – the design trio fosters creativity; prototypes of each style are made up by a team of dedicated pattern makers, seamstresses and finishers in Belgium; production is handled by the company's specialist manufacturing unit in northern Portugal.

It is hardly surprising that this is a company that engages with its retailers and their brides, but, more than that, it has cultivated a global network of photographers, wedding planners, caterers, graphic designers, stylists and more... in short, people who are close to brides' everyday life, so that information and mood boards are exchanged frequently. Something we can all learn from.





## TWO Qs TO MRFG...

### How do you advise retailers to make the best of your collections in store?

Our dresses need to breathe. They need to hang with space around them and on nice hangers. It is always good to put two or three of the dresses on a mannequin, so that brides can see the flow of the skirt and the fine details immediately. Most important – sell them with love. If you love them, brides will love them, too.

### How best should retailers deal with the current challenges?

The bridal industry is conservative and in need of innovation, and it needs to be more creative and challenging to secure the future of the stores and the labels. However, only some young and motivated people seem to have a new and modern vision. We need to consider certain factors such as the mix of cultures and the digital generation; technology and fashion change faster and faster. The bridal market is always a couple of steps behind. Why not be first?



**Rembo Styling** Especially striking in the new collection are the graphic star motifs that feature in gowns as well as the mix-and-match bodies and skirts. Lots of boho influences here that are cool, with flow and combined with a sense of modernistic luxury. The volumes are sometimes fairytale, sometimes sleek and sensual – fabrics fall smoothly and have the feel of a second skin.

UK RRP: £1,100 - £1,900

**Marylise** Ultra contemporary and always chic, from gowns with a soft, feminine touch to sharp-cut trouser suits and short-to-long hemlines that make a statement, with the implementation of nude tones. In addition to the core range, a ten-piece capsule collection has been developed in collaboration with French bridal house, Victoire Vermeulen.

RRP: £1,100 - £1,800

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