

COMEBACK KID

Joe Backhouse, the founder of the furniture business bearing his name, is remembered by design.

Joe Backhouse started out in 1948 as a young cabinetmaker and died in 2015. Now Backhouse Interiors – owned by his son Gary and wife Michelle – has released the 'JWB' lounge chair to honour his legacy. "We wanted to reference the general aesthetic of the products he created," says designer John Dinsdale, "without directly recreating the previous designs."

Joe's designs have become highly collectible – were you tempted to just reproduce the most iconic?

John Dinsdale: The design wasn't based on any one product or range, but features signature details and forms from the early Backhouse range. Many of the previous products were very labour intensive and not economically viable in today's competitive furniture market, but with advances in technology we were able to create a very complex form in an economical and efficient manner.

Returning to the original drawings, what struck you? The longevity of Joe's designs and how relevant many of the products are, even in today's market. We are selling many products in our range, both local and imported, that have a striking resemblance to his past forms and styles.

What was the starting point for the new design? We initially started the process with a range of different style concepts and through internal discussions we were able to refine the design down to one iteration. The concept was evolved further by limitations on the manufacturing process, material strengths and tolerances. We wanted to create a modern classic with a fine, elegant form that would withstand the rigours of commercial and residential use for many years to come.

What's next? We feel we've achieved our initial brief, and intend to adapt the design to a range of products in the near future.

Backhouse

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Above The new 'JWB' logo pays homage to the company's heritage branding.

Above right Joe Backhouse in 1992 with grandson Oliver – now the third generation to work in the business.

Right Hard at work in the Backhouse factory in Te Aro, Wellington, 1958.

Below The 'JWB' chair.

