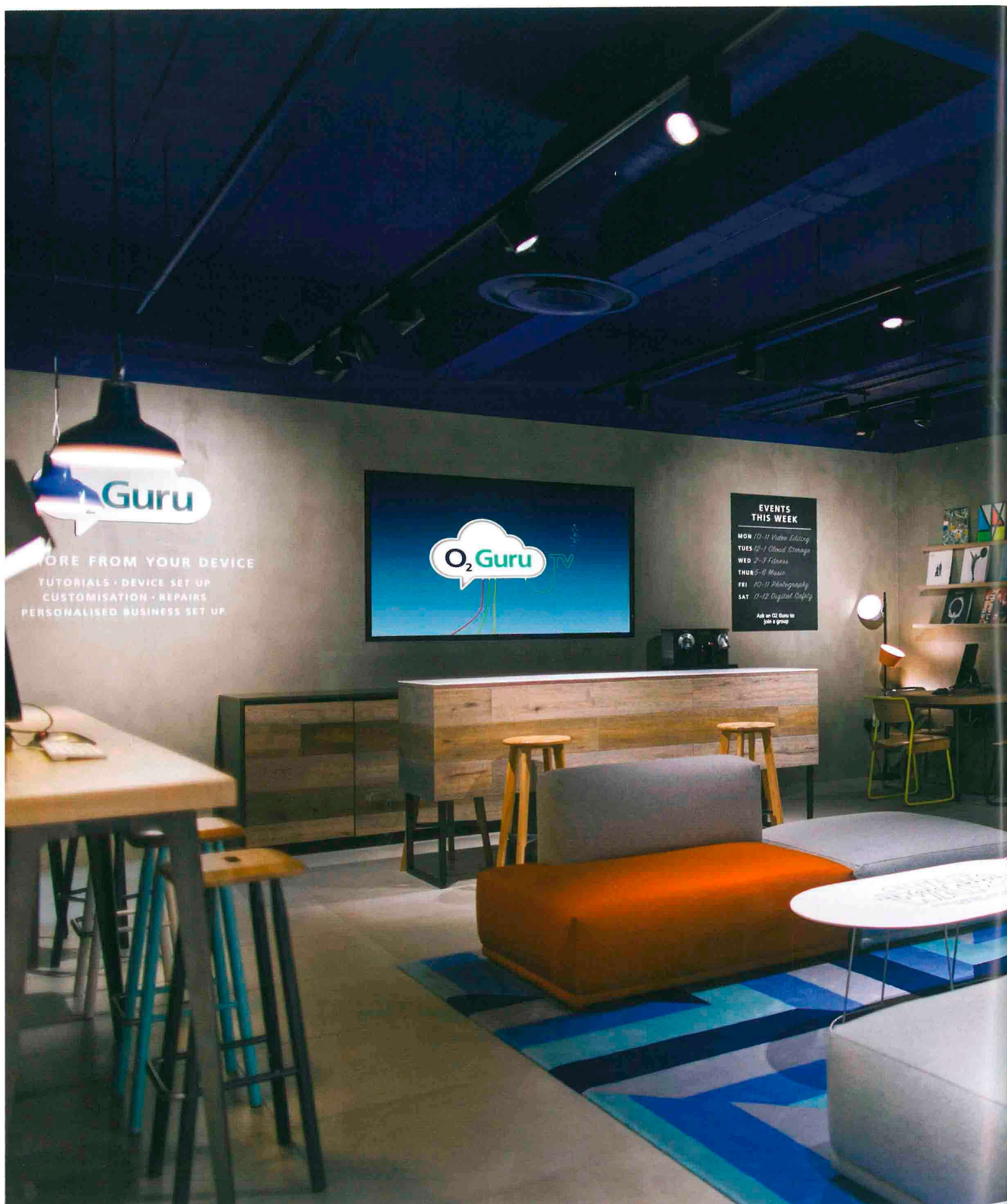


LIGHTING

Product is king in retail, so we should give it the regal treatment in store. **Gemma Goldfingle** looks at how retailers are putting their star products in the spotlight



Spotlight on sales

Retailers are constantly striving to inject some theatre into their store design and, much like in London's West End theatreland, lighting can help create drama and atmosphere.

The new breed of retail store has very little ambient lighting and instead the product is illuminated as the star of the show.

"There is an appetite to push lighting closer to the things you are selling. Shine a light on a product and it sings," says design agency Dalziel & Pow design director Tim Graveling. Product feature lighting used to be the preserve of jewellers and niche retailers, but it has now been embraced in all sectors, Graveling says.

However, it is en vogue in the fashion world. "The ability to view garments in the correct light is crucial to the customer's purchasing decision," says Philips UK and Ireland director of retail lighting Paul Goodall.

All Saints is one of a growing array of fashion retailers to introduce product lighting. It worked with Philips to design an LED system that complemented its industrial design. The concept, which has been adopted in selected All Saints stores around the world, uses customised pendant and spotlighting to show its clothing in the best light.

All Saints global director of store design and architecture Tim Sharp says the lighting enhances the experience at each point of the customer journey.

Meanwhile, Monsoon worked with lighting manufacturer Fagerhult to introduce beam-style lighting to highlight its product, and halo illumination around mirrors in fitting rooms to give a soft, flattering effect. The fitting room is arguably the place where lighting is most important for fashion retailers. Seeing your body squeezed into a bikini under the harsh, unflattering strip lights that are found in some changing rooms may ensure your purse stays firmly closed.

House of Fraser has worked with Philips to create an LED system integrated into the mirrors of its Oxford Street fitting rooms to allow customers to control the lighting so they can see how the garment looks in real life.

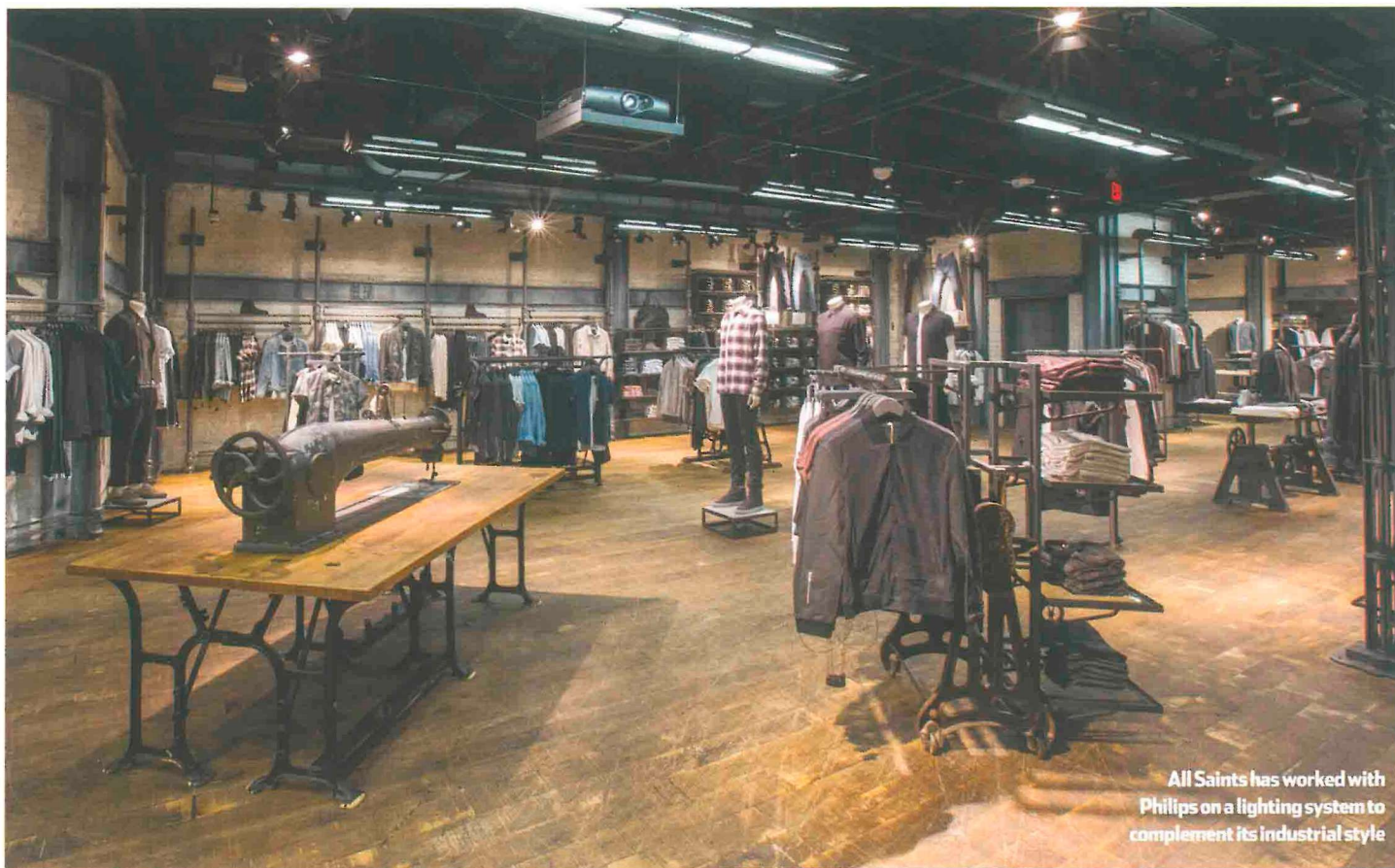
Shoppers can change the light settings to view how the clothes will look during different seasons and by day or night. Customer research showed that the lighting scheme encouraged House of Fraser shoppers to buy.

Some 54% said they were more likely to purchase while 80% said they would recommend trying out the new fitting rooms to friends and colleagues.

Breaking the mould

Product lighting is being embraced by more than just fashion retailers. Philips Lighting lighting application specialist Peter Kort says grocers are increasingly using accent lighting to highlight high-margin hero products such as cheese and wine.

OZ has been testing spotlight angles and colour 'temperature' to make its stores as inviting as possible



All Saints has worked with Phillips on a lighting system to complement its industrial style

Another sector embracing the lighting trend is mobile phones. Apple aside, the phone shops of the high street have traditionally been price rather than product focused and have used bright, uniform lighting that gives off an almost clinical feel.

O2 decided to do something different in its Manchester flagship store, which opened on Market Street earlier this year, to make it stand out. "If you look at all the mobile phone stores on the high street you won't be able to tell them apart. We wanted this store to look different," says O2 store design manager Simon Price. "It's in the heart of Manchester's fashion district. We wanted to show the landlord that it wasn't going to look like a typical tech store, so we took a more theatrical approach to lighting."

O2 worked with Dalziel & Pow and Fagerhult to create the new-look store. It uses LED spotlights carefully positioned to pick out products, while suspended panels hang over the main displays. Ambient lighting is provided by projectors that throw graphics on to the walls, including one of the Manchester skyline.

Creating shoppable zones

Different lighting concepts were used to create different zones throughout the O2 store. As a shopper walks into the Manchester store they enter what O2 terms the 'inspire zone', an area reserved for new product launches or campaigns – most recently for the new *Ghostbusters* movie – that change every six to

eight weeks. Here, spotlights and light sheets halo the product.

In the 'explore' zone – where the majority of the phones and accessories are displayed – hanging pendants provide the light source. Meanwhile, the lounge area at the rear of the store features lower, more directed lighting, to create a more relaxed atmosphere.

"Having more direct product lighting creates high and low points through the store and the change of pace and variance creates a more interesting and engaging environment that people will want to discover," says Graveling.

Price says product lighting helps the customer to better navigate the store: "There's no need for lightbox graphics or hanging signs. The lighting directs the eye."

Magical merchandising

Moving lighting closer to the product does not mean garish lighting fixtures are front and centre in store. Developments in technology means lighting can now be squeezed into spaces that would have previously been impossible, says Graveling: "Under shelves, concealed behind baffles, within ceiling recesses – light can be closer to the product and more effective."

Graveling uses as an example the way in which Next has neatly incorporated its lighting into the shelving of its footwear and accessories department. However, he points out that exceptional visual merchandising is a must when adopting product lighting. "Nothing

looks worse than highlighting a mess or, worse, empty space," he says. Precision is needed and the positioning of lights is integral.

Price says in the Manchester O2 store, spotlight angles and colour 'temperature' were tested in a specially designed 'mock shop' to ensure it was perfect. In the mock shop different light settings were created with Fagerhult, suitable for varying occasions, such as product launches and evening events.

Price says his biggest challenge was getting internal buy-in to this radical departure in store design. "People would walk in and say that it feels dark and think we had half the lights switched off," he says. However, he worked hard to communicate what the underlying aim was, particularly as store staff are charged with managing the lighting on a day-to-day basis.

When it comes to staff, Philips insists that the LED lighting used to highlight products can dramatically reduce the amount of maintenance needed. All Saints' LED lighting system, for example, lasts three times longer than its previous installations.

Price says using product and feature lighting has really enhanced the space and put O2's product at the heart of its store. The retailer has since used the lighting in its Westfield London store. "It's a radical change but it's really worked. It's given us a point of difference in the market," he says.

Proof indeed that the right lighting can make not just your product but also your store a true showstopper.