

# STEELE BARBER CO SEATTLE, USA

There's a whole world of barbering out there, so every issue we bring you a little international insight.

## FACTOIDS

**OWNERS:** Victoria and Matt Humphrey

**OPENED:** December 2017

**STAFF:** 10 barbers

**CLIENTS:** Construction folks, firemen, urban professional tech boomers, students, faculty professors, neighbourhood residents. Everyone is welcome.

**APPOINTMENTS OR WALK-INS:** Big on appointments, customers love the online booking. Walk-ins welcome.

**PRICE:** Cut from \$30 (£22.50). Signature shave \$45 (£34.00). Combo's available.

**RANDOM:** The owner's obsession with Land Rover cars inspired the shop interior and details in the decoration.

**MUST SEE:** IG and FB @steelebarberseattle. Web steelebarber.com



From the get go Matt Humphrey wanted Steele Barber Co to set a new normal on service and environment for high end men's grooming. He had the background, the contacts and the vision which have combined to deliver results for Steele's customers and its valued team. Matt is a former Aveda

executive with a backstory in supporting the expansion of the brand into high tier barbershops. "I loved the idea of creating something that could redefine the tradition of going to the barbershop for the modern man, so when I purchased the first Aveda Salon and Spa in Seattle, I immediately acquired the space next door to create Steele Barber," explains Matt. The team is a blend of men's grooming industry vets and new talent and all are employed and supported with in-house training. Matt's greatest challenge was recruiting the right people to deliver the standards and service required to command an \$80 plus price and share Steele Barber Co's vision. Matt says "Right now local government is taking a hard look at independent contractors or booth rentals versus commission operations like mine, as it pertains to fair taxation. I pay a good deal of taxes, benefits and wages compared to the owner of a booth rental outfit that doesn't. I also offer paid education, higher than minimum wage, higher than market commissions and health care benefits even though I'm not required to with the size of my company. It's a heated debate and rife with conflict with all those who rent. I've taken the road of creating a place where the benefits of compensation and ongoing education outweigh the lure of independent contracting. We're also experiencing an assault on licensure and industry deregulation at a national level which I find frightening. We have chosen to go deep into education and service delivery



standards with an emerging group called thegroomingcollective.com. It's a unique education and business focused group set up by men's grooming industry icon Kurt Kueffner who is also a former colleague at Aveda. It's a collective of schools, shops, educators and men's grooming specialists. We are working together to lay down a growth plan to elevate the prestige men's business."

For the premium look and feel of Steele Barber Co, Matt took inspiration from Land Rover. "I'm kind of a nut about those vehicles. Like Land Rover I wanted the shop to be very capable, luxurious but without pretence. The seating is designed with a gentlemen in mind...like the sofa which can actually fit a man with a 32" inseam like myself. The barber chairs were selected as they are similar to the late 90's, early 2000 full size Rovers. The metal screen separating the service area was custom made to look

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like the grill on the Series One Land Rover. The little details the guests enjoy are the simple touches like a custom leather caddy to hold your wallet, phone and keys. We offer a complimentary glass of local micro brewed beer on tap, or a glass of local whiskey or bourbon in a vintage Ralph Lauren Glen Plaid Crystal glass with a matching Crystal Decanter. We also have our guests

change into Steele Barber t-shirts, so they don't get hair shards on their clothes," enthuses Matt. The customer feedback is glowing and the shop has been thoroughly embraced into the community not least for its support of local charitable causes. The team works to raise funds for firefighters, forest rangers and EMT's as well as the Chicken Soup Brigade which offers free food to people too sick to feed themselves. Steele Barber Co shows that by thinking big they are delivering the premium details and doing it style!