

ADVICE

Made to measure is no longer a luxury



RUSSELL SMITH
ASK MR. SMITH

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Dear Mr. Smith:
Where can I get an affordable custom-made suit?

I get this question frequently and, although I can certainly recommend tailors in my own city, it's tough to answer in a way that will be of interest across the country.

Tailors are local, and you have to see them in person. So you will have to do research in your own city.

I will say that the idea of having suits – and shirts and even jeans – made to measure is growing in popularity among Canadian men, and so tailoring operations are springing up everywhere, and offering ever better deals. The made to measure suit is no longer an absurd luxury – in fact I know of a couple of shops in Toronto that can offer you a tailor-made suit (usually put together in Asia) for \$800 or even less. That's less than an off-the-rack Hugo Boss,

and it may well be better made. Affordable made-to-measure is definitely going to afford a boom – it's the future of men's wear.

Note that I'm talking about suits that are made from a pre-existing pattern, altered to your key measurements. Fully bespoke suits – that is suits whose patterns are designed and cut exclusively for you by a tailor – are still prohibitively expensive. (On the new "Bespoke" floor of the main Harry Rosen store in Toronto, the average customer shells out \$5,000 for a suit.) But even if you're ordering a made-in-Asia made-to-measure, you can still specify a

style and all the important details of the cut – the silhouette, the vents, the buttons – to a satisfying degree. A tailor here will take your measurements and send them overseas; when the suit comes back – usually a month to six weeks later – you will have it altered again, either by the first tailor or by your own tailor, so that may add a few bucks to the package.

It is also possible to order a suit online. For example, the Vancouver-based Indochino (www.indochino.com) shows you how to take your own measurements. You then pick a suit style and

colour from a small set of choices and hit send. The prices are astoundingly low – they start at \$199, for an all-wool two-button charcoal.

The problem with ordering online is that measuring someone well is actually a skill that requires some training. When you're measuring yourself, you're not getting the attention of the professional eye that makes something truly your own. I ordered a lovely dinner jacket from Indochino – a classic James-Bond-style two-button jacket with shawl collar, in wool and cashmere, selling for only \$325 – but I did a bad job of

measuring my own shoulders, so when it came it was too big, and I had to take it to my tailor here to have the shoulders narrowed. I also had the trousers narrowed and a couple of other things done, so it added around \$150 to the price. Still, it's a lovely fabric and still a bargain. I would look at Indochino as a source of decent, inexpensive everyday suits – particularly valuable for younger guys – rather than as a source for the perfectly fitted garment one usually thinks of as made to measure.

I will be discussing some other made-to-measure options in future columns.

LONDON FASHION WEEK

London be a lady

The shows for spring/summer 2009 were all about flirty sophistication and fun in the sun

BY MARILISA RACCO LONDON

Long the stomping ground of out-there designers, London Fashion Week has garnered a reputation for being too non-commercial to make an impact. Not so this season. The ladies on the catwalk were far more Patsy



From left to right: Nicole Farhi's spring/summer collection at London Fashion Week was aimed at the stylish working woman. Christopher Kane's collection featured semi-circle cut outs in leather and chiffon.