

Bespoke suits are in a league of their own, offering the gentleman a level of uncompromised comfort. But the devil, as they say, lies in the details. **Bernadette Png** shows how the masters pull it all together.

photos **SIDNEY TEO**

SHARP SUITERS

The British call it 'bespoke' — often associated with Savile Row, a historic strip in London made famous by its tailors — while the Italians know it as *su misura*. The term dates back to the 17th century where tailors had full bolts of cloths with them. When a customer chose their fabric, it was said to have 'been spoken for'.

In recent years, the trend towards personalisation has spurred an increased interest in tailoring. For Raffles Tailor's Mac Ho, honing the craft is difficult, as apprenticeships can take between seven to 10 years. He cautions using the services of tailors who can deliver a suit within a day, a sure sign these are outsourced and 'mass-produced'. Many aren't even fronted by tailors, but by businessmen trying to cash in on a trend. Ho offers some tips to ensure you get the most out of your tailoring experience.



Bubbles are tell tale signs of commercially-produced suits, says Mac Ho of Raffles Tailor.



Cutting is an art, and each tailor has his own style. So, ensure the tailor is also the cutter.

THE BASICS

A bespoke suit is made from scratch, with every detail of the body structure — including the arm position, the way one stands and waist level — accounted for when deciding the button levels, pocket levels, and size and width of the lapel. These details are hand-sewn to a larger extent and never fused. Functional buttonholes also distinguish such suits. Made-to-measure suits, on the other hand, are fused from standard blocks in small, medium and large sizes, modified to suit the individual.

TELLTALE SIGNS

Bubbles will tend to appear on fused suits after several times of dry cleaning, as the special glue used to adhere the canvas to the fabric wears off. Bespoke suits, however, are usually made of natural fabrics, which will have some imperfections that ironically are signatures of an ideal suit.

ALIGNMENT

When trying on a suit, unbutton the jacket and ensure that the left and right panels of the jacket front are straight and parallel, and that the buttons and holes are aligned — this indicates that the weight is distributed evenly on both shoulders. Pocket and button levels must be positioned where intended, as every individual has different requirements. The sleeves have to flow with the natural angle of the arm and there should not be any wrinkles on the upper sleeve.

FABRIC

A 100 per cent lightweight wool is ideal for formal suits, a cotton-linen mix for informal alternatives. The former breathes

easily and must be paired with a 100 per cent natural lining to give a cool feel. An all-weather fabric can be a high lightweight wool to low medium-weight wool ranging from 280g to 320g per metre of fabric, which is ideal for four seasons in a temperate climate and three in a colder country.

SINGLE APPEAL

The one- or two-button sleek-cut suit is currently in trend. Given the long lapel, the one-buttoned suit is ideal for the vertically challenged and can also make one look slimmer.

POWERING UP

For young entrepreneurs, a midnight blue contemporary classic suit can be easily worn from day to evening. For the successful businessman who has come of age, a 100 per cent cashmere suit would be better. This fabric is one of the most delicate materials; its ultra fine texture offers the wearer a sense of accomplishment.

PERSONALISED

Only the wearer for whom the suit is made can carry it off with style and confidence, as all measurements and details are tailored to his build. Initials or names can be embroidered on the inner chest pocket.

CARE & MAINTENANCE

Always send suits to a professional dry cleaning service and store in a proper suit cover, unzipped and hung. Less frequently worn suits can be dry cleaned twice a year.