

CLASSIC DRIVER

'Fashion is GREAT': Savile Row and Burlington Arcade celebrate British tailoring

Lead

We Brits have got a lot to shout about this summer. And, in addition to the Olympics, Wimbledon and the host of other London events coming up over the next couple of months, last week it was the turn of the Capital's centre of men's fashion, Savile Row, to wave the Union Jack with gusto.

Under the government-supported 'Fashion is GREAT' campaign, tailors in the world's most famous street for handmade suits opened their doors to the public. And a neat coincidence was the grand opening of a refurbished Burlington Arcade, only a short walk away.

So it was to that small corner of England that shall ever remain 'bespoke' that your Editor went last Friday. More in need of a sharply crafted body than custom-fit suit, I nevertheless enjoyed the textile world's equivalent of a tour of Pininfarina, Touring or Zagato.





There were cars, though: you just can't get away from them. London dealer HR Owen teamed up with Maserati – as sponsors of the event – and arranged for an interesting selection of the Trident's finest to be displayed in Savile Row and Burlington Gardens.

The tradition and history of Savile Row tailoring is quite extraordinary. Step into Henry Poole & Co (est. 1806), Norton & Sons (est. 1821) or Gieves & Hawkes (est. 1771) and you'll most likely be met by some vintage military uniforms betraying the area's early roots as suppliers to the well-heeled officer classes.

The sharply tailored military cut transcends the centuries and forms the basis for the typical 'Savile Row look'.

But before we dwell too much on 'tradition' and conservative styling, let's not forget that Henry Poole was the originator of the modern-day dinner suit and that Tommy Nutter, the legendary 1960s tailor to Mick and Bianca Jagger, had premises in Savile Row.







A proper bespoke Savile Row suit will cost £3,500 – 4,000. For that outlay one will receive a garment easily capable of lasting 10 years or more. That is, as Anthony Rowland of Henry Poole & Co so persuasively put it to me, “Around £350 a year – you’d pay much more than that for a half-decent, off-the-peg suit.” (As long as you keep off the buns, I thought.)

“Every component of a Savile Row suit is made solely for you,” he added. And of course if one doesn’t have three or four thousand burning a hole in one’s non-bespoke pocket, there’s nothing to stop you putting aside a few hundred a month to invest in something that ranks alongside shotguns from Purdey, a Patek Philippe watch or a Works Service-restored Aston Martin.

And it’s considerably cheaper than all of them.

Photos: Classic Driver

Gallery

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