



# TAILOR-MADE

Your suit can tell a lot more about you than you think. Mahir Ali from Ascot & Chapels gives us his tips and tricks on how to power dress | **By Rachel McArthur**



When it comes to menswear, the bespoke suit is the ultimate work of art. And how you customise it can say a lot more about you than you think. Whether it's for work, a wedding or an upcoming event like the Dubai World Cup, finding the right suit – that includes everything from the cut to the colours – can have an impact on the way you are perceived. We met Mahir Ali, who's the operations and brand artistic director of British brand Ascots & Chapels. With the brand known for its superb quality of master tailoring, it goes without saying that Ali knows a thing or two about dressing for business. Here, he shares his style secrets.

## *First of all, how important is it to choose the right suit?*

Very important. The idea is to dress for the position you are seeking. It would be arrogant of me to say dress like your boss' boss, let's say dress up for the position that you want. It's about the details, which a lot of people don't realise. With us, you can tell that an Ascots & Chapels suit is a bespoke suit because of the detail on the sleeves. The buttons are fully functional, they're not just there as a sewn on detail. Look at any ready-made suit and you will see that the buttons are not workable. I always tell a client to keep the first button - or the first two buttons - unbuttoned, so that when you are sitting down, it gets noticed. If you know about bespoke tailoring, you will automatically understand that this is a bespoke suit.

## *What are the other indicators of a tailor-made suit?*

The key is in the fine details. As we are talking now, you can see that I'm just wearing a navy blue suit; however, what makes the suit different are all the little details. For example, a good indicator of a bespoke suit is the threading around the button holes. If the threading is a different colour to the suit, then it is a bespoke suit. As for the button holes on the lapel, these are usually closed on ready-made suits. But in a bespoke suit they are open, and you can add a lapel pin through the hole. If you have the opportunity, customise your suit. It says a lot about you.

## *It is well known that suit jackets should be unbuttoned when sitting down. What other rookie mistakes have you witnessed?*

Yep, number one is when sitting down, you should always unbutton your jacket. Another thing I have seen is that when you buy a suit off the peg, there are labels on the sleeve. Those labels need to be taken off and put on the inside of the jacket. Don't keep them on there. As for a two-button jacket, you should only have the first button buttoned up.

## *Have you ever had any crazy requests that you turned down?*

Once someone wanted a renaissance suit, but we don't do that. We do a bunch of crazy things on personalisation though. For example, we once had a client request the French flag to be sewn on the inside of his jacket, which is pretty easy to do. Another had bought three Hermès scarves who wanted them to be cut out as the lining of the suit. The lining is very important. because when you are sitting without a jacket, you tend to fold it inside out, meaning that the lining is on show. And again, that indicates what kind of suit you have.

## *How long should a client give for a bespoke suit?*

Ideally, we take three-to-four weeks for a suit from the first fitting. If it's for a wedding, then visit us two months before.

## *With the Dubai World Cup coming up, what are your dos and don'ts for somebody going for business?*

Don't overdo it. But dress up in a way that people can take you seriously, especially if you are going to network. Sometimes, you see things that are fun, but you will never be taken seriously. Wear lighter shades of blue, and you can wear browns, that's fine. Opt for colourful accessories. I like bowler hats as it adds a good touch. They complete the look.

*Ascot and Chapels has locations in DIFC, Dubai Marina Mall, Souk Al Bahar, Dubai Motor City and The Galleria @ Sowwah Square, and Al Raha Mall, Abu Dhabi. For more information, visit [ascot-sandchapels.com](http://ascot-sandchapels.com).*



**CUFFLINKS**

It is perfectly acceptable for CEOs, CFOs and managing directors to wear cufflinks everyday. This is particularly important during meetings with clients, or when attending formal work-related events, such as conferences, for example. The key is to keep it classy and avoid the novelty cartoon ones.



**NECK TIES**

There is a huge variety of ties on the market, varying in colours, patterns, fabrics and widths. It goes without saying that the right tie completes a man's outfit. Colours clashing with your shirt or jacket are a little inappropriate for the office. Skinny ties, meanwhile, should be reserved for indie band members only.



**LAPEL PINS**

Lapel pins are another way of adding a bit of personality to your bespoke suit (plus it also demonstrates that your suit is indeed tailor-made). A custom-made lapel pin at the office looks great and can do wonders for your brand. If out at a formal event with a partner, match its colour with her dress.



**HANDKERCHIEF**

The handkerchief is an important part of a gentleman's wardrobe, one that is overlooked by many. When it comes to wearing a pocket square, there really is only one rule: Make sure it doesn't exactly match your neck tie. Why? Having a matching handkerchief and neck tie is considered a major fashion faux pas.