



When it comes to the perfect fit, nothing beats a custom suit, which is why many top fashion labels, including Gucci and Armani, offer a made-to-measure service with considerable success. But moving away from designer names, there are brands in the region dedicated to offering a tailoring service that are making their mark among discerning clientele.

Ascots & Chapels, a British tailoring house with a 130-year heritage, has seen more gentlemen in the Middle East seeking top-quality, hand-crafted clothing since opening their first outlet in the UAE back in 2007. They now have a presence in Doha and, with business booming, there are more being planned in the region, but the key to their success lies not just in their English sensibilities, but also being able to cater to local tastes.

"The majority stake in our Middle East operation is owned by a local group of third-generation manufacturers with in-depth knowledge of the preferences of the Arab gentlemen," explains Zaki Ali, corporate communications director for the Middle East and South East Asia operation of Ascots & Chapels. "Further to this, we have an excellent style and colour consultant to assist in the perfect choice of an intricately personalised garment, the finest blends of fabric, along with an efficient visiting tailoring and wardrobe service, taking our exclusive bespoke services to a truly global level."

Ascots & Chapels allows suits to be ordered in Doha, Dubai or Abu Dhabi and picked up or altered at its premises in Mayfair, London, and by the end of this year, a couturier will also offer this service in New York.

Ali has a number of tips for those keen on tailoring a suit, but most important is the fact that people have to wear a trend, and not let it wear you.

"While it is essential to be stylish and elegant while wearing a suit, it is also important to be comfortable," he tells *Aficionado*.

In this region, the boardroom demands, to some extent, a classic, sophisticated, sharp, well-fitted suit, but there's still a desire to stand out from the crowd, as Ali explains.

"While the general trend follows a classic taste and elegant design route, Middle Eastern men are incredibly trend-conscious, looking for something unique with every design blueprint.

"In this region, an element of customisation is always appreciated with active participation in the design and final outcome of the suit," he adds.

Of course, sometimes that means the end result can sometimes be a little too unique. For example, an Ascots & Chapels customer once wanted his own name to be etched into the gilded pinstripes of the fabric and run across the length of his suit, but each to his own. French design label Private Haute Couture recently launched its custom-made designs in the UAE, making headlines with



'BLACK CONSTRICTS YOU TO A VERY LIMITED NUMBER OF COLOURS YOU CAN PLAY AROUND WITH, WHILE A DARKER SHADE OF BLUE CAN ALWAYS BE BETTER'



its One Million Dollar' jacket, which is made from 25 crocodile and 10 python full leather hides, hand-carved buttons in 18-carat gold and zipper pulls with diamonds. Inside the jacket, a tag bears the owner's name in gold and their signature in diamonds.

"Private Haute Couture is a bespoke label that offers a level of luxury and exclusivity that remains unparalleled by any other fashion house in the world," said Christophe Petyt, founder of Private Haute Couture, who admits business is already booming. "We just started before the summer to sell, but so far we already found great interest and confirmed orders."

With their help, you can create a luxury jacket like no other. Names can be handcrafted in silk, gold thread or engraved in solid gold tags on luxury jackets, with buttons and zippers carved out of exclusive materials, including mother of pearl and platinum – the choices are many, but the result remains the same; a truly unique creation.

"The Private label concept seem to please all of those who come across Private Haute Couture", Petyt adds.

"To me there was no sense of doing things like others."

Samrat Amarnani, managing partner of Collars & Cuffs, a concierge service for high-end men's suits that started in 2012, also agrees on customisation remaining key in the Middle East.

"We have started [embroidering] Arabic initials," Amarnani explains. "I had a lot of Arab customers who ask for initials in English because they don't have the choice, but we have started Arabic initials, along with Russian and Chinese as well."

Growing through word-of-mouth, primarily through their exclusive fabric selection, Collars & Cuffs boasts more than 10 different fabric brands and factories that "supply to the likes of Armani and Hugo Boss". Some of the really unique fabrics they stock include a 100 percent wrinkle-free cotton collection called Easy Iron Shirting, which is treated with a harmless chemical that enhances crispness so your shirt looks impeccable even after a full day at the office. And while luxury tailoring no doubt comes at a price, what customers sometimes don't realise is that the more expensive and delicate the fabric, the harder it is to work with, as any good craftsman will tell you.

When it comes to suits, it's surprising to note that Amarnani doesn't think a black suit is that essential to a man's wardrobe, which he says can be constricting in the number of colours it can be paired with, and instead advises clients to invest in a navy blue one.

Tailoring a bespoke suit with the finest fabrics has never been easier, but it's important to choose a name that not only offers a range of colours and cuts, but also pays attention to details. After all, as Amarnani believes, "... it's the details that make the suit". That, combined with the local clientele's demanding yet discerning tastes, will see Middle Eastern men remain a cut above the rest. ■