

WILLIAM CASH

How many tailors does it take to change an HNW?
As many as he likes, it seems



I'VE NOTICED A NEW sartorial trend about HNW entrepreneurs. Just as they like to 'multi-bank', so they now 'multi-tailor'. I was reminded of this when I was in New York at a party on Fifth Avenue and saw my old novelist pal Jay McInerney. Jay – the closest America has to a modern-day Scott Fitzgerald – was looking as jazzy as ever in a new suit from Huntsman, the *grande dame* of Savile Row tailors now owned by hedgie Pierre Lagrange.

Of late, there has been a radical chic shift in London's bespoke tailoring world. A new generation of British 'gent' tailors, led by former cavalry officer Tony Lutwyche, who has just opened a showroom on Madison Avenue, is revolutionising the rules of mid-Atlantic British style. Only this time they are taking on not the old guard of Savile Row, but rather the favourite brands of the international HNW class: Brioni, Kiton and Zegna.

The subtle shift to 'boutique' tailoring is exactly like the mini-revolution that has shaken up the private client finance world. The moment many successful entrepreneurs have any meaningful cash, they open up accounts at Coutts and Hoare's. But, after a while, they also often want a bank defined not by its history, but by 'word of mouth'. They want a cosmopolitan boutique to match their own style. Choosing to have your bespoke suit made by Lutwyche is such a statement.

I now 'multi-tailor', most recently with Lutwyche (and previously with another 'challenger tailor' called Oliver Benjamin). I was introduced to Savile Row tailoring around 15 years ago at Anderson & Sheppard, through my Italian ex-wife's father being one of their best London customers. While

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many sophisticated Italian bankers in London or New York wouldn't be seen dead in an Italian suit (they prefer Savile Row), mid-Atlantic HNWs now increasingly like to go for a mid-Milan tailored look (Loro Piana for cashmere and coats).

Indeed, this is one reason tailors like Lutwyche have introduced 'ready-to-wear' ranges. Tony says once they feel the quality, they often upgrade to bespoke. Women are also following suit. Daisy Knatchbull – cousin of the royal family – has recently left Huntsman to set up her own female bespoke tailoring business.

After my Romanian housekeeper put my favourite hand-tailored French flannel suit in the washing machine, I cried for a week and then (after checking the cost of a new suit at Anderson & Sheppard) moved to the military and court outfitters, Redwood & Feller. Edward, the wonderful old master cutter and proprietor, is definitely proudly 'old school'. His Dickensian tailor's shop near Victoria has no ambitions to take on super-luxury Italian brands.

So now I greatly enjoy having several tailors, and I find my whole mood and character changes according to which suit I am wearing.

Indeed, this is one reason I so enjoy my new suit by Lutwyche. Formerly of the 9th/12th Royal Lancers, Tony operates from a private suite on Sackville Street (his Lutwyche 'Academy' ready-to-wear suits, made by apprentices, are also available at a nice discount). Every time I put on my new grey bird's-eye suit with a subtle green 'window pane' check, I feel a new man. I no longer feel as if I am walking about in a suit of navy blue armour. As Tony measured my

midriff, he said: 'William, you are the perfect specimen for bespoke.' He is right, of course. That's another beauty of bespoke. Everybody has been telling me how much weight I've lost.

The sartorial philosophy of *Le style est l'homme* was first applied by the 18th-century French writer and aristocrat Georges-Louis Leclerc. Graham Greene went the other way: he invariably wore the same literary uniform every day. Greene had around a dozen grey suits, which he wore with a white shirt and black wool tie. The latter can be referred to as the Robin Birley school of dressing. Such is Robin's fear that his stock of identical bespoke white shirts made by Lanvin in Paris will one day run out that he has been 'stockpiling'. 'I'm too frightened to look at the bill,' he told Nick Foulkes. 'I don't ask because if I do, I won't buy them.'

Lutwyche also makes exquisite bespoke shirts (a unique mix of Italian quality and British collar cut) for around the same price. They are very much the Frette of British shirts. Tony bought Britain's last remaining artisan tailoring workshop in Crewe. 'We are the only company to have truly "Made in England" suits on the market,' he says.

Tony's unique client banter makes clients – who include Guy Ritchie and Gordon Ramsay – feel they are members of a small and exclusive club. This was the secret of the legendary late Mayfair tailor Doug Hayward, whose clients ranged from tycoons like Lord Hanson to Roger Moore. Lutwyche is Hayward's successor as maestro mid-Atlantic tailor. **●**

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