

# Once, twice, three times a suit

*Elisabeth King stands to applaud the return of the three-piece suit.*

**F**ashion trends are like tsunamis. They can bubble below the surface for a year or two and then hit with full force. At the winter European menswear collections the English gentleman look re-emerged as designers used three-piece suits to hammer home the strong tailored trend of the season. And if you think you won't get much wear out of such formal attire, it's time you readjusted your thinking along with your shirt.

Sir Paul Smith, who created a benchmark pin-striped city three-piece with a two-button notch lapel jacket for his latest winter collection, says: "I think one reason men stopped wearing three-piece suits is because they thought they were restrictive but, actually, they are really very elegant."

The real bonus of the three-piece suit is that it allows you to wear your trousers higher, with the waistband hidden under the waistcoat, so that your legs look much, much longer. Hire *Dr No* and watch Sean Connery, for reasons best known to himself, walking along a beach in Jamaica in a gunmetal grey suit.

A two- or three-button single-breasted jacket is the best team-mate for a waistcoat, and wearing a three-piece suit to the office gives you a very sharp image, but its versatility doesn't stop there. The waistcoat can be worn alone on more laidback occasions, with a shirt and jeans for the pseudo-dandy look. "The waistcoat is a classic male garment," says Giorgio Armani. "It's wonderful worn casually, as it should be, over a T-shirt. It's only when you wear it with a jacket, shirt and tie that it becomes overtly formal."

Stick to grey, black or navy and you'll wonder why you waited for the official fashion nod to look this damned good. →



Saba waistcoat, \$469, and shirt, \$199; Mavi jeans, \$169; Prada belt, \$199; Gucci watch, \$1,515; Ray-Ban glasses, \$284, and dog tags, \$290.

Rembrandt houndstooth suit, \$999; Silver tie, \$79; Burberry & Kay shirt, \$169; Louis Vuitton shoes, \$1,480.



## WEARING IT

→ A part of your shirt cuff should always be seen coming out of your jacket sleeve. Just a centimetre's worth, possibly two, will do.



→ On a three-button suit, only the middle button should be fastened. On a two-button suit, only the top one.

→ A navy blue suit looks best if the shirt and tie are understated and monochromatic.

→ Tweed is best worn in small doses. This season's tweed works well with denim.

→ To find the right colour shirt to wear with a tweed jacket or suit, study the colours in the weave.

→ Cufflinks are up there as one of the more crucial components to any wardrobe. They should be barely seen and most definitely never heard. It's best to own several pairs and the simpler they are the better. Go for stainless steel.

→ Wearing a singlet is not daggly and will help keep you sweat free and your shirt looking crisp. It should also be grey as this won't show up underneath a white shirt.

## THE JARGON

→ **Bespoke:** The suit is made to your measurements and is usually stitched by hand. It can take anywhere from six weeks to a year to be completed.

→ **Made-to-measure:** Once you are measured by a tailor the details are sent to a factory, where changes are made to stock items.

→ **Off-the-rack:** Factory made suits (top-end brands are sometimes hand-stitched). A tailor can do minor alterations.