



## Reinventing Sartorial Traditions: The New Savile Row

by [Taraneh Ghajar](#)

Published: Mon Jan 12, 2009

Behind an unmarked green door in Central London, a Savile Row tailor fitted a client with a bespoke suite one early afternoon. If you are picturing an interaction between a stuffy gentleman and a tight-lipped tradesman, think again.

The tailor in question was the maverick, Mark Powell, and the client was Dexy's Midnight Runners frontman, Kevin Rowland. In front of the mirror, Rowland turned to admire his 1930s high-waisted, wide-leg Donegal tweed trousers and extreme cut-away jacket. "Mark understands me," Rowland told ASW. "We can spend an hour talking about turn-ups." Powell left the room only to return holding a remarkably similar pair of tweeds.

"I just made these for Keira Knightley," he declared.

Welcome to the new Savile Row. The elegant London street, where bespoke craftsmen have been in business since 1733, is still the heart of exquisite British tailoring but it's the younger players who are reinventing the meaning of bespoke. Their innovation is beckoning younger, hipper – and occasionally female – clients on to the Row to be measured up for luxe made-to-order suits.



Bespoke tailoring comes from the expression 'be'spoken' meaning that the tailor's cloth has literally been spoken for by a client. When you walk into a bespoke tailor's atelier, you are

opting for a distinct set of craftsmanship principles: specific measurement technique, straight shoulders, a narrow syce, and a well-defined arm are standards.

A bespoke suit is perhaps one of the original proofs that a quality product takes time. A suit takes an average of six weeks and three fittings to finish because every detail is hand-sewn. But according to Oswald Boateng, a Savile Row bespoke tailor, tradition needed an infusion of the new. “If traditions don’t evolve, they die,” said Boateng, who is also the creative director of Givenchy. “Savile Row wasn’t evolving.”

Boateng and other tailors, who are a part of the New Bespoke Movement, maintain painstaking bespoke techniques but challenge the old school bespoke firms’ subtle, traditional take on the standard suit. They have personalized bespoke even more, offering creative and more individualized looks. Below are the best of the Row’s new innovators.



### Oswald Boateng

The youngest tailor to open on Savile Row, Boateng talks like an artist, looks like a model and insists that he wants “to make all men beautiful.” Boateng’s look proves that brilliance and elegance go hand in hand. He skillfully uses bold colors in monotones and patterns to highlight his sharp suit lines. Clients include Daniel Day-Lewis, Laurence Fishburne and Keanu Reeves. Bespoke suits start at £3,000.

<http://www.ozwaldboateng.co.uk>

### Mark Powell

Famed for his sharp three-piece suits, Powell also knows how to combine individuality and fine tailoring to create edgy, dapper looks. He understands women too and has dressed Keira Knightley, Naomi Campbell and Bianca Jagger. Powell’s male patrons include George Clooney and David Bowie. Suits start at around £1,500.

<http://www.markpowellbespoke.co.uk>

### Kilgour

Established in 1882, Kilgour was revived in 2004 with Carlo Brandelli as the creative leader. Cary Grant, Fred Astaire, Jude Law and Daniel Craig are amongst the gentlemen who have donned Kilgour suits. The label distills sleek functionalism in its lean silhouettes. Expect charcoal mohair single button suits and jackets lined with polka-dotted silk. Look out for hand-blown Italian glass cufflinks in sky blue or powder pink and silk knit ties. Suits range from

£1,500 to £5,000.

<http://www.kilgour.eu/>

Timothy Everest

From his beautifully restored retro gentleman's atelier in Spitalfields, Everest crafts trim two-button slanted pocket jackets and plain trousers for the likes of Colin Firth, Gordon Brown and Tom Cruise. Everest, whose signature is his Spitalfields flower-patterned tie, also does bespoke denim. Suits start at £2,200.

<http://www.timothyeverest.co.uk/>

Richard James

Dandifying the traditional British menswear look, James' suits are recognizable for their elegant elongation. The jackets are waisted with deeper side vents and come with one to three buttons. James isn't afraid of color or texture, much to the delight of his fans, who include Pete Doherty, Hugh Dancy and Mick Jagger. Suits start at £2,700.

<http://www.richardjames.co.uk/>