

In conversation with Craig Banks

Craig Banks has just opened a gorgeous new shop on Thistle Street where he sells menswear. Not just any old menswear, but made to measure cashmere coats, tweed suits, dinner suits, formal wear and anything that the stylish man may wish.



He told us why he opened his own shop : “I love what I do. I am now married and have a family on the way, I want a better life and I want to promote myself and personal service.

“I love my trade. I have been working in it for nearly 19 years and it was time for me to do this for myself. If I can show how much I love it, how passionate I am then it should work.”



I suggested that Craig is his own best advertisement anyway. He was wearing one of his own bespoke tweed suits, an impeccable white shirt and silk tie with handkerchief peeking out of his top pocket.

“Well you’ve got to look the part to be the part of course! I design all my own clothes, the looks, everything. I am trying to be different without being too modern. ”

An English manufacturing company, Lambtons, make the clothes for Craig to his design. But how do you make tailoring into something quite different for men?

Craig explained : “Well most people imagine a suit as a single breasted jacket with trousers these days. I am trying to be a bit different, so I have designed the jackets to have a one button cuff and one button jacket. This is very rare indeed

even outside of Savile Row.

“Perhaps not everyone will take my style but it will give them a different look and approach. Most people see a two or three button suit and that is how they imagine their suit will be. You can of course have it any way you wish, but I am playing with an old-fashioned tailoring take which is very formal .



Craig's morning suit for weddings and Royal Ascot

“All evening wear should have peaked lapels, so I am trying to promote that into daywear but also make it a bit sharper. It is a nicer silhouette with wider lapels and a sharper body look. My suits have slanted pockets which elevate the body. I think everyone looks better in a one button slanted pocket jacket.”

Craig is married to Lesley and they have a baby on the way in May. He also moved house and started a business this year already, so this is a big year for him. He claims to have been dreaming about starting a business for about 10 years, but admits it was only when he and Lesley got married that he was able to fulfil that dream. She is apparently the boss according to Craig. “I had this dream but without Lesley this wouldn't work. She is my business partner and life partner. We work hard at this, especially now that our baby is on the way.

“I love Thistle Street, it is the best shopping street in Edinburgh and I came across this shop just at the right time when I was ready to start up on my own.”



Customers will be able to have any made to measure clothing they wish and Craig is adamant he can help them look better. Even walking along the street he often wishes he had a pack of pins to pin somebody's jacket to make it fit better. He continues : "I hate ill-fitting jackets!

"I started off in retail and sales, so pinning up clothes was something I learned on the job. I am pretty young in this game but I have already had a long career so I have a lot of experience. I now want to take this to a different level. I don't make fashionable clothes, these are classic clothes that will stand the test of time.

"I make clothes for all kinds of people but there are loads of young students in this city who have cash to spend on looking better. Perhaps they have always bought a label but they have realised that they don't always fit. Most off the peg clothes don't fit! Then we have professionals right up to director level. These are people who appreciate clothes, they wear

suits every day and who need longevity out of them. Otherwise of course there are people who only ever buy one made to measure suit in their lifetime and that is usually for their wedding. It is the biggest day of your life so it matters. You get a lot more choice, a lot more freedom, quality and a better fit.”

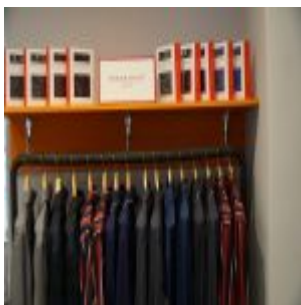


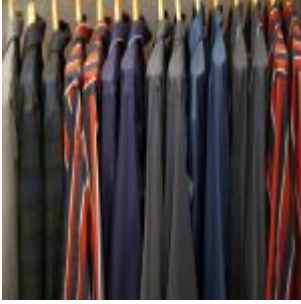
Craig Banks

So are there men out there who buy a made to measure suit and then simply cannot go back to off the peg?

“Well I hope so. I hope that they realise they will be hard pushed to have that level of service from other retailers with clothes in standard sizes.”

Although a made to measure suit may take six weeks before you take delivery of it, there are some clothes which can be bought off the peg in Craig’s shop. These include smoking jackets, pyjamas and dressing gowns from Derek Rose, Deakin and Francis cufflinks. Craig is emphatic about the choice of goods which people can readily buy in his shop. He stated : “These are the best pyjamas in Britain, and the accessories are the best in the world in my view. I make everything else under my own label from shirts to tartan trews, formal wear, business suits, trousers, cashmere overcoats and knitwear. We can do anything and everything.





“I think we are probably one of the few who make formal wear like tailcoats which people can wear to weddings and of course Royal Ascot!”

So even if Royal Ascot is not in your calendar this year, you may wish to go and have a coffee and a chat with Craig in his stylish new shop on Thistle Street.

Craig’s brand new [website is now live](#) and there is a Facebook page [here](#).

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