

## A NEW MEASURE OF SUCCESS

Is the historical art of tailoring being ushered into a brave new, mechanical dawn? The Rake visits the Dubai arm of New York's famed The Custom Shop to find out...

by **tom norton**

In the menswear domain, there is perhaps no sartorial pillar more steeped in tradition than the noble art of bespoke tailoring. And from those first style luminaries who held a measurement device to a gentleman's arm promising him a garment fit like none he'd known, throughout the centuries of innumerable fashions and fancies, the customisation process has remained relatively unchanged. Wherever the tailors – from the finest Savile Row establishments, to Bangkok side streets or gilded Middle Eastern shopping malls, it pretty much all falls down to a man and his measuring tape.

Until now, it seems. Harnessing an innovated concept from their New York outpost, The Custom Shop in Dubai has introduced to the region an entirely new way of suit fitting, one that could irrevocably change the institution of tailoring as we know it – body scanning. Professing to be a staggering 76 percent more accurate than human measurement, the process requires only 30 seconds to scan your entire being from head to foot, garnering enough precise data to fully embark on this crucial step of your bespoke outfit. The software will even run up a frighteningly quick summation of your health vitals, and giving a basic run down of your BMI, fitness levels – relating to your height and weight – and even your likelihood of contracting disease as you get older. Whether you fancy facing the music and getting appraised of these facts or would rather concern yourself with picking your suit fabric and matching handkerchief, is for you to decide.

“My background comes from the third generation of doing garments, tailoring, and textiles,” states Zaki Ali, founder of The Custom Shop Dubai. “We set up this concept, which is body scan in the traditional platform of tailoring – but this is a proprietary

technology that we have worked on.”

We can only imagine the questions arising in the minds of tailoring purists as they read this, but Ali asks for you to bear with him. “Once you get your size scanned, you're given a login number that immediately pops up on your mobile phone. You log in on to the platform and start shopping online. So, if you do have an alteration, you can always come back and support it with by the traditional experience.”

And, once the fabric, style and suit-cut preference has been indicated, a few days later you will return for the second stage – a more traditional fitting, where the fruits of this new-age process will be seen. In tailoring as in many things, the proof is in the pudding. And The Custom Shop's evolutionary pudding is an impressive one. Laying tradition aside for one minute, it seems only logical that technology that categorises your hip to foot ratio, waist size, neck width and all the other minutiae essential to tailoring, is naturally going to offer a more accurate reading than the fallible human eye. The fact that this new-age process is galvanised by a traditional second fitting to offer a human, and perhaps, more comfortable touch means the whole experience serves more as a hybrid of the contemporary and the classic, as opposed to a zany fad. –

“In a place like Dubai or New York, people are not money-poor, they are time-poor, they don't really have the time for the typical tailoring methods,” says Ali, when asked what the *raison d'être* was behind this new concept. “What we're doing is taking something that works in a very traditional platform and making it more efficient, more 21st century, and keeping it trendy. We're trying to infuse all of that in the platform of traditional bespoke. And while it might not be traditional, it is beyond bespoke.”

