Menswear + Add to myFT

How to style a pinstripe suit

With added crystals or paired with sneakers, the one-time formal business suit is finding new life outside the Square Mile

David Hayes 3 HOURS AGO

One of the great menswear classics to be discarded in the City's steady slide from business-smart to business-casual is the navy double-breasted pinstripe suit.

"I don't have a pinstripe suit and can't say I'll be buying one anytime soon," says Rupert Gove, a 29-year-old analyst at JPMorgan. He and his office mates prefer something much more relaxed now dress codes have eased — a Patagonia fleece gilet over a formal suit and tie — and when the day-to-day reality of office life often entails "tweaking Excel spreadsheets and joining conference calls".

Which is in many ways a shame. "Owing timeless British elegance" in the words of legendary Savile Row tailor Edward Sexton — who knows a thing or two about pinstripes, having cut suits for everyone from The Beatles to Gerhard Schroder — the style is deeply flattering. A narrow low-contrast stripe emphasises the line from chest to waist, thereby lengthening and slimming the body while adding a subtle sense of formality and gravitas.

Cristina Gardumi SS20 © Jason Lloyd-Evans

But unlike the Square Mile, the pinstripe suit is finding new life. In Paris, creative director Hedi Slimane opened his achingly cool Celine spring/summer show with a three-piece pinstripe suit picked out in crystals, evoking all the Savile Row swagger of a young Mick Jagger in his Seventies rock aristo pomp. (It's a look best approached with caution — unless, of course, you can muster all the swagger of a preternaturally young rock god.) Tom Ford also nodded to the Seventies for spring, cutting his grey pinstripe suits with louche, wide lapels and pairing them with glazed silk shirts and ties. At Alexander McQueen, Sarah Burton has sliced multi-stripe cloth in razor-sharp tailoring; and at Berluti, Kris Van Assche has added standard pinstripes to his mix of paint-splattered prints and sporty neon brights.

Advertisement

"It's about subverting traditional menswear codes and interpreting them in a directional way," says Lane Crawford, merchandising director at Moncler Genius. Wild traditional pinstripe suits haven't always sold well for the multinational department store. Moncler has seen an upswing in demand for suit separates, unconstructed soft tailored jackets and casual shirts, including those from Dries Van Noten, 3.1 Phillip Lim and Uma Wang. To make pinstripe look more contemporary, he recommends changing up the silhouette — a shorter trouser with a polo shirt and simple sneaker would do — or pairing it with unexpected pieces, like boots.

Berluti © Jason Lloyd-Evans

For designers, pinstripes add a touch of formality and elegance to sportswear and casual separates. "I feel I am being back traditional fabrics if I add something new," says Berluti's Van Assche. Echoing the logo trends of streetwear, he had the iconic Berluti "Scritto" design transposed into the spring show's silk and wool pinstripe to give extra dimension to the fabric.

> **66**
> **It's about subverting traditional menswear codes and interpreting them in a directional way**

"In this new era of tailoring, pinstripes are now popular beyond the corporate environment because they go back to giving a heightened sense of style and masculinity," he says.

Craig Green is another designer playing with that notion of tradition, mixing the classic stripe in what he describes as "worker-style utility shapes and patterns".

The results are anything but corporate. For spring/summer, Green has printed pinstripe-style stitch lines on to paper-feel cotton and created outerwear pieces from multiple strips of fabric patchwork organza with pinstripe-style embroidery holding the layers together.

Celine © Jason Lloyd-Evans

The change in tastes hasn't dimmed Sexton's own love of this business-like cloth. "Personally, I love to wear a pinstripe suit with one of my signature tab collar shirts, as much as I like to dress it down in winter with a roll-neck sweater. I tend to wear a pinstripe suit for formal meetings too," he adds. "But then I am quite traditional about these things."

Advertisement

Follow #financialtimesfashion on Instagram to find out about our latest stories first. Listen to Culture Call, the FT's transatlantic culture podcast, which interviews people shifting culture in London and New York. Subscribe at ft.com/culture-call, Apple Podcasts, Spotify or wherever you listen to podcasts.

Copyright The Financial Times Limited 2020. All rights reserved.

Share this article | Reuse this content

Menswear stories you missed

Robert Armstrong
Go west young man, with Prada's $240 bolo tie
JANUARY 23, 2020

FT Series **Menswear Autumn/Winter 2020 shows**
Craig Green is in a school of his own
JANUARY 20, 2020

FT Series **Menswear Autumn/Winter 2020 shows**
Suits aren't just for the office
JANUARY 16, 2020

FT Series **Menswear Autumn/Winter 2020 shows**
In Paris, clothes for the Instagram generation
JANUARY 15, 2020

Latest on Menswear

FT Series **Menswear Autumn/Winter 2020 shows**
Craig Green is in a school of his own

FT Series **Menswear Autumn/Winter 2020 shows**
Designers in Paris reappraise modern masculinity

Robert Armstrong
Go west young man, with Prada's $240 bolo tie

Special Report **How we will live in 2050**
Hackers of 2050 to target smart cities and deep-fakes

Follow the topics in this article

Menswear + Add to myFT
Fashion shows + Add to myFT
David Hayes + Add to myFT

How easy or hard was it to read FT.com today?
Leave feedback

Support
View Site Tips
Help Centre
About Us
Accessibility
myFT Tour
Careers

Legal & Privacy
Terms & Conditions
Privacy
Cookies
Copyright
Slavery Statement & Polic...

Services
Tools
More from the FT Group

Markets data delayed by at least 15 minutes. © THE FINANCIAL TIMES LTD 2020. Financial Times and "The Financial Times" and "The Financial Times Ltd"
The Financial Times and its journalism are subject to a self-regulation regime under the FT Editorial Code of Practice.

A Nikkei Company