

"I'm now ready for my close-up"



# IAN CHANG

HE LOOKS LIKE A YAKUZA BOSS AND CRAFTS SUITS LIKE A PROFESSIONAL SAVILE ROW TAILOR.  
JUST FOLLOW SUIT IF YOU KNOW WHAT'S GOOD FOR YOU...

## Q&A

### Hi Ian...

[Laughs] Hey, I thought you were coming with a bunch of *FHM*'s Girl Next Door finalists. This is very disappointing.

**We've sorry we let you down. Anyway, we heard you once turned up at a Savile Row boutique in London unannounced, and you were asked to leave the premises?**

First impressions count. I was wearing a t-shirt, jeans and carrying a backpack. They looked me up and down and probably thought I was lost. I definitely looked like I couldn't afford to buy a suit. They opened the door and told me to leave. I didn't even have a chance to say anything.

**What did you do after that incident?**

I returned to Malaysia and started doing odd jobs for a local tailor. I remember ironing shirts all day only to be told to do it all over again. I paid my dues alright. It taught me to take pride in even the most mundane of tasks.

**How big a fanatic were you of bespoke tailoring?**

I came from a small fishing village in Kuala Selangor and I was definitely not the most fashion savvy person. When I made my way to Kuala Lumpur I was criticised and even ridiculed for the way I dressed. So, when I had the opportunity to learn more about tailoring, I saved up to buy expensive designer suits, only to take them apart to study their construction. I was very poor back then, but I didn't care. I was obsessed with perfecting my skills.

**How did your fortunes change?**

I bumped into Sir Andrew Ramroop — head tailor of the legendary Maurice Sedwell Shop on Savile Row — during a tailoring conference in Penang in 2004. He was intrigued by this young Chinese guy who just wouldn't shut-up about suits. He eventually took me on as an apprentice. Considering what I had been through, it was extremely gratifying. I shed tears of joy when I made my way back to London.

**Go on...**

With Sir Andrew as a mentor, I came to understand why individuals with the means relish the bespoke experience. It isn't just about status and sophistication, but also about suitability. They want something that is theirs and theirs alone. The clients are essentially the designers, we merely try to understand their needs and facilitate the process of obtaining a perfect fit.

**When did you start Bespoked?**

I opened my boutique in 2008, in a tucked-away corner of 1 Utama Shopping Centre. In a few short years, we've managed to put together a clientele that appreciates our craftsmanship and attention to every detail.



suit much more expensive than one that you would possibly buy off a rack.

**That's just ridiculous! Don't tell me it's just to impress the ladies.**

To a certain extent, that is often the case. They want to stand out. A sharp looking suit instils confidence and is far more eye-catching than an expensive watch or car. It's about being individualistic; you could even see double-breasted suits making a comeback in slimmer silhouettes with a higher waist. Likewise, three-piece varieties are being seen again on the runways of Paris and Milan. As you can see, the possibilities are endless.

**Okay, we're convinced. Tell us how many should be hanging in our closet?**

Ideally, you should alternate between a dark and light-coloured version. Then, if possible, get a linen one for outdoor events, and a sports jacket that you

**Q: A suit isn't practical in our climate.**

**A: Wrong. Men want that competitive edge. That extends to looking good too**

**How does it feel to finally have your own place where you can kick unwanted individuals out?**

[Laughs] It feels great! Finally, I can offer personalised services in the truest sense of the word. It's not about being snooty, but we did have to ask certain individuals to leave for being disruptive when we were attending to important clients.

**But a suit isn't really practical in our climate?**

That's where you're wrong. These days, men want that competitive edge and that certainly extends to looking good too. The Internet has made sartorial knowledge widely available, and you'll be surprised that some in their early 20s are already paying attention to fabric type, the height of their notched lapels, and insisting on a specific number of buttons a sleeve cuff should have.

**Is anybody going to notice how many buttons there are on your sleeve?**

Yes! They'll even comment if yours is merely decorative while theirs can be unbuttoned. We also hand-stitch the eyelets, which takes almost a day compared to a sewing machine that could complete the task in a matter of hours.

The difference lies in the finishing, which makes the

can pair with chinos if you travel frequently. And lastly, have a tuxedo ready for black-tie events.

**What's the most expensive suit that you've sold?**

That has to be the RM80,000 pinstripe suit that we made for a wealthy businessman. We used Scabal's top-of-the-range Private Line and weaved his initials in gold thread into the fabric. Again, it's about having your outfit made-to-measure and personalised.

**You're pretty well-dressed yourself. What are you like on weekends?**

When I'm not working, I prefer comfortable clothing — a t-shirt, shorts and slippers. But on weekdays, first impressions still count.

## VITALS

**IAN CHANG**

**AGE:** 35

**FROM:** KUALA SELANGOR

**JOB:** BESPOKE TAILOR

**OWNER OF:** BESPOKED

**WHERE:** 1UTAMA SHOPPING CENTRE