



Recommended: S. Cohen

As a young professional, I know many peers are often confronted with the sartorial dilemma of quality verses price when shopping for tailored clothing.

Unless you are at the point in your professional career to purchase bespoke garments — and in that case Savile Row is the place to go — you are likely looking in the racks for something that is ready-to-wear.

If that is the case, I recommend you consider S. Cohen the next time you purchase a suit, blazer or sport jacket.

Too many gentlemen focus on the big-name labels, which are generally overpriced and often have no connection to the name that adorns the label. (S. Cohen has made tailored clothing for J. Press, the iconic American menswear store, and other familiar brands for a while now.)

For starters, S. Cohen is 100 percent made in North America. The company, located in Montréal, is also a union shop, if that is important to you.

In an age when just about everything is made in the Far East, it is refreshing to know S. Cohen is a fourth generation, family-run company with employees that could otherwise be your family, friends and neighbors.

And unlike others, S. Cohen stands by its offerings and provides a lifetime guarantee against “defects in workmanship or materials.”

For reviewing purposes, S. Cohen provided me with an off-the-rack suit from its Suits for the Cure line, in which \$20 from the sale of every suit is donated to cancer research.

My suit had a two-button charcoal jacket with side vents and so-called kissing sleeve buttons, although the jacket sleeve didn't have functioning buttons — also known as surgeon's cuffs in sartorial parlance. It had notch lapels, darts and a slimmer cut. It came with a welted breast pocket and two flapped waist pockets. Though the shoulders were padded, it did not have the look of football pads.

The cloth had been treated with S. Cohen's renowned stain resistance, which literally stops the cloth from absorbing liquid. Normally this sort of treatment gives cloth a rough feel, but the pure-wool cloth of my suit was very soft to the hand. While a fall 2011 offering, the cloth was light enough for use in three, if not four, seasons.

At this price, the suit's inner workings are fused with glue. Some may consider fusing a turnoff, though most suits these days are made in this manner unless you buy bespoke or high-end off-the-rack. It is also worth noting that modern fusing is vastly improved.

Notwithstanding, it would be advantageous for S. Cohen to offer non-fused jackets as rival Jack Victor, also of

Montréal, sells almost all half-canvassed. This puts Jack Victor at a slightly higher price than S. Cohen, though there is not much of a difference outside fusing to warrant the price difference.

Inside the jacket, there are the *de rigueur* pockets (three full-size plus a fourth for an ink pen) and soft-as-silk bemberg lining, which was medium gray. From a visual standpoint, I would have preferred a different color thereby giving the jacket a more bespoke look.

One thing to keep in mind if purchasing from S. Cohen is the company's new Custom Cuts program.

This is essentially halfway between what-you-see-is-what-you-get and bespoke. While not made-to-measure in the full sense of the word — made-to-order is probably better — it allows one to order a customized suit. (A bespoke suit on the other hand involves a pattern created from scratch based on the customer's measurements.)

Options include hundreds of cloths and dozens of linings and buttons. It also allows one to select options such as notch or peak lapels, pickstitching, hacking pockets, a ticket pocket, surgeon's cuffs and natural shoulders.

I did note that some of these options were not available when other choices were selected. I could order a two-button jacket with natural shoulders, side vents, and a ticket pocket, however, I could not order hacking pockets with a natural shoulder. Custom Cuts also did not allow me to select a three-two roll, which S. Cohen makes for J. Press. This classic choice involves the jacket lapels rolled past the top button rendering it functionless and in essence creating a two-button jacket.

It also should be noted that some of these choices come with a surcharge — \$25 for surgeon's cuffs and \$7.50 for a pen pocket. Even with this added cost, the overall price of your customized suit is still far below what one would expect and if done right it should not require any alterations upon delivery. (An experienced tailor will often charge upwards of \$80 to make an off-the-rack suit fit well.)

All of this is done through a new, state-of-the-art website accessible by S. Cohen retailers. Once the order is placed, the company delivers the finished garment within 10 working days — an incredible turnaround time that competes with Far East made-to-order shops such as Indochino.

Overall, I was thoroughly impressed with my suit and can, without hesitation, recommend S. Cohen. It is not difficult to imagine a suit of lesser quality than what I had being sold for between \$400 and \$500 in department stores.

In the future though I will go with the Custom Cuts program, which offers an exceptional value that far exceeds the any of the bland off-the-rack suits one finds at department stores and mass-market menswear stores.

— Dennis Lennox