Alumni

Ask an Alum: Tailor-Made

By
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Dan Trepenier (Alex Crawford)

Once voted the best-dressed man in America by the readers of *Esquire* magazine, Dan Trepanier ’09CC is now the CEO and creative director of Articles of Style, an online bespoke menswear company that he founded with fellow Columbian Will Howe ’10CC. We asked Trepanier for some practical fashion tips and advice on wardrobe essentials.

What’s one rule of thumb that men should keep in mind when shopping for clothes?

A good fit is the most important part of being a well-dressed gentleman. Frankly, it’s more important than quality. I have friends who shop at the thrift store, and they spend more money at the tailor than they do at the store. They look fantastic for a few bucks. And then I know other people who spend a lot of money on clothes, but they don’t fit. You never want to be the guy in the two-thousand-dollar Louis Vuitton suit that doesn’t fit.

How do you define style? Why is it important to you?

Style is your cover letter, your résumé. We teach “Don’t judge a book by its cover,” but we do that every day, every time we look at someone. Style is your way of putting your best foot forward and introducing yourself without having to say anything. I grew up on a farm in Canada, in the middle of nowhere, and then played basketball at Columbia, so I didn’t care about style for a long time, because it wasn’t important in those arenas. As soon as I wanted to be taken seriously as a mature, smart gentleman, dressing the part really catapulted me up the ladder. It was life changing for me.

What are some of your fashion pet peeves?

I’m a little peeved about the trend toward overly casual clothing. It seems that everywhere you go, people are wearing workout gear. They’ve lost any sense of occasion.

Is there an article of clothing that looks good on every man?

A beautiful navy sport coat, an Oxford shirt in white or blue, a good pair of dress boots. The beauty of menswear is that you don’t need a lot of clothes. You can build

a wardrobe out of a few investment pieces; those are the classics that are going to work for most men, day in and day out.

Where do you look for fashion inspiration?

I usually look to the past, to classic American style icons like Paul Newman, Ralph Lauren, Steve McQueen, and James Dean. To me, they embody cool and casual, and they always looked sharp.

What fashion trends do you see on the horizon?

There’s a consciousness that’s growing — especially among younger people — about sourcing. The same thing that’s happening in food is going to happen in fashion. People are going to ask, “How is it possible that this shirt is seven dollars? Who’s getting hurt along the way?” I’m a big opponent of fast fashion. Cheap, disposable clothing is detrimental to craftsmen and to the planet.

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