

# Suiting Style on a Shoestring

*From wallet-friendly options on the high-street to nicely priced designs in the multiples, competition in the good-value suiting market is keener than ever. Menswear in Ireland reports.*

If there were an Olympics for suiting and booting, and looking the part, well - credit where it's due - the Italians would be way out in front; the rest of the world scrapping for second place. And you'd be forgiven for thinking we wouldn't even make the starting line-up, with a track history of not knowing the difference between a slim cut and a disco lapel.

Not so fast though. Things are changing. Especially in the burgeoning discipline of dressing 'right'. Bit by bit, we're becoming savvier in the sartorial stakes. But ... still, many of us brace ourselves when contemplating an investment in new threads. Shuddering in anticipation of a significant outlay.

In truth, we're so intimidated, and often overwhelmed, by notions of creating first impressions that we spend too much (or nothing at all). No surprise really when the twin mantras of 'you get what you pay for' and 'clothes maketh the man' ring in our ears, rendering us hard-wired to dig deep, or just stall, for fear of landing the dreaded 'cheap suit'.

To save you pondering into oblivion what's good value, we've done the leg work for you. So, don't worry about undoing yourself by being frugal. Let us show you the kind of bang you can



Remus Uomo



Van Kollem



Remus Uomo

get for your buck. Here's a selection of what you can acquire - at prices to fit your finances: a range of suits and coordinates to stand alongside any other.

## RETAILERS - WORD FROM THE SHOP FLOOR

### Salingers Clothing & Apparel Cork

"Giudice," says Christofer Kaprelian of Salingers. "They're our main suit supplier, offering real quality - incomparable to any other brand, in my opinion. Theirs is a suit that offers something special, for those all important occasions."

"Giudice also provides a 'made to measure (MTM)' service," he adds, "letting us choose every detail and fabric you can think of. Now that's incredible quality and service." To mark your card - starting prices run from €550, and €750 for extra attention on personal fitting detail (MTM).

Kaprelian is similarly enthusiastic about suit brand Paul Taylor: "Our other main suit would be this Roman brand. It's gaining an incredible reputation, with stunning styles, quality and affordability." And he's not kidding, with entry level prices running from €290, you may just blink and look twice.

"Our Paul Taylor smart casual range has performed extremely well," says

Kaprelian. “It offers an alternative to the smart modern man. That said, we’re also introducing entry level suits this fall, from Portugal and Italy. And we’ve got very high hopes for these exciting, fresh brands. Ones to watch. Definitely!”

“In terms of consumer demand this season, we’ve found men are much keener on buying slimmer fits. And peak lapels have been quite a popular feature,” he mentions. “We’re gradually seeing an interest develop for double-breasted suits. As for colours? Navy has dominated, as well as petrol. Probably due to their versatility.”

**Fitzgerald Menswear, Waterford**

“Our key selling brands in suits are Como - they’ve got excellent fitting and also, City Uomo and Baumler, both out of the [John] Grief stable,” says Tony Fitzgerald. “These are superbly cut suits, and they represent very good value.”

Fitzgerald explains: “They work for the retailer too. We can sell them in special offer situations, at prices of €220 to €250, and they still realize a profit. A profit that means it makes sense for us to sell them.”

“We also stock Talmarc Clothing, Van Kollem, Van Gils and High Fashion Peter Van Holland (see right),” he continues. “And their top prices come in at around €250 too. Now, that’s excellent pricing. Even on sale, we get a worthwhile ‘mark up’. So much so, we could run shops on these brands alone, they’re so versatile.”

Fitzgerald’s frankness gives a rare insight into how the trade really functions. And perhaps, it also shows the future trajectory of the industry: bringing style and substance, in tandem, to the table, and thereby increasing sales, as shoppers twig they’re doing very well, even on the tightest of budgets.



Club of Gents



Van Kollem



Carl Gross

**Cooper Gents Outfitters, Derry**

“Yes we do sell business suits,” confirms Paddy Cooper of Cooper Gents Outfitters. “And our brands include Carl Gross, Tommy Hilfiger, Facis, and Skopes.” It’s an impressive range, covering a lot of ‘budget’ territory.

“My best seller would be Carl Gross,” he mentions. “Why? Well, they’re always consistent - with great fits and an excellent range of fabrics. And their prices are very manageable, ranging from £179 - £499.”

“That said,” he quickly adds, “our best-selling price would be around £300.” Even when you convert back into Euro, this kind of price keeps you well inside the mythical €500 mark; leaving plenty of spare change for shirts and ties.

**COMPETITION FROM THE MULTIPLES**

Suiting prices may be going down, down down in the nation’s independent retailers, but they’re also more keenly priced than ever in the larger multiples such as Penneys, Marks & Spencer, Next and Zara.

In the current M&S menswear range, for instance, the budget-conscious suit shopper can pick up a double-breasted suit in the upmarket Sartorial collection for €270. Cheaper still is the store’s single-breasted suit in the Limited Collection, which is priced at just €135.

Bargains also abound at retailers such as Dunnes Stores, where a men’s suit jacket and trousers can be picked up for as little as €65 and €35 respectively. Over at Tesco, meanwhile, a smart grey, single-breasted, two-button suit is a snip in the Northern Irish branches at just £60.

## BRANDS - THE LABELS TO WATCH

### Van Kollem & PVH (Peter Van Holland) Suits - Marc Tallon of Talmarc Agencies

Going Dutch is a good way to start. The Van Kollem label, part of the Van Gils group, and represented by Marc Tallon, is a tightly-priced brand that's been on the Irish market for more than 20 years. "It's a particularly popular business suit," says Tallon. "And it's available in a smart single-breasted, two-button style and very nicely priced between €80-€90."

"It's a similar shape to a Hugo Boss suit," adds Tallon, explaining how it has a slightly slimmer fitting, which he believes appeals to gents aged between 30 and 50 years. He's also quick to point out how it has two collections a year.

"Then you've got PVH," he continues. "Peter Van Holland. He's a young fashion designer whose work is grabbing the attention of the

younger market. They've got a slim lapel and shoulder line, as well as the customary two-button style. And they're entry price starts from €70."

### Falabella

Keep an eye out for Falabella: they too are a leading player in the 'suits and jacket' market in Ireland. Also a Dutch company, they work closely with their Irish agents, to provide formal wear that meets both fashion and business demands. Of course, all while remaining keenly priced.

Their indexing kicks off at €39 for jackets, and €55 for suits. Yet, there is no compromise on quality, or even style for that matter: quality wool, linen, cotton and a range of fabrics, smartly combine with attractive trims and elegant details to complete a modern, trendy, and remarkably commercial range.

You may not have encountered them as yet. But rest assured, they're very well established. And as such, Falabella fits snugly into the niche of disciplined purchasing. Right now, you could say - they're perfect for the Irish customer and the Irish pocket.

### Douglas & Grahame

Another standout label is Douglas. The flagship brand of Douglas & Grahame, it's notable for its fine craftsmanship. With a reputation for world class tailoring, at remarkably good value, you'll get more than you bargained for in their stylish and elegant suits.

The Douglas Menswear Collection for Autumn Winter 2012 is focused on a colour palette spanning grey, navy and black. Underpinned by a single-breasted button 2s, in two and three piece combinations, it arguably succeeds in making a sophisticated statement with effortless ease and using top-notch fabrics, including pure new wool and wool blends. And you'll be feeling all the more refined (in pocket) when you can attire yourself for a modest €299.

Douglas is also carrying a 1930s-inspired Remus Uomo range in its current collection, which is priced from €199. Its worthy features are the strong shoulders, nipped waists and wide-peaked lapels. Pretty sharp formal tailoring in anyone's book, you could say.



The advertisement features a man in a dark suit on the left, looking directly at the camera. To his right, the word "FRONT" is written in a bold, white, italicized font with a red triangle pointing to the right. Below the text, two pairs of oxford shoes are displayed: one pair in dark grey and one pair in brown leather. In the bottom right corner, the text reads: "IRISH DISTRIBUTORS Paul Garvey Agencies LTD - Blanchardstown T: 01 866 5280 E: sales@paulgarveyagencies.ie www.paulgarveyagencies.ie".

# DOUGLAS®

## M E N S W E A R

### Carl Gross

The stock mix and match suit range from Carl Gross is the biggest offer on the Irish market. There are almost 50 patterns to choose from with a size range from 36 short to 54 long. The ever evolving cloth selection is bang up to the minute with 5 blocks to choose from. In addition the bi annual flash jacket range (20 patterns) is a handy companion to any shop floor.

### Richmart

From August 2012, Pat Canny will begin a joint venture with Richmart, a high-tech Bulgarian menswear manufacturer that produces for prestige international brands. On the cusp of launching into the Irish market, Canny will be offering a brand new range of suits, jackets and overcoats, in a choice of top-end cloths.

"These days it's all about the 'price-quality' ratio," says Canny. "People are looking for high quality at much lower prices than before. That's the nature of business. And that's our aim. To get customers to buy 'value', get a good deal, and purchase again, knowing they did well the first time out."

"The last thing you want people to do is buy cheap, and buy often," he differentiates. "There's no merit in that. Quality is key. That's why I travelled out to meet Richmart and see their factory firsthand."

So, soon you'll be able to be able to choose from a wide selection of high quality Italian and English fabrics, from Vitale Barberis Canonico and Loro Piana to Dormeuil, at incredible prices. And according to Canny there is no need for seasonal forward orders, they'll get your order to you inside four weeks. Impressive.

Now, best of luck on that job interview. Or more importantly, that date you've been waiting to ask out. As Canny says: "It's time we got back into our suits". He's got a point.

### Skopes

The new range of mix and match suits from Skopes begin at an incredible €55. The new modern block now covers a wide variety of potential customers. With other mix and match suits at €57 and €67 the new Skopes collection is an easy option for all shop keepers.

A 3 day turn around coupled with sizes in stock in all colours up to size 62 chest.

Wool trousers and cotton trousers jackets and outerwear complete the new comprehensive range of stock from Skopes.

### Benetti

Fitted modern chic and sharp the new Benetti range of Debs suits from €59 are a must for any store to tackle the lucrative Debs market. Planning and foresight from Benetti has opened up this area of Debutants to many new customers who otherwise ignored it.

A wide range of fitted shirts and skinny ties complete the planned package.

Knitwear in V-neck crew and Zip (20 colours) with matching shirts in 2 ply cotton for the Christmas rush are all available from stock.



## Stock Service all year round

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