

## Suit Smarts

*Adrian Jules continues an American tailoring legacy—one suit at a time.*



TAILORS ADRIANO ROBERTI and Juliano Volontare established their Adrian Jules suit label in 1964 in a small workshop near Rochester, N.Y., at a time when eight other suitmakers—the country's largest concentration outside of New York City—were operating within the city limits. The two Italians had met a decade earlier while working together at the most prominent of those Rochester firms, Hickey Freeman. Their meeting coincided with the advent of mechanized production, which in short time would dominate the apparel manufacturing trade and would decimate many businesses; by the 1970s, Hickey Freeman and Adrian Jules were the only Rochester suitmakers still in business.

While Hickey Freeman utilized the advancing technology to make mass quantities of off-the-rack suits and sport coats, Adrian Jules continued constructing one suit at a time, incorporating as much handwork as possible into each. "Except for Oxxford Clothes, we are the only American suitmaker that still does most of the tailoring—shaping, molding, finishing, basting, and buttonholes—by hand," says Arnald Roberti, Adriano's son, who now co-owns the company with his brother, Peter. (Volontare left the company within the first year of operation.)

While their father operated Adrian Jules much like a large tailor's shop, the brothers have expanded the business far beyond Rochester, so that small independent specialty stores across the country now carry the collection. These

shops include Peter's Clothiers in Kansas City; Harper's Haberdashery in Baton Rouge, La.; and Liles Clothing Studio in Raleigh, N.C. Adrian Jules also makes suits that carry the labels of several major retailers and custom tailors.

"A lot of affluent American men are wearing our suits and don't even know it," says Arnald, who has designed jacket models for fall that are intended to

appeal to men younger than Adrian Jules' typical clientele. The Lance model—with light padding in the shoulders, a trimmer fit, and a higher button stance—has a long, lean silhouette. The Bradford also has soft shoulders, but its slightly fuller body offers a more classic American fit. The more casual, unlined Michael model has the lightweight feel of a sweater, and the Winston is a broad-shouldered, fitted-waist jacket modeled after those made on London's Savile Row.

For its custom-made suits, which are priced from \$1,500 to \$10,000, the company also offers superfine fabrics, such as Scabal's new Super 250 wool, and special-order details, including personalized and colorful silk linings, for which the elder Roberti once had a preference. "My father spent his life learning to build a great garment, but he always embraced change as well," says Arnald, noting that his 73-year-old dad still comes into the shop every week "to kick the tires and tell me what I'm doing wrong." —WILLIAM KISSEL

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