



STYLE

## THE NEW DB SUIT

BUTTON YOUR JIGGERS, THE DOUBLE-BREASTED SUIT HAS RETURNED. IT'S SOFTER AND SLIMMER, BUT STILL LENDS A SENSE OF GRAVITAS

In 1987's *Wall Street*, when Gordon Gekko tells the shareholders of Teldar Paper that "greed, for lack of a better word, is good," he wears a double-breasted suit.

It's only fitting that the quintessential 1980s corporate raider dons the quintessential 1980s corporate raider uniform.

The DB suit, of course, preceded Gekko. Since the late-19th century, when the double-breasted frock coat—itsself a nautical relic—was cropped just below the waist, the jacket has been associated with stylish gentlemen, from the Duke of Windsor to Errol Flynn to Clark Gable. But the DB of the 1980s—baggy, broad-shouldered,

with a whiff of moral bankruptcy—left a lingering bad taste.

In recent years, Brioni, Canali, Z Zegna and others have been reviving a stripped-back, slimmed-down version of the DB. If style blogs and red carpets are to be believed, the look is back. Still, trotting one out on Wall Street—or Bay Street, or Macleod Trail—isn't quite conventional yet.

"The DB's bold features give it a strong personality," says Ariel Ovadia, whose DB designs have become a signature part of his two-year-old New York-based menswear line, Ovadia & Sons. "It's like putting on a coat of armour." The suit's physical attributes are responsible for its power-suit

status: the jacket's V-shape and peak lapels widen the shoulders and slim the waist. (No suit, incidentally, is better at concealing spare tires or giving scrawny guys heft.) Plus, since D.B. jackets must always be worn buttoned-up, they look put-together, lending a sense of gravitas.

I asked Christopher Dewdney, a Toronto financial adviser and DB wearer, if gravitas is the goal. "Something happens when I don my double-breasted suit," he says, noting that in his office of 100, he's often the only DB wearer. "It's not so different to Clark Kent putting on his cape."

Bear in mind, it's a lot of suit: the extra hardware (the classic "six-on-two" style has six buttons down the front, only two of which are functional), the rules (always fasten the inner button, called a jigger or anchor, never the outer lower one), and all that fabric have long vexed men. In 1952, *The New York Times* declared the DB. "definitely in eclipse." The extra material is hot and cumbersome, it said. "Also, thrusting the hands into the pockets with requisite air of casualness is a gesture the DB makes unnecessarily difficult."

Of course, the suit never disappeared. It simply evolved. While Gekko's DB represented aggression and ostentation, perhaps today's softer, slimmer DB symbolizes a retreat, with that extra fabric gently embracing the wearer in a time when plenty of bankers could use a hug. More likely, however, it's just the pendulum of fashion. As the late fashion historian James Laver put it in 1958, "In any trend toward elegance, the revival of the DB is a logical outcome."

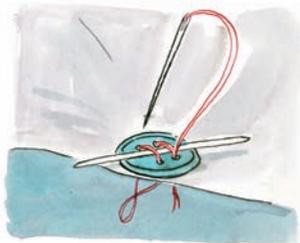
*Ben Leszcz is a Toronto-born writer and editor based in London, England*

**\* THIS YEAR'S SIX-ON-TWO**  
Slim and made-to-measure, from Ovadia & Sons, [ovadiaandsons.com](http://ovadiaandsons.com)



### BEST PRACTICES

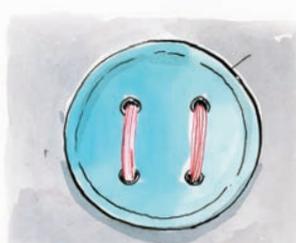
## HOW TO REPLACE A SUIT BUTTON, USING A TOOTHPICK *By Graham Roumieu*



Position toothpick over button and carefully sew over it



Remove toothpick, winding thread below until secure



Without slack, the button would be too tight to fasten



There you have it. Looking sharp