

# CLOSET CASE

Don't chuck those clothes gathering dust. All you need is a good tailor *By Amy Verner*

**a** woman's closet can be a scary place. Overstressed hangers and shelf avalanches aside, there are bound to be sartorial skeletons. These are the items of clothing that no longer see the light of day. What better time than spring to illuminate those dark corners and exorcise the ghosts before resorting to increasing your credit limit?

If you're one of those who has a sixth sense about which clothes are natural keepers and can update them with the aid of a gently purring Singer sewing machine, well, you're ahead of the curve. The rest of us require the help of an expert tailor or alterationist.

Enter Grace Buccì and her husband, John. The couple opened their tailoring boutique, Giovanni of Italy, in Toronto's Yorkville neighbourhood in 1984 and have since maintained a loyal clientele with impeccable taste.

On any given day, the Buccis deal with a who's who of high-end labels: Chanel, Etro, Escada, Prada. But they're just as likely to encounter pairs of Seven jeans, vintage coats and Club Monaco pants.

Of the garments that require substantial tailoring, Grace notes that jackets rank highest by volume. As she sees it, a jacket is a big investment and often it can be more cost-effective to update its shape than to buy a new one.

You can give clothing a second chance—"especially if you buy good clothes," she says. "It's not worth redoing something for \$150 if you paid \$300 for it. But if you buy

a jacket for \$1,500–\$2,000, that's a price range [that definitely warrants alteration]."

Jackets remain a must-have item for spring, with styles shorter in length and leaner in shape. The newest statement by Rochas, Chanel and Marc by Marc Jacobs is collarless, which Grace says is an easy alteration. Other jacket changes include going from double-breasted to single, turning one-button jackets into the trendier three-button style and eliminating the "big-shoulder '80s look" by removing the pads and recutting the jacket accordingly.

The Buccis also design made-to-measure jackets, which proved a success last spring with the swell of pastel tweed fringe suits. This past fall, Grace says, she had requests to add suede and wool fringe to the necks of cardigans.

And it was with sweaters that the designers at Toronto's Preloved first made their mark. The unique clothing boutique, which opened 10 years ago on Queen Street West, now produces more than a thousand pieces each week, with the label available at Holt Renfrew and at Urban Outfitters in the U.S. and the U.K. Owner Julia Grieve and head designer Peter Friesen are experts in the art of reconstructed clothing—that is, taking apart old T-shirts, sweaters, denim and, most recently, bed sheets, to create fashion-forward designs. (Seventies-era flo-

ral sheets turn into summery skirts and strapless dresses, for example.)

"It comes down to asking yourself why you bought something in the first place," says Grieve, a former model who also cohosts the television show *Diva on a Dime* on Prime. "If you fell in love with it for the fabric or the original detailing, then make something wearable out of it. But you have to be ruthless or else you end up having a ton of garbage in your closet."

Suffice it to say, if you seek a large-scale alteration, you'll need someone who not only understands fabric and fit but also fashion. Grace recommends asking the staff at established stores where they send their customers. It's worth the search. After all, finding a tailor you trust means having another person in your little black book who, like your hairstylist, is dedicated to making you look good.

But perhaps the most rewarding part of this experience is the satisfaction that comes with knowing your wardrobe has been resurrected—each altered piece representing a unique byproduct of your resourcefulness. And that's an accomplishment that hardly deserves to be kept in the closet. **F**



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