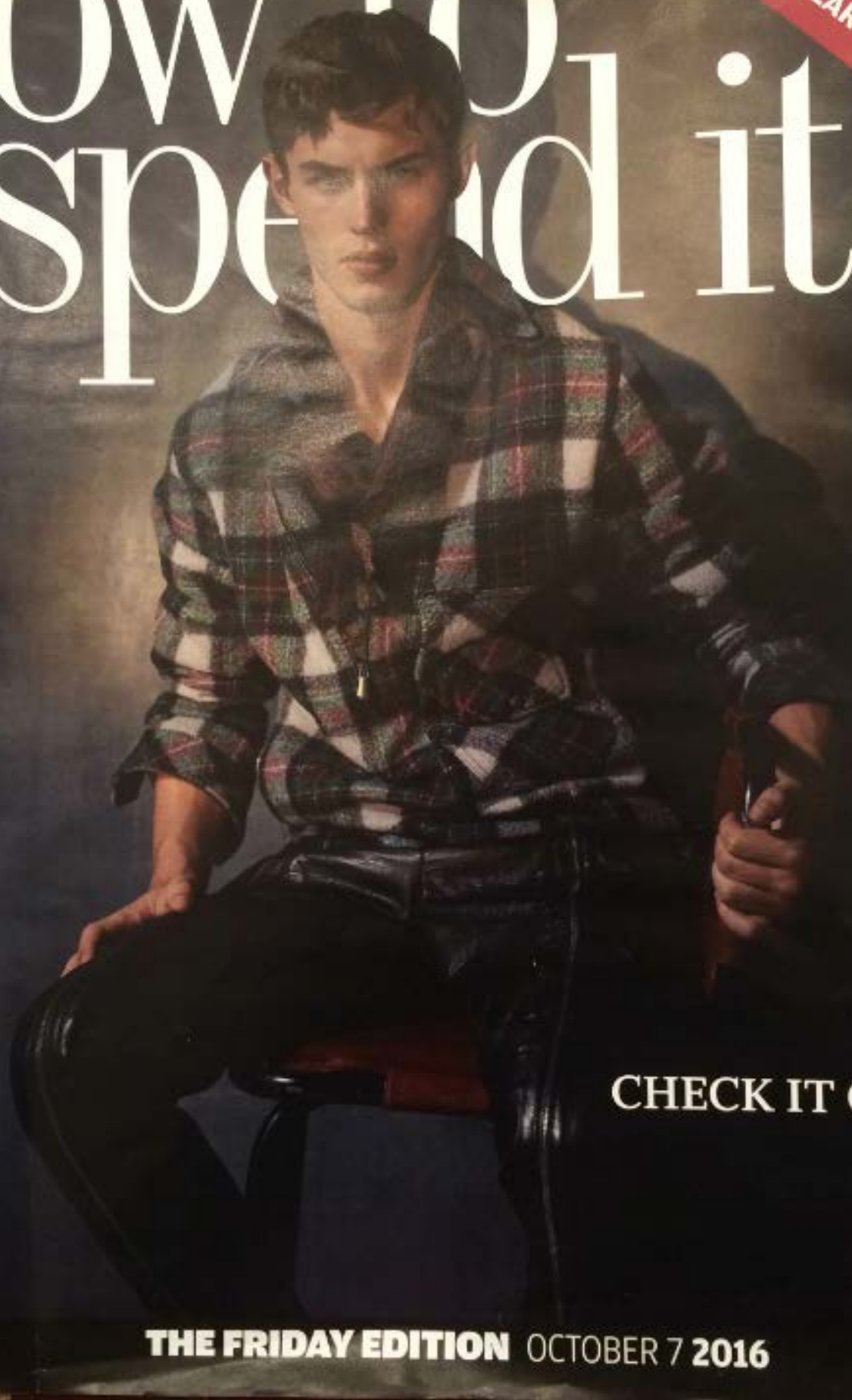


FINANCIAL TIMES

# Now to speed it

INSIDE: 36-PAGE  
MENSWEAR SPECIAL



CHECK IT OUT

**THE FRIDAY EDITION** OCTOBER 7 2016



# wise guise

INSPIRATION FOR THE  
SARTORIALLY INCLINED

*Cool takes on check  
and plaid tailoring*

*New workwear-style  
weekend jeans*

*Hiking-inspired boots  
for the man about town*

*Why now's the time  
to rethink velvet*

*The shopping services  
broadening men's style horizons*



# VELVET OVERGROUND

Rockstars and dandies have long been a soft touch for the relaxed raffishness of velvet – but refined updates are broadening its appeal, says **David Coggins**

**Y**ears ago, in Hamburg, I stepped into the rarefied world of Rudolf Beaufays. One of the great secondhand stores, it is a singular collection of dramatic pieces from Beaufays's archive, alongside endless racks of tweeds, Oxfords and brogues. Beaufays sat there like a king, smoking cigarettes and paging through the newspaper, but he would get up to make insightful recommendations for any man who entered. Digging through one of the racks, he pulled out a burgundy velvet blazer, raised an eyebrow approvingly and presented it to me as if it was the grail I'd been seeking. Then in my 20s, I was too shy to buy it, instead opting for a 1930s green hunting jacket – that I've yet to wear. I thought achingly of that velvet jacket many times, and it is only now, a decade later, that I have arrived at a more mature sartorial understanding of what's what and invested in a one-button, burgundy velvet jacket. If only I'd listened to Beaufays in the first place, my path toward a relaxed raffishness would have been much more direct.

I'm not alone in this belated appreciation of velvet. It's having its moment in leading designer collections, including those by Tom Ford, Gucci, Larvin and Alexander McQueen – and, most significantly, on men who have realised it has an ease and elegance that refers to formality without being constrained by it. Velvet has so much going for it – a wonderful touch, a lush texture, the ability to age gracefully – which is why it was once



Clockwise from top left:  
Alexander McQueen embroidered velvet jacket, £1,745. Saint Laurent velvet jacket, £1,525. Massimo Alba cotton velvet trousers, £233. Dunhill cotton/velveteen jacket, £1,490. Dries Van Noten velvet dressing gown, £1,391. Saint Laurent velvet boots, £610. Blue Blue Japan stretch velour jacket, \$525







the fabric of royalty. What it is gaining are followers who are ready to wear velvet on their terms.

Too often, a man in a tuxedo looks like he's wearing it against his will, whereas a man in a velvet jacket looks like he was eased into it, very much with his consent. So it's not surprising that the dinner jacket remains the gateway for men's arrival at velvet. But, increasingly, men are open to new equations – a velvet coat in an unexpected colour, say, such as Dunhill's double-breasted jacket (£1,490, pictured near left) that veers intriguingly toward terracotta pink. And Etro's elegant, slim-fitting velvet blazer in petrol blue (£885, pictured overleaf) with narrow lapels and debossed dashes that increase the sense of texture (if that was even possible).

As Bruce Pask, men's fashion director of Bergdorf Goodman, observes, "We have seen a growing interest in eveningwear in the past few seasons. It has become an area of a man's wardrobe that he experiments with, exploring personal expression beyond the rigours of classic black-tie clothing." This season, Pask is excited about a deep burgundy Alexander McQueen evening jacket (\$1,895) with a contrasting black peak lapel – the sort of detail designers are introducing to velvet and to which men are increasingly open – and solid velvet styles (\$2,395) in navy and black from Giorgio Armani. Pask notes the fabric's elegance, but also its versatility – you can lose the bow tie and head to an exhibition opening. A velvet jacket, he says, "can be worn in a more



relaxed way, with an open white shirt, dark jeans or pants for a dressy evening out."

The velvet jacket has the air of something Jimmy Page might have worn at Chateau Marmont in the 1970s while racking up a historic room-service bill. That sensibility finds its contemporary equivalent at Saint Laurent, with its taste for rock music's gleefully dissolute past. Saint Laurent goes deep into velour – velvet's sibling, which shares many of its characteristics. Its black jacket (£1,525, pictured on previous pages) with white piping feels like the most wonderful school uniform. Worn with tight gabardine trousers and an "I'm with the band" attitude, this was made for someone who thinks he's a better dancer than Mick Jagger. Saint Laurent doesn't end there; it offers burgundy velvet boots (£610, pictured on previous page) with fiercely pointed toes that are somewhere between guitar god and Wicked Witch of the West.

Viewed with an open mind, velvet can be an everyday fabric. It's not surprising Massimo Alba, known for his skill with striking textures, is a fan. His Baglietto jacket

## Velvet is coming into focus as it combines elegance and decadence, formality and ease

(£420) is completely unstructured and couldn't be easier to wear, while his field jacket (£683, pictured centre right) shows that velvet translates even in an informal environment. In Alba's hands it is treated with the nonchalance of a cardigan, but the most elegant cardigan you've ever owned. Wear it over a sweater, without a tie, over a polo shirt; you don't even have to button it – that's what Alba does. "I have a double-breasted blue velvet coat with a kind of military vibe. I wear it with a blue turtleneck and blue canvas trousers." On Alba nothing in the world looks more natural.

Alba also has a pair of green velvet trousers (£233, pictured on previous page) that are the perfect counterpoint to anybody wearing sweatpants on a plane. If you want comfort with your dignity intact, you've found it. Balenciaga jumps into the trousers fray with velvet jeans (£455, pictured top right) that are so contradictory (shouldn't jeans be made of denim?) you'll know at once if they'll suit you.

Josh Peskowitz, co-owner of Magasin, a designer men's store in Los Angeles, isn't afraid of velvet migrating all over the body. Take a direct approach to velvet, he advises, and don't overthink it: "Wear velvet how you would wear a normal blazer or pants." That said, Peskowitz is embracing the velvet vanguard, including a bomber (\$1,250) from Japanese label Kolor and an indigo karate jacket (\$525, pictured on previous pages) from Blue Blue Japan, which he simply calls "insane" (he means this as praise). It is the sort of forward-thinking clothing that will get approving glances during Fashion Week but won't get you past the door at a gentlemen's club.

Those who have already crossed the velvet threshold will respond to this season's bolder interpretations. Dries Van Noten offers a shawl-collared burgundy dressing gown (£1,391, pictured on previous pages) meant to be



Clockwise from left: Polo Ralph Lauren velvet jacket, £495, and Ralph Lauren velvet slippers, £458. Etro debossed velvet blazer, £885. Balenciaga velvet jeans, £455. Massimo Alba cotton-velvet field jacket, £683

house in the hills above Kyoto or for lounging in gardens in Marrakech while sipping absinthe.

Embellished velvet is another distinction this season. Alexander McQueen has a burgundy jacket (£1,745, pictured on previous pages) with crystal embroidery, like a Cy Twombly motif. On the runway it was paired with loose-fitting wool trousers with a velvet stripe (£695), a tuxedo cotton shirt (£275), though no tie, contrasted with white suede sneakers (£395). It was at once ornamental yet understated, and thoroughly modern. Sneaker sceptics (no need to apologise) should consider Polo Ralph Lauren's runway look that teamed a blue velvet jacket (£495) with tartan trousers (£245) and velvet slippers (£458, all pictured top far left). It was a

been reimagined to meet their sensibilities. Armed with this confidence, they aren't asking what they can do for velvet, they're asking what velvet can do for them. ✦

### INTERNATIONAL VELVET

**Alexander McQueen**, 9 Savile Row, London W1 (020-7494 8840; [www.alexandermcqueen.com](http://www.alexandermcqueen.com)). **Balenciaga**, 12 Mount St, London W1 (020-7317 4400; [www.balenciaga.com](http://www.balenciaga.com)) and see Mr Porter. **Bergdorf Goodman**, 745 Fifth Ave, New York, NY 10022 (+1212-753 7300; [www.bergdorfgoodman.com](http://www.bergdorfgoodman.com)). **Blue Blue Japan**, [www.bluebluejapan.com](http://www.bluebluejapan.com) and see Magasin. **Dries Van Noten**, [www.driesvannoten.com](http://www.driesvannoten.com) and see Harvey Nichols. **Dunhill**, Bourdon Hse, 2 Davies St, London W1 (020-7108 6204; [www.dunhill.com](http://www.dunhill.com)) and branches. **Etro**, 43 Old Bond St, London W1 (020-7493 9004; [www.etro.com](http://www.etro.com)) and see Mr Porter. **Giorgio Armani**, 37 Sloane St, London SW1 (020-7235 6232; [www.armani.com](http://www.armani.com)). **Harvey Nichols**, 109-125 Knightsbridge, London SW1 (020-7201 8788; [www.harveynichols.com](http://www.harveynichols.com)). **Kolor**, [www.kolor.jp](http://www.kolor.jp) and see Magasin. **Magasin**, 8810 Washington Blvd, Culver City, CA 90232 (+1213-458 8424; [www.magasintheistore.com](http://www.magasintheistore.com)). **Massimo Alba**, [www.massimoalba.com](http://www.massimoalba.com) and see Matchesfashion.com. **Matchesfashion.com**, 87 Marylebone Rd, London W1 (020-7487 5400; [www.matchesfashion.com](http://www.matchesfashion.com)). **Mr Porter**, [www.mrporter.com](http://www.mrporter.com).