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Ready for My Own Red Carpet



Robert Caplin for The New York Times

Tom Kalenderian of Barneys New York found that a tall customer looked best in a double-breasted tuxedo. "It's still a suit," he said, not something a shopper should fear. More Photos »

By GUY TREBAY

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MASSIMILIANO GIORNETTI, the designer at Salvatore Ferragamo who dresses Jake Gyllenhaal and Ryan Gosling for awards shows, suggested a natural shoulder was the way to go. Brett Fahlgren, the stylist and Style Ledger blogger, said the most important thing was not to look as if you were trying too hard.

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Alan Flusser, the men's wear expert, was unambiguous about the details: a peak lapel, a fine merino wool, well-cut trousers that are not too narrow or too wide, no flaps on pockets, a shoulder shape suitable for your physique and a bow tie that you have knotted yourself.

"It should bear some resemblance to your face," Mr. Flusser said. "You don't want to look gift wrapped."

Armed with advice from the experts, and in need of a new tuxedo to wear to the Vanity Fair Oscars party at the Sunset Tower hotel in Hollywood on Sunday, I made my way to the seventh floor of Barneys New York, where I was met by the men's wear honcho Tom Kalenderian and faced with a rack of preselected tuxedos to try.

My personal stats (6-foot-3, a relatively gym-fit 170 pounds) would not suggest too much liability when looking for clothes, or so one would have thought. As it happens, though, there is no such thing as a standard 40L suit. Beyond that, the choices themselves were overwhelming, even to a guy who has covered fashion long enough to



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have lost all fear of shopping.

The jacket to a Prada tuxedo was handsome, yet the trousers were so snug they could have been pegged. The Ami suit allegedly in my size fit as if I were John Candy. The Ralph Lauren Black Label was a good Goldilocks option, not overstyled or dowdy, like some models by his big-name competition. Still, it seemed a trifle generic to my eye.

Having gone out with the conviction that I wanted a relatively narrow notch collar and not a peaked one, that the suit had to be two buttons and conservative in cut, I found, with Mr. Kalenderian's guidance, that the best suit for my tall frame was, in fact, a double-breasted four-button tuxedo with a distinctly Fred Astaire lapel. It was

beautifully tailored and carried the label of Andrea Campagna, a designer whose father, Gianni, was famous for having dressed Gianni Agnelli, the Fiat chief.

"It's all about the silhouette," Mr. Fahlgren had told me. "You nail the shape and build from there."

It took Mr. Kalenderian and me some hours and 10 suits, but we nailed the silhouette. With a few tweaks I could have walked out of Barneys and into Oscar night. I could have, that is, if I had Fiat finances to match my tastes. The Andrea Campagna suit cost well over \$4,000, so I left dejected and with nothing to wear.

Stimulated by my expedition, however, I stopped at the J. Crew Men's Shop and found exactly what I sought. The J. Crew tuxedo (trousers, \$295, and jacket, \$510) from the Ludlow range was in stock in my size and fit me right off the rack. The store even had a pair of trousers sized perfectly for my point-guard legs.

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