

CLASSIC DRIVER

[Tuxedo exhibition at Burlington Arcade](#)

If you've ever wondered why your dinner jacket is also known as a Tuxedo, the answer lies with the 19th Century New York millionaire James Potter, *writes Simon de Burton*. In the summer of 1886, he and his actress wife, Cora, were invited to dine with the Prince of Wales at Sandringham but Potter didn't have the proper garb. The Prince duly sent him to his tailor, Henry Poole and Co., where he was fitted-out with a new type of jacket to a design created for HRH 25 years before.

The story goes that Potter took the jacket back home and wore it at New York's elite Tuxedo Park Club where it caused quite a stir – and was quickly named a 'Tuxedo'.

The Tux has been synonymous with suave and sophisticated gents ever since – James Bond obviously springs to mind, but style guru the Duke of Windsor was also a celebrated wearer and even introduced the midnight blue version (still the only acceptable alternative colour) after noting how black could take on a rather unpleasant, greenish hue in certain lights. Jimmy Stewart also sported a Tux with aplomb, as did Fiat boss Gianni Agnelli, shipping tycoon Aristotle Onassis and, of course, JFK.

Now the original creation of the jacket for the Prince of Wales is being marked by a collaboration between the London College of Fashion and Henry Poole and Co. to celebrate its 150th anniversary. Rather worryingly for traditionalists such as us, this involves a group of LCF bespoke tailoring students being tasked with 'reinventing the design for the 21st Century' – but it has also resulted in an interesting exhibition taking place at London's Burlington Arcade from 10-22 September.

It will include the original pattern for one of Frank Sinatra's Tuxedos as well as the actual one made for Truman Capote to wear at his infamous Black and White Ball of 1966, to which the diminutive author invited 500 of the world's A-listers, ranging from the Maharaja of Jaipur to Andy Warhol, and from Noel Coward to Walther Matthau. Capote's coat will be shown alongside the students' modern interpretations and a black and white 'behind the scenes' film showing how they were created.

Afterwards, the exhibition travels to New York where it will be displayed at the Tuxedo Historical Society before embarking on an international tour in 2012.

The London show follows the usual opening hours of Burlington Arcade – and the dress code is informal.

Now, you've just picked up your DJ from Savile Row, you need a set of wheels to go with it. How about this [Aston Martin DB5](#), we saw in the [Classic Driver Car Market](#)?

Text: [Simon de Burton](#)

Photos: The Communication Group

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