

Careerwear

The Clubclass Wash & Wear collection:
Simon wears the Panama jacket and
Conran trousers, and Kasia the Siena
jacket and Indra trousers.

► 'I love suits and although this isn't the style I might think of for myself, I'm surprised by how much I like it. My only comment would be that I would prefer the trousers to have a lower waist. The skirt was perfect, however – just the right length and cut. It was also brilliant in terms of appearance. There were no creases at the end of each day, and the trousers didn't lose their shape.'

Simon: 'This is my favourite suit in terms of style and fit. The trousers are very comfortable, and the suit itself is a style I would probably buy for myself. It is smart, with a stylish, modern cut and the fabric is obviously high quality. I like the colour and I was surprised by the attention to detail in the finishing. The whole thing has a well-made feel and one of the main reasons I like it so much is its resistance to creasing. Throughout the day both the jacket and the trousers remained very crisp and kept their shape well. I felt comfortable, and because the garments are lightweight I didn't get too hot.'

The wash test:

Kasia: 'None of the suits I own are machine washable, so I was quite apprehensive about washing this one. However, I followed the instructions very carefully and it came out none the worse for wear. In fact, I was very impressed both at the way it washed and the fact that it hardly needed ironing at all.'

Simon: 'The easycare properties are one of the most attractive things about this suit. I am constantly taking suits in to be dry cleaned, so the fact that I could just stick this one in the washing machine is a major plus. I have to admit to trying it on a bit sceptically afterwards, but it was fine – thumbs up.'

What Skopes said: 'When we set about designing this collection we tried to ask ourselves all the questions employers might ask of suppliers, and we believe we have overcome all the hurdles in this new range,' says Bob Siswick.

'U:P Collection is the most expensive we have produced by around 10 per cent, but it sits comfortably in a marketplace where competitors have ranges at similar prices so we don't feel we are having to break new ground here. Where it comes into its own is value for money, and customers have to weigh up the initial cost with the lifetime costs of the garments. And while we initially thought that crease resistance would be the major selling point, it has since become apparent that washability is more important.'

'U:P Collection is made from a wool-rich fabric and incorporates two-way stretch Lycra and nanotechnology for exceptional crease recovery and stain resistance. It has sold into major financial services as well as a large airline. The price may restrict some industries but the take up from our customers proves that there is a market for better, higher priced products. We were concerned that corporatewear was becoming solely price-driven, but the popularity of this collection shows that people will pay more when they can see the benefits.'

'The womenswear collection was only launched in September 2006, and is already being worn in a number of areas from solicitors and estate agents to retail, hotels and offices. The styling is sharp and contemporary. The ladies' trousers were based on current high street styles and are bang up to date, so I was surprised Kasia found them too high in the waist. In corporatewear we have to cater for all ages, shapes and sizes, however, and so have to be slightly more conservative to please employers.' ■



Wash & Wear Collection – Clubclass

Fabric: 61/37/2 polyester/wool/Lycra. **Care:** machine-washable at 40° using wash bag provided.

Kasia: Siena single-breasted, three-button jacket; Indra parallel leg, low waisted trousers; and Bianco pencil skirt, all in black.

Simon: Panama single-breasted, three-button jacket; Conran single pleat trousers, both in black.

The pitch: An eight-piece collection of fully machine-washable, non-iron garments made from a wool mix with Trevira and Lycra. The collection is available in navy, black, charcoal and navy pinstripe and has excellent styling and fit.

What our testers said:

Kasia: 'My initial impression of this suit was that it looked expensive. I was surprised that it is only 37 per cent wool – I would have guessed more from the look of the fabric – so I'm impressed that it is washable. What really makes it for me, however, is the detail inside the jacket. It has a purple trim and purple stitching around the lining and the inside pocket. It finishes the suit perfectly.'

'I really like the fit of these garments, especially the trousers. These have the lowest waist of all the suits, and I prefer a low waist. The trousers also have nice pockets, and other little details that really appealed to me. The only thing I would say is that they are a little too short, but I like my trousers very long. The jacket is nice and comfortable. I would like it more fitted but it has a smart, modern cut, and I like the shape of the collar and trendy pockets. The sleeve length is fine, as is the fit across the shoulders – padded but not too padded.'

Simon: 'This is the only black suit in the trial, in fact it is the only black suit I have. I thought I preferred grey, but this suit has really grown on me. Not only was it very comfortable to wear, and I felt very smart in it, but it is finished to a very high standard, especially the jacket.'

'This suit is different to the others in size and shape as well. The trousers are the longest in the leg, and the waist is the smallest, but that said I like the slim fit a lot. The jacket has a great shape, fitting perfectly across the shoulders, and it hangs very well. I was also impressed by the quality handle of the fabric, and the way it retained its appearance. Over the trial there was very little creasing so it stayed looking smart for the duration.'

The wash test:

Kasia: I had already washed the Skopes suit, so I was less nervous about ►