

Careerwear

Kasia and Simon in Clubclass Wash & Wear. Below: Simon in Brook Taverner Performance and Kasia in Brook Taverner Easycare.



► this one, and it didn't disappoint. I can really see the logic behind the wash bag now, as the difference in appearance in terms of creasing between this suit coming out of the wash and my other clothes was quite marked. I would recommend washable suits to anyone – they make life so much easier and save a lot of money in dry cleaning bills.

Simon: Once again, I was very pleased by how well this suit washed, and by how little ironing it needed. There was no shrinkage, it dried surprisingly quickly and the fabric lost none of its feel or appearance.

What Clubclass said: 'We launched the Wash & Wear Collection in 2004 because we wanted washable suiting in wool and Lycra which no one else was doing at the time,' explains Sam Long. 'We worked closely with our mill in Eastern Europe to develop a high performance fabric with good crease recovery but which also had a natural handle. We used Trevira rather than standard polyester, which is more expensive but has the more natural feel we were after. 'I'm very pleased that Simon and Kasia liked the style of the suits, as we

worked hard to make the collection fashionable. The aim of the range was to be both fashionable and suitable for corporate wear, so we introduced a number of styles that would complement all kinds of shapes, sizes and age groups. As we pride ourselves on fit, and because we sell to the trade, we need to offer our customers as many styles as possible, so that they can offer these to their customers, the end users. There is no such thing as a standard employee or a standard suit, and the most important thing in this industry is keeping the wearer happy. The Siena three-button jacket is one of our safer styles because it looks good on everyone. We have more fitted styles that Kasia might prefer.

'The collection is machine washable. The wash bag ensures garments don't get tangled, preventing excessive creasing, and also helps them retain their appearance as it stops them rubbing against other clothes. If used properly, the suit comes out of the machine looking as good as when it went in. In the two years we've been supplying this range, we've never had any issues with it and it is one of our best selling products.' ■

Category: Budget – Dry Cleanable The Performance Collection – Brook Taverner

Fabric: 55/45 polyester/wool. **Care:** dry clean only

Simon: Ortona, single-breasted, three-button jacket and Ortona single pleat trousers, both in charcoal.

The pitch: Corporate tailoring with extremely high performance that offers the sophistication you expect from Brook Taverner but with the industry's best performance. Tailored from a mid-weight superfine polywool mix, this fabric is superior to standard wool mixes. The range is aimed at the worker who requires a heavier weight, more durable suit.

What our tester said: 'This is a more everyday suit than the one from the Sophisticated collection, but you wouldn't know that from the appearance. It looks very smart, with a very dark charcoal colour that I really liked. I've got a lot of grey suits, but this one really stands out. It seems more durable, with better shape retention and crease resistance, than the previous Brook Taverner suit, but in all other ways it is very similar. It is made from a quality fabric, has a nice handle and is finished to a high standard.'

'Both the jacket and trousers fit well. The jacket hangs well, has a good, smart cut and is not restrictive. I like the pleated trouser style, but like the others I found them slightly too high waisted for my preference. However, the suit is easy to wear, retained its crisp appearance extremely well and I felt very confident in it.'

What Brook Taverner said: 'The Performance Collection is made from a poly/wool blend, using very fine wool, densely packed so it has a very crisp, mid-weight feel,' explains Doug. 'It is great for wearers such as drivers, security guards, porters and estate agents, anyone who spends some time outside. It is a warmer, heavier weight suit for heavier wear and so requires fewer pieces per person, so once again budget is an important factor.'

'In terms of trouser style, unlike the Sophisticated Collection, the Performance trousers only come in this style. They are slightly less fashionable in their cut, reflecting their end use.' ■



Category: Budget – Washable The Easycare Collection – Brook Taverner

Fabric: 100 per cent polyester microfibre. **Care:** machine-washable at 40°, ready to wear in two hours.

Kasia: Ancona three-button short jacket and Barletta parallel leg trousers, both in navy pinstripe.

The pitch: The original and best collection of washable clothing on the market. Tailored from the finest microfibre polyester, this is the ultimate in sophisticated washable corporate tailoring. Just wash your clothes at 40°, then put them on the hanger and they are ready to wear in two hours.

What our tester said: 'This suit is very easy to wear. It's not as fashionable as the Sophisticated suits and I feel less noticeable in it, but the Asti jacket drew a lot of attention which might not always be appropriate. In this I feel smart, approachable and presentable, exactly as I imagine an employer would want staff to look.'

'Over three days this suit did not crease and I didn't have to be careful about the way I was sitting. Instead of having to think about what to wear the night before, and whether it needed ironing, I could just throw this on in the morning and be confident of looking smart. One night I even left it on the floor, picked it up the next morning expecting to have to iron it, and it was fine.'

'Style-wise, I like the length of the jacket, but it is not quite as fitted as I would like, and the shoulders are slightly too padded. The trousers are also rather high waisted, but they fit well and have a modern and stylish cut. The material might be polyester but it looks and feels nice and smooth and I like the colour and the pattern of the fabric.'

The wash test: 'Amazing! I thought two hours must be an exaggeration, but this suit felt half way dry when I took it out of the machine. I wasn't expecting it to crease and it didn't. For sheer convenience, this is the best of the lot.'

What Brook Taverner said: 'The Easycare collection is exactly what it says. It's for anyone who wants a well made but "easy" range of corporate clothing. This collection is at a lower price point and these garments are virtually indestructible. They're made from polyester but it is a very fine and therefore expensive polyester, on a par with a poly/wool Lycra. The difference is that you can wash this suit, hang it up and it is ready to wear again in a couple of hours. It has been worn successfully in a diverse range of environments, from building societies to theme parks. There's a lot of crossover with the Sophisticated collection in terms of end use, and it is usually budget and convenience of laundering that determines which is chosen.' ■