

The Long-Distance Shirt

We Try Paris, London Tailors
For Pricey Custom Shirts;
Nice Cloth, Crooked Collar

By LAUREN LIPTON

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JACK MULLIS* IS so particular about his clothes that he bought a \$300 custom dress shirt made to his exact dimensions. It was just like going to Savile Row—except he had to measure himself.

"I gave it my best guess," says the San Francisco software consultant, who ordered the do-it-yourself shirt from an Internet tailor he never met in person.

From London to Hong Kong, fancy clothiers are using the Internet to take their custom-made shirts to the masses. The idea: You punch in your measurements, pick your fabric and details, and a few weeks later you've got a shirt fit for a globe-trotting CEO. While made-to-measure clothing makes up a tiny fraction of the \$50 billion men's apparel business, according to the NPD Group, online tailoring is growing: Paris shirt-maker **Liste Rouge** added a create-your-own-shirt site this year, while New York's David Nadler Shirts says 20% of its business now comes from the Internet.

But we wondered whether long-distance menswear could actually look good. So we went on a three-continent search for the best formal white shirt, logging on to tailors from New York to Italy and picking shirts for our own human model, New York executive recruiter Arnold Huberman. The process wasn't always simple, but it was amusing—from picking our own fabrics



Elizabeth Upman

to deciphering five separate instructions for measuring our tester's arms and shoulders. We ended up with some pretty expensive misfires, with collars that were high, necks that choked, even a shirt with sleeves nearly two inches too long. Yet we also got a few that looked straight from, well, Savile Row.

It's little wonder that mail-order tailoring is gaining ground. Big retailers like Lands' End and Levi's are already helping online shoppers get a better fit, with features like custom measurements and virtual models. In fact, more than half of online shoppers say they'd pay 20% extra for a pair of \$50 dress slacks

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* Jack Mullis is a ListeRouge-Paris customer

CATALOG CRITIC

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Liste Rouge-Paris also stayed in close contact, even reminding us by e-mail they'd do additional alterations "with pleasure." As it turned out, the sleeves of its \$280 shirt were long, and Mr. Clark thought the collar was too high. Mr. Huberman liked the fit, though, and Mr. Blackman deemed its Sea Island poplin fabric silky and crisp. Its score was the highest yet—a 6.



STORE/PRICE/PHONE

QUALITY

RETURN POLICY

PHONE/WEB EXPERIENCE

COMMENT

Liste Rouge-Paris

Sea Island poplin shirt, \$280
212-635-4315
www.listerouge-paris.com

Despite high collar, long sleeves—which could be fixed on a second fitting—it fit well. Nice reinforced side vents and silky, lightweight 140-thread count fabric.

Company will alter shirts if there's a fit problem.

Site's fabric-chooser can narrow down options by color, pattern and fiber type; illustrated measuring instructions were beautifully clear.

Sixty-five-year-old Paris shop just launched U.S. site and says traffic quadrupled in four months.