

Zesty Vest

By Martyn Smith



The resurgence of quilters turning their hands and techniques to garment construction is making quite a hit in the sewing scenes both in America and here at home. The basis of elaborate embellishment is to keep the base pattern or style as simple as can be, but only as long as the fit is not sacrificed in doing so.

The simple vest is an ideal place to start to test one's skills and to have a go at 'wearing the artist within'! If you think that you wouldn't get enough wear out of something too elaborate then make the garment reversible with a plainer more subdued side to ensure your creativity doesn't end up being an 'orphan in the wardrobe'. Kwik•Sew 3557 is the most simple of simple vests to make, slightly shaped through the side seams and a centre back seam, but no darts or panels to embellish over. View A or B can become the canvas for you to try some new techniques on. Quilting is not all wall-hangings and bedspreads; it's been used for centuries in one form or another. The method of adding fabric to another to make yet another fabric is probably stronger today than ever before and to do this to make a garment gives yet another dimension to the construction process.

The Pansy vest has a variety of finishes on it – appliqué, 'bypass tension' bobbin work and self-fabric piping cord. See photo 1.

Fabrication

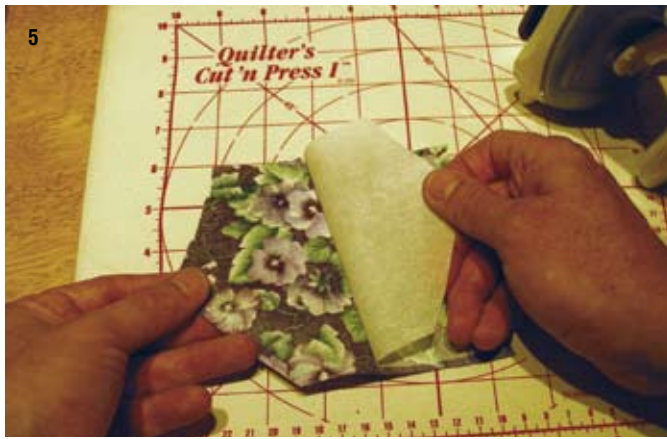
Quilting fabrics are generally 100% cotton and are available in an array of colours, patterns and varying degrees of vibrancy. Unlike other woven cottons, quilting cottons have definite weft (selvage to selvage) and warp (length-wise) grains. It is imperative when making garments from these fabrics to ensure the pattern pieces are placed on the correct grain as indicated on the pattern pieces. Ignoring this 'rule of thumb' can end in a garment that either won't fit or will not keep its shape. Quilt fabrics have the ability to stretch on the weft grain and this can make horizontal seams difficult to stitch, match and press flat. Stabilising or reinforcing these fabrics with interfacing will definitely help but be careful not to use anything too heavy as good quality quilting fabric is already quite firm in nature. Piping does not need to be bias cut when using quilt fabric as cutting strips across the piece gives sufficient movement on the weak weft grain.

Methods used

Piping is the neatest way of finishing a reversible garment as it frames the edges of the garment no matter which side is being worn. A piping foot works much better than a zipper foot when making piping as the fabric and the cord feeds through the machine more evenly. See photo 2. Overlockers with a coverstitch setting or those with chain-stitch ability will be able to take a piping accessory foot. This foot has grooves on the underside to allow the piping cord to pass freely through the machine. The blade of the overlocker will also make quick work of trimming the piping to a 1cm (3/8 in) finished width. If you make a lot of piping then this foot is a great time-saver (providing your overlocker is capable of taking one). See photo 3. The dedicated machine foot is used again to apply the piping to the garment edges and again when sandwiching the piping between the two layers of garment. See photo 4.

It is best to fuse a motif to the fabric before trying to appliqué around the edges. This is very easy to do with either Vliesofix





or Steam-a-Seam products. Both work in a similar nature, much like a double-sided sticky tape. Iron on the bond side of the Vliesofix to the back of the chosen motif fabric then peel off the backing paper and cut out the motif. See photo 5. All intricate cutting of the printed design is best done from the right side of the fabric with a very sharp pair of scissors so the edges won't be 'gnawed'. See photo 6. Arrange the motif into its final position and then press it into position. A pressing cloth can be used so as not to bruise or shine the face of the fabric. Steam can be used with this sort of fusing product as well. See photo 7.

With the motif firmly glued in position it much easier to then appliqué the edges in either a matching or contrasting thread. Fussy shapes and edges don't lend themselves to being stitched with a normal satin-stitch foot; the 'free motion' foot (quilters stippling foot or darning foot) is a great tool for doing this more freely. The feed dogs of the machine need to be lowered (some machines have a plate that fits over the feed dogs to prevent them from coming in contact with the fabric) allowing the foot to float above the fabric and move up and down in unison with the needle. See photos 8 and 9. On the original garment a metallic thread was used to appliqué the edges. A Metalfil needle is the best for this sort of thread as the needle provides a longer eye to thread and a deeper channel for the thread to hide in when moving through the layers of fabric (not to mention the glue from the fusing process).

Bypass tension is when the bobbin case tension unit is not used to control the amount of thread being passed through it. This method allows us to use all sorts of fibres from wool



to Lurex and even some boucle yarns. Winding the bobbin sometimes needs to be done by hand rather than using the winding mechanism on the machine. Also note that the bobbin will not hold very much thread on it so beware of running out at a crucial moment. Winding more than one bobbin before starting makes this sort of embellishment less of a chore. See [photo 10](#). Stitching must be taken at a slow pace and stitch patterns chosen must be simple and clean and preferably not ones that need to go backwards in their formation. An open-toed appliqué foot (or clear satin-stitch foot) is suggested so that the stitcher can clearly view what is happening when using novelty threads. Since the fancy thread is in the bobbin case and not the needle, it is necessary to stitch out the design from the wrong side of the work, which seems odd but it does allow some guide lines to be drawn up on the wrong side of the work without any hassle of them being permanent. See [photo 11](#).

Design notes

When creating any embellished garment, plan what you have in mind, stand back and look at what you've created, then remove one feature. 'Less is more' when it comes to sophisticated design and sometimes we have a tendency to add too much to one garment. Hold over your ideas for another project as there is nothing worse than a cluttered garment; Christmas trees are the only thing this doesn't apply to!

Contact Martyn at martyn.smith@kwiksew.com

