THE RAKE

РОССИЯ

14

ЧАСОВ В СТИЛЕ МИЛИТАРИ ДЛЯ МИРНОГО ВРЕМЕНИ

И НЕМЕДЛЕННО ВЫПИЛ: застольный разговор с главным молекулярным миксологом мира Тони Конильяро

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THE MOST RAKISH TAILORS OF THE YEAR

A triumvirate of Italian style, elegance and high craft: Andrea Luparelli, Antonio Panico and Gigi Dalcuore.

by **wei koh** *photography* **sidney teo** *fashion styling* **marie lee**

I find that as I grow into the old, cantankerous curmudgeon that is my true inner nature, I take increasing umbrage at the oft-quoted catchphrase of the English metaphysical poet John Donne: "No man is an island." What a bunch of horseshit. I am an island, damn it. And proudly so — a one-man act of isolationism with my self-defence mechanisms aimed like gun turrets lest someone seek to disturb my hard-won tranquillity. I am very much of the opinion that equipped with no more company than that of a preternaturally cognisant Border Collie and a phonograph upon which to play my collection of Bruce Springsteen recordings, I would be pleased to live my remaining years in total solitude with weekly air drops of Vosne-Romanée wine, tins of caviar and Partagas Maduro No.1s, and with the odd novel my only form of contact with the outside world.

Of course, I would brave the teeming hordes of humanity twice a year to visit my tailors in London and Paris. However, in the same way in which I had largely shut myself off from all human contact, I had long ago turned away from new tailoring experiences. Then, in the last two years, as I plodded inexorably towards my mid-century mark, I experienced an influx of wonderful new friendships. Which made me highly uncomfortable, as I now had to recant my position of detesting all humanity and make room for the existence of some truly magnificent people. Damn it! And as if to turn my entire world view upside down, in the last year I had some of the most extraordinary first-time experiences with three tailors I had admired from afar but had not previously collaborated with. And the resulting garments have been nothing less than life changing.

Ah, Italy, land of Bernini and Da Vinci, land of endless moments of unremitting beauty in landscape, in architecture and in the culinary arts, how you've conspired with fate to awe, outrage, thrill and delight me through the alchemic craft of rendering three-dimensional form from two-dimensional cloth — otherwise known as tailoring. And just as each of your fabled cities exudes a unique identity in *la bella figura*, attitude and food, so too do the most iconic tailors of your magical cities perfectly express the identity of the towns in which they are born.

Andrea Luparelli

Rome is big, loud and brash, and it is defined by some of the most recognisable architecture in human civilisation. It is, however, a challenging place to get tailored, due to the proliferation of a deceptively simple yet tantalisingly seductive culinary masterpiece known as *cacio e pepe*, which conspires to shift the points on the tape measure around my waistline with each successive fitting. So much so that at some point I blurted out to Andrea Luparelli — founder of the hotter-than-the-sun Sartoria Ripense — that we might want to accelerate the process of my suit before consciousness failed me from the effort of sucking in the gelatinous tub that was once my belly.

If you've never met Andrea, you should, because he is a delightful man. His tall, lean, roguishly handsome, effortlessly stylish form and elegant old-world manners are complemented by a largesse that will have you becoming fast friends.

I first saw the results of his craft on my friend Max Poux, the Parisian banker, rap aficionado and sartorial bad-ass. Max was draped in a Solaro Sartoria Ripense double-breasted suit that he wore open and with the nonchalant *élan* of someone traipsing around in their favourite threadbare bathrobe. I saw immediately that Ripense was something of a sculptor of men. Luparelli and his tailoring exists in the ancient and modern worlds simultaneously; he understands how young, physically fit men want their clothes to fit — yet there is something charmingly traditionalist in his relatively low gorge and the middle buttoning position of his double-breasted jacket. His shoulders are soft, as is the general make of his coats, but without the expressed indulgence of *spalla camicia*'s Shar-Pei-like folds or abundance of chest drape. Indeed, Luparelli's clothes express an individual's preoccupation with precision, with nary a millimetre of excess cloth wasted. His suits, like his style, are sharp and fit close to the body, yet are still refreshingly comfortable without lapsing into the deconstructiveness currently in vogue. The angle of his double-breasted lapels and the shapely, attenuated, slightly priapic profile of their points is nothing less than epically sexy.

The trousers on his suits are slightly lower-waisted than I have



Andrea Luparelli of the Rome tailoring house Sartoria Ripense.

become accustomed to, as I generally like my belt line to hit me mid-chest, so that if I were to wander onto a beach with just my dress pants on, I would still be safe from violating Instagram's no nipple policy. As someone who doesn't like excess, Luparelli also specced-out my trousers without turn-ups — a first for me in several decades. Like his coat, Luparelli's pants fit close, yet through some magic they are among the most comfortable I own. In his suits you look lithe and rapier-like. Luparelli is also in possession of some otherworldly metabolism. We celebrated our disembarkation on the suit you see here by scooting down the Appian Way in his vintage Porsche to indulge in a hunk of delicious flame-charred beef at one of his favourite family-owned eateries, which went down effortlessly and with no ill effect on him but left me looking and feeling like a particularly bloated warthog. But that is the magic of Rome, a city that sucks you in and showers all its cultural and culinary riches upon you, chief among them the sartorial gem that is Sartoria Ripense.

Antonio Panico

You may find it amusing that even after a decade producing this weighty tome, I am still capable of being intimidated by a handful of tailors. Two that scare the living bejesus out of me are Antonio Panico and Antonio Liverano, two men who should be considered cultural statesmen and living treasures of the craft of tailoring. Panico is so supremely elegant, so blindingly handsome and so transcendently stylish that you often feel as if you've inadvertently wandered into the film that is his life, directed by Vittorio De Sica or Luchino Visconti. Amusingly, during my first trip to Naples, he was the one person with whom I wanted to make clothes. However, on the day my photographer and I visited Panico, my translator had unfortunately departed early. And as I sat before him, his dark inquisitive eyes quietly observing me, attempting to make idle small talk, I grew so immeasurably intimidated that I panicked and quickly left without commissioning a thing. And it took me almost a decade to summon the courage to visit Panico's picturesque atelier on Via Carducci.

The motivation was simple. In the sartorial arts, Panico is commonly considered to be one of the Holy Trinity of living legends, the others being Liverano and Edward Sexton. But 10 years after first meeting him I felt that I had achieved a far greater understanding about what made his clothes so special. Indeed, during this time I'd become something of an expert at being able to identify a Panico jacket from across the room. First there were all the signature cues. There was the *spalla camicia* or the shoulder with the briefest soupçon of *rollino*, to endow a little attitude, complemented by the generous touch of chest drape that was neither excessive nor overly restrained but perfectly balanced. There was the length of his typically Neapolitan jacket, which veered on the short side but with a naturally high waist and slightly flared skirt that was perfectly proportional. And there was, of course, the de rigueur three-roll-two single-breasted button stance.