# LIVE LIKE LINO

*Owner of iconic Milanese menswear boutique Al Bazar, celebrated Italian dandy and quintessentially rakish individual Lino Ieluzzi articulates his philosophies on life, style, love, money and the appeal of imperfection.*

*by* ***wei koh*** *photography* ***munster***

For almost half a century, Lino Ieluzzi, proprietor of the menswear mecca Al Bazar, has been one of Milan's icons of classic elegance and premier rakes. In Japan, Lino has inspired a cult of devotion so profound that magazines dedicate vast editorial real estate to dissecting the minutiae of his appearance. Now, thanks to the Internet age and, in particular, photographer and blogger Scott Schuman (A.K.A. The Sartorialist), Lino, a grand master of the high sartorial arts and, more importantly, a man of profound warmth and generosity, has influenced how an entire new generation dresses. *The Rake* broke bread with him and the equally stylish Gianpaolo Alliata, his friend and shop manager, to learn those fundamentals that comprise his personal vision of elegance. He relates these to us in his own indelible words…

MY FATHER WAS ALWAYS WEARING double-breasted coats. He was a very stylish guy. My father was like Don Giovanni and at the age of 50, he said, "Now, it is time to get married," but he married a young girl of 26. This was very important to his happiness. It is good for a mature man to be with a young woman because they are more compatible.

When I first started working at Al Bazar, it was a boutique for jeans owned by an older man. But in 1969, he retired and sold me the store. I decided to recreate it in homage to my father and his style. My father dressed exclusively in tailored clothing, and he introduced me to his tailor when I came of age. In many ways, his style is my style. And I recreated Al Bazar as a way to communicate his style to the world.

For many years, no one was interested in the double-breasted jacket. It was only for older conservative men who wore it either as part of a suit or as a blazer. But when I opened Al Bazar, I wanted to revive the double-breasted jacket and explore all its possibilities. So, I started making it in many different materials, in vibrant colours like azure or pink. This was the style of my father.

I always try to work with artisan producers. When I ask them to make a jacket for me, I try to describe what I am feeling inside. The most important thing is that they understand what I feel about style, quality and passion.

Many of these were older craftsmen and so, when I proposed this new style, they were very excited. In the late '60s, we were in a period when people were dressing more and more casually. They were happy that I wanted to go against the grain and bring back more classic elegance.

When I was young, I decided the best way for me to communicate my vision for clothes was to do it personally. So, I would spend all day in the shop and all night going to parties or nightclubs to show people my clothes. This was a form of PR, but it was effective.

What is it about the double-breasted coat that I love it so much? It is a 'strong' look. It is like having a little more power without being ridiculous. The story of the double-breasted coat is that it used to be exclusively for the 'high' types, for the president or the manager. But we modernised it and now you can even wear it with jeans.

Some people will tell you that a double-breasted jacket is only for specific bodies and that shorter or more robust men must avoid it. This is not true. It looks good on everyone if fitted correctly. If you look at the most stylish men in history, even the shorter ones like the Duke of Windsor or Humphrey Bogart always wore double-breasted because they knew it was more powerful.

My suggestion is to wear the double-breasted jacket very tight. I often reinforce the buttons used to close the front flap of the jacket with another button on the inside for added security because I like the waist to be very, very tight.

I think the secret to looking good in a double-breasted jacket is that it should never be perfect. It should have a few lines across the front where it creases. I never button the inner flap because I like it to be imperfect. I like to think of the double-breasted coat as almost like a sweater, which looks beautiful when it is worn casual and imperfectly. Fred Astaire never buttoned the inner flap and his coat always looked fantastic. This way, you can move much better.

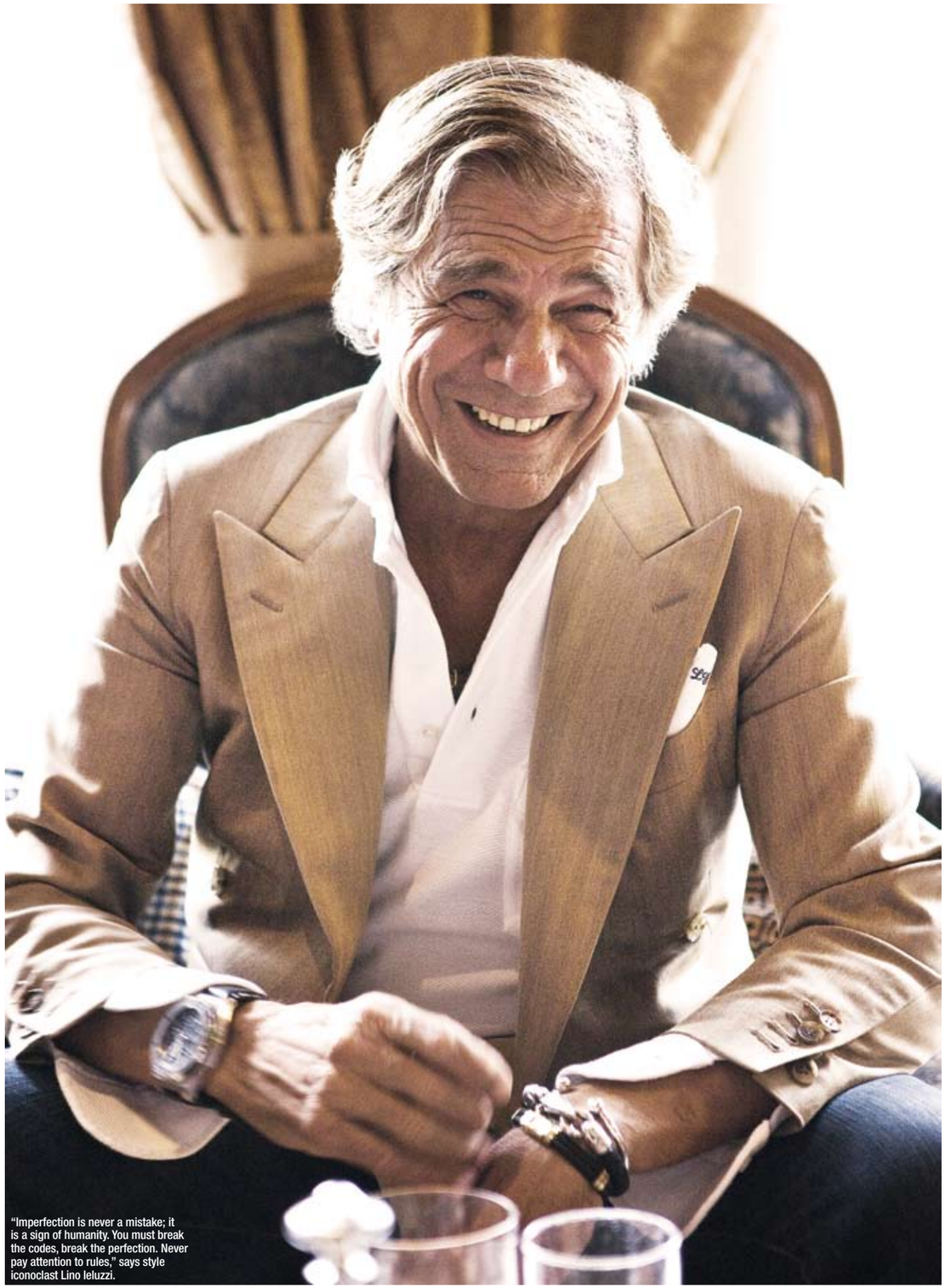
When some men wear a double-breasted coat, it is too austere, too sterile, too much like a uniform. I like it to be part of the body with a style that is elegant but also *sportivo*. If you want to button only the bottom of your jacket, then do it. You can button it how you like and depending on how you feel.

I like to button only the bottom button sometimes, because it is more comfortable when you sit to eat or work. This is the magic of the double-breasted jacket — it becomes part of you.

I hate it when men try to look perfect. Human beings are never perfect on the inside, so they must never be perfect on the outside. To me, imperfection is never a mistake — it is a sign of humanity. You must break the codes, break the perfection. Never pay attention to rules.

It's funny, but the British spend a lot of time trying to look perfect. So, if a British man's collar comes out of his jacket, it is a disaster. But with an Italian man, if his collar comes out by accident, it looks great. This has to be natural. There are some men who turn their collar up on purpose, and to me, this is silly, because it is selfconscious.

When you tie a necktie, you should never use a mirror. It should be imperfect and unselfconscious. Then, it will be beautiful!



"Imperfection is never a mistake; it is a sign of humanity. You must break the codes, break the perfection. Never pay attention to rules," says style iconoclast Lino Ieluzzi.

***"The only thing a real man should do in the house is make love to his wife and polish his own shoes. Everything else, the woman should do by herself."***

What is this *sprezzatura*? I read a lot about this idea in the English magazines, but I really don't know what it means. I think it is very English to take something that we (Italians) do naturally and make it into a set of rules. I suppose it is similar to what the French call *dégagé*, but to me, *sprezzatura* is not something you analyse — it is something you do naturally.

I like the comic *Peanuts*. In it, there is a character called Linus, who loves his blanket very much. Your clothes should be like Linus' blanket — part of who you are. Putting on a new jacket is like driving a car for the first time. At first, you are careful and self-conscious about the steering, about changing the gears, but with time, it becomes totally natural and you don't think about it at all.

I think, thanks to the Internet and to magazines, my style has become something of an influence on international brands and people from different countries. It's funny because I started to leave the top buckle of my double-monk-strap shoes open because they were easier to slip on this way. One day, a Japanese journalist told me that in Japan, all the men are doing this because they saw a picture of me.

I started to wear my pants shorter because I like to show off my shoes, and my jacket cuffs shorter, to show my watches, but this somehow became a trend.

There are fashion designers (for example, Thom Browne) who take this too far. It is not elegant any more when you make something too selfconscious or too extreme.

One of my favourite things at Al Bazar is a jersey polo with long sleeves and cuffs like a dress shirt. You can wear this in the evening or in the daytime. I like it because it adds a bit of *sportivo* feeling to classic elegance and it is comfortable as pyjamas.

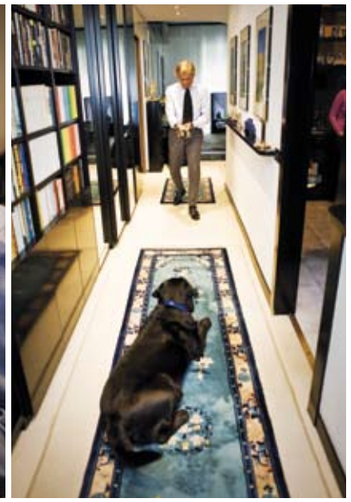
Being comfortable in your clothes is the key to elegance. This is why, in our jackets, I never put a lining or any canvas. This is too structured; it makes clothes stiff and doesn't let them feel comfortable and move naturally.

I would never buy something that is already aged or broken, because I think this is not honest. When I break something myself, through my experience with it, it then becomes beautiful because it is part of my life. At the same time, a real gentleman must take care of his things. Polishing your own shoes should be a great pleasure.

The only thing a real man should do in the house is make love to his wife and polish his own shoes. Everything else, the woman should do by herself.

A man should never think too much about money. This was the philosophy of my father. My father spent everything, all of his money. He was very generous, he had a big heart and he spent every cent he had. But he loved his life.

*Editor's note: Should any reader be similarly inclined, Al Bazar's address is Via A.Scarpa, 9 20145 Milan, Italy, which is, we assure you, a fabulous place to spend all your money. For further information, phone +39 02 433470, or visit www.albazarmilano.it. Tell Lino* THE RAKE *sent you.*



Women want him ("Some people say that he was a gigolo," jokes Al Bazar manager Gianpaolo Alliata, shown holding a copy of *The Rake*, at left), men want to be him. Lino Ieluzzi's smooth, louche personal style has been exhaustively documented on blogs such as The Sartorialist and in the pages of many a sharp Japanese menswear magazine, and his signature whimsical touches (such as the unfastened monkstrap, seen here) are today emulated across the globe. Yet Lino counsels that style should never appear too calculated. "It is not elegant any more when you make something too selfconscious or too extreme," he says.