

**Logline**

MEN OF THE CLOTH is an inspiring portrait of three Italian master tailors who confront the decline of the apprentice system as they navigate their challenging roles in the twilight of their career. The film unravels the mystery of their artistry and reveals how their passionate devotion to their Old World craft is akin to a religion.

**SYNOPSIS**

Italians Nino Corvato, Joe Centofanti and Checchino Fonticoli are master tailors who have spent a lifetime perfecting the skills necessary to construct flawless custom-made suits for their clients in New York City, Philadelphia and Penne, Italy, a fascinating process broken down step-by-step in MEN OF THE CLOTH. Now in the twilight of their career, they fear that their Old World knowledge will vanish with them. Enter Joe Genuardi, a tailoring apprentice who reflects the resurgence of popular interest in artisanal craftsmanship as an alternative to corporate mass production, providing hope for the future of this craft.

MEN OF THE CLOTH is structured like a triptych: each character’s story gives us an insight into the past, present and future of their craft. We see the intimate connection with their tools and the tactile nature of their trade as they work in studied concentration: sewing, pressing, cutting, marking, and pinning. The whir of the sewing machine, the clank of the steam iron, and the sharp slicing of the tailor’s scissors create an aural symphony. These artisans cherish their interactions with their clients. And as they go about their daily tasks, they share observations that are, by turns, nostalgic, poignant and humorous.

MEN OF THE CLOTH unravels the mystery of the tailor’s artistry, and how he fashions a garment in such a way that it moves and breathes with the person who’s wearing it. Filmed over the course of eleven years in New York, Philadelphia, and Italy, MEN OF THE CLOTH is a meditation on the value of handmade clothing.

**Director’s Statement**

I was introduced to the world of Italian master tailors 13 years ago on a reporting trip to Italy while working as a men’s fashion editor. I met Checchino Fonticoli, the master tailor at Brioni, the high-end clothing company based In the Abruzzo region. I discovered that he had done a traditional apprenticeship as a boy. But as a young man, he went to work for the new Brioni factory because he saw it as the way of the future. Fewer and fewer customers were patronizing custom tailors and this trend had threatened their livelihood.

Brioni brought these traditionally trained tailors with Old World skills together, and employed them in an American-inspired serial production process. The factory also

supported the entire town of Penne, Italy and the surrounding area in Abruzzo – which might otherwise be abandoned as residents emigrated to the cities and abroad for work.

I realized that this was just one piece of a larger story – and that the world of tailoring was a fascinating subculture that I wanted to explore. I was convinced that it was the perfect subject for a documentary film.

These humble men who make exalted clothing personify a disappearing cultural tradition that arose during the Renaissance, in the same period as Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci.

Up until recently, contemporary culture has placed little value on skilled manual labor that's not industrial labor. The philosophy of an artisan-tailor is rooted in a pre-capitalist ethos -- his entire life experience goes into every piece of clothing he creates, and he identifies with his creations. Master tailor Nino Corvato observes that “the beauty of something made by hand is infinite.” MEN OF THE CLOTH illuminates this esthetic value system.

I truly admire these artisans who live a life of meaning and purpose – and create clothing that’s as beautiful *inside* as it is outside. I consider them unsung heroes – with skills that have been honed over the course of a lifetime.

By highlighting the proud legacy of Italian master tailors, the film is inspiring a dialogue on what we’re losing in a global economy that’s increasingly devoid of any personal connection between the creator and consumer. MEN OF THE CLOTH resonates with a culturally diverse audience that relishes soulful pleasures delivered on a human scale.

**DIRECTOR BIO**

**Director/Producer Vicki Vasilopoulos** was the Senior Fashion Editor at *DNR (*now a partof *WWD)*, the men’s newsmagazine where she styled and produced photo layouts, reviewed designer runway shows and wrote fashion feature stories. As a freelance writer Vicki has contributed to *People* magazine and *Fashion Wire Daily* (an international newswire service) and has had features published in *The New York Times*, *Esquire,* and *Time Out New York*. Vicki served as a film series programmer for New York Women in Film and Television. She is a member of the International Documentary Association, the Independent Filmmaker Project, and the American Society of Journalists and Authors. She is a native of Greece and spent her formative years in New York City. She has a B.A. in Journalism from New York University, and has also studied at The Fashion Institute of Technology in New York and the Paris Fashion Institute in France.

MEN OF THE CLOTH is Vicki’s first feature film and had a sold-out World Premiere at DOC NYC, the largest documentary film festival in America. It was the opening night film at the Craft in Focus Festival in Amsterdam, The Netherlands, and was voted an Audience Favorite at the Three Rivers Film Festival in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. It has also screened at the Italian Film Fest Vancouver, the Hamptons Take 2 Documentary Film Festival in New York, the Black Nights Film Festival in Estonia, the Montclair Film Festival in New Jersey, the La Femme Film Festival for women directors in Los Angeles, and the San Joaquin International Film Festival in California.

MEN OF THE CLOTH had sold-out New York theatrical premieres at the Village East Cinema and The Cinema Arts Centre. The film has also had successful screenings at the following high-profile arthouse and museum venues: the Bloor Hot Docs Cinema in Toronto; The Bryn Mawr Film Institute in Pennsylvania; the West End Cinema in Washington, DC; The Dairy Center for the Arts in Boulder, Colorado; the Minneapolis Institute of Arts; The George Eastman Museum in Rochester, NY; the Cleveland Museum of Art; and the Australian Centre for the Moving Image in Melbourne.

**REVIEWS**

“A captivating tale of an art in both remission and resurgence, [Men of the Cloth](http://menoftheclothfilm.com/) is a journey across the globe unifying craftsmanship and style….Dynamic, emotional, and inspiring, it was truly an experience.”

-- A & H Magazine

“We get to feel the love of the men for their job and we understand just how special handmade suits are…. You will feel a loss at the notion that their way of life is fading from existence. I love films that make you feel and this one does in spades.”

-- Unseen Films blog

**“**The documentary is an attempt to do for suit-making what Jiro Dreams of Sushi did for Japanese cuisine: A celebration of devotion, craft and, possibly, an endangered art form.”

--The Globe and Mail (Canada)

“A small but beautiful documentary…Free from static talking heads, Vasilopoulos casually and quietly observes the tailors at work, allowing the audience to see their skill first hand. While they work, they muse candidly about their upbringing and training, never dwelling too long on any one thing, with each word, each anecdote carefully placed like stiches on a lapel.” – Boulder Weekly

**Main Credits**

Producer/Director: Vicki Vasilopoulos | Production Company: Orestes Films LLC

Editor: Sandrine Isambert

Directors of Photography: David Gaynes, Christian Jacks, and Andrew David Watson

Composer: Chris Hajian | Motion Graphics: Michael Saul

**Production Notes**

Running Time: 96 minutes | HD 16 x 9

The film received grants from the National Italian American Foundation and the William B. Dietrich Foundation.

**MEN OF THE CLOTH web site and trailer:** <http://www.MenoftheClothFilm.com/>

**MEN OF THE CLOTH Facebook page**: <http://www.facebook.com/MenOfTheClothFilm>

Indiewire Q & A with director Vicki Vasilopoulos during her DOC NYC festival premiere:

<http://blogs.indiewire.com/womenandhollywood/doc-nyc-women-directors-meet-vicki-vasilopoulos>

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