



Tailor Made

Luigi della Ripa was 12 years old when he started to learn tailoring, a trade he has done his whole life. Now, he's 89, and whenever he retires, he may be the last of his kind.

"Nobody teaches tailoring," he said from his home in Van Nuys, Calif. "It's sad because it's a lost art. It takes a lot of passion. You feel great! You make a suit from scratch. In Italy, you are a maestro."

Della Ripa, originally from the Avellino province outside of Naples, arrived in New York in 1960. But it was too cold, he said.

An avid movie fan, his dream was always to go to Hollywood, so he went. He ended up staying. Thanks to some fellow Italians, he landed a job at a clothing store doing alterations. Then he met another tailor, a fellow immigrant from Sicily.

"We used to make stuff from scratch," he said.

Soon he opened his own shop, Luigi Custom Tailor. Business thrived for several years. In the 1960s and '70s, he'd make

custom suits, even had celebrity clients like Ernest Borgnine and Gavin MacLeod. While he's not making suits from scratch anymore, he's still doing alterations, including on wedding dresses and tuxedos.

And his movie fandom has come full circle. In the 2021 film *Licorice Pizza*, he had a cameo . . . as a tailor!

—Jan Angilella



Harlem to Hollywood

Raised in East Harlem, Katherine Narducci always felt in touch with her Italian heritage. "East Harlem was once the real Little Italy," said Narducci.

An acclaimed actress, Narducci is best known for her roles in the films *A Bronx Tale*, Martin Scorsese's *The Irishman*, and *Jersey Boys*. On TV, she has starred in shows such as *The Sopranos*, *Godfather of Harlem*, and *Euphoria*.

Narducci credits her mother as her first source of inspiration for acting. "When I was a kid, my mom and I would pretend to run an imaginary acting school," she said. "My mom was a poet and singer. Creativity runs in our blood."

Coming from a passionate and animated family, Narducci developed a lust for life. Even though her family struggled financially, they always found a reason to be happy. "The passion my family instilled in me came from our Italian culture," she said.

Before her breakthrough role in *A Bronx Tale*, Narducci secretly went on casting calls without telling any of her family or friends. It wasn't until she brought her son to audition for *A Bronx Tale* that she was discovered. In Narducci's next film, *Wise Guys*, in 2024, she plays the leading female role for the first-time, opposite Robert De Niro.

Narducci is a second-generation Italian American with roots in Naples.

—Anthony Sciaratta

