

INTERNATIONAL EDITION

# THE RAKE

THE MODERN VOICE OF CLASSIC ELEGANCE

*Exclusive interview*

## LIEV SCHREIBER

*Ray of light*

THE EIGHTIES: A DECADE  
UNDER THE INFLUENCE

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## STYLE WITH SUBSTANCE

*Jeremy Kirkland, the founder of the menswear podcast Blamo!, is more than just another 'influencer' — he's injecting much-needed humanity into what is, for many, a forebodingly esoteric topic.*

WISDOM

by **nick scott**

**W**ith the global media landscape so blighted by fake news, facile content and wilfully confrontational journalism, there's an authentic moral integrity about Blamo!, the podcast founded by Jeremy Kirkland in 2016 that ploughs the fertile field of menswear via interviews with the big hitters who drive its evolution. This is because, for Kirkland — whose childhood-onwards fashion smarts were honed and smelted during a period working with Mark Cho at The Armoury — the truth is far more engaging than fabrication or sensationalism.

The philosophy underlying Blamo! has made it the perfect platform for guests such as Nick Sullivan, Josh Peskowitz, Michael Bastian, Alan Flusser and The Rake's founder and Editorial Director, Wei Koh, to share candid, lucid insights into their journeys and style philosophies to dedicated listeners who relish the show's refreshingly congenial tone and positive approach to its subject matter.

Leaping on the opportunity to reverse traditional roles and put Blamo!'s eternally affable founder on the receiving end of our questions, The Rake found Kirkland to be as absorbing as any of his 70-plus, hour-long podcasts. What became clear in the course of our conversation is that he excels at what he does because he loves it, as attested to in his opening gambit...

Doing a job without realising you're doing a job is the ultimate goal. That whole, 'I'd be doing this just for fun if I could' feeling is invaluable. When I was younger, all I wanted to do was spend time immersing myself more and more in this world of fashion and menswear and clothing. New York has a little bit to do with that — here, you're constantly hustling, constantly trying to do more. I think being around other New Yorkers also really inspired me to double-down on what I love.

The internet kind of democratizes a lot of things, which, when you're young, makes you think you should be at a specific level. That made me keep relentlessly trying to improve and seek feedback and grow. Maybe I could have been more successful if I had stayed in another career, but I think my adolescent mind grew frustrated with the lack of progress happening at the speed I wanted.

My grandpa was really into his clothes. He had great style, but looking back at it, he never had anything that was bespoke. He wasn't wearing bespoke Caraceni or anything like that. He wore J.C. Penney. But he really liked the idea of being well put together. And his pride, his care about his appearance, really influenced me.

**I learned at a young age that when you look good, you feel good.**

My mom, whenever I felt really sick and didn't want to go to school, would always encourage me to put something nice on. I was instilled with a sense of having pride in what I looked like. We didn't grow up with a lot of money or means or anything, so you were kind of making the best with what you had.

**The Armoury's Mark Cho is really into building the plane in the air,** so to speak, and that was really inspiring to me. He would say yes to things before we'd even figured out how they were going to happen. Having worked in the music industry and run my own clothing label for a bit, I was used to not being able to really move forward with an idea until you knew exactly how it was going to play out. It kind of made me feel more at ease. Working with Mark made up some of the best years of my entire life. I also learned, during that time, that really good things take a long time to produce.

**Fashion can often feel like a closed club** — something that's not welcoming, and is really difficult to get into. That's never sat well with me. I think the fashion world doesn't always have the empathy that a lot of people really want to establish a true connection in their lives. It's often superficial, it's often fantasised, and I think that turns a lot of people off. That breaks my heart, because this is what I care about more than anything.

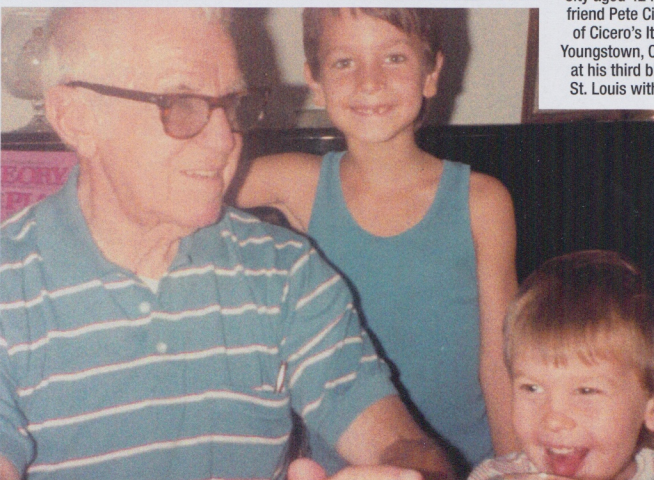
**I started the podcast because I'd been so inspired** and so encouraged by a lot of the people I had come into contact with. Someone like Ben Clymer was not born an expert on watches: it started as his hobby. Someone like Nick Wooster had no desire or initial intention to be who he has become now, and he talks openly about his sobriety and the struggles he's had in his life. I want the podcast to enable listeners to empathise and truly connect with these people with whom their only frame of reference is images that make them look untouchable. The truth of someone's story is far more exciting and appealing than something that's made up.

**I don't really have an agenda.** I think I have a very nice advantage, because I don't have to speak from the viewpoint or represent a brand, or a magazine, or something like that. I just need to represent myself, and what I am at heart is really just a fan and someone who wants to learn more. That mindset keeps the conversation natural, and also lets it flow to wherever the person wants it to go. I've spoken with people who, all of a sudden, start sharing personal stories about their struggles. That's not even

WISDOM



Clockwise from top: Jeremy with his grandfather Eddie Picciano (1906-2000) and older brother, Sean; his grandfather in Atlantic City aged 42 in 1948; with his friend Pete Cicero, the owner of Cicero's Italian grocer, in Youngstown, Ohio; and Jeremy at his third birthday party in St. Louis with Sean in 1988.



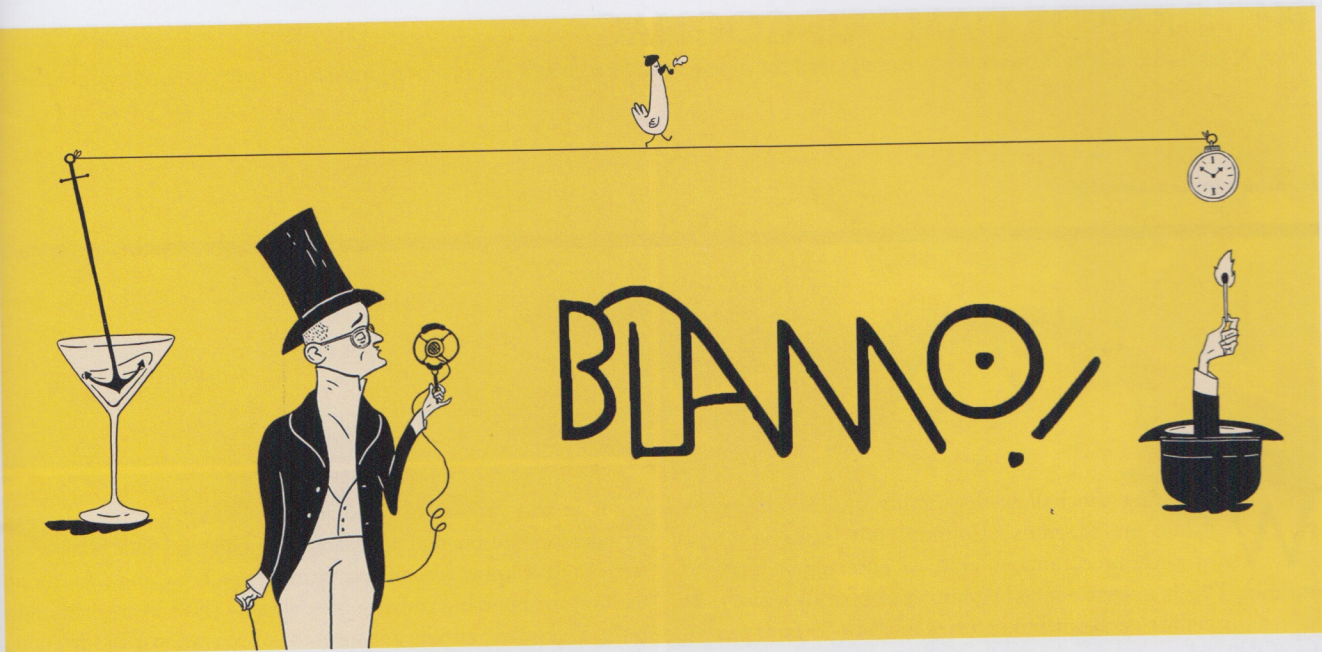
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what I set out to do, but that was what they cared about and that was what they wanted to discuss. And at the end of the day it made for a more interesting discussion.

**If I had Ralph Lauren on my show,** I'd love to ask what it's like to work so closely with family members, and how it affects your relationship. Jerry Lauren is often known as the deal maker. I love my brothers deeply, but it would be very difficult for me to work on something that is so personally close to me and have family in the picture.

I think people are slightly frustrated by the amount of stuff they have, and they want to reduce it. Ten hoodies is not necessary, nor 60 fleeces — one, and a really, really good one, is preferable.

**Knowing what fits your body type, I think, is the nearest thing to a secret for good dressing.** There are certain colours that I can't wear because of my skin tone, and there are certain types of clothing I can't wear because of my shoulders, my posture, my body type. That doesn't mean I can't appreciate them, but it means I probably shouldn't spend any money trying to own them. Menswear should be more about geometry and the proportions of the male body than it is about hype. I've always loved Dior jeans, but in most cases the rise on them doesn't fit my 33-year-old, adult-slash-father body type now. I shouldn't be trying to force myself to wear those. Why don't I just wear a classic higher-waisted jean that's more flattering and that fits me better?

**The Pitti peacocks are just trying to have fun and express themselves.** I know people in the industry who it really bothers, and I don't get that. If they were trying to push an agenda, and yelled at other people who didn't look identical to them, I think

there'd be a bit of an issue. But if they all want to dress like that, let them eat cake. Do it. Go for it, but I don't think that'll be me. I don't see myself in a red riding cape and a large, black top hat. That guy did happen to be out and about at the time of day when the lighting is just right for those outdoor shots...

**People want things that are eternal.** That's something I really latched on to when chatting to Jean-Claude Biver, when he was talking about the future of Swiss watchmaking. Same with art — you invest in art, it will last for ever. I didn't realise I felt the same way until he was able to articulate it so well. When you think about physical things to invest in that will last for

ever, mechanical watches are extremely high on that list. It's not reliant upon any type of modern silicon technology that gets dated and needs to be refreshed. Also, when you think of waste, when you think of the amount of excess crap that's just being thrown out into the abyss, that's not the case with a mechanical-movement Swiss watch.

**I often wrestle with my conscience.** I sometimes worry — and I fear that I'm biting the hand that feeds me here — about the fashion industry being such a huge contributor to global waste and emissions. Am I further perpetuating this, or can my continued involvement also make people think differently and seek to change the industry? Can I be a good guy working for a flawed system? I've talked with Maurizio Donadi of Atelier & Repairs — he worked at Diesel, Armani and Levi's, and also feels really frustrated by all of the waste that fashion has contributed.

**Fashion gives people an identity.** How people look helps them know who they are and how they view the rest of the world. ■