

# HAPPY MENDINGS

## —Global

**Preface**

In today's world of throwaway consumerism, it's good to know there are still tradesmen out there who pride themselves on giving your cherished possessions a new lease of life – from a cobbler in Milan who will lovingly repair your favourite brogues to the Buenos Aires luxury watch atelier.

PHOTOGRAPHERS  
Silvia Morara & Pablo Abuliak

01  
Alvisi

Milan may have a reputation as a shoe-conscious city, but ask around for a cobbler and you'll get blank stares. Boutiques prefer to promote their latest collections than fret about what customers already have on their feet. But for those who know their welts, there's Ermanno Alvisi. A third-generation shoemaker, Alvisi is part of a dwindling set of tradesmen in Italy. He has spent five decades first making and now mending shoes.

Hotels keep his number handy for when guests lose a heel on uneven sidewalks; Milanese bankers entrust him with their Church's and John Lobb's. To make a new insole, he cuts a swathe of leather with scissors. This is wetted and dried overnight. He then inserts cork inners before stitching up the shoe and applying colour and a beeswax polish. Reborn, pairs are fitted with shoe trees and placed in white paper bags for pickup. "It's a pleasure what I do," says Alvisi. "I get to work on beautifully crafted shoes." — IC [alvisimilano.it](http://alvisimilano.it)



01



02



03



04



05

- 01 Lines of shoes ready to be worked on
- 02 Third-generation cobbler Ermanno Alvisi
- 03 Alvisi's shop in Milan
- 04 Shoes get the special treatment
- 05 Women's shoes have an Alvisi fix
- 06 Cutting leather soles
- 07 L'Elysée's Adrián Fernández at work
- 08 A clock ready for repair
- 09 Repairing speakers at Audiolab



06

02  
L'Elysée

Adrián Fernández and Salvador Scaravilli's L'Elysée watch atelier is a shrine to time in Buenos Aires's Retiro district. Fernández, 66, and 74-year-old Scaravilli – with over a century of experience between them – use a collection of antique hand tools, dust-tight chambers and electronic Swiss testing machines to return luxury watches to life.

Buenos Aires businessmen and European visitors referred by friends bring their Rolexes, Patek Philippes, Longines, and Ulysse Nardins to this shop that will fix their timepiece perfectly for a quarter of the cost abroad. A dip in high-end tourism means bespoke watch repair is fading here – business at L'Elysée is down over half in the last year. But L'Elysée will go on. "This is a skill that's in deficit in the world," says Adrián Scaravilli, the 43-year-old son of Salvador who is set to take over. "Your movements and eyes have to get used to small things, and that takes time." — IM [lelysee@fibertel.com.ar](mailto:lelysee@fibertel.com.ar)



07



08



09

03  
Audiolab

The slogan says it all: "We love acoustic sound." In Japan, Audiolab is the serious music lover's repair shop of choice. Based in Yamagata, this thriving company specialises in speaker repair, revitalising anything from pre-war vintage to state-of-the-art modern speakers. Keiichi Ogawa's father established the business as an electrical appliances store. He started selling audio in 1973 and today half of the staff of 20 work solely on repairs. "It's important to respect the original manufacturers' sound policy," he says. "Some repairmen change cables and it causes all sorts of problems." Bad news if you are in a hurry: there's a seven-month waiting list. — FW [audiolab.co.jp](http://audiolab.co.jp)