



Of saints and sinners

"You can get much farther with a kind word and a gun than you can with a kind word alone." – Al Capone

Al Capone has the right of it. The notorious Prohibition era bootlegger, inspiration for Al Pacino's Tony Montana, Al Capone epitomised all that's gangster. While now the word 'gangster' or rather 'gangsta' conjures images of blinged-out semi-adults bumping loud music, wearing baggy pants and such, real gangsters were a class apart. They were all suits and swaggers, often opting for a kind word over braggadocio. But as Capone testifies, it helped that they had a gun to add weight to their verbal argument. The fact that they looked good while doing bad helped romanticise the very notion of the gangsters.

The 'gangster look' as a fashion statement by itself became most prominent during the 1920s. But instead of being a fad, their dress code helped serve an ulterior motive. Their choice of garment is what separated them from the herd, with the more expensive suits reserved for those who had already 'made their bones'. Keeping true to their belief of seeing the mafia as an organisation, the gangster look soon became a uniform of sorts, with the Mafioso opting to be picked from the crowd than blending in. Like the narcs and the feds, the gangster too devised a uniform for themselves.