## RAYMOND MASSARO

# SULTAN OF SOLE

As the iconic two-toned Chanel shoe completes 50 years, its legacy carries on in the work of Raymond Massaro, a third-generation Parisian artisan. The shoemaker tells **Shefalee Vasudev** why the soul lies in the sole

Left: Raymond Massaro with the classic Chanel black-toed shoe; above: from Chanel autumn-winter 2007/2008

A funny bit of Italian circus music used on HBO's popular series *Curb Your Enthusiasm* plays in the background as Raymond Massaro, legendary French shoemaker, walks from his workshop to Chanel on rue Cambon in Paris. Salted with energy, this piece of rhythm is in step with 78-year-old Monsieur Massaro on his usual trot. The scene actually plays out in an insightful five-part fashion series, *Signe Chanel* made by Loïc Prigent, documenting the start-to-finish process of making an haute couture collection at the House of Chanel.

For those who enjoy pen portraits, burly Monsieur Massaro is an absolute treat. No Robin Hood, he is warm as a sunflower, gentle as a marshmallow, lovingly courteous as only an elderly French atelier can be, and he smiles, smiles and smiles. He has reason all right; he has just been bestowed with the L'ordre du Merit, a prestigious French award. An exhibition of Massaro shoes, which have been part of defining Chanel collections down the years, has just begun in Paris and will show till January. A huge version of Coco Chanel's two-toned shoe (in gold and black) sits in his workshop – the best ▷