

THE CHARISMATIC FASHION DESIGNER TALKS ABOUT BEING A PERFECTIONIST, HIS FAMOUS FRIENDS AND TRANSFORMING DUBAI'S NIGHTLIFE

Despite being fashionably late (two hours to be precise), as soon as Roberto strolls into Kitsune (the funky new Japanese restaurant in the Fairmont), followed by his mini-entourage, his youthful energy is immediately apparent. "Am I late?" he enquires in a thick Italian accent. We nod. "Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't realise," he says with a cheeky smile. Thanks to regular workouts, the 68-year-old jetsetter looks lean and full of vitality. Famed for his love of leopard print and partying with A-listers on super-yachts, Roberto combs back his hair before posing for a few photos. During our exclusive interview the designer talks in a wildly animated manner – stopping every so often to see if his entourage agree with him. Here, *OK! Middle East* discover more about the man behind the Cavalli brand...

What brings you to Dubai?

Many things! I love the weather, the beautiful people and I'm going to launch the Cavalli Club (inside the Fairmont). It will be an original concept – a beautiful lounge, restaurant/bar where you can buy sunglasses and jewellery. There are many nightclubs but I wanted to create something different with amazing energy and lots of glamour. You will be amazed, believe me!

We expect the interior will be lavishly over-the-top...

Well, I want to keep it a secretbut there's one couch completely covered in fur. I want my visitors to feel big emotions when they walk inside. I want it to be perfect. I'm a perfectionist.

How else would you describe your character?

It's very hard to say. I'm overly sentimental yet my emotions are part of my creativity. I sometimes feel anxious because I'm a perfectionist. I think I'm adventurous. I like flying planes and water skiing.

Roberto Cavalli

Which celebrities will you be inviting to the opening of the Cavalli Club?

Many. Today I spoke to Michael Jackson and he said he would try to make it. I talked to Victoria Beckham last week and if she's free she will come. But I don't want to say too much, I want it to be a surprise! There will be lots of models and many famous faces. Maybe Mariah Carey...

Mariah Carey nearly came to Dubai last year but she cancelled her show at the last minute...

[Laughs] Mariah is a good friend of mine. I've invited her a few times on my yacht. She's fun and she's also very moody. She's so funny and sexy. Believe me, my god she has a beautiful body.

Besides a great body, what else makes a woman beautiful?

Skin, femininity, posture and the way she carries herself. For me femininity is the most important thing in a woman, perhaps like women like masculinity in a man. A guy could be a model yet he's not manly. There are so many beautiful models but only a few have a magnetic personality.

So will we be seeing famous faces on a regular basis in the Cavalli club?

Well I don't know. Dubai is still young, but last night I was at the 400 Club and the atmosphere was so fantastic. I think soon more and more celebrities will come here to party.

When will the Cavalli Club open?

Maybe at the end of April, maybe not. My plan is to finish the club one week before it opens, so I can go in every night with a few friends just to feel the lighting, the music, the ambiance. I need to feel it. When I'm ready, then we will open. I want it to be perfect.

Your designs are really popular here...

When I create a dress, I close my eyes and imagine it in my mind. My sense of fashion is all about my feelings. I feel people love me. Sometimes it's hard to know if people love me for me or for my brand! Maybe it's admiration, not love.

You lead an extraordinarily glitzy lifestyle - have you had to cut back due to the recession?

Well, no. I go with what I feel. If I cut back I will because I feel like it. I live day to day. If I feel like something I will do it. Life is so short, you have to enjoy every moment.

There are rumours that your fashion line Just Cavalli is struggling because you pulled



out of the runway show at Milan Fashion Week...

I don't understand these silly rumours. I had a smaller show because I wanted my dresses to be perfect. One of my faults is that I'm a perfectionist.

You look much younger than 68. What's your secret?

I don't even remember how old I am. I love life! Life is too short. I like to spend time with young people who are fun. People my age can be boring. I have another secret but it's mine and I can't tell you! [Laughs]

How do you relax in your free time?

I like being on my own with my animals. We have monkeys, parrots, an iguana and so many horses. I talk to myself a lot! Yes, I am a little crazy! You know, I'm not scared of dying. Absolutely not. I'm curious to know what the afterlife is. But for now I love life, I enjoy every moment.

What are your plans for the future?

I love colour. My dream is to launch a Cavalli make-up line. It will be wonderful.

Tell us more about your wife Eva, who is also your business partner...

My wife is a fantastic business partner. She's Austrian. She is very practical, whereas my head is in the clouds. I think we compliment each other. She doesn't mind me hanging out with beautiful women, she doesn't care. We are business partners first and foremost.

And how your children doing?

I adore my children. I'm very patriarchal. I prefer to be a good daddy than a good designer. Really. That's much more important.

And lastly, what's your idea of a perfect day?

A beautiful glass of wine and some nice music with my girlfriend! **OK!**



Above: With model/actress Milla Jovovich at the opening of the Cavalli boutique in Paris. Right: Roberto adores Jennifer Lopez.



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