

Isaac's World

The fashion designer expounds on clothing, wrinkles and underwear

IMAGE SECTION

By SUSAN STAPLETON, Image Editor

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favorites

Fantasy Celebrity to Dress: "We want to dress Celine. Wouldn't it be fun? She's a very elegant woman. And it's her real hair on stage."

Place to Visit: "I really like the art galleries and museums in London. In New York or Paris, it's so impossible to go to exhibits. I love the clothes."

Place to Shop: "Saville Row for myself. I also love Fred Segal in Los Angeles. Bergdorf Goodman and Target. That's why I work with both of them."

Designers: "Manolo Blahnik, Sonia Rykiel."

Music: "I don't listen to music anymore. Marlene Dietrich records. I perform at Joe's Pub, this little cabaret in New York City, my favorite fun thing in the world. I've been emulating different singers my whole life. Now I'm going through my Marlene Dietrich phase."

Television: "Turner Classic Movies. I feel like Robert Osbourne, I know him. I've had dinners with friends, I've worked with him and I realized that he's my closest friend because he's always on in my bedroom. That's why I don't like to travel so much because not every city has Robert Osbourne. I feel like I need him in my life to feel secure. I also watch the Food Network. I'm making my Iron Chef debut (at the end of the month)."

Clothing: "Sorry to be so self-congratulatory, but it's this lemon yellow silk faille rain jacket that I made for spring for men. It's only available at Bergdorf Goodman and it's probably sold out by now, so don't even try."

Isaac Mizrahi's conundrum of projects includes fashion design, television, magazines and a gig as spokesperson for StriVectin-SD. <http://media.lvrj.com/images/1770485.jpg>

Photo by Ronda Churchill <http://www.reviewjournal.com/webextras/gallery/churchill/churchill.html>>

Isaac Mizrahi designs a clothing line for Target, publishes a magazine, "Isaac's Style Book," designs a couture line for women only available at Bergdorf Goodman, created a new bridal line for Target that launched online at the beginning of the month, launched an accessories line, designs menswear, sings cabaret, hosts his own television show on the Style network, guests stars on shows such as "Ugly Betty" and "Sex and the City," interviews celebrities on the red carpet, still creates costumes for the theater and just added his name to the anti-wrinkle line, StriVectin-SD.

If he had to give up anything, it would be his boyfriend. "Just kidding," he laughed as his significant other looked up in disbelief from a phone call.

His work ethic comes at a price, namely so much energy that he can't sleep. Mizrahi admits that he doesn't find much time for slumber and instead spends his late-night hours watching Robert Osbourne on Turner Classic Movies.

"It seems that everything feeds off each other so it seems much more time efficient to do millions of things than to do one or two," Mizrahi said. "I have this show that premiered at the Met (ropolitan Opera) two nights ago ("Orfeo ed Euridice"), and I'm exhausted. It was kind of nice to just get on a plane the next morning and come out here."

In his first (can you believe it?) trip to Las Vegas he crammed as much into his free time as possible. By day, he hawked StriVectin-SD, the stretch mark cream that has become the top-selling anti-wrinkle cream, at Sephora. By night, he saw "Love" and Celine Dion and **found time to visit the Liberace Museum to find inspiration for his next couture line. "(It was) the most fabulous place I've ever been in my entire life," Mizrahi said. "And, if you want a preview of my next couture collection, just go to the Liberace Museum. I was so inspired."**

And just like on the streets of New York or Los Angeles, Mizrahi gets noticed by his fans. "It's always by a married guy with his wife," he said. "He's always pointing, 'Oh, look, there's your favorite designer, Isaac Mizrahi.' "

Indeed, Klein-Becker approached Mizrahi to represent StriVectin-SD not to reach women. "Instead, our goal was to reach men, the fastest growing segment of cosmeceutical buyers," said Gina Gay of Klein-Becker. Top that with market research that found that men trust Mizrahi just as much as women do and a new gig was launched.

With Mizrahi, 46, it's easy to wander off on tangents because one idea feeds into another. On that Friday at Sephora, Mizrahi felt energized despite the back-to-back launches of his accessories line and his new bridal line at Target. The duo launches epitomize the duo roles in his clothing lines.

"I think when I started with Target, I was more involved with the woman who aspired to those clothes, who thought of \$50 as a lot of money to spend on a jacket," he said. "I thought about her getting value for her money as much as the woman thinking, 'Wow, it's only \$50.' That's the way I feel about the wedding dresses, too. I wasn't thinking about, 'What are the dresses I can make that are cheap?' These women are getting married, wanting to have an heirloom for their daughters."

Mizrahi harps on the idea of value frequently in his conversation. He wants his clothes to have a seasonless quality to them. His fall couture line had a definite bend toward spring with winter whites and bright, dazzling colors normally seen in warmer months. "That was the idea, because I don't really see people dressing anymore for a season, especially here," Mizrahi said. "Even the tweediest thing I made this fall looks like a spring dress."

His couture line, for example, never goes on sale and only goes up in value. So for fall, Mizrahi expanded on the idea of seasonless dressing. "They get marked up. I just don't feel there's a season. I don't think that this spring I'll be doing fall. For fall, it just seemed like the right idea to me."

This penchant for breaking style rules has gained him a following in the fashion world. He has a propensity to zig left when the rest of the world is zagging right. "I don't really believe in style rules," he said in all seriousness. "I think that's the age we live in, post-'Sex and the City.' It's like what looks right now are wrong things."

That iconoclastic persona extends to his commentator role. Anyone who has witnessed his antics while interviewing celebrities on the red carpet -- looking down Teri Hatcher's dress at the Golden Globes and feeling Scarlett Johansson's breast -- knows he's not shy about doing what conventional people might consider inappropriate.

His favorite question, "Are you wearing any underwear?" draws telling reactions. "It's a very important question," he said, getting somewhat serious. "It's the most important thing to fashion is what the underwear is. It's always interesting the answer, even if they don't want to answer it. But I have no problems answering.

"I am. It's 2xist. It should come to here," he said, indicating his lower thigh. "Because I'm a little fat, it's kind of grabbing a little bit."

And with that, it's off to sign autographs for his fans. Just another tangent in the life of Mizrahi.