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Viva La Glam Diva

By Alastair Gee
Staff Writer

Once, Sergei Zverev lived in a Siberian village with his grandma. Now, with his bee-stung pout and dainty nose, he's charging the nouveau riche thousands for style advice.

"Zverev means impossibly beautiful, impossibly fashionable and an impossibly big star," he said in an interview, wearing a woman's necklace, makeup and sunglasses although indoors.

Zverev calls himself a stylist, and caters to oligarchs and their wives beset by that gnawing New Russian fear. That they're unfashionable.

Fifty people are waiting for a \$3,000 "image" consultation at his salon just off Tverskaya Ulitsa, hung with a painting of his rippling torso - he'll do their hair and tell them what to wear and how to fix their faces.

How does he describe his style?

"Sometimes glam-rock, sometimes rock-a-pops-glam, sometimes pops-glam, sometimes extreme rock without glam, sometimes crazy-fashion-rock, and everywhere, diva, diva, diva, diva, diva, diva, diva," he said.

If that's unclear, see his reality show: He wears knee-high fur boots over jeans and blanchmange-like fur hats. He likes being photographed nude, though in some pictures his head appears to be pasted on someone else's muscled body.

Fashion insiders are concerned that Zverev and plastic surgery-enamored Russian celebrities have a distorted idea of fashion.

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No. 1."



Zverev was posted to Poland, where he cut the hair of local residents whenever he got the chance. "The uniform really suited me. I adjusted it myself with a sewing machine," he said, adding that he got on well with other soldiers.

After being discharged, he was noticed by a prominent hairdresser, Dolores Kondrashova, and moved to Moscow. Just as people lined up for bread and fruit, they lined up for Zverev from 4 a.m., he said.

He opened his first salon in the early 1990s, won a series of international competitions, and was named best European hairdresser in 1997. "It turned out that I ... opened the eyes of fashion in the whole world," he said with genuine amazement.

Zverev styled pop queen Alla Pugachyova and her erstwhile husband, Filipp Kirkorov. He made whimsical trips abroad for inspiration, skulking about in the hotel room where Christian Dior died for a few days.

He was the first person to dye hair red, Zverev asserted. He said he has had four wives.

Today, he's planning to open a new salon on Red Square. He's also recording an album, and spends nights at home with his mother and 13-year-old son writing a book. About himself, naturally.

Most days of the week he pops into his salon. As he has grown in stature, he has realized he'd prefer to only work with clients that are spiritually ready.

AAA



Courtesy Of Sergei Zverev/Courtesy Of Sergei Zverev

"They love the Japanese cartoon style," said Alexandre Vassiliev, a fashion historian, referring to the exaggerated facial features of manga characters. "They want to look more like they've been drawn by someone. They're trying to create a new race, a new generation of beautiful Russians."

Zverev keeps his age secret, but past press reports indicate he's in his mid-40s. He was born in Kultuk, near Lake Baikal.

"I was lucky - I was born a superstar," Zverev said. "In kindergarten, it was obvious to all the kids. And in school, like my old teacher told me, 'We all knew that you'd become an impossibly big star.'"

He loved fashion early on; his mother managed to find him jeans and trainers on the black market. He attended a hairdressing school in Ust-Kamenogorsk, and then - all too selflessly - did his Army service.

"They said I didn't have to go if I didn't want to. It was in everyone's interest in the town that I was left in peace - because such hands were necessary. Basically, in the whole Communist system, I was superstar

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Courtesy Of Sergei Zverev

Sergei Zverev teaches clients how to look "top, fashionable, trend, trend vision."

"A person might have reserved a dye and a cut two years ago, but it doesn't mean that she's ready morally," he said. "It just means she saved up money."

Zverev has one bit of indispensable advice for the masses: Don't ever wear head-to-toe Dolce & Gabbana, that would be crass. Throw in a Dior jacket.

"You'll be top, not crazy, but top, fashionable, trend, trend vision."

Which is, of course, what's important.

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