



Wrapped in Ropp

“if you can’t put it over a hotel lampshade and make it more interesting, then it doesn’t belong in my collection.”



A living memorial to the halcyon days of the sixties when rock ‘n roll, non conformism, and hedonism were what mattered most, Bali based New York fashion designer, Paul Ropp creates clothes that espouse a freedom of expression limited only by the extent one wishes to be noticed.

“My clothes have nothing to do with fashion, my clothes are created in such a manner as to induce reaction; my creations entice. They are clothes for

those who prefer to be naked, sensual not sexual. We create a certain freedom that allows men to wear the same garment as a woman and vice versa. They are for people who believe they can wear their pyjamas in the garden. But most important of all they have to be fun to wear.”

He mixes bright colours. Red, peach, lavender and magenta might all be combined in one outfit. And the material of choice: soft and comfortable handwoven

rayons and cottons with fine embroidery. Gold metallic threads might be woven into a plaid rayon shirt tunic.

More often than not they are seen on actors, rock stars, art directors, closet freaks, “artsy fartsy” characters and the odd sultan or two. They are not the cheapest selection of clothes available in Bali and are probably one of the more expensive collections to come out of Indonesia, but Ropp shrugs this off: “I don’t strive to be the cheapest; I want to be interesting and besides,

our prices here in Bali are 50% less expensive than they are in the west.”

Paul Ropp has become as accustomed to mixing with celebrities as the rest of us have become accustomed to lusting after them. I guess anyone who counts the likes of Dolph Lundgren as his personal friends, knew Jack Kerouac and Dennis Hopper and was one of the late Jimi Hendrix’s friends would be one extroverted character – you only need to look at the clothes he

designs. But that is just the point he quips: “I was and still am a very shy person. What I do is to create reaction by the manner in which I dress or present myself. It’s just a facade. If someone is attracted to another human being who walks into a strange club or party simply because of what they are wearing, then already they have overcome the major hurdle of a social extension of what they previously had before they walked into the room.” memorial to the halcyon days of the sixties when rock ‘

Making and selling garments for the rank and file is just not part of his repertoire. “We appeal to a very small segment of society – the very affluent or for anyone who doesn’t consider price a crucial factor in obtaining a unique item.”

And basically that is how the Paul Ropp story started – making clothes for rock stars who happened to be his friends. That was after he had just made his first million decorating “roll-ye-own” cigarette papers with



the American flag, draft cards and \$100 bills.

He played a role in the great American raised middle finger to the establishment, but unlike many he never lost sight of the need to make a buck. His brand of non conformism was and still is very lucrative.

Paul grew up on the wrong side of the New 'Yawk' tracks, crashed the best parties, hung out in Greenwich village and as road manager of The Paul Butterfield Blues Band, was present at Woodstock. "That's how I gravitated into fashion; I started making clothes for my friends who were into music – I dressed a lot of those characters and still do ... the ones anyway that survived. Jimi

Hendrix was not only a good friend; he was a source of inspiration. If he hadn't been a great guitarist, he could've been up there with the best of them as an avant garde fashion designer."

Video clips of Jimi performing show him wearing costumes he might well have designed himself or obtained from Paul Ropp.

Boutiques are now part of a franchise plan. His stores are packed into containers and later reassembled DIY anywhere in the world. Hawaii, Byron Bay, KL and soon Mumbay, as well as 12 stores in Bali indicate the first steps of a grandiose scheme. "We plan to sell 300 of the best stores on the planet," he confides.

Think Paul Ropp, think India.

"Jimi Hendrix was not only a good friend; he was a source of inspiration"

the biggest names in fashion, yet we don't believe in fashion, to us fashion is dead."

While taking the franchise path may be the 21st century way to ply his trade, Ropp takes pride in the fact that his creations are still created in the old way. Five thousand pairs of hands hand weave and embroider the fabrics in the sub continent.

They are then sent to Indonesia where they are manufactured and then exported to some 18 countries.

"We create an affordable collection for the most expensive boutiques in the world," then he looks you in the eye and once again teasingly pronounces: "We stand there next to

A statement right out of the sixties.

Testament that the fire of rebellion and counter culture still runs deep. The same is true for the clothes he creates, you can hate them or adore them, but you can't ignore them. They have attitude; they spell "look at me, I am here".

And that's why lots of us are wrapped in Paul Ropp.

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I can, It's done, what's next? - Paul Ropp