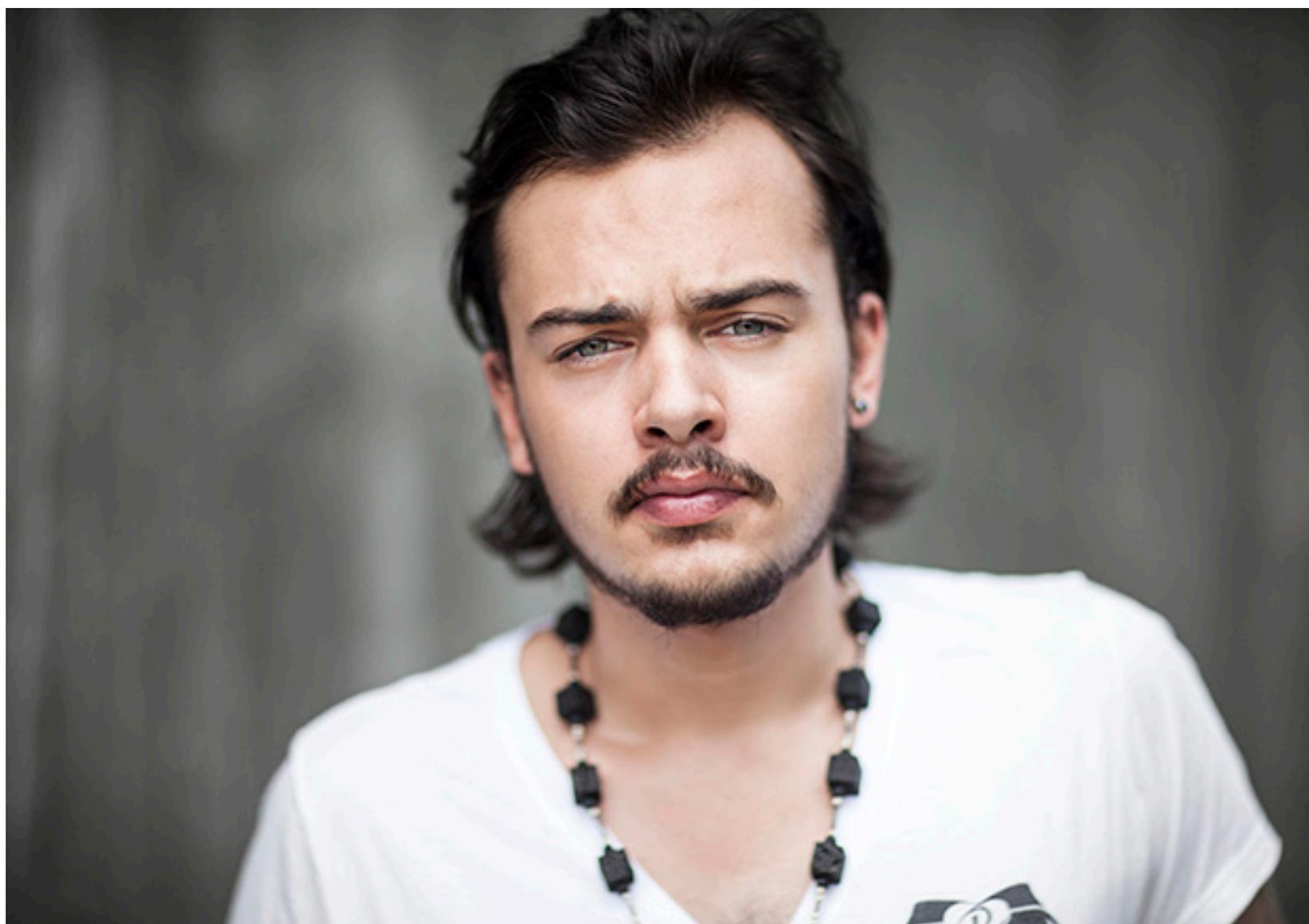


Alexander



Salvador Bali meets a young fashion designer going places. Photo: Spencer Hansen.

TELL it like it is.

Alexander Blomgren, I'm 18 years old, born in Sweden, moved to Moscow straight away. My mother is from Moscow and dad is from Sweden. I lived in Moscow for 10 years, then moved to Sweden for six years. My parents separated and my mother moved to Bali. A couple of years later I moved here as well.

What was your schooling like?

Well that's where I get a bit shy. I dropped out of school the first year in high school, basically I did the normal up to high school in Sweden and that's pretty much it, and then it's all experiences in Bali.

You're definitely the youngest designer I've come across to date – you're 18 now and started to design clothes at 17 . . . how did that come about with no formal education in the field?

That's actually a pretty funny story. I moved to Bali two-and-a-half years ago. The first year was kind of rough – nothing but the blues. After a year I was okay and thinking I have to start doing something. So I started working in Oazia SpaVodka, my mother's place. That worked out for a while, but it really wasn't my calling and then all of a sudden I started thinking about fashion, and there was the fact that I had nothing to wear and not a single good shop in Bali where I could find some normal clothes to go out in. So I started doing some designs and two months later I had my workshop running and producing my first collection.

Of course with your mother's blessings and backup ...

Yes, of course (laughs).

Where did the passion come from that you are obviously projecting?

It all came from looking on the Internet and looking at some designers, and then I started drawing.

You never drew before, it just came?

No, never, it just came.

A natural talent, so it seems.

Yeah, it kind of worked in my favour.

What's the name of your company?

Alexander Blomgren.

Is that strictly men's wear?

No, women's wear as well and jewellery designs, which will be coming soon.

So it's been two years in the making?

No, only about eight months. I did my first collection and jumped back into Oazia Lobster Bar, which was a new venture by my mother, helping out ... now that it's finally running I'm back to doing my designs again.

I understand the desire to make men's designs, but women?

The women's side was more from my mother, because she was actually having the same thoughts as me – that she had nothing to wear. She came up with some designs

that she liked ... I started drawing them out and making models.

Have you had any fashion shows yet?

No, I was planning on doing it on my birthday, which is in November. So I'm pushing my collection to meet that date.

How would you describe your collection?

What I'm going for is very stylish, slim-fit, moderate, not too many colours, evening wear, dress shirts, formal, suits and trousers. For the ladies, silk dresses, tops, pants and shirts.

Being in Bali and at your age, you're not inclined to do surfer clothes and such?

No, that's not really my part here in Bali.

Are you planning to open up shops here?

Yes, I've started to look around and I have a friend in Amsterdam, so I'm starting to outsource a bit over in Europe.

So you're going international as well, do you have a website?

Yes, which will be open with the new collections, and with on-line shopping.

What has been the response so far?

Very good actually, a lot of my friends are now picking up my shirts, seeing a lot of nice photos in magazines like this one. Much of it has been from friends, so I'm getting a lot of good and bad comments on what they would like as well.

Do you see this business as your future?

I don't know yet if it's my calling. I'm gonna do it until I feel I've done it.

Life's lessons – they can go on and on ...

Yes of course.

What are some of the obstacles you've faced so far?

Bali is one of the smallest islands in the world in terms of its expatriate community, so it's hard getting a new product out here, but also there's a flipside to it, which is the creative side.

Is everything manufactured here?

Yes, I have my workshop where I do my shirts and dresses, and now I'm starting to do jeans and T-shirts and trousers in the factory.

Do you work with anyone, for quality control etc?

No, it's all done by me. Whenever there's a problem I have to be there, 24/7. I want to see every bit of the sewing, every little stitch, all the details.

So designing is the easy part?

Yeah, the hard part is doing the production; you have to check every little thing to make it work.

Do you have a philosophy of life?

That's easy ... just to live as you want, and in the end it will work out for you.