

Flash!
Bahrain Fashion Week
is taking place on
November 17-19 at
Palm Hall, Bahrain
Exhibition Centre



ARE YOU READY FOR THIS?

Bahrain Fashion Week is on a roll. Now in its third year, it has been responsible for launching a host of exciting new talent, as well as putting Bahrain's home-grown designers on the map. *Grazia* catches up with the people getting this month's can't-miss-it show on the road

THE SHOW PRODUCER

PAYAL PATEL, 27, studied at the London School of Economics before taking a degree in events and entertainment at New York University. In Manhattan she worked for a top events and PR company. On her return to Bahrain, Payal saw potential in an untouched niche in Bahrain and started her company, Lotus Pi, to offer unique event concepts, particularly in the fields of lifestyle and fashion

BAHRAIN FASHION WEEK IS IN ITS THIRD YEAR, HOW DID IT ALL START?

As a result of a random brainstorming session with the team we realised that there was no Bahrain Fashion Week!

WHAT DOES BFW MEAN TO YOU?

We aim to primarily push the talent within Bahrain into the international fashion arena.

HOW IS FASHION IN BAHRAIN EVOLVING AS YOU SEE IT?

Before we started there were only a handful of local, well-established designers. Now we have seen a whole new breed of talented young Bahraini designers. Fashion has exploded in Bahrain due to the advent of

social media such as Facebook and fashion blogs.

HOW HAS FASHION WEEK EVOLVED IN THE REGION?

We have had to work backwards as fashion week is mostly a new concept for the region. We keep the runway shows as the highlight but are introducing the Fashion and Lifestyle Mini-Expo which will ultimately develop into a trade show to display all aspects of fashion.

HOW DOES BAHRAIN FASHION WEEK COMPARE TO THE BIG FOUR?

We have a long way to go before we are Paris, London, Milan or New York. But that doesn't mean we can't get there. Dubai did, and with neighbours such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Kuwait, there's no reason we can't be bigger and better one day soon.

WHAT ARE YOUR ASPIRATIONS BEYOND FASHION WEEK?

We've established Fashionaires Middle East, which provides a platform for creativity for designers, models, photographers, hair and make-up artists. We have branches in Bahrain, Italy and London, with Tokyo and New York soon following suit.

Payal Patel tapped into an untouched niche in Bahrain with her company, Lotus Pi



Phlong Flores wants to show the world what Bahrain Fashion Week has to offer



THE PHOTOGRAPHER

PHLONG FLORES, 25, worked closely with the local designers from his home city of Cagayan de Oro in the Philippines, which served as a training ground for his photography career

WHAT IS THE MOST FUN THING ABOUT BAHRAIN FASHION WEEK?

The moments in between shows are what I enjoy the most. It's where small random talks happen and people are dancing around and doing crazy stuff just to keep the energy up for the next show.

HOW DO YOU COPE WITH THE MADNESS ONCE IT ALL GETS GOING?

We keep everything balanced. When it's time to work, we focus on that and then afterwards we try to loosen up a bit.

HOW TIGHTLY DOES THE TEAM HAVE TO WORK TOGETHER IN ORDER

TO GET BFW OFF THE GROUND?

Insanely tight! Especially as we need to go out of our way to see each other because we have different day jobs.

HOW DO YOU SEE YOUR ROLE WITHIN THE TEAM?

In this digital age, pictures reach different parts of the fashion world in minutes and we would like to do that. We would like to show the world what BFW has to offer.

DO YOU SEE BFW ON THE WORLD STAGE?

BFW is still a baby. We are still setting the standards and trying to follow the successful ways of the Big Four.

WHAT LIES BEYOND FASHION WEEK?

Gaining the trust of the rest of the region and getting noticed throughout the fashion world.

HOW HAS FASHION WEEK EVOLVED IN THE REGION?

People are more tolerant now but it is still a work in progress.



Winner of the Best Emerging Talent Award at Dubai Fashion Week, Khalid Swaid

THE FASHION DESIGNER

KALID SWAID, 32, from Saudi Arabia, won the Best Emerging Talent Designer Award at the Dubai Fall/Winter 2010 Fashion Week. He has been designing for 10 years and studied in Italy and New York before returning to Saudi to design couture. His ready-to-wear line, Studio Kalid, is based in Bahrain

HOW WERE YOU FIRST DRAWN TO A CAREER IN FASHION?

After studying electrical engineering for two years, I realised that I needed to pursue a career in practical arts where music and colours harmonise. Fashion sounded like the right medium at the time, and that still proves to be true for me.

WHAT EXCITES YOU MOST ABOUT THE DESIGN PROCESS?

As exciting as the presentation and the fashion show are within

this process, the early stages of designing a collection, the sprouting idea evolving, is what excites me the most.

HOW DOES BFW FIT INTO THE FASHION WEEK MATRIX?

Unlike the Big Four, which have their own identity and reputation to keep up with, BFW has the opportunity to create an identity from scratch and guide it to evolve in a direction that reflects the Bahraini fashion scene.

WHERE WILL YOUR FOCUS LIE AFTER FASHION WEEK ENDS?

I am looking forward to the next BFW and Dubai Fashion Week! Fashion weeks from this region have only recently become an international phenomenon. They are still taking their first steps towards international recognition. That is the greatest motivation to strive for a fast-paced evolutionary track. ■

THE REST OF THE TROUPE



FRAGEL GALARRITA, 33, is the BFW Artistic Creator and show choreographer. He likens the moment he started to choreograph as "the moment I learnt to breathe"

and Bahrain fashion as "giving birth to my dreams". Fragel laments the trickiest aspect of his job being when the budget cannot cope with his imagination "but then again there is always improvisation". He believes that through education, more people are appreciating the value and the relevance of fashion in Bahrain as "there is always a silver lining after a sandstorm".



PRINCESS APPLE DOMINGUEZ SINCHONGCO, 25, trains the models for BFW. Hailing from the Philippines, she has been modelling for eight years. Residing

in Bahrain since 2007, Princess is also studying photography, digital art and make-up. She maintains that models in Bahrain are learning and becoming more open-minded to different concepts of fashion shoots and catwalk shows. "I'm looking forward to designers such as McQueen, Galliano, Lagerfeld, Vuitton, Valentino and Versace showcasing their collections at BFW one day".



ERIN PACOMA, 25, is the Creative Director of Lotus Pi Events. Bahrain-born, Erin studied business management in Toronto and worked in advertising,

marketing and PR. She keeps sane during BFW with caffeine, chocolate and five-minute breathing sessions. After BFW she will continue her work in putting Bahrain on the international fashion map by organising fashion events, creating out-of-the-box fashion concepts, "handling insane photo-shoots and anything else we can get our crazy minds to do".

THE FASHION PR

NADIA GOURZONG, 23, specialised in fashion merchandising and public relations in Chicago and styled for MTV in New York. She is currently stationed in Bahrain with the US Navy

HOW DID YOU GET INVOLVED IN FASHION?

I just loved clothes and by my senior high school year I was designing friends' after-prom outfits.

WHAT'S THE MOST CHALLENGING PART OF YOUR JOB?

Fashion is still new here, so people are willing to

take risks like they do in New York, Tokyo, Milan or even Dubai.

HOW DO YOU SEE BFW COMPARED TO THE BIG FOUR?

We are at a far too early stage to compare. Hopefully one day the question will be "how does your fashion week compare to Bahrain fashion week!"

WHAT WILL YOU BE DOING WHEN BFW'S FINISHED?

Styling and writing, putting on more events, and building my folio - staying a very busy fashion bee!

Nadia Gourzong discovered her passion for fashion while making friends' prom dresses

