

South African couturier Errol Arendz and his stunning sister Gloria, a formidable fashion force in the world of international design, spoke to Lifestyle Club in a frank interview.

Errol Arendz

The Mother City's doyen of fashion.



Errol Arendz, South Africa's most famous international couturier came from a very close-knit middle class family. At school, he was never "one of the boys". He was an outsider, and this quality strengthened his determination to succeed in his career.

His mother was a very sophisticated lady, always immaculately groomed. Her ritual of preparation when she was going out captivated both Errol and Gloria and nurtured their interest in the world of glamorous fashions.

After completing his schooling Errol attended a design school in Johannesburg for a year. To avoid the problem of the Group Areas Act, Errol's parents had him stay in a hotel for the entire year.

After a brief sojourn in Europe, Errol returned to Cape Town and started making dresses for clients acquired by word of mouth. His major break came when society hostess, Vicky Keeler, staged a fashion show in her Constantia home. Errol, using a domestic sewing machine, ran up the garments for the show which was so successful that he was shortly thereafter invited by Fair Lady magazine to dress Barbara Barnard for a fashion special.

The rush of orders for an Arendz creation has never subsided since.

The task of every couturier is to make his patrons feel good and look good by translating their personal fantasies into their clothing. This special talent is the secret of the successful couturier.

Owing to his celebrity status in South Africa, the continuous interruptions of work by people wanting interviews, fashion shoots and party invitations, Errol finds that it is impossible to find relaxation in this country. To unwind, he has friends in Provence (France) to which he commutes regularly. His desire for this quiet spot is such that he passes through the world's fashion capital, Paris, without stopping. In Provence, he can relax and unwind in total obscurity and recharge his body and soul.

Errol loves to work. He yearns to be able to lock himself away, like a Parisien designer does, and work uninterrupted on his new collection, and only when it is finished emerge to receive the accolades. "If I had wanted to be a celebrity I would have gone on stage." Errol admits that the tinsel fades when one achieves success. The first flight in a lear jet is exciting, by the 10th it's really just another plane.

Gloria is not only Errol's sister but his friend and confidant. Always exquisitely turned-out, Gloria is also a shrewd business woman and P.R.O. Her natural sophistication makes her the perfect showpiece for Errol's fantasy creations. Every bit as hardworking as Errol, together they make a formidable combination.

Errol's garments are exclusive and worn by equally exclusive clientele, but an off-the-peg range is soon to be released, unfortunately, not in South Africa but will appear in boutiques throughout Europe. The income generated from the off-the-peg clothing will give Errol the time to concentrate on the fantasy designs which have made his name synonymous with exclusive fashion in South Africa. ■

