**STYLE HUNTER AUSTRALIA**

**INTERVIEW WITH:**

**TITLE: WORLD WIDE SALES MANAGER /** **OPERA® and SUNFLAIR® CREATIVE DIRECTOR?**

**OPERA® and SUNFLAIR® are both swimwear labels but are very different in their own right. Can you tell us a bit about each of the brands and their ethos?**

Our five award winning brand SUNFLAIR® always delivers the latest colours and styles - sizes from 8 to 28 and cup-sizes from A to H. SUNFLAIR® places the emphasis on fit, quality and comfort for the wearer. SUNFLAIR® offers a large collection of swimwear including bikinis, tankinis, one pieces and even skirted swimsuits – the range includes also special swimwear styles such as “Mastectomy”, Shapewear “Beautyform” and Tummy Control. The matching beach fashion and the “City & Beach” dress collection will take our customers from the beach to the restaurant or to a stroll [through](http://www.dict.cc/englisch-deutsch/through.html) [town](http://www.dict.cc/englisch-deutsch/town.html) in complete style.

We can describe OPERA® as an absolutely indispensable luxury. Women who want luxury in everything they are wearing will find that with OPERA®. The range offers a collection ofexquisite swimwear in sizes from 8to 20, cup-sizes from A to G.The available accessories, are as elegant as they are original, consistently prove to be particularly remarkable. Quite special and striking fashion effects are achieved. OPERA® offers a fine and elegant fashionable style.

For even higher demands we offer the product line DIAMONDS by OPERA®. This line combines everything that makes swimwear fashion noble, valuable, unique and fascinating. Wonderful designs, only the highest quality materials are used in functional items and accessories such as, for example, stones by Swarowski or scarves in design colours. Particularly high-quality workmanship is added to this: reversed seams, closer stitching along the seams and the particularly intricate fasteners on the bikini tops. Quite simply: DIAMONDS by OPERA®.

**How many designers put the collections together? How do they pick the trends? Colour palette, prints etc for both collections each season?**

We have one head designer for each brand. To pick the trends we visit fashion fairs, check the internet, fashion magazines and stores. But the rest has to stay a secret ☺

**Both OPERA® and SUNFLAIR® are based in Germany; do you think the European swimwear market is very different to the Australian one?**

Every woman wants to look good when they step on to the beach or into the pool no matter where they are in the world. Many Australian women are a little more conservative than their European counterparts. Sales of A-Line tankinis and swim dresses that provide more cover and are not so tight fitting is definitely higher in Australia. Australian women often prefer to buy bikinis as separates rather than a standard matching set, this does help them ensure they get the perfect fit for their shape.

**The Sunshine Coast Fashion Festival is in its 8th year this year and I believe you will be showing your latest collections at the event for the third year running. What is the drawcard to show at the festival and what can we look forward to seeing from this year’s ranges.**

The Sunshine Coast Fashion Festival is a unique event for South East Queensland. With most major fashion events only occurring in the southern states, this is a exceptional opportunity to showcase the latest releases to the media, retailers and the general public. The climate in Queensland is favourable for a long swimming season and therefore it is the perfect location to showcase our extensive ranges of swimwear and matching resort fashion to clientele that really have a need for the product. As always there will be fabulous colour combinations and the release of new casual wear that will be perfect for a yoga class or walk along the beach.

**The Sunshine Coast is the epitome of everything about the Australian beach lifestyle. Is this why chose to showcase the OPERA®  and SUNFLAIR®  collections at the Sunshine Coast Fashion Festival?**

It is no surprise that so many people have chosen to leave the rat race of big city living and spend their lives in such beautiful surroundings. OPERA**®** and SUNFLAIR**®** are upmarket product ranges and are the most suitable collections for the growing population who like to invest in swimwear and resort fashion that perfectly matches their lifestyle.

**I have noticed for OPERA® and SUNFLAIR® you have models of all ages and sizes walk the catwalk during the SCFF is that a conscious decision?**

We make swimwear for real women, so we intentionally use a broad cross section of models to demonstrate that you don't need to have a perfect body to still look fabulous. With such a large selection of swimwear available and specialist options such as the Mastectomy and Shapewear/Beautyform, our brands really do have something for everyone. If all our models were 18 year old's with size 6 bodies, we would not be representing our brands for general appeal.

**How do you make the final cut of the pieces to appear on the catwalk?**

Give a group of women our catalogues and a glass of wine and before you know it you have a list of the most popular colours and styles! Add a few select pieces that highlight the different styles we offer and it's done.

**What are your fashion predictions for swimwear for 2015?**

The new collection is all about bright colours, pastels are taking a step back. Animal print is still incredibly popular and will feature in the ranges again. The elegance of navy and white will be the forerunner for classical looks and will be a great choice for women who will often gravitate to black.

**I believe that for the last four years in a row, SUNFLAIR® has been awarded the SOUS retail award for the best-selling swimwear brand in Germany, which is exciting. Can you tell us a little bit about the award and what it means?**

Actually SUNFLAIR® just won the award the fifth time in a row. We have received the award in March 2015 and it is such a huge accomplishment when you consider the incredibly large number of competitors. The “SOUS” award is given to the best-selling swimwear brand in the German retail trade. The award is based on a poll from 500 retailers and reassures our customers that SUNFLAIR® is offering the best fitting and most fashionable swimwear in the German market and around the world. Winning this award ensures we do not sit on our laurels but continually strive to create the best selling collections so that we win it every year!

**What have been the biggest challenges in the swimwear industry over time?**

Increasing competition ensures we have to continually improve and offer our customers the best possible product. The development of fabric that can resist damage from Chlorine so that the swimsuits last has been ongoing and incredible improvements have been made. Swimwear only used to be sold in the summer months but now sales are incredibly active all year round. This has seen the need to create two full ranges each year instead of just a single release.

**What does it take to be a successful swimwear designer or swimwear brand?**

Swimwear has evolved from being a basic black piece to an important fashion statement. Women of all ages now take to the water regularly and want to do so in style and comfort. Our incredible success has grown from creating pieces for all shapes, sizes and cultures. Provide a quality product that does what it promises and you will gain a repeat customer for life. That is how we do business and it works!

**What are the top tips you would give a woman when shopping for new swimwear?**

Instead of heading to your local department store where you are left to your own devices to negotiate racks of swimsuits, make time to visit your local boutique that specialise in swimwear and/or lingerie. You will find the staff a wealth of knowledge. Let them measure and fit you properly. Let them suggest colours that will suit your skin tones. Certain colours will bring your features too life. Patterns can help to accentuate your good points and hide those you are not so proud of. Select a few that you like the look of and then try on some that they suggest.  Basic black is often a comfort choice as we have been lead to believe that it will make us look slimmer, but find the right colours and shapes for your figure and you might wave goodbye to black forever.

**There are so many iconic swimwear moments in fashion history, Pamela Anderson in her red Baywatch swimming cozzie, Ursula Andress in her white Bikini in Dr No, Jessica Simpson in the Dukes of Hazzard, Bo Derek in 10, Salma Hayek in From Dusk Til Dawn, Halle Berry in Die Another Day, are just a few. What would you say is your favourite swimwear moment?**

It would be hard to beat Ursula Andress in her white bikini in the James Bond film, Dr. No.

**If you could pick the brain of any fashion designer, dead or alive, who would it be and what would you ask?**

It would have be Coco Chanel, the epitome of all things style and grace. 'What style and features do you think are essential for a swimsuit today, so that a woman can look gorgeous and glamorous?'

**What are you earliest or most poignant fashion memories?**

My earliest fashion memory is all flairs, safari suits and fluro. All of which do not need to be recycled!

**What are your favourite fashion magazines, blogs, and websites?**

Marie Claire is my first choice in fashion magazines. Not only does is offer the latest in fashion and makeup trends, but it always has a great article or two that often opens your eyes to experiences others have. My favourite blog for all things fashion would have to be [www.stylingyou.com.au](http://www.stylingyou.com.au). Nikki Parkinson shares practical and inspirational ideas for real women. When it comes to websites, any that offers online shopping is a winner in my books as it saves time and money to have goodies delivered, and it feels like Christmas every time a parcel arrives.

**What one questions would you like an interviewer to ask you, and what would your answer be?**

Q - 'Why would you buy SUNFLAIR® or OPERA®?'

A - Tried the rest, now I will stick with the best! Cheap swimsuits lack support and start to disintegrate after only a few wears. Living in Queensland, I swim a lot and the super smooth but incredibly soft fabric they use is a delight to wear. After a whole season of regular use my SUNFLAIR® still looks as good as the day I got it. Definitely no turning back now.

**How do you think your own personal style has evolved over the years?**

I no longer follow fashion trends and wear things that do not suit my shape just because they are 'in'. The same goes for colours, unless the latest shades actually look fabulous on me, they do not make it into my wardrobe. Every season I add a few fresh basic pieces that can be mixed and matched and then throw in a top or two or three in the colours I love. Handbags and shoes will often show their age more than a good pant or skirt. That gives me a great excuse to buy more of them.

**What is your favourite fashion quote or mantra?**

"The difference between style and fashion is quality" - Georgio Armani

**In three words how would you describe OPERA®?**

Luxury - Fascinating – Diamonds

**In three words how would you describe SUNFLAIR®?**

Sensational - Stylish - Supportive.

***OPERA® and SUNFLAIR®*** *will be showing at the Sunshine Coast Fashion Festival on Saturday 17th October 2015 at Palmer Coolum Resort Coolum on the Sunshine Coast, QLD. Combined Glamour and Luxe fashion and stay packages will be available as well as VIP and general tickets. Sign up on the website for the latest news and ticket information.*

*For further information visit:*

[*www.sunshinecoastfashionfestival.com*](http://www.sunshinecoastfashionfestival.com)

[*https://www.facebook.com/SunshineCoastFashionFestival*](https://www.facebook.com/SunshineCoastFashionFestival)