Nobody seems to have had as much fun this spring at Coachella as designer Fausto Puglisi, whose Spring Summer 2023 cruise collection for the house of Roberto Cavalli is all about full-fronted feminine fantasy.
Though he designed the collection before his recent jaunt to Coachella, the music festival’s freaky wanderlust aesthetic informed the whole mood.

In April, Puglisi cut a swathe through southern California, as stars like Miley Cyrus, Anitta, Karol G and Doja Cat donned Cavalli for their scantily dressed performances.

Puglisi’s cruise is a lot more grown up, albeit it with a gold Sicilian baroque religious approach, even as Fausto insists he wants to dress women of multiple generations.

“Being in Coachella was so much fun and I dressed some very cool girls, in fashion fantastic terms. But I hope also
I can dress all women. I want to dress the young girl, mum and grandmother,” explained the Sicilian-born designer in a chatty Zoom.

The result was a wide-ranging series of looks varying from double-face cashmere coats – in bright pink and sinful red; or lingerie froissé velvet lingerie dresses, that Puglisi termed “very easy to travel and very Roberto.”

Most audaciously, he played with classic leopard, mixed up with a new multi-feather print that had great gusto; or dreamed up sexy iconic body-con catsuits in leopard jacquard, worn underneath twisted masculine overcoats.

“There are no high heels in this collection. I want strong but feminine as well,” he insisted, showing oodles of saucy mini cocktails accessorized with lion’s-head jewelry or silk twill tops cut like a foulard. For glam evenings, Puglisi
went for punkish regal coats, in Fortuny-style velvet.

“I have so many books of Fortuny from decades ago. And I like this wrinkled, I don’t give a fu… velvet look,” he laughed.

Add in macramé lace dresses with punky Balenciaga-worthy volumes, riffing on the late '60s and early '70s Spain; or oversized wrinkled velvet dresses, and you got a great statement collection from Cavalli. A brand that is suddenly bristling with life under Fausto’s determined direction.

For mono-color moments, there are jet black dresses in wool or macramé lace, or rouched bias-cut mini cocktail T-shirts, or a recreated crocodile dress, made of laser-cut leather. His lace guipure jackets can be worn day and night, while his grand Coachella tie-dye shearling coats demand a major nightlife entrance.
Many models adorned in golden regal headbands, after a visit to Piana degli Albanesi, a mountainous commune in western Sicily. "It’s the only place in Italy where they speak in Albanian, and it’s where Sicilian jewelry was born," muses Puglisi, who was born in Messina, in eastern Sicily. Subsequently, he found a double lion necklace in the Cavalli archive in Florence and put it on a hot new printed leather bag.

In between finishing off cruise, Fausto also had a great Cannes, with lots of red-carpet action, much of it in a new custom-made Cavalli couture capsule. Eva Longoria stunned in a bondage dress that turned out to be knitwear; Pooja Hegde smoldered in a marigold dress with chains, gold fangs and panther heads; and Didi Stone had the paparazzi in overdrive in a champagne-satin mermaid dress finished with crocodile scales in rose-gold brass.
“That couture capsule was great success in Cannes, so I went and got to meet private customers and celebrities,” he enthused.

Despite having to debut in the midst of the pandemic, Puglisi’s impact has been immediate. Key stores like Neiman’s and Selfridges report strong sales and social media coverage has been intense. The brand now boasts 7.6 million Instagram followers.

“It’s hard to remember that I have been here only one and half years, in full Covid. But we have enjoyed a great boom very quickly. I think I have already created the right vibe,” Puglisi concluded.

By Godfrey Deeny

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