



Kirsti Alley at the recent New York Fashion Week



# A Malaysian Fashion Icon

**F**rom humble beginnings as the youngest of seven children in a small village in Kelantan, Zang Toi literally burst into the New York fashion scene in 1989 and it was just two years later that a journalist commented "If anyone is THE NEXT BIG THING, it's him." Zang proved him right and today, the world continues to recognize his passion for timeless beauty as he builds on a strong tradition of elegance.

Among the stars he has 'dressed' are Sharon Stone, Patti LaBelle, Ivana Trump, and Fergie from The Black Eyed Peas and his creations are marketed as original and feminine. An award winning designer and duly knighted by the Sultan of Kelantan, he has established himself as a fashion icon and a true ambassador of the fashion world in Malaysia.

At the recent launch of his collaboration with Malaysian Jewellery designer, Amee Philips and the Zang Toi 10001 Nights Jewellery Collection, *Senses of Malaysia's*

Nick Atkinson was fortunate to have the chance to ask have a chat with this icon of Malaysian and world fashion.

**SoM: You left Malaysia at the age of eighteen to go the USA. Were you already keen to be a fashion designer and if so, was this desire a factor in this decision?**

**Zang Toi:** No...all I wanted to do was pursue my dream of creating "beauty"

**SoM: New York is now your home but I hear you love to travel.**

**Zang Toi:** Yes, I love to travel to different parts of the world to find inspiration for my works as well as to experience the beauty of different cultures.

**SoM: Do you have a favourite destination to visit?**

**Zang Toi:** I love all destinations as I am a firm believer that "beauty comes in all shapes and forms", and in all cultures for that matter.

**SoM: Pop stars or film stars? Do you have a preference when asked to design personal fashion items?**

**Zang Toi:** Film stars, as I love the look of glamorous silver screen stars.

**SoM: Of all the stars you have designed for, who is your favourite?**

**Zang Toi:** Sharon Stone as she has that true "movie star" look that's not manufactured by Hollywood stylists. I also love Gong Li...it's my dream to meet her in person someday, and dress her in more Zang Toi.

**SoM: You have worked with another Malaysian, Ling Tan, in your fashion shows. How do you feel about the fashion potential here in Malaysia?**

**Zang Toi:** I think Malaysia has a strong pool of fashion talents which can blossom with the help of a little luck and loads of hard work!

**SoM: Tourism Malaysia has recently given a lot of support to the local fashion industry. Do you believe this will give impetus to young Malaysian designers to strive for greater things in the fashion world?**

**Zang Toi:** Very much so...It's smart of Tourism Malaysia to support the fashion industry as it has the potential of becoming a power player like the one in New York, where it is the second largest industry behind Wall Street.

**SoM: What first attracted you to Amee Philips and her Jewellery designs?**

**Zang Toi:** Amee and me like to claim "it's love at first sight"

**SoM: What inspired this collaborative collection with Amee?**

**Zang Toi:** The 10001 Precious Jewels Collection was inspired by my dream trip to Marrakech 11 years ago; the iconic La Mamounia, the exotic garden of the late YSL and the beautiful caftans and rugs left a lasting impression that help inspired the collection today

**SoM: You are very supportive of a number of charities. What motivates you to help them?**

**Zang Toi:** I have been blessed to live a dream life, so it's my duty and pleasure to give a helping hand to worthy causes whenever and however I can.