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October 2001

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# Ze-e-E-e-en

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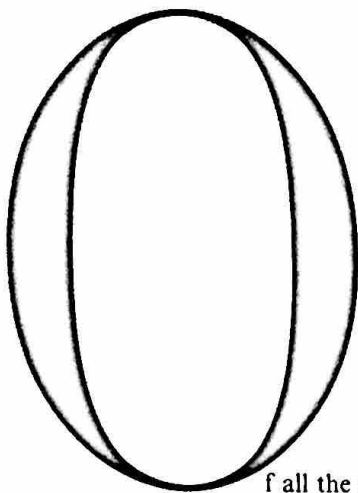
His ID modeling agency is just three years old, without much in the way of profits or big-name cover girls. But from Milan to Israel to New York, everyone knows the ebullient Paolo Zampolli. NANCY JO SALES looks on as this playboy turns into something approaching a player

# credible Paolo!

STYLED BY ANNE CANTINO. ZAMPOLLI'S SUIT, SHIRT, AND SHOES BY TOM FORD FOR GUCCI; TIE BY HERMÈS; WATCH BY PATEK CALPÈRE; CUFF LINKS BY GIOIELLERI ACCIARI; ALL GOLDEN BELLS SHIRTS BY TOM FORD FOR GUCCI; ALL PANTIES BY BANKY PANKY; HAIR BY MICOLAS JUDENAC; MAKEUP BY ARIELLE BEISS-ANDERSEN. FOR DETAILS, SEE CREDITS PAGE

#### THE MODEL MOGUL

Paolo Zampolli with his ID models (left to right) Dana Thompson, Stacia Cleary, Elizabeth Perfoli, Jacqui Rickards, Cinthia Moura, Nuria de La Fuente, Nathalia Costa.



f all the fashion events taking place in New York each year, the *Seventeen*/Chanel New Model of the Year cocktail party is not among the most significant. Jerry and Eileen Ford, the founders of Ford Models, were already ducking down the elevator, several gift bags in tow, as the eight lucky teens plucked from spots like Kissimmee, Florida, were wobbling around the runway set up in the Chanel boutique on 57th Street, beaming.

"If these girls are models, I'm a nuclear physicist," said a booker from a top agency, sipping free champagne.

Just then, the elevator doors opened, and a man came creeping through the room, intently fixing the young models with what appeared to be his most discriminating stare. There was something oddly familiar about his rugged face, his lustrous, swept-back hair; but no, it was not George Hamilton.

"I am Paolo," said Paolo Zampolli in his thick Italian accent. "When people meet me, they love me," he likes to say. "When they know me, they are jealous."

The runway show was over now, and the eight racially diverse girls in pretty Chanel dresses were standing around nervously, smacking their lips and trying not to look at the bushy-browed man with the Count Dracula collar studying them as if he might be one of those "funny" guys.

"This is Paolo Zampolli, the owner of ID Models," a publicist reassured them, adding lightly that she knew Mr. Zampolli "from Saint-Tropez."

"Oh!" said the girls, still uncertain how all this fit into the picture.

"What is your name?" Zampolli said, zeroing in on a skinny brunette with an orange purse.

"Amanda," said the girl.

Zampolli purred, "I like your purse."

Amanda said, "It's Chanel."

Zampolli felt the air, as if for inspiration. "She has something!" And then he withdrew a tiny camera from his breast pocket and thrust it at Kirsten Weaver, a booker in his agency.

"Kirsten! Take Amanda's picture!" he said, and stalked over to schmooze with the *New York Post*'s Richard Johnson and *Gotham*-magazine publisher Jason Binn.

"If he's the next John Casablancas, I'm Tupac Shakur," one of the bitchy bookers said.

It was a warm day in SoHo, and Zampolli was responding to the taunts of his detractors with a rundown of some of ID's bigger bookings in the last year: "We have Kim Smith doing Victoria's Secret," he said, thumbing at a two-way pager, "Ana Hickmann on the cover of Brazilian *Vogue*, Nathalia Costa on the cover of Australian *Marie Claire*. Hops!"—he caught himself—"I walk against a tree!"

"Ciao, Paolo," said the two models. They stopped and gave Zampolli the double-cheek kiss, and they told him they were moving in together.

"These girls are such slots!" he complained as they walked away. "The other night I saw the dark one making out with some guy in a club! The one with the ugly nose used to be varry famous," he added.

A few more paces up the block, a silver-haired man extended a manicured hand. "Ciao, Paolo."

"Eh, Victor!"

"Victor Hugo—varry famous," Zampolli said after the man had gone, "the Louis Vuitton of Brazil. And the girlfriend I discovered on model search."

Zampolli also claims to have been in on the discovery of Gisele.

"I organized Elite's Look of the Year '94!" he insists. "I brought to the table Club Med and Italian TV!"

A pretty, young guy in Prada passed by, slapping Zampolli high five. "Yo, Paolo."

"Nice jacket," said Zampolli.

"Everybody in the world knows Paolo, trust me," he said, pleased. "I can walk down the street in every country, they know me."

Surprisingly enough, the same can be said of his agency, which in the three years since it was founded has gained international name recognition. It's curious, because ID has hardly begun to turn a profit yet and doesn't have any of the biggest models in the industry (although it does have one with some of the longest legs—Ana Hickmann, at 48 inches), nor has it managed so far to achieve some of the milestones of a powerhouse agency, such as an American *Vogue* cover or a major cosmetics campaign.

And yet ID seems to exist in some virtual space where it passes for a real modeling agency. Media coverage of ID girls—*Extra*, the Style Network, *Access Hollywood*—is relentless. Zampolli's presence on "Page Six," the gossip column in the *New York Post*—where he is always identified as a "model mogul"—is surpassed only by "hot-blooded hotel heiress" Paris Hilton's. The items are invariably upbeat, recounting the seemingly endless parade of Zampolli and his "coterie of leggy lovelies" through New York nightlife in the proximity of celebrities great (Robert De Niro) and small (Vincent Gallo).

"With pictures!" Zampolli crowed. "We are on Brazilian TV every day! On Italian TV twice a day!"

As usual, he was eating lunch at the downtown Cipriani, where he dines twice daily. The airy, sun-splashed place was flooded with members of the fashion elite, from famed photo agent Jean Gabriel Kauss to photographers Michel Comte and Patrick Demarchelier—

"Patrick!" Zampolli called across the restaurant. "Varry good friend of mine," he said.

Christy Turlington, hair shorn, was looking rosy at a table nearby. May Andersen and her boyfriend, rich kid Bert Dweck, were looking fashionably morose.

"There is Peter Brant, the art-collector husband of Stephanie Seymour!" Zampolli whispered, eyebrows raised. "Why is he talking to Patrick? . . ."

It was like a club where only the most stylishly Euro members of the fashion world could apply—and the only modeling-agency head there was Zampolli. In fact, his name is included on a plaque on the wall of the establish- CONTINUED ON PAGE 160

# Paolo Zampolli

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 346 ment's *soci permanenti*, permanent members.

"Giuseppe," he said, shrugging—meaning Giuseppe Cipriani—"is a varry good friend.

"Everyone think the Paolo is involved in this to know these people," scoffed Zampolli. "No—I knew them before. I was friends with Patrick Demarchelier 10 years ago, I had John Casablancas spending the summer wif me when I was a kid . . ."

That was on Ibiza, where Zampolli's family owns one of the biggest houses on the island. They also have a castle (the Castle Zampolli) in Varese, outside Milan. The family fortune on his mother's side—the Ventura Gregorinis—is from steel; they built Italy's railways. Gianni Agnelli, the Fiat and Ferrari tycoon, is a relative ("an uncle of my cousin"), and there's a Pope in the family (Paolo VI) and two saints. Zampolli's mother, Luisa, is a distinguished heart specialist who teaches at the University of Milan. Valentino made her wedding dress.

"This is why I am viciously attacked left and right every day in this industry!" Zampolli said. "People think I am rich!"

He lives in a \$3 million Gramercy Park apartment adorned with a Picasso, two Mirós, three de Chiricos, and "a view into the apartment of Paulina Porizkova!" Of his personal wealth, he says, "Anything less than \$100 million is not real money." He admits to spending "meillions" keeping ID afloat.

"People say, Who is this new kid on the block? When I started out in this business I had everything against me: I am Italian, I am young"—he claims he's 31—"people think I am straight . . ."

On his father's side, there was still another fortune, from, "how you say, tar?" And then there was the Easy-Bake Oven. "My father invented the Easy-Bake Oven," Zampolli related over a Cipriani lunch. "I control the Milan hairport with these toys! When I want the visitors' bus to come meet my plane—truckload of toys to the security police! One time the prime minister of Italy was varry upset because the bus met my plane and not his—"

Zampolli's father owned Harbet, a small toy company that had the Italian licensing for such popular items as Sega video games and the Star Wars action figures. He died at 43 in a skiing accident in Saint-Moritz, and Zampolli, who was 18, took control of the business.

"That was when I realized life is not pink like an amusement park," said Zampolli. He dropped out of school, went to the office every day in a suit. "I loved it!"

he said. "They were all custom-made by a tailor named Caraceni, which is varry famous in Italy, and if not him I was wearing Valentino."

"In a way, you know," he mused, "it was similar to what I am doing now: today I scout for models and in those days I scout for new toys. I never thought about that before—I am so excited!"

But he soon grew bored with being a toy salesman. His true love had always been fashion, from the time he was 14 and "going around on my scooter in Milano seeing all these gorgeous girls."

"I looked up to Casablancas," he said. "He had every supermodel then—Cindy, Naomi, Frederique. I remember one day during Fashion Week in Milano I was hanging around the Elite booth and they said, 'Hey, Paolo, Linda's late for the Versace show—give her a ride.' I am 18 years old, I have Linda Evangelista alone with me in my car for 25 minutes! . . . Nothing happened, of course. I couldn't even speak English."

He sold the toy company for "lots of money!" and moved to New York with his girlfriend at the time, Edit Molnar, a Hungarian model. "I got sheevers," he said, "every time I saw the skyline of Manhattan." For a while he tried to import yachts in Miami, but eventually an opportunity to invest in a modeling agency came his way. (He first bought Metropolitan Models, which he is now suing for an astronomical sum after falling out with his partners, and then purchased American Models, which he turned into ID.)

"Everybody says the Paolo does this to be a playboy," said Zampolli, "but the truth is I really believe in this. I am not playing a game!"

"What's the matter with play?" grumbled Peter Beard, the gruff photographer; he'd just sat down and summarily polished off Zampolli's espresso.

"Play is important," Beard rumbled on. "We're losing play in our lives. We're all machines acting more and more mechanical—"

"Eh, I met him in Cannes," Zampolli offered.

"People are envious," said Beard. "He's a bon vivant. I'm into living sculpture—so is he, without going into specifics . . ."

They started discussing some young model Zampolli had recently sent over to Beard to be photographed.

"She is beautiful, no?" Zampolli said, his green eyes flickering. "Yes?"

While Zampolli doesn't seem to mind being known as a self-promoter ("I make stars!"), a ball-buster ("I don't take yes for no—or however you say!"), the one thing he can't have is to be known as a playboy.

"If I sleep with every model, they would all walk out the door, it's sure. If you sleep with one model and you don't stay wif her," he said, "she's gonna change agencies the next day . . ."

Or worse. The last couple of years have been hard on the fun of being the head of a modeling agency, what with *60 Minutes* and the BBC doing exposés on sexual harassment and drug abuse in the modeling world. Zampolli's idol, John Casablancas, resigned from Elite last year in the wake of the BBC story.

"I do not date models," Zampolli insists.

Yet he's enough of an admirer of models to confess he once told Václav Havel that he should replace the faces of political figures on Czech money with the images of the country's several supermodels; that was on a scouting trip with . . . John Casablancas.

"I hate models!" Zampolli says.

And two years ago, *Playboy* magazine named him—along with Derek Jeter, Leo, and Sean Combs—one of the 10 "princes of the city" of New York.

"Not playboy—prince," Zampolli stresses. "To understand the Paolo you have to understand I don't need a fucking modeling agency to get laid. If I wanted to get laid with every fucking model, I could do it much better without having a model agency—it's a restriction. Actually, it was much better before!"

He will admit to having a rather active social life. "It is not hard to have sex! It does not have to be with models. What do these girls do? I do not ask their professions."

And he was, he said, currently courting a young model—"but she lives in Brazil. I sent her flowers when she was in New York, huge Balducci Easter eggs—she is a Catholic girl—flowers to her plane back to Brazil, huge teddy bear to Brazil!" They hadn't gotten together yet. "She does not know they are from me! I'm a varry romantic guy!" he explained.

He was scurrying through SoHo again on his way to one of the "model apartments" where ID houses young girls trying to make it. His cell phone rang. "We booked our seventh Guess campaign!" he announced, nearly jumping in the air. "Good, eh?!"

No one who knows Zampolli will say he doesn't truly love the hustle of the modeling business. "If you took away all his money and set him down in the Sahara Desert, he'd come out driving a Mercedes and wearing a Rolex," said Ray Dowd, his attorney. He's usually the first to arrive and last to leave his offices on Varick Street, say his employees. Christian Paris, his head booker, says, "He really wants it bad."

"I negotiate in five languages," Zampolli said proudly. "English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian—and I am learning Hebrew! There are many beautiful Israeli girls!"

At the model apartment, four girls—ages 17 to 21, from Brazil, Sweden, Siberia, and Minnesota—sat tensely around a coffee table as if waiting for their dad to appear.

"Ciao!" Zampolli called, bursting in. (He'd phoned first.)

"You see what we give them?" He wheeled around the large, bright loft and pointed to the "satellite hookup, DSL high-speed-connection fax, espresso machine—hey, there is my furniture from Miami!"

"We are very high-tech. We give them cell phones, two-way pagers. These are good girls," he said, and the four girls around the coffee table smiled tightly, "but you have the cuckoo girls who are unreachable. It's 8:30 in the morning, they're supposed to be at a job, and the booker can't find them—you have to call the friend, the boyfriend!"

"We kick out these cuckoo girls," he said. "One time the booker called and say, 'Can we kick out so-and-so from the agency?' and I say, 'Why,' and he say, 'Because she has the rapper Shyne'—or, I don't know, one of these 'yo, yo's'—'asleep in her bedroom and she is not there!'"

A picture of Eminem snarled down from

the wall; next to him were magazine cutouts of half-dressed girls in amorous poses.

"O.K., ciao, girls!" said Zampolli.

On the way out, he kicked at a case of empty beer bottles behind the front door. "What is this, beer? I am shocked!" He laughed, and left.

"I think Paolo found Italy too small," said his mother, Luisa, on the phone from Milan. "I always thought my son would be an engineer or a banker, but if he is happy . . ." She sighed. "I hope he will make some babies."

I asked her about the Easy-Bake Oven.

"Eh? No, Paolo's father did not invent the Easy-Bake Oven. He had the licensing from Kenner."

"Did she tell you I was a bad boy?" Zampolli said later, on the phone from the gym. " . . . Eh? Well, if Mama said that, then it's true, but I definitely know my father invented the cotton-candy maker and the potato maker and the ice-cream maker!"

A night at Cipriani—the restaurant was smoky and loud—and Zampolli was having dinner with a few friends: designer Roberto Cavalli, ID model Sabrina Hüls, and others including Monet Mazur, a lovely dark-eyed young actress in a sheer camisole

who'd been getting some heat lately. Zampolli had just been introduced.

"I'd like to represent you for print!" he said.

"He's always working, always working," laughed Maria Divaris, an assistant to the fashion editor at *Marie Claire*.

"I think she is gorgeous!" Zampolli said.

"Peter Lindbergh's shooting me next week for the Pirelli Calendar," offered Mazur.

Zampolli's eyes lit up. "Wow! That's very prestigious! I love Peter! Congratulations! Can you write down the number of your manager?" He lit her cigarette.

"A girl like her," he murmured, aside, "at the right moment in her career . . ."

His knees seemed restless under the table, as if searching for hers.

"These magazines," he said, "they all want Hollywood girls on the cover."

"Everybody say Paolo is a playboy, but absolutely he is not," said Roberto Cavalli in his gravelly voice. "He only tries to make the models in his agency more comfortable."

Cavalli was wearing a pair of outrageous sunglasses and leather pants, which he'd made himself. "Paolo is like my son," he said. "Life is love," he wrote on the tablecloth.

"You don't know what I was doing before becoming an agent," Zampolli purred at

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## Paolo Zampolli

Mazur. "I was making the Easy-Bake Oven."

She laughed, delighted. "Oh, really? Can I have one?" she said.

Zampolli smiled. "I should get the catalogue."

When dinner was over, they were off together in a cab to Joe's Pub.

The next day, Zampolli said happily on the phone, "That girl, I think she's going to sign with us—would be good for us, no?"

Almost every night, Zampolli goes out to clubs, usually with a few ID models at his side. He likes to be seen with his stunner, Ana Hickmann—whom he calls "perfection"—whenever she's in town from Brazil.

He travels through nightlife this way, like

a celebrity, moving past velvet ropes, getting led through thick crowds by men with walkie-talkies barking his name.

"Paolo Zampolli in the house!"

"They say my name in the D.J. booth!"

Zampolli said excitedly, one night at Lotus.

The club was alive that night with New York's most potent cross section of comers, stars (Meg Ryan, Nicole Kidman), beautiful kids.

Zampolli said, "Preence is here! Oh, I love him! I went to his *Sign of the Times* concert in Milano four nights in a row!"

"Carmen Kass cannot get a table!" he singsonged, giggling, pointing at the (second) biggest model in the world.

"Can't keep her little model hands off me," Jay-Z rapped.

The head of Hugo Boss, Marty Staff, was dancing on a table.

Jeffrey Jah, the club's owner, ordered everyone up to dance.

"Paolo does not dance," Zampolli said, standing up uncertainly on the banquette to dance.

And then before him, suddenly, was a model. "I think she is the most gorgeous of all!" he exclaimed.

It was Rhea Durham, a birdlike beauty—"She was the girlfriend of Stephen Dorff!"—moving close to Zampolli, eyes closed.

Maybe she didn't know herself why the music had caught her so powerfully, or why she was dancing in front of Paolo Zampolli, eyes closed.

Men were clapping, shouting—"What up, Rhea?!"

Zampolli grinned, and he went on dancing.

"It's a scandal!" he said. □

## Macedonia

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 324 Inn was filled with journalists who had just come back from a long, hot day at the highway rest area. They clustered around a television above the bar, smoking furiously and watching their own footage of the attack helicopters rocketing Aracinovo. At one point a tank fired at two distant figures—rebels—who were sprinting for cover at a roadblock; they were enveloped in a cloud of smoke and then re-emerged a moment later, unscathed. Off in one corner, a BBC reporter in a pink shirt and new Timberland boots was pacing back and forth with a cell phone, telling someone he'd just interviewed, "You're going to be on TV in 10 minutes. You know, that part where you say, 'People don't make war, politicians do.'"

No one could get inside Aracinovo, but an Agence France-Presse reporter spoke with Hoxha on his cell phone, and Hoxha said that his men had easily repulsed the army's attack. "They got a little way in but ran into a trap we had set," he said. "We burned four or five of them, and they ran away."

The fighting, such as it was, had become hard to take seriously. Most of the journalists at the bar had covered wars where people died by the tens of thousands and being anywhere near the fighting was extremely dangerous. In the early 1990s in Sarajevo, you couldn't walk down the street for fear of getting shot at by snipers. Now, in Tetovo—a predominantly Albanian city in northwestern Macedonia—you could sit at a café in the town square and watch the army shell rebel positions a few hundred yards away on a hillside. The rebels shot only at policemen and soldiers—no one I talked to could think of a single civilian death on the

Slavic side—while the Macedonian Army gunners were so wildly inaccurate that, when they shelled a village, all they usually managed to kill was the local livestock. Occasionally, Albanian civilians died in a cross fire, but that was blessedly rare. And the fighters themselves almost never died. At one point I asked my translator, Erol, how many soldiers had been killed in four months of war.

"I don't know exactly," he said. "But let me see . . ."

To my amazement Erol labored over the numbers month by month—three here, four there—until he'd added it all up. "I think," he announced proudly, "that maybe it is about 30 or 40."

In a war where almost no one was dying and you could call rebels up on their cell phones to ask how the battle was going, it was tempting to dismiss the whole thing as some kind of *son et lumière* extravaganza projected onto a hillside outside town. What journalists were missing—what I was missing, at any rate—was the fact that underneath it all the society's temperature was fast approaching the boiling point. The Albanians had been grumbling about their rights ever since Macedonia split off from the Yugoslav Republic in 1991, but it was all pretty much café chatter until last February, when a few dozen rebels took over a village called Tanusevi, near the Kosovo border. The government quickly denounced them as terrorists and dispatched the army and police to deal with the problem, but to its immense embarrassment they made no headway. The rebels were battle-hardened by three years of war in Kosovo, while the national police and army were mostly young recruits who had zero interest in dying to retake some Albanian village in the mountains.

Valley by valley, ridge by ridge, the rebels took over the rugged border area between Kosovo and Macedonia. Occasionally they ambushed police convoys or attacked army posts, but for the most part they just walked into Albanian villages and set up checkpoints. Their weapons came across the border from Kosovo, mostly on horseback, and their money came from a 3 percent "war tax" levied on Albanians working in Europe and America. In addition, a network of Albanian strongmen who had run weapons and contraband into Kosovo during the war against the Serbs were now engaged in arms trafficking, prostitution, and gunrunning in Macedonia. The rebel army and the Albanian Mafia—while not quite the same thing—were closely linked. The chaos of war helped the Mafia thrive, and a thriving Mafia helped pay for the war.

Some Slavic nationalists seized upon the organized crime as an excuse to dismiss the perfectly legitimate demands of Albanian political leaders. Their solution—bomb the rebels into nonexistence and threaten everyone else into good behavior—would have worked in, say, Serbia or Russia, but this was not Serbia or Russia. This was Macedonia, a country where the police couldn't shoot straight and air-force pilots weren't allowed to fly their own planes. Every time the Macedonians tried to dislodge even a handful of rebels from a town, the rebels either melted back into the mountains or fought the security forces to a standstill. When they resorted to artillery to do their work for them, civilians died and the world grew more sympathetic to the rebels' cause. In early May, a high-ranking NATO official referred to the rebels as "murderous thugs" who could not be negotiated with. By June the rebels had graduated to "armed elements," and were in direct contact with NATO officials.