

# JEWELLERY DESIGNERS TO THE STARS ROBERTO FARAONE MENNELLA AND AMEDEO SCOGNAMIGLIO LAUNCH THEIR COLLECTION IN DUBAI



**H**ollywood stars including Sarah Jessica Parker, Kim Cattrall, Oprah Winfrey and Meryl Streep are just some of the A-list celebrities that adore the Faraone Mennella R.F.M.A.S jewellery collection by Roberto Faraone Mennella and Amedeo Scognamiglio.

The dynamic duo visited Dubai last week to showcase their collection exclusively at Harvey Nichols.

Faraone Mennella combines sophisticated elegance with edgy design, to create glamorous hand-made jewellery that has earned a fashionable reputation amongst the Hollywood elite.

It all began with an unexpected phone call from Sarah Jessica Parker in 2001 and a chance encounter with *Sex and the City* costume designer Patricia Field, that quickly propelled Roberto and Amedeo onto the 'most-wanted list' of every fashion house in New York.

"I was at home in New York one evening, watching TV and relaxing, and my phone rang," said Amedeo "I answered and a lady said 'Hi, this Sarah, Sarah Jessica Parker.' I was like, 'Yeah, okay. Who is this really?' I did not believe her at first. Then Sarah went on to explain how she had got my number from a mutual friend and was really interested in seeing our designs and perhaps using them for the show. I could not believe it."

Amedeo and Roberto were unable to immediately take advantage of the conversation with SJP, but fate had something else in store for them when they went to view a property for a potential store.

"We needed to make a final decision," said Roberto. "We were still undecided if we were going to go through with starting the business. We wanted a 'sign'. As we approached the building we saw *Sex and the City* trailers parked along the street - we could not believe it. There it was, there was our sign."

Nervously knocking on the trailer door, costume designer of the show Patricia Field answered. After hours of chatting with the fashion guru, the designers quickly had a fan, and the rest is history. Faraone Mennella quickly became a regular staple on the show and subsequently in the highly-anticipated movie version released in 2008.

Roberto and Amedeo have created iconic pieces for hit movies such as *The Devil Wears Prada*, *Perfect Stranger*, *What Happens in Vegas*, and TV shows such as *Will & Grace* and *Lipstick Jungle*. The duo has also collaborated with American fashion icon Carolina Herrera on an exclusive collection of couture jewels sold in New York.

In spring 2001, Amedeo and Roberto, longtime best friends, decided to merge their experiences and design a jewellery collection which would best reflect their background, generation and artistic vision. Roberto grew up in Italy in his family estate surrounded by beauty and fine arts, which he soon learned to appreciate from his grandmother Stella, who encouraged and inspired Roberto to pursue a career in design. After attending the Università Federico II in Naples, Roberto moved to New York City to pursue his true passion, graduating from the Parson School of Design.

Amedeo is no stranger to the business, as his family have been creating handmade cameos



Roberto and Amedeo launched their chic jewellery collection last week exclusively at Harvey Nichols

since 1857 in Torre del Greco, situated near Mount Vesuvius and the Isle of Capri. By the age of 16 he mastered the art of hand carving cameos, becoming the lead designer for his family's company, M+M Scognamiglio. After graduating from the University of Naples in 1995, Amedeo moved to New York City where he launched his first signature cameo collection.

A unique feature distinguishes the Faraone Mennella collection: the designs are modern without being minimal. There is a technical excellence and attention to detail that makes each piece timeless and unique. Their inspiration comes from their life experience and passions, namely Visconti movies, vintage fashion layouts of the 1970s and 1980s, vacations in Capri, and their grandmothers Stella and Augusta, their unforgettable muses.

The fashion-savvy duo took time out of their busy schedule to chat with HELLO! about their fairy-tale discovery and what it is like designing jewellery for some of the most fashion-forward shows on television.

**'Our designs are very playful yet dressy. They can be worn on the beach or at an evening function'**

Your discovery by fashion guru Patricia Field was quite unique and led to you launching your jewellery collection in 2002. Can you talk us through what happened?

**Roberto:** "We had found a very cute store on Park Avenue on 64th street but we were still undecided if we were going to buy it and even start the business. We only had 25 to 30 sample pieces of jewellery, that was it. As we walked to the store there were several *Sex and the City* trailers parked outside."

**Amedeo:** "We could not believe it."

**Roberto:** "After sitting with Patricia for a couple of hours she asked to see the jewellery so I ran home as quickly as possible brought them back, Patricia loved them and called Kim Cattrall and Sarah to come and see the collection. They asked if they could keep them and use them on the show."

Several pieces from your collection were featured in *Sex and the City: The Movie*. Did you specifically design jewellery for the film?

**Roberto:** "Yes, Patricia came to our store with the script and spoke about one scene in particular that involves a long telephone conversation between Sarah and Kim. We were asked to design the earrings for Kim's character Samantha, along with other pieces for her throughout the film."

Although you were asked to make the jewellery for this scene you still didn't know if it would be featured in the actual film. What was it like when you realised that your jewellery was chosen and included in such an important scene in the film?

**Amedeo:** "It was unbelievable. The scene was even longer than we expected and for Samantha to be wearing our earrings was just incredible." ▶



**Roberto and Amedeo with fashion guru and *Sex and the City* costume designer Patricia Field in New York. Left and right: Faraone Mennella Jewellery has featured in films such as *Sex and the City: The Movie* and *The Devil Wears Prada***



Were you surprised to see how much of your collection was featured throughout the movie?

**Roberto:** "Yes, of course. We watched the movie in complete shock, it was amazing. There was so much competition and beautiful pieces that Patricia could have chosen from some of the biggest designers in the world, yet she chose ours." How did it feel to be put in the same category as such established jewellery designers, like Chanel, Tiffany & Co. and Cartier?

**Roberto:** "It is marvellous. It is a massive compliment, Patricia wouldn't use our jewellery if she didn't like it. It is important that she chooses the best designs not only for the movie but to sustain her reputation."

**Amedeo:** "For us it is a testament that we are creating beautiful things that women want to wear."

Your work was seen on numerous episodes of the show and was not available in shops for a year after it was first shown, creating a huge demand for your collection. Do you believe this helped increase the popularity of your designs?

**Amedeo:** "Absolutely. The moment our stock arrived in the stores people already knew about the products because of the popularity of the show and all the media coverage. Women were talking about the jewellery like it had been around for years, they were requesting particular pieces."

You have a huge celebrity following, with actresses such as Meryl Streep, Cameron Diaz and Brooke Shields wearing your jewellery. Do you pursue celebrities to wear your products?

**Roberto:** "No, not at all. The most surprising time for me was when someone asked me if we have the 'Oprah earrings' in stock. I didn't know what the lady was referring to, until she explained that Oprah has been wearing our earrings for the past several months on her show. We had no idea. It was very flattering, she bought this particular piece in every colour with and without diamonds."

**Amedeo:** "A similar situation occurred with Cameron Diaz, in her role in *What Happens in Vegas*. Our intern was at the movies and called me in a panic to tell me that Cameron was wearing our earrings throughout in the movie. I thought she had made a mistake but when we watched the movie, there she was, wearing our earrings."

Where do you draw your inspiration?

**Roberto:** "The biggest inspiration is our homes in Naples. We also take inspiration from the 1960s era and vacations. Our designs are very sensual and fun, playful yet dressy. They can be worn on the beach or at an evening function."

**Amedeo:** "More than inspiration, I would say we are trying to translate our background into our collection. We want our collection to showcase where we are from."

Why do you think your partnership works so well?

**Roberto:** "We share exactly the same vision. We talk

all the time about this woman – our client – and we ask, 'would she wear this?' We know exactly what she wants. We are very lucky, we do argue about most things but never about the actual design." **Amedeo:** "We are very Italian, very passionate, so it's natural that we argue, but we both know what we are trying to achieve."

Can you describe the woman that wears Faraone Mennella R.F.M.A.S jewellery?

**Amedeo:** "No matter where we visit around the world we have found that it is the same type of woman that enjoys our designs, whether it is in New York, Dubai or Milan. It is a woman who is well travelled, very chic with a lot of energy and self-confident. She has a sense of style that is very natural but very determined. She knows what she wants."

You are spending one week in Dubai, is there anything that you would like to see and do while you are here?

**Amedeo:** "We still have so much to do. We have managed to see a few attractions while we have been here and we did visit a few malls. We would love to see the museums and learn about the history and culture of Dubai. And take an excursion into the desert, but I think we will have to save that for our next trip."

You recently launched a new silver range called L'una in New York and London in the fall. Do you plan to bring the collection to the Middle East?

**Amedeo:** "Yes, absolutely. We will be launching L'una in Bloomingdales in Dubai Mall so we will definitely be coming back to Dubai. We are very excited to be able to come back and explore the city a little more."

What are your aspirations for the future?

**Amedeo:** "We want to bring Faraone Mennella to a lifestyle concept. Last October we launched a line of flowers in America and Japan, chic flowers that come from Roberto's family, they have been breeding them for the last 20 years. We have launched that under the umbrella of Mennella and we are going to launch a home décor range with beautiful Italian ceramic hand-painted pieces in our signature black and grey design. It will launch in a couple of months in the USA and then we plan to make a perfume from the flowers, which we will launch in the fall." **H**

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For more information about Faraone Mennella R.F.M.A.S visit [www.faraonemennella.com](http://www.faraonemennella.com)