

OF KORS

Finding Michael Kors in Greenwich
and Greenwich in Michael Kors

by **JILL JOHNSON** photographs by **ROBERT NEWMAN**

IN MAY, HE PRESENTED HIS COLLECTION AT RICHARDS and mingled with shoppers. In June, the Council of Fashion Designers of America (CFDA) awarded him the Geoffrey Beene Lifetime Achievement Award and the Fragrance Foundation inducted him into the Fifi Hall of Fame. Wow, are we worthy of Michael Kors?

According to the superstar designer, not only are we worthy, he needs us—we are his muses (considering today is one of those write-in-my-PJs-days, I'm using that "we" loosely, but you know who you are).

"My clothes are all about quality, timelessness and laid-back chic. The sophisticated eye and busy lifestyle of the

Connecticut woman make her an endless source of inspiration," says Kors. "Fairfield County is one of those extremely rare geographic locations where a predominant number of the women lead very modern lives that require both urban and suburban dressing—I love the dichotomy. I have a store in Greenwich and opened

another lifestyle store in Danbury Fair Mall in July. Connecticut is totally Michael Kors territory!"

Perhaps our relationship with Kors is more symbiotic than some—he's even given the name "Greenwich" to items in his line—but his territory spans the globe. His flagship collection boutiques are in the chicest locales from Beverly Hills to Milan, and sixty accessory-focused lifestyle stores have opened since 2006: here, across North America, in Munich, Seoul, the Middle East... He's an emperor of fashion. He, at age fifty, was also the youngest recipient ever of the CFDA's Lifetime Achievement Award. I wondered how that felt.

"First off, I was totally surprised and blown away. Next year will be my thirtieth year in business so although I still feel like a kid, standing back I realize it truly is a lifetime in fashion," says Kors, who grew up in Long Island and was designing a collection for the boutique Lothar's in New York by the age of nineteen. "This award is especially meaningful because it was voted on by my peers in the industry."

Three decades of collections that molded





Models walk the Richards runway this past spring.

our concept of American sportswear is certainly the reason he earned those votes. But he didn't lose any to a big ego either. Gwyneth Paltrow, who accompanied Kors to the CFDA Fashion Awards, describes him as "a compassionate person and not totally self-focused, which is rare for such a successful designer."

These days, with Kors as one of the judges on the Emmy-nominated show *Project Runway* (formerly on Bravo, now on Lifetime), his personality—smart, sharp, funny, not afraid to say a dress looks like a "tablecloth" or "disco pumpkin"—is out there for all to see. "I love working with Michael," says host Heidi Klum. "We have a really fun time. Sometimes we're like the naughty kids in school. We'll start laughing if something strikes our funny bone, and we just can't stop! It's great to have someone with us who's not only so witty, but also gets what the designers have to go through from a technical point of view." The audience responds to reality TV star Michael Kors just as enthusiastically. When he went MIA on some episodes, bloggers went nuts. "Bring Kors back!" they demanded.

Those of us who saw his abbreviated Fashion Week show at Richards last spring and those of us who want to see a future parade of Kors creations feel the same way. The Richards appearance has been an annual event thus far, so we have a good shot. And he likes it here. Kors describes Greenwich as one of the "few places that is a perfect blend of small-town charm and big-city glamour." He also appreciates the equivalent blend in Richards and Mitchells, "the 'shop on the corner' mixed with big-city glamour. I began my career in retail," says Kors, "and appreciate a store with fabulous taste and unparalleled service."

What does Michael Kors have in store for us this fall? "This season for both men and women, there is an incredible range of super-luxurious knitwear that's perfect for Connecticut—cozy, comfortable and luxurious all at once," he says. "I also think a surefire hit is a beautifully tailored camel coat that can work with everything from jeans on the weekend to tailored clothes at the office."

Who would guess that the designer of luxe knits and camel coats is actually



"a true beach bum at heart"? He loves to travel, interspersing beaching with business—more of the latter, no doubt. "Staying close to the customer around the world is so important for me," says Kors. However, he admits, "As people-oriented as I am, I am the ultimate only child at heart and certainly love my alone time." That's quite a balancing act, and from all angles, he appears to be executing it beautifully.