

We're Going to Ibiza!

MEET MICHAEL PIASTRINO

By Kym Krey

At 33 years of age, Michael Piastrino has been in the industry for 16 years. Starting out as a 'shampoo boy' (his words) at John Morrey salon, Michael then worked for many years at Fratelle hair until deciding to take the plunge and open his own salon, Ibiza hair in Melbourne's Albert Park in 2007.



Fast forward 9 years and Michael and his team have had quite the journey, collecting over 130 National and International awards including IHS Hairdresser Of The Year, Hair Expo Salon Team Of The Year and Emerging Hairdresser Of The Year with his Technical Director, Adrian Rotolo also named finalist for Colourist Of The Year 2015. This year was no exception with both Michael and Adrian once again being named as finalists in both Victorian Hairdresser of the Year and Colour Technician of the Year respectively for the Schwarzkopf Professional Hair Expo Awards. Adrian was successful in taking our the gong for a well deserved colour collection. CONGRATS!

Reality TV viewers may recognize Michael as the celebrity stylist chosen to cut Lysandra Fraser's hair live on ratings juggernaut, The Block- an experience Michael describes as 'life changing'.

Hair Biz Editor Kym Krey spoke to Michael shortly before he packed his bag for Hair Expo.

KK. TELL US HOW YOU GOT STARTED IN THE HAIR INDUSTRY AND WHAT ATTRACTED YOU INITIALLY?

MP: Hairdressing is in my blood. My Mum has been a hairdresser from a young age so I grew up around salons. Plus, hanging out with women all day was a bonus. That's actually how I meet my wife!

KK: WAS HAIR ALWAYS GOING TO BE YOUR PASSION OR DID YOU CONSIDER OTHER CAREERS?

MP: During school I was working on Saturdays as a shampoo boy and my focus was to one day become a well-known hairdresser, so my passion has always been hairdressing from the age of 15.



KK: WHO WERE YOUR EARLY INFLUENCES OR INDUSTRY HEROES?

MP: There are so many people who have influenced my career. I would have to say Emiliano Vitale, Caterina di Biase, Joe Giampa, Shane Henning, Anthony Mascolo and Carl Reeves. These guys really pushed the boundaries and inspired me a great deal. In fact, they still do to this day.

When it comes to business, my parents were my biggest influence. They taught me to always push beyond my comfort zone and that when things get hard, just get back up and do it again and again. I still remember the times I would be in Mum's salon until all hours of the morning with Mum sharing with me her knowledge in hairdressing. I've put in a lot of hard work over the years and now it is all paying off, with my second salon opening only 3 doors down from Ibiza Hair. I'm going to call this one Code Black Barber Shop.

KK: HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOURSELF BACK THEN AND HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOURSELF NOW?

MP: Like any young bloke in hairdressing, in the early years you think you're a Rock Star and you just want to slice and dice every chick that came into the salon! But it's very different now and hairdressing is my business. I am very focused on training and growing my businesses, my family and my faith with Jesus Christ. All are very important to me but having faith is the most important thing.

KK: HOW DID YOU IMAGINE YOUR CAREER UNFOLDING BACK THEN AND HAS THE REALITY BEEN VERY DIFFERENT?

MP: I never thought I would have

2 salons and be surrounded by such an awesome team! It was only a dream but I made it a reality by putting in the blood, sweat and tears.

KK: YOU HAVE ALSO LAUNCHED YOUR OWN PRODUCT RANGE, FRANCO ALPHONSE & CO. TELL US ABOUT THIS.

MP: Yes, I'm very excited about this. The name has a lot of personal significance. My Nonno was Franco; Adrian, my Technical Director at Ibiza's Nonno is Alphonse and, together, we are CO. The range has 34 products ranging from styling pastes to shampoo and conditioner. Watch this space!

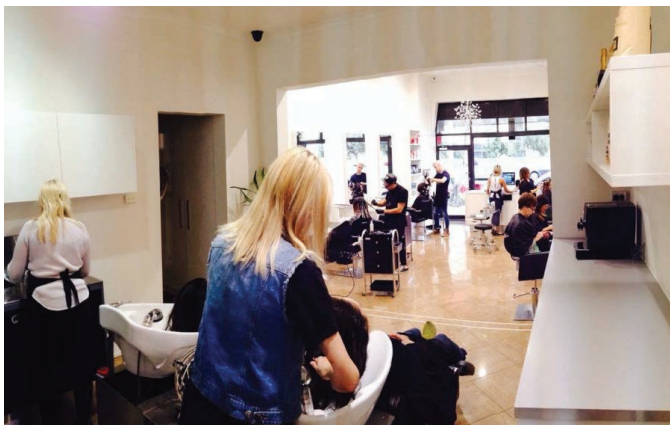
KK: THERE'S SOMETHING QUITE SPECIAL ABOUT THE BUILDING YOU'RE IN AS WELL, ISN'T THERE?

MP: Absolutely. Ibiza Hair is located in the same building my Nonno bought when he arrived from Calabria in Italy. The family had their first Italian deli there, it was a success for over 20 years and the building is still in the family to this day. My Nonno passed away 3 years ago and so has my Uncle so to have my business grow and be successful in this same place is a honour to both of them.

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KK: WHAT DO YOU THINK HAS BEEN THE MOST MEMORABLE HAIR TREND YOU'VE SEEN?

MP: The Concave Bob. When I cut Lysandra's hair (from TV show, The Block) it was aired on national TV and I had around 300 emails from ladies wanting the same cut! I loved cutting every single one of them and still today we get calls requesting that cut!

KK: WHAT WORDS WOULD YOU USE TO DESCRIBE YOUR OWN UNIQUE STYLE NOW?

MP: Professional. Humble. Strong minded

KK: WAS BUSINESS OWNERSHIP ALWAYS PART OF THE PLAN FOR YOU?

MP: Of course! I have been around businesses all my life and have seen my family create a lot of success, so I have learnt a lot and have always wanted to own my own business as well.

KK: WHAT DO YOU LOVE MOST ABOUT OWNING YOUR BUSINESS?

MP: Seeing my team grow, especially when I have someone who started with me as a first year apprentice complete their Certificate III qualification and become fully qualified. At the moment I have two staff who are nearly qualified, Keira and Sophia and to see them grow each day, perfecting their skills is such an awesome feeling!

KK: WHAT HAS BEEN THE HARDEST PART OF YOUR JOURNEY?

MP: Taking such a risk in business is a stressful journey. Knowing when you put that key in the door each Monday that you have targets to make weighs heavily on your mind but I always separate business and family time. When I get home and I see my beautiful wife Marie and my son Joey, my stress all goes away. I'm also lucky enough to have great friends who help me train in

mixed Martial Arts and doing this is a real stress release.

KK: WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE YOUR YOUNGER SELF?

MP: To stay focused and take my time in hair competitions. I think a lot of people still remember when I cut two female models on stage at once for the HBIA Hair Championships. I wanted to bend the rules because no one had ever done this here before and the crowd were like ...what is he doing?? I managed to get both done but the judges didn't know how to score it as I threw a spanner in the work! I would say that in anything you do whether in your hairdressing or life in general, bend the rules, push the boundaries and you will get noticed.

KK: YOU WERE NOMINATED FOR 4 HAIR EXPO AWARDS- MORE THAN ANYONE ELSE THIS YEAR AND ADRIAN WON COLOUR TECHNICIAN! HAS 2016 BEEN ONE OF YOUR MOST SIGNIFICANT YEARS IN TERMS OF RECOGNITION AND EXPOSURE?

MP: 100%! My colour director, Adrian Rotolo who is like a brother to me, and winning Colour Technician Of The Year after being a finalist in 2015 was the absolute icing on the cake and I am so proud and honoured to be able to work with him. To have 4 finalist positions personally was such a honour and like a dream had come true. Being a finalist for Victorian Hairdresser Of The Year, Salon Team Of The Year and Photographic Collection Of The Year was just amazing, but I owe it all to my family, my team and Jesus Christ for always giving me the strength I need.

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