



### Playing it cool

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**Clearly, KAGE is enjoying a new chapter and perhaps Ghazaleh's dreams of seeing her designs on Queen Rania and Alexa Chung will soon become a reality.**

Anyone who has been following the 'Made in Dubai' story will have heard of the label, KAGE. It was started in 2009 by Arwa Abdelhadi and Basma Abu Ghazaleh, two Palestinian girls born and brought up in Dubai. Thanks to its laidback feel, KAGE quickly gained a lot of interest both from the media and retailers. But then the label went quiet and, for the last two years, the brand has been off the radar. Abdelhadi's move out of Dubai after her marriage left Ghazaleh solo.

Last month, KAGE made a comeback with a presentation at Fashion Forward Dubai (FFWD), showing their Fall/Winter collection. It was KAGE's first time out at FFWD since 36-year-old Ghazaleh took sole charge of the label. Playful cat and tulip prints mixed with plaid, easy shapes such as pinafore dresses, cropped trousers, shirt dresses, zipper tops, a clean colour palette that went strong on neutrals... They injected the practical and youthful feel of school uniform dressing with a touch of quirk, yet had a feel of smart day dressing.

Clearly, for Ghazaleh, it is not about following trends but staying loyal to the dictates of the label - which is for the woman who does not take fashion too seriously. Some fashion critics felt the collection lacked punch due to its simple feel. Says Ghazaleh, "Those who have followed KAGE over the years are well aware that we are a brand that has never typically followed trends - neither are we an avant-garde brand. I design keeping the KAGE girl in mind, while also staying true to the brand's DNA."

KAGE collections are available in stores such as Boutique 1 and Rania's Corner at City Walk. With Ghazaleh planning her next FFWD presentation, launching a kids' line as well as their own e-commerce website soon, the brand is moving forward. The "accessible luxury" market is her target, with prices beginning at Dh600.

The 'Made in Dubai' label is looking forward to moving into the international fashion market - and KAGE may have to look at raising its style quotient, in order to compete with international contemporary brands, like Paris' Paul and Joe, New York's Diane Von Furstenberg and London's Joseph. With all production and design being done in Dubai, and fabrics being sourced from Europe, quality is always top of the mind for Ghazaleh. There is no question that KAGE has the finish and finesse to look at being international; there is just that little bit of extra oomph that seems to be missing.

Recently, KAGE moved into Dubai Design District and Ghazaleh is clearly excited about her studio's new home. "With the support of The Dubai Design Fashion Council, who aim to create global opportunity and invigorate a world-class design community, Dubai is pushing and encouraging local creativity," she notes. "From Fashion Forward, a platform for Middle Eastern talent, to the Dubai Design District, a community that nurtures local talent, the design sector has definitely been a strong focus."

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