

Bark & Swagger

Fierce Fashion and Fabulous Stories for Dog Lovers

The New York Pet Fashion Show Dazzles; Pays Tribute to the Fashion & Culture of the 60's & 70's, all to Promote Pet Rescue

By Jody on February 13, 2015



Hippy chic

There was an excitement and a sense of fun in the air Thursday night at the 11th annual *New York Pet Fashion Show*. And, it was no surprise. The theme this year was "A Rescue Revolution – Peace, Love and Animal Rescue; A Tribute to the 60's & 70's in Music, Fashion and Attitude!" It's a mouthful, but the sheer fun it inspired in recreating those seminal styles of the era, paid dividends all night long.

Top pet designers pulled out all the stops to showcase their spin on the sassy, showy or hippy chic creations that were strut down the runway, all for a great cause. As the title suggests, the night was all about rescuing, and over 150 shelters were represented by the fundraiser's recipient non-profit, the *Mayor's Alliance of NYC's Animals*.

Disco glitter and mirrors, love-in lace, tie-dye and beads and musical icons' signature fashions were all mined to turn out some of the most outrageous and inspired fashion this reporter has seen at the event. I'll share my faves in photos, but first want to acknowledge those honored with a Golden Paw Award, for their important contributions to raising awareness about rescuing and to the well-being of pets.



Show creators Gregg Oehler & Ada Nieves with Vanilla, being interviewed by Gail King of King TV

Event Co-Chairs Gregg Oehler of Oehler Media and *Hamptons Pet* magazine, and uber designer and event creative director, Ada Nieves, co-founded the *New York Pet Fashion Show* to honor those designers turning out exemplary work, to bring attention to shelter pets and to celebrate the creative energy of the then newly-burgeoning pet fashion scene. Thursday night, both were making it happen in full force; Gregg, unfortunately on crutches from an accident (which didn't seem to slow him down one bit), and Ada, with her headset and fringed top and bag, orchestrating the three runway shows.

The doggy divas dazzled on the red carpet, which was co-hosted by Bravo TV's Chantelle Fraser and *Hamptons Pet* owner, Jewel Morris, a pet philanthropist and creator of the *Pet Hero Awards* which celebrates adopting and local shelters in the Hamptons each summer.



Chantelle Fraser, Gregg Oehler, Kristy Hinze Clark & Jewel Morris

Honorees for the Golden Paws were awarded in five categories:



Golden Paw Award Humanitarian of the Year honoree, Kristy Hinze Clark

Humanitarian of the Year: Supermodel Kristy Hinze Clark was named for her work championing rescues (she has four mini Schnauzer rescues) and for her work in helping preserve the health of our oceans and, therefore, the lives of our fellow creatures living there. Kristy shared with me what an honor it is to work with pets and to be recognized in this way. "I can't stress enough the importance of adoption," she emphasized. "There are so many animals needing homes." When I asked her what was the most fun of a pet fashion event inspired by the 60's and 70's, Hinze Clark enthused, "While I didn't live through that era, the fashion was so original and fun! I love the colors and the creativity here tonight."



I to r: Event MC, Maria Milito of Q104.3 radio, Golden Paw Award honoree, Melinda Toporoff of Animal Planet and Gregg Oehler

Television Producer of the Year: Melinda Toporoff, Executive Producer of Animal Planet and its popular *Puppy Bowl* franchise, was honored for the attention she brings to shelter pets through the shows she works on and champions. Melinda is terrific and she and her team come up with such creative and wacky ways to bring attention to the dozens of shelter puppies that participate in *Puppy Bowl*. She relayed they were already in conversations about next year's event. Can't wait!



I to r: Golden Paw Award winners David Crouch and Debi Boies, with Kate Quinn, Executive Director of Pilots N Paws, jewelry designer Chen Sahar, Hamptons Pet Travel Editor, Loren Morrissey & Gregg Oehler

The Air Rescue Award went to Pilots N Paws' Debi Boies. Debi has built this organization into a 5000 pilot program nationwide, that offers a platform for shelters, individuals and those who transport animals in need to connect and help save lives. Wow. Needless to say, Boies is a major champion of Adopt Don't Shop. "I'm humbled by this award," Boies shared. "This is a problem we *can* solve! If everyone adopted, we'd have far less in our shelters."

The Surgical Animal Care Award was given to D.V.M. surgeon, Dr. David Crouch. The surgery David performs is often life-saving, allowing an animal to return to a normal life. He's even operated on a snow leopard! Crouch expressed gratitude at being able to serve the animals in his care.



Golden Paw Award honoree, Dr. Marty Goldstein

The Integrative Vet Award recognizes a doctor who utilizes alternative ways to treat animal illness. No one else deserved this award more than the irreplaceable Dr. Marty Goldstein. Marty was one of the first holistic vets on the scene 40 years ago, and has surmounted many obstacles on the road to educating both the medical community and the public on the benefits of a natural approach. Goldstein shared with me an exciting opportunity he has to participate as the vet to two of the most historic animals in the television pantheon and the culture, at large.

A noted Broadway producer is staging a production about the legendary Western stars, Roy Rogers and Dale Evans that will, of course, include Roy's two cherished animal companions, his golden palomino Trigger, and his German Shepherd, Bullet. Goldstein was asked to be the veterinarian to these animal actors. Through this, Dr. Marty (as he's often called), will have an amazing platform to share preventative health care information with the public. I'm excited to watch this unfold and wish Marty tons of success!

Israeli jewelry designer, Chen Sahar, created a stunning dog collar, matching bracelet and ring, which she wore, made of precious and semi-precious stones, which were on display at the event.

The designers, shelter pups and canine fashion stars were showcased throughout three runway shows, all having their own themes.

Mingling just before, I met up with Suzanne Donaldson, a.k.a. Mrs. Sizzle, who has one of the smartest, coolest pet fashion meets photography meets art meets rescue sites, called MrsSizzle.com. She was chatting with designer Ruben Santana, whose brightly colored floral bear Addidas I loved! Santana's pup, King Tut, was dyed and groomed by him and looked very chic!



**Suzanne Donaldson (MrsSizzle.com) and designer
Ruben Santana with King Tut**

Up first was the *Rescues on the Runway* show, featuring adoptable dogs and cats from several of the Mayor's Alliance-affiliated shelters. Some of my picks were:



Sharon Folkes with her diva chickens, Lady Gaga & Beyonce on the runway

- “Birds” wasn’t just a 60’s slang for girls last night. In a *New York Pet Fashion Show* first, two celebrity diva chickens made an appearance on the runway! Yes, that’s right, folks. Two chickens rescued by Sharon Folkes from a grim fate, one dyed pink and both dolled up, were carried down the runway in their mama’s arms. With such fashionable feathers, fitting names were required, of course! Beyonce and Lady Gaga stepped in to lend theirs.



Mary Fayet’s darlings, Pumpkin & Lexi

- Mary Fayet had her two precious pups, Pumpkin and Lexi, both unable to walk on their own. They were each ensconced in very cool decorative carts that they maneuvered like experts! Pumpkin was born without fully developed front paws and Lexi was the victim of a broken back from abuse. Just horrible. However, both looked very well adjusted and happy and their outfits and carts were really cute! It's wonderful to see them thriving.



Carmen Diaz with Anakin Luke Skywalker, wearing a gorgeous, hand-painted design by Ada Nieves

- Carmen Diaz from Beverly Hills via Madrid, came in for the show with her two Chihuahuas, Darth Vader and Anakin Luke Skywalker. When I first met them, Darth Vader was dressed in a cool layered tee and had on 60's shades. Anakin was dressed in a raspberry-colored sequined hoodie. Both were precious. Carmen told me how she drove five hours to rescue Darth Vader from a horrible shelter in San Sebastian, Spain, where he was abused and being eaten by the other dogs! Now, a couple of years later, he's a happy and healthy pup and his sibling, Anakin, is the spoiled and pampered little girl she should be! When I saw them later, just before they walked in the show, Diaz had on a beautiful, floral, flowing gown. As is her way, the pups matched! Anakin wore a gorgeous floral creation, custom made and hand painted by Ada Nieves, and Darth Vader wore a fabu hand painted vest, also by Nieves.

Designers Couture Retro Show

Next up was the *Designer Couture Retro Show*, where some of the most illustrious in the pet fashion world were represented on the runway. My faves were:



Rebecca Bissi & Sophia in her creations on the runway

- Designer Rebecca Bissi walked with her client, the beautiful snow Pomeranian, Sophia, in stunning matching creations. Bissi designed multi-colored, mod, floral-printed outfits, hers accented by a beaded neckline and Sophia's, with a beaded trim, that offered a breath of fresh air in the show.
- A tribute to the Beatles' *Yellow Submarine* was a must for the era, and it was done with whimsical creativity, complete with an Ed Sullivan placard, honoring the late television entertainer, whose show broke them in the States. The pup was Paul, of course!



The Beatles Tribute ensemble on the runway

- Tangerine orange, gold and white in dazzling disco chic was what Gale Ricany, with Bella Mia, rocked on the runway. Made by Exclusively Poochie by Gale. Reminded me of Palm Beach meets Beverly Hills.



**Gale Ricany with Bella Mia in
Exclusively Pochie by Gale Designs.**

- Designer Kevin Ugarte created an impressive three-layered outfit, where the gown's skirt detaches to highlight the feather plume, decoration. And, that detaches to reveal the embellished vest. Hippy chic in fabrics but fantasy in feel.



Designer Kevin Ugarte with his Fantasy Hippie Chic 3-layered ensemble. Very impressive!

- Last year, pet couturier Anthony Rubio walked away with the Designer of the Year honors. Rubio and his pups Bogie and Kimba, looked fantastic in their Sargent Pepper-inspired costumes in electrifying colors with cool badges and fabrics.



Anthony Rubio, Bogie & Kimba in their Sargent Pepper-inspired creations

- Another fave doggy diva is Sophia Loren and her mom, Anne Maria Tafoya. Designer Jaimie Diaz, one of Sophia's main fashion sources, created a gorgeous lilac gown in bloom with lots of hand sewn flowers. The gown is part of her Starwind Collection, inspired by Christian Dior's pieces from the movie *Arabesque*, starring Sophia Loren and Gregory Peck. How glamorous!



The beautiful Sophia Loren in a gorgeous Jaimie Diaz Couture gown

- Dr. Danny and Amy Cox of McKinney, Texas, are angels to animals and their parents with their mobile spay/neuter and vaccination vet practice, The Pet Vet and The Shot Spot. But, they know how to have fun, and made a huge splash on the runway, putting the D in Disco and Dazzle. Danny, Amy and their adorable three pups were all decked out in black and silver sequins, with a sparkly stroller to match.



Danny & Amy Cox in Amy's designs

- Even Elvis was represented, with a hippy flair, by designer Miguel Rodriguez, who created a tribute cape to the icon he showcased on the runway.



Miguel Rodriguez in a full on Elvis tribute

Who Captured Designer of the Year?

Finally, with the anticipation at a fever pitch, this year's *Best in Show Costume Contest* kicked off. Over 30 contestants walked the runway with their pets, dressed to demonstrate what they're capable of!

This year, the designer who claimed the top dog spot was **Rebecca Bissi of *Chien Coature***. Bissi, who I profiled several months back on Bark & Swagger, is a very talented artist and a big Bark & Swagger favorite! Hers are very intricate designs with lots and lots of beading, and Rebecca's always upping the ante for herself.

Her design that stole the show, was an ensemble for Gena and Jake Oddo of Texas, parents to beautiful snow Pomeranian, Sophia. One of my night's top picks, the truly stunning "Sonny & Cher," as the Oddo's described it, featured 1000 plexiglass mirrors, 4000 argentiium connector rings and 8000 crystals!



Winning ensemble of the night by designer Rebecca Bissi on Jake, Gena & Sophia Oddo

The outfits looked very Sonny and Cher, but they weren't who inspired Bissi to create it.

"When I heard the theme of the show was the 60's and 70's, I immediately thought of Paco Rabane, the clothing, jewelry and fragrance designer," she shared. "He did some costumes for women using paillettes that were wired together. So, I contacted my glass company and asked them to cut circular, plexiglass mirrors in four different sizes and have four holes drilled in them. I used argentium sterling silver rings to hold the mirrors together, because they are high quality and won't tarnish. I spent 2 weeks on Gena's jumpsuit. Her jumpsuit was made out of silk faille and is lined in silk charmeuse.

"The skirt on Sophia's outfit is about a yard long and detaches from the harness. The mirrors are a smaller size and directly attached to the silk."

Blood and a lost drill bit on the way to the runway...

Rebecca flew in from Racine, Wisconsin for the event. Working all of the previous night, she still had some tweaks to do. What she didn't know is that it would involve some blood being shed.

"The morning I arrived, I needed to finish work on Jake's vest, but I had all of these extra mirrors with no holes in them," Bissi explained. "So, I went to the hotel manager, and asked to borrow a drill. After assuring them I wouldn't sue if I got hurt, I went to my room and started work.

"About an hour in, the drill slipped in my hand and went into my index finger. I was bleeding and couldn't find the drill bit, so I was thinking maybe it was still inside my finger. I ran down to the front desk and the guy, seeing the blood, insisted on calling 911. I said 'No! I have work to do!'"

Talk about a dedicated designer! LOL "Turns out it wasn't in my finger," she said. "When I went back upstairs, I found it!" Bissi's no-nonsense, get it done ethic to her work has helped her create some of the most intricate designs I've seen.



Gena Oddo, Rebecca Bissi, Sophia Oddo and Jake Oddo backstage before the show

After hearing that story, I was extra happy for her at garnering the *Designer of the Year* honors. What she went through to get her creations onto the runway! And, she had something really nice to say about what the award meant to her.

"It means a lot, because there were many talented designers there," she shared, thoughtfully. "There were many gowns I saw that I know a lot of work went into, and I appreciate that talent and design. This is a real honor that I will carry that in my heart."

The night ended on a great note. The fashion-loving crowd was sated, the dogs happy to be relaxing, and the designers had captured the spotlight they deserved for their ingenuity, talent and hard work. I can't wait for next year! A little birdie told me the theme is going to be a good one!

Get more info on the [Mayor's Alliance for NYC's Animals](#)