



HIGH FLYERS

Esquire celebrates the New Year with nine of the most inspirational men taking off in the region. And where better to do that than at Emirates DXB with an A380?

STYLING AND WORDS BY KATE HAZELL

PHOTOGRAPHY BY KATE LEWIS



Tony Underwood

Former British Rugby Union player Tony Underwood swapped the muddy field for the cockpit as he now flies A380s across the world for Emirates Airlines. “Professional sport is a young person’s game, and after 27 appearances for my country, I began to realise that my mind would one day start to make promises that my body wouldn’t be able to keep,” smiles the 45-year-old Brit. “In truth, flying wasn’t something I’d thought much about until I sat in the flight deck on a trip to South Africa with the British Lions. I realised that my passion for travel and adventure was fairly well encapsulated in the life of a pilot.” Underwood has been in the UAE for just over a year and can usually be found at the gym, on the golf course, or “belting up and down the Al Qudra cycle track” if not at work. From playing in the Rugby World Cup in 1995 to now being responsible for hundreds of lives thousands of feet up in the sky as one of Emirates’ First Officers, this year he hopes to take further steps to make Captain. “Emerging from a flight simulator after a gruelling assessment every six months is an achievement in itself,” he grins. “What I enjoy about flying is the opportunity to see many places as per the destinations we fly to,” he adds. As Underwood prepares, once again, to reach the top of his professional career, does he have any tips for success? “A famous boss once told me that any fool can make things complicated but that it takes a genius to keep things simple. I’ve been amazed at the number of times that’s rung true.”

○ Mr Underwood wears: Suit, Dhs4,147, by Richard James at Mrporter.com; Shirt, Dhs1,350, by Gucci; Tie, Dhs725, by Alexander McQueen at Saks Fifth Avenue Dubai; Trunk, Dhs31,000, Louis Vuitton.



Hazem Aljesr

As owner and Founding Managing Director of art and lifestyle store Cities, 36-year-old Saudi Hazem Aljesr is heavily inspired and influenced by travel, which is evident in his fast-growing business. After starting his career at Tom Dixon Design studios in London, a design and manufacturing lighting and furniture company, Aljesr gained experience in the world of high-end design, and his work has been acquired by museums across the globe, including leading names such as the Victoria & Albert Museum, Museum of Modern Art New York and Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris. His latest project, Cities, which originally opened in Riyadh in 2008, with a second boutique recently opening at The Galleria in Jumeirah 1, specialises in unique art and design sourced by Aljesr on his far-and-wide travels. The store also prides itself on providing regional designers and artists with a larger platform to showcase their work and talent through store installations, exhibitions, and publications. “Travel is so inspiring but you have to be organised. As I travel a lot for work, my three essentials are my iPhone, with which I conduct a lot of business while I’m on the go, and my MacBook Pro,” admits Aljesr, who looks to Lora Piana and Tom Ford for tailoring. And the third? “A lightweight blazer. It’s my go-to piece and appropriate in a number of different settings if you need to look smart.”

○ Mr Aljesr wears: His own suit and waistcoat; Tie, Dhs530, Saint Laurent at Saks Fifth Avenue Dubai.



Simon Parkinson

As a resident of the UAE for over a decade, British creative Simon Parkinson has largely carved out his artistic career at the hands of the young city. “The UAE is a dream-making country; it’s still largely a blank canvas and the city is in a fast-paced development phase, even today,” says the 39-year-old, who is Creative Director at global brand and creative design consultancy agency, Brand Union. “How often can you truly say that you were there at the beginning of the creative birth of a city? The UAE set me on a journey and it’s one that I am still loving more than 10 years later.” Having collaborated and worked with the likes of Coldplay and photographers Mert & Marcus, and Nick Waplington, the designer is inspired by the exciting talent the region has to offer. “Working with clients and creatives who have challenged and inspired me to go further in design has been the highlight of my career so far,” he says. “International-level Arab talent such as the artists eL Seed, who I worked with when I designed his first book *Lost Walls* for its launch during Art Dubai last year, has also been a high point. There’s so much creative talent here it’s hard not to be inspired.”

○ Mr Parkinson wears: Jacket, Dhs5,939, Alexander McQueen at Mrporter.com; Trousers, Dhs1,540, Neil Barrett at Stylebop.com; own shirt and shoes.



Peter Rear

Filmatography, a production company commissioned for private cinema productions, has managed to position itself at the top of its game since launching in 2012. CEO, and digital pioneer Peter Rear runs his studio between London and Dubai. “Dubai has huge opportunities in the luxury sector where the studio operates, but it’s also a great gateway to the rest of the Middle East,” explains the 34-year-old Brit. “Since establishing ourselves in Dubai we have made significant expansion into Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Jordan, Lebanon and Bahrain.” Sir Patrick Stewart — for whom Rear recently produced a showreel collating his great work, and which was presented at the Chivas Legends Dinner last month in Dubai — said of his work, “This is without question the best production of my life’s work ever made. The storytelling and creative insight is astounding.” Impressive words from one of Hollywood’s greats. This month, Filmatography launches its new Middle East Cinema Studio HQ in Sunset Mall on Jumeirah Beach Road. “Combining contemporary design, state of the art technology and groundbreaking innovation, it will deliver a client experience never encountered before,” Rear explains. “For years Filmatography has been delivering world-class cinema to its clients and now the studio will be entertaining them in its own private screening theatre. Later in the year we are planning a pilot for our first feature TV series, which is also really exciting.”

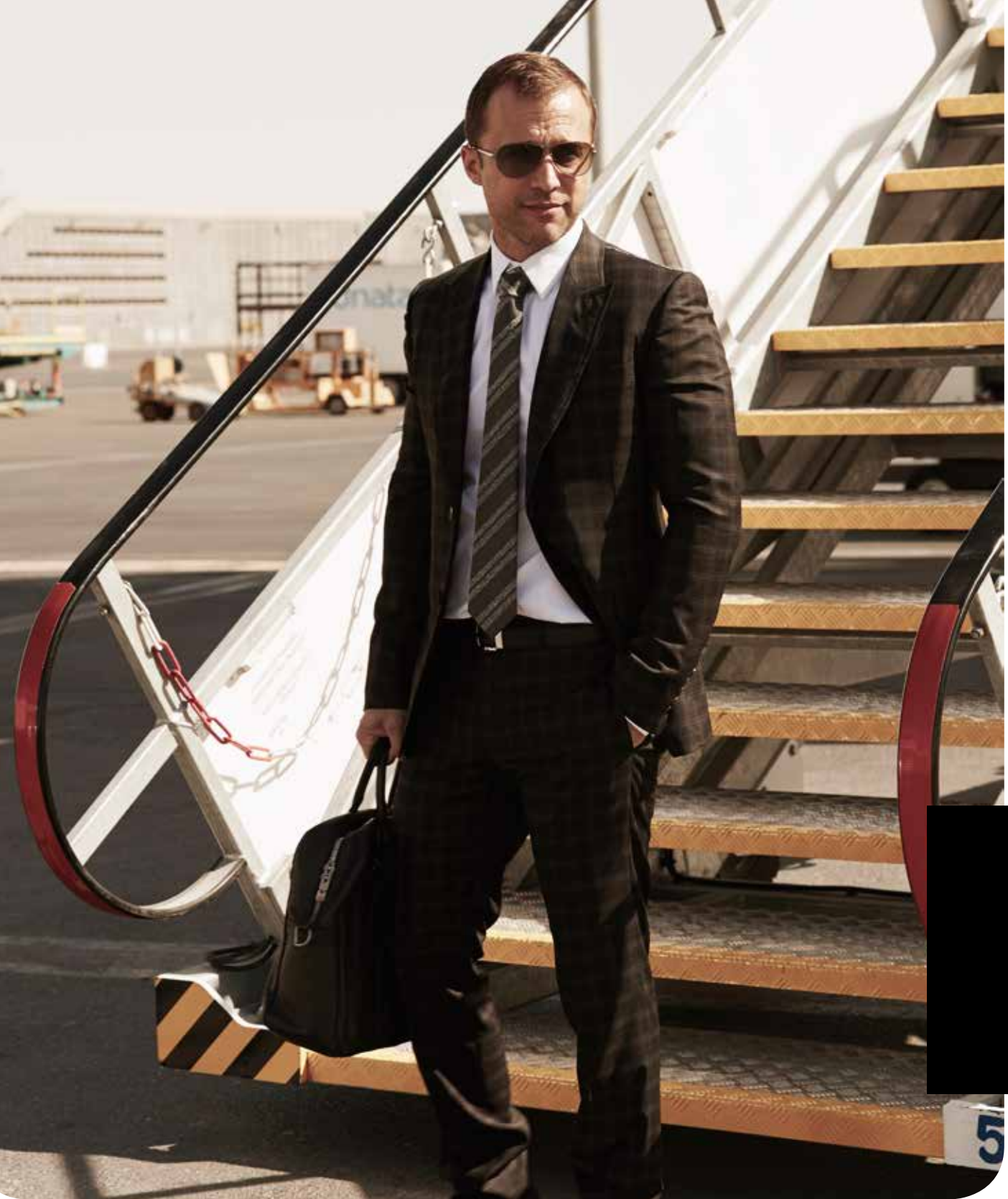
○ Mr Rear wears: Three-piece suit, Dhs9,556, Dolce & Gabbana at Mrporter.com; Shoes and trunk, Dhs31,000, both Louis Vuitton; Shirt and tie both his own.

Mahmoud El Sidani

Level Shoe District, set across 96,000 square feet of impeccably designed space in The Dubai Mall, houses the world's largest range of women's and men's shoes under one roof. As part of the Chalhoub Group, people travel far and wide to visit the impressive boutique and unrivalled selection of footwear, for which Mahmoud El Sidani is responsible. "The UAE has definitely helped me launch my career," explains the 25-year-old Lebanese buyer. "My company is regionally based but has global recognition. It has offered me the chance to meet and work with incredible people around the world. My proudest achievement so far would definitely be when our team won the *Footwear News* retailer of the year award last month in New York." As the stylish, self-confessed sneaker-head El Sidani travels all across the world sourcing some of the most rare, interesting and sought-after shoes, what are his go-to-trainers for 2015? "My Louis Leeman sneakers, for sure," he says. "They are a basic in my wardrobe and travel with me where ever I go as they can be smartened up with a suit or look just as great with jeans."

○ *Mr. El Sidani wears: Jacket, Dhs9,670, trousers, Dhs2,670, and tie, Dhs705, all by Dior Homme at Saks Fifth Avenue Dubai; Shoes, Valentino, and shirt, both his own.*





Markus Thesleff

If you went to any one of Dubai's hot spots last year, it's likely that Markus Thesleff and his company, Whistle Hospitality, were involved. As the brains behind cool venues Okku, Claw, RIVA, Cielo Sky Lounge, Sophie's and Casa de Tapas, 41-year-old Thesleff is fast filling the country with hip eateries that are changing the face of the nightlife and F&B industry in the region. "I love this place. It reminds me of Manhattan 10 years ago — it's such a melting pot," excitedly explains the Finn. "The UAE is a friendly and safe place that encourages personal achievement and entrepreneurship, and this year I just want to continue to build what I think is the best boutique hospitality company in the region, one guest at a time."

○ Mr Thesleff wears: Suit, Dhs10,600, and tie, Dhs750, both Gucci; own shirt and shoes.



Paul Frangie

With a degree in economics, a passion for fitness and a believer in good, nutritious food, Paul Frangie is a man of many talents. A well-known face around the region as the founder and presenter of online show *This Dude Knows Food*, Frangie's time spent at London's Tante Marie Culinary Academy and behind the scenes at some of the British capital's best kitchens (including the three-Michelin-star Restaurant Gordon Ramsay) has led him to 2015, where his big plans are finally coming to fruition. "The rapid growth of the food, media and events industries here in the UAE has given me the opportunity to work on great platforms with amazing people," he humbly admits. "As the UAE cements itself on the global stage; doing something good here means you get recognised for it internationally." The 29-year-old Dutchman was certainly recognised last year when he cooked on live TV to over 1.5 million viewers on the UK's biggest breakfast show, ITV's *This Morning*. "It was one of my proudest achievements so far. I believe this is just the beginning, and hopefully there are many more to come. I'm working on my first cookbook, as well as opening my own food and fitness outlet in Dubai. These are both big projects that I'm hoping to get off the ground in 2015."

○ Mr Frangie wears: suit, and tie, all Ralph Lauren Black Label.

Hamid Rashidmanesh

While you may recognise 42-year-old Hamid Rashidmanesh from our Best Dressed list last year, it's not just his impeccable style that keeps him on the pages of *Esquire*. As Managing Director and General Counsel of Arqaam Capital in DIFC, Rashidmanesh is one of the founding partners that started one of the region's fastest-growing and exciting investment banks. "When we first started in 2007, we wanted to bring the best international standards of investment banking to the Middle East," explain the qualified lawyer, who has lived in Dubai for seven years. "It has been relatively easy to recruit the talent we need into Dubai, with its reputation, social infrastructure and international connections, and DIFC has succeeded in establishing itself as a financial centre in the region." And while we imagine his collection of immaculate, bespoke three-piece suits will continue to grow, what else does 2015 have in store for Rashidmanesh? "While I'm so proud of founding Arqaam Capital, which has succeeded in growing, prospering and providing jobs to so many people, I look forward to further expanding the business even more, while trying to find a better work-life balance with my family."

○ *Mr Rashidmanesh wears: his own bespoke suit and tie.*

David Lessard

In a city that is world-renowned for its ambitious architecture, David Lessard is one of the youngest architects helping shape the UAE's impressive infrastructure. As Senior Architect at Perkins+Will, and Membership Director at AIA Middle East, the 32-year-old American has worked on some of the region's most impressive and iconic structures and sits at the head of boardrooms in New York, Prague, Abu Dhabi and Dubai on high-profile projects with some of the world's leading architects and consultants practising today. "In architecture, there is never one person responsible for realising a project, so to claim any one achievement for myself would be disingenuous," he smiles. "Having said that, I've been invited to speak at public conferences, write for publications and participate in academics all while maintaining a senior level position at Perkins+Will, all before the age of 35 in an industry where you're considered a 'young architect' in your 40s. The UAE's ambition to grow its infrastructure with a sensitivity towards design provides architects with many opportunities. My career has been shaped by this notion and has forced me to mature in my work much more quickly than if I were practising architecture in the US, which generally tends to work much more slowly." His Brooklyn background and Italian heritage is evident in Lessard's flawless style,

which requires no updating. But what about his career, looking forward? "Last year was a year of achievements, as I helped to grow the AIA Middle East member count to the largest international chapter as Membership Director," he says. "Feeding off this momentum,

my experience in luxury residential and hotel projects brings a wealth of knowledge to a firm that is already well established and proven in creating sophisticated, functional and refined architecture." This combination has a lot of potential in 2015.

○ *Mr Lessard wears all own clothes, and carries a Rimowa suitcase.*

Make-up by Marciel Jospheh at Illumin8 Make-Up Studio, www.illumin8makeupstudio.com. With special thanks to Emirates, www.emirates.com.