

in person

## EVANGELISING ON LIFE

*ONE OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL FACES IN THE WORLD AND WINNER OF THE WORLD STYLE ICON AWARD 2005, LINDA EVANGELISTA IN A TÊTE-À-TÊTE WITH SAVIA RAJAGOPAL*

### **WITH A LONG SUCCESSFUL CAREER AS A MODEL, HOW DID YOU GET INVOLVED WITH FASHION?**

When I was 12, I remember telling my mother that I wanted more outfits! My mother sent me on a selfimprovement course to learn grooming, posture and make-up. She also entered my name in the Miss Teen Niagara beauty pageant. A talent scout in the audience later took some pictures and sent them to the model agency Elite, who accepted me. But it took me three years to get to the top. Later, photographer Arthur Elgort booked me for the French 'Vogue' and I started working for all the 'Vogue' publications.

### **AT AN AGE WHERE MOST MODELS HAVE RETIRED, YOU ARE STILL IN DEMAND BY DESIGNERS THE WORLD OVER. WHAT DOES TURNING 40 MEAN TO YOU?**

I don't think it's such a big deal. It's great to be 40. After all, think of the alternative. If you don't age, you're dead! I don't mind looking 40 either. I feel there's more to come. I feel better than I did 10 years ago. There's place for women in fashion, just like there is for young girls. The press, designers and the public don't hold my age against me.

### **LOOKING BACK, WHAT WAS IT LIKE TO BE ONE OF THE FIRST SUPERMODELS OF THE 1990S?**

It happened very fast. I got swept away. I was too busy to really look at what was happening. It's only when I look back that I realise what I went through. I could be in two different countries in one day. But I didn't party. I was very professional. I enjoy, appreciate and understand it more now. I got to live my dream — to be a model.

### **MANY ASPIRING MODELS LOOK UP TO YOU. HOW DO YOU REACT TO BEING SEEN AS A ROLE MODEL?**

I don't see myself as a role model. Sometimes you become that when people are inspired by you. Hopefully they are listening to you, and if they are listening, then I'm conveying my message. I don't take it on as a job. I just want to do my share and be a decent human being. I just feel like I've already been given so much that I'm trying now to do my share to make a difference.

### **YOUR QUOTE "I WON'T GET OUT OF BED FOR LESS THAN \$10,000 A DAY" HAS BECOME INFAMOUS...**

I'm a different person today than I was then. I wouldn't say that now. These days, I get out of bed for much better reasons. I'm part of a team that raises millions of dollars and spreads awareness of HIV and AIDS all around the world.

**CAN YOU THINK OF AN EXPERIENCE THAT HAS CHANGED YOUR PERCEPTION OF LIFE?**

My first booking agent died of AIDS. Since then, I've known colleagues and friends who've died from AIDS. Just being exposed to death changes your life. You stop taking things for granted. You take your health more seriously and start respecting yourself and take action. I'm committed to myself as I respect myself. I'm committed to a healthy and fit lifestyle.

**WHAT KEEPS YOU GROUNDED IN SUCH A GLAMOUROUS INDUSTRY?**

It's not all that glamorous! [Laughs] There are moments of glamour. But in general, my day-to-day life is pretty normal. I'm not even news worthy! Now, I believe I have my priorities straight. I think it took me time to get that sorted out. With time and age, comes wisdom.

**YOU'VE RECEIVED A LOT OF FAME AND MONEY. WHAT'S NEXT FOR YOU PERSONALLY?**

More! [Laughs] I really like who I am right now, and I can't ask for more. If I can just have this, I'd be really happy. I want to continue the work that I'm doing.

