



# Costume DRAMA

There's more to *Project Runway Australia's* new look than diva demands, bitching and see-through clothes, according to pals Megan Gale and Alex Perry

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EXCLUSIVE  
INTERVIEW  
& PICS

**C**all her a diva all you want, but there's precious little about stunning new *Project Runway Australia* host Megan Gale that would give you cause to do so. The 35-year-old supermodel-turned-fashion designer has arrived on an early morning flight from Melbourne for *OK!*'s Sydney photo shoot – alongside her longtime pal and designer extraordinaire Alex Perry, who's now playing mentor on *Project's* glamorous third season.

The entourage Megan has arrived with consists of all of one oversized handbag, from which she pulls out two pairs of heels – she didn't want *OK!* to go to any trouble sourcing shoes – which she'll team with her Alex Perry frocks. There's minimal fuss, and many laughs, as the glam duo – who has known each other for 13 years (Megan was one of the original 'Perry girls') – play up for the camera. Not even a broken wind machine and a few gown issues are cause for complaint.

In fact, the only change in their demeanour occurred when Megan's reported behind-the-scenes 'diva' antics were mentioned. 'It's outrageous!' exclaims Megan, who has not only taken charge of the hosting role previously held by fellow model Kristy Hinze, but also the extremely demanding task of executive producer.

'There's no time for that sort of nonsense. I've been in this industry for 20 years. If I was a complete bitch to work with, it would've come

out by now. In Australia, you can't get away with that,' she says, before Alex furiously shakes his head and adds his own opinion on the matter. 'It's bullshit, bullshit, bullshit!' he insists.

According to the pair, it's very much happy families on set, and there was no special treatment – not even for the contestants, who Megan admits she found hard to criticise. Alex, 48, on the other hand, hasn't been plagued with such concerns; sticking with the tough-love approach he's renowned for as a judge on *Australia's Next Top Model*. He readily admits he wasn't on the show to make friends – well, at least not with the contestants. As for becoming better acquainted with Megan, he's now at the stage where he can 'read her moods', while she points out when he starts to 'look nude' – but that's another story...

**'IF I WAS A COMPLETE BITCH, IT WOULD'VE COME OUT BY NOW'**

**How did you first meet?**  
Alex: I met Megan in 1998. She'd just come back from Italy, but it was before

she became mega-famous. I was doing a show and I had everybody booked, but we ended up canning someone because Megan was so fabulous.

**Megan:** Alex was the first Australian designer that ever booked me for Fashion Week.

**Alex:** Yeah, sucked in to the rest of you!

**What is it like working together again?**

**Alex:** We've been able to spend more time with each other on *Project Runway*. Before, it was always fleeting, so it's been nice. I've got to know her even better. I know what sort of person she is. I can read her moods...

**Megan:** [Laughs] Be careful! You're walking on eggshells here.



## Project Runway Australia

**Alex:** No, I mean when you get close with your friends, you tune into them more. Put it this way: I know when she's had a long day.

### How have you both changed since the good old days?

**Alex:** Megan's become more self-assured and self-confident. I remember back then, the way she looked was so arresting, but she was so gentle, she was almost timid.

**Megan:** Well he's not making dresses with hibiscuses all over them anymore!

### You're both new to Project Runway Australia – do you think you've given it a new flavour?

**Alex:** We've made it fabulous!

**Megan:** It's had a bit of an overhaul. The crux of the show is the same, but then there's a whole new look – especially with Alex coming on as a mentor and judges Kirrily [Johnston], who's a fantastic designer, and Jarrad Clark, who's been in the industry for years.

**Alex:** And then there's Megan. She has really strong opinions when it comes to giving the designers good, solid criticism.

**Megan:** For example, one designer made a red-carpet dress that you could see through, so I had to step up and say I wouldn't wear it because you can see underwear. That would be so horrific for me on the red carpet, if I was photographed and people could see up my skirt.

### Which one of you is feared more by the contestants?

**Megan:** I've made a conscious decision that there's to be no good judge, bad judge – we don't want to play roles.

You have to be encouraging, but sometimes firm. Although with Alex, it's always tough love...

**Alex:** It's about being real. I started off by being nurturing but, at the end of the day, they need some reality – they need someone to say, 'This is not good enough'. People might think that's really bitchy, but I don't believe pointing out something that's as plain as day is bitchy – especially if it's something that needs to be taken onboard.

**Megan:** I've been told to man up and toughen up. There's an episode where I had to send home one of two contestants who had got quite close. They were in tears, and knowing that I was splitting up friends... you can hear my voice crack.

**Alex:** Whereas I'm like, 'I don't want to know you until it's finished'. Afterwards, sure, I'm happy to be your friend, but getting personal, it clouds your judgement. I do the same thing on *Top Model*.

### How have you both managed with having to add the show to your busy workloads?

**Alex:** It's been a busy year, but I've got a support team and my parents gave me a really good work ethic – I just keep going until the job is done. It's not possible to tell a bride that she's going to get her wedding dress two days after the wedding.

**Megan:** Alex is so inspiring for me to be around. I've been busier than I have been in years and trying to juggle that has been quite hard, but

I've spent so much time with Alex, who works endlessly, and I've never heard him complain.

### What do you do on your days off?

**Alex:** I make sure time counts. Mary [Perry, Alex's wife] has been such a rock, because she doesn't see me very much, but when we do [see each other], we really enjoy it.

### How about you, Megan? Do you go shopping?

**No,** I'm not a big shopper. I'll just go and do it all in one big hit and destroy the credit card in the process!

**Alex:** When you're around clothes all the time, you get a bit over it.

**Megan:** I work 15-hour days, so it's not like, 'OK, I've been looking at clothes all day and now I'll go shopping after work'.

**Alex:** Why not? David Jones is still open at 11.30pm [laughs].

### We all know Alex loves his sunglasses, is there anything you can't live without, Megan?

**I don't** have a signature item. I'll go through phases of being quite partial to shoes, or bags or jewellery, but there's not one signature thing that I have to have.

### Have you ever seen Alex without his sunnies?

**No.** [To Alex] You'd look nude without them!

**Alex:** Somebody said it looks like I've got no ears!

**Megan:** The other day, I actually asked him how long he'd been wearing the sunglasses, because I can't remember him without them. I was trying to think back to when it started, if he'd worn them when we first met?

**Alex:** I've always worn

them. They do come off, but the more people make an issue out of it, the longer I'm going to keep them on. I was going to take them off for the *Top Model* final, but then the production company freaked out.

### Looks are a big part of the fashion industry – what are your tips for staying young?

**Megan:** It's not about looking young for me. I'm in my mid-30s and I'm happy that I'm not in some battle to try to reduce my age. I've always been comfortable with ageing; it's more about being healthy and fit.

**Alex:** You have your physical age and then your body age...

**Megan:** Yeah, I've had that done. I'm 27.

**Alex:** The fitter you are, the younger your body age. Having said that, I'm up for a bit of Botox!

### So what's on the agenda after Project Runway?

**Alex:** Tan.

**Megan:** I don't know. I've got a couple of things coming up that I can't discuss – they're things that aren't going to be announced for a while yet. I've got my Isola [swimwear] collection coming out in July, which has been really exciting to work on. **OK!**

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