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New shop for the very rich

Following the success of its FutureFin operation, there is now a Future Exotics sales showroom in Cape Town, writes Roger Houghton

FEW businesses are in the fortunate position where they can generally discount economic downturns. However, this is probably true in the case of those undertakings that pander to the requirements of the rich and famous.

The plush Future Exotics Lifestyle Emporium, situated on Breakwater Boulevard next to the Aston Martin showroom in Cape Town's V&A Waterfront, is one of these.

The showroom had its official opening last Friday evening at a time when many South Africans are tightening their belts and car sales are slowing. Future Exotics, the retail arm of Wesbank's FutureFin financing operation for expensive cars, boats and planes, attracted many well-heeled "beautiful people" to the extravagant launch function in the very impressive showroom that doubles as a conference or entertainment venue. The company credo is well summed up in its slogan, "It's a matter of style."

The custom-built lifestyle venue, which was designed by Stefan Antoni and Associates, provides accommodation for 230 people seated or 350 as a cocktail venue when there are no cars on display.

Unfortunately for the "petrol heads" at the launch, the mind-blowing Ferrari, Porsche and Lamborghini supercars and an assortment of luxury cars from Bentley, Rolls Royce (including a drophead Silver Phantom), BMW and Mercedes-Benz — as well as some classics — were parked among more mundane transport such as Hilux and Isuzu bakkies, Opel Corsas and Tazzes in the public parking garage outside the rear entrance to the showroom.



The reason was the necessity to clear the venue of four-wheeled models for models of the two-legged kind. The main feature of the official opening function was launching an exclusive calendar and to raise money for the Reach for a Dream Foundation.



The calendar, of which only 120 will be printed, is in the vein of the famous Pirelli collectable and features 12 of SA's top beauties — Caprise, Tamara Dey, Minki van der Westhuizen, Christina Storm, Lee-Ann Liebenberg, Tanit Phoenix, Louise Carver, Victoria Aitken, Gina Athens, Rosie Motene, Millen Magese and Claudia Henkel. They were all photographed in black and white by top local photographer Mia Ziervogel. The photos are seen as a "throwback to old Hollywood glamour and epitomise the "finer things in life" with "timeless elegance in each shot".



All except one of the photographed beauties was present on Friday evening and added glamour came from an ongoing procession of lingerie models.

A leather-bound calendar was auctioned for R25000 and a Catherine Christie painting, "The Last Oyster", went for R51000 .



Future Exotics is part of the Abalengani Group, a BEE company, headed up by charismatic 34-year-old Zunaid Moti, a self-confessed "lover of exotic and unique vehicles, marine and aviation".

He says he recognised a gap in the market for a new breed of luxury dealership for cars, boats and planes that will enjoy the convenience of doing business in a sumptuous "one-stop shop". Moti said at the launch the objective is to launch a second Future Exotics Lifestyle Emporium in Johannesburg within 18 months.

Future Exotics is prepared to fly its customers anywhere in the world to arrange personalised specifications for their cars, boats or aircraft. The general manager for sales and finance, Sohail Dangor, says the aim of Future Exotics is to make new assets available faster.

Dangor declined to disclose the start-up costs for Future Exotics, saying that the premises were leased from V&A Waterfront. He said the company will strive to split the business equally between cars, marine and aircraft, with strong growth seen for the latter category as private charters become more popular. He added that being close to the harbour meant the marine division will also be a good draw card.

Future Exotics claim they will be able to speed up the delivery of specialised cars, boats and planes as well as arranging for custom-made models when

these are ordered. In-house FutureFin will arrange the financing when required.

Vehicles sold by Future Exotics are registered with the respective distributors and agents in SA and serviced by them. Dangor says Future Exotics will assist clients who experience any difficulties with regard to warranty work.

The opening of Future Exotics means that, to a degree, FutureFin will be trading against its existing customers in the form of other purveyors of luxury cars and the like.