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ROBERT PATTINSON

THE FUTURE'S BRIGHT
FOR HOLLYWOOD'S
FAVOURITE VAMPIRE

AGENT PROVOCATEUR

MEET THE ANTI-BOLLYWOOD
AUTEUR WHO'S MAKING WAVES
ON THE INTERNATIONAL CIRCUIT

WHEN LEFT WAS RIGHT

EXPLORING
BERLIN'S
COMMUNIST
PAST
25 YEARS ON

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THINGS EVERY
MAN SHOULD
EAT BEFORE
HE'S 35



HOW TO
MANAGE
YOUR
SUMMER
FITNESS
BREAK





A room with a Brew

A new museum due to open in the historic Al Fahidi area of Dubai is a paradise for the coffee cognoscenti, with artefacts dating back centuries. While you're there, try an aromatic Ethiopian brew or let the Egyptian barista whip you up a proper cup of the black stuff.

📍 📷 Arva Ahmed





King of caffeine: Khalid Al Mulla is the man behind a new museum in Dubai dedicated to all things coffee

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hile many food historians agree that the first coffee-brewing techniques were born in Yemen, coffee-loving nations in almost every region of the world but the Middle East have taken

the lead in opening museums dedicated to the bean, including Germany, Italy, Portugal, Brazil and Russia. However, we needn't feel neglected any longer. Khalid Al Mulla, a partner in Dubai-based coffee wholesaler Easternmen & Co, has been collecting coffee artefacts with a vengeance for the past four years, and his boundless addiction for coffee-related paraphernalia has culminated in a dedicated museum housed in the historic Al Fahidi neighbourhood.

The museum, due open officially later this year, might seem like an anomaly for a commercial coffee corporation, but for Easternmen & Co, it is wholly aligned with a broader strategy of educating customers about the differences between superior beans and the more widespread low-quality grade. Easternmen also operates Mirdif-based Café Retro, a hidden gem that not only pours a perfect cup, but doubles up as a barista training ground, as well as a showcase for buyers seeking to purchase anything from beans to machines.

The automated grinding and siphon gadgets on Al Mulla's teak brew-bar seem like new kids on the block compared to the museum's collection of antique implements, some of which are 200, or even 300 years old. Al Mulla explains the story behind every grinder in a room dedicated to the classic manually cranked machines, my favourite being one that dates back to the Second World War. During the war, when scarce metals were diverted towards military uses, coffee fanatics fashioned the dull gold body of a grinder out of used copper bullets.

The stories of the machines made me long to switch back to manual coffee grinding, so much so that in a moment of weakness, I could not help but wonder if Al Mulla would miss one particular machine that was designed exclusively for petite women. This collector's item was positioned with a counterbalancing plank so that the lady of the house could sit on it, pinning the grinder firmly to the ground as she turned the crank.

My guess is that he would.

From the 300-year-old excavated Yemeni clay brewing pots (jamena) to the copper coffee roasters tinged green with oxidisation, the



Visitors must not leave without enjoying a finyaal of unsweetened gahwa and dates in the cosy Emirati majlis



Some of the items on display at the museum date back hundreds of years



painstakingly curated collection at the museum is one that deserves to be savoured. Al Mulla emphasises that his museum is not limited to coffee history. What sets it apart from others around the world is that it is interactive and culturally engaging.

Visitors who walk through the main courtyard of this converted coral and gypsum wind tower can participate in a coffee-drinking ceremony from Ethiopia, where coffee beans were first discovered between the 13th and 15th centuries. They can watch in fascination as Abdel Hamid, an Egyptian barista in his traditional grey garb and skull cap, stirs a robust Turkish brew. Abdel's preferred coffee appliance is a silver and gold machine with a 400-year-old Egyptian design, one where the coffee pot is heated uniformly over fine silky sand. True to the Gulf region's hospitality, visitors must not leave without enjoying a finyaal of unsweetened gahwa and dates in the cosy Emirati majlis. This cultural coffee trail will leave enthusiasts with much to think about – a good thing since sleep will prove evasive for hours.

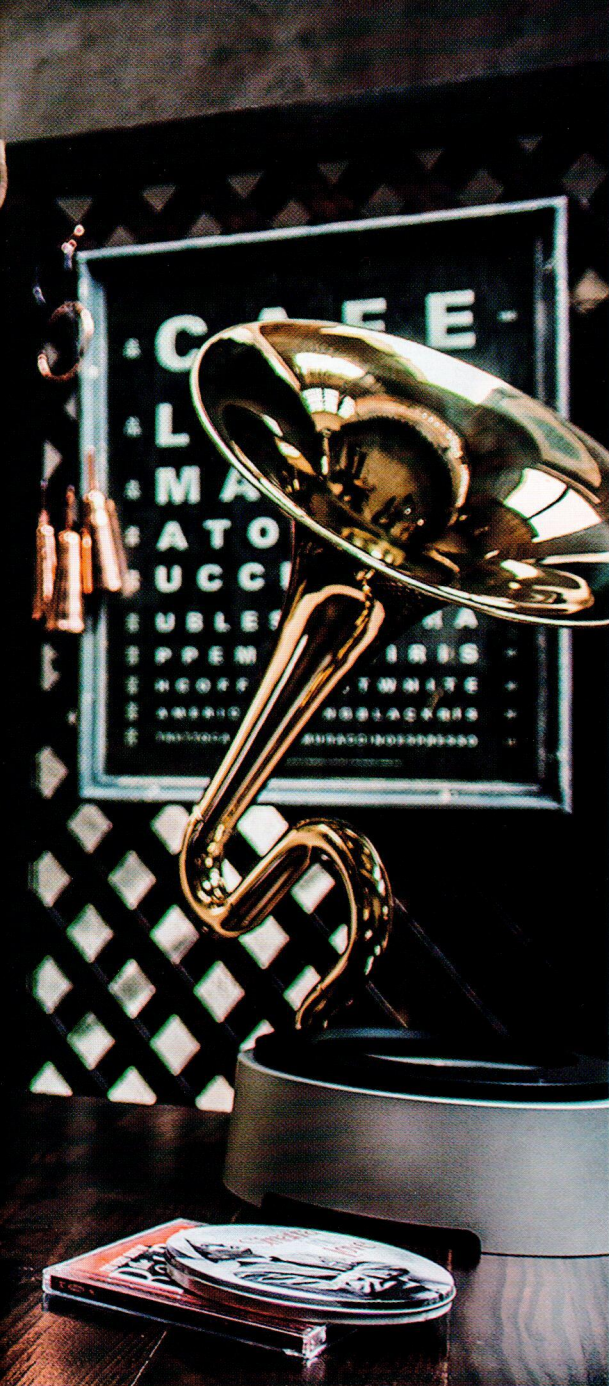
One storey above the dedicated antique rooms on the ground floor, I sat and listened closely as Al Mulla explained how the siphon machine works. Siphon coffee is far stronger than a cup of French press, the extended interaction between

grounds and water leading to a concoction that can resurrect the groggiest of souls.

Still, the concentrative effects of a caffeine fix are redundant in this museum. There is more than enough to keep visitors rapt as the staff meticulously explains the various artefacts in the three rooms, namely: the cupping room, the history room and the one I personally wished to be locked up in – the literature room.

Al Mulla obliged me by letting me bury my nose in an encyclopaedia by Johann Friedrich von Pfeiffer, dated 1784 and with 177 pages dedicated to 'kaffee'. While the German who parted with the book for Al Mulla's museum project would sleep with it by his side, this rare piece of literature now rests under a sealed glass for coffee enthusiasts to appreciate.

As the Vietnamese Arabica brew prepared by Al Mulla worked its magic on my taste buds, he mentioned that I had fared well by not "insulting" the drink with milk or sugar. I secretly applauded myself for not asserting my love for Thai iced coffee – sweetened with copious streams of condensed milk – and quickly diverted the discussion by making an earnest plea for introducing museum memberships. Memberships could be instrumental to engaging coffee aficionados over the long term, I suggested. Who would not jump at the chance to sample four different blends



per week from the brew-bar upstairs in return for a fixed fee? Discounts on the fair-trade beans stocked in the storage room might be an additional sweetener to the programme, as would a free cupping class or a voucher for the museum shop, which appropriately stocks a paperback edition of Michael Weissman's *God in a Cup*, essential reading for coffee-lovers.

Galvanised by the caffeine, I was brimming with ideas and pushed Al Mulla to tell me his plans for the future. He placed his cup down and smiled with the wry expression of a mastermind who had best be observed, not questioned.

This museum is a giant step towards showcasing the coffee culture in the region, and having seen the bottomless pot of passion that Al Mulla brings to the table, I reckon that he could be brewing nothing short of a coffee revolution.

For more info on the museum, visit www.coffeemuseum.ae

Above left: Visitors can participate in a traditional Ethiopian coffee-drinking ceremony. Above: Exhibits on display include this gramophone. Right: Al Mulla pours a rich brew of perfect coffee

