



SINGING

A
Different
TUNE

LENNY KRAVITZ IS MOST FAMOUS AS A ROCK 'N ROLL SUPERSTAR, BUT HE'S ALSO THE MAN BEHIND KRAVITZ DESIGN—AND A HOST OF EXTRAORDINARY PRODUCT COLLABORATIONS AND DESIGN PROJECTS FROM MIAMI TO NEW YORK.

BY LINDA MARX



K LENNY ravitz

designs tables and chairs with glamorous metallic touches, door knockers, cabinet pulls and knobs that are handsome and edgy, wall tiles that offer a personal and contemporary interpretation of tridimensional decor, and interiors that radiate what he calls a "soulful elegance."

No, the award-winning musician has not given up his stellar career. But he has turned his creative eye to design. With celebrated collaborations in Miami and around the world on both residential and commercial interior projects, as well as with new product designs, the musical maverick has struck a new chord that is distinctly his.

The rocker's company, Kravitz Design, Inc. (KDI), was founded in 2003 by the singer-songwriter, composer, multi-instrumentalist, photographer and actor to satisfy his craving for fine design. Now he's creating furniture, rugs, lamps, pillows and wall decor for CB2 (Crate and Barrel), door and cabinet hardware for Rocky Mountain Hardware, and ceramic tile for Lea Ceramiche. (He also has designed a collection of sunglasses and watches for Chilli Beans in Brazil, and his interest in photography led him to create a limited-edition camera and case for Leica called the "Correspondent".)

Kravitz has a genuine passion for all kinds of design, especially masculine sprinkled with glamour. In the past decade, he has designed interiors around the world, including Miami's Paramount Bay Residences, a 47-story bayfront condo; South Beach's Recording Studio in The Setai; and The Florida Room at the Delano. He's designed luxury suites for the SLS hotel brand in Miami Beach and Las Vegas, pop-up concepts for Pepsi's Kola House hospitality brand in Milan and Dubai, and helped relaunch the world-famous French boîte L'Arc in Paris.

KDI is also working on the interior design of the 35-unit condo 75 Kenmare in New York's Nolita neighborhood. Kravitz's vision centers on a layered environment, drawing inspiration from the downtown vibe and Nolita's own style, culture and rhythm, while integrating natural stones, bonded metal and aged oak. Kravitz says he is creating an environment that feels contemporary and refined, yet warm and inviting.

He recently completed the unique Sound Lounge, a multi-purpose environment where luxury condo residents at the Art Deco-styled Kent in Manhattan can watch TV or movies, play music together, or practice their instruments. His inspiration came from one of his own recording studios.



Comparing the creativity between music and design comes easily for him. "It's the same creative spirit and process regardless of the medium," explains Kravitz, who lives in the Bahamas and visits Miami frequently. "It organically starts with a feeling and then evolves until it becomes what it wants to become. The music, design, photography and acting all feed off of each other."

Kravitz, 52, was born in Manhattan to creative parents. His late mother, Roxie Roker, was an actress best known for her character Helen Willis on the popular 1970s sitcom *The Jeffersons*. His late father, Sy Kravitz, was an NBC-TV news producer.

Kravitz grew up in a hub of creativity and design without being fully aware of what they were. As a boy, he amused himself by banging on pots and pans in the kitchen, playing them as makeshift drums as early as age 3. Even then, he was a natural musician



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: The Florida Room at the Delano; The Setai Recording studios' Live Room; Trousdale hardware for Rocky Mountain Hardware; The Lola table lamp for CB2.

and innovator. "I became interested in design as a kid without realizing what it actually was," he recalls. "I was instinctively creating environments around me that allowed me to feel creative and engaged."

He moved to Los Angeles with his mother's show business career and attended Beverly Hills High School, spending his most formative years around talented, interesting people and traveling the world. Kravitz became cosmopolitan and curious, and no matter what he was doing, he always wanted to keep things fresh.

Even as his musical career took off and he became a bona fide superstar, Kravitz took his interest and fascination for design seriously, eventually developing a style he now calls "soulful elegance." He incorporates inspiration from his personal experiences and travels into his product design, and a great deal of the natural environment and

energy for his interiors. Perhaps the French designer Philippe Starck put it best and most colorfully when he said, "Lenny is a weapon of mass construction. He is an explosion of all talents, an unlimited boiling bucket of culture, a daily firework, a tireless explorer."

For example, Kravitz's brilliant work at Paramount Bay generated talk around the world. Located on Miami's Biscayne Corridor, the stunning Arquitectonica-designed building with creative input by Kravitz is a reflection of refined city living coupled with the flair of a casual beach home. Cool, sophisticated, international, tropical and urban all at once, much of Paramount Bay captures just what Lenny Kravitz is all about.

For the high-rise's interiors, he married the natural beauty and energetic vibe of Miami into a design that is both functional and inspirational. With the use of vibrant wallpaper, dazzling chandeliers, unique furnishings and the finest materials, his attention to detail is meticulous. "I love the laid-back casual vibe and the fact that Miami is very international," says Kravitz of the city he says still feels like home. "The work I've done there has always embraced its casual nature and tropical environment. I've spent a great deal of time in Miami since I was born. My Bahamian aunt settled in Miami, so it was a constant destination. As an adult, I moved there in the early 1990s," though he has since relocated.

"Since I am based in the Bahamas, I go often to Miami. I am inspired by the amount of energy and creativity going on there now with the new development in places like Wynwood, and by the work of people like Matt Sherman at Jugo Fresh and Roma Cohen at Alchemist."



"LENNY IS A WEAPON OF MASS CONSTRUCTION. He is an explosion of all talents, an unlimited boiling bucket of culture, a daily firework, a tireless explorer."

PHILIPPE STARCK



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: The lobby of the Paramount Bay Residences in Miami; scenes from the Goccia wall tile collection created for Kravitz's collaboration with Ceramiche; pillows and rugs from the CB2 x Kravitz Design collection.

Kravitz is also inspired by internationally known designers. He enjoys Starck and his work, Gabriella Crespi furniture, Joe Colombo designs, Danish designer Verner Panton and his shapely chairs, and Paul Evans furniture. And every day is about being creative, whether he's working with his team on a design project or ensconced in the studio recording. There is no such thing as a routine or normal day for this rainmaker.

Last year, he collaborated with CB2 to design about 20 pieces of furniture inspired by his travels and personal experiences. The collection captures the edgy glam of the 1970s New York club culture and the natural ease of the same period's California music scene. "I travel all over the world as a musician, so I see things in different countries and from different cultures that continually inspire me, which keeps the designs fresh," says Kravitz, who uses his own products in his Bahamian home and in another of his houses in Brazil.

The CB2 collection is made of materials that include high-impact pairings of lush textiles, leather, wood and reflective surfaces. Some examples are the Foxy Table, with a dish-like top that can hold a sheepskin-covered cushion; the Nova Table, with a faceted underside; and the circular YaYa Table, which hides a storage compartment beneath a removable wooden tray. The Lola table lamp has a polished metal base that has been likened to an "upside down wine glass." Cushions and rugs are custom designed in bold colors and sophisticated stripes and patterns. "Lenny and his team helped create a collection that is beautiful, practical, earthy and elegant," says CB2 managing director Ryan Turf.

For Rocky Mountain Hardware, a respected manufacturer of bronze architectural hardware, Kravitz created Trousdale, a cool collection for both doors and cabinets. Inspired by the architecture of the Trousdale Estates neighborhood in Beverly Hills—mid-century modern homes that made their mark in the 1950s and '60s as a favorite of celebrity residents—the glamorous collection offers sleek architectural elements with angular

profiles and a strong textural effect. There are seven lever, grip and knob designs, four cabinet pulls and knobs, and five accessory pieces, including a remarkable door knocker. "I was drawn to Rocky Mountain Hardware because of the high-quality products they produce," says Kravitz. "They create handcrafted hardware with time-honored casting methods. It was a pleasure to work with their talented artisans." His collaboration with Lea Ceramiche results in Goccia, a new wall tile collection. The tiles serve as modules that create different tridimensional shapes, which play on concave and convex rigorously in black and white. Lights and shadows suggest the continuous movements of the water recreated in stylized shapes.

Kravitz also designs private residences and is looking at another condo and hotel project in Miami. His work and its mass acceptance stimulates him and makes him want to design more. "When I see people react in a positive or surprised way to the design, the product, or the environment, I am rewarded," says Kravitz. And so are they. **IA**