



Karan Johar in conversation with Maria Sharapova.



Nadia and Yana.

Top match

Pictures by Ahmed Ramzan
Staff Photographer

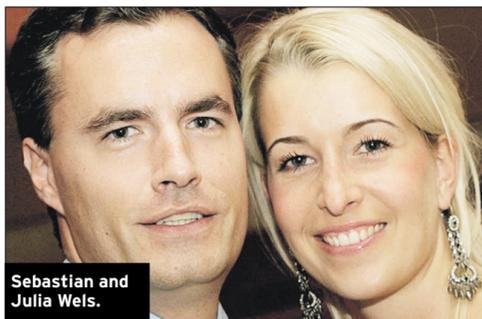
Glamorous tennis star Maria Sharapova was served up a stream of questions by Bollywood celebrity Karan Johar at an event staged by Dubai Lifestyle City at the Grand Hyatt Dubai.



Kris and Michel.



Preeti Nanda, Nandini and Ambika Vohra



Sebastian and Julia Wels.



Nass and Saima.



Rashid Humaid Al Mazroui, Syed M. Salahuddin, managing director of ETA, and Abdul Qadir Mohammad.



Marie-Louise Olson brings you people who live life THEIR way. Today it's Therése Neaimé

COLOUR OF SONG

9 questions Under your skin

1 MOST EMBARRASSING MOMENT: I once asked a woman if she was pregnant – and she wasn't!

2 WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF YOU WERE KING OF THE WORLD: I would make peace.

3 WHAT MAKES YOU TICK: When I meet a person who has drive and passion. Because a lot of people are sleeping.

4 BRING TO A DESERTED ISLAND: Water. It's a boring answer but that's going to keep me alive!

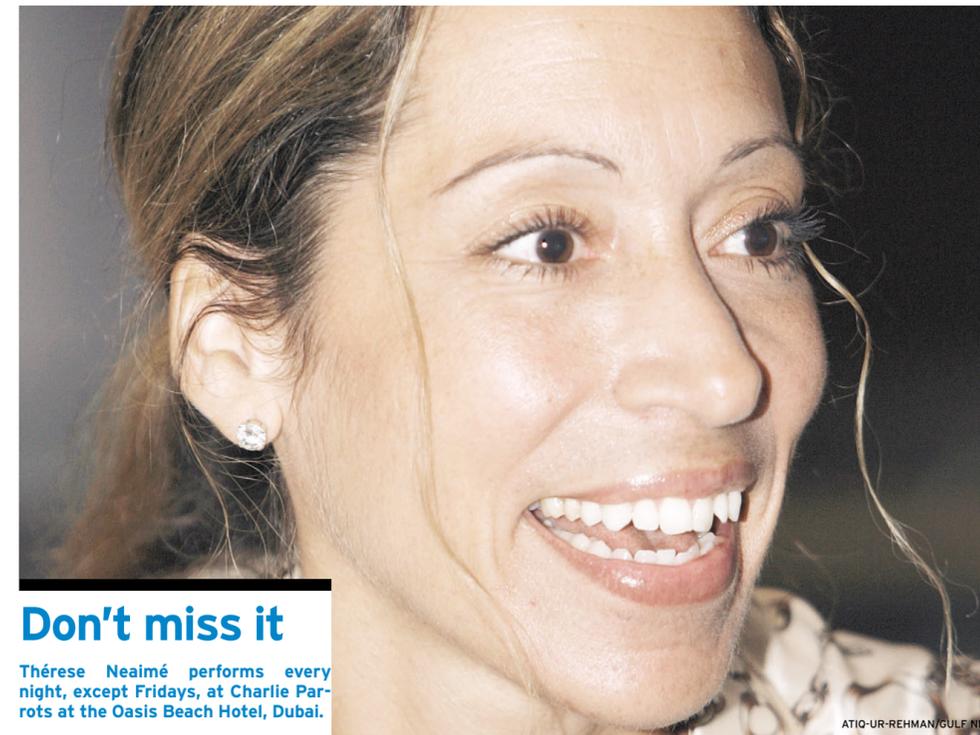
5 THREE FAMOUS PEOPLE, DEAD OR ALIVE, TO HAVE DINNER WITH: My mother, Prince – he's a very talented, interesting person – and finally, all my gone relatives. To me they're famous.

6 WHAT MAKES YOU CRY AND LAUGH: I laugh when I'm surrounded by family and friends. I cry when I think about my mother. I'm normally a very positive person.

7 BIGGEST CAREER DREAM: To spread my music across the world and show that it is possible.

8 BEST AND WORST THING ABOUT DUBAI: I like that people come here from all over the world to fulfil their dreams. It's OK to come to Dubai and I like that there is so much attention here and it's in the Middle East. Suddenly the Middle East is OK again. I'm happy that there is a place in this region which attracts the rest of the world. But at the same time, it looks like a construction site. They're building so much everywhere.

9 FINAL WORDS: Everything is possible. Don't put a limit to what you want to achieve.



Don't miss it

Therése Neaimé performs every night, except Fridays, at Charlie Parrots at the Oasis Beach Hotel, Dubai.

ATIQ-UR-REHMAN/GULF NEWS

Therése Neaimé is beautiful, friendly and above all, talented. The singer opens up about her music and life

The day Therése Neaimé decided to board the flight to Hollywood to pursue her dream as a singer is a day she will never regret. But it wasn't easy. She was 25-years old and had to leave everything behind – boyfriend, family, apartment and friends.

"I think that if you have a dream, you should go for it because you never regret the things you did. People always say that the music industry is so hard, but I think the key is not to think about how hard it is.

BIGGER PICTURE

"If I had been able to see the bigger picture from the beginning... to start my own record company..." she trailed off and shook her head with a smile.

We all know that feeling of frustration to look back and realise what we could have done instead of what we actually did. But, in this case, Swedish-born Neaimé, who is half Lebanese, did exactly what she dreamt about doing.

The 35-year-old singer released her first album, *Live'n'* – a comfortable fu-

sion of soul, pop and a twist of Arabic flavour – last year and her single *The Future* spent 13 weeks on the Top 40 Adult Contemporary charts in the US. Also on the album were her hit singles *Here To Stay*, *Keep it Up* and *Colour of Love*.

AIRWAVES

Now she's back on the airwaves with her new single *How Could I*, which is currently receiving massive airplay on the mainstream radio stations in Dubai. Her album is scheduled to be released in April 2008, but the title is still "hush hush".

I met Neaimé at her residence at the Oasis Beach Tower, situated next to the Oasis Beach Hotel, where she will be entertaining people at Charlie's Parrots for the next six weeks.

"I wanted to come here for a longer period of time. It's wonderful to have a base here," she said, while gracefully brushing a strand of hair from her face. She was, for lack of a better word, beautiful. Tall, slim, stylish and with the perfect blend of self-confidence and humility.

Neaimé lived in Hollywood for five

years and worked hard, writing her own music and playing gigs all over Los Angeles and San Diego. She gathered together a band, who are still with her today, eight years later and she continuously stresses how important they are to her.

"I want to create real music with my band," she said, using singer Sade as the perfect example. "Having a band that's been with me for so many years... We have that chemistry on stage. We make jokes about things and the audience can see that. It makes me feel strong.

"That's the key – to not forget anyone on the way and be the same person and bring them with you."

SONGWRITING

Now she runs her own independent record label, Future Records, and loves taking the reins in her career.

"If it was only about standing on stage singing, then you wouldn't be able to run the whole distance," she said. "Of course I love being on stage, but it's also to show to myself and the people around me that it's possible."

Her forté lies particularly in songwrit-

ing and speaking from the heart. "I think that's my strength as an artist. That I can tell a story about every song. Because if you can say that this song is for my mother... people will listen."

Speaking of her mother is very emotional for Neaimé. She died of breast cancer six years ago, and, upon mentioning her name, it's apparent that the loss is still strong in her memory. She wrote a song, *Overwhelmed*, dedicated to her father in which she says she wouldn't know what to do if she lost him as well.

"The songs come from my life. It would be hard for me to sing about things that don't matter. They have to have a meaning for me. Inspiration comes from life, your family and friends," she said.

Later that evening, Neaimé stepped up on the small stage at Charlie's Parrots. Although the venue was only half full, with her husky, emotional voice she sang every song with such passion, I noticed one or two glistening eyes.