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Designer to Open Local Cavalli Clubs

By Irina Filatova

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Moscow's famed Praga restaurant will remain largely unchanged if it is chosen as the site for a Cavalli Club. **Igor Tabakov**

Italian fashion designer Roberto Cavalli plans to open night clubs in Moscow and St. Petersburg this year, with the investment in the projects possibly exceeding 4 million euros ($5.48 million), a real estate consulting company said Monday.

The designer, who started his Cavalli Clubs chain in 2008, is looking for a venue in Moscow to open a luxury club, with a total of 10 possible locations under consideration, said Alexei Mogila, head of the trade real estate department at Penny Lane Realty, which is advising Cavalli on the project.

Mogila declined to specify the locations under consideration, saying only that restaurant Praga, owned by Telman Ismailov's AST Group, is one of the options.

"The agreement isn't signed yet, we're holding negotiations," he said by telephone, adding that the rent agreement should be signed in the first quarter of this year.

Cavalli also plans to open clubs in St. Petersburg and Kiev. The fashion designer set his sights on Russia and Ukraine after clubs in Florence, Milan and Dubai that he opened over the past two years proved popular, Penny Lane Realty said.

Each project in Russia may cost more than 2 million euros, depending on its final location, Mogila said.

According to Penny Lane Realty, Cavalli has tapped Sakhib Ibragimov, a founder and co-owner of the Azeri television channel ATV, as a partner for the projects.

Ibragimov will invest in the project in exchange for rights to further develop Cavalli's club chain in Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States, Vedomosti reported last week.

If Praga is selected for the club, the interior and front of the legendary building will remain unchanged, Mogila said, adding that Cavalli is looking for a building with a historical background in Moscow's center.

A club's atmosphere and interior are very important for the Moscow audience, said Dmitry Shalya, a spokesman for Pacha Moscow club.

"People in Moscow go to a club like to a theater expecting that they are being entertained there," Shalya said. "It will take some effort to explain what a Cavalli club in Moscow is and how it will work."

Restaurants and dance-floors are not the key differentiators for Cavalli, since the designer uses his clubs as a venue for exhibitions of his jewelry and accessories and fashion shows of his branded clothing.

Shalya also said that he doesn't see Cavalli as a rival because the Moscow audience is used to traveling from one club to another during the night.

For St. Petersburg, Cavalli wants a location on Nevsky Prospekt, while in Kiev he plans to be in the center, near Kreshatnik street.

A request for more details sent to Cavalli's representatives on Monday went unanswered.

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