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Russian Bear Model Steals the Spotlight With Fairy-Tale Photoshoots

October 12, 2020



Stepan is “smart, kind and incredibly beautiful,” his photographer says. **zhdanova.mila / Instagram**

Russia’s hottest model is a 700-pound, 28-year-old Eurasian brown bear named Stepan.

Standing at over 2 meters tall, this hunk’s photoshoots adorn the pages of the Daily Mail, the Sun and the New York Post.

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Публикация от Mila Zhdanova | photographer (@zhdanova.mila) 8 Окт 2020 в 2:22 PDT

“I've worked with models from Thailand, Australia, Germany, Britain and Israel who have all flown to work with him,” Stepan’s photographer Mila Zhdanova says.

Born in a St. Petersburg zoo, Stepan was adopted by his “second parents” Svetlana and Yury Panteleenko at the tender age of three months after he was abandoned by his own mother, according to his biography.

By age 18, the Panteleenko family “managed to melt the predator’s heart with their love and kindness” and turned Stepan into a film and circus star in Russia.

His latest star turn came with Zhdanova’s fairy-tale-inspired photoshoots alongside models in traditional Russian costumes.

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A post shared by медведь Степан и Савва❤ (@panteleenko_svetlana) on Jul 25, 2020 at 3:40am PDT

“Stepan is so friendly thanks to his trainers' care and love,” Zhdanova, who delights in the foreign press coverage her sessions, which last no more than 30 minutes each, are getting, told British media.

Zhdanova added that she wants her sessions with Stepan to break the stereotype that Russia is a country of bears and no smiles.

“We do have bears but I want to show in my pictures that we do smile,” she says.

As for Stepan’s animal instincts, his bio points out that he’s “an exception to the rule.”

“He’s smart, kind and incredibly beautiful.”

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