

- He is a consummate artist as well as a man of culture and business.

A VERSATILE ITALIAN TROUBADOUR

The world acclaims him as "the troubadour from Italy," who sings beautiful love songs to everyone, but to Elio Mauro, the singer himself, he could be many things at the same time and be equally good at each one of them.

For instance, besides traveling around the world all the time singing before elite crowds, he is also known as a champion car racer in Italy, a composer, a movie star, a painter, a writer and at one time, newspapers in Italy romantically linked him to a celebrated singing fan of his, actress Ava Gardner.

"She used to invite me to her apartment regularly to sing for her, but I was terribly young and shy then," this visiting Italian balladeer told us between songs at the Nile where he is now under contract.

Elio, at 31, has reaped enough acclaim to rank him

among the world's entertainment celebrities today.

Possessed with very handsome Gaelic features, the most prominent of which are a pair of sleepy and soulful eyes, Mauro at once generates a personality full of tenderness and warmth, so peculiar of artists preoccupied with the painful search of elusive beauty.

"I was very young when I started out in the entertainment world," he recalled to us in richly Latin-accented English. "The German destroyed all our properties so I had to work," he added.

His father, a violinist, had seen in Elio great promise. He encouraged the young man to pursue his musical career. Forthwith, Elio took up piano lessons as well as guitar lessons, and was soon transposing musical pieces to suit his voice.

At a very tender age, he joined a roadshow but he was disgusted when women

members of the show showered him with too much affection.

"They kept kissing me and I was terribly young and shy then," he naughtily winked.

Somehow, everywhere he went — Spain, Portugal, Northern Europe and Africa — there were good reviews about him. He also got impressive patronage, like the Queen of Afghanistan and later, the First Lady of Italy itself.

When Vittorio Gassman, Italy's leading actor-director, needed someone to do a role for his stage presentation of "Irma La Douce," Elio tried for it and made it. This launched his movie career.

He has appeared and sang in about ten films, including the award-winning "Cabirian Nights." He composed the song for the film, "Rocco and His Brothers" which was shown all over the world.

A true Italian with Gallic taste for art, he thinks Anna Magnanni is the greatest living actress today, and Vittorio Gassman, the best actor. He has worked with Visconti and Fellini and Vittorio de Sica, and he knew

Sophia Loren before Carlo Ponti discovered her. In fact, he said, she was originally engaged to a friend of his, a singer.

Elio told us that he is now divorced but "very much on the look-out for a wife." He was married once before to a very pretty Italian socialite, whose father was a prominent figure in the entertainment world. They have three children, all of whom live with his wife in their fashionable home in Rome.

Elio himself was born in the suburb of Abbruzzo, which gave birth to other entertainment celebrities like Vic Damone, Perry Como, Mario Lanza and the parents of Connie Francis.

"Mario Lanza did not only have a great voice, he was a great person. He would sing to anyone, including the humble streetfolk when they asked him to sing," Elio spoke of the late singer.

Of his *affair l'amour* with the fiery American actress, Ava Gardner he said, "she is very beautiful. I kept dreaming of her. I was simply overwhelmed by her attention. When she was seeing me a lot, Dominguin, the

bullfighter came into the scene. I could have fought it out with him and would have profited from the publicity, but as I said, I was terribly young and shy then," Elio reminisced.

When he is in Rome, he dabbles in business too. He imports and exports the most expensive variety of caviar. He has about 300 RCA recordings and in Italy, his best-sellers are his "Faro" (lamp) songs. Among these songs is the popular "Ciao, Ciao, Bambino." Only recently, he made another RCA recording in the States. The series are entitled "Italian Troubadour Nos. 1, 2, and 3" and these make up a series of albums.

Whenever he has the time after racing his Alpha-Romeo car, he paints. He does portraits although he said he liked painting clowns the most.

Elio, who likes to mingle with the intellectuals, can hold his own on discussions of art, literature and life. He thinks that the Church (he is a Catholic) should adopt a more liberal view on morality and sex ("It is bad to be involved in obscurantism

like you seem to have a tendency here"), and while he does not categorically endorse what we have known here as Marriage, Italian style (Elio said this is called Marriage, Scandinavian style, in his country), he said young people should be openly educated on sex so they knew what to expect and do. It is bad to make a taboo of it, he said.

As a reader, he is partial to Malaparte "because he thinks a lot" and finds that after reading one Moravia, "you know the rest because he repeats himself."

Elio said he liked it here because in this country people let you know if they liked you or didn't. He said it was difficult if one didn't know where one stood in public regard.

Elio speaks six major languages. He has not been outside Manila, but hopes to see more of the country before he leaves. He finds local girls very pretty. He plans to proceed to Australia and back to the States, possibly Las Vegas. — *From the Manila Bulletin, May 8, 1966, by Amelita Reysio-Cruz.*