

SCI FI TECH

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An Interview with Fabio, Geek Squad Ambassador



Don't let the flowing locks, chiseled jaw, and hundreds of kitschy romance-novel covers fool you. Turns out everyone's favorite male model (sorry, Ryan Seacrest, you need at least one Y chromosome to qualify), the one, the only Fabio Lanzoni — just "Fabio" to us mere mortals — is secretly a huge dweeb. You heard right: The pigeon-baiting Italian Stallion isn't just a spokesman for I Can't Believe It's Not Butter — he's also a huge home theater geek who's dropped millions outfitting his mansion with the latest in [A/V gear](#). Currently shilling as an official ambassador for Best Buy's Geek Squad, we caught up with the beefcake recently to see why your Mom's heart isn't the only thing he's been known to short-circuit.

SCI FI: Dude, what's with the Geek Squad cameo? I Can't Believe It's Not Butter commercials and cheap romance novel royalties stop paying the bills?

I'm telling you, I've been having so much fun. You know, I love technology. I'm just like a kid in a candy store.

So you're an official member of the team or what?

Yes — they're calling me the Geek Squad Ambassador. Let me give you a little bit of background: since I was a kid, I always loved two things about this country. One is the sense of freedom, because this country has more freedom than any other country in the world. And the other thing I loved was the technology.

Since I was a kid, America always represented the cutting edge of technology. I was always amazed at the kind of things I would see on TV. As a matter of fact, the first time I came to the States, I went to Houston. When I came to the airport, I was amazed just to see how the airport was set up, the size of it, the mechanical lifts that would take passengers all the way to the plane, because back home, all you had to get to and from the plane was a bus. I was seeing all this, and skyscrapers! Coming from Italy, it was culture shock. Milan, Rome and Venice are beautiful — they have a lot of history, a lot of culture, but none of the technology.

So anyway, back to Geek Squad. They fixed up my entire house, made it wireless all over. Before with my computer, I had to always plug it in and couldn't go anywhere — I felt like a dog on a leash. Now, I have wireless access around the house and check my email, go online... it's amazing.

Obviously you're getting over your culture shock. But it's a big leap from there to [home theater systems](#). How exactly did you get into the hobby?

Always, always, always I was into it. My father, a mechanical engineer, was big into audio/video. It's because of him that I'm able to set everything up. I'm thankful for that. Putting together a VCR, DVD player, and speakers is easy when you have only a few components. Now, you have hundreds of components, and most people need a book to tell them how to set everything up.

What exact types of equipment do you own? I've heard you've put a lot of effort into this obsession.

Pretty much the majority of my equipment is made by Krell. It's one of the best companies in the world for audio.



What else do you have in terms of a TV,

speakers, DVD player, etc?

One room is all Krell equipment — subwoofer, speakers, amplifier, DVD player, surround sound — and I have an [HD projector](#) that displays on a 15-foot screen. Of course I watch DVDs, but I also use a Faroudja line quadrupler with my laserdiscs. I have a big collection of laserdisc movies, because I started young. I've been collecting all my life. Laserdiscs have really good quality, but when you project them on a really big screen like the 15-foot one in my home theater room, the quality is not as good, so that's why I bought the line quadrupler.

Did you buy any special seating for the theater room?

No, I just have a comfortable couch and a couple chairs I bought for it. A couch is enough for me — I'm more into the technology part. I didn't spend most of my money on leather recliners with cup holders. I spent it on the system itself.

[HD-DVD](#) or [Blu-ray](#): Which is the way to go?

I honestly don't know. I'd like to see more on both.

What's the secret to building a great home theater?

Invest your money in the best components possible. Of course, that all depends on what you want, or are willing, to spend. You can get a great system for a few thousand. Or you can have an *amazing* system that costs a few million.

And just what equipment should we be spending most on in particular?

I know companies out there who use the best components — the same they'd use on a space shuttle. It's almost like buying a car. There will always be a Ferrari or Rolls-Royce. But the best-in-class components at that high end might be better than what "consumers" are buying for the next 10 to 15 years. Whatever you do, always buy the best equipment you can afford — it'll serve you well for years.

Any common errors you'd advise those building a home theater to avoid?

Cables connect everything. If you buy top-of-the-line components and cheap cables, you cannot achieve the sound quality you would get with a good cable. So why spend money on a system and not good cables?

So just what toys specifically are you playing around with in your spare time?

Well, you know [motorcycles](#) have these computers now, and you can download a map of the track you're riding on to the bike, and it'll know which course you're cruising. It's amazing: You can find out everything you need to know about upcoming turns and the speed and power required to race them.

What's something people would never guess about you based upon your print, online and televised appearances?

I'm a technology geek. And I'm a very simple person — I love my toys, but I'm very down to earth. I think everybody's human, and I think there's only one God.

Any big projects in the works?

I have a couple I'm working on, but I can't talk about them. One of them is my idea and it's very unique. You'll hear more about in 9 months to a year.

Fabio: The Dating Simulator for mobile phones?!

[laughs] No, not that!

— *Scott Steinberg*