



A Question for The Sartorialist

Scott Schuman

by Ilana Diamond
Illustration by Wes Duvall

For chronic people-watchers, keeping up with Scott Schuman's fashion blog The Sartorialist (thesartorialist.blogspot.com) is the ultimate peep show. Since the site's 2005 launch, Schuman has merged the skills of a cool hunter and a man-on-the-street photographer, chronicling the style whims of everyday people he encounters during his rambles around New York City and beyond. Recently, *Time* magazine dubbed The Sartorialist a "major design influencer," and today Schuman enjoys contributing photographer status at both *GQ* and Style.com. We reached him by phone in the Italian Riviera to find out how he went from industry insider to tastemaker blogger.

READYMADE: Hi, Scott. How did you get that f*&%ing awesome job?

Scott Schuman: I made it up. The only criteria of the job were to do things that I'm good at doing: photography and talking about fashion.

RM: Has fashion always played a role in your life?

SS: I spent 15 years in the business, in sales and marketing and merchandising, but it took me a while to find my niche and find out what my strengths were. I happened

to find those as blogs were becoming more important and easier to do. It was a happy concurrence of events.

RM: How did you break into photography?

SS: That was the part of the job that I made up for myself. I started looking at fashion magazines in seventh or eighth grade, so by the time I got to college, or by the time I moved to New York, I had a pretty good idea of the difference between [photographers] Steven Meisel and Richard Avedon.

RM: How do you choose your subjects?

SS: It's a very instinctual thing. If I think about it too much it's probably not going to be as good a shot. I take pictures of things that inspire me, but what might inspire me might be different for somebody else.

RM: How do you approach your subjects?

SS: Well, I usually shoot them with some kind of sedative from across the street and they fall asleep. Then I prop them up and make their eyes open. It's like they're awake!

RM: You attach strings to their limbs and do a little puppet action.

SS: It's amazing how lifelike they look. I've gotten pretty good at being able to figure out who will be open to having their picture taken. Basically, "I really love your outfit...I think it looks really cute, or cool, or

whatever, and can I take your picture?" Most people—if they have good style—are pretty flattered by something like that.

RM: Do you feel that your blog has filled some sort of void in the fashion world?

SS: I shoot it the way I see it. I'm not just reporting that this person is wearing this shirt on this day. I'm not trying to say that this person is the most stylish person in the world; I'm trying to shoot pictures that are real, but at the same time an idealized version. That's what I think a lot of people really get from it. Designers have told me when they're trying to design for a particular woman—and they haven't met her—they look at my site and they go, "Oh, wow, that's the girl that I want to design for."

RM: So you've clearly made your mark on the fashion side. What is your advice to aspiring bloggers?

SS: [What's important] is the power of the idea and how clearly you can articulate your point of view. A lot of corporations have tried to do blogs, and a lot of newspapers, because they thought it was something they needed to do. An editorial page in a newspaper has to have a real point of view. For someone who's doing a million other things, they just don't have the time. You either get how to do a blog or you don't. My blog started out with no money, but I had a very good sense of view. The fact that I do all the content myself, all the writing, the visual elements, it makes a big difference. A lot of bloggers are just rehashing other peoples' ideas. They're taking pictures from other blogs. To have complete control over that makes a difference. Being naïve helps you a little bit, [too].

RM: So you're saying just go for it?

SS: The advice wouldn't be to just go for it. The advice would be to let yourself be dumb enough to not be afraid to do it. Like when you train in sports, when you really train, as opposed to walking in and saying I want to run a marathon and just doing it. Then you might be able to do it and you might not. But you don't let not knowing and not training and any of that stuff get in your way. That kind of arrogance of youth really helps.

RM: It's worked for you.

SS: It's going pretty well. I'm sitting in a hotel in San Remo.

VITAL STATS

OCCUPATION	Photographer
LOCATION	New York, New York
AGE	40
FIRST JOB	Executive trainee at Bloomingdale's
BEST JOB	This one
GREATEST PROFESSIONAL CHALLENGE	Creating The Sartorialist brand
SALARY DURING 20s	A range from the \$30,000s to \$70,000s

ILLUSTRATION BASED ON PHOTOS BY SCOTT SCHUMAN

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