

A Stylish Chat with Simon Doonan

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Simon Doonan. The world pretty much knows him as the creative director of Barneys New York. But he's also a best-selling author, columnist and commentator on VH1, BRAVO, NPR, Sirius Satellite Radio and the likes. *AFM* caught up with Doonan to chat about his favorite things for fall and what to expect at Arizona's first Barneys New York store, opening next month.



AFM: *Simon, we're very excited to have you in town; will you be here for the Barneys opening?*

S.D.: No. I thought I'd just blow it off. Of course we're coming! It takes five years to get something like this off the ground; we're not going to just not show.

AFM: *With the weather so different here, will the Arizona Barneys New York carry many of the same clothes as the other stores?*

S.D.: You'll find all the gorgeousness there that you will in the New York store. The Louboutins, Lanvin, Balenciaga—it's going to be fabulous. They adjust it for the climate obviously. The men's jackets will be cognizant of the fact that it's warmer here. We already have a fabulous store in Beverly Hills, so we're used to adjusting to that whole climate thing.

AFM: *What collections are you most looking forward to this fall?*

S.D.: For fall, I think the strongest collections that we're excited about are Lanvin—Alber Elbaz [Lanvin's designer] rocks; he is happening. Balenciaga, Bottega Veneta, Alexander Wang.

AFM: *Any specific trends that you're loving this season?*

S.D.: There was a lot of black on the runway; I think designers wanted to do collections that they felt would somehow hit the spot and black is an old standby for a lot of designers. Also, The Row [Mary Kate and Ashley Olsen's line], we love The Row. It sells so well, it's never in the store.

AFM: *What do you recommend for Arizonans to transition their wardrobe into fall?*

S.D.: Transition to fall, yes, wear a sweater. I think it's fun to think "O.K., how can I stay warm without wearing an overcoat?" But there are loads of groovy ways to do that. A big cashmere throw, a fabulous scarf, amazing knits that you wear as outerwear and layering—in this climate you don't want to be stuck in an overcoat with your arms stuffed into two sleeves. It's better to go scarf-y and throw-y and cashmere-y. Think Rick Owens—a leather jacket won't necessarily keep you that warm, but it will if you wear it with a fabulous scarf and layer it up a bit.

AFM: *You have four books published, one that was recently re-titled and re-released due to your BBC television series. Are there any other future books in the works?*

S.D.: I've sort of started to play around with the idea of doing a retail memoir—funny stories in retail—because I've worked in retail all my life and it's just hilarious and there's always something wacky going on. After 30 years of being in retail I've got a storehouse of kooky anecdotes.

AFM: *What's been the highlight of your career?*

S.D.: Working at Barneys there are just so many highlights, there's always a huge amount. Maybe the highlight for me was being cameoed in "Will & Grace" where they say "Simon's had a hissy fit and gone off to Belize" and that's when Jack has to [design] the window [display]. That was sort of a highlight for me.

AFM: *Anybody that you would be absolutely star-struck to meet?*

S.D.: I'm addicted to "American Idol" so I would love to meet Adam Lambert. He's a real rock eccentric—he's beyond, he's so great. And I love country western [music] too so I've always wanted to meet Carrie Underwood. Brad Paisley, Sugarland.

AFM: *With the economy the way it is, do you have any advice for those that are just entering the fashion industry?*

S.D.: When I entered the job market in the 70's there was a big economic recession. People now should just get an entry level job in a store. It's a great way of getting involved in fashion. You can work your way into another position; there are a lot of great careers in fashion.

AFM: *What is your take on Scottsdale so far?*

S.D.: We're very excited to be here, there's a lot of eccentric glamour here in Scottsdale and everyone seems really excited about Barneys coming.