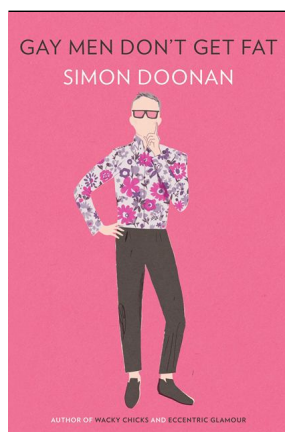


Written by By: Vanja Veric

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Simon Doonan, Creative Ambassador-at-Large for Barneys New York, famed window dresser and all around fashion guru debuts his fifth book "Gay Men Don't Get Fat," a guide to a truly glamorous life with plenty of laughs, diet tips and overall fabulousness from the foremost experts on style: gay men and a few French women. With a campy, witty and eloquently hilarious compilation of essays about his personal life and opinions, "Gay Men Don't Get Fat" is sure to be one of this icon's most successful publishing endeavors. Doonan sat down with us to discuss his most recent book tour, the secrets to a successful life, and just what it is about the Valley's fashion scene that he can't get enough of.



AFM: What was your inspiration for your latest book?

SD: Well, I wrote this book because I felt like American women needed a bit of help. They needed some support, because it's become so complicated to be a woman. You're supposed to look like Gisele, be professionally successful and pop out children as well. In the old days it used to be enough to be a homemaker. Nobody can just be a dumb broad anymore; you have to be smart as well, and it's too much. So I think the pressures on women and the expectations have been multiplied so what every woman needs is a velvet entourage: a bunch of gays to help her achieve these momentous goals. And of course not every woman can have a velvet entourage yet every woman can buy my book which is full of gay wisdom.

AFM: Your husband, John, is he a big part of your writing process?

SD: Yes, I have him read everything when I get it to a certain point and he has great feedback for me. He's smart. Everything I write, I say 'OK, I want your feedback now.' He's such a good editor.

AFM: You do so many things. From Barney's, to writing, to guest appearances, you're everywhere. How do you keep up with such a packed schedule?

SD: My main goal is just to be creatively stimulated. I'll do the projects that I think are creative and fun, and I'm lucky to have such long relationships, like with Barneys, which has always been an intriguing, fun job. For me, retail itself is very interesting and dynamic. It's all about the experience and throwing yourself into something.

AFM: What is a secret to success?

SD: Resilience, energy, creativity—that will get you somewhere. I think it's important to have some achievable goals- and not some insane lottery-winning type goals. Maybe you're not going to be Miss America; maybe you'll get on the local weather channel and be the anchor lady. When I was young I used to watch those Busby Berkeley movies from the 1930's and I'd think, 'god, how great it would be to be a chorus girl

Q&A with Simon Doonan

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because you have all the fun of being in the show and you don't have to be the star. You can just tap dance your brains out and smile a lot and have fun.'

AFM: What has the book tour been like so far?

SD: It's so interesting now doing a book tour, because I did a book tour pre-Internet and now doing a tour with the Internet is bananas. You've got to be on everything and it's hard to know what to say no to. It's a really interesting time, like utter madness with the Internet. It's fascinating and you've got to dive in and be a part of it; otherwise, you end up sitting in an Internet wheelchair as the world is just flying by.

AFM: What's next for your writing? Any plans for future books or projects?

SD: I've thought about a couple of ideas. I've had so many great experiences in fashion like some kind of fashion-specific memoir. A lot of my memoir writing has been about my family and my childhood, but I haven't really delved into my 30 years in fashion so I thought that could be fun.

AFM: With all the places you've been on this tour, what is it you like about Scottsdale?

SD: Well I'm madly pro-Scottsdale. I've always had fun when I come here. The last time I was here I came with the Olsen twins, and we had such a blast. You know what I really really really like about it? It's not pretentious. There are interesting, creative people here. There's something very playful about Scottsdale.

AFM: What about the style here do you think separates this area from other places?

SD: The women here, their personal style is playful and fun. I've met people who are truly experimental; they have a real sense of fun in their clothing whereas in other cities typically the women might be a bit more inhibited or socially conscious or status conscious. But you don't get a sense of that here; it's all very fun. People take risks. They just go for it.