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## THE TALENTED MR BARRON-HOUGH

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It's New York Fashion Week and the pressure is on. At the end of the catwalk is the photographers' pit. The 'posse' are mainly old hands, guys in their 50's and 60's, shooting as a team, one focusing on beauty, another accessories, (bags and shoes) and a third on the clothes. They jostle for the prime position. In the midst is a young man, politely spoken and totally focused; Alex Barron-Hough, TIGI's own reportage photographer. "Compared to the others who work in a team, I'm like a Swiss Army Knife - doing everything," says Alex. At the AW13 Mark Fast show in London, Alex finally felt he'd 'arrived'. He was 'house photographer' for Mark and on telling the rest of the photographers he was there working for the designer, he says, "It was like the parting of the Red Sea! Suddenly everyone made way and allowed him to take the central, prime position."

It's been an interesting journey for Alex. During his latter school years he thought he'd end up working in The City, so focused on economics and maths, and even though his schoolmaster advised him maybe an academic career wasn't his ideal choice; he won a place at Bristol University. But his place was deferred for a year and this proved to be a happy accident, resulting in a complete turn in his career path. Not wanting to take a 'gap year', Alex's 'ambition' had been to spend the year 'hanging-out' at home, basically being lazy. His mother however, had a very different view and told him, in no uncertain terms, that he should get some work experience. From the age of six Alex had regularly accompanied his mum to her hair appointments with Anthony. Anthony had always impressed him. He'd seen Anthony on TV and in magazines and he thought it would be good to work with him.

It took three letters before Anthony finally replied to his request for work experience and invited Alex to meet him at Bed Head Studio. Alex told Anthony that he wanted to get into PR or marketing, but Anthony offered him a different job, Bed Head Studio Assistant. Alex had never so much as held a camera, but he took the three-month job trial with enthusiasm and started at the very bottom, sweeping floors and sometimes washing Anthony's clients' hair. He was soon the 'assistant to the assistant' on photo shoots.

Anthony has always been hugely supportive of Alex and a year on, in 2004, gave him his break at TIGI's In-Crowd show in London. Unexpectedly, Anthony handed him a camera and told him to document everything that was going on over the weekend. A year later Alex was sent to Dallas for two months, to shoot a collection for the American team, as well as TIGI Classics. He had to learn as he went along -very quickly. "I've learnt from close observation, replicating and observing," he says.

But it's reportage that gives Alex his adrenaline rush. Over the last 8 years Alex has developed his own photographic style. Working for TIGI when he's backstage at fashion shows and TIGI shows, he always tries to ensure there's a product in shot - even if it's tucked in someone's pocket. He's now done 9 seasons of fashion weeks. "When I look at the first season's images, I realize how much I've improved. At first it was terrifying, but now I'm getting to know some of the other photographers and my confidence has grown with my skills. I love what I do and am proud of my work. Everything happens at speed. Every show is different and afterwards it's a bit of a blur."

So what inspires Alex? "I'm inspired by music. I originally thought I'd like to be a music photographer and I've been lucky enough to shoot for TIGI backstage at Festivals. I even got to shoot The Who when they opened the Super bowl in Miami. Big productions inspire me. I like things that are on a grand scale. The TIGI Masterbrand shoot was totally inspirational. I couldn't believe the scale of the shoot. In fact working with Anthony is always inspirational."

Alex has been fortunate to travel all over the world with TIGI, but what does he do when he has some rare time on his hands? "I love walking through cities. The morning after I came back from my last trip, I got my i-Pad (with my newspaper downloaded) went for a walk and then found a café to have a coffee and chill. I like eating, shopping and music and I like talking to people about ideas that push my brain to think in new directions." It's been an extraordinary and exciting journey for Alex. Now he wants to take the knowledge he's gathered to the next stage, using the skills he's acquired, and ensuring he uses his eyes to keep seeing how he can further develop himself. "I'm really excited about the work we're doing at TIGI. Anthony and the Team have some amazing ideas. We're really focusing on what made us great and we're beginning to develop a fantastic mix with music and fashion. I also want to work with our clients and help them develop their own creativity through photographic imagery. And his ambition? It's to be the best and the biggest in my field."

Watch this space!

