



**THE LONG VIEW**  
Wang, who celebrates the 10th anniversary of his own fashion label this year, outside California Surplus Mart in Hollywood.

TRACKED

## ALEXANDER WANG

The designer keeps his cool under the pressure of running two premier fashion brands.

BY CHRISTOPHER ROSS PHOTOGRAPHY BY MICHAEL SCHMELLING

**M**Y FRIENDS ASK where I get all my energy from," says Alexander Wang, 31, with a smile and a toss of his long black hair. It's not an unreasonable question. Slender, with a boyish, guileless affect, Wang doesn't exactly bring a workhorse to mind. But by all accounts, that's just what he is—laser-focused and remarkably efficient in his role as a leading fashion designer. On his thin shoulders he carries not one but two major brands: his namesake business, which reportedly does more than \$100 million in sales and celebrates its 10th anniversary this year, and the French brand Balenciaga (owned by luxury giant Kering), where he was named creative director in 2012. (Kering and Wang are currently negotiating the renewal of his contract.) The double duty sees him regularly commuting between New York City

and Paris, whirling through 11-hour days.

His entrepreneurial drive is in part inherited: Wang's Chinese parents ran a successful plastics manufacturing business in San Francisco, where he grew up. He attended boarding school, meeting his longtime friend and muse, stylist Vanessa Traina, before going on to Parsons School of Design in New York City and dropping out after two years to start his own company. The trademark dishabille of his clothing—torn denim, slouchy cashmere knits, threadbare black T-shirts—channeled the lifestyle of the downtown New York models and cool kids Wang ran with, eventually catapulting his start-up into a global phenomenon. Over the years the brand has grown to comprise men's and women's lines, accessories and the sporty, less expensive T by Alexander Wang label. Meanwhile,

his collections for Balenciaga draw an ever finer line between his insouciant, streetwise aesthetic and the iconic house's heritage of elegant restraint.

In June, Wang was briefly in Los Angeles with photographer Steven Klein to shoot a portrait series for the company's anniversary in collaboration with the social-action nonprofit DoSomething.org. Friends of the brand, including Lauren Hutton and Rod Stewart, posed in Wang sweaters and shirts that said "Do Something"—sales of the items will benefit the charity. When not on set or reviewing photos, Wang emailed furiously on his iPhone. After dinner with friends at the Thai restaurant Sapp Coffee Shop, he hopped a red-eye to New York City—one of the few things, he admits, that can slow him down. "Flying's very therapeutic," he says. "It gives me a chance to reflect." >



**9:30 a.m.**  
Departs  
from his hotel,  
the Beverly Wilshire,  
to grab Sunday  
morning breakfast.



**10:45 a.m.**  
Dumplings

at Din Tai Fung, a favorite of Wang's,  
joined by his friend Jesse Lee and  
her husband, Seth Hale (below left).



**12:22 p.m.**  
On set  
Wang consults on the  
"Do Something" shoot, at  
one point turning up  
the music to boost energy.

**1:45 p.m.**

Strikes a pose  
for smartphone cameras with  
Rod Stewart, one of the models  
in the portrait series.



**3:50 p.m.**

Peruses  
the shelves at California Surplus Mart  
on Santa Monica Boulevard. Wang  
frequents surplus stores for inspiration.



**5:21 p.m.**  
Reviews

photos from an ad  
campaign with photo-  
grapher Steven Klein  
(center) and creative  
director Pascal Dangin.



**20**  
emails

Wang sends to himself on average per day,  
jotting down new ideas. At the end of  
the day he compiles them all into one email,  
which he sends to himself as well.

**4**

massages

per month, approximately. He prefers deep  
tissue—the more painful, the better.

**12**

weeks

a year Wang spends in Paris working on  
Balenciaga. He lives in a hotel in the  
eighth arrondissement and frequently  
orders in Chinese food.

**\$54.48**

Price of a small black flight suit Wang buys  
at an army surplus store in L.A., in addition  
to two black tank tops.

**72**

years

Age of his mother, who consults on the  
Wang brand, which is family owned. "She  
still wants to take on more," he says.

**20%**

Growth of the Wang brand annually  
from 2011 to 2014. There are now  
23 Alexander Wang stores worldwide.

**1**

dog

A miniature pinscher named Uni who  
has her own black leather tepee at Wang's  
Tribeca apartment.

**420**

bracelets

handed out to people waiting in line (some  
for 13 hours) for the Alexander Wang  
for H&M collaboration last fall in New York  
City. Each bracelet granted 15 minutes of  
shopping time.

**6**

sweaters

in Wang's inaugural collection. At his first  
trade show, he had 80 orders. ●