

# Stylist to the stars

>> He began his career as a model and has now created his own fashion label



PHOTO: SUPPLIED

Fashion director and designer Shaldon Kopman (L) with international actor Samuel L. Jackson.

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Pietermaritzburg-born Shaldon Kopman has made a name for himself in both the national and international fashion industry.

Living in Woodlands for the first decade of his life, Kopman then moved to Johannesburg but came back home

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**SHALDON KOPMAN**

on a regular basis for school holidays.

He describes his time in Pietermaritzburg as “wholesome living in sleepy hollow.”

“I have many fond memories of riding bicycles into forests and skinny dipping in the woods, friendly people in the neighbourhood where everyone knew everybody,” said Kopman.

He began his career as a model, working with world renowned designers such as Giorgio Armani, where he gained experience in the fashion industry. This enabled him to establish his own fashion label, Naked Ape, which has become a prominent fashion house in South Africa.

Naked Ape started as a fashion consulting company in 1998, the label was born in 2005 and launched in 2010. As the fashion director and designer, Kopman has built a renowned reputation.

His ability to style men with suave and elegance has most recently been recognized by international actor Samuel L. Jackson, whom Kopman is styling for Jackson’s upcoming film, *Kite*.

This is in addition to styling Jackson for the May 2013 issue of *GQ* style magazine.

His ambition after completing matric was to travel the world, a reality that became possible when he was given the opportunity to become a fashion model.

“I visited and lived in many parts of Europe, the east and the USA. Throughout this journey, I absorbed an enormous amount of knowledge,” he said.

For the most part, Kopman is a self-taught designer; a process which he describes as being a natural progression from fashion model, fashion stylist, fashion editor, fashion show producer, creative director and then fashion designer, all in one stride.

When Kopman was fashion editor of *Elle* magazine, he appeared in fashion shows for some of the world’s most elite designers, including Valentino, Paco Rabanne, Armani and Jean Paul Gaultier to name a few, and as a designer showed in London and New York fashion weeks amongst others.

“We have successfully developed a brand which is ready to take on the world. We set the trend rather than follow it and all inspiration is locally drawn,” said Kopman.

He added that it is good to fly high, but always take more time to feel the ground.

“Be honest. Love what you do and respect all others no matter what the situation might be. You never know where or with whom your fortune lies. Above all, keep it real.”