

Written by By Corbin Chamberlin

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In the illustrious world of fashion design, it's easy to forget the amount of work that goes into one collection, season and label. Reality TV buffs love nothing more than to see the struggles in fashion through glossy, unrealistic channels of bitchy-behavior and senseless editing. Alas, a new series, *All On The Line*, a non-fiction show on the Sundance Channel that will feature struggling designers fighting to save their dream by business guidance, criticism from legends like Linda Fargo, Norma Kamali and Georgina Chapman, all in the attempts in recreating themselves as designers.

The designers will be taking direction from Joe Zee, fashion-maverick and creative director of *Elle Magazine*. Joe Zee will act as an advisor throughout the eight part series and will address each designer and their professional roadblocks. The show won't feature recent design graduates like others have in the past. *All On The Line*'s cast will be "label giants" who have held "executive positions".



Joe Zee, star of the Sundance Channel original series "All On The Line".

Joe also adds that this will not be a competition. "There are no judges, it's not a competition. At the end of the show, we present the collection to a panel. A very important buyer, we've done it with Neiman Marcus we will do it with Nordstrom, Bergdorf Goodman, amazing buyers, amazing fashion directors and tastemakers who will come in and decide whether they're going to buy the collection or not for their store."

I am confident that *All On The Line* will be a refreshing and sensible exhibit of fashion design through television. The series will debut Tuesday, March 29th 10pm et/pt on the Sundance Channel.

I speak with Joe Zee on the joys and frustrations of making a series like *All On The Line*.

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## How did *All on the Line* come together? Did Sundance approach you?

When Sundance first came to me with *All On The Line*, it was so exciting. It was the first time in my entire career, I've done several things on TV working in fashion, I just never felt like there was a proper authentic, inspired way of showing what this industry is about. What we do on the show is not about being a competition, nor about elimination, that's never what this world has been, there is so much more to it. When people look at what I do and they think 'oh it's so glamorous', it's not about glamour, it's really about business, and that's what people fail to understand. *All On The Line* is such a great documentation of that; it's fun, it's entertaining but also genuine and authentic.

## How involved were you with the production and ideas of this show?

I have to give a lot of credit to Sundance. Because my expertise and my role in fashion, we sat down and talked about it all collectively, and discussed the needs of the show; what was being shown and what was not. It was such a big world of possibilities. I definitely lent my expertise and my experience and all of those things that I have done for 20 years into it for sure.

## Will there be any contestants that we recognize? (previous well-known designer, etc.)

We actually did not do anyone who was just a school-grad. This is about struggling designers who have hit a road-block. It's for someone who couldn't get to the next level and what I did is come in and help them and number 1, assess what the problem is and identify the problem, fix it and then really fix the product. I've done this with designers, aside from this television show, and sitting with the designer and telling them they should be doing this; or this is what you're good at; this is what's going to sell; this is what your company or brand is about; this is what we should be doing; and that's what I have done with all of these designers on the show. I also say your problem is manufacturing or promotion. What ever the problem is, I come in there with the level of expert to help solve that problem. So I basically work with them, collaborate with them and give them the tools that they need. But they have got to work hard, because ultimately they're putting their name on the back of those clothes that were going to sell.

## How involved if at all, will *Elle Magazine* be with this show?

Yes, I work at *Elle* so it's very hard to sort of disconnect the two. Each episode kind of opens up at *Elle* with me at my office, but it's really not an *Elle* show, it's really about the designers and the design process, the design industry and really about small business and really helping and getting these designers to break through to the next level and that's really ultimately what the premises of the show is. It's not about my life at *Elle*, it's not really about the inner-workings of the magazine, so that part is not there. It's straight-forward on how you put that whole thing together as a designer? How do you come up with that idea? How do you package it? How are we going to present it to the most important buyers in the world?

## What's the most frustrating part of filming a show like this?

I have so much fun doing this. A lot of this is just an extension of who I am and what I do anyways. It's never frustrating, but there were so many times I had to literally juggle my schedule like a crazy person. We work in production from September to January; it was six days a week productions.

## How do you relax after such a hectic schedule?

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I watch TV; I'm a pop-culture junkie. I unwind by absorbing everything sitting in front of the TV. I love what I do. If I didn't love my job, it would be absolutely unbearable.

### **Can we expect any special guest or judges?**

"There are no judges, it's not a competition. At the end of the show, we present the collection to a panel. A very important buyer, we've done it with Neiman Marcus we will do it with Nordstrom, Bergdorf Goodman, amazing buyers, amazing fashion directors and tastemakers who will come in and decide whether they're going to buy the collection or not for their store. In terms of that, you'll have Linda Fargo from Bergdorf Goodman, but within the episode sometimes I'll bring different people, to sort of give them advice. I think you're going to see a great scene with Victor and Rolf, Norma Kamali in another episode and Georgina Chapman from Marchesa, you know really amazing types of fashion personalities that are hugely successful in this industry.

### **What's next for Joe Zee?**

Right now my priority is really *All On The Line* and *Elle Magazine*. I just got home from Paris fashion week yesterday. Now it's getting those big issues out the door.