

EDITOR'S CALL-TIME

The Bold & the Beautiful



Our second annual "50 Most Beautiful Models" special issue deserves the title of "Most Beautiful Issue" in *Tear Sheet's* five-and-a-half year history.

The credit for that goes to 61 amazing people: the 50 stunning models of course; the ten role models featured in this year's new "Icons" section; and graphic design guru Robert Greene,

who has just been named Art Director of *Tear Sheet* magazine. Greene will be working as Creative Director Jason Losser's right hand (and, during Losser's occasional memory lapses, his left brain as well). Congratulations and kudos, Robert!

This year, the 50 Most Beautiful fall into three categories: women, men, and kids. The women range from 5'5" to 5'11"; hail from places like Romania, Guatemala, Argentina, and Tennessee; and earn in a day—often as teenagers—what many people won't earn in any year of their entire lives. The women (not just teens, but also some who are closer to 30 than to 20) rule in the modeling world; they command the highest rates and they cover the most pages in this issue, including the most important page: the cover.

Choosing 50 finalists from the 500+ submissions that flooded into our office from top agencies across the United States was a feat; selecting one cover model out of the cream of the crop who made the cut was...actually pretty easy. First we narrowed it down to five options, then we combed through portfolios, analyzed interviews, and deliberated over which model had the poise, personality, and presence to carry the label of *Tear Sheet's* "50 Most Beautiful Models" cover girl on her lovely shoulders.

We came to a speedy and unanimous conclusion: Shakara. She's a woman who has paid her dues. She was rejected from agencies in New York for four years, often for the same harsh reasons: "Because you're black...We have our black girl...Black girls don't work." The Bahamas native and Brooklyn resident is actually "half black," which didn't make any difference in the rejection she faced or stereotypes she had to overcome. Fortunately for the industry and for other ethnic models, Shakara believed in herself.

"I forced myself down agencies' throats until they got tired of me and signed me," says the model, who was then tracked down by *Sports Illustrated* for the renowned swimsuit issue after her photo was spotted in another magazine. And the rest, as they say, is history. Or, in this case, the rest will change history.

Like her idol, Tyra Banks (a former *Tear Sheet* cover model), Shakara aspires to be a role model to the masses, not just to models. By bucking the trends and formula many magazines follow—i.e. keeping the covers Caucasian—we hope to do our part in helping her change the rules. Shakara is beautiful, inside and out—which is one cliché we support, while "black models don't work" is one we don't want to hear ever again.

Shakara knows that rejection is a reality in this business and she has good advice: "You must create a strong foundation because you will be criticized and picked apart—this can be devastating if you doubt yourself." The image of Shakara on this cover—regal, confident, beautiful—says it all. She doesn't doubt herself for a second, and shame on those who did.

Male models face their own stereotypes in this industry: they can't make as much money as female models, they're just accessories, they can't reach "supermodel" status. But, male models do have the advantage when it comes to career longevity. The gorgeous guys in this issue will be landing bookings long after those \$10,000-a-day women are all washed up (though look out guys, women—like 36-year-old Linda Evangelista—are making comebacks in their 30s). Men definitely don't face as many slammed doors if they try to start a modeling career later in life (meaning in their golden 20s).

Kid models are overlooked even more than male models—their earning power is smaller still and none are household names. But when we started reviewing the kids' submissions, we all melted. They are all so adorable that a special kids issue is in the works to give the tykes the tear sheets they deserve.

Where would models be without the masters who design the clothes, handle their careers, make up their faces, style their hair and wardrobe, set the scenes, and shoot the photos that fill their breathtaking books? Regardless of sex or age, they would be jobless and not nearly as beautiful. Thus, we've given credit to some of the "model makers"—fashion industry icons like photographer Michael Thompson, makeup artist Charlie Green, hairstylist Oribe, designer Michael Kors, and fashion stylist Joe Zee. Their stories are an inspiration to everyone looking for exciting opportunities in the fashion industry that don't require posing or physical perfection.

Thank you to the numerous talented photographers who contributed to this stunning issue, and thank you to each and every agency and booker that participated. Your enthusiastic support made it all possible.

Jill Johnson