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## STYLE

### Surething

BY HILLARY FREY | APRIL 24, 2007 | TAGS: STYLE

"I was 25 when I moved here," said Shaun Cottle, a.k.a. Shaun Surething, the co-owner and principal stylist of Seagull Haircutters in the West Village. "I was working here and enjoying the high and low crazy cultures of New York. I had a great time running around the meatpacking district with all the tranny hookers and doing that thing. I just got really wrapped up in New York nightlife." Indeed, he got his nickname from his friend K8 Hardy, who once described Mr. Cottle as a "sure thing" to a frisky Columbia undergrad.

He got so wrapped up, in fact, that after two years in the city in the late 90's, the Olympia, Wash., native was compelled to return to the sleepy Northwest. He'd spent his last eight months in New York in Narcotics Anonymous, recovering from what he called "the last of his youth."

But last year, after nine years of gazing into the placid waters of the Puget Sound, Mr. Cottle, 35, returned to New York to run Seagull along with his pal Joanna Fateman, of the feminist dance band Le Tigre.

It was a sort of second homecoming for Mr. Cottle, who had worked at the West Village salon during his first tour of duty here.

"All that time I was running around and being fucked up, I was laying the foundation to come back nine years later to take over this business," he said. The shop, which Mr. Cottle likes to call a "beauty parlor," is tucked in on West 10th between Bleecker and Hudson, just across the street from the Housing Works Thrift Store. Mr. Cottle occasionally sends his clients to the thrift shop when he sees something in the window that's especially cute or interesting, like Vivienne Westwood.

Mr. Cottle is tall, with a bleached-blond, shaggy bowl cut that frames his longish, scraggly bearded face. He describes his style as Middle America glam/West Village rent boy; on a recent day when a reporter had her hair bleached by Mr. Cottle, he was wearing jeans, a vintage-looking T-shirt and a hoodie. Around his neck was the Tiffany heart pendant he'd been given by his boyfriend. Mr. Cottle is slim, but boasts a cute belly that suggests an endearing lack of vanity. He has some tattoos—including one on his arm of an exploding pipe bomb—and a comforting, buttery voice that would sound terrific on radio. Despite his punk-rock look, he greets his clients with kisses and hugs. He's a softie. He charges \$85 to \$110 for a cut and \$100 to \$300 for color.

Mr. Cottle's lack of self-consciousness is key to what makes Seagull feel quite unlike a salon and exactly like an old-school beauty shop. At his and Ms. Fateman's invitation, people roam in and out bearing bottles of wine, gossip and updates on their artwork or acting prospects.

Ms. Fateman, who vaguely resembles the actress Cheryl Hines, but younger, prettier and far less brassy, is often at the reception desk, talking on a pink phone. The shop is open until 10 p.m. Wednesday through Sunday, catering to a creative crowd that doesn't necessarily have time for—let alone wake up at the appropriate hour for—a three-hour mid-day hair appointment. (Celebrity stop-ins include Ms. Fateman's friends Justin Bond of Kiki and Herb and *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* filmmaker John Cameron Mitchell.) In

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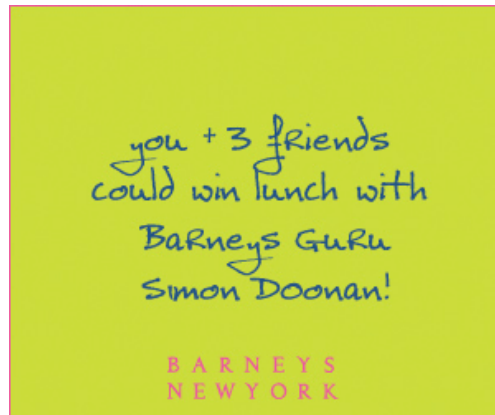
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addition to Mr. Cottle, there are currently two other stylists.

Mr. Cottle's expertise is color. He first studied the arts of bleaching, highlighting, touching-up and correcting at Lacey Beauty College outside of Olympia, and then worked at a salon called Jamie Lee before moving to New York the first time around. He has what he describes as a "nontraditional" approach—mainly "how one color will play in with another color, rather than 'What's the perfect red? What's the perfect blonde?'" he explained. In the 90's, that meant bright orange over lime green. Today, he is working on what he calls "exaggerated naturalness."

"I like natural colors to be real amplified," said Mr. Cottle. "So it's the same thing, but on the other side of the coin—doing something that's nontraditional and unexpected, but you can go home to your mother and she'll say, 'Oh, that looks nice. I like that!' They don't want to, but they have to. It's just something that's punched up, a high-end version of something they can relate to."

Mr. Cottle excels in helping his female clients find a dramatic look that isn't too much. For example, when this reporter suggested that she might look good with a nice, bright red head, Mr. Cottle gave a considered, subtle look that suggested she should rethink things. Blond? Yes! But with a funky "base color" of brown, platinum layered over the top, and some black dye on the bangs.

Mr. Cottle was recently in the running to be on Bravo's hairdresser smackdown, *Shear Genius*. However, he pulled himself out of the competition.

"After a year of being in New York and opening the business, I feel like I deserved a vacation, rather than being trapped in a loft with five fags I didn't know and not being able to leave without a camera following me everywhere," he said. "It was an exciting idea for me. It would have been exacerbating the last of the personality in me that wanted public attention in that capacity."

"I'm really not that person at all anymore," he mused, finishing the last of a headful of foils. "But I could have faked it."

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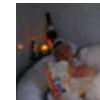
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