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HUFFPOST DETROIT



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CEO, The Creative Class Group & Author, Upgrade

Made In Detroit

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Photo Credit: Shinola

Detroit's fall from grace--from its ruins porn to its obesity rankings, from its crime rate to its bankruptcy--has all been exposed in the lurid glare of publicity.

But I am constantly defending the Motor City. While I grew up in the suburbs just north of Detroit, I worked for the city and its cultural institutions; my sisters and I wrote an advice column for [The Detroit News](#) and we regularly appeared on the local [Fox News](#) channel. More than that, my friends and I chose to hang out in Detroit. We'd drive down the I-75 South corridor into downtown to see [The White Stripes](#) at the Magic Stick, Paychecks Lounge or the Magic Bag, or [Kid Rock](#) who we knew as Bob Ritchie, or [Eminem](#) walk in a small lounge and casually take the stage to a crowd of 20. We'd frequent The Shelter at Saint Andrews Hall, where the Smashing Pumpkins, Nirvana and Soundgarden could be seen, or hit clubs like the Warehouse, an underground favorite for its techno, where djs and musicians from Berlin and Amsterdam would flock. We'd drive home late at night, past the amazing [Detroit Institute of Arts](#), the [Center for Creative Studies](#), and historic [Hitsville USA](#), home of Motown records, and up Woodward Ave and the infamous 8 Mile divide.

While we knew Detroit lacked the obvious big city characteristics, a walkable grid, compact restaurants and shops, it was filled with energy, grit and edge. It's a city with a soul and determination unlike any other city's.

And it was that grittiness and determination that Chrysler tried to capture in its ad campaigns such as "[Born of Fire](#)" and "[Imported from Detroit](#)." Using celebrities such as Clint Eastwood and Eminem, it positioned the brand as the ultimate comeback story.

While the campaign became a coup and showcased the city, no campaign has captured the spirit and soul of the everyday people who live and work in the city --until, that is, the Detroit-based watch, bicycle, and leather goods manufacturing company [Shinola](#) choose the legendary photographer [Bruce Weber](#) to capture the essence of the city for its newest campaign. "Detroit's full of characters," Weber told Vogue magazine. This isn't Weber's first time working in Detroit. In 2006, he and Casting Director, [Jennifer Venditti](#) from [JV8Inc](#) created a feature photo editorial for W Magazine entitled, "Welcome to Motor City."



Photographer Bruce Weber, Photo Credit: Michael John Murphy

"The city was so welcoming--even though it's a big place and spread out, Detroit had that wonderful small-town kind of attitude," Weber [told Shinola](#). "People were really friendly, they looked you in the eye when they said hello on the street, and they greeted you with a smile."

I asked [Daniel Caudill](#), Shinola's Creative Director (a recent transplant to the city) how he feels about Detroiters. "People are genuinely nice and go out of their way to help you. There's solidarity here and people love where they're from and they're very proud of it. I've only been here a year and I'm very proud of it."



Shinola Creative Director, Daniel Caudill, Photo Credit: Shinola

When I asked Caudill his views of his new city he said, "There's so much here that's so positive. There's a very vibrant and really cool art scene I didn't expect," he added, "And really cool things happening around the city. Detroit reminds me of the Lower East Side in the 70's and 80's and all the art and pop culture that came out of the city at the time, so much happened that effected the world and I have the opportunity to be part of that now in Detroit. It's amazing to see what's happening."

As for the campaign, "We focused a lot on the people who make the products behind the Shinola brand," he explained, "Because that's really what the brand is about. Bruce Weber is probably the most iconic American photographer today and he has a very optimistic lens. He looks at the positive in life and highlights it. His view of the city was a great perspective on what's there. For him to put his spin on the brand was an amazing opportunity for us."

When I asked him for his thoughts about Detroit's entrepreneurship and startup communities, he said that Shinola feels like it is just "a small part of a greater movement in the city. There are so many, from artists to startups to large companies like Quicken Loans that are doing amazing things," he said. "Hopefully what we're doing at Shinola is inspiring to people and smaller companies."

"We really can make amazing products in this city," he said. "Manufacturing is part of the culture here. If you add creativity, design and entrepreneurial spirit and we can still do it in this country: we can make great, well-designed products, and we can be successful."

When I interviewed my high school friend who left Detroit years ago and now lives in New

York, what it was like going back to cast the project, Venditti said, "Going back to Detroit has been great. Detroit was where we would escape to see music, dance, and live life on the edge. It was filled with the danger of being someplace we shouldn't have been."



Casting Director: Jennifer Venditti with her favorite character

"Going back has given me a surge of pure creativity and inspiration," she continued. "It is so refreshing to meet people who are true individuals. Detroit still has a sense of style and music, that's unique to each individual. Detroiters use music and dance to connect with their community and to express themselves pure and simple. I am also inspired by their sense of activism and community, bonding together and coming up with resourceful ways to deal with the hand that has been dealt to them."

As for how she went about casting the characters for the shoot. "Working with Bruce is always an honor. He told me to find what excites me, what I think is beautiful, what I find inspiring."

When I asked her why the campaign has gotten so much attention, she said, "I think people want to be told a story and we want a window into a world that is not like our own. Also, I think there has been a lot of bad press about Detroit, but there is also a mystery brewing about the place. People know that something magical is happening amongst the ashes. Shinola wants to bring manufacturing back to America, starting with Detroit. Everyone loves a comeback story, no? Or at least the possibility of one."

A snapshot of life in the Motor City, shot by Bruce Weber for Shinola:





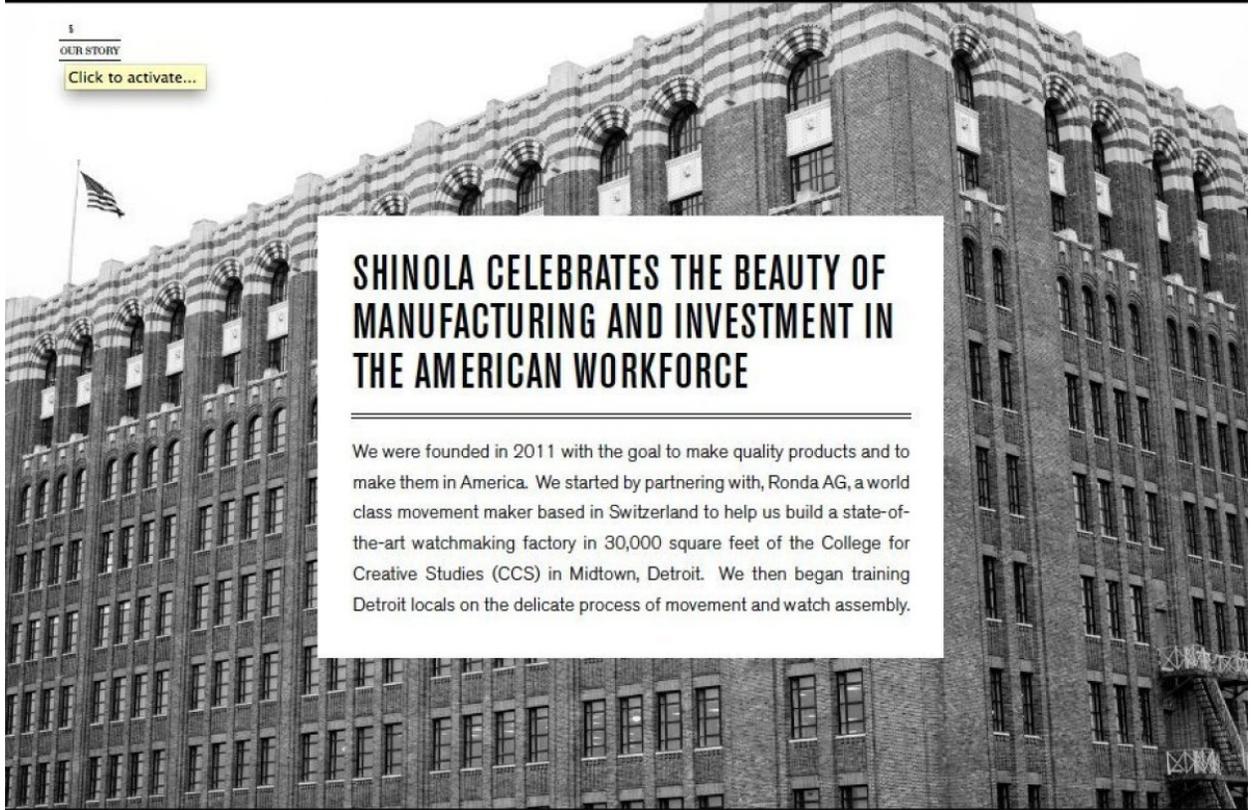
Where American Is Made

PRINT



Shinola Brand Campaign The characters of Detroit

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SHINOLA CELEBRATES THE BEAUTY OF MANUFACTURING AND INVESTMENT IN THE AMERICAN WORKFORCE

We were founded in 2011 with the goal to make quality products and to make them in America. We started by partnering with Ronda AG, a world class movement maker based in Switzerland to help us build a state-of-the-art watchmaking factory in 30,000 square feet of the College for Creative Studies (CCS) in Midtown, Detroit. We then began training Detroit locals on the delicate process of movement and watch assembly.

Shinola Brand Campaign
Made in Detroit



THE WOMEN'S BIXBY

Shinola Brand Campaign
Shinola bicycles

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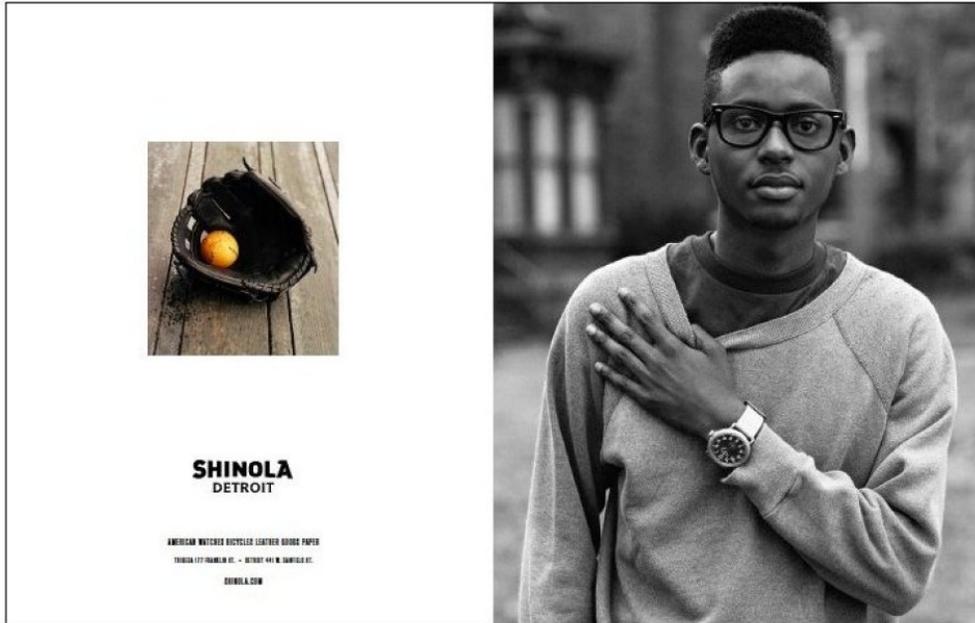
Shinola Brand Campaign
Shinola watches



Shinola Brand Campaign
Characters of Detroit, shot by Bruce Weber, cast by Jennifer Venditti.



Shinola Brand Campaign
Shinola journals



Shinola Brand Campaign
Characters of Detroit



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