

JASON McALISTER



Photography by Scott Teiter

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THE FACE OF GLOBAL BRANDS

BY CHRISTINE MONTANTI

PHOTOGRAPHY BY SCOTT TEITER & DONNE ASHLOCK

Growing up in a small southern town in Georgia, Jason McAlister never even flew on an airplane prior to the launch of his international modeling career which exploded at the age of 24. The 6-foot 2 blue eyed model came from humble beginnings in the sleepy city of Stone Mountain, when he was discovered by an AMTC modeling scout. It was undoubtedly in the cards for McAlister to have a lifelong career working in front of the camera; at the age of 9 he was a celebrated soccer player and was featured in *Sports Illustrated Magazine* for his skilled athleticism. Shortly after, the star athlete was offered a position to play for an international soccer league but declined honoring his parents' wishes. A decade later, McAlister was presented with yet another global opportunity: a modeling contract to work overseas in Asia. This time without hesitation, the former athlete eagerly accepted the incredible employment offer. McAlister's striking features along with his natural ability to communicate through the lens of a camera, has proven to be his most powerful asset, capturing the likes of countless global brands and clients. Currently, McAlister continues to redefine his craft on runways, in print, and on international television commercials; in his very first exclusive interview, the model gets candid about his career and the industry for which he is so passionate.

For over two decades, Jason McAlister's image has represented numerous advertising campaigns: American Express, Coca-Cola, HUGO BOSS, Wrangler, and Camel, just to name a few. He has also starred in dozens of international commercials including Hard Rock Hotel & Casino, DANNON, KORBEL and Shell and has been featured on the covers of *Men's Fitness* and *GQ Magazine* as well as inside the pages of *Maxim Magazine*.

The Georgia-born model was brought up in a strict Irish Catholic, Southern Baptist household, and he experienced tragedy early in his life when his father passed away when he was 10. His mother worked full time and supported her three children, while his grandmother cultivated vegetable crops on the farm and prepared organic farm to table meals for the family. The All-American boy, and his two siblings, (a younger sister and older brother), essentially lived off the land, and McAlister would often help his grandmother by fishing for food on the lake. "We fished for lunch, picked the lima beans and made our own wine, we did everything," McAlister admits.

As a young boy, McAlister had an innate athletic ability, and at the age of four, he started playing soccer. He was pursued by international scouts attempting to get him to play on a worldwide soccer team, but his family declined the offer. After being featured in *Sports Illustrated* and completing elementary school, McAlister, along with his siblings, was bussed 50 miles to attend catholic school as part of the family tradition. McAlister's passion for playing sports was apparent, and his strong desire to follow in his father's footsteps (a former football player and coach) prompted him to leave catholic school and transfer to a public school enabling him to play on the football team with his close friends.

The star athlete first got interested in the idea of modeling after high school while he was dating his on again off again girlfriend who was modeling in New York, Italy and Spain. When she returned home to Georgia from overseas, she convinced McAlister that by cutting his hair, he could travel the world and model as well. McAlister recalls, "I asked her what does that mean, travel the world and model?" and she said, "Make money and see the world." I said, "Oh yeah, I will cut my hair for that.

FEATURES



Photography by Scott Teitler



“Sign me up!” McAlister’s girlfriend arranged for a photo-shoot with a prominent New York photographer who was in Georgia to shoot new models, and soon after, he was discovered by an AMTC modeling scout.

McAlister accepted his first modeling contract to work overseas in Asia at the age of 24 and describes what it was like leaving his historic hometown of Stone Mountain. “It was difficult. I had never flown on an airplane before, and I had to fly over 20 hours to the destination. When I finally arrived in Southeast Asia, I was picked up by a man at the airport who had my name on a piece of paper, and he didn’t speak any English. We drove for hours to the city, and I saw all these neon lights everywhere. When we finally arrived at my destination it didn’t look anything like the Sheraton Hotel brochure I had been given. The driver told me to get out of the car, and I looked around and I didn’t see a Sheraton Hotel anywhere. I was in a different country, and I didn’t know anybody. I initially wouldn’t get out of the car and locked the door because I heard stories about people not making it to their destinations there, and it didn’t look like he was trying to take me to where I had to go.” Initially scary, that was the trip that launched his very successful modeling career and travels around the world.

After leaving Asia, the ambitious model began accepting contracts to work in various countries around the globe. His career skyrocketed when he began working for clients in Italy such as Gianfranco Ferre, FILA Underwear, and Ermengildo Zegna. McAlister admits, “I really loved Italy and spent most of my time there. It’s the fashion capital of the world. I was told early on that I had to go to Milan just to become a model. So, in my mind, I had to go live there. The Italians were so loving, such great people and the food was so delicious; I just loved it. I kept going back and forth there because the Italians are so professional and business-like. They treated me like a king in a way. They would go overboard for you when you work for them — they are like family.”

When asked what his favorite exotic location to travel to is, he confesses, “Wow, that’s difficult! I traveled to 47 different countries and 450 different cities from the Swiss Alps to the Italian Alps, and from Sardinia to Sicily in Italy. Greece was my favorite time of my life because not only was I working a lot, but also, it was the way the Greeks live life. They don’t start working until late morning and they work through the evening. Then after work they celebrate and go out and have fun. Just the experience . . . the culture, the food and architecture, it was surreal.”

As for the actor's favorite productions to work on he reveals, "I shot a worldwide TV commercial for the Hard Rock Casinos which took place in different countries. They had just built all new high rises in Panama, Central America, South America and Florida, and it took two and a half months to film. Myself and a film crew of about 20 people, jumped from Island to Island shooting on different locations."

Currently, the small-town Georgia native is working with full range agencies that cast for acting, television, movies, catalog and modeling work in Miami Beach, New York and Los Angeles. He is also affiliated with Wilhelmina in Miami, New York, Chicago and LA and is presently working with 15 agencies worldwide. Although the bulk of McAlister's career has consisted of a tremendous amount of modeling work, he actually prefers acting. "I am focused on acting; trying to break out into TV and possibly some feature films. Acting is something that I love and comes from within. I like doing character work and reading . . . turning into different people. That's interesting to me." The former athlete confesses that traveling the world and being afforded the opportunity to experience different cultures has been the most rewarding thing he's ever done. "It opened up my mind and made me grow as a person." When asked what his dream job is, McAlister looks at me smiling and responds, "Oh, I am living my dream job!"

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