

# STARGAZER

DONE WITH  
*THE DESCENDANTS*  
AND BEING *DIVERGENT*,  
SHAILENE WOODLEY SHINES IN  
*THE FAULT IN OUR STARS*  
THIS MONTH.

By Andrew Myers | Photography by John Russo  
Styling by Jessica Paster | Shot exclusively at  
The Vortex LA, vortexla.org



Applique embroidered strip  
dress, \$9950, at Tom Ford,  
Beverly Hills; 14K rose gold  
screw studs (throughout),  
\$620, by Shylée Rose Jewelry  
at shyleerose.com.



White cotton organza shirt with black tie, \$1,295, at Michael Kors, Beverly Hills; black leather shorts, \$1,990, by Saint Laurent by Hedi Slimane at Barneys New York, Beverly Hills.

"I'VE ALWAYS BEEN AN OPTIMIST, AN ADVENTURE-SEEKER, A BELIEVER THAT WE'RE ALL BORN PERFECT AND FEEL PERFECT UNTIL SOCIETY TEACHES US OTHERWISE."

"Let's get in our comfies!" declares Shailene Woodley at the end of her extensive five-hour photo shoot. The 22-year-old actress, who stars as the teenage cancerpatient protagonist in this month's *The Fault in Our Stars* (based on the best-selling young adult novel and romantic heart-wrencher by John Green), is speaking to no one—and everyone—on the set.

And while her sentiment is meant to address the 5-inch heels that further accentuate her already long, lean, nearly 5-foot-9-inch frame; the painstakingly applied makeup she would normally eschew; the pixie cut that is rarely so perfectly coiffed; and the never-before-worn, form-fitting designer duds she's donned instead of her standard secondhand treasures, it's also an affirmation of Woodley's mindset and general life orientation. Call it an impromptu, casual *cri de coeur*, California-style!

Born in Ventura County's Simi Valley, Woodley bears many attributes often associated with those who make the Golden State their home. To start, she's permanently peripatetic. "I've never lived in the same place, let alone the same house, for more than seven years," says Woodley, the eldest of two children born to an elementary school principal (dad) and a middle school counselor (mom), who moved twice within California prior to returning to Simi Valley before her 10th birthday. To this day, she remains perpetually on the move. "I live in my car," she jokes, pointing at her ride, which has a patina that makes clear its familiarity with the state highway system.

Woodley is also eco-conscious, Gaia-aware, prone to practicing alternatives to Western medicine, a ready explorer of the unconventional and a clear proponent of positivism. "I've always been an optimist, an adventure-seeker, a believer that we're all born perfect and feel perfect until society teaches us otherwise," says Woodley, who is clearly fond of embraces, as this writer experienced

at our interview's beginning and end. "You're a good hugger," she pronounces.

But here's the deftness in Woodley's magic: Her serious beliefs are not just skin-deep; they're carefully considered, often extensively researched, nuanced as opposed to naive, and frequently presented with a sense of humor that squarely targets herself. They also reflect an openness, curiosity and rigor that she says have kept her both whole and happy, "recognizing, of course, that not every day is rainbows," while propelling her to the front of the queue in a profession rarely conducive to emotional stability or inner peace.

"I find a sacredness in meditation, and in a tree, but I'm also aware it's just a meditation and just a tree. It's both ways," Woodley says, emphasizing duality, perspective, fluctuation and, above all, a balance that must be continually recalibrated. Rose-colored or not, it's an attitude that works for her, at least judging by her productivity, earnest enthusiasm and absence from TMZ—and all at an age when many a college senior consider a drinking game the shortcut to self-awareness.

As many young actors dream, Woodley got her first break in acting class. Unlike most of these acting students, she was only 5 years old. "I was in an after-school program, and a friend of the teacher called my mom and said she wanted to represent me," Woodley recalls. "Mom was like, 'What's an agent?'" Nevertheless, seeing their daughter's enthusiasm—"Acting for me was always just pure fun," she says—her parents were supportive, and they remained so over the next five years, as one commercial grew to 40, and as small and recurring TV roles on shows such as *Replacing Dad*, *The District* and *Crossing Jordan* started to appear.

"We had three rules if I wanted to keep acting," she says. "I had to stay the person I was; I had to stay in school; and I had to have fun." An even-keel formula, it remained

Top and skirt both by Balmain, similar styles available at [balmain.com](http://balmain.com); platform open-toe booties in Camelia suede with black elastic bands and faceted cone-shaped heels, \$995, at Gucci, Beverly Hills; crystal ring, \$150, by Pluma Italia at [pluma.italia.com](http://pluma.italia.com).



balanced despite the general waves of adolescence as well as trials more specific: her parents' divorce when she was 14, followed the next year by a diagnosis of scoliosis. "I never saw either as 'poor me'; I figured I'd just adapt and move forward," she says.

In terms of acting, that forward direction led to Woodley's breakout TV role on *The Secret Life of the American Teenager*, a five-season stint she started at age 15. "I got my GED, but I also wanted a hard diploma," says Woodley, who for half of her junior year and her entire senior year picked up schoolwork from Simi Valley High School once a week to complete and return. She notes, "It was as normal as it could be. I went to prom; I had good friends and a first kiss; I got to do the whole program."

Post-diploma, Woodley also received a major graduation gift: the chance to co-star with George Clooney

more films, with *Insurgent* soon to be filmed in Atlanta; and finally, *The Fault in Our Stars*, a story of romance, redemption and renaissance as told by the 16-year-old with cancer played by Woodley. "Nothing teaches you as quickly about the unfairness of life, as well as the importance of living fully and presently, as kids with cancer," she says, adding that the book (one of her favorites) and its author, John Green, also reminded her of how important it is to overcome fear. "Fear is taught to us when we're young, by society, which teaches us we're not perfect [and] compares us to others, and by a media that compares us with fantasy. I say, 'Enough,'" says Woodley, with the same resoluteness of the teenage heroine she portrays, a character inspired by a real-life friend of Green's who died of cancer at 16. "Screw fear," she scoffs.

Living large, not as in bling but in being, is indeed on

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in *The Descendants*, her feature film debut and professional watershed, which won Woodley numerous awards and nominations as well as concentrated industry attention. Not that she was overly fazed. "It's hard to tell from when different projects were released, but after *The Descendants*, I didn't work for two and a half years," she says, adding that she had no problem resisting advice to move quickly, compound gains or strike while the iron was hot. "If I'm not passionate about something, I'm not going to do it," she maintains.

Following that tandoori-oven dry spell, inspiration fully overtook Woodley. In the course of a year, she's starred in four films. Running the gamut of both budget and genre, the cinematic quartet includes indie coming-of-age *The Spectacular Now*; the low-budget thriller *White Bird in a Blizzard*, by controversial independent filmmaker Greg Araki; the Chicago-filmed blockbuster *Divergent*, the success of which has guaranteed the franchise as well as Woodley's return as protagonist Beatrice Prior in three

Woodley's mind. It's a cornerstone of her acting process. "I've [long] taken acting classes, but I've only had three teachers, and none of them spoke about method or technique," she says. "What they talked about was truth, being truthful and grounded, and then using that to see the world through the eyes of another person." It's also a cornerstone of her personality. "I never thought of acting as something I did in addition to something else; I never thought of it as a career. But it obviously is, as it takes up all my time." Breaking eye contact, her big brows wander, making them all the stronger. "But when it's no longer fun, I'll quit doing it," the star avows.

After the interview, we hug for the last time and I make the sensible observation that after five hours on her feet among a battalion of stylists, photographers and a demanding writer, she must be tired. "Tired?" she says, as though she's never before heard the word and doesn't like the sound of it. "I'm ready to start my day!" Clearly, this actress is just getting started. ■

Diamonds snake on cording embroidered gown, price upon request, at Tom Ford, Beverly Hills

Hair by Caille Noble at Jed Root using John Frieda  
Makeup by Roxxy at The Magnet Agency using Rejvra Minerals

MANICURE: STACY SCHERT; HAIR: JOHN BISSO; BEAUTY: JIMMIE HENNINGTON; JASON BUGH AND DAS UNIK

