



NINJA MONK

SMASHING THE STATUS IN FASHION

Written by Nila Hogan

Saundra Saulnier and Helga Solrun are innovators within the fashion industry. Their vision is a comfy chic-vibe of 'Style meets Lounge to Street.' Saulnier was a creator and visionary who launched her first clothing brand at 23 years old, building a ready-to-wear women's brand Pyramid in Hong Kong. Saundra set up licensees in 5 countries, selling \$5 million. With her second company, based in New York, Saundra was a trailblazer for the "Gym to Street" activewear market we live in today. She has built brands for both start-ups and corporations globally. Someone as talented and creative as Saundra would need to collaborate with someone just as innovative as her vision! Saulnier joined forces with her business partner Helga Solrun to create NINJA MONK.

Helga Solrun is the owner of Tryggvason, a Los Angeles apparel production business that she created in response to the growing need within the fashion industry for LA-based manufacturing. She is an industry veteran with over 20 years of experience. Her commitment to excellence is unmatched by her dedication to and love for the art of fashion. She has worked for such top brands as YEEZY. We had a chance to sit down with them both to talk about their brand NINJA MONK and step into their perception of the industry, and here is what this magical duo revealed.

1. Tell the readers what you think when you hear the word Elevate?

Elevate denotes uplifting or raising something to a higher level: mentally, physically, or spiritually. Elevate can symbolize the state of being your 'best self' which encompasses how you live, think, your style, which of course, includes what you wear. With NINJA MONK, we have created sustainable, Elevated Eco Essentials that are luxe lounge to street.

2. How did NINJA MONK come about, and what does it stand for?

A need for change created NINJA MONK. People are craving transformation from the old status quo and desiring collaboration and community. We are continually moving into living in a digital world,

and we can't forget as human beings that there is still a beautiful physical world to enjoy regardless of the extensive global uncertainties. There is also a massive global movement of re-thinking life values and the exhaustion from excess consumption & waste, not only materialistically but also time, energy, and soul. Clothing plays a part in that, and it's a conscious decision of how you express yourself. It's part of your authentic lifestyle. NINJA MONK is a way of being that's the yin/yang concept of dualism and connection of the inner and the outer. The NINJA and the MONK qualities reside in us all and represent that we are all Superheroes in our way. We felt NINJA MONK's name perfectly represented a lifestyle brand that connected Style, Tech, and Entertainment. We started with clothing 1st because we are experts at it and created unisex, no-brainer, well-made, luxe' Clothes to Live In.' And we think the name is fun & badass.

3. I know you and Helga had worked with some fantastic designers and people within the industry; what is your favorite memory when you were getting your brand started?

We were missing the stylish, comfortable 'throw & go' no-brainer clothes we wanted to wear every day. As creators, when you feel that you are missing something, you intuitively know other people are feeling this way too. And as we see, Lounge to Street has become a global trend. We both love minimal architectural clean lines in design and style and wanted to bring this aesthetic to seasonless, timeless clothing. The fashion industry has been working with outdated, wasteful methodologies for years, and it was time for a change. We were passionate about creating a new way that was genuinely sustainable with unisex, multi-functional clothing such as reversible and 2 in 1 item that is built to last. We cut waste on every aspect of manufacturing, from no excess trims or tags to throw in the garbage to reusable zip-close packaging. You support sustainable manufacturing vendors, ethical business practices, livable wages, and quality eco-friendly fabrics when you shop with us. Our favorite memory was starting NINJA MONK and how much excitement and fun we had brainstorming the vision.

4. Why is it essential to make sure your brand is inclusive?

NINJA MONK believes in the smashing of ALL stereotypes. Connected as a global community on the foundation of "No Labels and Just Humans." This awareness and acceptance are needed more than ever: so, we started with sustainable, easy-fit clothing for Everybody and Every Body. Your style reflects who you are in every aspect: how you live, what you eat, what you wear, how you think, and so on, and NINJA MONK is a way of being. Clothing plays a substantial part in how you express yourself. It's part of your lifestyle. Know your unique style and enjoy comfy, cool clothing that's flexible and long-lasting. NINJA MONK champions' spending your time creating and enjoying life, not in your closet, and that you don't need to buy more stuff to feel good about yourself, you know who you are! People only wear 10% of what's in their closets. So, they reach for their favorite items that they always feel-good wearing—understanding more & more that longevity is sustainability and will invest in fewer clothes that they love and that last. We offer everyday flexible comfy clothing eco-essentials for all areas of your life: work, gym, meditation, travel, events, lounge, and even sleep. Our core philosophy is: LOOK GOOD-FEEL GOOD-DO GOOD. So you look good, which is a domino effect for doing good when you feel good. And everybody wants to feel good. It's a human right.

5. What was the most challenging part of starting your brand?

One of the most significant emotional and financial strains as a start-up, not only for us but other entrepreneurs we have spoken to, is aligning with the right reputable people in Marketing/PR/Press that execute what they say they will do. They know how to "sell the story" as that is their profession. This is a massive challenge for all brands, regardless of industry, as we are not just product companies anymore and must be 'marketing machines.' There's a lot of noise out there, and people are getting exhausted from it. There's a need to cut through the entire BS. Talk is cheap.

6. What do you hope for in the future of Ninja Monk?

We see NINJA MONK as a global brand, not only for creating exciting new products with incredible talent and giving people a chance to shine but also for advocating positive change and well-being. The world needs hope and uplifting, and NINJA MONK is a part of this new movement by contributing to non-profit causes, creating work opportunities, mentoring, and supporting the visionaries and the change-makers, which drives us toward innovation. We believe Community and Collaboration over Consumption are crucial more than ever.

7. What makes you passionate about what it is that you do?

We envision, create, innovate, and build exciting new ideas in every area, not just clothing. Everything is connected. I'm passionate about feeling exhilarated.

8. What is one thing you would tell someone that is up and coming and has the idea of starting something of their own?

Just be true to yourself and listen to your intuition, as that's always your true guide. Try not to get caught up with external conditions and compare yourself with what others do. We all have our unique paths. Learn every aspect of the business you want to be in and understand that it's 5% create/design and 95% execution/follow-through. Be teachable and inspired.



9. Anything you would like to share with the readers that you're excited about coming 2022?

NINJA MONK has exciting plans in the Tech, Entertainment, Media, and Distribution sectors, which we can't disclose yet, including brand collabs with artists, gamers, creatives, and change-makers to produce unique limited-edition products. And to continue putting out great products, working with awesome people, having fun, and creating win-wins for all.

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