

# Full Tilt Boogie

## Mitchell Slaggert charges into cinema

Photography by Randall Mesdon

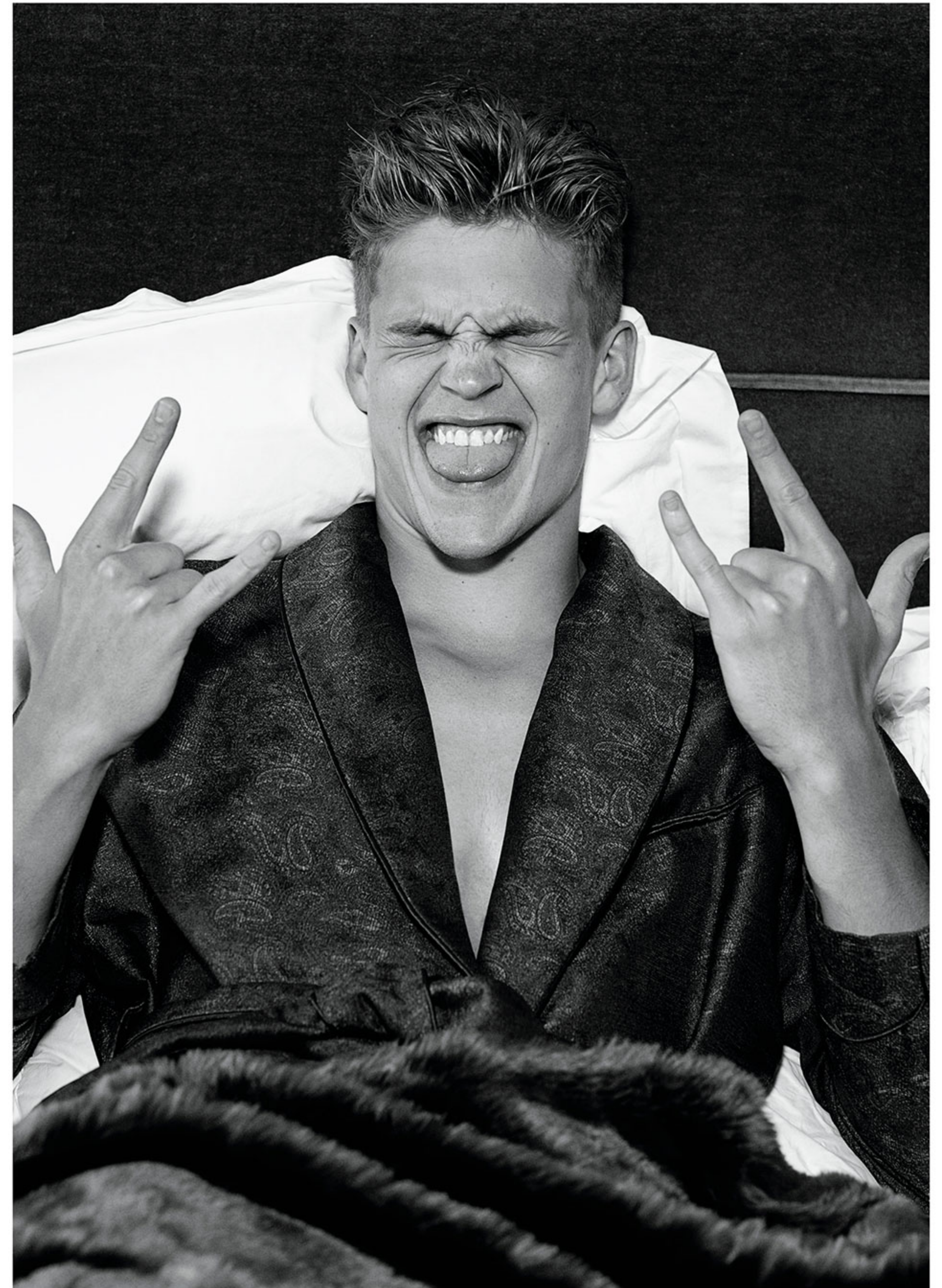
Written by Chris Lee

Styling by Christian Stroble

She wore a black bra with matching cotton panties; he was in vermillion boxer briefs. When they met, he was upside down with jet lag and didn't quite catch her name. Their bodies fell into a series of intertwined poses requiring a kind of forced intimacy belying their total unfamiliarity with one another. Even when he finally discovered who she was, the dawning awareness of her superstardom meant almost nothing to Mitchell Slaggert — the new poster boy for Calvin Klein underwear who, until shortly before his first ad campaign photoshoot for the brand in London last year, had never given so much as a thought to modeling professionally.

By his own admission, he was more at home shooting a bolt-action rifle or a spearfishing gun than being shot by a camera. Yet here he was with this raven-haired, kohl-eyed gamine. "I was like, 'Wait, what's your name again?'" She said, "Kendall Jenner," the Georgia native recalls. "I knew the name but I didn't know the face — it's usually the opposite. I said, 'Oh, so you're famous as shit?'" She said, "I guess you could say that."

It's also fair to say, he never expected to wind up in the crosshairs of Hollywood as an up-and-coming actor — but more on that in a minute. Growing up in small-town Fayetteville (population: 15,945), Slaggert idolized Michael Jordan and the men and women of the armed forces. He aspired to join the Marine Corps, to serve out his patriotic duty to defend his country, not to walk the runway beneath fashion's brightest lights. "I was going to be the best soldier I could be," he says. "I was going to jump out of planes. I was going to go overseas and cut the







Coat Ann Demeulemeester, Tank Top Berluti, Pants X-3 Adidas





Fate first intervened, however, by way of a childhood car accident that robbed Slaggert of one of his kidneys, ultimately snuffing out any chance of his military enlistment. Fate intervened a second time, albeit in a less surgically invasive way, in early 2016. The University of North Carolina mechanical engineering major was walking down a street in Wilmington when he was spotted by an influential New York casting agent named Daniel Peddle — the fashion world savant who “discovered Jennifer Lawrence,” as he introduced himself after chasing the student to his car. Did Mitchell want work in fashion?

Slaggert’s reply was a polite but resolute ‘thanks, but no thanks.’ “It was a career I didn’t really want to pursue. I brushed it off. It sounded too good to be true.” The career goal by then, of course, was Homeland Security — specifically, a posting within the tactical response arm of the U.S. Border Patrol known as BORTAC — the agency’s version of the Navy SEALs. And Slaggert informed Peddle he was headed for Texas after graduation.

But there was just something about the agent’s air of complete certainty that gave him pause. “He goes, ‘Here’s my card. I’ll be expecting to hear from you.’ Expecting to hear from me? Who is this guy?” Slaggert says. Curiosity (as well as a quick Google search) compelled him to call back. Two weeks later, Slaggert found



himself signed to DNA Model Management in New York. Inside of a month, he was smoldering before the lens for and *Italian Vogue* and *GQ* — a magazine he’d never even heard of before booking the editorial. “I go to the modeling department and I was like, ‘Hey is this *GQ* magazine good?’” he remembers. “Everybody looked at me like, ‘You’re a buffoon.’”

This is the archetypal story of one of those lucky souls who finds himself plucked from obscurity, shaken from the quotidian day-to-day of another existence, placed atop the pecking order within a rarefied realm and contemplated anew by an admiring public. Although we should be clear to draw limits to the “country podunk done good” narrative surrounding Slaggert — both of his parents hold

masters degrees (his father in engineering, his mother in psychology), while his father is a high-ranking executive.

Now, not only is the blond-haired, blue-eyed 22-year-old the most forward face of Versace — which, prior to meeting Donatella Versace, Slaggert simply assumed was just a word repeated ad infinitum in that song by the rap group Migos — he’s landed representation by the powerhouse Hollywood talent agency William Morris Endeavor. And he’s begun turning up in films with a seemingly equal measure of aw-shucks effortlessness.

June marked the Los Angeles Film Festival premiere of his movie debut *Moss*, a backwoods coming-of-age odyssey that *Peddle* — who moonlights as a visual artist and feature filmmaker when not breaking in new modeling talent — wrote with a lead role specifically earmarked for Slaggert. Never mind the guy had never acted before. He plays a motherless teen surviving by his wits among the bayous and beaches of coastal North Carolina where he meets a mysterious yet alluring backpacker (Christine Marzano), then embarks on a psychedelic journey of self-discovery (psilocybin mushrooms are involved). “Mitchell was sort of the inspiration for the film,” Peddle explained at the festival. “We both grew up in a rural environment. And we tried to integrate that childhood experience into the film. Partly because this is the first film he’s ever done, we wanted it to be a project where he’s familiar with the terrain.”

Which was flattering. But more importantly, it allowed the nascent actor to stay within his comfort zone. “It was kind of tailored towards me,” Slaggert confirms. “I don’t mind being waist-deep in a freakin’ swamp. It felt like home.”

Less like home but more accessible to multiplex audiences is Slaggert’s co-starring turn in the July supernatural thriller *Wish Upon* — a project he describes as a mash-up of *Mean Girls* and *Final Destination* — in which he portrays the love interest to a high school girl in possession of an enchanted music box (that murders people or drives them insane in exchange for granting her wishes).







118 Coat **Berluti**, Shirt **Saint Louis NYC**, Pants **Ami**



Sweater **Ralph Lauren**, Shirt **Saint Louis NYC**





Slaggert never loses his sense of wonderment at his accidental journey to the heart of the dream factory. Exhibit A: Slaggert's specific instructions to family members to employ physical violence should any indication of an inflated ego arise. "I see some of these male models walking around like they're Jesus of Nazareth," he says. "I'm like, 'Dude, you're nothing special. You're just blessed.' I'm not going to be riding my high horse around town. I'm just going to be me. I'm never going to change. I tell my family, 'If you ever see me change, get a running start and knock me out. Cause I don't want to be that guy.'"

Instead, living in Manhattan's Financial District with his girlfriend, Slaggert describes a life of quiet contemplation: reading scripts, going to auditions, hitting the gym. His eventual goal is to become an action movie star, performing his own stunts — and finally make good on at least one part of his original childhood career plan. "If you want me to jump out of a plane, I'll jump out of a plane," Slaggert exclaims, adding with a laugh: "I'm full tilt boogie. I'm ready to rock and roll."

Grooming by Mira Chai Hyde at The Wall Group  
using Leonor Greyl Haircare And Caudalie Skin Care

Set Design by Bryan Porter at Owl & The Elephant