

# cool by the pool

He's SA's first citizen of blogging, lives in a penthouse (for free), drives a Mini (for free). **Seth Rotherham** says he planned it this way. But **Stuart Taylor** wants to know: is he just lazy right down to the bones?

Photographs by Morne van Zyl

**ST** I love what you do. You do a blog, and then you *sommer* start a radio station. *Ja*, then next thing you know you're taking over the world. It's amazing.

**SR** I'm just doing whatever comes naturally, hey. ... There's a need, I mean, radio, local radio needs to be fixed ... and the fact that my thing came on the internet, that was just a means to an end. ... The most important thing was just making radio, which I like.

**ST** Which people want to listen to. So basically you were just fixing it for yourself and it happened to become this big thing?

**SR** Correct. And, I mean, it costs like 30 or 40 million rand to, you know, get a FM station ... it's a bit of a waste

of money getting involved in that old kind of vibe...

**ST** But this has always been your thing. You've always been at the cutting edge of pop culture – you are what is happening next, pretty much.

**SR** Definitely, hey. For me, I just always jumped on whatever technology's there. And, I mean, the radio thing, I did want to start a radio station but it was too expensive so I left it. But then the day MWeb announced uncut broadband, my brain immediately went: 'Okay, there we go...'

**ST** How many listeners now?

**SR** Um, we're on about 10 000 listeners... Look, it's difficult to get an exact figure because you get →

people tuning in via so many mediums. There's a good kind of 7 000 that tune into the actual website, but then we made a streaming app for BlackBerry and iPhone, and that's been downloaded 13 000 times... You don't want to tell people that there are 20 000 listeners, but you be conservative and I say 10 000. I mean, Mini gave me this new car, it's called the Countryman. It's got built-in internet radio! ... And the new Fords are coming out with it, the BMWs have got it. It's not mass yet but I think the big thing with 2oceansvibe is just to be the first mover.

**ST I wanna know about this blog thing. I mean, the whole thing with the blog was, 'Work is a sideline, live the holiday'. Based on that slogan, I've got to begin by saying, were you always a lazy bugger?**

**SR** [chuckles] No, but I'm very much into automation, right? I'm into having one person who I use to do the roofing, one person I use for – all of my friends, our entire network, we all use the same people to do our insurance, any service. Then you're safe and I think making little

out of Caprice and you take a photo, you can put that photo into the window of any travel agent.

**ST And people will want to go there.**

**SR** It's an aspirational thing. ...I was just doing it because none of my friends really had email and stuff. It was before most people had email, and I had email, and I had a digital camera and none of my friends did. And I would take photos and put the photos up. And then friends would read it and friends of friends would start to read it. Then I'd start to write funny things next to the photos, then I'd start taking photos of different people and writing funny things about them. And then this, a following started. But you see, like I said, the lucky thing with timing was when blogs came about. Blogs then arrived overseas, and I just kept on going and I knew South Africa would ... whatever happens in the UK and US, it will happen here later on. So I just kinda bide my time and then eventually the local media starts to talk about blogs, and who do they go to? The go-to guy is

If someone thinks you're c\*\*p, they comment right there on your blog.  
**That's eina!** Are you on hectic Prozac or do you drink a lot?

moves like that makes life easier, it's less stressful, and that alone helps you live the holiday, know what I mean?

**ST But you've managed to turn it into a job. This is what's amazing to me. You were basically blogging before there was anything like blogging.**

**SR** Ja, I mean that was just a hobby, hey, Stuart. It was just to ... in those days I was a little bit of a lunatic. I was in my mid-20s and I was, like, dancing on the counter at Caprice, doing pyramids of, like, vodka Red Bulls and partying and stuff. But because I lived in Camps Bay and Caprice has got the palm trees in front of it, it's just definitely very good luck and very good timing because it just so happened that I lived here, and it just so happened that palm trees and beautiful girls and fast cars and cocktails does appeal to a lot of people, right? You look at the photographs – if you look

me because I won the first blog award. The only reason I won the first blog awards is I had this readership... So like I said, the first-mover advantage is what happened there. ... At school I was, uh, I was probably a lot like you at school – I was kinda getting up to mischief...

**ST Spent most of the time standing outside the class.**

**SR** Right, you must've been a nightmare [ST laughs]. But, I mean, I was always ... if there was one thing I did, actually, which is not very well documented, it was this: when I was in matric one of the new boys had this, like, a bug, which you can hide and people can tune in their radio, they can listen. ... He was, like, a geek and obviously the bug was very appealing to someone like me. So I confiscated it from him [ST laughs] and I put it in my study and I put a wire from the bug up into the ceiling of the boarding house. And I put down, like,



**did you know?**  
I was an only child. I grew up surrounded by 500 antique, porcelain dolls and a pack of Yorkshire terriers. I also had a stutter as a child.

**ST So here's the core difference between the two of us: if I'm doing a gig and someone thinks I'm c\*\*p, they drive home, they tell their wife. But if someone thinks you're c\*\*p, they actually comment right there on your blog. That's eina! I mean, are you on hectic Prozac or do you drink a lot?**

**SR** You know, Stuart, I'm sure with your rise to fame you understand that there's no ways that you can get to a certain level and *not* have that. I mean, 2oceansvibe is now enjoying close on 70 000 unique readers per month.

**ST You gonna upset some people out of 70 000.**

**SR** And all I do, *bru*, is I just ... any person I meet I always try my best, I always try and help. If someone doesn't like me I do like a double negative – like, sometimes people email me and they go, like, 'You're a pr\*\*k' and I go, like, 'Cool, here's a voucher for you for this weekend, good luck.' ... Ja, they nail you and then you give them a gift. It's just a good way to play with their minds.

**ST [laughs] So your site is fairly commercial, right? When you first started endorsing those products, did you have to tone down on the edginess of it?**

**SR** Uh, I'll be honest, you know, Woolworths wouldn't dig photos of girls kissing...

**ST Fair enough.**

**SR** ...but the most important thing for me to say is that 2oceansvibe turns down brands lots. We turn away a lot of brands that we don't believe in, we don't think are suitable or we don't want to be associated with. So the big thing is basically integrity. Every single brand that you see there I do use. People have tried to catch me out. Bear in mind, 2oceansvibe has been going now for, uh, 10 years, so I will always go to a restaurant, the first wine I'll order – De Grendel wine. If we're having bubbly, Boschendal; if we're having a beer, Corona or Jack Black. I stick to my brands religiously and the reason is I truly like them. I mean, people have come to me with good brands of watches, they've come to me, but they're not brands that I like and I turn them down. I mean, if Crocs shoes had to offer me R50 million I'd have to turn them down.

**ST [laughs] You just cannot look cool in a pair of Crocs, dude.**

**SR** Do you have a pair?

**ST No, my son does, but he's only two so that's okay.**

**SR** I think with kids and chefs and medical people, absolutely fine. →

100 hangers touching each other, so it could broadcast to the whole school and other boarding houses. We just actually had this mini radio station, and it's quite funny how it's gone full circle.

**ST And now you've got a much bigger hanger, as it were. Talking specifically about the blog, you know who my favourite character is? Mavis. I love Mavis.**

**SR** I just saw her right now, she's just cleaning...

**ST I wanna ask, is she real, does she really exist?**

**SR** Ja! Do you know that people say to me, because – Stuart, you're not the only one – she's got a massive following, hey. But the best thing is, I mean, you must've read the notes that she's left, right? People say to me, 'Are those notes real?' I said to them, 'Do you not think, if they weren't real, surely I'd be making more of them?' They're so funny, I mean, people love them so much, surely I'd make more if they weren't real. Of course they're real! She's actually off her head. ... But she is fabulous and she's been my domestic executive for about close on 10 years now.

**ST** The rest of us, no!

**SR** It's a big no-no. But you get my point?

**ST** It fits into your vibe and then it's cool.

**SR** But it's all real. ... Like I said, 2oceansvibe for me is a stress-less place because I'm sticking to brands that I trust and services that I trust and people that won't let me down. As long as you stay in that safe zone, everything is absolutely fine, and if something goes wrong – for example, I'm very closely linked to Butler's Pizza... Now this guy had ordered something else and the order was wrong and he emailed me and he was *gatvol*. I said to him, 'Hold on a second', and I emailed him back and I copied in the email the owner of Butler's Pizza, and the owner wrote back to him and said, 'You won't be paying for pizza any more until you tell me you're happy again.' ... And that is what I do. Not that I'm like a service website – I mean, I'm no Isabel Jones.

**ST** Do you literally just live in hotels, drive cars that get given to you, eat in restaurants for free and then go on sponsored holidays? Is that your life?

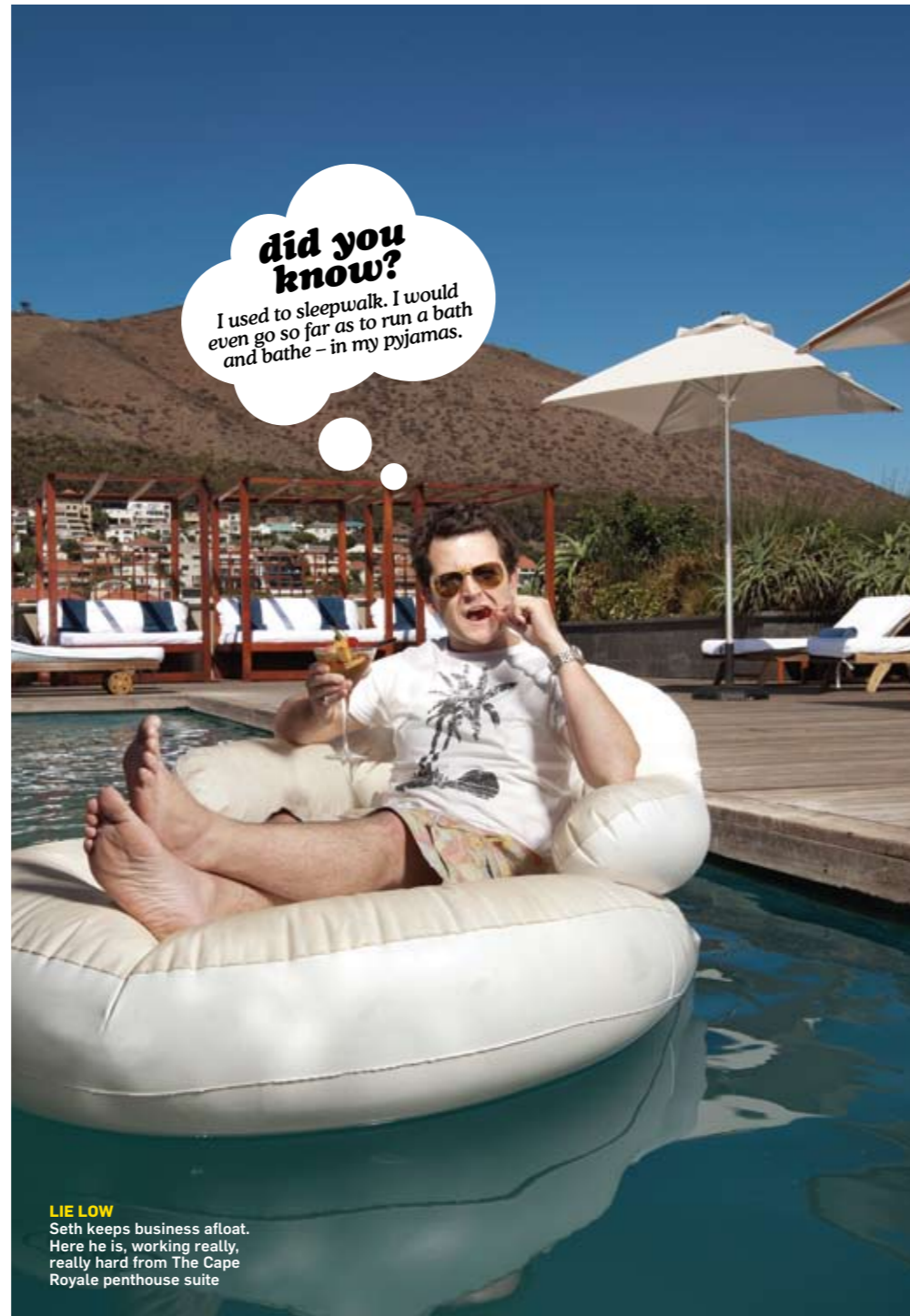
**SR** Stuart, no, I do... Like I said to you, it's something that started off as a hobby... I don't have meetings with people that I don't wanna meet with, so I am working but in my mind I'm literally doing exactly what I feel like doing.

**ST** But someone has given you a penthouse suite at the hotel and said, 'There you go, live there.'

**SR** Ja, but they get ... in return I do a lot of meetings there, I have a lot of people round. A lot of the time I use that suite to thank people, people stay there, competitions, magazines do interviews on me – I'll do the interview there, I'll get photos done there. There's a lot of ways to reward the sponsors. But in terms of me, what I'm doing all day, yes, I am in the hotel, I am in the car etc etc, but I am working. ... And my phone also doesn't ring, Stuart. ... Nobody phones me because if you phone me the voicemail says, 'Voicemail turned off. Can you text me please? Can you mail me?' Because these days people phone out of habit, people phone when they could text. And now everyone in my network has learnt this...

**ST** So it's, basically, you've just tried to sort out your life so everything is smooth-going?

**SR** Exactly, so the slogan actually remains true, right? Because you're dealing with stress-free people, with stress-free services... And then no one's phoning each other because how do you know that this moment that



**LIE LOW**  
Seth keeps business afloat. Here he is, working really, really hard from The Cape Royale penthouse suite

suits you, how do you know that I'm not shopping or having lunch with my mother or in a meeting or ... how do you know that? And it's put me under duress for something that requires just a yes or no answer. It's just rude. People are learning now just to email, and when a person can get back to you they will...

**ST** I wanna ask you, since you live in a hotel. Doesn't the whole mint on the pillow thing get a little old?

**SR** It can do, Stuart. But, you know, the Cape Royale ... it's like very much a home for me now. You're dealing with a concierge downstairs who takes care of all my deliveries and packages and stuff like that. The penthouse itself is, like, there's a lot of my own stuff there now. There's like a *lekker* cow-print rug, there's photos on the wall. It's not like you doing a tour, where you're there and it's all kinda k\*k and not yours. Like I've got my PlayStation, I've got all my magazines on the table, I've got all my creature comforts, and very often I'll, like, change the arrangement of furniture as well.

## You live in a hotel. Doesn't the whole *mint on the pillow* thing get a little old?

**ST** When other people are on holiday they go to a hotel. When you're on holiday, do you go to your mom's house?

**SR** I go home. I go to my mom [laughs]. My mother lives in France and I go there. It's very, very cool.

**ST** So if you had a traditional job, what would it be?

**SR** Oh, a traditional? Surfing is not traditional, hey? ... Uh, mmm ... Traditional job? Can you give me an example?

**ST** A plumber.

**SR** Nice. Uh, I wouldn't be a plumber. A musician? Fine.

**ST** Do you actively promote yourself as a celebrity?

**SR** No, I do not.

**ST** So this means you wouldn't sell your pictures to the *You* magazine.

**SR** It depends how much they're paying. There's a difference between being a celebrity and being a fool.

**ST** [laughs] I don't think many people can tell that difference, but as long as you know the difference that's cool. If a fire caused you to evacuate the hotel suite you live in, what would you grab?

**SR** Probably my vinyl player, my vinyl collection.

**ST** So what advice do you have for Jo'burgers that find it difficult to chill out?

**SR** I think the most important thing to tell Jo'burgers, Stuart, is the fact that people in Cape Town don't do meetings on Fridays, and they just need to get that into their heads. And we are not impressed at them trying to schedule Friday meetings, and they just need to actually settle down a bit because they are forcing us to lie because they're making it awkward for us. ... It's actually something that I am actively driving at the moment, is I want to make a petition for people to sign, and I want to take it to the government to let people not work on a Friday, because it's pointless. Nobody wants to work, no one's really working. Everyone's just pretending.

**ST** Your attitude to life is not about entitlement. You've got this attitude, anything is possible. Who instilled this value in you?

**SR** You know, Stuart, I'm a bit of a hybrid between my

... I've got two dads and one mother. My real dad, he's a musician, so he's the entertainer, which I have in my blood. And then my mother and my stepfather, they're big into business, so I was raised in a business home and it was all about Richard Branson and Rupert Murdoch – those were the idols in my house. I was more in awe of Branson than my peers who were more in awe of sportsmen.

**ST** My final question is the biggie: are you actually just a trust-fund kid, giving people false hope that they can also live the holiday?

**SR** No, absolutely not. I will sit down with anyone, any time they have ... I will talk to them about things they can do to change their life. It's not what my work's about, it's just how I like to roll, about an easier life. I make all my money, I'm not a trust-fund kid. I did go to good schools and that, but I've made all my money on my own and it's just doing it my way, delivering a package that people aspire to.

**ST** Awesome. ■