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AUGUST 2014

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Michael Stars

# Getting Into the Menswear Business

Nearly 30 years ago, Michael Stars started making high-quality cotton T-shirts for women who wanted a contemporary product that was fashionable yet comfortable.

Now, the Los Angeles contemporary company is branching out into menswear by launching a limited 34-piece collection for Fall in September and then a more extensive collection for Spring 2015.

The new menswear collection will include high-end cotton T-shirts and woven shirts made in Los Angeles as well as sweaters and twill pieces.

"The idea for a menswear collection came from the fact that we have done womenswear for 27 to 28 years, and men's was the next step to expand the collection and our retail growth plan," said Jared Ellis, the company's senior director of retail and e-commerce.

Like the womenswear collection, the menswear will have a minimalist design. But there will be a modern, technical edge to the clothes.

For Fall, the T-shirts will be made of 100 percent cotton, including some slub fabric, in an array of colors such as bright orange, cornflower blue and army green. For Spring/Summer 2015,



the T-shirt color story will expand to 28 shades. "That way, the core knit groups can be purchased in an array of colors," Ellis said. "As a company, we are known for our color blends."

Men's tops will also be made of a hacci knit fabric—a polyester/cotton/ rayon blend—as well as an overdyed waffle fabric. The waffle fabric is similar to a thermal top made of cotton and polyester. The polyester on one side dyes slightly darker than the cotton side, which adds a different element when the sleeves are rolled up.

"We consider our menswear customer to be every man of age, but we are going for a core audience of someone who is 25 to 40 years old," Ellis said.

Wholesale prices for T-shirts will range from \$26 to around \$35, and the cashmere sweaters

will wholesale for \$75 to \$79.

Most of the Fall collection will be sold at Michael Stars' own 12 stores and online at [www.michaelstars.com](http://www.michaelstars.com). The Spring collection will be available to specialty stores.

The Fall collection as well as the more extensive Spring collection will be shown at Project in Las Vegas Aug. 18–20.

—Deborah Belgum

I Am Nameless

## From LeBron to the Hustlers



In a major case of beginner's luck, basketball star LeBron James posted an Instagram picture of himself wearing a crew neck T-shirt by novice Los Angeles brand I Am Nameless in January.

It's a story that would make any celebrity stylist explode with envy. Tradition, a prominent streetwear boutique at Los Angeles' Beverly Center, soon exhibited the shirt in its store window. But the day after the Instagram posting, the basketball star wore something different and life went back to normal for I Am Nameless founder Justin Smith. He continued to design T-shirts for his brand and kept true to his brand's inspiration. "I've been working in streetwear for five years," Smith said. "I've been living the streetwear culture. But I am nameless, like the thousands of other hardworking, hard-hust-



ling people out there."

I Am Nameless started business in November 2013, and Smith has been showing the brand, which is his first, to influential streetwear boutiques. One of the T-shirts Smith is showing is a black T-shirt bearing the bar logo that states "I Am Nameless." Another bears the word "Trophies," and it is

inspired by working toward goals and accomplishments whether it's a car, a job or just having some good times.

The graphics are printed on cut-and-sew T-shirts with a heavier, 20-single, cotton fabric, Smith said. I Am Nameless' Summer '14 collection also offers water resistant, seersucker swim trunks and a half-zip top with a French terry fabric on the inside of the garment.

The T-shirts wholesale for \$16. For more information, contact [justin@iamnamelessbrand.com](mailto:justin@iamnamelessbrand.com).—Andrew Asch



# Poprageous Leggings and Beyond



When Cher Park launched her Poprageous collection in 2013, she had to persuade Los Angeles factories to take her small orders.

"They're set up for mass production. It was difficult to accommodate my orders," she said. "I'd ask for one in each size."

And even when her orders grew, Park found it challenging to get her leggings printed correctly and on time. "I'd get 30 pieces that were all wrong. They'd have to go back, and I'd get pushed to the bottom of the queue again," she said.

So Park purchased her own sublimation printer and press, which is housed in her new two-room studio in downtown Los Angeles.

Along with a small four-person team, Park designs and produces leggings printed with everything from donuts to Claude Monet's Water Lilies. There are photos of Beverly Hills and Venice Beach, public-domain artwork by artists such as Monet and Hieronymus Bosch, and collaborations with contemporary artists such as Jasmine Becket-Griffith. A recent design features a Nordic sea-monster map.

In January, Poprageous expanded the collection to include swimwear and dresses in body-conscious and skater silhouettes. In May, *Elle Canada* shot Emma Roberts wearing

Poprageous' giraffe-print maillot for the cover.

With the new in-house equipment, Park and her team ensure the exact placement of each design so a large-scale image can perfectly align across the body or along the leg.

"We are able to execute so much faster now," she said.

The setup allows her unfettered creativity—and the ability to continue to print small production runs. "I come from Forever 21, where the philosophy was about having a lot of SKUs—it's more breadth than depth," she said.

Poprageous designs are sold on the company's e-commerce site ([www.poprageous.com](http://www.poprageous.com)) with retail prices starting at \$75 for leggings and up to \$120 for swimwear. "I like being able to print something I dreamed about the night before and seeing how it does on the site," Park said.

She recently landed an order from Los Angeles-based retailer Kitson for Poprageous' Grumpy Cat legging, which features the Internet celebrity cat with the permanent frown. The leggings will be available in stores to coincide with the release of "Grumpy Cat: A Grumpy Book" at Kitson stores.

Next up for the company are printed fleece pieces, and, for fall, Park is working on a "cool, sexy jogger."

For more information, call (310) 210-0978 or visit [www.poprageous.com](http://www.poprageous.com).

—Alison A. Nieder



# Clashist Nostalgia Now

A typical career trajectory in modern fashion starts with an entrepreneur introducing an apparel line and, a few years later, launching an e-commerce store. But that is not the case with Heather Lipner, founder and creative director of T-shirt line Clashist. She turned the typical trajectory upside down.

She began her career as a creative director with various Internet design agencies and worked at pioneering social-media site MySpace. She later founded e-commerce store Uncovet, which she still runs, and, in January 2014, formally made the first shipment of Clashist, a T-shirt line.

Lipner said that she started the line for the sake of commerce. Selling other people's clothes online didn't pack a lot of margin, she said. But she wanted her shirts to make a comment, too. One top was dubbed "Lena Dunham Birthday Suit." It features illustrations of the star of the HBO series "Girls," who frequently

appears topless in the show, and her less-than-perfect body raised eyebrows. "There is a discussion about nudity ... and it is funny," Lipner said.

Other T-shirt designs give a nod to the fixations of teenage girls such as making a collage of pictures of a favorite celebrity. Hence, there are collage T-shirts of actors such as James Franco and Channing Tatum. Other designs feature graphics of a tornado, marigolds and a quilt. The motto of the collection is "Nostalgia Now." It looks back fondly on celebrity worship by teenagers and other mementos such as a quilt from a grandmother's house, but it hopes to look at nostalgia in a novel way. The shirts are sublimation printed on American Apparel blanks.

Clashist also offers cut-and-sew for the line's swimsuits, leggings and socks. For Fall '14, it will offer sweatshirts and "sweat skirts." T-shirts retail for \$27.50. For more information, email [heather@clashist.com](mailto:heather@clashist.com).—A.A.



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## White Crow

# The Edgier Side of Boho

White Crow, the contemporary collection by Irvine, Calif.-based Z Supply Inc., has always had a few graphic tees in the collection. But for Spring '15 and beyond, the company is giving the category a featured spot in the line.

"It fits in so perfectly with the White Crow collection," said Beatrice Rosu, Z Supply's marketing director. "We have a lot of very detailed, artisan denim in the line, and we do a lot of wovens and mixed prints. It works so perfectly to do T-shirts on more fashion bodies and be able to throw on graphics."

Plus, some of White Crow's larger accounts had been saying that T-shirts are a big part of their business and the company spotted an opportunity to expand the collection.

To fit with White Crow's edgy boho aesthetic, the screen-printed tees feature relaxed, slightly cropped, slightly oversized bodies in cotton/Modal fabrications for a drapey silhouette. "The Modal has this luscious



feel to it," Rosu said.

There are also burnout fabrications with a screenprint on top.

"It gives it a really nice texture to the cotton and has a cool, worn-in vintage T-shirt vibe to it," she added.

Available in warm neutral shades with a few pops of color such as pink and green, the T-shirts are wholesale priced from \$18 to \$20.

For customers that want to mix in a few basics, as well, the company has the Z Supply basics collection, which features similar fabrics and an ultra-soft hand but without the graphics.

"The fabric is surreal," Rosu said. "They're so soft to the touch, and we do some really cool dye treatments on them."

For more information, contact (949) 236-6988 or [info@zsupplyinc.com](mailto:info@zsupplyinc.com).—A.A.N.

## Kersh and Press

# Graphics-Driven Since the Start

Ever since sister brands Kersh and Press launched, the two collections have included graphic tees.

Kersh, launched in 2007, by Vancouver-based private-label maker International Fashions, is designed for eclectic and adventurous customers.

"[She's] a little more experimental with color and mixing," said Sandy Dombroski, vice president of International Fashions.

The collection features a range of fabrications, including 100 percent cotton, cotton slub and poly/cotton depending on the embellishment. Kersh tees feature screen prints, digital prints and sublimation prints, as well as burnout treatments, embellishment, and interesting washes and finishes.

Press, which launched in 2007, is for the customer with

a clean, more-minimal aesthetic. Fabrics include "whisper weight" 100 percent Modal in sheer, translucent constructions.

"Handfeel is paramount," Dombroski said.

Produced in China, India and, beginning in spring, in Peru, the tees are retail priced at \$15 to \$45 for Kersh and \$45 to \$65 for Press.

While both brands are sold at large retailers such as Nordstrom and Piperlime, the company also sells the collections in more than 5,000 boutiques in North America.

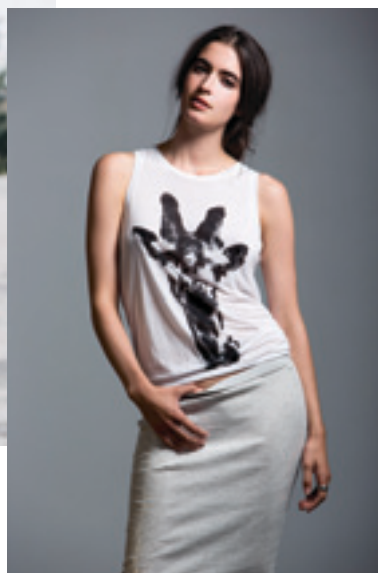
"We love our grass-roots business, the specialty neighborhood boutiques," Dombroski said. "We do sell all those bigger guys, as well, but we still do that 1-2-2-1 business."

For more information, contact the Jacob Gray Agency at (213) 973-7535.

—A.A.N.



Kersh



Press

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# For Yoga Lovers and Fashion Lovers Alike

Established in 2010 originally just as a line of basic T-shirts, LVR has organically gained a strong following of loyal customers who embrace healthy, active lifestyles. Today, the brand offers full seasonal collections of flattering and functional yoga pants, shorts, tops, maxi and mini dresses, hoodies, wraps, and scarves.

"Whereas many people who start yoga brands go into the apparel business for the first time, we're the fashion background who has found and embraced the yoga lifestyle," said Eric Clarke, who co-founded LVR in 2010.

According to co-founder Anastasia Mazula, LVR's fold-over-top sweatpants are what put their brand on the map. "No one understood them at first, but now people are seeking them out," she said.

LVR designs are known for functionality and comfort while still being fashionable enough to wear while running errands,



which makes them a true crossover brand, sitting on fashion boutique and active-lifestyle retailers' floors alike.

Wholesale priced from \$14 to \$37, LVR is carried by Southern California retailers including The Springs in the Arts District of downtown LA; Exhale in Venice; Tryss in Los Angeles' Westside Pavilion mall as well as in Westlake and El Segundo; and Blackdog Yoga in Sherman Oaks. It is also sold at [www.evolvefitwear.com](http://www.evolvefitwear.com), as well as at stores across the state and nationwide and in Europe, Japan, Canada and the Middle East.

LVR is 100 percent made in downtown Los Angeles. All fabrics are knit, cut, sewn, dyed and shipped from local factories and low-impact dye houses that adhere to high standards for water and waste disposal.

"We don't mind paying slightly more to employ an LA-based workforce," Clarke said. "Plus we are producing higher-quality products than what others are making overseas."

In addition to LVR's efforts to reduce the company's carbon footprint and keep employ-

*Continued on page 10*



## Lanston

# Luxury Basics and LA-Made

Lanston is a Los Angeles-based luxury basics collection made from ultra-soft fabrications.

"Everyone really loves the feel of our fabrics, that super-soft buttery hand," said founder Krisabelle Ann Tan.

The collection includes tees, dresses and jackets in neutrals such as white, black, gray and beige, as well as pops of color such as plum, tangerine and dark turquoise. The tees range from loose to tight fit, as well as scoop necks to plunging deep V-necks.

"I think we are best known for our boyfriend sweatshirt," Tan said. "It's been a No. 1 seller since day one, and our French terry dresses are always a favorite. There's an elevated jogger and matching hoodie, as well as a striped maxi dress, shorts romper and sleeveless cutout racer-back mini dress."

All of the garments are made in Los Angeles. Core fabrications include MicroModal jersey, French terry, tri-blends and cotton.

"I source our core fabric from local vendors who knit in Los Angeles, but our novelty fabrics I get from European mills," Tan said.

Wholesale price points range from \$30 for basic tanks to \$110 for an Italian tweed moto jacket.



Lanston



Krisa



Three Eighty Two

Lanston is sold at larger department stores, such as Nordstrom and Saks Fifth Avenue, and at online retailers such as Revolve Clothing, Piperlime and Shopbop.

Tan is a second-generation Los Angeles manufacturer. Her father headed production for several high-end apparel companies, and her mother owns a private-label firm. By junior high, Tan knew how to inspect garments for fiber content and fine construction.

"I don't have a formal education in fashion. I grew up in the business and learned through osmosis," Tan said. "One of my first memories was playing in a cardboard box with my brother in my dad's contractor shop. I was so fascinated with the whole process and all the machinery."

Tan studied communications at University of California, Los Angeles, but after graduation she gravitated toward fashion.

"It was right after college that my dad recruited me to work for him temporarily at Chip & Pepper, and that's where it all started. It was like boot camp, and my two-week stint turned into a year," Tan said.

She learned all the angles, including marketing, PR, sales and merchandising for denim

*Continued on page 10*



Alstyle

# Customization Program Lets Customers Build Their Brand

Alstyle Apparel & Activewear, the Anaheim, Calif.-based blanks provider, is putting the focus on its custom apparel program with plans to launch a Web application to help Alstyle clientele customize their orders by fabrics, color and style.

"We see that our flexible manufacturing is a benefit to this market and our customers," said Chris Caldwell, director of marketing and merchandising, who describes the list of options as a "buffet."

Customers can choose from several men's and women's styles, including a pocket tee, ringer tee, raglan or ¾-sleeve baseball tee, v-neck, tank, long-sleeve style, and short-sleeve style.

The T-shirts come in a range of fabrics, including a 60/40 poly/cotton (4.3 ounces), 100 percent combed ring spun cotton (4.3 ounces), a 100 percent carded ring spun cotton (5.5 ounces), a 100 percent Supersoft fabric (5.5 ounces) and a 100 percent open-end cotton (6 ounces). Next year, Alstyle will add two more fabrics to the program, another Supersoft in a 4.3-ounce weight and another carded ring spun cotton in a 5-ounce weight.

Alstyle is still finalizing the minimum orders for the program.

"The minimums are going to vary based on the complexity of the program," Caldwell said.

For custom orders, Alstyle has 150 standard colors on the books, plus the capability to create custom colors, as well.

Alstyle manufactures its products in its 800,000-square-foot fac-

tory in Agua Prieta, Mexico, near the U.S. border.

"That's the good thing about being so close," Caldwell said. "We can adapt to changing market trends and quickly get them to market. We have small dye becks where we can do the custom colors. We will test it, get the dye formula and then put it into production. We control the quality all the way through from the purchase of the yarn to the knitting of the product. Since everything is done in one facility we can really monitor the consistency of the product throughout the manufacturing flow."

Alstyle can re-label product with a customer's own tag or heat-transfer label in less than three weeks.

"It can actually be much quicker than that," Caldwell said. "We have multiple relabeling facilities in our distribution centers across the United States, so the typical turnaround is 10 to 14 days, depend-

*Continued on page 10*



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## Lanston

Continued from page 8

houses. "At that time, denim was booming, so I wanted to do something to complement that market," she said.

Tan introduced the knit-top collection Krisa in Spring 2005. She followed that with Lanston in 2009. Tan's newest collection, Three Eighty Two, which launched last year, is a bolder and brighter blouse and dress collection that features slinky tanks, printed draped shells, catan mini dresses, color blocked shift dresses and python-printed maxis.

For wholesale information, contact Brigitte Hassan Lubin at (213) 489-3732 or [brigitte@oceanshowroom.com](mailto:brigitte@oceanshowroom.com).

—Sarah Wolfson

## LVR

Continued from page 8

ment local, the company is also continually active in two charity organizations. It has formed a partnership with a wildlife rescue center in Guatemala called AR-CAS ([www.arcasguatemala.org](http://www.arcasguatemala.org)) by donating a portion of revenues quarterly to help aid in the rescue, rehabilitation and release of wild animals. In addition, LVR makes monthly donations of new, unworn clothing to the Downtown Women's Center in Los Angeles, whose mission is to create a safe space for women in need.

LVR's corporate office and showroom are located in Los Angeles. For more information, visit [www.lvrfashion.com](http://www.lvrfashion.com).

—Alyson Bender

## Alstyle

Continued from page 9

ing on the geographic area of the customer."

Alstyle recently created custom products for a supplier of NFL merchandise, as well as a youth program at Kohl's.

"We have a lot of the products and we have all this capability, but we've never let the public know what we can do," Caldwell said. "Now we've started to make the public aware that we have all these capabilities and skills. So if there's something unique that will set them apart from what they could get off the shelf, we're here to help them make it a reality."

For more information, contact (800) 225-1364.—A.A.N.

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