

CALIFORNIA ApparelNews

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HOLIDAY OPENING: There's a new athleisure store on Abbot Kinney in LA's Venice neighborhood. Los Angeles-based and LA-made Avocado opened its doors on Dec. 22. For more on the store, see page 8.

NEW RESOURCES

Contenders: Clothing Line Looking for Bigger Forum

By Andrew Asch *Retail Editor*

Skateboarding and surfing have launched hundreds of brands, but for John Anderson, the inspiration for the new **Contenders** clothing line came from one of the oldest of sports: boxing.

In 2014, Anderson teamed up with his brother, Mike Anderson, and Rick Robles to start Contenders, a collection of men's underwear inspired by the trunks worn by professional boxers. The Anderson brothers were fight fans. That year they had designed swim trunks that looked like boxing trunks. A little brainstorming led them to think the look would make a great-looking pair of underwear, something between fashion underwear and a plain pair of boxers.

But Contenders kept a low profile. It was sold at 20 physical boutiques, including the Andersons' own **Tankfarm &**

Co. boutique in Seal Beach, Calif. The brothers hoped to develop the brand's direct-to-consumer business. In the summer of 2015, a new group of financial and marketing partners joined the Contenders team to develop the underwear brand into a clothing collection and bring it to a bigger ring, said Jonathan Snyder, one of the new partners.

For one of its first acts, the new team unveiled a license. It is from one of the only media properties that could have made sense for a line of boxer briefs inspired by boxers.

It was the "Rocky" series of films, which follow the life of underdog boxer Rocky Balboa, played by Sylvester Stallone. The seven-movie series launched in 1976 and made Stallone a star and an **Academy Award** nominee for best actor and best screenwriter. (The original film won the **Oscar** for best picture of the

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American Apparel Gets Deadline Extension on Reorganization Plan

By Deborah Belgum *Senior Editor*

American Apparel has been on a fast track to reorganize after it filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection on Oct. 5.

It is hoping to be out of bankruptcy by early February but on Dec. 28 filed a request to extend from Feb. 2 to May 2 its exclusive right to file a bankruptcy plan. The request was granted by U.S. Bankruptcy Judge Brendan L. Shannon.

American Apparel also was granted an extension from Feb. 2 to May 2 to reject store leases for its 125 stores in the United States.

American Apparel has already filed a joint plan of reorganization, noting it will close 17 stores.

With the deadline extension, the company is hoping to avoid other acquisition plans being filed, particularly any proposals being undertaken by American Apparel founder Dov Charney, who was suspended as the Los Angeles clothing company's chief executive and president in June 2014 for alleged misconduct and fired one year ago. He was replaced by Paula Schneider at the beginning of 2015.

"To allow exclusivity to lapse and for parties to potentially

file multiple competing plans at this stage of the case would increase the costs to the debtors' estate, unduly burden the court and quite likely impede—rather than facilitate—meaningful progress toward the debtors' exit from bankruptcy," the company wrote in documents filed with the U.S. Bankruptcy Court in Delaware.

A hearing on the confirmation plan is scheduled to be heard in Bankruptcy Court on Jan. 20. American Apparel is hoping to emerge from bankruptcy soon after Jan. 20 and before Feb. 2. It will go from a publicly traded company whose stock was sold on the New York Stock Exchange to a privately held entity.

Under the bankruptcy reorganization plan, the company struck a deal with its secured lenders to reduce American Apparel's debt through a process called debt-for-equity conversion, which means the company's bondholders swap their debt for shares in the company.

These secured lenders will convert \$200 million in bonds into equity in the reorganized company. They have already provided \$90 million in debtor-in-possession financing as well as \$70 million in new liquidity. ●

New California Laws Change Workplace Rules in 2016

By Deborah Belgum *Senior Editor*

California politicians were busy in 2015 passing a bevy of employment laws that will take effect on Jan. 1.

Some laws apply only to specific industries, but everyone will be affected by the new minimum-wage law, which mandates that hourly pay goes from \$9 an hour to \$10 starting Jan. 1.

This is the first change in the hourly wage since mid-2014, when it rose to \$9, which was the first minimum-wage hike in six years.

And those who pay their workers a piece-rate wage will have to take into consideration paying their employees for rest breaks.

Other laws protect workers from discrimination, let them take time off to find schools or daycare for their children, and helps them seek equal pay for equal work.

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Holiday's Mixed Review: MasterCard Reports Increased Sales, Others Call It a Tough Season

By Andrew Asch *Retail Editor*

The reports for the 2016 holiday retail season are in, and the news is mixed.

According to a statement released on Dec. 29 by **MasterCard Spending Pulse**, the market-research group that tracks spending in the **MasterCard** payments network, the season ended well for apparel retailers.

Apparel saw high single-digit growth during the season, which began on Black Friday, the day after Thanksgiving, and lasted until Christmas Eve, according to MasterCard.

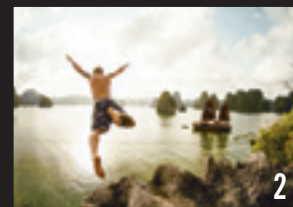
Sales for women's apparel rose by double digits. Excluding auto and gas, retail sales grew 7.9 percent between Black Friday and Christmas Eve in a year-over-year comparison to last year.

The MasterCard Spending Pulse report was one of the

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INSIDE

Where fashion gets down to businessSM



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Indian Garment Company Fined for Stealing Software

California's attorney general has won a settlement from a clothing factory in India accused of stealing intellectual property from U.S. software companies.

Pratibha Syntex Ltd., founded in 1997 in the Indian city of Indore, was accused of not paying licensing fees for software from companies including **Microsoft Corp.** and **Adobe Systems Inc.**

California Attorney General Kamala Harris sued Pratibha in Los Angeles County Superior Court in 2013 for IP theft, charging the company with not paying for software that helped run the manufacturer's enormous apparel facility in India, which has more than 3,500 sewing machines and can make up to 56 million garments a year. Much of its clothing is exported to the United States.

The complaint alleged that Pratibha obtained an unfair advantage because it was able to redirect money saved by using pirated software to hire employees and invest in research-and-development efforts.

To end the lawsuit, Pratibha agreed to pay a \$100,000 settlement and finish four audits of its software and fix any violations in 45 days. Under the settlement, Pratibha did not admit to violating the state's unfair-competition laws.

"Pratibha Syntex engaged in illegal business practices that placed California garment companies at a disadvantage while hurting American software companies' ability to develop new and innovative products," Harris said in a statement. "Businesses around the globe should be on notice that the state of California will hold them accountable for stealing intellectual property to unfairly undercut their competition."

This marks the first time a state has secured an enforceable judgment against an international company for these kinds of violations, the attorney general's office said in a statement.

"Our software is a key differentiator in the business operations of the fashion industry. Companies using software without paying for it should not be rewarded with lower costs, especially when this comes at the expense of hardworking American companies," said Shahin Kohan, president of Los Angeles-based **AIMS360**, which designs and develops state-of-the-art software solutions for apparel manufacturers, wholesalers and importers. "This landmark settlement will allow us to continue innovating and help our customers grow their businesses and create new jobs."

California's apparel industry, which is largely based in Los Angeles County, employed nearly 100,000 people in 2012 to 2013. A 2011 study by the **Orange County Business Council** found that California had lost nearly 400,000 manufacturing and technology jobs over the past decade to countries where piracy rates are as high as 80 percent.

This activity resulted in a loss of \$1.6 billion in economic activity and \$700 million in tax revenue for California.—*Deborah Belgium*

Iconix Being Investigated by SEC

Iconix Brand Group, which owns a number of labels started in California, announced on Dec. 28 it received a formal order of investigation from the Securities and Exchange Commission.

The SEC is investigating the accounting done for forming certain joint ventures in China and Latin America. Iconix, based in New York, said it planned to fully cooperate with the SEC. News of the SEC investigation caused the company's stock to plunge by 20 percent on Dec. 29.

The brand-management company has had a difficult year as revenues and profits have tumbled. Longtime Chief Executive Neil Cole, who founded the company in 2005, left on Aug. 7, months after the departure of Iconix's chief financial officer, Jeff Lupinacci, and its chief operating officer, Seth Horowitz.

After a special committee of the company's board conducted a review in November of the accounting treatment related to certain transactions, the company said it planned

to restate historical financial statements for fiscal years 2013 and 2014 and the first half of 2015.

Iconix doesn't believe the adjustments will affect fiscal 2013 but that operating income for fiscal 2014 will be reduced by \$6 million. In addition, the company's operating income for the first half of 2015 should increase by approximately \$1.5 million.

Cooperating with the SEC has been expensive. The company said that during the third quarter of 2015 it spent \$7.1 million on professional fees to pay for continuing correspondence with the SEC staff.

Iconix also revised its guidance for 2015. It now believes licensing revenue in 2015 will range from \$370 million to \$380 million instead of \$410 million to \$425 million.

Iconix's brands include **Ocean Pacific**, **Mossimo**, **Ed Hardy**, **Bongo**, **Badgley Mischka**, **Joe Boxer**, **Modern Amusement**, **Rampage**, **London Fog**, **Candie's**, **Danskin**, **Fieldcrest**, **Waverly** and **Sharper Image**.—*D.B.*

Gov. Brown Appoints Two New Cal/OSHA Deputy Chiefs

Gov. Jerry Brown has appointed Debra Lee and Eric Berg as the newest deputy chiefs for the state's Division of Occupational Safety and Health, also known as Cal/OSHA.

Together they have 39 years of experience working with Cal/OSHA to improve workplace health and safety.

"Governor Brown appointed two of the most experienced and informed Cal/OSHA employees to help guide the division into the future," said Christine Baker, director of the Dept. of Industrial Relations, which oversees Cal/OSHA.

As deputy chief of safety, Lee will oversee investigations and inspections of California's worksites. Her duties will include managing Cal/OSHA's regular enforcement offices statewide.

As deputy chief of health, Berg will manage Cal/OSHA's research and standards activities, including the development of health and safety regulations. He will also oversee Cal/OSHA's medical and toxicology, asbestos, and carcinogen and crane units.

The new appointees will serve under the general direction of Cal/OSHA Chief Juliann Sum.—*D.B.*

SURF REPORT

La Jolla Strikes Deal With Roark Revival

Irvine, Calif.-based **La Jolla Group** has formed a joint venture partnership with **The Roark Revival** in which La Jolla Group will provide Roark with "the tools, staffing, financial management and structure to scale their business seamlessly."

Roark, a 5-year-old lifestyle company based in San Juan Capistrano, Calif., will continue to operate as a separate entity with control over its brand.

Roark's branding concept allows consumers to follow the brand's global travels "in search of Roark" through the company's zine and website. Roark is a "bar-brawling hellion" whose "meandering travels" are woven into "a timeless line of well-worn apparel, T-shirts and trinkets" inspired by Roark's adventures.

La Jolla Group will oversee back-end operations, including finance, accounting, logistics, technology, human resources, planning and sourcing. Roark will oversee sales, product development and marketing with support from La Jolla Group's infrastructure.

La Jolla Group has a similar partnership with **Spiritual Gangster**, a yoga-inspired collection for men and women. The company also holds the apparel licenses for **O'Neill Clothing** in the USA, **Metal Mulisha** and **FMF**.

"This partnership allows us to thrive



operationally while remaining in control of our own destiny and brand," said Roark founder and President Ryan Hitzel. "It's a turbo boost for one of the most challenging pillars of a small business."

La Jolla Group Chief Executive Officer Daniel Neukomm said both he and Ryan observed "a highly dynamic retail climate thirsty for small brands to help bring diversity on the floor but still expecting the sophisticated execution of larger brands."

—*Alison A. Nieder*

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ABBD Debuts New Look at High-End Shop Traffic



ABBD'S FALL 2016: LA-made brand ABBB crafted a new look for its Fall '16 style, said Adam Derry, the brand's founder and creative director, pictured far right. Pictured next to him is Derya Kadipasaoglu. Rick Barton Jr. is photographed in other pictures. Photos courtesy of ABBB.

After a few years of selling streetwear on Los Angeles's Fairfax Avenue, Adam Derry of the **ABBD** label is taking his line a few streets and a world beyond from Fairfax's streetwear sizzle.

ABBD's Fall '16 collection will make its debut at **Traffic**, the pioneering boutique in Los Angeles' **Beverly Center**, said Michael Dovan, a founder of the shop, best known for the high-fashion styles of lines such as **Alexander McQueen**, **Comme Des Garçons** and **Dolce & Gabbana**.

"We want to increase the visibility of new designers in this city," Dovan said. "We need this category in our store. It's street/sportswear. It's got a loose cut and a big shape. It's what people want."

Derry intended to drive his ABBB brand's Fall '16 look into a new direction for his line, which was once dominated by graphics and form-fitting silhouettes. The new ABBB line offers hoodies, tees, tanks and shorts that are oversized, seek to drape in a dramatic style and offer bold colors, Derry said. He also worked as a brand consultant for clients such as music star will.i.am and companies such as U.K. retailer **Harrods**.

"We wanted to make something unfiltered and not defined by overly loud graphics. It is a true blank canvas," Derry said of the line. "They are clothes for the human form. They work on either gender. They are essential, wearable items that have a timelessness about them. We want to be

part of your daily life."

For the line's marketing campaign and lookbook, Derry photographed models who represent a wide range of ethnicities and ages. One of the models was 65-year-old Korean-American businessman Daseuk James Choi. Another was a young Turkish-American woman, Derya Kadipasaoglu, who is an artist. "These images showcase the commonality in the human form," Derry said. "It's the reason why we shot a multitude of ages and people."

The fleece used in the line is constructed from imported hemp and Supima cotton. Wholesale price points range from \$40 to \$125. For more information, email info@abbdx.com.—*Andrew Asch*

LEGAL

New Laws *Continued from page 1*

Here's a summary of the new state employment rules that take effect in 2016.

Piece-rate compensation (AB1513)

This new law applies to employers who have piece-rate workers paid for every item they make.

The regulation requires employers to pay those workers for rest and recovery periods and other nonproductive activities at a specified minimum hourly rate separate from the piece-rate salary.

Also, specific information such as the total hours paid for rest and recovery periods must be included on pay stubs.

The bill includes a safe harbor provision for employers who in the past may not have properly paid their piece-rate workers for recovery and rest periods and face liability. They have until Dec. 15, 2016, to set things straight.

Back wages (SB588)

If employees don't get paid what they are owed, this new law allows the California Labor Commissioner to slap a lien on an employer's property to try and recoup the value of the unpaid wages.

If a final judgment against an employer is not paid 30 days after the time to file an appeal has expired or no appeal of the judgment is pending, the employer cannot conduct business unless a bond has been obtained of up to \$150,000 and a copy of the bond has been filed with the Labor Commissioner.

Equal-pay act (SB358)

This new law attempts to close the gap between men's and women's wages by saying they must be paid the same for "substantially similar work," an upgrade over the current standard. It allows women to talk about their

own pay and inquire about the pay of others without facing discipline.

Employment discrimination (AB987)

Under this new regulation, employers cannot retaliate or discriminate against an employee for requesting a reasonable accommodation for a disability, religious belief or observance, regardless of whether the request was granted.

The request is protected under the Fair Employment and Housing Act.

School activities time off (SB579)

Workers should be able to take protected time off from their jobs for school or childcare activities. Those activities include finding a school or a licensed childcare provider or to address school emergencies or childcare provider issues.

This law applies to companies that have more than 25 employees.

Whistleblower (AB1509)

Whistleblower and anti-retaliation measures are expanded under Assembly Bill 1509. The new law prohibits employers from discriminating against a worker when his or her family member engages in whistleblowing or other protected activities such as complaining about wage theft or unsafe working conditions.

The law expands to include not only the employer but "client employers" such as contractors.

Labor Commissioner (AB970)

The state Labor Commissioner has received expanded power to investigate and enforce local overtime and minimum-wage laws and to issue citations and penalties for violations except when a local authority has already issued a citation.

The Labor Commissioner now has expanded power to issue citations and penalties when employers fail to reimburse workers for employer-required expenses.

State disability insurance eligibility requirement (SB667)

This law goes into effect on July 1. It changes the eligibility waiting period when filing a second disability claim for the same or related disability filed in the first claim. The new regulation also extends the time between claims that will be considered one disability benefit period. Existing law says that if an individual receives two consecutive periods of disability benefits due to the same or a related cause or condition and separated by not more than 14 days, they are considered as one disability benefit period. This latest bill extends to 60 days the time between claims.

Wage garnishment restrictions (SB501)

This is another law that goes into effect on July 1. It reduces the amount of prohibited weekly disposable income subject to withholding orders.

Anti-discrimination law (SB600)

This bill, backed by the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF), expands the category of individuals who may not be discriminated against. The bill mandates that employers may not discriminate against workers because of citizenship, language or immigration status.

Misclassification of truckers (AB621)

This new regulation establishes an amnesty program for companies that previously misclassified their truckers as independent contractors when they should have been clas-

sified as full-time employees.

The companies can avoid liability if they voluntarily enter into settlement agreements with the state Labor Commissioner by Jan. 1, 2017.

Unemployment insurance benefits (AB1514)

This law makes changes to eligibility for unemployment insurance when the unemployed worker is taking special training classes or being retrained.

It requires the Employment Development Department to automatically qualify individuals for unemployment-insurance benefits when they are enrolled in an employer-sponsored training program.

E-Verify (AB622)

A new California law makes adjustments to when an employer can use E-Verify, an Internet-based system that lets employers check whether a new hire has the right to work in the United States.

AB622 prohibits employers from using the E-Verify system to check the employment-authorization status of existing employees or applicants who have not received an offer to be hired, except as required by federal law or as a condition of receiving federal funds. The new law does not change employers' rights from utilizing E-Verify to check the employment-authorization status of a person who has been offered a job.

If an employer receives any government notification about an employee's E-Verify case that did not match federal records, the employer is required to notify the affected employee as soon as possible.

Any employer who violates this new law may be liable for a civil penalty not to exceed \$10,000 for each violation, and each unlawful use of the E-Verify system on an employee or applicant constitutes a separate violation. ●



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DollarTShirt: Thrift Goes E-commerce

Derek Wong started a fashion career printing T-shirts. But when it came time to move on to his next project, Wong didn't feel like going high-end or designer. He saw opportunity in thrift.

Wong and a partner started the downtown Los Angeles-based e-commerce site **DollarTShirt** in September 2015. The website (www.dollartshirt.com) sells used T-shirts in good condition for \$1, then ships them for an at-cost sum. The shop also offers clothing from high-profile brands at retail price points that range from \$5 to \$20.

Wong said that the project's goal was to take the bricks-and-mortar concept of a neighborhood thrift store and transfer it online. "We're trying to go as low as we can," Wong said of prices. "We are trying to make it as affordable to the consumer as we can."

The thrift and secondhand market is competitive. Veteran thrift organizations such as **Goodwill** run e-commerce sites. (Goodwill's is at www.shopgoodwill.com.) Chains of secondhand clothing shops such as **Buffalo Exchange** and **Crossroads** run locations in popular fashion retail streets such as La Brea Avenue and Melrose Avenue in Los Angeles.

At its most basic level, the thrift business is getting a donation and charging the

consumer a very low off-price sum for that donation. Many use the thrift business as a vehicle to fund nonprofit projects. Wong and his business partner, Ferguson Agwu, intend to build partnerships with a group of nonprofits eventually.

If there's a lot of margin in selling a garment that one got free, Wong said that he and Agwu put in a lot of sweat equity in



selling the donated clothing, constructing an e-commerce site to sell the clothing and photographing it. Friends donate clothing. Agwu's family also is involved in exporting used clothing overseas.

Wong forecasts a lot more work on this project. "Thrift is a very competitive industry. Like a liquor store, there's a thrift on every block. All of these shops have their own buying strategy. We're trying to see if this business model works," Wong said.

—Andrew Asch

Calendar

Jan. 5

SoCal Materials Show
LAX Marriott
Los Angeles
Through Jan. 6

Jan. 7

Agenda
Long Beach Convention Center
Long Beach, Calif.
Through Jan. 8

Jan. 8

Swim Collective
Hyatt Regency
Huntington Beach, Calif.
Through Jan. 9

Jan. 10

Accessories The Show
Moda
Fame
Javits Center
New York
Through Jan. 12
Accessorie Circuit
Intermezzo Collections
Pier 94
New York

Through Jan. 12

Jan. 11

Retail's BIG Show, NRF's Annual Convention
Javits Center
New York
Through Jan. 14

Jan. 14

Surf Expo
Orange County Convention Center
Orlando, Fla.
Through Jan. 16

Jan. 15

Active Collective
Hyatt Regency
Huntington Beach, Calif.
Through Jan. 16

Jan. 18

Los Angeles Fashion Market
California Market Center
Cooper Design Space
The New Mart
Gerry Building
824 Building
Lady Liberty Building

Primrose Design Building
Academy Awards Building
Los Angeles
Through Jan. 21

Designers and Agents
The New Mart
Los Angeles
Through Jan. 20

Select Shape Transit
California Market Center
Los Angeles
Through Jan. 20

Brand Assembly
Cooper Design Space
Los Angeles
Through Jan. 20

LA Kids' Market
California Market Center
Los Angeles
Through Jan. 21

There's more
on ApparelNews.net.

For calendar details and contact information, visit ApparelNews.net/calendar.

Submissions to the calendar should be faxed to the Calendar Editor at (213) 623-5707. Please include the event's name, date, time, location, admission price and contact information. The deadline for calendar submissions is the Tuesday prior to Friday publication. Inclusion in the calendar is subject to available space and the judgment of the editorial staff.

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Columbia Inks Licensing Deal With Delta Galil

Portland, Ore.-based **Columbia Sportswear Co.** struck a licensing deal with **Delta Galil Industries Ltd.** to develop and produce a line of performance underwear under the Columbia Sportswear label.

Under the agreement, which runs through 2018, Tel Aviv, Israel-based Delta Galil will produce a collection that will include women's sports bras and underwear as well as men's underwear. Items in the collection will feature performance characteristics such as moisture management and anti-microbial properties. The collection is launching at the Jan. 7-10 run of the **Outdoor Retailer** Winter Market Expo in Salt Lake City. The line will sell at Columbia stories as well as outdoor specialty stores and better department stores worldwide. Delta Galil also holds the global license for Columbia men's and women's socks.

"We are very pleased to expand our partnership with Columbia Sportswear and provide them with intimate-apparel collections that embody the performance, fit, function and style that consumers worldwide associate with the Columbia brand," said Isaac Dabah, chief executive officer of Delta Galil, in a company statement. "This represents an important growth opportunity for our business as activewear remains a strong contributor to our overall sales."

Founded in 1975, Delta Galil manufactures branded and private-label apparel for men, women and children, including seamless apparel for bras, shapewear, socks, intimate apparel for women, underwear for men, babywear, activewear, sleepwear and leisurewear. In July, the company acquired Irvine, Calif.-based pajamas and loungewear maker **P.J. Salvage** for an undisclosed price. Delta Galil's other labels include **Schiesser**, **Karen Neuburger**, **LittleMissMatched** and **Nearly Nude**.

"We are excited to be collaborating with Delta Galil on the development of our performance underwear business," said Matt Merriman, director of licensing at Columbia Sportswear. "Their design expertise, ability to meet our high quality and performance standards, and strong global reach will be instrumental in expanding our brand into this important new category."

—Alison A. Nieder



Contenders *Continued from page 1*

year.) The franchise recently returned to the headlines with the November premiere of "Creed," the seventh film in the series. The original "Rocky" will celebrate its 40th anniversary in 2016.

In November, Contenders introduced a capsule collection called **Creed by Contenders Limited Exclusive Collection**. It offered trunks designed with the colors of the American flag, which were worn by the character Apollo Creed in "Rocky." An upcoming collection, called **Rocky by Contenders Collection**, includes boxer briefs reminiscent of the trunks worn by Stallone's Rocky Balboa character as well as other characters in the movie series.

Like a boxer's trunk, the brand's underwear features a contrast waistband and side stripes. Contenders' main collection comes in nine colorways, including heather gray, white and black. The shorts feature tailoring, which keeps the underwear from riding up. With the Creed capsule collection, new categories were added to the Contenders line, including T-shirts inspired by the styles of the mid-1970s. One T-shirt bears the logo of "Contenders Boxing 1976." Also available

from the line are plain T-shirts the company calls the "Money Tee," which are made with soft fabric. Wholesale prices points range from \$11 to \$24 for the briefs. T-shirts will be sold exclusively at the brand's website (www.contenders-clothing.com). The brand will be more active in wholesaling its goods in fall 2016.

The Contenders is one of the projects for the Anderson brothers. They also run the Tankfarm & Co. menswear collection and a multi-line boutique bearing the same name. The Andersons started their fashion business in 2003 by wholesaling graphic T-shirts. They expanded the brand to also sell button-up shirts, outerwear, denim and shorts. In 2010, a Tankfarm boutique was opened in the brand's former headquarters of Los Alamitos, Calif. More than a year ago, the headquarters moved a short drive away to Seal Beach, where it opened a 1,300-square-foot boutique. In 2014, it opened a store with a yearlong lease at the **Americana at Brand** retail center in Glendale, Calif. The shop is closing in January. In May, Tankfarm & Co. is scheduled to open another boutique at the high-end **Pacific City** retail center in Huntington Beach, Calif.

For more information on Contenders, contact (725) 696-1711. ●



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Avocado Opens on Abbot Kinney



ANDREW ASCH, KICHUNG



As many boutiques were anticipating the winter holiday retail season winding down, made-in-Los Angeles brand **Avocado** was just getting started. It opened its first store on Dec. 22.

Formerly a residence and an office space, the store is located at 1348 Abbot Kinney Blvd. Avocado is a 5-year-old brand. It sells yoga and athleisure clothes for women, said Ki Chung, the general manager of the brand, which also runs an e-commerce boutique (www.shopavocado.com).

Retail price points range from \$20 to \$80 for the brand. About 70 percent of its garments do not feature seams. The

seamless garments feel better on the skin, Chung said. A top-selling item for the brand is its tank top, which is offered in 50 different colorways.

Avocado's parent company also makes **Nikibiki**, a women's line, which offers popularly priced items that range from dresses to outerwear. The 15-year-old company also offers plus sizes. Chung said that his company formed the Avocado line to break into a higher-end market. However, Avocado seeks to sell its athleisure clothes at a competitive price point.

Athleisure is increasingly becoming popular on Abbot

Kinney. In early December, U.K.-based athleisure brand **Sweaty Betty** opened its first store on America's West Coast at 1112 Abbot Kinney Blvd. Also opened on Abbot Kinney this year are brands that make sustainable clothes or brands that make it a point to manufacture in a way that won't damage the environment. One of these brands is **Industry of All Nations**, which opened this fall at 1121 Abbot Kinney Blvd. A women's contemporary store, **Cuyana**, also moved onto Abbot Kinney this year. It is located at 1140 Abbot Kinney Blvd.

—Andrew Asch

RETAIL

Holiday *Continued from page 1*

first measures of the crucial sales season to be released. Sarah Quinlan, senior vice president, market insights, for **MasterCard Advisors**, said business was good, despite anxiety over retail sales' performance.

"After a slow start, I'm very happy to see that the holiday season was hot for retailers," Quinlan said. "We saw some very promising trends."

Forecasts for the 2015 holiday retail season were influenced by anxiety over what some believe to be the continuing anemic recovery from the Great Recession. Media reports said that there was a shift in the way U.S. consumers shop during the holiday retail season. Retail traffic at shopping malls declined while online retail business increased.

During the Black Friday kickoff to the holiday season, there was a 5.1 percent decline in store traffic, according to **RetailNext Inc.**, a San Jose, Calif.-based shopper-analytics group.

Shelly Kohan, RetailNext's vice president of retail consulting, said that more people shopped online during the first weekend of the holiday season. "The weekend continued to demonstrate the emergence and importance of mobile shopping, and shoppers increasingly used digital devices to shop brands, research products, compare pricing and make purchases," she said in a Dec. 1 statement.

E-commerce sales skyrocketed at **The Dreslyn**, a 2-year-old women's contemporary online retailer headquartered in downtown Los Angeles. The retailer beat forecasts for its Black Friday weekend. Its sales increased 48 percent during the Black Friday season compared with last year, said Daniel Corcia, a cofounder and chief finance officer of the retailer, which does business at www.thedreslyn.com.

"Typically after Cyber Monday [the Monday after Black Friday], we see a downward spiral. But sales have not stopped. I think people are getting more comfortable with e-commerce and the ease of shopping online," he said.

Holiday e-commerce was dominated by **Amazon.com**. The Seattle-based company reported more than 3 million people joined its Amazon Prime service during the third week of December. Its stock price increased more than 2.88 percent during the week after Christmas based on its performance during the holiday retail season. The e-commerce giant has been promoting its fashion offerings in recent months. To highlight its holiday performance, Amazon got a little dramatic. In a Dec. 28 statement, the company said it sold enough jeans to cover the driving



AFTER-HOLIDAY SALES: Big sales characterized the holiday. On Dec. 27, retailers on Abbot Kinney Boulevard in Los Angeles offered generous sales to clear inventory.

distance between San Francisco and Los Angeles. It also claimed that it sold so many women's boots that if they were stacked on top of each other they could reach the orbit of the International Space Station.

All this rosy news comes on the heels of cloudy forecasts. The **National Retail Federation** predicted that holiday retail sales would increase 3.7 percent compared with the 2014 season, when sales increased 4.1 percent. It will announce results for holiday season sales on Jan. 15.

On Christmas Eve, **Retail Metrics**, a Boston-area market-research group, forecast that sales would increase 0.4 percent for the fourth quarter of the 2015 fiscal year for the retailers in its index.

And in the days following the holiday shopping season, not every industry observer was upbeat across the board. Howard Davidowitz, founder of retail consultancy **Davidowitz & Associates**, said that the season's business was tough for department stores and good for off-price retailers. "We're in an economy that is crawling along," he said. "We have too many stores selling the same things. The only difference is price. If you are trying to appeal to the middle class, you need to find price points that appeal to them. That's why **Macy's** entered the off-price business." (In May, **Macy's Inc.** announced that it would open off-price stores **Macy's Backstage**.)

However, there is still a lot of room for luxe and boutique-style shopping, said Darrel Adams, founder of

the **Kin** boutiques in West Hollywood, Calif., and in Los Angeles' Bel-Air neighborhood. He'll be opening another Kin boutique in Huntington Beach's **Pacific City** retail center in February.

Adams estimated that Kin's 2015 sales increased over last year. While he maintains an e-commerce shop (www.kinlosangeles.com), his physical sales dominate. "We cater to someone who wants to go to Kin," he said. His customers prefer the experience of a boutique and the unique environments they create. "You don't get the experience of merchandising when shopping online."

Don Zuidema, a cofounder of West Hollywood boutique **LASC**, also forecast that sales at his physical stores were stronger than at his e-commerce site (www.shoplasc.com). He predicted sales increased by double digits over last year. Still, Zuidema said, the business of running a store continues to be tough work.

"Bricks-and-mortar is in a challenging environment," he said. "It's also an opportunity. We have built environments where people can be entertained and be social."

Traffic patterns

At **South Coast Plaza**, the high-profile retail center in Costa Mesa, Calif., the busiest days for holiday retail traffic were Black Friday and the day after Christmas, said Debra Gunn Downing, executive director for marketing at South Coast Plaza. Retail traffic increased compared with last year. Consumers made a special trip to South Coast Plaza because of the Santa's Village installation, Gunn Downing said.

At the **Citadel Outlets** retail center, south of downtown Los Angeles, retail traffic was strong throughout December, said Traci Markel, the retail center's marketing director. But sales started cresting in mid-December. To draw more shoppers, the shopping center extended its hours and also scheduled entertainment, including what was billed as the world's tallest Christmas tree.

"People want to shop online, but they also want to have the pleasant experience of shopping with family and friends where they take pictures and watch entertainers," Markel said.

Citadel management also works with stores to guard against the stores running out of inventory during the busy holiday season. Upon request, the shopping center would contact the retailer's inventory headquarters to ask for more inventory. They also wanted to help to ensure the inventory could be replenished in a snap. In 2014, the Citadel built a two-story logistics center in a delivery court on the retail center's site. "There are plans for more of them," Markel said. ●

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