

# CALIFORNIA ApparelNews

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Santa Cruz, Calif.-based Socksmith was among the returning exhibitors showing at the recent Fashion Market Northern California trade show in San Mateo, Calif.

## TRADE SHOW REPORT

### Boutique Retailers Turn Out to Order Immediates, Spring Merchandise at FMNC

By Alison A. Nieder *Executive Editor*

SAN MATEO, Calif.—The weather outside was Northern California cool and gray, but the mood—and the merchandise—inside the **San Mateo Event Center** was sunny as retailers from across the Western U.S. turned out for **Fashion Market Northern California** to place orders for Spring goods.

The Oct. 23–25 show featured a mix of vendors showing women's apparel and accessories for a range of categories, including updated sportswear and dresses, young contemporary, activewear, and footwear.

This season, the show opened on Oct. 23 with a presentation by Paul Erickson, a retail consultant and senior vice president of **RMSA**, retail management solutions software, discussing inventory control and productivity.

Show organizers were pleased with the response to the

seminar and plan to expand the educational component in the future, said Ute Wegmann, owner of the **Ute Wegmann Showroom** in Los Angeles and FMNC president.

"It was our very first informational seminar," Wegmann said. "The feedback was amazing. The whole idea is to empower our reps and our retailers."

FMNC traditionally draws Northern California boutique retailers, but in recent years the show has been attracting exhibitors and attendees from farther afield.

"Our borders are disappearing," Wegmann said. "We have vendors coming from the East Coast, from Oregon and Washington. We have retailers coming from farther away looking for an easy way to do business in a location where they can easily see product in an open-booth format."

The show drew a steady flow of retailer traffic for the first two days, said Suzanne DeGroot, FMNC executive director, who said the April and October shows tend to be the largest of

➔ **FMNC** page 3

### Cone Denim Parent Company Acquired by Beverly Hills Private-Equity Firm

By Deborah Belgum *Senior Editor*

**International Textile Group**, a diversified fabric maker that includes **Cone Denim** and **Burlington Industries**, has been acquired by private-equity firm **Platinum Equity** for an undisclosed price.

In order to complete the merger transaction, Platinum Equity, headquartered in Beverly Hills, Calif., acquired all of the debt and equity securities of ITG, previously owned by entities managed by **W.L. Ross & Co. LLC** and its affiliates.

Platinum Equity was launched in 1995 by Tom Gores, whose brother, Alex Gores, started global investment company **The Gores Group**, also headquartered in Beverly Hills.

International Textile Group's stock was traded in the over-the-counter market. Its common stock will cease to be

➔ **ITG** page 2

### DSTLD: Building the Wardrobe One Premium Piece at a Time

By Alison A. Nieder *Executive Editor*

When **DSTLD** launched two years ago, the company focused on premium denim and luxury tees. After two years of design development and brand building, the company is preparing to provide consumers with an entire wardrobe of luxury basics.

"We launched with premium denim, which is one of the hardest things to get right—the right fit, the right fabrics. That was challenging," said Corey Epstein, DSTLD co-chief executive officer and creative director.

Because the company is based in Los Angeles, premium denim seems to be an appropriate jumping-off point, Epstein said.

"The goal was always to become the DSTLD closet," he said. "Denim was the anchor."

➔ **DSTLD** page 8

### Fred by Fred Segal: Denim Rooted in Los Angeles Culture

By Sarah Wolfson *Contributing Writer*

For the first time since retailer **Fred Segal** opened its doors in Los Angeles in 1965, the famous Fred Segal name will appear on an apparel line: **Fred by Fred Segal**.

The denim collection is helmed by Vice President and Creative Director Shaun Hurley, cofounder of **Genetic Los Angeles Denim** and a longtime denim-industry executive whose career has included **Abercrombie & Fitch**, **Gap Inc.** and **575 Denim**.

"LA fashion has been evolving for many decades, and I am truly fortunate to share some of my own perspective in this evolution," Hurley said.

Fred launched online with Fall/Holiday collections that combine the laid-back "cool" and ease of Los Angeles with core basics. There are about 60 pieces for men, including tees, denim, polo shirts, wovens, sweaters and one-of-a-kind swim trunks. For women, there are 72 items, including bodysuits, T-shirts, denim, cashmere sweaters and fashion

tops. Retail price points start at \$58 and range up to \$358 for some cashmere pieces. Denim is wholesale priced between \$90 and \$121. There is a kids' collection that is largely based on T-shirts as well.

"I really wanted to create everyone's favorite 'must haves' living the LA lifestyle, from your favorite T-shirt to classic designer jeans and cashmere sweaters," Hurley said.

For the debut collection, Hurley was inspired by Los Angeles' Laurel Canyon and the rock 'n' roll fervor of Sunset Boulevard as well as the breeziness and culture of Santa Monica and Venice Beach from the 1970s and 1980s.

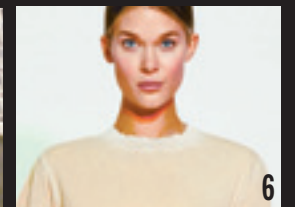
The pieces in the collection have a layered, mix-and-match quality that reflects an effortless West Coast lifestyle.

"Everything that I design has a 'hidden twist' inside," Hurley said. "It is a lot like living in LA. You don't always understand this city until you actually live here. The same is true with this collection. As you own each piece, you begin to see the intricate details that remain undiscovered to just the casual reviewer."

➔ **Fred Segal** page 3

## INSIDE

Where fashion gets down to business<sup>SM</sup>



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# Halloween Spending Boost Forecast to Kick Off Solid Holiday Sales Season Following Election Slump

Halloween will be sweet, not spooky, according to a survey from the **National Retail Federation**, the trade group headquartered in Washington, D.C.

According to the NRF survey, Halloween spending is forecast to climb to \$8.4 billion, which is an all-time high in the trade group's 11 years of tracking this holiday's spending. Last year, U.S. consumers spent \$6.9 billion on Halloween costumes, decorations and candies.

Pam Goodfellow of **Prosper Insights**, the company that conducted the survey, said that eight in 10 Americans shopped for Halloween goodies early, basically in mid-October. Shoppers were forecast to spend an average

of \$82.93, up from \$74.34 in 2015.

It is one of a group of recent surveys forecasting solid to good business for the Fall and Holiday seasons.

On Oct. 27, the NRF released a survey predicting that U.S. consumers will spend \$935.58 during the holiday season. It is second only to spending in 2015, which the NRF said was a record at \$952.58. The survey found that 58 percent of consumers plan to shop for themselves during the holidays. These shoppers will spend an average of \$139.61, an increase of 4 percent from last year's average spending of \$133.74. In a forecast released Oct. 4, the NRF predicted that holiday spending will increase

3.6 percent to \$655.8 billion.

The presidential election is currently diverting attention from shopping, the survey found. Ad space that would be typically dominated by retailers is being taken up by political parties and candidates, said Matthew Shay, the NRF president and chief executive officer. The uncertainty of the election is causing some to rein in their spending, with 43 percent saying they are being more cautious with spending due to the election.

Post election, the NRF expects consumers to return to a focus on shopping. "Retailers should prepare for a rush of consumers in the weeks following the presidential election as

they get more economic and political certainty," Shay said.

Marshal Cohen, chief industry analyst for market researchers **The NPD Group**, predicted that the election would do little to rein in consumer confidence during the holidays, even if consumers are not paying attention to shopping in the days preceding the election. "Retailers will need to find ways to break through the noise surrounding the election and be innovative in marketing to consumers. The best way to get the attention of the distracted is to give them a great deal. They'll be back regardless of who wins the election," he said.

—Andrew Asch

## NEW RESOURCES

## Arcady: Classic Design Meets Individual Style

Men's fashion line **Arcady** was introduced with a big splash recently—the label founders produced a party attended by actors, models and musicians at the Los Angeles landmark **Chateau Marmont**—but the show of glamour was not necessarily the aim of the new line. Founders Billy and Christopher Hines hope that the line will mix in seamlessly with whatever someone is wearing.

"We wanted to make clothes that would let a person's individual style define what they are wearing," said Christopher Hines, who founded the line with his brother Billy.

"Hence the classic design and minimalist approach to our aesthetic."

The line's "Standard Pant" is an example of that credo. "After 15 minutes of wearing, it adjusts to you," Christopher Hines said. "There's a small amount of polyurethane in it. It stretches to your leg size." Other looks include a cashmere hooded sweater. "It's a great layering piece; there's an accessibility to that," Billy Hines said.

But the Hines brothers did not want to simply produce the Zelig of men's fashion. All of the pieces were designed to emphasize craftsmanship, and some of the pieces were



designed to make a statement. There are mandarin-collar shirts and the "Sparta Overcoat," which is a mix between a peacoat and a trench. The line's "Hollywood" pants come with suspenders that seem more of an accessory than a necessity to hold up the pants.

The Hines brothers worked with designer Jonathan deLagarde on Arcady's styles. In the past decade, deLagarde has designed for **Gap Inc.**, **Nike** and **Wilson Tennis Apparel**.



Also on the Arcady team are Jack Hurley, who works as the chief operating officer, and Adam Bolden, who has worked for fashion labels such as **One World Apparel** and is a cofounder of **Blend Management LLC**, a fashion management group.

Currently, Arcady is sold only online at [www.arcady.com](http://www.arcady.com). Retail price points range from \$65 for a Standard Crew T-shirt to \$2,400 for the Sparta overcoat.—A.A.

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## NEWS

### ITG *Continued from page 1*

publicly traded, and former ITG stockholders will receive information from **Continental Stock Transfer & Trust Company**, the paying agent in the merger, on how to receive the cash consideration for their shares of ITG common stock in the near future.

The merger transaction and related agreements were entered into following the approval of ITG's board of directors, based upon the recommendation of an independent special committee, along with its independent legal and financial advisers, which negotiated the terms and conditions.

Under the new ownership, Kenneth T. Kunberger, International Textile Group's president and chief executive, will continue in his role. "This is an exciting time for ITG," Kunberger said. "We believe Platinum Equity and ITG's goals and strategies are well aligned and provide a strong foundation on which to further leverage ITG's performance innovations and brand heritage across our global markets."

ITG's Cone Denim mills are located in Mexico, China and near its headquarters in Greensboro, N.C. ITG's other businesses

are **Safety Components** and **Carlisle Finishing**. It employs 4,800 workers around the world. ●

### Corrections and Clarifications



The showroom pictured in the photo above, which appeared in the **Los Angeles Fashion Market** story in the Oct. 21 issue, was incorrectly identified. It is **The One Showroom**, which is located in the **Lady Liberty Building**.



## FMNC *Continued from page 1*

the five annual FMNC markets.

San Francisco sales representative Nancy Provda was managing a full schedule of appointments as well as drop-in traffic at her booth, where she was showing the latest collections by **Fridaze**, **Rising Phoenix**, **Toofan**, **Yasuko** and **Ivy Reed**.

"Both days were very busy," Provda said on the second day of the show.

Provda said she was getting positive feedback from her accounts, who placed a few orders for Immediate delivery but were primarily buying Spring.

"Up here business is good," she said. "I travel around the Northwest, and I'm hearing good things."

Northern California accessories rep Sheryl Draper, who said she just finished "an epic 2,000-mile road trip through the Northwest," was doing a brisk business with Immediate and "as ready" orders. Draper—who represents **Leatherock International**, **Dub & Drino**, **Pom Jewelry**, **Fil de Joie** and **Zina Kao** jewelry—said new product included a collection of leather handbags and cosmetic bags by Zina Kao in pastel-colored metallic leather.

"It's like candy for people," she said.

Draper also recently added **Aunts & Uncles** to her collections. The German line of handbags and small leather goods features warm colors and vintage-inspired shapes and details.

It was back-to-back appointments at the **Nancy Prickitt Accessories** booth, according to sales rep Jessica Fernandez.

"This is our busiest show of the year," she said. "We debuted Spring, but we also do a lot of Immediate for holiday."

Prickitt represents **Hobo International**, **Rapti Scarves and Shawls**, **Liquid Metal** jewelry and **Symbolic Socks**, a collection of made-in-America socks.

"The Bay Area is not slowing," Fernandez said. "We've had great sell-through on Fall. People are excited to order for Spring."

While most of the traffic was from pre-booked appointments, Fernandez said she and Prickitt also met with potential new customers as well.

"We always get a few inquiries every show," she said. For Hobo, a lot of our territory is covered. But last show I opened three or four new accounts."

Traffic was steady at Lori Markman's booth, where the Northern California rep was showing **Indigenous**, the fair-trade, organic collection from Sebastopol, Ca-



Nancy Provda



Janet Borelli-Martin

lif.; San Francisco-based contemporary collection **Weston**; **Kokun**'s high-end cashmere and bamboo/cashmere; **Pink Wheels**' vintage-inspired rayon dresses; **Boho Gloves**; and **Fig & Bella**'s hand-dyed scarves.

"It was a well-attended show," she said. "Given that it's an election year, it's nice to see traffic growing. People are optimistic. I think holiday will be good."

Brooke Papp, sales representative for Los Angeles-based young contemporary brand **Miss Me**, has been showing at FMNC for two years. The company, which typically has a large, enclosed booth at **WWD MAGIC** in Las Vegas, sets up a modest booth at FMNC.

"It's a great show," Papp said. "When I took over the territory, I tried it out and I had so many new accounts. Maybe they wouldn't have looked at us at MAGIC, but here they can see the line is wearable for all sorts of bodies."

Papp said opening day of the show was "awesome."

"It's hard for them to get out of their stores, but people make a solid effort to see me here," she said.

Cassandra Aaron, vice president of marketing and sales for Santa Cruz, Calif.-based **Socksmith**, was showing her company's collection of brightly colored novelty socks, in-

cluding whimsical prints of avocados and tacos, as well as a patriotic collection featuring portraits of George Washington, Abraham Lincoln and John F. Kennedy.

"We're in the **Smithsonian** gift shop with our presidential socks," Aaron said.

At FMNC, Aaron sees regional retailers from California and other Western states.

The company carries cotton and bamboo socks for men and women, with plans to launch a kids' line next year. The company produces

its socks overseas but stocks inventory domestically in a 20,000-square-foot warehouse in Santa Cruz for quick-turn deliveries.

Mike Berkis, brand director for **Consolidated Shoe Co.**, introduced a new collection at FMNC. **Naked Feet** features raw-edge leather, leather-wrapped heels and a memory-foam footbed. Berkis said the collection is geared for the boutique market.

"We don't sell department stores; we don't sell online," he said. "We want to build the independent business."

On the second day of the show, retailer Carol Munson, owner of **5th Street Clothing** in Chico, Calif., had finished an appointment at **Eileen Fisher** and was looking through the Spring collection for **Staples**.

In addition to Eileen Fisher and Staples, Munson's 3,000-square foot store carries **Nic & Zoe**, **Karen Kane**, **Johnny Was** and **NYDJ**.

"When I buy a company I buy it all," she said. "I have an entire section of Karen Kane."

Munson and her daughter Jennie Elliot planned to spend two days at the show.

"I get it all done here," she said. "They get together everybody under one roof."

More retailers are taking extra time to shop the show, said Jacqueline Stone, a Northern California sales rep for **Mycra Pac** outerwear, **Pantropic** hats, **Sympli** apparel, **Italca of Italy** scarves and **Escape From Paris** jewelry.

"People are staying more than one day here," she said. "The quality of exhibitors draws a lot of buyers, and they stay and they buy."

Stone said buyers are placing Spring orders for apparel. Typically, retailers wait until January to place Spring accessories orders, but, she added, "My hats are doing fabulous for Spring."

"They are looking ahead," Stone said. "That's encouraging and that's why I feel cautiously optimistic." ●



Consolidated Shoe Co.'s Naked Feet collection is targeted to boutique retailers. The line is not sold online or to department stores.



Aunts & Uncles is a new German handbag and small leather goods collection represented by Sheryl Draper.

## DENIM

### Fred Segal *Continued from page 1*

The women's denim category consists of the "Perfect Skinny," "Sexy Straight," "Irresistible Flair" and "Iconic High-Rise" styles with blue hues including light vintage, a dark, true and medium indigo and a black vintage and black rinse with raw, refined and distressed characteristics.

"I am obsessed with the design of '90s denim," Hurley said. "But I also wanted to provoke a new design aesthetic—the gritty streets of LA meet the casual LA beaches."

The denim, which is produced in Los Angeles, offers high-quality, premium craftsmanship. The jeans are cut from three different Japanese fabrications. The washes range from rinses to true vintage, with a worn-in hand feel.

"I wanted the denim to feel truly authentic with a

modern take," Hurley said. "All my denim feels great and is always broken in the perfect way to make these jeans your favorite pair."

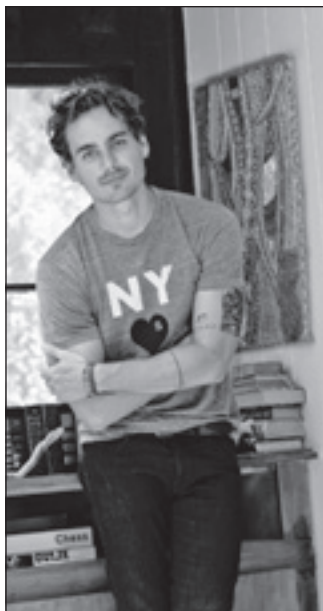
The collections are currently sold on Fred's online retail site ([www.fredsegal.com](http://www.fredsegal.com)) and will be selling in all of the Fred

Segal stores internationally. Currently, Fred is carried in 30 specialty stores, but Hurley anticipates expanding the brand into more categories and widening the distribution.

Fred Segal was acquired in 2012 by New York-based **Sandow** and is currently owned by an investment group that includes Sandow along with equity investor **Evolution Media Partners**, a joint venture of Hollywood talent agency CAA, private-equity firm **TPG Growth** and **Participant Media**.

The original Melrose Avenue Fred Segal store and its sister store in Santa Monica have closed. (Sandow and the current owner of the Melrose location are currently involved in a lawsuit over the use of the Fred Segal sign at the Melrose space.) Following the Sandow acquisition the company has opened new stores at **Los Angeles International Airport** and in Japan.

For more information about Fred by Fred Segal, visit [www.fredsegal.com](http://www.fredsegal.com). ●







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## Heidi Merrick Opens First Store in Downtown LA

At a time when many people are shuttering stores and heading to e-commerce sites to sell their collections, Los Angeles designer Heidi Merrick is making a splash with her very first retail outpost.

Merrick was surrounded by friends and press at the Oct. 27 preview of her 1,500-square-foot space, which opens on Nov. 3. It has the feel of a modern loft with big windows overlooking Ninth Street, a block away from the **California Market Center** and in the heart of the **Los Angeles Fashion District**.

The new **H. Merrick of California** store at 113-115 W. Ninth St. is doors away from the French retailer **A.P.C.**, the Swedish retailer **Acne Studios** and the Australian retailer **BNKR**. The hip **Ace Hotel** is down the street.

Merrick's design studio, where her contemporary women's collection is cut and sewn, is around the corner on Broadway near the **Orpheum Theatre**.

The designer said a retail store was the best way for her to showcase her entire line of dresses, skirts, T-shirts, loungewear, jumpsuits, tops, coats and a home collection. "It feels unnatural to show at **New York Fashion Week**," she said. "My lifestyle is here, and I wanted to have the visibility of my full collection here, where it began. It felt authentic and honest."

She chose downtown Los Angeles instead of the traditional Los Angeles shopping streets of Melrose Avenue or Beverly and Robertson boulevards because it was close to her studio and her Silver Lake home. "My whole collection is about lifestyle," she said.

Merrick did a whirlwind renovation of the site when it became empty at the beginning of September. Before, a cramped **Z Best Audio & Video** store had been there seemingly forever.

Now the space looks airy and breezy. A central focus of the space is a rock installation created by Heidi's close friend, French artist Josephine Wister Faure.

The floors are made of polished concrete and the walls are a soft white. Against one wall are several pictures that are the inspiration for her present Fall/Winter collection, which has an elegant, casual feel.

On another wall are several surfboards shaped by Merrick's brother, Britt Merrick, in the colors of her Fall collection.

Merrick's father was famed surfboard shaper Al Merrick, who launched the **Channel Islands Surfboards** stores, first in 1969

in Santa Barbara and later in Los Angeles. Heidi Merrick got her start in the clothing business as the buyer for the store, where her mother, Terry, also worked.

Heidi Merrick later moved to New York, where she worked as a stylist, and then returned to California. After sewing her own wedding gown with her mother, people

kept telling her she had a knack for fashion.

With that, she enrolled at **Los Angeles Trade-Technical College** to study pattern-making and launched her collection in 2007, which retails for \$125 to \$795. She also does a limited home collection with floor pillows and throws. The home collection is expanding to bedding, beach towels and tea towels.

Merrick's collection is also sold online at [www.heidimerrick.com](http://www.heidimerrick.com).—Deborah Belgun



Heidi Merrick in her store

## Calendar

### Nov. 2

**Kingpins**  
Basketball City  
New York  
Through Nov. 3

### SPESA

San Antonio Riverwalk  
San Antonio, Texas  
Through Nov. 3

### Denim Première Vision

Paris Event Center  
Paris  
Through Nov. 3

### Nov. 3

**Coast**  
Music City Center  
Nashville  
Through Nov. 4

### Nov. 5

**ReveLation**  
Siren Studios  
Los Angeles  
Through Nov. 6

### ComplexCon

Long Beach Convention Center  
Long Beach, Calif.  
Through Nov. 6

### Nov. 8

**CALA**  
Fort Mason Center  
San Francisco  
Through Nov. 9

### Nov. 14

**CALA**  
Denver Mart  
Denver

Through Nov. 15

### Nov. 17

**Shop for Success**  
8767 Wilshire Blvd.  
Beverly Hills, Calif.  
Through Nov. 20

### Nov. 20

**DG Expo Fabric & Trim Show**  
San Francisco Hilton  
San Francisco  
Through Nov. 21

There's more  
on [ApparelNews.net](http://ApparelNews.net).

For calendar details and contact information, visit [ApparelNews.net/calendar](http://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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# SAS Textiles: Offering Quick Turn and Quality Knits in Southern California

By John McCurry Contributing Writer

For Sean Sassounian, the way to compete with cheap imports is to offer top quality and quick turnarounds.

Sassounian is the chief executive officer and founder of Vernon, Calif.-based **SAS Textiles**, a versatile circular knitter of contemporary and performance fabrics.

Lots of changes have happened since he founded the company 23 years ago. Among them are smaller programs by customers and a move to online sales.

Sassounian founded SAS Textiles in 1993 while studying business at the **University of Southern California**. He had previously helped his father sell imported yarns from Brazil. He partnered with a knitter when he founded the company because, as he says, "I had no idea what knitting was all about."

That's no longer the case as SAS boasts a machinery arsenal of 150 assorted knitting machines with capabilities that include production of basic jersey fabric, double-knits and novelties.

**Monarch** makes the majority of the company's machinery, and Sassounian recently purchased some new high-speed double- and single-knit machines, which he said offer much improvement over older models. He notes that with labor rates increasing, it is essential that SAS become as efficient as possible. He says he plans to switch out another 10 machines in 2017 for newer models.

SAS works with "select" dye houses in the Southern California area for dyeing and finishing. At one time, the company had a cut-and-sew partner in Mexico, but SAS is currently only offering fabrics. Sassounian said he hopes to move back into cut-and-sew sometime in the future. SAS has a product-development team that focuses on innovation and an extensive library of more than 20 years of styles that Sassounian says inevitably come back into vogue.



Sean Sassounian

In addition to rising labor costs, which are coming about in part due to California's new law that will gradually increase the minimum wage to \$15 per hour by Jan. 1, 2021, textile companies are increasingly finding it difficult to recruit skilled labor.

"We have about 80 employees now and we are having a hard time finding knitters," Sassounian said. "A lot of employees we had for a long time have moved to other states with a lower cost of living. Qualified labor is hard to find. Our head mechanic has trained some of our mechanics, so we have guys here who have been trained here from the ground up."

SAS currently offers a starting pay of about \$11 with more-experienced employees making more. The company offers a lot of overtime work and runs 12-hour shifts on a five-day week. All of this happens in a 140,000-square-foot plant and a warehouse that often holds 1.5 million to 2 million yards of yarn, so orders can be turned quickly.

Sassounian said his staff is working hard to increase efficiency throughout the plant. This includes a push for innovation to develop and offer products with added value so customers do not turn to imports.

SAS Textiles has moved into a more performance-oriented market in recent years as a way to diversify its product mix. Because SAS Textiles works with a lot of the better contemporary brands in the activewear market, quality control is essential and SAS puts a lot of effort into this area.

"We take our quality seriously here, and we don't take shortcuts anywhere from yarn selection to the dye house," Sassounian said. "We source yarns from all over the world."

Yarn suppliers range from **Parkdale Mills** and **Unifi** in the U.S. to manufacturers in Mexico, South Korea and China.

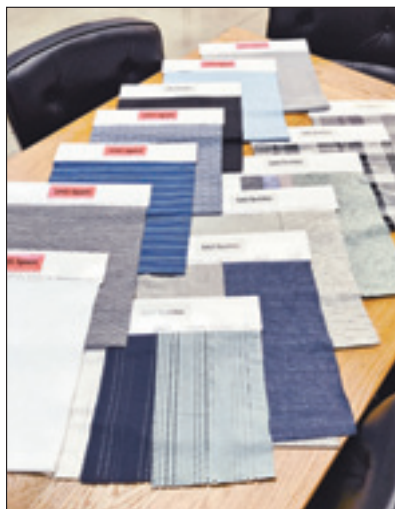
"We go to the markets that make the best quality for what we are working on," Sassounian said. That might be India or South Korea for cotton yarns made with U.S. cotton. We also buy from Indonesia and a lot comes from China. There are some mills in China that we have been working with for a long time. We buy a dyed rayon yarn out of Spain. We have 15 automatic stripe machines and we carry a big yarn inventory."

Sassounian said he believes there is difficulty ahead for the California textile and apparel industry. He's concerned that some manufacturers may opt to move to lower-wage states such as Texas and notes that some companies are considering moving to Texas due to tax incentives offered by that state. One answer may be increased factory automation.

"The traditional cut-and-sew factory operation will change in the next five years," Sassounian said. "There will be more automation and robotics that will come into the plant, and as a result labor won't be as great a factor. Some of the brands I have spoken to say that technology is on the way but a few years out."

All the challenges notwithstanding, Sassounian is optimistic about his company's future. Business has declined a little during 2016, but an improvement in sales in the early fall offers hope.

"We have customers in certain areas who are doing well, giving us the volume to keep things going," he said. "The end of the year will be a tossup. I hope after the elections that people will begin spending more. It all depends on the economy." ●



## T-SHIRTS

# Cotton Citizen: Don't Fear Color

Sometimes a T-shirt is more than a T-shirt.

Los Angeles-headquartered label **Cotton Citizen** is aiming to go beyond the basic look of a plain top. It plans to accomplish its goal with unique colors and finishes, luxe fabrics, and fashion silhouettes.



Eddie Bromberg

Cotton Citizen's Spring/Summer '17 season features T-shirts and pullovers in shades of bright lime and pink. The garments, which are finished to look artfully gnawed, are available in cotton, hemp and a Japanese slub yarn, according to Eddie Bromberg, Cotton Citizen's president. Bromberg joined the company in July after holding executive positions at **Rock & Republic** and **James**

**Perse**. Since he joined Cotton Citizen, the company has cut new overseas expansion agreements in Israel and Germany, deals that include distribution territories in Austria and the Benelux countries.

The label aims to show all of its colors at its newly opened first boutique, also called Cotton Citizen, on the exclusive shopping street Melrose Place in West Hollywood, Calif. On one of the shop's walls, all of the line's silhouettes and looks are displayed in a gallery style. The wall goes for a unique effect, such as a splash of color extended across a wall, because all of the pieces bear the same vibrant color. The color wall is updated with a new hue every month, and in October it was burnt orange, Bromberg said.

"It shows what we stand for," Bromberg said. "You don't

need to be afraid of color."

Recently, the company introduced a new delivery system to its retail partners, Bromberg said. The label's vivid fashion colors will only be offered for specific deliveries. If not ordered during the time allotted, there won't be another chance to order that specific fashion color. "It's a better way to create anticipation and create more Cotton Citizen consumers," he said. "We won't be falling into what everyone else is doing." It's a risky policy because some stores may not like being limited to a strict color schedule. However, scarcity can drive demand and speed up consumers purchasing the goods," Bromberg said.

The company will continue to offer basic styles in basic colors, such as black, gray and white, which can be ordered and reordered at any time.

Men's looks include thermals, crew necks, pullover tops and drawstring sweatpants. Women's styles push beyond traditional T-shirt silhouettes. There are shirt-dresses with hoods and shirt-dresses featuring backless panels. Women's looks also include sweatpants, knit bomber jackets and tank tops.

Retail price points range from \$65 for a crew neck to \$165 for a destroyed black sweatshirt, \$175 for a hooded



pullover and \$185 for a women's biker trouser.

Cotton Citizen plans to open more boutiques in the future, Bromberg said. "They'll be gallery-like stores that will show something different," he said. Occasionally local artists will display their creations at the boutiques. Some of these boutiques could be seasonal. "We don't want to compete with our current retailers," Bromberg said. "We showcase product that does not compete. It complements other retailers and educates consumers on what Cotton Citizen is," he said. The brand has been sold at stores such as the **Ron Robinson** boutiques in the Los Angeles area as well as at **Bloomingdale's** and **Saks Fifth Avenue** and e-commerce emporiums such as **Revolve**.—Andrew Asch



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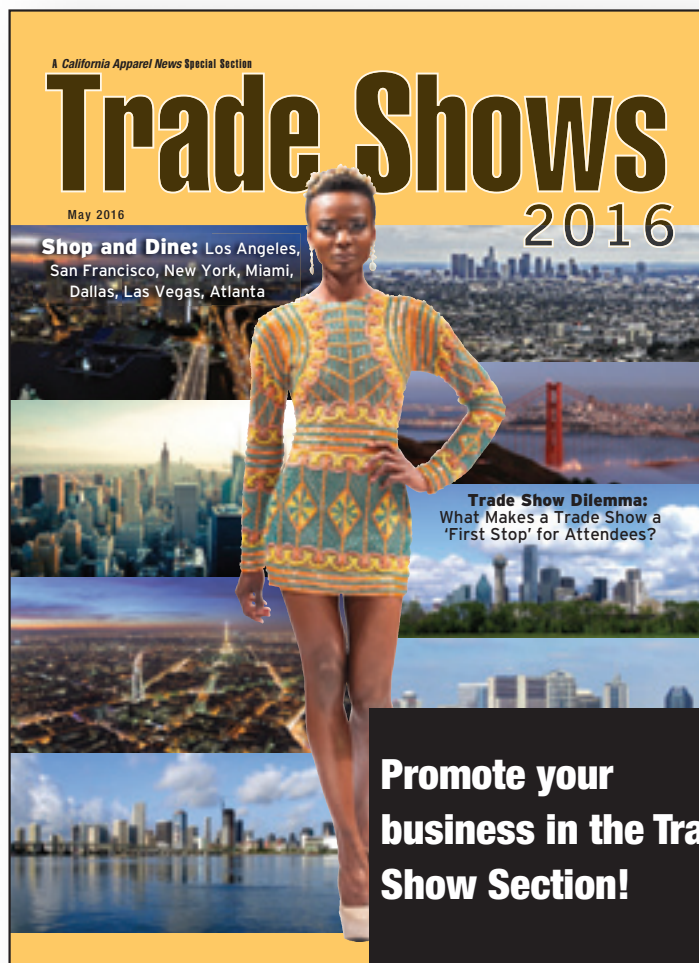
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## DENIM

### DSTLD *Continued from page 1*

Epstein and business partner and co-CEO Mark Lynn set out to build a DSTLD closet of “essential, timeless pieces.” Within the next year, Epstein estimates, DSTLD will have fully developed an “essential closet” of about 200 pieces for men and women. Once complete, DSTLD will begin filling in the closet with seasonal and capsule collections.

“We see DSTLD as a full lifestyle brand,” Epstein said.

perfect the styles and fit because the company sells direct to the end consumer rather selling through traditional wholesale channels.

“Traditional brands don’t look at tolerances the way we do,” Epstein said.

Roughley, who describes the look of DSTLD as “elevated basics in a limited color vocabulary,” is currently building the DSTLD collection, which eventually will include everything from jeans, tops, outerwear and hats to underwear, socks, gloves, bags and luggage.

“I came in to put merchandising in place where I felt there were holes,” he said.



To develop the collection, DSTLD hired former **Kill City** designer Paul Roughley in April. Roughley has been designing and building out the DSTLD wardrobe, but, as Epstein points out, the process takes time.

“We spent two years developing the women’s moto jacket,” Epstein said. “I bet we will have our moto jacket in the line for 10 or 15 years with minor modifications. “[And] we’ve done work on the denim. They are the right size right out of the box.”

DSTLD has the luxury of taking time to

DSTLD’s “elevated casual” style is “very much LA,” Roughley said. The brand’s signature style echoes the luxe jeans, tees and jackets style of California’s creative class.

DSTLD jeans, T-shirts and cut-and-sew knits are made locally while more-complicated items such as leather and outerwear are made in India or China, Roughley said. Other pieces are made in Mexico, Italy and Spain.

Roughley has been working with domestic and international suppliers to find factories that can meet DSTLD’s quality standards—



# DSTLD

*Continued from previous page*  
something Roughley said goes against typical sourcing criteria.

"The factories' habits lean to saving money and how can we make it cheaper," he said. "I would rather go back and say how can we make it better. You can spend a lot of time in the development process before you find out it's not right. It's a fact-finding mission, but we're not beholden to set deadlines."

Key items in the collection include leather moto jackets and bomber jackets for men and women. Jeans come in black and blue with a range of washes, and Roughley recently added a new men's style he described as "a non-sporting polo—so you don't feel like you're going to a golf course."

There is a hat program that includes a suede style with full-grain leather trim, a lamb's-wool style and another in silk. The hats have minimal branding and are finished inside in cotton twill or silk.

Prices reflect DSTLD's direct-to-consumer model. Hats are priced from \$30 for a French twill style to around \$40 for wool and \$60 for suede. The women's leather moto is currently the highest-priced item in the line at \$350. (Next, Roughley is looking to do a version in suede.) A men's lambskin coat is priced at \$300. A wool three-quarter-length coat with leather trim is \$175.

"There's no magic trick," Roughley said. "It is a \$500 coat that will be \$175 at retail. That goes across the board."

DSTLD introduced a limited-edition Japanese selvedge jean, which sold well at \$125. (Non-selvedge jeans sell for \$65.)

"We're looking at doing a selvedge jean jacket now," Roughley said.

Roughley splits his time between DSTLD's headquarters in West Hollywood, Calif., and a space within the **East 8th Trading Company** in downtown Los Angeles.



## Leveraging data and consumer investors

Epstein's background includes photography, design and creative direction while Lynn worked in the luxury hospitality business and e-commerce before launching DSTLD. The two are leveraging the data-rich benefits of e-

commerce to build DSTLD.

"We use a lot of real-time data to make decisions," Epstein said. "When you are direct-to-consumer, you own all the data. I can tell you what is selling in the past hour right on my cell phone."

All this data helps DSTLD forecast and reduce waste by concentrating on styles and sizes that are selling best. For example, Epstein said, DSTLD's black skinny jeans sell better in smaller sizes.

"The next evolution in the data is projecting success of the styles—where we should go next with the collection," he said.

This sophisticated analytical data helps Roughley, as well, the designer said.

"We are constantly updating availability," he said. "We know what the customer is looking at and in what region. We know how much is in the basket versus what they actually buy."

Last year, Epstein and Lynn began looking into finding investors in the company. In addition to investments from **Plus Capital**, **CAA Ventures**, **Wavemaker Partners**, **Baroda Ventures**, **Amplify.LA** and **CrunchFund**, the company also began soliciting small-scale investors thanks to provisions in the JOBS (Jumpstart Our Business Startups) Act of 2012, which opened up funding opportunities for small businesses in the U.S.

Information on investing in DSTLD can be found on the company's website, [www.dstld.com](http://www.dstld.com), or at [www.seedinvest.com](http://www.seedinvest.com).

"Anyone can invest as little as \$500, and we now have 1,000 customer investors," Epstein said. "What better brand-ambassadors program can you create?" ●

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