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THIS IS US: Hala Bahmet, the costume designer for the NBC TV show "This Is Us" (far right), and the show's star, Mandy Moore (center), sat down with journalist Lesley N.M. Blume (far left) at an exclusive event for alumni of the Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising at the design school's FIDM Museum and Galleries. For more from the event, see page 8.

TRADE SHOW REPORT

Serious Retailers Turn Out to Write Orders at Fashion Market Northern California

By Deborah Belgum Senior Editor

The August edition of the **Fashion Market Northern California** trade show is always the smallest of the event's five annual shows because it is held just days after the humongous apparel trade shows wrap up in Las Vegas.

So for the Aug. 20–22 run of FMNC, organizers decided to add a little something extra to the occasion for the people who do attend the three-day show at the **San Mateo Event Center**.

On the second day, a free barbecue dinner was served when the show remained open Monday evening for retailers to sip a glass of wine, dine outside and later stroll the aisles to check out new collections or vendors.

"It was a thank-you to the retailers and the exhibitors for being there," said Ute Wegmann, president of the FMNC executive committee and owner of the **Ute Wegmann Showroom** in Los Angeles. "The show is a little more casual than the other shows because the craziness of Las Vegas is behind us."

So a barbecue truck pulled up, picnic tables were set up outside and everyone spent more time at the show to explore new collections.

Retailers who attended the trade show weren't just checking out lines, they were very serious about writing orders and FMNC page 6

Nifty Genius: Menswear, Retail for All Seasons

By Andrew Asch Retail Editor

The **Nifty Genius** menswear label takes the term "lifestyle brand" very seriously.

Visit its e-commerce site (*www.nifty-genius.com*) and shoppers will see classic cars such as a 1956 **Ford** Thunderbird convertible for sale or a 1957 **Porsche** 356A coupe.

The Los Angeles-headquartered e-boutique is an authorized sales agent for a classic car dealership, said cofounder and CEO James Costa. Nifty Genius also serves as a mini department store. It sells furniture and apothecary as well as third-party brands such as **Android Homme** high-end sneakers, **Goorin** hats and **Jean Shop** premium denim.

"It's a complete curated lifestyle experience," Costa said. "In theory, you can buy a new bed or couch. We sell apparel. We sell accessories and apothecary on the site."

The site is focused on the Nifty Genius brand, which features contemporary looks inspired by traditional menswear. Since delivering its first collections for Fall 2016, the line has been sold at **Nordstrom** and Los Angeles–area boutiques such as **Ron Robinson** as well as leading boutiques such as **Roth**- man's in New York City, **Bill Hallman** in Atlanta and **E-Street Denim** in the Chicago area.

Nifty Genius aims to be a one-stop shop for men. While the e-emporium officially went live in May 2016, the brand is taking steps to build a bricks-and-mortar shop soon.

Nifty Genius is scheduled to open a physical store in the Jewelry District in downtown Los Angeles before the end of the first quarter of 2018.

"Downtown Los Angeles has not had a good contemporary store for men and women yet—something that is substantial, not just a pop-up," Costa said. "We need a legitimate, contemporary lifestyle store."

In the past two years, downtown Los Angeles—especially the Arts District and Fashion District neighborhoods—has increasingly attracted boutiques for mono-brand shops. If Nifty Genius could fill in a void for multi-brand contemporary shops, the upcoming shop also could serve as a way to pay for the brand's design and e-commerce offices. "We added a distribution channel without much overhead," he said. Costa said that **Nifty Genius** page 8

MADE IN AMERICA

Groceries Apparel Looks to Build a National Dyehouse in Southern California

By Andrew Asch Retail Editor

In a rapidly changing fashion market, Matt Boelk and Rob Lohman basically want to build a new segment from the ground up.

The entrepreneurs want to dye the basics styles from their Los Angeles–based brand, **Groceries Apparel**, in natural dyes. They figure that it's the only way to offer their customers a 100 percent ecologically sustainable product, which they call non-toxic. They also want to bring organic clothing from boutiques and sell it on more of a mass scale. Groceries is sold at **Nordstrom**, 800 independent boutiques and its own e-commerce site (*groceriesapparel.com*).

But there's a problem. The industry for natural dyes pigments made from vegetables, minerals, tree bark and the bodies of insects—basically shuttered in the 19th century

➡ Groceries page 7

Z Supply Taps Maui and Sons for Icons of Culture

By Alison A. Nieder Executive Editor

After taking a look at classic surf heritage brands **Ocean Pacific** and **Gotcha**, Irvine, Calif.–based **Z Supply LLC** has unveiled the next brand in its **Icons of Culture** series: **Maui and Sons**.

The debut Summer 2018 women's collection will bow at the upcoming **Surf Expo** show in Orlando, Fla.

"We experienced such success with the launch of our **Op by Icons of Culture** and **Gotcha by Icons of Culture** collections this past summer that it was a natural progression to bring on the Maui and Sons brand," said Greg Garrett, Z Supply LLC's co-owner. "We're working closely with the Maui and Sons owners to bring back original fabrications and designs and pay proper homage to the lifestyle of the '80s."

Founded in 1980, Maui and Sons is known for its cookie

🍽 Maui page 2



Who Will Be the Winners and Losers This Season in Holiday Shopping?

Back-to-School shopping is barely over, but retail gurus are already making predictions for the holiday shopping season.

Fung Global Retail & Technology recently conducted a survey and found that millennials this season will be shopping primarily at Amazon.com, Target and T.J. Maxx while older consumers will be circling the parking lots at stores such as Walmart, Kohl's and Costco.

Target

Kohl's

Walmart

Best Buy

Macy's

Costco

eBay

Sears

T.J. Maxx

(CPenney

Sam's Club

Other retailer(s)

Nordstrom/Nordstrom Rack

U.S. Holiday Shoppers: Retailers They Expect to Buy Gifts

From This Holiday Season

28.7%

33.5%

24.6%

19.8%

19.5%

18.0%

17.1%

15.9%

11.2%

10.3%

9.2%

But don't be deceived. Online shopping will win out over hitting the stores and rifling through those stacks of neatly folded sweaters in search of the perfect gift. The survey found that 82 percent of shoppers will let their fingers do the clicking on their computers to buy holiday gifts compared to 77 percent of shoppers who anticipate actually walking through a store door.

Some 75 percent of survey respondents

Amazon

Target

Walmart

74.8%

Source: FGRT

48.2%

47.6%

CALIFORNIA LABEL PRODUCTS expect to turn to Amazon.com for gifts this holiday season, especially if they are Amazon Prime members, which gets them free delivery on millions of goods.

The online/in-store gap is most pronounced among younger age groups. Some 85 percent of holiday shoppers between the ages of 30 to 44 expect to shop online, reflecting the fact that many are parents and have less time for shopping. The main reason

89.8%

Source: FGRT

74.8%

U.S. Holiday Shoppers: Top Five Retailers They Expect to

Buy Gifts From This Holiday Season, by Prime Membership

50.9%

48.2%

47.6%

40.1%

30.5%

shoppers are going online is to avoid the holiday crowds. Those who shop in a store prefer to touch, see or try on products in person.

Holiday sales should be up slightly this season. About 6.7 percent of U.S. shoppers said they will be spending much more and 16 percent indicated they will be a little more generous this year than last. Nearly 50 percent said their holiday budget will be on track with last year's.

That positive shopping vibe is countered by the 11.4 percent who said they would trim their budgets slightly this year and another nearly 10 percent who noted they will be spending much less.

Shoppers, it turns out, are lured by two things. They look for products that have good quality, but they are also on the hunt for lower prices. The convenience of instock products and stores that are nearby are other factors when figuring out where to shop.

Surprisingly, the option to buy online and pick up in a store wasn't that popular because most people don't want the hassle of dealing with holiday crowds and jam-packed parking lots.— *Deborah Belgum*

Retail Healthier Than Many Think, Research Group Says

IHL Group, a partner of **National Retail Federation**, the Washington, D.C.–based trade group, released a paper on Aug. 30 that said that tough times for retail have been greatly exaggerated.

In a webinar for reporters, IHL President Greg Buzek said that American retailers opened 4,080 more stores than were closed in 2017. U.S. retailers also plan to open more than 5,500 in 2018.

"The negative narrative that has been out there about the death of retail is patently false," Buzek said in a prepared statement. "The so-called 'retail apocalypse' makes for a great headline, but it's simply not true. Over 4,000 more stores are opening than closing among big chains, and when smaller retailers are included, the net gain is well over 10,000 new stores. As well, through the first seven months of the year, retail sales are up \$121.6 billion, an amount roughly equivalent to the total annual retail sales of The Netherlands."

IHL's research considered the big picture in retail. Their research considered growth in convenience stores, fast-food restaurants and mass merchandisers. For retailers in the

Maui Continued from page 1

logo, Sharkman character and neon colors. Richard Harrington became the first international licensee of Maui and Sons in 1983 and six years later purchased the brand. In the ensuing 28 years, Harrington has built the business into a licensing company for the iconic brand with an extensive international sales presence in more than 100 countries. In recent

years, the company has launched **Maui and Sons Men**'s heritage products in key retailers such as **Jack's Surf Shop, Ron Jon, Sun Diego** and **PacSun**.

Harrington struck a one-year licensing deal with Z Supply, which will design and manufacture the capsule collection of women's screen-printed tees and sportswear. The women's collection, which will be retail priced from \$34 to \$86, will be sold in specialty stores and specialty chains across the U.S.

"Maui and Sons is proud to partner with Z Supply LLC and

join the brand's quality roster of heritage California lifestyle brands," said Maui and Sons brand director Blake Harrington. "We are confident the very talented and experienced team there will introduce a thoughtfully curated and exceptionally designed women's line based around the same concepts, prints and graphics pulled from Maui and Sons' carefully preserved archives.

Z Supply first launched the Icons of Culture series in January with the Ocean Pacific and Gotcha collections. The vintage-inspired collections were developed with archival material and input from Op founder Jim Jenks and Gotcha founder Michael Tomson apparel category, store closings were a major factor. In one webinar slide, IHL counted 400 department-store closings and 3,133 closings for specialty softgoods.

The company also noted that all retail categories but department stores have a ratio greater than 1.0 for companies opening rather than closing. It claimed that department-store openings were basically flat. Specialty softgoods retailers were ready for growth of 1.3 percent.—Andrew Asch

as well as the brand owners **Iconix Brand Group** and **Perry Ellis International Inc.** The two launch collections bowed exclusively at **Urban Outfitters** earlier this year. In 2018, the collections will be sold in a broad range of specialty boutique partners and specialty chains nationwide. The mission of the collection is to "tell the stories of legendary brands, musicians, artists and photographers of the past and present that helped shaped our society then and now." With an emphasis on au-



thenticity, Icons of Culture takes inspiration in the original styles, artworks and fabrications.

The Icons of Culture Graphics collection features classic musicians such as Janis Joplin, David Bowie, The Police, Blondie and Wham! as well as theater, film and television properties such as "Lost in Space" and other partnerships with the Santa Cruz Surfing Club Preservation Society, "Endless Summer" artist John Van Hamersveld and rock photographer Tom Gundlefinger O'Neal.

Icons of Culture is part of Z Supply's portfolio of brands, which includes the Black Swan, White Crow, Others Follow, Rag Poets and Z Supply labels.



Paul Schnell, Designer for Don Loper, Ernst Strauss, Da-Rue of California, 90

Designer Paul Schnell died earlier this year at the age of 90. Best known as the designer for **Ernst Strauss**, a Los Angeles–based manufacturer of high-end women's apparel in the 1960s, '70s and '80s, Schnell's last job in the industry was as designer at **Da-Rue California Inc.**, the maker of upscale updated apparel.

Schnell spent 15 years with Da-Rue before retiring in 2004, said company President Richard McElrath, who described Schnell as "one of the great ones."

"He was the most talented guy I ever met," McElrath said. "We were lucky to have him."

Schnell was born in Southern California but moved to Denmark with his family as a child. Schnell's Danish father was a tailor and taught his son the art of tailoring and design. A gifted artist from an early age, Paul Schnell attended the **Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts** before enlisting in the U.S. military at the outbreak of World War II, according to his son Brian Schnell.

After the war ended, Schnell returned to Southern California, where he landed a job with famed costume designer and necktie designer Don Loper. After opening and running his own collection, Schnell joined the design department at Ernst Strauss in 1965. For nearly 20 years, Schnell created



Paul Schnell

the look of the label: understated sophistication.

"At Ernst Strauss, he created everything new each season with no repeats," McElrath said. "He felt at their prices and looks—Ultrasuede coats with chinchilla collars and cuffs his customers, top specialty stores in the country plus Neiman Marcus, Saks Fifth Avenue and Bloomingdale's, deserved all new fashion every season, which was exhausting."

It was at Ernst Strauss that Schnell met his wife, Donna, who was working as a model for the company.

His son Brian recalled taking a class trip to visit his father at the Ernst Strauss factory in downtown Los Angeles.

"It was a small class, 12 children, and we all got on the bus to Ernst Strauss and heard him speak to us about design," Brian Schnell said.

The younger Schnell recalled his father's signature looks, the Ultrasuede jackets and suits in the 1970s and the shoulder-padded styles and power suits in the 1980s. He remembered seeing the racks of fabrics—including the furs—at the factory, remembering a fur coat Paul Schnell brought home for Donna, who wore it to the opera before deciding later to

LEGAL

become an animal advocate and eschew fur.

Paul Schnell retired in 1985 but shortly returned to work at **Roth Le Cover California** before joining Da-Rue in 1989.

"He would sit in front of a blank piece of paper every day and sketch and design clothes," Brian Schnell said.

In the 1987 book "California Fashion Art and Style" Paul Schnell was quoted as saying, "The hallmarks of quality clothing are fabric, fit, styling and workmanship. The fabric is the backbone that unites the collection. The woman who cares about clothing can choose to be a polyester princess with closets full of



An Ernst Strauss design that appeared in *California Apparel News* in May 1976

mediocrity or invest in a few garments of great distinction." Schnell died on July 5, which was his 90th birthday. He

was preceded in death by his wife, Donna, who passed away in April, as well as his eldest son, Kevin. He is survived by his son Brian.—*Alison A. Nieder*

Kitson Founder Files New Lawsuit

Retailer Fraser Ross filed a lawsuit in July against its former executive Christopher Lee, lender Salus Capital Partners LLC, HGI Asset Management Holdings LLC and Spencer Spirit Holdings LLC.

The suit, filed in Superior Court in California, is the latest in a series Ross has filed regarding the unexpected closure of the **Kitson** retail chain two years ago. Ross founded Kitson in 2000 on LA's Robertson Boulevard and over the years grew the business into a 19-store chain with an e-commerce business. In December 2015, the business announced plans to shutter all stores. Ross told the *California Apparel News* in 2016 that he was no longer with the business at the time of the chain's closure. Ross has since opened a new retail store, **Kitross**, in the same location on Robertson Boulevard as the original Kitson.

The latest lawsuit details Ross's account of the events that led up to Kitson's closure, including a "life-threatening illness" Ross suffered in 2012 "that left him in a medically induced coma and required years of recovery and rehabilitation."

During that time, according to the lawsuit, Lee, Salus and Spencer's "seized on [Ross's] illness as an occasion to prey upon [Ross], steal his money and ruin his business."

Among the charges in Ross's complaint: that Lee and Salus "conspired" to "rob [Ross] of more than \$2 million of his own personal funds," which Ross had loaned the company to pay down Kitson's line of credit, according to the suit.

The suit also alleges that Salus and Spencer's "quadrupled orders to Kitson's vendors and even opened a new, 9,000-square-foot store in **Fashion Valley** [in] San Diego just three weeks prior to shutting down every boutique nationwide—all in a guise to lead vendors to believe they would be paid." Describing this as a "pump and dump" scheme, the suit alleges that Salus and Spencer's "refused to pay the vendors for their merchandise and profited off the stockpiled merchandise in the liquidation."

Ross's lawsuit further claims that Salus loaned Kitson money "without the commercial lending license required under California Financial Code."

Salus had issued a \$15 million revolving line of credit in May 2013, the suit states. Salus is a subsidiary of the Harbinger Group/HGI, which is named in the suit because HGI, which was funding Salus, "provided no more capital to Salus for its loan portfolio" after Salus's "largest borrower, **Radio Shack**," filed bankruptcy, the suit states.

According to the lawsuit, Salus brought in Spencer's in mid-2015 to "improve its security position" as a secondary lender and 'infuse an additional \$4 million into Kitson." The suit claims Spencer's also "had no California lending license."

Spencer's then installed its own personnel at Kitson, the suit states. Kitson employees were told "they could not pay vendors for merchandise without approval from Spencer's personnel," according to the suit.

Kitson closed all doors in early 2016 after a series of liquidation sales.

The lawsuit lists "numerous examples of Salus and Spencer's stockpiling high-value goods to inflate the company inventory, when such merchandising decisions made no sense for Kitson from a sales standpoint." For example, according to the lawsuit, "Salus and Spencer's amassed an excess of designer sunglasses in the middle of winter, when sunglasses were obviously summer merchandise."

According to the lawsuit, Salus and Spencer's actions have "resulted in severe reputational and financial harm to [Ross]." Since returning to retail with the opening of Kitross, Ross said vendors have "either refused to furnish merchandise to Kitross or required [Ross] to pay thousands of dollars in upfront costs for the merchandise—all before it is sold," the lawsuit states, continuing, "the vendors believe they will be burned by Kitross because they associate [Ross]'s new boutique with Salus and Spencer's fraudulent 'pump and dump' scheme at Kitson."

The lawsuit includes examples of complaints and comments Ross has received from vendors regarding the association between Ross and Salus and Spencer's.

Ross originally filed the lawsuit in 2016. At that time, Lee said in court papers that he denied the allegations in the lawsuit and that he is not legally liable for the loss and damages alleged by Ross.

The current amended complaint was filed in July and named Salus Capital Partners, HGI Asset Management Holdings and Spencer Spirit Holdings as defendants. The court has given the companies until Sept. 12 to respond to the charges.

Calls to Spencer Spirit Holdings' office in Egg Harbor Township, N.J., HRG's investor-relations department and emails to attorneys for Salus, HGI, Spencer Spirit and Lee were not returned at press time.



POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: CALIFORNIA APPAREL NEWS, Customer Service, PO Box 4419, Orlando, FL 32802. CALIFORNIA AP-PAREL NEWS[®]: (ISSN 0008-0896) Published by TLM PUBLISHING INC. APPAREL NEWS GROUP Publishers of: California Apparel News[®], Market Week Magazine[®], New Resources[®], Waterwea[®], New York Apparel News[®], Dallas Apparel News[®], Apparel News South[®], Chicago Apparel News[®], The Apparel News (National), Bridal Apparel News[®], Southwest Images[®], Stylist[®] and MAN (Men's Apparel News[®]). Properties of TLM PUBLISHING INC., California Market Center, 110 E. Ninth St., Suite A777, Los Angeles, CA 90079, (213) 627-3737. © Copyright 2017 TLM Publishing Inc. All rights reserved. Published weekly except semi-weekly first week of January, second week of July and first week of September. Periodicals Postage Paid at Los Angeles, CA, and additional entry offices. The publishers of the paper do not assume responsibility for statements made by their advertisers in business competition. Opinions expressed in signed editorial columns or articles do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the publishers. Subscription rates: U.S.: 1 year, \$89, 2 years, \$140. Foreign: \$180 U.S. funds (1-year subscription only). Single-copy price \$2.99. Send subscription requests to: California Apparel News, Customer Service, PO Box 4419, Orlando, FL 32802 or visit www.apparelnews.net. For customer service, call (866) 207-1448.

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FBI's Harder Among the New Team at Yonduur

By Alison A. Nieder Executive Editor

Frances Harder has a new gig. The founder and president of **Fashion Business Inc.**, the fashion nonprofit that recently shuttered after nearly 20 years, has joined the board of advisors at **Yonduur**, an online marketplace for closeouts, overstock and excess inventory.

In addition to Harder, Yonduur's advisory



board includes Deanna Hodges, the founder and head of operations and strategy at Yonduur; Abinesh Singh, founder of New Delhi, India–based **Benevellient Technologies**; Todd Hershberg, former president and chief marketing officer at digital-media consultancy **Quantimark Marketing**; and finance executive Philippos Athanasiades. Harder will assist with business development for

Yonduur, while Singh will lead the company's programming, security and technology operations. Hershberg will oversee marketing, and Athanasiades will oversee finance. Hodges will continue as head of operations and strategy for Yonduur, which she founded in 2016 and officially launched earlier this year.

Yonduur operates as a platform for brands to move closeout inventory and overstock goods through a series of channels, includ-

ing business-to-business, business-to-consumer and business to a range of charities. "[Yonduur] allows brands to move dead

goods out of their space and sell them through multiple channels simultaneously," Hodges said.

For example, a brand can list goods on Yonduur for sale through wholesale and retail channels at the same time. The site will only show wholesale prices and availability through the wholesale channel and inventory levels will be updated in real time.

"When retailers and wholesalers and distributors and agents log in, they only see the [bulk] price and the quantity," Hodges said.

As consumers purchase items from the consumer side of the site, the inventory levels will be reflected on the wholesale side.

"If you're a distributor and you say, 'I can't do 100 T-shirts, but I can do 50,' you can make an offer to the company [for] 50 instead of 100. Or you can wait for the individual consumers to buy enough where it's down to 50. But you may miss out because somebody else may buy it," Hodges said.

There's also a charity component for brands that would rather donate the goods in exchange for a tax deduction, Hodges said. Companies can decide to donate to a number of philanthropic organizations including the Los Angeles Mission, Working Wardrobes, the Scottish Rites Center in San Francisco and Alexandria House.

"If you want to donate goods, you can look for something that's close to your heart," Hodges said. "We are always looking at new charities that could benefit from being a part of Yonduur. We will be adding new charities as we grow and see a fit."

In the company's latest development,

Yonduur recently struck a deal with a distributor in Senegal, who will buy excess inventory by the pound.

"He is really a last step if you just want to move them super, super fast," Hodges said. "He takes containers to Senegal and distributes [the goods] in Africa. That opens another door for us to move goods that wouldn't normally be sold."

Logistics and fulfillment

Most goods sold on Yonduur will be warehoused and shipped from the company's warehouses in Southern California and New Jersey, which allows Hodges and her team to verify brand authenticity and inventory levels and provide fulfillment to wholesale customers and consumers. There is also

a drop-ship option for brands that want to ship directly to the buyer, but Yonduur has a set of strict rules regarding fulfillment. Brands that miss two shipments are banned from the site, Hodges said.

"We never own the goods," she said. "We facilitate the marketing and sale of the goods. We provide a platform and we also provide logistics. Our goal is [for] you to

forget about these goods. We're going to market them. You're going to collect the money."

Hodges got the idea for Yonduur after spending nearly 30 years in the apparel industry as a manufacturer of her own brands as well as privatelabel goods.

"T've worked in almost every capacity of this business," she said. "I've had my own brands. I've manufactured private label. I have physically run production. I have sourced everything. I

have run my own warehouse." Hodges said two challenges that affect

every mass manufacturer are cash flow and inventory management.

"If you handle your inventory management, your cash flow doesn't take a hit because you're not sitting on goods. They're not aging out and turning into dead goods," she said.

But more often, the hectic pace of production can lead to overruns that take up valuable space in a company's warehouse.

"The season runs out and you shove a few boxes to the side and say, 'I'll deal with those later.' You're busy and it's not enough to really deal with at the moment," Hodges said. "The next thing you know, you have thousands of units taking up your warehouse space. You're paying a lot of money for these goods to sit there and age out."

Often the excess inventory includes a random assortment of styles, colors and sizes, making it harder to sell the goods through traditional closeout and off-price channels.

"One year, I ended up with 10,000 units like that," Hodges said. "There wasn't more than eight of any style, any color. I had five of this, three of that and one of that. What do you do with those goods?"

A manufacturer can try to sell excess inventory like this directly to their customers.

"Do you know how many warehouse sales I've had, how many sample sales I've had?" Hodges said. "But then you still have racks of samples left, duplicates and things that never ended up in the line. What do you do with that stuff? There's new samples and Yonduur page 8



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TRADE SHOW REPORT

FMNC Continued from page 1

were on the prowl for Immediates and Spring merchandise, exhibitors said.

"We made appointments and had a really, really good show," said Mary Birnbaum, co-owner of **Ginni.Mary Sales**, a company in San Anselmo, Calif., that represents a number of womenswear brands such as **Angela Mara**, **Renaur**, **Jana** and **Cativa**. "We always have a good show in August."

That might seem counterintuitive because so many store owners head to Las Vegas in mid-August, when they maneuver their way through nearly 20 trade shows with thousands of booths displaying every kind of clothing and accessories categories you can imagine.

Several years ago, the organizers of Fashion Market Northern California didn't hold the August show because they felt it was too soon after the Las Vegas trade shows. But several retailers complained. Ever since then, the show organizers have been dedicated to making sure the August event happens and retailers have been committed to coming.



The Ginni.Mary booth



Karen Anderson in her Karen Anderson Showroom booth

New exhibitor Tina Gleave of Silk Squirrel

Jacqueline Stone, the Northern California rep for the Canadian line **Sympli**, said she traditionally does the **Womens-Wear in Nevada** show in Las Vegas and often sees the same retailers who later come to FMNC. "I had many customers who came to Las Vegas. They took notes and then they came to San Mateo and wrote orders," she said.

The San Mateo show is definitely an appointment-driven show. There are not many retailers who wander around with-



Maria Janeff in her Maria Janeff Designs booth



nitely appointment-driven." Hannah Skooglund—who represents several lines including Lisette-L, Neon Buddha, Pure Handknit and Paula Carvalho—relies on appointments for her business. "I don't get a lot of walk-in traffic or lookie-

little slow for us," he said. "It is defi-

loos," she said. "All the business was based on appointments. The people who were there were there to get business done."

For several years now, salespeople representing clothing collections have said that the perfect retail price for stores falls just below the \$100 mark. And that was proving to be true at the San Mateo show, where exhibitors felt retailers were still cautious about their budgets. "Anything under \$100 is the sweet spot," Birnbaum said.

To appeal to cautious retailers, Lisette-L, a Canadian brand based in Montreal, reduced its wholesale price points by \$10 on essentials. That trimmed the wholesale cost from \$50.75 to \$40.75. "That way retailers can get a higher margin or move more of their merchandise," Skooglund said.

Stores were on the hunt for unique and different items that might lure shoppers to open their wallets. That is probably why new exhibitor Tina Gleave, owner of **Silk Squirrel**, did so well.

The Northern California artist sells scarves, wraps, shirts, vests and kimonos using her own artwork, which has been digitized and reproduced on silk fabric. Scarves retail for \$60, wraps go for \$90, and resort shirts sell for \$120.

Even though people said show traffic was down a bit, Gleave had 25 stores place orders, and she nabbed two new sales representatives who wanted to carry her line. "I sell my items as wearable art, and stores were excited about the artsy look," she said. "It was a very strong show for me." •



MADE IN AMERICA

Groceries Continued from page 1

and was replaced with synthetic dyes, which were preferred by 19th-century consumers because of their long-lasting properties. But more than a century later, there are heavy costs to pay. Environmental groups such as Greenpeace have criticized synthetic dyes for creating environmental havoc such as polluting rivers across the world. In 2012, Greenpeace lobbied fashion brands to commit to a zero discharge of hazardous chemicals in waterways by 2020.

The business for natural dyes is in its \overline{B} infancy in the United States, and it's not that big of a market around the world. Lohman estimates that about 5 percent

of Groceries styles are dyed with natural dyes. To reach its goal, Groceries is partnering with a dyehouse to expand the capacity to make natural dyes. There are a handful of natural dyehouses in America. Brands such as Patagonia and Eileen Fisher use natural dyes.



Plants used for natural dyes. From left, madder root, sulphur cosmos and indigo.

Lohman and Boelk have set no deadline for converting their entire label to a naturally dyed line. But Lohman, still dressed in shorts and tee shirt like the UC Santa Barbara undergraduate he was when he first got interested in the environmental movement, said it was crucial to commit to

natural dyes.

This is an extremely toxic industry," Lohman said. "It's about time we discover a holistic model that accounts for all impacts, not just monetary. I set a path for Groceries that we either achieve a 100 percent level of nontoxic, local and ethical garments or we shut down the business. I'll be kicking and screaming trying to make this happen.'

Making it happen might take the mental agility of an inventor, the aesthetic sense of an artist and the will of an entrepreneur, said Kathy Hattori, who has worked to revive the business of natural dyes with her Seattlebased company, Botanical Colors LLC.

"It's definitely an art to take and coax color out of a root or a leaf or an insect,' Hattori said.

The infrastructure for a mass natural dye business has not been built yet in America.



Prominent U.S. brands have found success with natural dyes, Hattori said. But the subject is off the radar for many companies

Lohman estimated that prices for naturally dyed goods are more than 15 percent to 30 percent higher than clothing made using synthetic dyes. He forecasts that when more dyehouses make more natural dyes, prices will come down.

He and Boelk currently experiment with natural dyes at a studio in downtown Los Angeles. The 1,200-square-foot space features two washing machines and two dryers. They are experimenting with natural colors such as a blue indigo. It may be extra work, but Lohman prefers it. He doesn't have to worry about

offshore factories cutting corners and dealing with labor and environmental practices that would be illegal in America. "It's not possible unless I am there every day. We have a commitment to do everything in the United States." •



Matt Boelk, left, and Rob Lohman of Groceries Apparel





Designing the Look of 'This Is Us'





Jermel Nakia and Hala Bahmet

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DENIM WASH DEVELOPMENT NOVELTY TREATMENTS

Members of the cast of "This Is Us" were on hand for an Aug. 28 event at the Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising, held in the FIDM Museum and Galleries, amid the costumes of the 11th annual "Art of Television Costume Design" exhibition.

"This Is Us" costume designer Hala Bahmet and actress Mandy Moore, who plays one of the NBC show's leads, sat down with journalist Lesley N.M. Blume to discuss the look of the show. Fellow cast member Jermel Nakia was also in attendance at the exclusive event for FIDM alumni.-Alison A. Nieder

Textile Design Winner

Megan Weitz, a textile design student at the Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising, received the Hank Pola Scholarship at an Aug. 28 reception at the design school's FIDM Museum and Galleries in downtown Los Angeles

The event was presided over by Ilse Metchek, president of the California Fashion Association. Metchek established the scholarship fund at FIDM four years ago in memory of her late husband, Hank

NEWS

Pola, who was a longtime member of Los Angeles' textile apparel community and past board member of the Textile Association of Los Angeles (TALA).

Pola's grandson Spencer Sherman presented Weitz with the award, noting that his grandfather was dedicated to helping young people in their careers in the fashion industry. Sherman thanked Toni Hohberg,



Hank Pola Scholarship recipient and FIDM textile design student Megan Weitz

FIDM founder and president, and the staff at FIDM for allowing the family to present the award in Pola's name, "which keeps his memory alive for us all."

Association

Megan Weitz and Ilse Metchek, president of the California Fashion

Weitz, who is pursuing a bachelor of arts in design at FIDM, showed examples of her designs, including coordinating "Chinese Peony" floral patterns in soft pink and navy.—A.A.N.

Nifty Genius Continued from page 1

he found a deal where a storefront was included in rent for e-commerce space and an office.

The upcoming physical shop will be managed by Chanita Fondacaro, Nifty Genius' sales director, who also handles e-commerce. The shop will be part of the company's multifaceted business plan.

Nifty Genius started in 2015 when Jared Cook, a tight end for the Oakland Raiders National Football League team, pitched an idea for a fashion line to Costa, a designer and entrepreneur. Costa produced a men's clothing label called Carpe Denim, which was

sold at Nordstrom. He also co-founded the Trafik trade show, which ran in Miami from 2005 to 2009.

Costa liked Cook's idea. He also pitched the footballer the idea of doing a mini department store online. Cook serves as the brand's financial partner. Cleveland-headquartered Larry Lemons is also a cofounder.

Significant pieces in the Nifty Genius clothing line include the "J.P. Chino." Costa described it as a modern-cut, four-way-stretch trouser, which is offered in seven different colors. It retails for \$105 and is wholesaled for \$39. Costa said.

The inside waistband features a Japanese-

made Ultrasuede fabric. "It's a modern fit with traditional suiting details. The Ultrasuede makes it more contemporary." Ultrasuede doesn't

crack or fade. It is water resistant, Costa said. It's also a focus of branding. The Ultrasuede fabric

appears in Nifty Genius' labeling as well as its clothing, including vests, blaz-ers and knits. Other details in the line include a utilitarian look, a "coin" pocket in the thigh area of the J.P. Coin chino pant. It can be used to store a phone or, its stated purpose, coins.

Other Nifty Genius looks include spreadcollar shirts that come in a range of patterns and colors. They retail for \$115. Other looks include flannel shirts, walking shorts, jogging pants and a peaked-lapel blazer.

Costa forecasted the brand will introduce a women's line, maybe for Spring '19. It also plans to expand its e-commerce internationally.



FROM A NIFTY WORLD: Jared Cook, left, and James Costa



tags

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COURTESY

James Costa at Nifty Genius' Project trade-show booth

TECHNOLOGY

Yonduur Continued from page 1

new duplicates coming in every two months. It piles up fast."

The off-price marketplace is also very competitive, Hodges said, with many offprice merchants preferring to work with just the top brands rather than smaller, indie brands with smaller quantities to closeout.

Hodges said a jobber friend of hers was recently approached by two well-known denim brands with 100,000 units to closeout. The jobber ended up taking the goods for \$1 per piece, she said.

"They're going with the top of the top and everyone else is left behind-the indie brands, the people who have lower volumes of closeouts," Hodges said. "If you have one piece of something, you can put it up on Yonduur."

Consumer perks

On the consumer side of Yonduur, Hodges has created a \$99-per-year VIP program that gives VIPs early access to flash sales and discounts on goods and shipping. There's also a stylist program to offer recommendations from among Yonduur's offerings. And there's a gift calendar to remind consumers to shop. The site will also recommend suggestions for birthday, anniversary or baby-shower gifts.

"We're starting with apparel, accessories and soft home goods," Hodges said. "But anything that's mass manufactured is going to have overstock."

Hodges said she's been approached to sell everything from furniture to real estate, neither of which Yonduur is currently prepared to handle, but the company is looking into it.

"It's basically for people that want to move goods really fast and they want to get some money out of it instead of sitting on it," she said.

For more information about Yonduur, visit www.yonduur.com.



NEWS

Shafer Exits Agave

Jeff Shafer, the founder of Agave, a premiumdenim line that has been sold at retailers such as Nordstrom, recently announced that he was leaving the label after a 15-year run.

Shafer had most recently served as Agave's creative director after Los Angeles-headquartered XCVI purchased the company for an undisclosed amount in May 2016. On August 1, Shafer posted a message on his Facebook and LinkedIn accounts announcing that he was going to leave Agave to start working on new ventures.

'I have worked very hard to integrate the two organizations (Agave and XCVI) to ensure the investment worked for the new owners," he said. "Given the state

OC Fashion Week Starts

Week will aim to balance trade,

consumer and glitz when the bi-

annual fashion event unveils a

series of shows Sept. 5-9. OC

Fashion Week's Spring/Sum-

mer 2018 shows will be held in

venues around Newport Beach,

around the world are forecast

to attend, said Ingrid Nielsen,

a spokeswoman for the event.

More than 20 fashion bloggers

have confirmed to report on the

More than 1,000 members

Retail buyers from boutiques

Calif.

event.

Orange County Fashion of the public are forecast to at-

of the industry, I left Agave in amazing shape." Shafer said that he made a commitment to XCVI

to work a transitional period in order to ensure that Agave's brand identity, product quality and retail customers would be in the best condition for the new owners.

Agave started business as a men's-focused line. XCVI distinguished itself as a women's-focused company.

Along with other ventures, he will continue manufacturing the denim line Bluer, which is made in Los Angeles and sold at its direct-to-consumer website (www.bluerdenim.com).—Andrew Asch

Nordstrom. She has dressed

Hollywood actresses such as

Jasmine Guy, Halle Berry and

Jada Pinkett Smith. This will be

Hunter's first collection in years

to show at the opening-day cer-

emony on Sept. 5. The event will

be staged on a large yacht on

Lido Marina Village in New-

Week will wrap up with a new

kids' fashion runway event. It's

scheduled to take place Sept. 9 at

Ralph Brennan's Jazz Kitchen

in Anaheim, Calif. Featured de-

signers include Egypt Ufele, a

are constantly added to its collection, and color stories

Orange County Fashion

port Beach, Calif.

are updated seasonally

Jeff Shafer

designer who featured anti-bullying campaign messages in her ready-to-wear.

A couture night on Sept. 7 will take place at the Hyatt Regency Resort & Spa and will feature runway shows from designers Llenuel Fro, Mildred Aroche and Danny Nguyen.

Also scheduled is a resortwear-collection night at the Island Hotel in Newport Beach with designers such as Lili Nguyen. Also, scheduled is a streetwear-scene show featuring styles of Japanese designer Masaki Masuko.—A.A.

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mediately after shows from the

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ionweek.com) or a special site.

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