

CALIFORNIA Apparel News

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SCOTT RINALDI

OC FASHION WEEK: Gigi Hunter gained notoriety for her knits and glamorous crochet pieces that were seen on celebrities such as Halle Berry, Jada Pinkett Smith and Jasmine Guy. After a hiatus, the designer's self-named brand, Gigi Hunter Collection, staged a comeback at Orange County Fashion Week, which ran Sept. 5-9 in venues around Newport Beach, Calif. The Gigi Hunter Collection took a bow at the fashion week's opening-night event on Sept. 5 in Newport Beach. The runway show was held on a yacht sailing into the Newport Beach Harbor from a dock at the Lido Marina Village retail center.

Getting Back Into the Apparel Business After a 20-Year Hiatus

By Deborah Belgum Senior Editor

Step into Trishia Grace's compact atelier in West Hollywood and you will see her world of fashion influenced by delicate fabrics and femininity.

Inside a mere 250 square feet of space, there are long rolling racks of colorful dresses that evoke the days of old Hollywood when women spent time developing a wardrobe that played up their desire to be glamorous.

"I wanted to develop something that was classic and could live forever. It was a style I had been wearing for a long time," said the fashion designer, who has just launched her first self-named collection for Spring/Summer 2018 after a 20-year

break from the fashion industry.

Many of Grace's dresses have a billowy, unconstructed look that take inspiration from the slips and negligees the fashion designer collected during her trips to vintage stores and flea markets in the Los Angeles area when she was first contemplating whether to do her own collection.

Dresses come in long-tiered looks, caftan-like silhouettes or flowy tunics that can be worn as a dress or paired with a pair of pants or jeans. Other styles include hand-dyed slips that can go solo or be placed under a dress.

Chiffon is the predominant fabric for many of the dresses because of its lightweight quality, and bright prints permeate

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After Tough Times, Gap Announces New Stores and Closures

By Andrew Asch Retail Editor

After a long period of restructuring, **Gap Inc.**, often described as the world's largest specialty retailer, is charting a course for growth.

At the Sept. 6 **Goldman Sachs 24th Annual Global Retailing Conference**, the San Francisco-headquartered retailer announced that it would open more physical stores and continue to build its online and digital retail, said Art Peck, Gap's president and chief executive officer.

"Over the past two years we've made significant progress evolving how we operate—starting with getting great product into the hands of our customers more consistently and faster than ever before," Peck said in a statement. "With much of this foundation in place, we're now shifting our focus to growth. We will leverage our iconic brands and significant scale to deliver growth by shifting to where our customers are shopping—online, value and active."

Over the next three years, the company expects to open 70 new stores. A lot of growth will be driven by its **Old Navy** and its **Athleta** brands. In a company statement, Gap Inc.

forecast that in the next few years Old Navy would exceed \$10 billion in net sales and Athleta will exceed more than \$1 billion in net sales.

The growth will be fueled in part by those brands' online and mobile channels and expansion of physical stores in the U.S.

Gap Inc. also is scheduled to close 200 of its **Gap** name-sake stores and **Banana Republic** locations that have been underperforming.

Also over the next three years Gap Inc. will increase its investment in online and digital retail. Investment will be focused on areas such as direct fulfillment capacity, personalization, omni-channel services, artificial intelligence and various data-driven consumer experiences.

For the second quarter of fiscal year 2017, which was released Aug. 26, same-store sales increased 1 percent compared with a 2 percent decrease for the second quarter of 2016, according to financial documents. It was a third consecutive quarter of sales growth. Net sales for the second quarter decreased 1 percent in a year-over-year comparison. Net sales were \$3.8 billion for the quarter. ●

How Many More Laps Are Left for the Athleisure Trend?

By Deborah Belgum Senior Editor

Financial gurus around the United States have started to ask whether the prosperous athleisure trend is on its last run around the track.

Recently, retail analysts have been dissecting the revenues of various sporting-goods stores and athleisure makers whose fortunes have risen with the tsunami wave of growth in everything that comes in stretchy fabric. And some are starting to sound the alarm that the athleisure trend is nearing its end.

After **Dick's Sporting Goods** reported its same-store sales were up a weak 0.1 percent in the second quarter, retail analysts blamed slowing athleisure sales as one culprit contributing to the fall-off.

That analysis was loudly voiced by John Zolidis, president of **Quo Vadis Capital**, who blamed Dick's lackluster

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J!nx's Nerd Lifestyle Goes Pro Sports

By Andrew Asch Retail Editor

The competition is just beginning.

Professional leagues for computer games, called esports, are gaining momentum, and owners of major league sports teams are investing in them.

Sean Gailey and Tim Norris, cofounders of the San Diego-area **J!nx** clothing label, plan on being the first company to clothe esports athletes and lifestyle gamers. The 18-year-old company currently makes clothes for the gaming obsessive and makes licensed T-shirts, hoodies and caps for some of the most popular computer game titles. Gailey is banking on this subculture getting bigger and bigger.

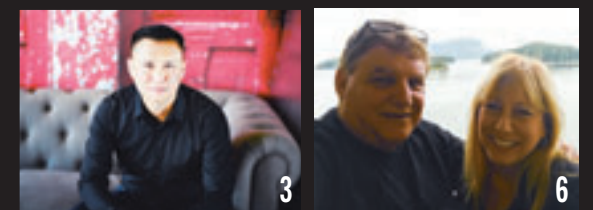
"The speed of esports is moving quickly. The movement may not take in retail right now, but it may by 9 p.m. tonight," Gailey said. "We can give meaningful offerings of the esports world to bricks-and-mortar retail."

The nascent category passed some milestones recently.

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Taiwanese Citizen Held in San Francisco on Charges of Bringing in Millions of Counterfeit Footwear and Apparel

A former Taiwanese national living in New York was charged with smuggling and conspiracy to traffic counterfeit goods that ranged from high-priced **Nike** shoes and **Ugg** boots to **True Religion** blue jeans after he tried to board an international flight in San Francisco.

Su Ming Ling was arrested Aug. 31 as he was about to board a plane to Taiwan.

"Using a combination of Internet savvy and old-fashioned counterfeit distribution techniques, defendant Ling perpetrated a lucrative counterfeiting scheme involving fake name-brand items," said Bridget Rohde, acting U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of New York.

According to a complaint filed with the U.S. District Court, Ling is accused of using aliases, stolen business identities and falsified shipping

documents to bring in 200 shipping containers of counterfeit brand-name apparel and footwear from China between May 2013 and January 2017. The retail value of these goods, landed at New Jersey ports, is estimated to be \$250 million, according to the U.S. Attorney's Office.

For example, in late 2014, inspectors from Customs and Border Protection looked inside a shipping container linked to Ling. The container's documents alleged it held bottle openers, key chains and picture frames with a dutiable value of a little more than \$41,400.

When the inspectors opened the shipping container, they said they found shoes that were marked as Nike "Air Force 1" sneakers. The shipment, which consisted of 29,500 pairs of sneakers, had a retail value of \$1.5 million with a dutiable value of \$177,865, or four times the dutiable value listed on the

customs entry form.

The U.S. Justice Department alleged that in his scheme, Ling used fraudulently obtained e-mail addresses to pose as a representative of real businesses and then hired established customs brokers to file customs entry forms on behalf of the stolen business names. Some of these customs brokers were in California and Illinois.

Court papers said Ling gave these customs brokers falsified shipping documents for numerous shipments of counterfeit brand-name apparel that misrepresented the true contents of the shipping containers. Ling arranged for the shipping containers—some containing **National Football League**—brand athletic jerseys—to be delivered to warehouses and storage facilities in Brooklyn and Queens, N.Y., and in New Jersey.

In late 2015, Ling was stopped as he arrived at John F. Kennedy Airport in Queens, N.Y., from Taiwan. An agent from Homeland Security Investigations detained Ling and his two **Apple** iPhones to search the devices. On the phones, HSI agents said, were numerous fraudulent domain names and e-mails that showed he had reportedly communicated with others to smuggle in counterfeit goods to the United States.

Ling was released but his importing actions were followed as more counterfeit shipments were found.

After his arrest at San Francisco International Airport, he was detained by law enforcement. He made his initial court appearance on Sept. 1 at the U.S. Courthouse in San Francisco and is now awaiting a bail hearing.—*Deborah Belgum*

Prana Names New President

Prana has named a replacement for its longtime president, Scott Kerslake, who left last month to become the chief executive of **Nixon** watches.

Russ Hopcus has been appointed as the new president of the company, taking over the position on Oct. 1.

Previously, Hopcus served as senior vice president of North America sales for **Columbia Sportswear Co.**, which acquired Prana three years ago for \$190 million.

"As a 32-year veteran of the active apparel and footwear industry, Russ brings extensive leadership experience in brand and market development to Prana," said Doug Morse, a senior vice president at Columbia

Sportswear. "He will be relocating to join our Prana team in Carlsbad, Calif., and be responsible for managing the brand in all channels and continuing to strengthen the brand's position as a leader in both performance and sustainability."

Succeeding Hopcus at Columbia Sportswear will be Joe Craig, who was promoted to senior vice president, North America sales. Craig first started working at Columbia Sportswear, based in Portland, Ore., in 1995, representing the brand in nine states as an independent sales representative and as co-owner of **CW Outdoors**. He then joined Columbia Sportswear in 2009.

—*D.B.*

CIT Group Names Chief Strategy Officer

Commercial lender **CIT Group** has named Kenneth McPhail as executive vice president and chief strategy officer, effective immediately.

He will be responsible for strategic planning and initiatives, mergers, acquisitions, and divestitures that advance the company's goals.

McPhail, who comes from **MUFG Union Bank**, will report to Chief Financial Officer John Fawcett and serve on CIT's executive

management committee. McPhail succeeds Kelley Morrell, who is leaving CIT to pursue another career opportunity.

"Ken is a seasoned leader with more than 30 years of banking experience," Fawcett said. "He brings broad industry perspective, strong leadership skills and a thoughtful approach to developing and executing strategic initiatives. He will be a key contributor in advancing CIT's strategic goals for the future."—*D.B.*

Rosie HW X Paige: Style for the 'On-Duty' Model

For their Fall/Winter '17 collection, Paige Adams-Geller and Rosie Huntington-Whiteley let their imaginations roam wild for their **Rosie HW X Paige** collection.

It's the second Rosie HW X Paige collection that Adams-Geller, founder of the **Paige** denim label, will create with model Huntington-Whiteley.

The collection's theme was "model on duty," which was introduced at a Sept. 6 debut party at the Paige flagship store at the **Brentwood Country Mart** in Los Angeles' exclusive Brentwood neighborhood.

The first Rosie HS X Paige collection, released earlier this year, imagined what a model would wear "off duty." The collection's colors were light, and it had an edge that would fit in at the beach. The collection's "model on duty" side was directed at nightlife. Adams-Geller said that it was inspired by rock 'n' roll.

One piece of the collection is a gold sequined tuxedo-style jacket, which features shawl lapels and a stylish center-seam detail on the back of the jacket.

Another look is a dark, duster jacket, which features burn-out fabric and some beading.

Looks for bottoms include jeans with a high waist inspired by cummerbunds. There's also a skinny jean that looks like a leather pant. The jean also features ankle zips to uncover the wearer's ankle.

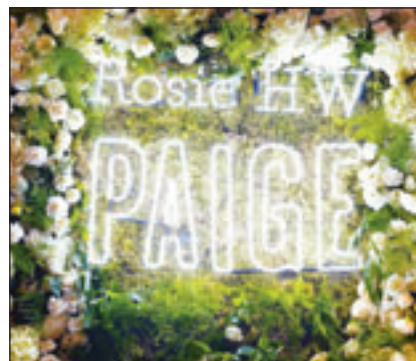
The Rosie HW X Paige line was intended to run no more than two seasons, but that could change, Adams-Geller said.

For 2018, Adams-Geller hopes to focus on building more lifestyle categories for Paige's men's division.—*Andrew Asch*



CHARLEY GALLAY/GETTY IMAGES

Rosie Huntington-Whiteley with Paige Adams-Geller



Scenes from the debut party for Rosie HW X Paige



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Everystore Packages a Universe of E-Retail

By Andrew Asch Retail Editor

For many, shopping online feels like navigating a tsunami of choices and information.

San Diego–headquartered e-commerce site **Everystore** made a formal launch on Aug. 29 at www.everystore.com, and site founder Ryan Sit promises that it will offer navigating tools for shoppers.

Everystore.com will give shoppers a wide swath of Internet shopping. Everystore claims to be a platform for 1,000 retailers, 22 million products and 25,000 brands. If that seems like more choice than the most avid shopper can handle, Everystore said that it will provide the tools to help shoppers make sense of all the choices available to them.



Ryan Sit

Women's fashion will anchor the vast e-emporium, Sit said.

Viewers will be able to browse goods sold at **Nordstrom**, **Macy's**, **Forever 21** and **ASOS**. Everystore's visitors will be able to use special site tools to see how the popularity of an item is trending. Another shopping tool is a browser that will show how somebody would look in a specific garment without a trip to a physical fitting room.

Everystore shoppers also will be able to shop for bags, shoes, beauty, men's fashions and kids' clothing. The site developed relations with e-retailers on its site through affiliate programs where e-retailers work through third parties online to sell goods and direct traffic to websites.

Among the navigation tools are the Everystore Guides, which offer price comparisons, e-store information, trend



The Everystore home page on different devices

analysis on different items and popularity ratings based on how much people are viewing certain items online. Everystore reviewers also put together information on various e-stores' customer-service offerings, such as the return policy and shipping charges.

There's also a product-match feature. Everystore's proprietary algorithm scouts more than 25 similar items for every item a shopper selects through Everystore.

With an integration into the **Pinterest** social-media site, Everystore's shoppers can create personalized fashion feeds. They can collect Pinterest "pins" from Everystore and make a wish list of items that will be updated daily with news of product arrivals and discounts. Pinterest shoppers can sign on to Everystore through their Pinterest accounts. As of press time, there are no plans to create fashion feeds to other social-media platforms, according to an Everystore spokesperson.

Everystore is a division of **PicClick LLC**, also based in San Diego. PicClick gained notoriety for developing a special browser for **eBay**. For Everystore, PicClick developed a feature where shoppers can impose their picture on a picture of model wearing a suit or a dress. Currently, that feature may not get the same results as going to a fitting room in a physical store. But that might not be the case for long.

Sit, who also is the founder of PicClick, said that technology aided by things such as virtual reality and 3-D imaging tools will be able to give viewers an accurate image of what they would look like in pictured garments. Now, Everystore features a tool called "Try it on with Head Swap." This tool superimposes a person's photograph on a model in a catalog. The picture of the garment changes into what the person photographed would look like in those clothes. Sit forecasts that Try it on with Head Swap will be an important part of the general e-shopping world. ●

NEW RESOURCES

J!nx *Continued from page 1*

In July it was announced that Robert Kraft, the owner of the **New England Patriots**, invested in the Boston team for the **Overwatch League**, a professional league that competes in the **Blizzard Entertainment** game **Overwatch**.

Jeff Wilpon, chief operating officer of the **New York Mets**, ponied up money for a New York City team in the **Overwatch** league. Last year, Steve Aoki, a DJ and owner of the **Dim Mak** clothing line, invested in the Los Angeles esports team **Rogue**. Former **Los Angeles Lakers** star Rick Fox bought Los Angeles esports team **Echo Fox** in December 2015.

More proof that esports is becoming big business was announced in August. **Nielsen Holdings**, known best for TV ratings, introduced **Nielsen Esports**, a group that will measure ratings and the competitive market for esports.

According to Gaily, J!nx is the first brand to make a lifestyle collection for gamers. Interest has been developing with other groups. A brand named **DRKN** was introduced in August at the **Capsule** trade show in Las Vegas. DRKN was described as a streetwear brand inspired by gaming and digital culture, according to a brand statement.

On Aug. 17, J!nx delivered its fall line of lifestyle clothes to **Hot Topic** stores across the United States. Looks include T-shirts bearing the brand logo—a skull wearing glasses. There's also a bomber jacket with the brand logo. Before Au-

gust, Hot Topic carried J!nx's licensed products, including shirts, caps and accessories for popular game titles such as "Minecraft" and "Overwatch."

J!nx's lifestyle categories feature looks for men and women. Women's looks include leggings with a pixelated camo design and a red-sleeved bomber jacket as well as colorful T-shirts, some with special burn-out treatments.

Men's looks include jogger pants and a zip-up hoodie with a pixelated camouflage hood liner. Men's T-shirts include game-inspired art and styles that take cues from computer graphics of the past 20 years.

The label also recently introduced **J!nx Pro**. It's a line

in **jinx-seangaileyheadshot_print_bw** tended for the competitor. Styles include soccer jersey-style tops. Like the tops made for soccer stars, J!nx Pro jerseys are constructed from breathable fabric that can wick away sweat.

Just as **Quiksilver** and **Billabong** were made for people who love surfing and surf culture, Gailey said that J!nx was made for people fully immersed in the gaming lifestyle and may need a shot of geek pride.

"When I was growing up as a gamer, you were always made to feel ashamed and ostracized. There's still a stigma attached to video games," Gailey said. "My goal is to give gamers a flag to rally behind. Our brand stands for being proud of what you love."

Before starting J!nx, Gailey made his own designs on blank T-shirts. He reported that people frequently wanted to buy the shirts off his back. After he and Norris started an Ohio-based website development company, they moved to San Diego and started J!nx in 1999, which they ran out of a bedroom in an apartment in San Diego's Ocean Beach neighborhood.

In 2003, they closed the Web-hosting company to focus on J!nx. Currently, J!nx runs a 65,000-square-foot compound in Poway, Calif., about 21 miles north of San Diego. In the past three years, the company hired more than 35 people, including Candace Brenner as vice president of marketing and Doug Treese as vice president of sales. Treese is an alum of **Skullcandy** and **Hurley**.

J!nx is looking for more growth. It recently started a round of investment to finance more staff, handle more inventory and finance more marketing initiatives. ●



GAME ON: J!nx makes clothes for the gamer and those who compete professionally in computer games. J!nx cofounder Sean Gailey is pictured in the center, bottom row. Also pictured, J!nx lifestyle shots.



August Business Mixed

The U.S. economy was good in August, but retail sales ranged from solid to soft.

The **Bureau of Labor Statistics** announced that 156,000 jobs were added during the month. The jobs report was lower than forecast, according to some analysts. But the miss didn't put a damper on consumer confidence. Lynne Franco, director of economic indicators of **The Conference Board**, which measures consumer confidence, said that good feelings about the economy increased in August, according to the index kept by the New York-headquartered Conference Board.

Zumiez Inc. runs a fleet of 606 mall-based Zumiez action-sports shops across America. In August, its same-store sales increased 7.4 percent while its net sales increased 10.1 percent to \$98.6 million. Zumiez also announced on Sept. 7 that it would open nine stores in America during the remainder of fiscal 2017.

Business was solid for **L Brands**—the parent company for **Victoria's Secret**, **Bath & Body Works** and **Henri Bendel**—which posted sales that hit the mid-point of its guidance for August business, said Ken Perkins, the president of market-research company **Retail Metrics**.

L Brands posted a same-store-sales decline of 4 percent in a year-over-year comparison. The performance was slightly better than Wall Street forecasts that L Brands would post a 4.2 decline during August. The company said that its Victoria's Secret brand's exit from the swim and apparel categories earlier this year continues to place a drag on its performance. A company statement noted that the exit from swim had

a negative impact of about 2 percentage points for the total company.

In August, denim-focused mall retailer **The Buckle** posted a same-store-sales decline of 7.9 percent. Value retailer **Cato Corp.** reported a year-over-year comp-store decline of 10 percent in August.

Before August sales were released, retail trade group **National Retail Federation** re-

August Retail Sales

	\$Sales (in millions)	% Change from yr. ago	Same-store sales % change
The Buckle	\$80.30	-7.9%	-7.9%
Cato Corp.	\$62.10	-9.0%	-10.0%
L Brands Inc.	\$842.10	-1.0%	-4.0%
Zumiez Inc.	\$98.60	+10.1%	+7.4%

Source: Information from company reports

vised its business forecast for 2017.

In February, NRF announced that retail sales—excluding auto sales, restaurants and gas stations—would increase 3 percent to 4.2 percent

On Sept. 6, it revised its 2017 sales projection. The year's sales are forecast to grow 3.2 percent to 3.8 percent. The **US Bureau of Economic Analysis** announced Aug. 31 that it made slight changes to forecasts on American consumers' personal income and consumption, said Jack Kleinhenz, NRF's chief economist. But the U.S. economy should keep chugging along. "While weaker-than-expected spending in the first quarter along with decelerating inflation has also contributed to the revision, NRF anticipates stronger sales heading into the fall and holiday seasons," he said. —*Andrew Asch*

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Calendar

Sept. 9

Fashion Supplies Inc. Liquidation Sale
1203 S. Olive St.
Los Angeles
Through Sept. 17

Sept. 10

Riviera by Mode City
Centre Expo Congress
Mandelieu, France
Through Sept. 11

Sept. 16

Designers and Agents
Starrett-Lehigh Building and Cedar Lake
New York
Through Sept. 18

Capsule

Axis at Capsule
Pier 94
New York
Through Sept. 18

"How to Build a Sustainable Business," presented by FAB Counsel
120 E. Eighth St.
Los Angeles
Through Sept. 17

Sept. 17

Coterie Sourcing @ Coterie Edit Sole Commerce
Stitch Accessories The Show Fame Moda Pooltradeshow
Javits Center
New York
Through Sept. 19

Sept. 18

Texworld Apparel Sourcing
Le Bourget
Paris
Through Sept. 21

Sept. 19

Première Vision
Parc des Expositions
Paris
Through Sept. 21

Sept. 27

Interfilière
The Tunnel
New York
Through Sept. 28

Sept. 28

TPC Networking Event
TomGeorge LA
Los Angeles

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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Vecchiarelli's Fashion Supplies Inc. Closing After 85 Years, Four Generations

For 85 years, four generations of the Vecchiarelli family have been selling apparel supplies to manufacturers in Los Angeles. But in December, owner Joe Vecchiarelli is closing the family's retail operations.

"It's time to consolidate Fashion Supplies into something more manageable and enjoy a semi-retirement and focus on the family," Vecchiarelli said.

Vecchiarelli has been working in the business his father founded since he was in his teens, but the family business dates back to 1936, when three Italian immigrants—Cosmo, Nick and Lee Vecchiarelli—relocated their scissor-sharpening business, **Newark Cutlery**, from Brooklyn, N.Y., to downtown Los Angeles. Cosmo's son Mario joined the business and eventually Mario's sons Joe and Jim Vecchiarelli joined the company and expanded it to **Vecchiarelli Brothers**, which sold sewing supplies and notions to the industry.

Joe Vecchiarelli remembers accompanying his father to the set of "Star Trek" in the 1960s, where the costume designer told him that they were looking for a full-body male dress form. Even though Vecchiarelli Bros. was not in the dress-form business, the teenage Vecchiarelli—who wanted the chance to return to the "Star Trek" set—promised he could get one.

"That was my start," Vecchiarelli said.

Eventually, Vecchiarelli's daughter, Laura, joined the company and renamed the business **Fashion Supplies Inc.** Laura later left the business to become a teacher, but Joe Vecchiarelli continued to run and expand the business. The company acquired **Global Model Forms**, a New York-based mannequin business that Fashion Supplies Inc. oper-



Joe Vecchiarelli teaching patternmaking and draping at the Original Sewing and Quilt Expo in Raleigh, N.C.



The Fashion Supplies Inc. store in downtown Los Angeles



Joe Vecchiarelli and his wife, Kelly

But running the Fashion Supplies retail business, maintaining custom accounts in the television industry and attending up to 14 home-sewing trade shows annually has been challenging.

"It's time to move on to focus on the trade shows and maybe maintain a few custom accounts," Vecchiarelli said. "It's bittersweet. I've worked with every major manufacturer and

I've seen the industry change over the years."

Going forward, Vecchiarelli plans to continue to provide custom dress forms to the home-sewing industry as well as to a handful of key costume designers and apparel makers. Vecchiarelli's long-time co-worker Alfredo Diaz will continue to work with Vecchiarelli to run the home-sewing side of the business. Diaz began working at Vecchiarelli Bros. 30 years ago as an entry-level employee, rising through the ranks of delivery, customer service and accounting until he was able to run the business.

Fashion Supplies Inc. is hosting a one-day liquidation sale on Sept. 9 at its retail location at 1203 S. Olive St. in downtown Los Angeles. For more information, call (213) 749-5944.—*Alison A. Nieder*

ated for about 10 years. Then Vecchiarelli began importing dress forms in 2012. The business for "French European" dress forms took off, Vecchiarelli said.

"That dress form has been the standard in the industry, home sewing, department stores and television," he said.

In recent years, Vecchiarelli has been hosting workshops at home-sewing trade shows around the country.

"I took what I learned in the industry in how to fit people," he said. "I learned to do patterns, draping, grading—all aspects of the fashion industry. I was the fit specialist."

The home-sewing market is large and underrepresented, Vecchiarelli said.

"They want hands-on workshops, and they want to hear the industry perspective," he said.

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Athleisure *Continued from page 1*

results on dipping athleisure sales. “The largest issue, in our opinion, is the end of the fashion athletic trends, or ‘athleisure’ as it has been called,” he wrote in a report. “This is an industry-wide trend.”

He pointed out that skidding athleisure sales contributed to lackluster revenues at **Big Five Sporting Goods, Hibbett Sports, Lululemon, Under Armour** and **Nike**. Some of these stores should be benefiting from the **Sports Authority** closing 450 stores across the nation last year after the large sporting-goods chain filed for bankruptcy. Southern California-based **Sport Chalet** also filed for bankruptcy last year, shuttering 47 stores.

But is the trend really dead?

Most experts and retail sages believe the fashion craze is slowing down but still has legs to run on. According to **The NPD Group**, activewear sales for men, women and children totaled \$45 billion for the 12 months ending in June, barely up from a year earlier. In comparison, non-activewear totaled \$170 billion in sales for the 12 months ending in June, down slightly from a year ago.

“Athleisure is still growing but slowing,” said Marshal Cohen, retail analyst for The NPD Group. “Part of the slowdown is the nature of the product.”

He noted that athleisure has entered that area where everyone is getting into the game and prices are coming down rapidly. “**Target** is putting together a good sports bra for \$19 and an athletic bottom for \$39 compared to other brands that sell a bra for \$79 and a bottom for \$120,” he said. “Also, a lot of this stuff wears like iron. It is not in the same replenishment cycle as regular athletic wear.”

Then there is the fashion part of it, which doesn’t change much. Leggings are leggings with only a few things such as

prints changing seasonally. “Leggings are a little different and there is some interest in different prints, but when all is said and done, people don’t say, ‘That is last year’s style or last year’s color,’” Cohen said.

Competition, partnerships and fashion innovation

Roseanne Morrison, fashion director for **The Doneger Group**, a trend forecasting and retail advisory company in New York, said she heard athleisure was leveling off, but she didn’t believe it was declining. “People are still working out. The girls are extremely competitive about what they

are wearing, and they want to keep up with the trend, look their best and see what other people are wearing,” she said. “This lifestyle trend to be fit and well is a shift in our culture.”

Fung Global Retail & Technology has been monitoring the athleisure industry and believes it has enough energy to keep jogging. “However, it does appear to be entering a new phase,” said Deborah Weinswig, a global retail analyst and

managing director at Fung Global. “Consumers still want to incorporate sport-styled designs into their everyday wardrobe.”

She said athleisure for men is one area that continues to gain momentum. That was seen at athleisure retailer **Lululemon Athletica**, which now sees menswear making up 20 percent of its total revenues. The pioneering yogawear retailer recently launched some key products for men such as “Metal Vent Tech” and “Pack-and-Dash” run tops, which were expected to boost sales. Also, sales of men’s bottoms, often the first thing that people buy in the athleisure category, were up 20 percent in the first quarter compared to last year.

Manik Aryapadi, a principal in the retail practice of **A.T.**



Kate Hudson, in the middle, with her Fabletics line

Kearney, a global strategy and management consulting firm, said that athleisure has grown at a double-digit pace over the last three years but is hitting some headwinds. “But I wouldn’t say, ‘Oh my god, it is falling off the charts,’” he said.

He also noted that retailers fear that **Amazon.com** will be stepping into the arena with its own private athleisure label, adding to the fact that the field is already crowded as more companies enter the category.

Or Amazon could partner with a big athleisure brand, much like it did with **Nike**, which is working on selling some of its products directly on Amazon to take advantage of the popular online shopping site. “That Nike deal is sending shivers through the sporting-goods industry, which relies significantly on Nike,” he said.

By 2021, Amazon is expected to account for 16.2 percent of apparel sales, or \$62 billion, followed by **T.J. Maxx** and **Macy’s**.

Innovation is expected to be the savior for the athleisure category, as it has been for all fashion trends through the years. That could mean that more athleisure fabrics are integrated into everyday clothes or different tech fabrics are developed that mask sweat and hide imperfections.

Andy Annunziata, an analyst at **SportsOneSource**, sees the athleisure trend showing flat sales this year and then shifting to lifestyle brands that are influenced by activewear. “Still, the crystal ball is cloudy,” he said. “We need some innovation in the active world to get people juiced up again.”

Some of that innovation is coming from **Outdoor Voices**, a relatively young athleisure retailer started in 2013 by former athlete and **Parsons School of Design** grad Tyler Haney.

Recently it collaborated with French cult retailer **A.P.C.** to develop a limited collection that had well-fitting and long-lasting pieces that could be worn every day.

This year, Mickey Drexler, the former chief executive of **J.Crew**, was named to head Outdoor Voices’ board of directors after his **Drexler Ventures** led a \$9 million convertible note to Outdoor Voices that can be turned into equity.

Currently, Outdoor Voices has three stores and three pop-ups—with one at **The Grove** in Los Angeles—but it is hoping to expand its store footprint this year and next, giving athleisure a new look and a new voice. ●



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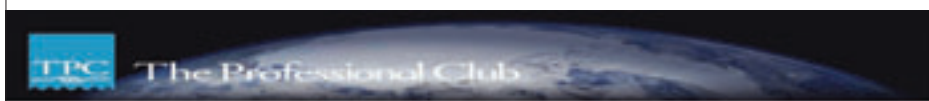
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MADE IN AMERICA

Trishia Grace *Continued from page 1*

the collection with blasts of color.

“I wanted to have an essence behind my brand, which is a feminine feeling and being beautiful for yourself,” Grace said.

Grace has just begun to tip her toe into the fashion world again. Some two decades ago, the veteran fashion designer left the business to raise her three daughters in Huntington Beach, Calif., south of Los Angeles. But with two adult daughters and a third in high school, Grace decided to move to Los Angeles three years ago following a divorce.

She wasn’t sure what career path she wanted to pursue. She had done a stint in gourmet cooking, but when she weighed what really made her heart sing it was fashion.

photo shoot he was coordinating for *Palm Springs Life*, a regional magazine.

“I really liked the product. It seemed right. The dresses were easy and modern. These are great resort-style dresses,” Cohen said. “They could be vacation dresses or easy lifestyle dresses. They could be a beach cover-up if you are going on holiday or a cruise.”

Cohen, who has 35 years in the fashion industry, helped the fashion designer merchandise the collection and advised on prints and fabric. Cohen felt there were too many sheer fabrics, such as chiffons and georgettes, so he suggested adding some chambray and striped cotton prints to the dress collection to balance it out.

To make her samples and her collection,



Paisley print



Chambray dress



A slip look



Trishia Grace

Prior to taking time off to raise a family, Grace had worked for 10 years at **Teaze of California**, a company first started in the 1980s that made juniorswear and then branched out to childrenswear. From 1985 to 1995, Grace was vice president of sales and design, working on million-dollar contracts with retailers such as **Sears** and **Target**.

It was a time when the Southern California apparel industry was still manufacturing much of its clothing in the region. At its City of Industry, Calif., headquarters, Teaze of California had 200 garment workers and did its screen printing in Santa Ana, Calif.

So Grace knew that coming back into the industry would not be the same as when she left. In the beginning, to get her small brand going, she invited women up to her atelier in a historic brick building to sip champagne in an interior courtyard and view the garments, using the potential shoppers as a focus group.

Then a few years ago she met Neil Cohen, a stylist in Palm Springs, Calif., who ended up using her dresses for a luxury shoe

Grace is manufacturing in Los Angeles with various contractors she has found by networking with people in the apparel industry.

With samples made, Grace has hired an East Coast sales representative, Debbie Fragna, who is taking the collection on the road to specialty boutiques in her area.

Cohen advised Grace to also find a sales rep in the Atlanta area as well as Los Angeles and then branch out to the Midwest when the line is more established but to concentrate on specialty stores. “I think she can have the right business with the right reps in the right regions,” he said.

The collection is geared toward a woman of just about any age because of its plethora of flowing styles and slips that can be worn under dresses to smooth things out or worn by themselves. Retail price points are set at \$190 to \$275.

Eventually, Grace’s goal is to build the brand into a lifestyle collection that encompasses the feminine side of women. “I feel so excited,” she said, “because I am on the curve of what this movement in apparel is going to be.” ●

More Than 200 Brands to Show at Centrestage in Hong Kong

The Sept. 6-9 run of **Centrestage** at the **Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre** was expected to feature more than 200 international fashion brands and a lineup of events that includes runway shows, designer Q&As, B2B seminars and networking events.

Among the brands scheduled to participate are China- and Hong Kong-based labels including **Anagram**, **Angus Tsui**, **Doriskath**, **Harrison Wong**, **House of V**, i.t, **Kenaxleung** and **Loom Loop**. International labels include **Cheng Pai Cheng** from Taiwan, **Dew E Dew E** from South Korea, **Dressedundressed** from Japan, **Edward Achour** from France and **Pourquoi** from Macau.

An opening gala runway show was held on Sept. 6 featuring designers from Hong Kong and South Korea, including the Spring/Summer 2018 collections by Hong Kong-based **Ffixxed Studios**, founded by Fiona Lau and Kain Picken, and Korea-based **Juun. J.**

The **Hong Kong Young Fashion Design-**

ers' Contest 2017 is being held on Sept. 9 and features 15 designers competing for three awards as well as the Joyce New Talent Award and Best Footwear Design Award. This season, Mug, founder and designer of the Japanese fashion brand **G.V.G.V.**, serves as VIP judge.

Another event being organized by the **Knitwear Innovation and Design Society** as well as the **Hong**

Kong Young Knitwear Designers' Contest was set for Sept. 8. A "Knit Voyage 2017" exhibition highlights local and global knitwear



Runway shows from Centrestage 2016

products.

The last day of Centrestage is open to the public. Dubbed **Openstage**, the Sept. 9 event is free to attendees age 12 and older. There is also a citywide campaign, called "Hong Kong in Fashion," which started in mid-August and includes curated events, installations and exclusive offerings such as fashion shows, **Fashion Night Out** and DIY workshops around Hong Kong.

Centrestage is organized by the **Hong Kong Trade Development Council**, which also organizes **Hong Kong Fashion Week**. For more information, visit www.centrestage.com.hk.



Ffixxed Studios founders Kain Picken and Fiona Lau

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