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Holiday Rings In Strong Sales

By Andrew Asch *Retail Editor*

It may be the best holiday season for retailers in years. That was the conclusion of one of the first surveys of the holiday 2017 sales season.

A day after Christmas, **Mastercard SpendingPulse** found that holiday sales inched up 4.9 percent and online shopping jumped 18.1 percent.

It was the largest year-over-year increase since 2011, according to the group, which bases its findings from sales activity on the Mastercard payments network. The survey found that specialty apparel and department stores saw moderate gains in sales.

Leading trade group **National Retail Federation** is scheduled to release its final numbers on holiday sales in early January. But Matthew Shay, the NRF's president and chief executive officer, predicted sales would be on the high end, or even exceed, the trade group's initial forecast

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Two LA Textile Importers Plead Guilty to Laundering Money for Mexican Drug Cartels

By Deborah Belgum *Executive Editor*

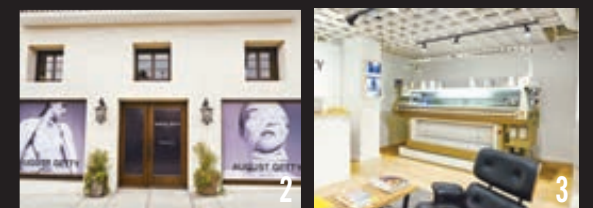
More than three years after some 1,000 federal and state agents fanned out across the Los Angeles Fashion District to curtail a long-running money-laundering scheme benefiting two Mexican drugs cartels, two brothers who own a Los Angeles textile company pleaded guilty to federal money laundering and tax charges.

Morad "Ben" Neman and Hersel Neman, who own **Pacific Eurotex Corp.**, admitted in court documents that they failed to report to federal authorities the receipt of bulk cash divided up for frequent bank deposits that were less than \$10,000 to avoid a bank-reporting requirement that would have tipped off law enforcement. They were indicted more than three years ago for receiving bulk cash they knew or believed to be money coming from drug traffickers.

The Neman brothers, who pleaded guilty in U.S. District Court on Dec. 21, also admitted to conspiring to defraud the United States by maintaining two sets of business records in

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SHOPPING SPREE

Shoppers this season did their research before hitting the malls and retail streets such as Rodeo Drive, pictured here, in Beverly Hills. The result was that holiday sales were the best since 2011.

Getty Heir Takes Retail to Rodeo Drive

August Getty first launched his collection of red-carpet gowns and women's eveningwear with his Spring/Summer 2015 collection.

Now the great-grandson of billionaire John Paul Getty is opening his first boutique, on Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills, taking over what once was a **Badgley Mischka** outpost at 479 Rodeo Drive.

The scion of the Getty oil family is expected to open his **August Getty Atelier** around March 2018.

The brand has not made an official statement about the boutique, but an **Instagram** account for August Getty Atelier posted a picture of the building, saying it would open in March.

As a child, Getty was always artistic, creating paper-napkin gowns for forks and drawing flowers in his family garden.

In 2014, he launched his self-named line and has been a regular at the runway shows during **New York Fashion Week**. His pieces focus on couturier-style creations and contemporary looks.

Earlier this year, Paris Hilton wore his \$270,000 gown made with 500,000 **Swarovski** crystals when she accepted the "Fragrance of the Year" award at the "Hollywood Beauty Awards." Other celebrities donning his creations

include Rachel McAdams, seen in an open-back teal-green gown at the 2016 **Academy**

Awards, as well as Miley Cyrus and Katy Perry.



August Getty's mother is Ariadne Getty, whose father was Sir Paul Getty, also known as John Paul Getty II. August's great-grandfather was John Paul Getty, the founder of **Getty Oil** and the country's first billionaire.

The recently released movie "All the Money in the World," starring Christopher Plummer, is about the kidnapping of the oil magnate's 16-year-old grandson, John Paul Getty III.—*Andrew Asch*

Acne Studios Setting Up Shop on Melrose Avenue

Swedish label **Acne Studios** made headlines in 2013 for placing a risky bet on downtown Los Angeles when it opened a 5,000-square-foot emporium on the corner of Ninth Street and Broadway in the Fashion District.

At the time, this was a new neighborhood for high-end retail.

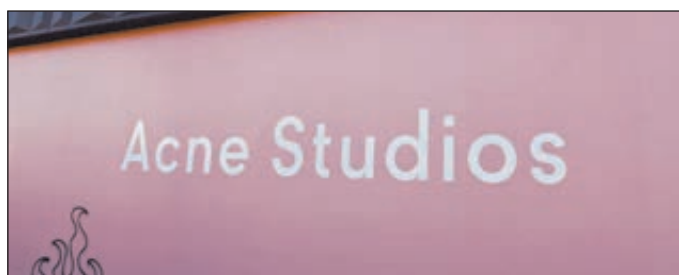
Fast-forward a few years and now Acne is scheduled to open a store in a more conventional retail neighborhood with a spot at 8920 Melrose Ave. in West Hollywood, Calif.

The new boutique is scheduled to open sometime this coming spring. Acne's West Hollywood neighbors will be pioneering

boutique retailer **Maxfield** as well as boutiques for **Helmut Lang**, **James Perse** and the **Eskandar** brand.

A block east, on the corner of Melrose Avenue and Robertson Boulevard, there's a **John Varvatos** flagship. The main drag for the fashion section of Robertson Boulevard is about a five-minute walk south.

Japanese-headquartered streetwear brand **A Bathing Ape** also is scheduled to open a store on the Melrose Avenue block between Robertson Boulevard and North Almont Drive.




Jay Luchs brokered the deal to bring Acne Studios to Melrose. He said that Acne and Bathing Ape might be the last fashion stores to move onto this block for a while. "It's a true neighborhood block," said Luchs, vice chairman at **Newmark Knight Frank**. "It's a great local block with great brands."

You're not going to see big development there."

Acne's new 1,650-square-foot shop formerly housed an art gallery. It's a fitting segue for the art-inspired Swedish brand. The downtown Los Angeles location features art installations such as *Giant Triple Mushroom*, a sculpture by Carsten Höller. His work has been exhibited at the **Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles** and at the **Fondazione Prada**, a museum co-chaired by Miuccia Prada in Milan.

Acne Studios did not return a request for comment by press time.—*A.A.*



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French Label Ba & Sh Coming to Beverly Hills

Last fall, Paris-headquartered womenswear brand **Ba & Sh** opened a handful of boutiques on the East Coast. Now it is getting ready to unveil a new store in Beverly Hills, Calif.

The company recently put up storefront posters at 404 N. Beverly Drive announcing it will be doing business soon at the corner of Brighton Way and Beverly Drive. The 1,600-square-foot space was the former address for an **Aldo** footwear boutique and a location for the **Kimora Lee Simmons** brand.

Jay Luchs, vice chairman of **Newmark Knight Frank**, brokered the deal for the space. He said he thought the store would open in spring 2018. A brand representative did not reply to a request for comment.

The name Ba & Sh stands for the first

names of founders Barbara Boccara and Sharon Krief, friends since childhood in France. They introduced the brand in 2003. Currently it is sold at more than 400 locations around the globe.

In 2015, private-equity firm **L Catterton** acquired 50 percent of the brand for an undisclosed amount to support Ba & Sh's international expansion.

L Catterton is a partnership of luxe conglomerate **LVMH**; **Groupe Arnault**, the family holding company of Bernard Arnault, LVMH's chairman and chief executive officer; and U.S. private-equity company **Catterton**. Its portfolio of brands includes **Rhone**, **Sweaty Betty**, **Seafolly** swimwear and the **Equinox** high-end fitness studios.—*A.A.*



Taking a Cue from James Bond to Design Performance Wear for Professionals

By John McCurry *Contributing Writer*

Will 3-D knitting become the wave of the future in apparel manufacturing? A 5-year-old firm in Boston believes so. Since March, the company has been using a **Shima Seiki** machine positioned at its Boston flagship store to produce custom-knitted blazers.

Ministry of Supply was formed in 2012 by four former MIT (**Massachusetts Institute of Technology**) students. As Gihan Amarasiwardena, the company's cofounder, chairman and chief design officer, says, the idea was to create a new apparel category of performance wear for professionals.

"We wanted to include moisture management, stretch, machine washability and combine all of that with a sharp aesthetic. We wanted something you could wear not only from 9 to 5 but all the way from morning coffee to drinks after work. We started with dress shirts, then launched pants and, more recently, expanded into womenswear."

There's also a story behind the company's interesting name. Amarasiwardena said it comes from the British government department formed in 1939 to supply equipment to armed forces during World War II.

"We're creating gear for a mission," he said. "The character of 'Q' in the James Bond movies is based on a real person who designed gadgetry for special operations. The cover was the British Ministry of Supply. We like to think of ourselves as Q's lab, creating gear for people on a mission."

In December, MOS released **Velocity Suiting**, a machine-washable suit. Amarasiwardena said it offers performance in addition to the hand of a more formal wool suit.

"The development process for Velocity Suiting was extensive to say the least: three years of R&D, tons of field testing and seven fabric types," he said. "We actually ended up scrapping the original fabric four months before production—which is unheard of in apparel manufacturing—in favor of a better polyester-rayon blend. We're really proud of the end product: a suit that is wrinkle-free, machine washable and really sharp."

MOS currently operates nine boutiques. In addition to the Boston flagship store, there are locations in Atlanta; Chicago; New York City; San Francisco; Washington, D.C.; Bethesda, Md.; Santa Monica, Calif.; and Walnut Creek, Calif.

MOS debuted its printed blazer about one year ago. The garment comes out of the Shima Seiki machine in one piece. All that remains to do is to sew on buttons. As Amarasiwardena described it, "It's our vision of how the manufacturing of blazers could happen in the future."

The process works like this: Customers come into the store in Boston, where the MACH2XS machine is installed. They choose the fabric, the cuff color, the body color and the button color and then can be part of the design process. It all takes about 90 minutes. The finished garment will be ready in three to five days.

At the moment, MOS is only producing blazers with the machine, but Amarasiwardena sees production moving far beyond that with sweaters and dresses.

"Retail is changing now, and one of the promises of the industry is the experiential component of it. You can do this anywhere. In the era of farm-to-table restaurants, this is very much like that but for clothing. One of the great things about this is that compared to traditional cut-and-sew techniques,



A Shima Seiki machine at Ministry of Supply



Gihan Amarasiwardena

which have a limited number of styles, with this process you can have a manufacturing batch of one."

So, what is the cost for a custom blazer? Right now, it is \$345 per garment. Stores also have some pre-made products, which sell for \$285.

The MOS process does not currently include custom sizing, and Amarasiwardena notes that the company is creating a knit product that has stretch in it. So far, most customers are not looking for a custom fit.

However, he sees custom fitting becoming an option down the road. He also predicts that a quarter to a third



Amarasiwardena running in a Ministry of Supply outfit

of MOS products will eventually be made using the Shima Seiki technique.

In the beginning

Amarasiwardena says the partnership with Shima Seiki began when the machinery company made a visit to the MOS flagship location on Newberry Street in Boston.

Upon seeing the MOS product line, Shima Seiki believed there was a good alignment with its vision and mission. After a year of research and development on a preprinted blazer, a small batch was manufactured at the machinery company's facility in New Jersey.

Amarasiwardena believes the customization process is the wave of the future in apparel manufacturing and selling. He notes that the industry is in a period of time where a lot of brands are closing their doors. The challenge, he said, is to make the retail experience something that makes sense.

"We are being bullish in translating the retail experience from buying off the racks to a place where customers will be part of the design process," he said. "Our challenge is to approach this in a new way."

Certainly, MOS has plans for more machines at its other stores around the U.S., but it may be a year or more before that happens. The in-store concept is only a few months old, Amarasiwardena noted, and the company wants to see how it develops. ●

NEWS

Money Laundering *Continued from page 1*

order to conceal income for tax purposes.

In court papers, Pacific Eurotex also was accused of receiving, laundering and structuring approximately \$370,000 in bulk cash delivered on four different occasions over a more than two-month period in 2013 by an undercover agent posing as a money courier. The defendants admitted in court that they laundered this money after being advised by special agents with Homeland Security Investigations that bulk cash payments were frequently derived from illegal activity and that they were required to report cash transactions that totaled more than \$10,000.

Also named in the indictment was Pacific Eurotex, which, as a business, pleaded guilty to conspiring to launder money and structuring monetary transactions with a domestic financial institution.

The Neman brothers admitted they instructed other individuals to deposit the cash into the personal **Wells Fargo** bank account of Hersel Neman's wife, Mojgan Neman. "These deposits, 384 in all, were divided into increments less than \$10,000 each" with the intent to prevent Wells Fargo

from filing currency transaction reports, the U.S. Attorney's Office said.

The Neman brothers have agreed to forfeit to the United States nearly \$3.18 million, which includes the narcotics proceeds they received and deposited in structured cash transactions.

The brothers are scheduled to be sentenced on June 14 in the courtroom of U.S. District Judge John Kronstadt.

Morad Neman, 57, chief executive of Pacific Eurotex, faces a maximum sentence of 21 years in federal prison. His brother, Hersel, 58, chief financial officer of Pacific Eurotex, faces a mandatory sentence of up to 28 years.

Pacific Eurotex faces a statutory maximum sentence of up to 10 years' probation and almost \$2 million in fines.

The indictment in this case also named two other defendants, scheduled to go on trial on March 6. Mehran Khalili, 49, who is a brother-in-law of Hersel Neman, is charged with conspiring to structure cash transactions. Alma Villalobos, 55, the in-house accountant and bookkeeper for Pacific Eurotex, faces several charges, including conspiracy to launder money.

When federal agents raided 75 fashion and textile companies in 2013 in the Los Angeles Fashion District, the total amount of

cash and property they seized was \$140 million.

During the raid, called Operation Fashion Police, law enforcement officers found \$35 million in cash stuffed in cardboard boxes at a condo. At a Bel-Air mansion, another \$10 million in cash was found stuffed in duffel bags, and four safes were still to be opened. More than 30 bank accounts with approximately \$19 million were seized.

The investigation started in 2013 after confidential informants alerted federal authorities to the scheme. The money-laundering scheme worked this way: Los Angeles companies would import apparel and textiles into the United States with U.S. dollars left by the drug cartels. Those goods were then exported to Mexico via wire transfers and then sold at local stores for pesos. Those pesos were then deposited in Mexican bank accounts, reportedly for the Sinaloa and Knights Templar drug cartels.

This elaborate kind of transaction became increasingly popular after 2010, when Mexico changed its banking regulations stipulating that deposits in U.S. dollars for regular customers must be limited to no more than \$7,000 in cash a month. The regulations were devised to stop drug cartels from shuffling their drug money into Mexico. ●



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NEWS

New California Laws Change Workplace Rules

By Deborah Belgum *Executive Editor*

Starting off the New Year means getting to know the new laws recently passed by the state Legislature. Most of them go into effect on Jan. 1.

There are several regulations protecting workers from hazardous chemicals, discrimination and sexual harassment. There is also an extension to the Parental Leave Act, which affects larger companies.

Once again, the minimum wage is scheduled to go up on Jan. 1 with the 50-cent increase depending on the size of the company. For smaller businesses, the state minimum wage will be \$10.50. For larger companies, it will be \$11 an hour.

Later this summer, city-specific minimum-wage laws will see further increases. Los Angeles and San Francisco are two of the cities that have higher wages than the rest of the state.

Minimum Wages (Senate Bill 3 and local laws)

On Jan. 1, the state minimum wage goes up to \$10.50 an hour for employers with 25 or fewer workers, and it goes up to \$11 an hour for employers with 26 or more workers. In Los Angeles, Santa Monica and Pasadena, the minimum wage increases on July 1 to \$12 an hour for employers with 25 or fewer workers and rises to \$13.25 an hour for employers with 26 or more workers. In San Francisco, the minimum wage on July 1 will be \$15 an hour, no matter the size of the company. The increases in the state minimum wage are

important because they affect the standard for exempt status under California law. In order to be exempt from being paid overtime under the executive, administrative and professional exemptions, an employee must be paid at least twice the state minimum wage per month. So, in 2018, the minimum annualized salary for an employee to be considered for one of these exemptions in California will rise to \$45,760 for employers with 26 or more employees and to \$43,680 for employers with 25 or fewer employees.

Parental Leave (Senate Bill 63)

The new Parental Leave Act requires small businesses with 20 or more employees to be given up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave to bond with a new child. Leave must be taken within a year of the child's birth, adoption or foster-care placement. This is only for baby bonding and is not required to provide for employees who want leaves for other issues, such as taking care of a sick parent or loved one.

This law will mostly affect employers with 20 to 49 workers who had not previously been required to provide baby-bonding leave.

Salary History (Assembly Bill 168)

This new law bans employers from asking about a job applicant's previous salary history as a factor in determining whether to hire the applicant or how much to pay the applicant. However, employers can consider salary information that is disclosed voluntarily by the applicant without any prompting.



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Ban-the-Box Law (Assembly Bill 1008)

In an effort to employ more reformed criminals, this law prohibits employers with five or more workers from asking about criminal-history information at any time before a conditional offer of employment has been made. There are some exemptions, such as those where a criminal-background check is required by local, state or federal law.

Worksite Immigration Enforcement and Protections (Assembly Bill 450)

The state has decided that workers should be provided protection from immigration enforcement while on the job and imposes varying fines from \$2,000 to \$10,000 for violating these provisions.

This bill could also make it unlawful for employers to re-verify the employment eligibility of current employees in a time or manner not allowed by federal employment-eligibility verification laws.

Harassment-Prevention Training (Senate Bill 396)

California employers with 50 or more employees must provide supervisors with two hours of sexual harassment-prevention training every two years. These training courses will have to discuss harassment based on gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation.

Anti-Discrimination Protections for Veterans (Assembly Bill 1710)

This new law expands current protections for members of the armed services by prohibiting discrimination in all terms and conditions of employment. This bill makes

state law conform to the federal Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act by protecting service members in civilian jobs from hostile work environments.

Labor Law Enforcement, Retaliation (Senate Bill 306)

This new regulation allows the state Labor Commissioner to investigate an employer even if an employee hasn't made a complaint. The commissioner can do this when he or she suspects retaliation or discrimination against a worker during a wage claim or other investigation.

The Labor Commissioner also can obtain a court order prohibiting an employer from firing or disciplining an employee, even before completing its investigation.

Workplace Safety (Senate Bill 258)

Trying to keep workers safe, this bill relates to the safety of designated cleaning products, including general-cleaning, air-care, automotive or polish or floor-maintenance products used primarily for janitorial, industrial or domestic cleaning purposes.

This bill states that manufacturers of designated cleaning products must disclose the chemicals in those products and provide safety data sheets. Employers who have these products in the workplace must obtain the safety data sheets from the manufacturers and make them available at the workplace.

Domestic Terrorism Injury on the Job (Assembly Bill 44)

Under this law, employers must provide a nurse case manager to advocate for workers injured when on the job by an act of domestic terrorism but only when the governor has declared a state of emergency. ●

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Sam Edelman Looks to Los Angeles to Develop New Blue-Jeans Line

Sam Edelman is known for the cute and fashionable shoes the New York company has been making for more than 10 years.

When the brand decided to launch a new denim collection, Los Angeles is the place where the trendy footwear venture looked to find the right designers and sourcing managers to help launch Sam Edelman denim.

They ended up working with Global Brand Group Denim West in Los Angeles, part of the Hong Kong-based Global Brands Group Holding, which over the years has developed licensing agreements with Calvin Klein, Under Armour, Juicy Couture, Cole Haan and Jones of New York.

Global Brands is also in partnership with Marquee Brands to produce the latest BCBGMaxAzria collection after the Los Angeles brand's name was sold after its bankruptcy-protection filing last year.

Denim West and Sam Edelman worked together to introduce a Holiday collection, and now they are rolling out the Spring/Summer 2018 collection.

"There are two things that are critical to a successful denim collection—the perfect fit and being on trend. These are both things the Sam Edelman brand is known for and

will be the foundation for the denim launch as well," said Suzy Bisantz, president and chief executive of GBG Denim West.

For Holiday, the first offerings featured jeans and denim jackets in an array of washes and three fits. The featured fits include a mid-rise jean, a high-rise jean and a boyfriend jean. Some had crystal embellishments and coated denim. The Spring collection expands the offerings to denim skirts and shorts.

Right now, the collection is selling at Nordstrom and at www.samedelman.com with retail prices ranging from \$98 to \$148.

The forces behind the Sam Edelman label are Sam and Libby Edelman, who created the Sam & Libby line of shoes in 1987, which was known for its bowed ballet flats that became a fixture on the fashion circuit. In 1996, the shoe line was sold to Maxwell Shoe Co.

Then the Edelmanns returned in 2004 to launch the Sam Edelman shoe line, which was sold in 2010 to Caleres Inc., based outside of St. Louis. Caleres has been instrumental in launching Sam Edelman as a lifestyle brand with handbags, outerwear, activewear, intimates, socks, dresses, swimwear and sunglasses.

—Deborah Belgium

Calendar

Jan. 4

Agenda

Long Beach Convention Center
Long Beach, Calif.
Through Jan. 5

Jan. 7

Accessories The Show

Intermezzo Collections

Children's Club

Fame

Moda

Jacob Javits Center

New York

Through Jan. 9

Arizona Apparel, Accessories,

Gift and Shoe Show

El Zaribah Shrine Auditorium

Phoenix

Through Jan. 9

Jan. 11

Active Collective

Swim Collective

Anaheim Convention Center

Anaheim, Calif.

Through Jan. 12

Coast

Seagate Hotel

Delray Beach, Fla.

Through Jan. 12

Jan. 15

Los Angeles Fashion Market

California Market Center

The New Mart

Cooper Design Space

Gerry Building

Lady Liberty Building

Academy Awards Building

Primrose Design Building

824 Building

Los Angeles

Through Jan. 17

Select X Emerge

LA Kids' Market

Transit

Los Angeles

Through Jan. 17

Designers and Agents

The New Mart

Los Angeles

Through Jan. 17

Brand Assembly

Cooper Design Space

Los Angeles

Through Jan. 17

Hong Kong Fashion Week

Hong Kong Exhibition Center

Hong Kong

Through Jan. 18

Jan. 16

Première Vision

Pier 94

New York

Through Jan. 18

Printsource

Hotel Pennsylvania

New York

Through Jan. 17

Intermoda

Expo Guadalajara

Guadalajara, Mexico

Through Jan. 19

Jan. 17

DG Expo Fabric & Trim Show

Penn Plaza Pavilion

New York

Through Jan. 18

Jan. 19

Imprinted Sportswear Show

Long Beach Convention Center

Long Beach, Calif.

Through Jan. 21

Jan. 21

Project

MRket

Jacob Javits Center

New York

Through Jan. 23

Jan. 22

Texworld USA

Apparel Sourcing USA

Jacob Javits Center

New York

Through Jan. 24

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on ApparelNews.net.

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Outdoor Voices Opens Shops in California

New York-headquartered **Outdoor Voices** has been in a California mood lately.

The activewear brand opened two boutiques in the Golden State. On Dec. 2, it opened a shop in San Francisco's Hayes Valley neighborhood, at 555 Hayes St. A few days later, it opened a boutique in West Hollywood's Melrose Place neighborhood. The store, located at 8425 Melrose Ave., formerly housed the **Tenoversix** boutique.

The 3-year-old brand currently operates five permanent stores and two pop-up shops. Ty Haney, the founder of the label, believes the brand will open a few more shops in 2018.

Outdoor Voices makes activewear for women and for men. One of its points of difference is that it is made for people who

aren't LeBron James and Serena Williams. "For us, it's about being human, not superhuman, which is an idea that's been celebrated in the activewear space until now," Haney said. "As a brand, we approach activity with a lighthearted ease and sense of humor, and our spaces reflect that. It's intimidating to walk into a store and see photos on the walls of professional athletes with **Gatorade** sweat. We want our shops to feel inviting and inclusive."

The San Francisco store includes a water feature, which looks like a koi pond. It is made from redwood slabs grown in Northern California. The boutique also includes a tearoom-like area.

—Andrew Asch

Alstyle Apparel Closing Distribution Center in Anaheim

T-shirt and sweatshirt company **Alstyle Apparel** is shutting down its distribution center in Anaheim, Calif., and laying off 81 employees, according to notices filed with the state Employment Development Department.

Alstyle Apparel was acquired in 2016 by **Gildan Activewear**, the same company that in early 2017 bought the **American Apparel** brand name after the Los Angeles concern filed for bankruptcy protection in 2016.

A spokesman for Gildan Activewear, based in Montreal, said the activities at the 200,000-square-foot Anaheim distribution center are being consolidated with a larger distribution facility in the Jarupa Valley recently launched to also ship American

Apparel products.

"The employees at the Anaheim facility were provided notice of the upcoming shuttering quite some time ago and were offered retention bonuses as well as severance packages," wrote Garry Bell, a Gildan Activewear spokesman, in an email. "Additionally, we made an offer to have them relocate to the new facility, which I believe is 35 miles away, with relocation incentives to move. At this point, more than 30 percent have chosen to move to the new facility."

Gildan, which employs more than 42,000 people worldwide, has been on an expansion through acquisitions that is giving the company greater economies of scale, as seen in the warehouse consolidation.—*Deborah Belgium*

Bluewater Taps Into Surf Expo's DNA

Surf Expo's newest show category, Bluewater, brings the best of inshore and offshore apparel and accessories companies to a one-stop shop for those captivated by the lure of open air and water.

Bimini Bay

When asked which apparel items Bimini Bay expects to be bestsellers this season, it responds, "Believe it or not, everything."

Not surprising. Since 1992, Bimini Bay clothing has been the choice of "active individuals who enjoy being on or near the water as well as in the sunshine and open air," from the Florida Keys and Gulf Coast to the mountains of upstate New York. The keys to its success? Attention to detail, attractive price points, generous fit, and moisture-management wicking and ventilation systems engineered to keep a sportsman or -woman comfortable in all conditions. Always responsive to consumer feedback, Bimini Bay now offers a complete line of UPF-rated garments for greater skin protection. New for 2018: Hook 'M printed performance T-shirts "with some of the best fish graphics on the market, vibrant and lifelike." Having fine-tuned the line, Bimini Bay provides its customers with fill-ins on demand by color and size "in a very timely manner."



Salt Life

Founded in 2003 by four Jacksonville Beach, Florida, friends who are passionate about the ocean and all it has to offer, Salt Life captures a bluewater lifestyle, whether it be surfing, fishing, diving, or just enjoying a day at the beach.

They understand the unique needs of watermen and fishermen, providing gear and apparel that has worldwide appeal. For them, Salt Life offers clothing that combines performance, comfort, and fashion with incredible fit. This season's Angler fishing shirt is a case in point. Made with four-way stretch fabric, it is, they say, "the first true fishing shirt that you can wear from the boat to dinner." Also new for 2018, the Sunburnt T-shirt collection that Salt Life asserts is "the most comfortable tee you will ever wear." In addition, Salt Life has expanded its ladies' line to include yoga-inspired fitness wear designed for an active lifestyle on or off the water. All three offerings are expected to be bestsellers in 2018.



Scales Gear

Scales Gear, which was launched in 2008, made its name and built its brand of "the finest fishing apparel this world has ever worn" by focusing on elite anglers competing in top-tier tournament circuits. However, the way the scales of fish have evolved "in providing protection and hydrodynamic advantage," the company explains, has similarly grown to include not just fishermen but anyone who enjoys "Every Degree of Water"—the name of its new collection. "We understand that our customer is anyone who enjoys being on the water, from professional fishermen to weekend warriors." For the latter, the Surf and Slay collection crosses over to "those who throw a line while paddle boarding or enjoy a little surfing now and then." For the traditional fishing core, Scales Gear offers its "game-changer" Pro Performance shirt, which features patent-pending SCALESkin fabric, which keeps you dry, eliminates odor with an EPA-registered antimicrobial additive, is stain resistant, and is UPF 50+ for protection.



Yeti

As every good outdoorsman or -woman knows, you are only as good as your equipment. Growing up, the founders of YETI, who hunted, fished, and traveled to outdoor industry trade shows with their entrepreneur father, quickly realized the coolers they needed just weren't up to snuff. "The handles would break, the latches would snap off, the lids would cave in," they say. "Not only was it a hassle to replace them after every season, but these cheaply built ice chests were limiting our good times." That frustration led to a solution in 2006 with the launch of Yeti, "the most durable and reliable products imaginable" for in- and offshore activities. The colossal success of the over-engineered coolers has led to other equally resilient products such as airtight duffels and "extremely tough" buckets. New products for 2018 include the Panga, a 100 percent submersible and airtight dry duffel bag; the Hopper Flip Family, lead-proof, tough-as-nails soft coolers; and the ultra-durable Loadout 5-gallon Bucket.

The next edition of Surf Expo takes place at the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando, Florida, January 25–27.

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Holiday Shopping Continued from page 1

of a 3.6 percent to 4 percent rise over the 2016 holiday season. “Sales and traffic were up across the board, from online and luxury retailers to department and discount stores, from Main Street to mega stores and everything in between,” Shay said.

In October, the NRF was optimistic about strong holiday business based on the nation’s low 4.1 percent unemployment rate and a good economy. Consumer confidence was high, and there was more time for the shopping season. This year saw one more day for shopping compared to last year because Christmas fell on a Monday.

Several Los Angeles-area mall managers said that retail traffic at their properties during the recent holiday season was even or slightly higher than last year. But e-commerce continues to change traffic patterns, said Susan Vance, marketing and sponsorship director at the **Beverly Center** in Los Angeles.

“As omni-channel retail becomes more prevalent, we are seeing a new consumer-shopping pattern emerge. Customers who have researched their potential purchases, gifts and trends online are coming into stores to make their final purchase, which we saw reflected in this year’s traffic,” Vance said.

The busiest shopping days of the season

were forecast to be the first day of the holiday shopping season, Nov. 24, also known as Black Friday, and Dec. 23, nicknamed Super Saturday. Other busy days were Dec. 16, the third Saturday of December, as well as the day after Christmas, according to **ShopperTrak**, a market-research company that measures retail traffic.

At **South Coast Plaza** in Costa Mesa, Calif., heavy retail traffic on Super Saturday was deemed to be the same as the first wave of shopping on Black Friday, according to the retail center.

If traffic seemed moderate at malls, business was still relatively good at many of these traditional retail centers, said Jeff Van Sinderen, a retail analyst at **B. Riley & Co.** “[Shoppers] were going with the intention to make purchases,” he said. “They were making fewer trips, spending less time walking around, scoping things out and spending more time making purchases when they were at bricks-and-mortar retailers.”

The 2017 holiday season was marked by retailers gaining a new comfort and flexibility in dealing with a new market increasingly dominated by e-commerce and omni-channel retail.

In 2015, many traditional retailers were



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Holiday Shopping *Continued from page 8*

stunned by heavy competition from online sites. Before that season started, they ordered too much inventory. Because shopping sites claimed a much larger market share of purchases, many retailers found themselves having to put a lot of goods on sale, which hurt margins, Van Sinderen said.

Since 2015, retailers have worked with leaner inventories. "If you look at a two-year comparison, I think this season's overall results will be substantially healthier than they were two years ago," Van Sinderen said. "We're beginning to see light at the end of the tunnel in terms of businesses being better positioned and supply being better balanced with demand in apparel."

He estimated that retailers' promotions and discounts for this holiday season were even with last year.

While retailers have learned how to better roll with the punches

of a new economy, turbulence remains ahead. "We're seeing signs of stabilization," Van Sinderen said. "But more stores will close. More bankruptcies will happen. It is a multiyear process that is playing out."

This holiday season was not dominated by one fashion trend, said Mercedes Gonzalez, director of **Global Purchasing Companies**, a New York City-based fashion strategy and brand development agency. But some trends stood out.

"Everyone was looking for luxury fabrics—cashmere or cashmere blends," she said. In the freezing Northeast, flannel-lined leggings have been popular, she said.

Another popular trend was gifts involving charity. "People were looking for things with an ethical story behind them. There was novelty added, but people were seeking it this year," Gonzalez said. "Price wasn't an issue this year; it was quality and story. It can't be mass-produced." ●

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Surf Expo

www.surfexpo.com

Products and Services: Surf Expo is the largest and longest-running watersports and beach/resort/lifestyle trade show in the world. Produced annually in January and September, the show draws buyers from specialty stores, major chains, resorts, cruise lines, and beach rental companies across the U.S., the Caribbean, Central and South America, and around the world. The show features more than 2,500 booths of hard goods, apparel, and accessories and a full lineup of special events including fashion shows, annual awards ceremonies, and demos. Average buyer, exhibitor, and media turnout exceeds 28,600 attendees—per show. More information about Surf Expo can be found at our website.

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