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GREG KESSLER COURTESY OF RODARTE

Designers Kate and Laura Mulleavy took their Rodarte fashion show to Southern California to showcase their Fall 2019 collection, inspired by movie musicals. For more looks, see page 8.

TRADE SHOW REPORT

Las Vegas Apparel and Footwear Shows Announce Big Location Moves

By Andrew Asch, Deborah Belgum and Dorothy Crouch

WomensWear in Nevada LAS VEGAS—The major trade shows for apparel, accessories and footwear held every February in Las Vegas saw a big shift with the shows being held a week earlier than normal.

At the same time, two of the shows announced they would move. **Informa Exhibitions** said it would consolidate all of its **MAGIC** shows into the **Las Vegas Convention Center** next August while **Womenswear In Nevada** said that in 2020 it would move its event from the **Rio Hotel & Convention Center** to the **Caesars Forum Conference Center** on the Las Vegas Strip.

The announcements address a major problem for the twice-a-year shows held in February and August, when ex- ➔ **Las Vegas** page 3

New Study Reveals Impact of Creative Jobs on L.A. County's Economy

By Dorothy Crouch Associate Editor

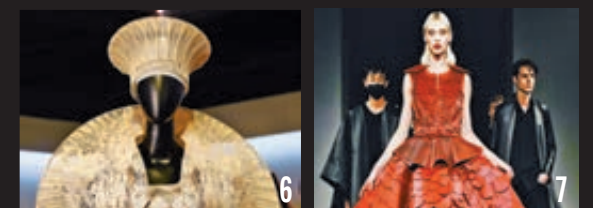
In the latest study of Los Angeles County's creative economy conducted by the **Otis College of Art and Design**, the fashion industry was the only one of the creative industries that saw a decrease in employment. The decrease came even though the fashion industry has the second-largest share of creative-industry jobs in Los Angeles County.

The 2019 edition of the report, called the "2019 Report on the Creative Economy" and released Feb. 1, was researched by the Los Angeles-based firm **Beacon Economics**. The 2019 report, which studied the creative industry between 2010 and 2017, analyzed five major industries: entertainment and digital media, creative goods and products, the fine and performing arts, architecture and related services, and fashion.

"The apparel industry is unique," said Robert Kleinhenz, an economist and executive director of research at Beacon ➔ **Otis** page 4

INSIDE

Where fashion gets down to businessSM



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Charlotte Russe to Close Approximately 94 Stores in Voluntary Chapter 11 Bankruptcy Plan

Charlotte Russe Holdings Corporation filed a voluntary Chapter 11 bankruptcy petition on Feb. 3 in United States Bankruptcy Court for the District of Delaware. The announcement was made Feb. 4, with the San Diego-based retailer planning to close 94 of its bricks-and-mortar locations while pursuing a going-concern sale of the business and assets.

With **Charlotte Russe** and **Peek Kids** stores and online platforms still open, the re-

tailers will continue to serve customers.

Charlotte Russe received a \$50 million commitment for a debtor-in-possession financing, which, if approved, will support operations and administration during Chapter 11 proceedings. In customary motions filed with the U.S. Bankruptcy Court, Charlotte Russe has sought authorization to operate in the ordinary course during Chapter 11 proceedings, which will include without limitation the authority to continue pay-

ment of employee wages and benefits, amounts due to shippers and warehouse personnel, utility-service providers, and taxing authorities. It has also requested the court's authorization to honor certain customer programs.

In 2018, Charlotte Russe reduced \$214 million in term-loan debt to \$90 million, with the loans' maturity date extended with term lenders to February 2023. Lenders received 100 percent of the company's equity.

Cooley LLP is named as the company's legal counsel, **Berkeley Research Group** is acting as its financial adviser, and **Guggenheim Securities, LLC**, is serving as its investment banker.

Led by Chief Executive Jenny Ming since 2009, Charlotte Russe was founded in 1975 by brothers Dan, Frank and Larry Lawrence, who opened their first store in Carlsbad, Calif.

—Dorothy Crouch

Levi Strauss Sees Substantial Growth in 2018

Levi Strauss & Co., the San Francisco clothing company known for its **Levi's** jeans, had a solid year of growth with net revenues increasing a healthy 14 percent in its fiscal year ending Nov. 25, 2018.

"We had an outstanding year with reported net revenues of \$5.6 billion, growing 14 percent year-over-year on a reported basis," said Chip Bergh, president and chief executive of Levi Strauss, in a statement. "It's clear our strategies to diversify our product portfolio, expand our direct-to-consumer business and deepen our connection with consumers worldwide have worked, resulting in both higher an-

nual revenues and gross margins."

The company had 74 more company-operated stores at the end of fiscal 2018 than it did the previous year.

While revenue grew in 2018, net income for the fiscal year remained flat at \$285 million. That was due to higher operating income, lower interest expense, gains on hedging contracts in the current year as well as a debt refinancing charge in the prior year. This was partially offset by a one-time \$143 million tax charge related to the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act.

For the fourth quarter, net revenue grew 9 percent to \$1.6 billion with net income declin-

ing 17 percent from \$116 million the previous year to \$97 million this year. Profits were affected by an increase in selling and general and administrative expenses for the fourth quarter, which were \$720 million compared with \$633 million during the same quarter in 2017. The increase in costs reflected the expansion of the company's direct-to-consumer business, higher compensation expenses reflecting the company's stronger performance and higher advertising expenses.

The Americas, which includes the United States and Latin America, still account for more than half of the company's income. Dur-

ing fiscal 2018, net revenues for the Americas were up 10 percent to \$3 billion. A lot of that growth came from sales in the company's moderately priced **Signature** and more expensive Levi's brands and the strong performance of the company's retail stores.

Levi's saw its sales in Europe grow 25 percent during 2018 to \$1.65 billion with higher income across all channels but was offset by higher advertising costs and higher selling expenses to support growth.

Sales in Asia grew 8 percent to \$887 million, reflecting expansion in Levi's direct-to-consumer business.—Deborah Belgium

RETAIL

U.S. Retail Sales on Strong Footing for 2019 With Job Growth Continuing

Despite rumblings of a trade war with China and an up-and-down stock market, the **National Retail Federation** said it expects retail sales for 2019 to be up from 3.8 percent

to 4.4 percent, totaling more than \$3.8 trillion.

Preliminary estimates show that 2018 was a solid year for retail sales, which grew 4.6 percent over the previous year to \$3.68 tril-

lion. That exceeded the NRF's forecast of at least 4.5 percent growth for 2018.

Online sales in 2018 grew 10.4 percent to \$682.8 billion, with online sales this year expected to shoot up between 10 percent and 12 percent.

"We believe the underlying state of the economy is sound," said Matthew Shay, president and chief executive of the National Retail Federation, a retail trade group based in Washington, D.C. "More people are working, they're making more money, their taxes are lower and their confidence remains high."

Many experts expected retail sales to take a hit last year with the recent government shutdown and a shaky stock market.

Jack Kleinhenz, the NRF's chief economist, said the good news is that inflation and interest rates are expected to remain low this year. "We are not seeing any deterioration in the financial health of the consumer," he said. "Consumers are in better shape than at any time in the last few years. Most important for the year ahead will be the ongoing strength in the job market, which will support consumer income and spending, both key drivers of the economy."

Job growth was robust in 2018 and should continue at a healthy pace this year. The

NRF expects the overall economy to gain an average of 170,000 jobs a month, down from 220,000 in 2018. Unemployment, which currently is at 4 percent, will drop to 3.5 percent by the end of the year. Gross domestic product is likely to grow about 2.5 percent in 2019 over 2018.

One roadblock could be the rise in tariffs on Chinese goods imported into the United States. The NRF said tariffs could drive up the cost of consumer products and affect company profits this year. Right now, a 10 percent tariff has been placed on \$200 billion in goods coming from China, including fabric, handbags and furs. That tariff could be pushed up to 25 percent on March 1.

Kleinhenz said it has been difficult to measure the impact of the recently ended government shutdown, which lasted for 35 days, from Dec. 22, 2018, to Jan. 25, 2019. Government workers will be paid retroactively, he said, but some spending on things such as dining and entertainment has been lost, and government contractors will not receive back pay.

A key issue will be how quickly the Internal Revenue Service can turn around its potential backlog of tax returns, which would affect first-quarter spending.—D.B.

Markdowns Cost U.S. Retailers \$300 Billion in 2018

Who doesn't love a sale? Consumers do, but for retailers the idea of discounting merchandise by 10 percent to 25 percent adds up.

According to a recent U.S. retailer survey of more than 200 senior retail decision-makers, markdowns cost non-grocery-store retailers \$300 billion in revenues in 2018, or 12 percent of their total sales.

"Ever-expanding choice and rapid changes in consumer behavior are increasing the pressure on retailers to make smart merchandising decisions, and these pressures show no signs of easing," said Deborah Weinswig, the chief executive and founder of **Coresight Research**, which conducted the survey for **Celect**, a company in Boston that does predictive analytics and inventory optimization for retailers.

Other findings from the survey included:

Inventory misjudgments were a primary markdown driver and barrier to selling at full price, accounting for 53 percent of unplanned markdown costs.

Multi-channel retailers had a lower propensity to sell inventory at full price because their overbuying/underbuying inventory formula gets even more complicated with channel expansion.

About 86 percent of survey respondents identified specific ways in which advanced analytics could help their retail sector sell more products at full price.

"To stay competitive in today's challenging retail landscape, retailers need to understand the impact of complex inventory decisions and the potential for upside," said John Andrews, chief executive of Celect.—D.B.



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Las Vegas *Continued from page 1*

hibitors display their clothing and shoe collections and other goods. Buyers have been challenged getting to the MAGIC shows located at the **Mandalay Bay Convention Center** and the Las Vegas Convention Center while the WWIN show is across the freeway at the Rio.

“Logistically, the move to a single campus means a shift from two venues to one,” said Mark Temple-Smith, managing director of Informa Exhibitions’ fashion business. “Fundamentally, though, it’s a new perspective and a sharpened commitment to building a singular, powerful experience for our entire industry.”

Informa has not revealed the new exhibit layouts and locations at the Las Vegas Convention Center, but it did say the Las Vegas Convention Center is making \$540 million in renovations to the current space and is working on an \$860-million expansion that should be completed by 2021.

Also, Informa, which purchased MAGIC owner **UBM** last June, is planning to invest \$15 million over the next three years in the shows to promote growth. The next edition of the shows will take place Aug. 12–14 with **Sourcing at**



Hats made in China are displayed at Sourcing at MAGIC.



Pantone color display at WWD MAGIC



WomensWear in Nevada

MAGIC beginning on Aug. 11.

Womenswear In Nevada has been at the Rio since 2000 but found it was hard to expand because all the ballroom spaces were filled. The show’s new organizers, **Clarion UX**, said this move will make it possible to expand in a state-of-the-art facility. The move will be made when the WWIN show is held Aug. 17–20, 2020. The next WWIN show will be held Aug. 12–15.

“The incredible Caesars Forum venue opens up so many opportunities for WWIN,” said Desiree Hanson, vice president of fashion events, Clarion UX. “The stunning new venue provides the perfect backdrop for the innovations and enhancements we have planned for WWIN.”

WWIN debuted at the **Tropicana Hotel** in 1998 when Roland Timney and Jeff Yunis founded the show. It moved to the Rio two years later. The show was sold in 2015 to **Urban Expositions**, which is now called Clarion UX.

Show dates alter

This year, the various trade shows started on Feb. 2 with the **International Fashion Jewelry & Accessory Group** opening at the **Embassy Suites** for four days followed by a bevy of MAGIC shows starting on Feb. 5 and ending Feb. 7. WWIN launched on Feb. 4 and wrapped up on Feb. 7.

Normally, the February shows begin the second week

of February, but this year the dates were pushed up by one week.

The earlier date was not the best for the Sourcing at MAGIC show, which started on Feb. 4 and ended on Feb. 7 because Chinese New Year began on Feb. 5. Normally, more than half the exhibitors at the Sourcing show are from China and Hong Kong.

Chinese New Year and the current U.S. trade war with China didn’t help Chinese attendance. “It was a killer, but China is still here,” said Chris Bryer, director of sales for Sourcing at MAGIC. Organizers estimated that about 600 of the 1,100 booths at the show were from China. India brought about 100 companies. Egypt had a pavilion filled with almost 20 companies, and Portugal had a large pavilion at the front of the show with 16 companies.

The WWIN show began on Monday, one day before the majority of the MAGIC shows opened, which proved a big draw for buyers. The show floor was abuzz with activity. Suzanne Pruitt, a WWIN spokesperson, said there were about 400 companies exhibiting at the show.

One of those companies was **April Cornell**, a more than 35-year-old apparel and home décor company based in Burlington, Vt. “We’ve been busy,” said Leticia Brewer, April Cornell’s wholesale manager for Canada, who was at the show with Anna Krause, the wholesale coordinator for the United States. “It has been great. It’s a great place to meet new people.”

Also starting before the bevy of MAGIC shows was **Off-Price**, a discount clothing event that kicked off Feb. 3 at the **Sands Expo and Convention Center**. But starting on **Super Bowl** Sunday proved to be a one-day business killer.

“It was just not a great day on Sunday,” said Mitch Rubinfeld of **Ultimate Apparel**, which sells discounted clothing for men, women and children. “They had a little party here on Sunday and that cut into our time.”



OffPrice

Many MAGIC shows

The Mandalay Bay Convention Center was a busy place for the seven shows organized there from Feb. 5 to Feb. 7 by Informa Exhibitions.

During **Project Womens**, exhibitors were introduced to



On the Curve Las Vegas floor



A photo opportunity at Project Womens

the new Conscious Fashion Campaign, a partnership with the United Nations. Certain exhibitors registered as a Conscious Collection to showcase their fashions.

At **It Is Well L.A.**, a made-in-Los Angeles basics brand, the company saw buyers who were visiting from many regions within the United States. “Buyers are looking for staples,” said Susanna Kwon, operating associate for the company. “Trends come and go—and they’re great—but our buyers want something that is more wearable year-round.”

Variety was found at **Stitch @ Project Womens**. **Stash Style**, which sells U.S.-made home goods, T-shirts and bags, also creates new apparel through screen-printing and repurposing denim, military jackets and flannels updated using a reverse dye process. Apparel wholesales from \$5.50 to \$45. “You can make your store pretty eclectic depending on what you’re looking for,” said Lauren Goik, wholesale account

Otis *Continued from page 1*

Economics. “We’ve seen those job losses mainly because of manufacturing going away, but it’s not that the fashion industry is going away,” Kleinhenz explained. “We may not be manufacturing the clothes, but the design work is not going anywhere.”

The report broke down the fashion-job market into subsectors, including textile mills, apparel manufacturing, apparel wholesaling, footwear manufacturing, footwear wholesaling, women’s handbag manufacturing, leather-goods manufacturing, jewelry manufacturing and jewelry wholesaling.

As creative jobs occupy more space within the Los Angeles County employment market, Kleinhenz was hopeful that these jobs would overlap with other fields, such as technology.

siderably larger than New York’s. Compared to New York City, Los Angeles County’s fashion segment employs approximately 24 percent more workers in the industry than the East Coast fashion giant.

According to Kleinhenz, the secret of Los Angeles’ large stake in creative-industry jobs could be that the connection between these positions isn’t always apparent.

“We have this huge assemblage of creative industries in Los Angeles County and California,” Kleinhenz said. “If we haven’t discovered them, there are probably many synergies between—and across—seemingly unrelated industries. By virtue of their commonality, I am sure that they have benefited from the cross-pollination because they are next to each other in the region.”

In 2017, private industry employed 3.8 million salaried and wage employees in Los Angeles County. Creative jobs oc-

Total Employment in Fashion in L.A. County, New York City and California, 2010-2017

	2010	2017	CHANGE
Los Angeles County	89,582	78,625	-11,227
New York City	68,480	63,326	-6,044
California	121,295	115,251	-5,154

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW); Beacon Economics

“There is a heavy influence between creative industries and the tech sector. There is a lot of overlap. A lot of the areas that saw a big job gain have some type of tech aspect to it,” he said. “There is always more opportunity to understand what that is like and capitalize on that.”

Compared with New York City, which is a large domestic creative hub, Los Angeles County proved to be an impressive source of professionals in these industries. According to the report, when examining employment figures within creative industries, Los Angeles County ranks as the United States’ largest hub.

When examined against its East Coast counterpart, Los Angeles County employs 10 percent more creative workers than the Big Apple. The fashion industry’s employment of workers in Los Angeles is also con-

cupied nearly 20 percent of those jobs. Of the 864,958 jobs generated by the creative economy in Los Angeles County, 488,456 professionals were employed in creative occupations across all industries, with 177,311 of these workers employed in noncreative industries.

Workers who were employed directly in creative industries numbered 419,945, of which 311,145 worked in creative occupations and 103,000 occupied noncreative jobs. Jobs indirectly generated from creative industries totaled 450,013.

In Los Angeles, 11 percent of the county’s total employment was traced to creative industries. Los Angeles County accounts for 40 percent of California’s direct creative-industry employment and one in three jobs indirectly generated from these industries throughout the state. ●

Calendar

Feb. 10

Playtime New York
Metropolitan Pavilion
New York
Through Feb. 12

Feb. 11

Apparel Sourcing Paris
Paris Le Bourget
Paris
Through Feb. 14

Texworld Paris, Texworld Denim
Paris Le Bourget
Paris
Through Feb. 14

Feb. 12

Première Vision Paris
Parc des Expositions
Paris
Through Feb. 14

Feb. 19

Milan Fashion Week
Various venues
Milan
Through Feb. 25

Feb. 20

Rocky Mountain Gift Show
Denver Merchandise Mart
Denver
Through Feb. 25

Feb. 22

Denver Apparel & Accessories Market
Denver Merchandise Mart
Denver
Through Feb. 25

There’s more
on ApparelNews.net.

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

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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FIDM Unveils Some 100 Movie Costumes at Its Annual Costume Design Exhibition

More than 800 people attended the Feb. 2 preview opening of the annual “Art of Motion Picture Costume Design” exhibition, which features more than 100 movie costumes from some 25 films released in 2018.

This is the 27th year that the **Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising** has organized the extensive exhibition, housed at the school’s downtown Los Angeles campus.

All five movies whose costumes have been nominated for **Academy Awards** are included in the exhibit. Those films are: “Black Panther,” “The Favourite,” “Mary Queen of Scots,” “Mary Poppins Returns” and “The Ballad of Buster Scruggs.”

On hand for the preview were two of the Oscar-nominated costume designers: Mary Zophres, who created the costumes for “The Ballad of Buster Scruggs,” and Ruth Carter, who designed the costumes for “Black Panther.” In addition, Mary Vogt, who designed the costumes for “Cra-

zy Rich Asians,” was at the Saturday-night opening, which gave attendees a preview of the exhibit before it opened to the public on Feb. 5. All the costumes will be on display at the school’s museum gallery through April 12.

This is the only major exhibit of its kind that pays homage each year to the creativity of costume designers, who often have only weeks and a limited budget to put scores of looks together for some huge films.

The exhibit is put together every year by **FIDM Museum** Director Barbara Bundy, who takes about a year to organize the display. As soon as one is done, she is on to the next year, hoping that what is in the exhibit will be up for an Academy Award nomination.

Other films whose costumes are included in this year’s exhibit are “Aquaman,” “BlacKkKlansman,” “Bohemian Rhapsody,” “If Beale Street Could Talk,” “A Star Is Born” and “A Wrinkle in Time.”

The museum gallery, located at 919 S. Grand Ave., is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturdays. Entrance to the gallery is free to the public.—*Deborah Belgum*



Ruth Carter



Black Panther



A Star Is Born



Crazy Rich Asians



The Ballad of Buster Scruggs



Mary Zophres

Vegan Fashion Week Launches in L.A. With Fashion and Activism

The very first **Vegan Fashion Week** kicked off in Los Angeles on Feb. 1 with a private event at the **Natural History Museum** and then two days of public events at the **California Market Center**.

At the CMC, there was Vegan World during the day and a fashion show the second night of the three-day happening.

Attendees at Vegan World could sample vegan delicacies including “foie gras” and gourmet cupcakes, find animal-free apparel and products, and see collections from designers who create cruelty-free fashions.



Mink Shoes on display during Vegan World at the California Market Center

“We are such a grassroots movement,” said Emmanuella Rienda, the organizer of Vegan Fashion Week. “We managed to successfully create a vision for the community to keep moving together. There is a strong connection that arose from the event through which we can collaborate with the attendees and exhibitors.”

During the fashion show, designs were shown from **Dr. Martens**, **Matea Benedetti**, **Noemie Devime**, **Altir**, **Bayem**, **Ecopel**, **Enda**, **New Rock**, **Mink Shoes**, **Mistohn**, **Sarah Regensburger**, **Chloé Trujillo**, **Vegan Club**, **WastedLA** and **Ar-sayo**. As cruelty-free alternatives to animal-based fabrics and textiles, designers relied on materials such as **Piñatex** pineapple



Matea Benedetti dress

leather, apple leather, eco-friendly faux fur, faux wool and cork-based exotic skins.

“My parents were fashion designers, so I grew up in Paris in the fashion world,” said Chloe Trujillo, now based in Los Angeles. “The way manufacturers make fake leather now is scientific with materials such as pineapple and mushrooms—it’s incredible. It was so inspiring seeing the other designers and their creations. You see that you can make anything in this way.”

Fashion-show attendees also included celebrities who have supported animal-rights initiatives, including musician Moby and actors Mena Suvari and Harley Quinn Smith. While the event began with a Los Angeles launch, Moby noted that



Chloé Trujillo design

many social trends launched in Los Angeles have expanded into globally accepted norms.

“L.A. has become the world center for vegan food, vegan apparel and veganism in general,” Moby said. “If you look at the last hundred years, how many social movements and world-changing movements have come from Los Angeles? This is the incubator for trends that spread into—and change—the rest of the world.”

As Vegan Fashion Week came to an end, Rienda looked forward to the future of her new event brand. “The goal of Vegan Fashion Week was that brands, at any stage of vegan fashion or sustainability, can come together for discussion

and extend the idea to come up with solutions that are good for people, the environment and animals,” she said.

The first installment of Vegan Fashion Week closed with a private fund-raising event Feb. 4. According to Rienda, plans are now being made to hold a second edition of the event in September in New York or Paris.—*Dorothy Crouch*

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FASHION

Rodarte Debuts Fall 2019 Collection in Southern California

Kate and Laura Mulleavy are home-grown designers who grew up in Pasadena, Calif. But their careers and their fashion shows for their **Rodarte** label have taken them mostly to New York, where their creations are seen on the runway during **New York Fashion Week**.

But this year the sisters decided to take the show on the road and showcased their Fall 2019 collection on Feb. 5 at the **Huntington Library, Art Collections and Botanical Gardens** in San Marino, Calif.

The fashion world was abuzz with the fact that the sisters were returning to their

roots and acknowledging that Los Angeles is a major fashion center.

The Mulleavy sisters started their label in 2005 after graduating from the **University of California, Berkeley**, without any formal fashion training. They have been touted by *Vogue* magazine, and in 2009 they won the Womenswear Designer of the Year Award from the **Council of Fashion Designers of America**.

Their Fall collection had a fairy-tale look that drew inspiration from the golden age of movie musicals between the 1930s and 1950s.—*Deborah Belgium*



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TRADE SHOW REPORT

Las Vegas *Continued from page 3*

manager at the Rocky River, Ohio-based brand.

At the **Curve Las Vegas** show, fresh brands were excited about introducing their pieces to a new market in the lingerie and swimwear segment.

For **Me Seduce**, a brand that traveled to Las Vegas from Poland, sales representative Justyna Szeftczyk met with buyers from Puerto Rico, Ohio, Utah, Texas, California, Florida and New York. The brand has a provocative approach to lingerie but also offers styles for a more conservative consumer.

"Our range appealed to them [buyers] because we have different styles," she said. "Especially in Las Vegas, they are more attracted to the sexy styles, but, surprisingly, they also liked the more feminine and softer pieces."

At the independent design-focused **Pooltradeshows**, buyers were placing orders for Brooklyn, New York-based **Rubyzaar's** shawls, maxi dresses, caftans and shirtdresses with a heavy tie-dye focus.

"I've been writing all morning," said co-owner Molly Rubin, who runs the company with her sister, Sarah Rubin. "I recommend this show for buyers and wholesalers. It's a great little market."

WWD MAGIC kicked off at the Las Vegas Convention Center on Feb. 5 and was extremely busy the first day as retailers poured into the show and its ornately decorated booths. "I had 25 orders the first day," said Raj Kapoor, the founder of **Raj Imports** in Los Angeles.

Over at the Embassy Suites, the nonprofit, member-owned International Fashion Jewelry and Accessory Group offered buyers the opportunity to meet U.S.-based companies.

At the **Bella & Company** suite, General Manager Joshua Lee felt the show was better than last year because of the better quality of buyers in attendance. "The smaller retailers are struggling because the big chain stores are taking over, but even those big stores are also struggling," he said. "Their online business might



The new Agenda location

have been a second thought. There are some online companies like **Fashion Nova** that are good at focusing on **Instagram** and online business."

Moving to downtown Las Vegas

From Feb. 5 to 7, **Agenda** and **Liberty Fairs** made their inaugural runs at the **World Market Center** near downtown Las Vegas, a more than 15-minute drive north of the Las Vegas Strip. But next August, Agenda and Liberty Fairs will be at a different location.

Vendors and show directors at streetwear-focused Agenda and contemporary-inspired Liberty said that traffic at their shows did not suffer from their location change from the Sands Expo and Convention Center.

However, vendors and show directors at **Project**, a rival trade show at the Mandalay Bay Convention Center, begged to differ. Jason Peskin, a brand director of men's fashion at Project, said that 80 brands from Agenda and Liberty joined Project because they did not want to make the move off of the Strip.

Agenda veteran brand **Staple** was one of the vendors making the jump to Project. "I love what Agenda does," said Jeff Staple, founder of Staple. "But that old retail adage is true. 'It's location, location, location.' When people come to Vegas, they want to stay on the Strip."

But Tony Shellman, an Agenda event director, said that retail traffic was good at Agenda's new space. Also, the show continued to serve its mission of providing a venue for prominent brands such as **Mitchell & Ness** as well as new and emerging brands such as **Carton**.

"We decided to change and do something different," Shellman said. "A lot of brands believed in us and made the change with us."

At the adjacent tent housing the Liberty Fairs show, Robin Chretien of the **Robin's Jean** brand also said that buyer traffic had not suffered at Liberty's new space. "Traffic was very good," he said. When buyers come to Liberty, they look for fashion." ●



Inside Liberty Fairs

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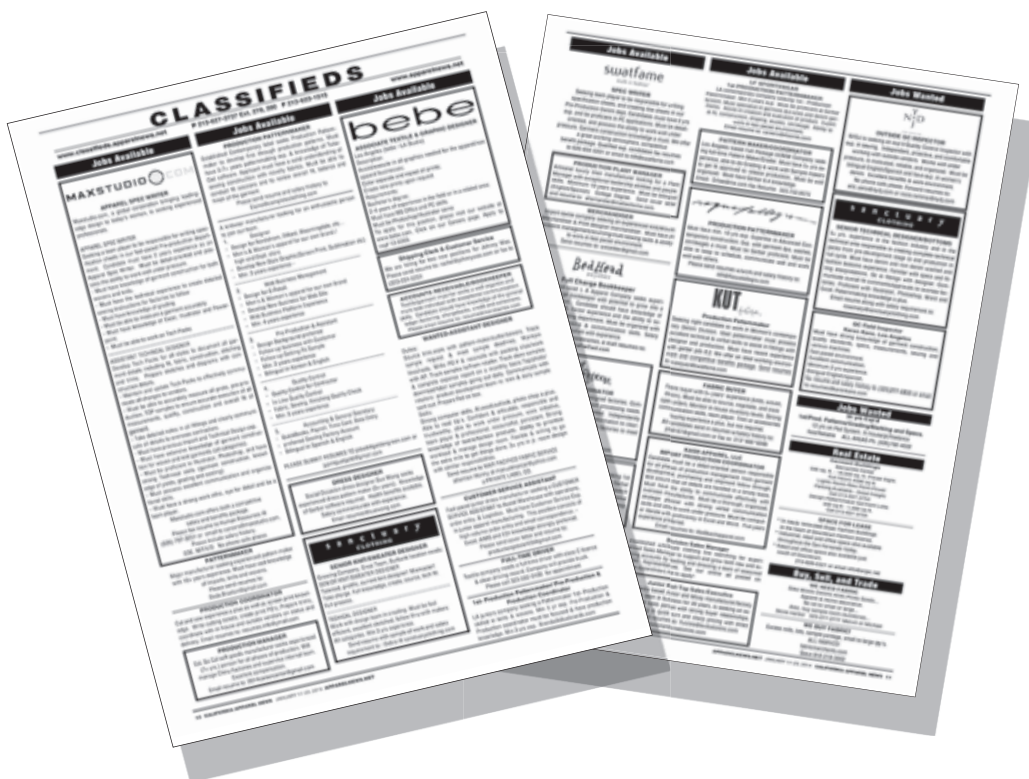
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