



# AS THE WORLD TURNS

The designers for the Johnny Was brand traveled the world for inspiration for their Fall '19 collection with lots of ethnic influences. For more looks, see page 7.

## **Clothing Manufacturer Three Dots Closes Doors**

#### By Deborah Belgum Executive Editor

After nearly 25 years in business, **Three Dots**, a contemporary knit tops and womenswear company launched in 1995 by Sharon Lebon, has ceased operations.

Calls to Lebon, the company's chief executive and president, and to Bruno Lebon, the company's vice president, were not answered, and emails to sales representatives bounced back as undeliverable.

Sources said the company, based in Garden Grove, Calif., shut its doors on April 18, right before the Easter weekend, while sales reps were out on the road selling the label's knit tops and fashion collection. "They were desperate for cash to go forward," one source said.

As recently as mid-April, a sales representative was selling the label's collection at the **Fashion Market Northern California** trade show, held five times a year in San Mateo, Calif. It was unclear how many employees were laid off. As of this week, the company's owners were selling the venture's

manufacturing equipment, one source said. Three Dots started out small, but by 2006 its revenues had

Three Dots page 3

# Traditional Retailers Have a Change of Heart Regarding the Value of Resale

By Dorothy Crouch Associate Editor

What is old is becoming new again for traditional retailers looking for added revenue streams. That's because the secondhand clothing, handbag and footwear market has been gaining an unprecedented amount of traction with store owners.

According to the "2019 ThredUp Resale Report," the resale market in the last three years has grown 21 times faster than the traditional retail-apparel market. In 2018, 12 million more women bought secondhand products than in 2017, an increase from 44 million to 56 million.

"The resale customer is no longer somebody else's customer. They are everybody's customer," James Reinhart, the co-founder and chief executive of **ThredUp**, wrote in the report. "Mass market or luxury, if people can find a highquality product for much less, they'll choose used. As the line between new and used apparel blurs for consumers, a **Luxury Resale** page 3



Second Generation sold ... p. 2 Women's denim sales up ... p. 2 Marine Layer using old T-shirts ... p. 8

# Second Generation Sells Its Juniors Labels to L.A. Company

Second Generation, a juniorswear company founded in Los Angeles in 1996, has sold its three juniorswear labels to a Los Angeles company associated with Star Fabrics.

The three labels sold on March 20 were **BeBop**, **Fishbowl** and **Gypsies & Moondust**, said Michael Weisberg, the company's chief executive, who did not disclose the price paid by Adir Haroni, who owns **Secret Charm**, **Star Fabrics** and **City Triangles**. Haroni formed a new company, called **Second Generation LLC**, to buy the labels.

Second Generation was



BeBop clothing

started by Weisberg; his father, Shelly Weisberg; and his brother Gregg Weisberg as a small juniorswear company whose main clients are Macy's, Stage, Belk and T.J. Maxx, among others.

Over the years, Second Generation grew and eventually moved into a 40,000-squarefoot building the company bought in Vernon, Calif., where the venture's warehouse is located. Last year, the company's revenues were \$24 million.

"It was kind of the right thing to do at the right time, but it has been very difficult to let go of something the family has been very proud of," said Michael Weisberg, an attorney who put his law ambitions on hold to help out his father and brother run the apparel company. "I thought I would go back to practicing law, but that never happened."

Last August, Weisberg did start practicing law again with the law firm **Brutzkus Gubner Rozansky Seror and Weber**, located in Woodland Hills, Calif., but he still remains a partner in **Wild Horses Apparel**, a Los Angeles company that owns the juniorswear label **Emerald Sundae**.

Secret Charm, whose chief executive is Adir Haroni, plans to run the recently acquired juniorswear labels as fairly autonomous brands, Weisberg said, with all the same employees moving to Secret Charm's headquarters near downtown Los Angeles. —Deborah Belgum

# What Kinds of Blue Jeans Are Women Buying?

Blue jeans never fade away, but they come and go in popularity. In recent years, blue jeans have faced increasing competition from activewear and athleisure pants that have more stretch and are extremely comfortable as well as versatile.

But the return of the blue jean in the United States is being seen by the space these cotton-denim pants are occupying in women's closets.

For the 12 months ended February 2019, women bought 364 million pairs of jeans, which amounts to 22 million more pairs than the previous year. More than half of those jeans bought during that 12-month period were purchased on sale, according to **The NPD Group**, a market-research company based in Port Washington, N.Y.

Off-price jeans now make up 17 percent of blue-jeans sales and are driving the majority of growth in women's jeans. "The recent growth in women's jeans is good news for the industry. Women want to wear more than just leggings and yoga pants," said Marshal Cohen, chief industry adviser, The NPD Group. "But the emphasis on quantity and discounting means marketers need to find new ways to inspire the women's-jeans consumer and deliver product that compels them to take their purchase to the next level."

In-store sales still account for an overwhelming number of blue-jean purchases some 80 percent in the last year. But these purchases are on the decline with online sales driving growth in the market. There was a 32 percent increase in online sales of women's jeans over the 12-month period compared to the previous year.

Women shopping online tend to purchase more and purchase more frequently. The average online annual spend per buyer on women's jeans was 4 percent higher than last year, and women purchased women's jeans through online sites twice a year on average.

"The denim consumer has changed," Cohen said. "Manufacturers and retailers are now faced with the challenge of strengthening the consumer's passion for jeans to ensure they are more than a commodity in their eyes."—D.B.



Indigo Rein jean

# Bebe Stores Names New Board Member

**Bebe Stores Inc.** has named a new member to its board of directors. New to the board is Perry Mandarino, who became a member on April 22. He replaces Kenneth Young, a director who joined the board last year.

Mandarino is the senior managing director, co-head of investment banking and head of corporate restructuring at **B. Riley FBR Inc.** He has advised more than 400 companies during his career as a financial adviser.

"We are excited to welcome Perry to Bebe's board of directors. Perry brings deep knowledge of our industry and has served as a trusted adviser to us throughout the successful completion of our business transformation," said Manny Mashouf, the brand's founder and chief executive. "In addition, we truly appreciate the service Kenny has provided to the board during his tenure and wish him all the best in his future endeavors."

In 2017, Bebe announced it would lay off 700 employees and close its entire retail chain, which consisted of 134 stores and 34 outlet stores.

The strategy was part of the remake of Bebe, a once fashion-centric retail chain started in San Francisco in 1976 by Mashouf.

The shuttering of stores and closing of the company's design studio and offices in Los Angeles helped the retail chain avoid bankruptcy. Earlier, it sold half its brand for \$35 million to **Bluestar Alliance**, a New York brand-management company that over the years has acquired several labels including **English Laundry**, **Nanette Lepore** and **Catherine Malandrino**.

Bluestar Alliance came out with a new collection of sexy dresses with new sizes and new categories, which have been sold online. Last year, Bebe pulled the wraps off its first lifestyle store in New York City, located near the Empire State Building at 1 W. 34th St.

The outpost is a new concept store that includes a beauty bar organized through a partnership with **beGlammed**, an on-demand beauty service where shoppers can have their hair and makeup done on site. There is also a personalization bar where shoppers can customize clothing items—from jeans to jackets—using **Swarovski** crystals, patches and embroidery.

On-site stylists help customers define their personal style and wardrobe with the possibility of ordering from the Bebe website using in-store **iPads**.—*D.B*.

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#### **Three Dots** *Continued from page 1*

reached \$26 million, according to published reports, but last year revenues were down to \$12 million, sources said.

By the middle of the week, Three Dots had not filed any documents with the U.S. Bankruptcy Court but was planning to meet with an investor who might be interested in buying the trademark.

The company has been trying to sell its venture over the past few years. Earlier this year, sources said Three Dots' owners met with Chinese investors to try to sell the company, but the deal fell through after the Chinese company pulled out.

"It has been harder for contemporary clothing companies to stay in business because there are fewer multi-line stores to sell to and there is not a lot of floor space in the bigger department stores," said Mark Brutzkus, a bankruptcy attorney at Brutzkus Gubner Rozansky Seror Weber, who often works with apparel-industry clients. "So unless you are doing a lot of direct-to-consumer business, it is tough to make it as a contemporary brand."

It is hard to keep a brand alive, which is why there are so many labels-management companies out there snapping up faded labels. Iconix Brand Group in New York has acquired several veteran California labels, including **OP**, Bongo, Ed Hardy, Mossimo and Rampage as well as national labels including London Fog, Fieldcrest and Buffalo

#### David Bitton.

Sequential Brands Group, also in New York, has bought a stable of California labels including Joe's Jeans, Jessica Simpson and William Rast as well as Ellen Tracy, Martha Stewart and Caribbean .loe.

"All brands have life cycles of their own. A few brands

can last a lifetime or more such as Levi's, but most have a limited life," said Rob Greenspan, the president of Greenspan Consult, which works with a number of apparel companies. "Most contemporary brands fall into the category of a limited life span due to the nature of rapidly changing fashion trends and the ability to stay ahead of the fashion curve. Oftentimes the brand is led by a single person, usually the owner/designer, and therein lies a significant issue. It is incumbent upon that person's vision to keep the brand moving forward. Brands that have a 'team of people with a transition strategy' to keep pace ahead of the fashion trends have a chance for a longer life cycle."

Sharon Lebon and her now-former business partner, John

Ward, founded Three Dots in the mid-'90s with the idea of making fabulously fitted T-shirts and contemporary tops with quality fabric and great design. For many years, the company's collection of tops was made at the company's headquarters, located in a 70,000-square-foot building in an industrial park in Garden Grove. Later, some of that production was contracted to sewing factories in the Los Angeles area as Three Dots branched out into dresses and other lifestyle items.

At one time, the company's collection was selling at 2,000 specialty boutiques and in stores in Europe, Asia, Canada and Australia.

The company also had a handful of its own stores in areas such as Newport Beach, Calif., and in Tokyo. Those have been closed. Three Dots is still a popular seller

at high-end department stores including Bloomingdale's, where a ribbed turtleneck is listed online for \$66, a longsleeved crew-neck T-shirt is going for \$48, and a stripedgauze tie-front top is selling for \$134.

In 2016, the company launched its first plus-size collection, which initially was being sold at Nordstrom as it tried to generate new revenue streams.

#### Luxury Resale Continued from page 1

powerful transformation in retail will unfold."

Compared with shopper priorities from five years ago, San Francisco-based ThredUp, a fashion resale website, found the number of consumers who think about the resale value of the products before buying has increased nearly twofold, to 40 percent, which shows a greater interest in reselling from the initial point of purchase.

While 51 percent of consumers surveyed are moving toward more secondhand shopping within the next five years, the luxury resale market is showing extraordinary growth with a 16 percent projected increase.

"The luxury-consumer mindset has changed. We've seen that consumers shopping retail want to know the resale value of designers and items before they make a purchase," explained The Real-Real's chief merchant, Rati Levesque, whose San Francisco company has consignment locations in New York City, Chicago, Dallas, Miami, San Francisco and Washington, D.C., and sites that also sell goods in Manhattan's SoHo neighborhood and in Los Angeles. "They make purchases now knowing they will eventually consign it and make a significant portion back on the original costit's an investment."

This shift toward consumer demand and recognition of the secondhand, high-end-goods market as an important segment was noticed by Dallas-based luxury retailer Neiman Marcus. It recently announced it was investing in Fashionphile, a luxury reseller in Carlsbad, Calif.

"Our investment in Fashionphile is an exciting step in a five-year increase of Neiman Marcus Group's transforma-

serve our customers, continue to shape the future of luxury, and position Neiman Marcus for long-term and sustainable growth," said Geoffroy van Raemdonck, chief executive officer of the Neiman Marcus Group, in a statement.

Specializing in the online resale of luxury handbags and accessories, Fashionphile executives saw Neiman Marcus's minority-stake investment as the perfect way to celebrate the 20-year anniversary of the reseller's launch.

"A company like Neiman Marcus partnering with a company like ours is really a dream," Fashionphile founder and President Sarah Davis said. "We've been working on this for so long and trying to build the company in a way where we are focusing on our brand so we would be thought of in circles like that."

With growth over 50 percent year over year, Fashionphile experienced great success as a pioneer of luxury resale, allowing the online reseller to open four storefronts over 10 years. Beginning with the launch of its Beverly Hills location in 2008, followed by San Francisco, San Diego and a Manhattan storefront in 2018, Fashionphile created an opportunity for resellers to easily sell their goods. Through the partnership with

Neiman Marcus. Fashionphile should soon have two pilot locations within the retailer's stores and five additional shops by the end of the year.

"We don't sell bags at our storeswe buy your bag and we sell online," Davis said. "You

can bring your bag to our Beverly Hills store; you walk out with a check and we ship your bag to Amsterdam [for example]. That is the strategy."

As a reseller that has enjoyed its own pop-up partnerships with retailers such as Stage, Bealls, Goody's, Palais Royal and Peebles, ThredUp is reporting that secondhand shoppers are increasingly moving away from shopping exclusively at traditional retailers for new products, with 72 percent of consumers revealing that they shifted their spending toward previously owned goods.

The ThredUp report found that 22 percent of value-chain customers who shop stores tion into a luxury-customer platform as we work to better such as Walmart, Target and Old Navy are also purchasing secondhand goods, and 25 percent of department-store customers engage in buying preowned items. At 26 percent, a higher number of premium-brand shoppers who buy brands such as Gucci, Chanel and Prada are in the market for secondhand pieces.

> "The last few years of growth in the resale market have been driven by the early adopters (the same ones who first adopted Airbnb or Lyft or DoorDash), but now the skeptics are starting to come around," Reinhart said in the report. "At ThredUp, we're seeing first-time thrifters coming to platforms like ours in droves."

> By reselling previously owned items, retailers are able to generate more opportunities to sell their new goods, which in turn will build a stronger retail economy. When consumers



invest in quality pieces with the intent of eventually reselling to another shopper, they will need to replace those items with new premium goods and bring their business to luxury retailers.

"The more people are able to participate in this, the more they are able to get the money out of their investment pieces and they'll spend more in the primary market," Davis explained. "In Japan, they have a sophisticated, decades-old secondary market. That country is the No. 1 consumer of luxury goods in the world-their secondary market helps fuel that."

As more executives of traditional retailers recognize the opportunity that lies in embracing the resale market, they will generate revenue streams for their companies. Within the resale report it was revealed that 96 percent of senior retail executives want to fortify circular-fashion initiatives by 2020.

Primary market brands have started to realize that consignment players are helping extend the discovery, reach and 'covet-ability' of their brands," Levesque said. "An item with a strong resale value can strengthen the brand as a whole."

Beyond increasing revenue, retailers can also build their sustainability efforts through contributing to a circular economy that decreases waste when goods enter the resale market. The move towards tapping into the resale market could prove an extraordinary, unexpected win for retailers.

"This is a legitimate sector. There is a lot of good it's doing," Davis said. "There is money to be made and it's such an economically and eco-friendly, green way to shop that everyone should be involved in it."

Secondhand Shoppers Are in Every Store-From Walmart to Gucci<sup>2</sup> 26% of luxury GUCCI shoppers also buy T secondhand. PRADA 25% of departr store shoppers also \*11100/5 buy secondhand. signingdok

0 Data: ThredUp







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### Developer to Start Update on Playa Vista Retail Center

The seaside neighborhood of Playa Vista, not far from Los Angeles International Airport, is the new home of tech giants Google and Facebook, which recently opened big offices there.

Now, **DJM Capital Partners, Inc.** wants to make sure that high-end retail is there for the tech crowd.

The developer of such mixed-use retail centers including **Bella Terra** and **Pacific City** in Huntington Beach,

Calif., as well as Lido Marina Village in Newport Beach, Calif., will embark on a \$9.1 million redevelopment of mostly around one acre of the Runway Playa Vista, which is a mixed-use center described as Playa Vista's living room.

Groundbreaking is scheduled for May 9, and the project will wrap up by the end of this year, said Stenn Parton, DJM's chief retail officer.

The 14-acre mixed-use development currently fea-

tures neighborhood-style tenants, including a **Cinemark** movie house, a **CVS Pharmacy**, a **Whole Foods** grocery store, a **Chase** bank, 30,000 square feet of medical offices and an urgent care run by **Cedars-Sinai**. DJM will redevelop the area into a more pedestrian-friendly atmosphere with more than 50 shops and restaurants, Parton said.

"The question is, How do you make it feel more intimate? How do you make a community-focused space that will be the living room of Playa Vista?" Parton asked. A Los Angeles architecture firm, with the humorous name **Design, Bitches**, got the job of making the plans for the redesign, which will include bringing more public art and improving signage.

The redevelopment will emphasize pedestrian walkways and parklike public spaces. Auto traffic will be diverted from the development's Town Center Drive to surrounding streets such as McConnell Avenue, West Jefferson Boulevard and Village Drive. **Invesco Real Estate** purchased Runway for \$475 million in 2016, according to the *Los Angeles Times*. In 2018, DJM assumed the jobs of property development, construction, leasing, marketing and branding for the development. A coworking space that includes the child-care center **Brella** is scheduled to open by fall.

Montreal-headquartered activewear retailer Lolë Apparel opened a boutique at



Runway earlier this month. Steakhouse restaurant **Bull & Butterfly** is scheduled to open this fall, and in November the new concept **Free Market** is scheduled to take a bow.

The 20,000-square-foot anchor will offer pop-up shops for direct-to-consumer brands and environments for established retailers as well as food carts and events spaces.

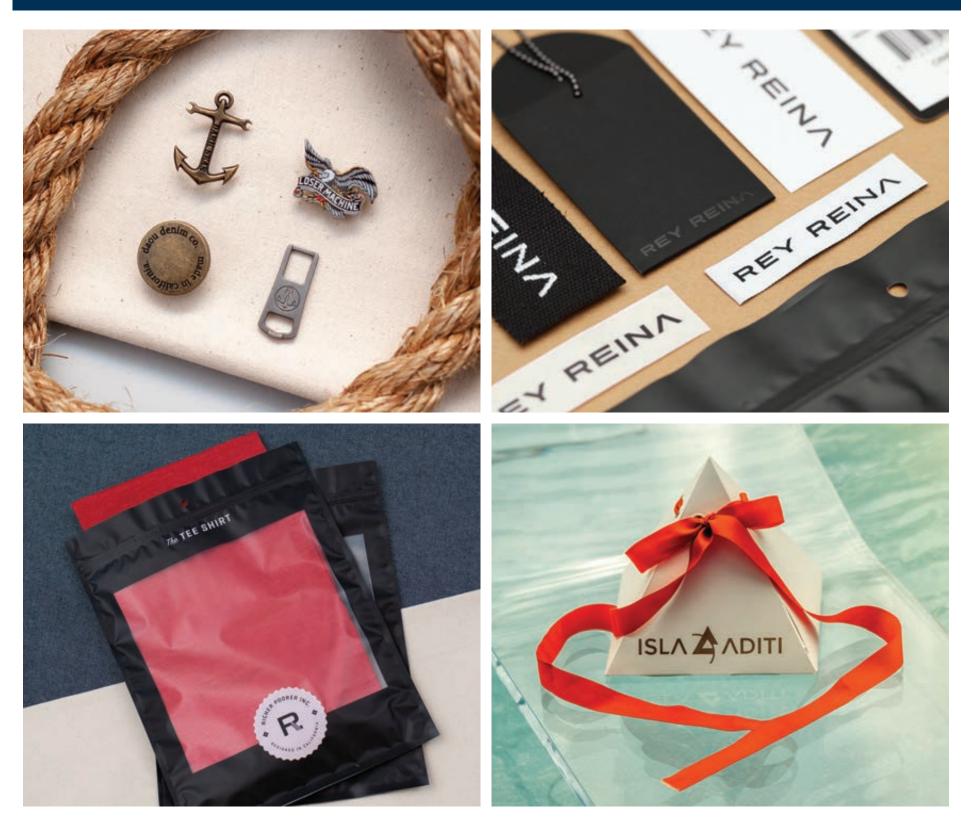
Free Market was co-founded by Raan Parton and his wife, Lindsay Parton. Raan Parton co-founded the Los Angeles clothing brand **Apolis**. In 2013 Raan and Lindsay Parton co-founded **Alchemy Works**, which sells home décor, accessories and clothing at one location in the Arts District of Los Angeles and another location at **Lido Marina Village**.

Stenn Parton said his brother and sisterin-law's anchor space will enhance the Runway project. "There are common threads between lessons learned with Apolis and Alchemy Works," he said.—*Andrew Asch* 

April 26 Stagecoach Empire Polo Club Indio, Calif. Through April 28	<b>Trendz</b> Palm Beach County Convention Center Palm Beach, Fla. Through April 30	May 9 Marcum Retail Symposium L.A. Live Los Angeles
April 27 Global Sources Fashion AsiaWorld-Expo Hong Kong Through April 30	<u>May 6</u> Seattle Mart Spring Market Seattle Mart Seattle Through May 7	<b>May 11</b> <b>Unique LA</b> California Market Center Los Angeles Through May 12
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ANTHONY EVANS

## **E-Commerce Brand Naked Wardrobe** Launches Denim Capsule at First Pop-up Shop

By Dorothy Crouch Associate Editor

With a successful family business that launched in 2012, the Kaviani sisters-Shideh, Shida and Shirin-are further expanding their affordably priced e-commerce apparel company, Naked Wardrobe.

On April 23, the Kavianis opened their first pop-up shop, a nearly 1,500-squarefoot space at the intersection of Los Angeles' Melrose Avenue and La Cienega Boulevard in West Hollywood.

"In October it will be our 7-year anniversary, and our customers have always asked us to open up a store," Shideh said. "Once they come into the store, they get to experience it for themselves." Opening this

first store experience in Los Angeles

and started their business in Northridge, Calif. This first shop experience is a way for Naked Wardrobe to provide greater access to its brand, which has been available exclusively online.

"We're quality driven at an affordable price point," Shideh said. "We want to show people the difference between our product and our competitors'. Seeing a black bodysuit online can look the same whether it's \$10 or \$400."

The expansion of Naked Wardrobe isn't



limited to this new, temporary storefront, which will remain open until May 30.

The sisters also released a Los Angelesmade capsule collection of Naked Wardrobe denim, a line that includes jeans in embellished styles featuring rhinestones and Cuban link chains in addition to a basic design. This is a complete collection as opposed to the few denim pieces that Naked Wardrobe offered in the past.

"We'll be rolling out a few more styles over the next couple of weeks. The styles we are launching now are very intricate," Shida explained. "They're a little over the top, and there is one basic style, but this is such a moment of diamonds and crystals and being as flashy as possible. We incorporated that to make our denim a little more fun."

Available in sizes 24 through 40, the jeans in the capsule collection are offered with two different inseams that measure 30" and 35" and three different bodies. Denim shorts will also be released within the next few weeks, and tops, such as corsets, will range from sizes XS to XL. By Fall 2019, they hope to expand sizing up to 4X. Retail pricing for the denim capsule ranges from \$79 to \$99.

"In our new pop-up, we created a beautiful denim wall that is the focal point of the space and it's just a little taste," Shida said, adding that by the end of the year Naked Wardrobe will feature menswear-inspired shirts, jumpsuits and suiting in denim for women. "Over the next six months, we're launching much more denim. Anything you can think of and dream of in denim, we've got you covered."

Made in Los Angeles, with denim from a local source, the capsule is elevating Naked Wardrobe to the next level. The brand already provides an array of garments, including body-hugging dresses, leggings, bodysuits and crop tops; on-trend blouses, sweaters,

slacks, shorts and skirts; maternity pieces; outerwear; swimwear; shoes and accessories.

The sisters' goal has been-and remains-creating reasonably priced quality pieces for clients of every size to enhance their bodies, whether they are petite or curvy, and

feel good about how they look.

"A size small isn't a traditional size small as it used to be. Women are more empowered to embrace their curves and their height," Shideh said. "We try to incorporate those things and think about those things throughout the design process."

In addition to the new denim collection, the pop-up shop will include the 2019 swim line, which features string bikinis, two-piece designs and one-piece suits—which vary from a traditional style to others with cut-



outs-in trendy animal and snakeskin prints, bright neon colors and black.

With some pieces available to purchase as separates for the first time to accommodate different tops and bottoms sizes, swimwear is priced from \$20 to \$58. The line launched nearly two weeks ago while a second swimwear drop will take place in June.

Before, we used to sell our swimwear in sets. We are listening to our customers around the world, who want us to start selling our swim as separates," Shida said. "Just because someone is a medium on top, they might be a different size on the bottom-the sizes for sets might not be cohesive."

While the Kavianis have no current plans to shift into wholesale with retail partners, they are planning to launch additional popup experiences in different cities around the country and are open to considering a future that includes a permanent bricks-and-mortar presence.

Next up on their pop-up-shop map is New York and Miami, but this week the proud Angelenos were excited about unveiling a Naked Wardrobe experience in their hometown.

"Growing up, we used to grab our girlfriends and go shopping on Melrose, so we've come full circle" Shida said. "Those girlfriends, whom we shopped with on Melrose, they're coming to celebrate with us as well. It's surreal."



was important for the women, who grew up

#### **FASHION**

# **Global Travels Inspire Johnny Was Collection for Fall '19**

**Johnny Was** has always been a leader when it comes to infusing ethnic flair into its collection.

For Fall 2019, the designers for the Los Angeles label continued that tradition by traveling to exotic places for inspiration. Vice President of Design Theresa McAllen said she visited Peru, where she toured Lima and the Incan ruins of Machu Picchu. "It's a country with such a rich history, lush landscapes and the most incredible handicrafts," she recounted. "I was floored by the artisanry and understanding of color."

Biya Ramar, the other vice president of design, has traveled in the last year to China, Thailand and Mexico, where she said even a sidewalk's pattern could inspire her. "At Johnny Was, we're always thinking globally even though we're still deeply rooted in Southern California and its beauty," she explained.

This year, the designers experimented with different materials and fabrications as seen in the label's reversible coats, kimono silhouettes and flowing tops. Comfort is key and colors are vibrant. "I like to think of it as activewear with a feminine twist," Ramar said.

Styles are infused with utilitarian details and silhouettes, such as puffer-style jackets. Coats and trousers have a tailored line. "We also took some of our classic pieces and gave them a fresh update," Ramar noted.

That is seen in an updated bomber kimono, which is a bomber silhouette with floral fabric. This season, velvet plays a predominant role in tops which, are richly embroidered.—*Deborah Belgum* 



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PUBLISHED BY TLM PUBLISHING INC. APPAREL NEWS GROUP Publishers of California Apparel News Waterwear Decorated

ECUTIVE OFFI California Market Center 110 E. Ninth St., Suite A777 Los Angeles, CA 90079-1777 (213) 627-3737 Fax (213) 623-5707 Classified Advertising Fax (213) 623-1515 www.appareInews.net

webmaster@appareInews.net PRINTED IN THE U.S.A

CIRCULATION

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"The whole process is waterless-it's

# Marine Layer Uses Old T-shirts for **New Collection**

By Dorothy Crouch Associate Editor

To combat the scourge of apparel-manufacturing waste, San Francisco brand Marine Layer is working with consumers to produce a new collection of shirts produced completely from recycled

T-shirts. Marine Layer's founder and chief executive officer, Michael Natenshon, said this is the first line of T-shirts, tank tops, polos and raglans that is produced using 100 percent recycled tees from postconsumer sources.

"There are a lot of people trying to solve the sustainability issues in the fashion world and they're doing a lot of interesting things," Natenshon said. "What is unique about this program is we're keeping the shirts from landfills and working on what I think is the biggest problem in the fashion industry, which is apparel waste due to fast fashion."

The company started out in 2010 with T-shirts made from a blend of Pima cotton and Modal. Now, Natenshon sources old T-shirts from consumers, who receive a \$5 credit for each piece donated-up to \$25-resulting in a blend that typically comprises cotton and polyester. Customers can send unwanted T-shirts to the company via a kit that

Marine Layer provides or simply drop off the garments at one of the brand's 41 retail locations within the United States.

"The RealReal and ThredUp are doing cool things with reselling goods, but there is only a percentage of your closet that is actually resellable. People wear through clothes. It will get holes, and Goodwill will just throw it away," Natenshon said. "This is the solution for clothes that are beyond repair." The only guideline is that the shirts being



used for this new material contain at least 40 percent cotton. Stained, worn, torn and embellished pieces are usable. However, any embellishments must be removed by the workers who produce the Re-Spun line.

Donated pieces that are not usable for respinning are repurposed into insulation. In addition to recycling T-shirts, the cleaning and sanitizing process for the garments is waterless and free of toxic chemicals.

pretty cool. The fibers are cleaned using an ultraviolet technology as opposed to a chemical or water-based cleaner," Natenshon explained. "We don't dye the shirts. We sort all the blues, sort all the reds, sort all the light colors. Then we break them down at the color level so all the fibers are re-spun together and don't need to be dyed again."

Following the sanitizing process, the reclaimed shirts are transformed into new textiles by a mill in Spain, and new shirts are manufactured in Los Angeles. This process provides an apparel-waste solution by extending the life of the original garments, which otherwise could end up in a landfill.

"It's a unique program. The only trick is that you need a lot of shirts for it to work. That is the reason it's so cool to have our customers be so supportive. As long as the shirts keep coming, we'll keep taking them," Natenshon said.

Natenshon is extremely grateful for the community's support, which includes a large number of donations provided by consumers who aren't even customers of the brand as well as donated products from other labels.

To begin working on the Re-Spun line, Marine Layer had to collect 10,000 shirts to start the program. It collected 5,000 the first day and more than 25,000 the first month. To date, the program has col-

lected 75,000 in nearly five months. "Producing Re-Spun wouldn't be possible without the knitting and technology that we developed but also the participation from our

SCICLED

customers," Natenshon said. The program will launch on April 28, but Marine Layer is not stopping with this first step. By fall, the company would like to offer Re-Spun fleece, growing the line from its initial eight SKUs to an additional 25. Within two years, the brand hopes to pro-

duce 50 percent of its goods through the Re-Spun initiative.

Despite Marine Layer's commitment to selling its goods exclusively through its own branded online and bricks-andmortar stores, Natenshon said the company is considering collaborating with retailers to promote the Re-Spun initiative.

"We want to work with our manufacturing partners and are open to retail partners. This program is going to be more successful the more people who participate in it," he said. "We are in talks to offer the Re-Spun line to wholesale retail partners. This is an important

message that we want out in the marketplace."

The Re-Spun collection is available for women in sizes XS-XL and men's S-XL, with the company's exclusive in-between sizing of Marge-a medium/large-and Larger. Starting April 28, the line will be available through Marine Layer's retail locations, online at www.marinelayer.com and on the road with the brand's first mobile store, which will travel throughout the United States for six months. Retail prices range from \$52 to \$92. ●

## **Eco Collaboration Promoted During First Sustainable Apparel Coalition Event in L.A.**

By Dorothy Crouch Associate Editor

Bringing together experts and apparel-industry veterans, the **Sustainable Apparel Coalition** hosted its first Los Angeles event at the **California Market Center** on April 24. The organization works within the apparel industry to lead sustainable, ethical initiatives by limiting environmental impact and promoting social welfare for garment workers.

During "The Future of Design" workshop, the organization introduced tools for a better apparel industry and invited speakers from companies implementing sustainability efforts. After learning about the Los Angeles apparel-manufacturing industry by working at his family's business, Scott Miller is now the director of business development for SAC.

Following the event, he reported that his organization was successful in showing attendees that collaboration is key to an improved, cleaner apparel industry.

"We brought together brands, retailers, service providers and academics in the same room to sit next to each other—perhaps even competitors," he said. "We drive them to design sustainable fashion on-site and show them that we are all together living on this planet. If we don't come together on the concepts related to sustainable design in the precompetitive space, we will all suffer the consequences."

Setting the tone for a shared mission, Ricardo Vazquez, who is the economic-policy manager for the City of Los Angeles, provided opening remarks. He felt his presence at the event was important to show the apparel industry that the city is interested in working with manufacturers and designers for a cleaner city.

He said Mayor Eric Garcetti on April 29 will relaunch the L.A. Sustainability Plan. "By 2050, our goal is to have zero waste to landfills. We are here to partner with the industry to plan how we can help get there," he said. "We want this to be a partnership. That is going to be the first step. We're in the early stages of what our action plan will be with the industry."

Susanna Schick, a speaker and product development consultant at **Sustainable Fashion Los Angeles**, encouraged guests to consider working with consumers to develop resale initiatives such as the model followed by reseller **The RealReal** and buyback programs similar to the apparel brand **Patagonia**. She outlined how a resale program could benefit both the environment and business.

"Manufacturers who don't have a takeback program are missing out tremendously," she said. "Not only do you get to resell your clothing and make money on it again but you also get to understand the clothing items people keep—the bodies, styles and colors. What are the things that become loved clothes that last?"

During the event, the Sustainable Apparel Coalition also showed how its sustainability-measurement tool—The Higg Index—can be used to ensure brands are progressing toward more ethical and ecologically sound practices. The Higg Index has become a benchmark for companies at every stage along the supply chain to monitor and remain accountable for their contributions to a sustainable industry.

While Miller emphasizes the urgency for the apparel industry to adopt more beneficial practices, he recognizes that

-the rate sustainability for **Guess**.

The discussion addressed concerns of apparel-industry professionals who want to implement sustainable practices but feel overwhelmed by the seemingly insurmountable task of becoming an eco-friendly and ethical brand while still remaining profitable. Lincoln outlined the path toward reaching this sustainable-apparel goal by referring to the steps she took to develop her Spring 2020 swimwear line using all recycled materials.

"First we did all of our solids, then recycled polys, then nylons and baby-stepped our way into it. We could afford the 1 percent margin degradation here—and we funded it by



Susanna Schick

small steps can mean greater progress over time.

"It's possible to adopt incremental change and have the ability to make sustainability decisions within the design phase without conceivably increasing cost," he explained. "It is absolutely a business and planetary imperative that our industry embrace circular and regenerative production concepts immediately."

The breakthrough regarding how to start small was reached during a panel discussion covering "Embedding Sustainability, Case Studies and Best Practices." Moderated by Julie Brown, SAC's director of The Higg Index, the panel included Rachel Lincoln, director of sustainability and product operations for **Prana**; Elena Egorova, environmental researcher at **Patagonia**; and Jaclyn Allen, director of corpo-



From left Julie Brown, Rachel Lincoln, Elena Egorova and Jaclyn Allen

moving more inventory—maybe earning the 1 percent over there," she said. "It's not about compromising the business. It's what are we going to leverage to support this area of our business?"

For Miller, the event's presence in Los Angeles was important due to the city's history and continued role as an apparel-manufacturing capital. While he recognizes that some brands have been slow to adopt sustainable practices, he noted that the shift is inevitable.

"It's time to wake up to the call of the scientific community in particular to boldly address the sustainability impacts of our industry," he said. "There are some companies that are truly stepping it up. I would not be shocked if these are the companies that come out of this ahead of others that are sitting

#### ATHLEISURE

# Sene Studio Takes Custom-made Suits in a New Direction



Athleisure apparel has been at the forefront of a trend that has swept across the country for the past several years.

People have long been talking about the goal of wearing clothing that transitions from work to workout and vice versa.

Now a Los Angeles company is making that more of a reality. **Sene Studio**, founded three years ago by Ray Li, has come out with custom-made suits for men and women made entirely of a performance fabric that comes from the same Japanese mill used by **Lululemon**.

The FlexTech suit is made of a synthetic fabric composed of recycled polyester and polyester that has four-way stretch and is machine washable. Recently introduced as a limited collection, Sene Studio is launching a **Kickstarter** campaign on May 1 to raise more money to buy a larger quantity of fabric to lower the cost of the suit.

Currently, the FlexTech suit sells for \$695, but the company would like to lower that price by at least \$100. "The mill we are using has minimum fabric buys of 50 yards per color. So, with economies of scale, we can purchase more at a lower cost and pass on that savings to the customer," said Mark Zheng, who is Ray Li's cousin and a partner in the company.

The price of the suit includes a custom fit as well as alterations once the suit is delivered in one to three weeks.

During the two-week-long Kickstarter campaign, a suit bought in the first 24 hours can be acquired for \$415. During the second day of the campaign, the price goes up to \$425 and then up to \$475.

"The core idea of the company is that clothing should be made for every individual person," Zheng said, noting the design comes from Los Angeles while 80 percent of the company's products are made in China and another 20 percent in the United States. "Everything is custom made from scratch. We don't produce inventory unless we have an order."

The company has been making a number of custom-made items since it launched. Products include men's shirts, men's and women's suits, blazers, outerwear jackets, coats, pants, jogger pants, tuxedos, and dresses. The FlexTech suit is the latest addition to the company's lineup.

Li decided to start a custom-apparel company because he had a hard time finding clothes that fit his 5-foot, 10-inch frame but proportionately short arms. Two years ago, he opened a 1,700-square-foot store on La Brea Avenue where customers could walk in and get fitted or have alterations done by a tailor.

But that is closing as the company sets up new fitting outposts at the **Pacific Design Center** and **OneCulver** via **WeWork**.

But customers don't have to drop by a physical location to be custom fitted. The company has a smart-fit algorithm on its website that extrapolates body data based on a few questions, such as what is your dress size for women and what is your shirt size for men.

Customers can input their body measurements, but Zheng said men tend to shy away from doing this while women understand that exact body measurements mean a betterfitting garment. "Women understand the process and why it is needed," Zheng said.

Most of the company's customers tend to range in age from the mid-30s to mid-50s, and the company's bestselling category is men's shirts, which go for \$125 to \$145. For more information, go to *www.senestudio.com.*—*Deborah Belgum* 

Men's FlexTech Suit

Women's FlexTech Suit



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