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DESERT WINDS

The Los Angeles-based Halston label looked to the desert for some of its pre-Fall 2019 inspiration. For more from the collection, see page 8.

Designers Calvin Klein and Donna Karan Talk About Their Brands at Annual Beverly Hills Finance Conference

By Deborah Belgum *Executive Editor*

In 1968, Calvin Klein founded his self-named fashion company and spent years building up a brand that became renowned for style, sophistication, and sexy jeans and underwear ads.

He sold that company to **PVH Corp.** in 2002 for \$435 million, but fashion is ever on his mind as he watches social media and the Internet change the landscape for creating brands and clothing.

“Social media and the Internet changed everything,” Klein

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Where fashion gets down to businessSM



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M.Fredric at 40: Looking for New Vistas in Bricks and Mortar

By Andrew Asch *Retail Editor*

Bricks-and-mortar retail has taken a lot of hits in the past decade.

Struggling against changing consumer habits and ways of doing business, many shops have closed. But a handful of high-end Los Angeles retailers stayed in the game and dominated the Los Angeles boutique scene in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Some of these shops, such as **Ron Robinson** and **Ron Herman**, pioneered retail on some of Los Angeles'

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VF Corp. Separates Denim Labels Into a Separate Business, Including Rock & Republic

VF Corp. announced it is separating **VF Jeanswear** from its parent company and making it a part of a new company called **Kontoor Brands, Inc.**

It will be an independent, publicly traded entity following distribution of its common stock on May 22.

The new company's brands will include the **VF Outlet** business in addition to **Wrangler**, **Lee** and the Los Angeles-founded

Rock & Republic.

After the market closes on May 22, VF Corp., based in Greensboro, N.C., will distribute 100 percent of Kontoor Brands' shares to holders of VF common stock, according to a press release from the company. For every seven shares of VF common stock shareholders have by the close of business on May 10, they will receive one share of Kontoor Brands common stock. Fractional shares of Kontoor

Brands common stock will not be distributed.

Such fractional shares of Kontoor Brands' common stock that are otherwise issuable to a VF shareholder will be sold in the open market. This sale will be conducted on behalf of the shareholder, who will receive a cash payment for the fractional share based on the pro-rata portion of net cash proceeds from all fractional-share sales.

In 2002, Michael Ball launched the Rock

& Republic brand as a premium-denim label during the high-end jeans craze of the early 2000s. In 2010, Rock & Republic filed for bankruptcy following the company's inability to repay its debts.

That same year, VF Corp. bought the brand name, which resulted in a licensing deal with the department-store chain **Kohl's**. The retailer remains a seller of Rock & Republic apparel.—*Dorothy Crouch*

UpscaleHype Co-founder Named Artistic Director of True Religion

Los Angeles apparel brand **True Religion** announced the hire of luxury-streetwear expert **Allen Onyia** as its artistic director. The **University of Houston-Downtown** graduate received a Bachelor of Science degree in political science and government, according to his **LinkedIn** profile, yet is known for founding the online luxury-lifestyle magazine *UpscaleHype*. The media outlet was launched in 2008 by Onyia and his brother Kyle.

"We have been driving toward this watershed moment since I joined the company," said True Religion Chief Executive Officer Chelsea Grayson in a statement. Grayson was appointed interim CEO of True Religion in November 2018 following

the retirement of former chief executive John Ermatinger and permanently accepted the role in early 2019. "I am excited to work with Al-

len to return True Religion to its rightful place among streetwear leaders," she said.

While he built a career around media and brand consulting, Onyia has enjoyed roles and partnerships with the **National Basketball Association**, **Nivea** and **Complex Media**. In 2018, he was named "Men'swear's Most Important Instagram Account" by *GQ* magazine.

"I have always admired True Religion as an iconic brand with deep roots in the streetwear category," Onyia said in a press release. "I am thrilled to join the team and bring my vision

to reestablish a brand people can associate with in this new age of streetwear."

True Religion, a leader in streetwear and premium denim, was founded in Los Angeles

in 2002. The company offers apparel for men, women and children and has a partnership with the professional English football club **Manchester United**.—*D.C.*



Allen Onyia

Reyn Spooner and Southern Tide Partner on a Coast-to-Coast Collection

Hawaiian-style apparel label **Reyn Spooner** has entered into a partnership with Greenville, S.C., coastal lifestyle brand **Southern Tide**.

By using Reyn Spooner's expertise in creating Hawaiian-inspired prints—most notably those used to design its famous Aloha shirt—Southern Tide created the Southern Tide x Reyn Spooner collection with its own fabrics, fits and colors including Pompeii Blue, Roman Red, Classic White and Tidewater, a hue of green.

"We are thrilled to be partnering with Southern Tide. Southern Tide has a youthful vibe and adventurous spirit," Reyn Spooner Chief Executive Officer Lynne Koplin said in a press release. "I am excited to combine our iconic prints with their performance technology to embrace a new generation of customers from coast to coast."

Launched May 1, the Southern Tide x Reyn Spooner collection features men's sport shirts, polos, T-shirts, swimwear and children's styles.

"The first time I met Reyn McCullough, over 30 years ago, I was taken with his warm, inviting manner and inspired by his products and story," Southern Tide CEO Christopher Heyn said in a statement. "Today, CEO Lynne Koplin and Creative Director Doug Burkman have taken the brand's legacy and continue to evolve the Aloha shirt and the brand's offerings."

Men's pieces for the collection range in size from XS for certain shirts, while

most pieces are available in S to XXL; all are priced at \$48 to \$110 retail. Children's apparel is sized from XS to XL with retail prices ranging from \$32 to \$59.50.

"Southern Tide's roots may be southern,



Southern Tide x Reyn Spooner

but we will go anywhere, like the Hawaii coast, to experience new adventures and meet new people," Heyn explained. "The South is a state of mind, not a destination."

The Southern Tide x Reyn Spooner collection is available at Southern Tide Signature Stores, wholesale partners and online at *SouthernTide.com*.—*D.C.*

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Calvin Klein *Continued from page 1*

observed. “**Instagram** replaced fashion magazines. When I was building the brand, it was print, TV, outdoor billboards and buses. Now look at Kylie Jenner. In three years she has built a \$900-million business [**Kylie Cosmetics**] with seven people on her team. You could not do that years ago. The game has changed, and the fashion industry hasn’t quite figured it out. That is the real challenge.”

Klein was speaking at one of the various sessions at the **Milken Institute Global Conference** held April 28–May 1 at **The Beverly Hilton**. The conference is a gathering of some of the most influential financiers, politicians and celebrities around the world where baseball player Alex Ro-

studio. To be successful, you have to be in touch with everything that is going on.”

Klein remembered when Milken started telling him what he had to do financially to improve his company. “I knew instantly this would be the thing that would save us,” the designer said.

Having a creative advertising campaign also helped the brand. Klein recalled the famous TV ad featuring a then-15-year-old Brooke Shields saying that nothing got between her and her **Calvin Klein** jeans. Then there were the underwear ads with now-famous actor Mark Wahlberg featuring this muscular young model wearing a pair of Calvin Klein briefs. “I opened up my own in-house advertising agency. I knew what the message was, and who could do it better than us?” he said.

Klein said he was always interested in becoming a global company long before other fashion houses were thinking beyond the U.S. market. “I was thinking globally right from the start,” he said. “You can achieve that if you have a good brand.”

He said **Nike** is a good example of brand building that has gone global. “They don’t even put their name on their product,” he observed. “Just a swish and you know it is Nike because they have created something fantastic through their imagery. People know it is

exciting, tough and athletic.”

But he said he is troubled about what is happening in the fashion industry when big corporations buy up brands and don’t continue with the brand’s identity. A few months ago, PVH Corp. announced it was closing the Calvin Klein flagship store on Madison Avenue in New York and was in talks with **G-III Apparel Group** to take over the brand’s women’s jeans label.

“When designers come to work at a [corporate-owned fashion] house that has a brand and stands for something, they sign a two-year contract. They are not paying attention to what the brand stands for and really hurting the brand. Then after two or three years they are gone, and that is not a good thing.”

In 2016, Belgian designer Raf Simons signed a three-year contract to take charge of the Calvin Klein collection and was

gone by late 2018—eight months before his contract expired.

Klein noted that the chief executive officers of these big companies are choosing the chief designers for the brands they have acquired, and this doesn’t always work out. “It is a struggle. It is not easy,” he said about protecting a brand’s DNA.

Going Zen

On April 29, Donna Karan was on a panel with a number of high-powered women speaking about getting to the top of their profession as a female. She shared the stage with former California Congresswoman Jane Harman; former head of **Paramount Pictures** Sherry Lansing; head of **Epic Records** Sylvia Rhone; and Anastasia Soare, known as the “Eyebrow Queen,” who founded the beauty-products company **Anastasia Beverly Hills**.

Karan started her iconic **Donna Karan** label in 1984 after graduating from the **Parsons School of Design** and working as head of the design team at **Anne Klein**. In 2001, she sold her company to **LVMH Moët Hennessey Louis Vuitton** for \$243 million.

For a while she stayed on with her company, but in 2007 she created a new company called **Urban Zen**, a luxury label that features comfortable clothing made of knits and other fabrics that amply cover the body.

The designer said one of the reasons she created the label is that she couldn’t find brands that she could wear anymore. She also is a lifelong yogi and wanted to share that Zen feeling with a clothing line that is different. “Urban Zen doesn’t follow the rules of fashion,” she said. “I deliver in season. I don’t believe in showing clothes before they are in the stores or during Fashion Week. I believe the customer needs to buy now, wear now and when the weather is appropriate.”

She loves Urban Zen because it is much smaller than her original fashion house, which grew exponentially, later adding a more affordable label called **DKNY**. “When you become a large label, it becomes hard to control and say what you want to say,” she noted.

Even though she is 70, she doesn’t want to retire. She not only wants to dress people comfortably, but she also wants to improve our healthcare system, our educational institutions and the environment. “There is so much to do in this world today,” she said. “And I do feel that responsibility.” ●



Donna Karan



Michael Milken and Calvin Klein

driguez was talking about going from sports to business and Ivanka Trump was on a luncheon panel about shared prosperity. The Milken conference has often been called the **Davos** of North America.

Klein was one of two celebrated fashion designers who participated in the conference’s panels and interview sessions. Donna Karan was on a panel about women rising to the top.

Klein, now 76, was interviewed in a May 1 session by investor Michael Milken, who helped finance the high-end New York label many years ago.

Milken asked Klein about the importance of deciding he needed outside financing. “For starters, if you are the creator [of a label], you are concentrating on the design,” Klein said. “But you can’t be a creative person locking yourself in the design

M.Fredric *Continued from page 1*

established retail streets.

Another Los Angeles-area retailer, **M.Fredric**, made its mark in a different venue—the established retail areas and shopping malls around new and growing big-city neighborhoods. To celebrate its 40th anniversary, M. Fredric will hold a private party on May 4 at **The Village at Topanga** retail center.

Siblings Fred Levine and Mardi Fox founded the contemporary shop in 1979. In the early 1980s, Fred’s wife, Lisa Levine, joined the company as a co-owner. In the 1990s, M.Fredric focused on opening stores for the growing suburban communities of Westlake Village, North Ranch, Ventura and Thousand Oaks, which straddle the Los Angeles County/Ventura County line.

More recently, M.Fredric has been focusing on opening locations in another growing field: airport retail. There are now six M.Fredric locations in airports including **Los Angeles International Airport** and **San Francisco International Airport**.

Like other businesses, M.Fredric has thrived during business booms and managed to survive during recessions. But Fred Levine said that the current era is one of the more challenging times in his business, which started before social media, the Internet and e-commerce invaded the retail scenario.

“You almost have to perform magic to be a successful bricks-and-mortar retailer,” Levine said. “We are competing with an online giant. It’s a tough competitor. We have to make the experience in-store so inviting, so fun and different from what you can find electronically.”

It’s a much different business climate than 40 years ago when Levine, who then worked as a litigator, decided to change careers. He didn’t like the adversarial style of the legal profession but thought he would enjoy being an entrepreneur.

He took a crash course in retail by working for six months for his father, Jack Levine, who ran a Los Angeles factory called **JPJ California**, which had outlet stores that Fred managed.

With a \$30,000 loan, Fred Levine, Fox and their mother,

Phyllis Levine, who passed away in 2015, opened the first M.Fredric shop on April 3, 1980, in the upscale Brentwood neighborhood of Los Angeles.

Jack Levine’s garmento friends helped stock the new shop with name brands such as **Sassoon** and **Jordache**, which sold at discounted prices. It was successful enough that the Levines felt confident to open more locations. In June, M.Fredric opened a store in Marina Del Rey. A few months later, it opened another store on Beverly Hill’s South Beverly Drive.

The stores were a true family affair. With no staff, the Levine family worked in all of the store operations. Fred transported store merchandise from downtown Los Angeles to the Westside stores in a **Volkswagen** van.

The operation’s invoices were stored in Fred’s briefcase. By the mid-1980s, the Levines wanted to add more brand-name lines to the retail chain’s merchandise mix. But the brands’ sales chiefs put up a restriction, saying they would only work with M.Fredric if the shop sold their brands at full price.

At this time, regional malls were becoming more important, which the Levines saw as a growth opportunity. However, mall managers would only lease to merchants selling full-price clothes. The Levines complied, and the first M.Fredric full-price stores were opened in Los Angeles at the

former **Westside Pavilion** and the **Beverly Center** in the mid-1980s.

At its largest, M.Fredric had around 20 locations, which included separate stores for men and kids, located from Los Angeles County’s South Bay to Ventura, Calif.

Currently, the chain operates eight stores in locations ranging from the San Fernando Valley to Ventura. Most shops include areas for kids, men and gifts.

The Great Recession took a big bite out of the M.Fredric



From left, Mardi Fox, Fred Levine and Lisa Levine at the Valencia Town Center in 2015



The M.Fredric location in West Los Angeles in the mid-1980s. At left, a hirsute Fred Levine holds future rock star Adam Levine.



An M.Fredric store at Los Angeles International Airport

chain. Survival for M.Fredric meant scaling back stores and cutting working hours. But they didn’t cut loyal staff.

“Everyone took a cut in salary. We made costs go down. We eliminated some overhead. Landlords gave relief when we needed to close stores and take down rent. Vendors all helped. They went 90 to 120 days, some even six months, before they got paid,” Levine said.

The warehouse in Agoura Hills, Calif., was closed Thursdays and Fridays, spurring the staff to become more efficient.

M. Fredric was able to count on forgiveness from vendors and business partners because the store’s business style is collegial, Levine said. His family worked to ensure that everyone was happy with negotiations. “My philosophy is about relationships. It’s about trust, friendship and making sure that everyone walks away from a negotiation in good shape,” he said.

Levine forecasts that the retail chain’s next growth spurt will be in airport stores. M.Fredric licensed its name to **The Hudson Group** to produce six stores in airports including LAX, the **George Bush Intercontinental Airport** in Houston, as well as the **McCarran International Airport** in Las Vegas. The airport stores typically range from 300 to 1,000 square feet, but they do as much volume as a 2,000-square-foot store, Levine said.

“Every airport seems to be expanding the shopping presence. They are becoming shopping malls.” The reason why they are so successful is that you have a captive customer, he said. “Bricks-and-mortar is as difficult as it gets now. One bright light is that airports are developing into shopping centers.” ●

Arts District Pioneer Carl Louisville Heads to Westfield Century City

Carl Louisville's pioneering store **Guerilla Atelier** proved that luxury and pricy avant-garde clothes could be sold in a neighborhood located a few blocks away from downtown's Skid Row.

Guerilla Atelier was one of the first high-end boutiques to gamble on opening in the Arts District, which currently is anticipated to be a Los Angeles area poised for growth with restaurants, nightclubs, retail and creative-office spaces. Guerilla Atelier closed in mid-2017 after construction made it hard to do business on the 900 block of E. 3rd Street in the Arts District. During this time, two of Louisville's neighboring boutiques closed. Only one, **Apolis Common Gallery**, will return to the Arts District.

Louisville will start another—counterintuitive—venture. On May 16, he will officially open **Carl's Atelier**, a shop devoted to idiosyncratic luxe clothing. It will be located on the second level of **Westfield Century City**, which is focused on department-store anchors and many tenants that are familiar names to mall shoppers. Westfield Century City wrapped up a \$1 billion remodel in 2017.

Louisville said that he is not fazed by the move from Eastside grit to Westside glam.

"It's as daring of a project to offer a direct retail experience in a mall as it is opening a store a few blocks away from Skid Row," Louisville said. "This is about creating experiences for people. It's what I always have done. It will be creating an experience in Westfield."

Louisville is bullish about the success of Carl's Atelier because his shops always served as retail destinations. He forecasts his veteran customers and new people will find his new shop, a couple storefronts down from the mall's popular Italian grocery/restaurant **Eataly** and a virtual reality theater called **Dreamscape**. The move could also be something of a homecoming. Before opening Guerilla Atelier, he was a Westsider. He served as the director of the **Prada Epicenter** flagship on Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills, Calif.

The 2,700-square-foot Carl's Atelier in Westfield Century City will feature house

brands such as the **Carl's Atelier Private Label Collection** and **Guillermo**, which is a project from Los Angeles "starchitect" Mark Rios. Other lines will include made-to-measure Italian suits from **Luca Grassia**, the high-end Moroccan line **Masion Allié** and a shop-in-shop from art-book company **Taschen**. It also will offer art, home wares, jewelry and fragrance products.

Louisville said that he continues to be bullish about the Arts District's future. However, there have been missteps, in his opinion. The area relies too heavily on pricy housing to drive its development. "My sincere hope is that the Arts District would develop in the way Silver Lake developed," he said. There are no big brands or chain retailers in Silver Lake." He feels that the Silver Lake shops are engaged with the neighborhood residents and are a part of the neighborhood's life. "I felt we were part of building a community for destination spaces in the Arts District. It stopped doing that," he said.

He blamed developers for not respecting the space of retailers. In 2017, Louisville closed Guerilla Atelier because his customers were being scared away by construction noise and debris from the **Aliso Apartments**, a 400,000-square foot compound adjacent to the shop. Louisville sued the developer, **Fairfield Residential**, but he said that he dropped the case in 2019 because he didn't want to deal with the anguish of a lawsuit.

Boutique retailers continue to do business in the Arts District. They include **3.1 Philip Lim**, **Shinola**, **H. Lorenzo Archive** and **Rogue Collective**. Colin T. McCarthy, creative director/vice president of Rogue Collective, said that the Arts District continues to hold a lot of potential.

"Nobody can replace Carl no matter how you try," McCarthy said. "He's got to be the most hospitable, customer-first store operator that has been around. His product was unparalleled. I think people are still inspired by what the Arts District can become." He said it would offer elements of popular shopping districts such as New York's Lower East Side and the SoHo of the 1990s, Los Angeles' Abbot Kinney Boulevard of the late 2000s and a little bit of Aspen, Colo.—*Andrew Asch*

Calendar

May 6

Seattle Mart Spring Market
Seattle Mart
Seattle
Through May 7

May 7

Atlanta Spring Immediate Delivery Show
AmericasMart
Atlanta
Through May 9

May 9

Marcum Retail Symposium
L.A. Live
Los Angeles

May 11

Unique LA
California Market Center
Los Angeles
Through May 12

May 12

Fashion and Sustainability Summit
LIM College
New York

May 14

Texprocess Frankfurt
Messe Frankfurt Exhibition Grounds
Frankfurt, Germany
Through May 17

Apparel Sourcing Show Guatemala
Grand Tikal Futura Hotel
Guatemala City, Guatemala
Through May 16

There's more
on ApparelNews.net

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

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Brokedown Clothing Finds Success With Quirky Phrases

By Deborah Belgum Executive Editor

When Jodi Benavidez started her clothing company, **Brokedown Clothing**, her collection of T-shirts, tanks and sweatshirts was known for its buttery fabrics and clever graphics that had a beach vibe or a Western feel.

Having grown up in Los Lunas, N.M., near Albuquerque, she's seen her share of cactus and desert landscapes, which sometimes get translated into her designs. Some of her bestselling T-shirts over the past few years are ones with a single cactus motif or rows of cacti punctuating the garment.

Because she wanted to control the quality of her goods, she decided to manufacture everything in Orange County or Los Angeles County from the knit fabric made in Los Angeles to the cutting and sewing in Santa Ana, Calif., to the garment washing done in Los Angeles. "When we say we are made in the U.S.A., people love hearing that," Benavidez said.

It also means that retailers only need to wait two to three months to get their merchandise once it has been ordered instead of six months if it were coming from overseas. "Most of my customers are ordering closer to delivery," she said.

Benavidez started her company in 2006, a few years after graduating from **American Intercontinental University** in Los Angeles, with a year spent in London studying fashion design. She graduated with a dual degree in marketing and fashion design.

For a little more than a year, she worked for **Trends West**, a

About six months later, she expanded the line into casual tops made of quality fabric, which ranges from organic cotton and rayon spandex to brushed hacci.

Then, three years ago, after having her first child, she added children's tops to the mix as well as "Mommy and me" matching outfits.

One of her favorite Mommy-and-me outfits is the **Thelma and Louise** duo, referring to the movie "Thelma and Louise." Mom wears the Thelma T-shirt and the daughter wears the Louise T-shirt, or vice versa. The set is also available in women's sizes for best friends or sisters to wear.

She started out doing lots of word graphics on her contemporary T-shirts, with statements such as "Sunshine State of Mind,"

"Happiness Is Free" and "Yachts, Bikinis, Martinis." "Our graphics are fun, quirky lifestyle graphics," Benavidez said.

As time went by, she added more prints to the collection, which is sold to about 200



Jodi Benavidez



stores across the country with women's T-shirts selling for \$54 to \$58 and sweatshirts going for \$86 to \$92.

As her collection expanded, Benavidez moved from her garage several years ago to a 2,500-square-foot warehouse in Costa Mesa. The **Siblings Showroom** at the **Cooper Design Space** in downtown Los Angeles represents her women's line, and the **Nicky Rose Kids** showroom in the **California Market Center**

represents the childrenswear line.

The name for the company came from the fact that her father always bought her cars that broke down. "My first car was a VW bug that didn't have a starter, so I would have to park it on hills and pop the clutch to start it," she recalled. "When I was looking for a name, this is what fit my upbringing. Back then, I thought I would eventually want to add denim. So I thought Brokedown denim sounded perfect. I never ended up adding denim, but Brokedown stuck." ●

trend-forecasting company in Los Angeles and then moved to Orange County, where she started her company out of her garage in Costa Mesa, Calif.

At first she was designing military caps with different logos, metal motifs and embroidery that quickly became a hot item worn by celebrities including Paris Hilton, Jessica Alba and Vanessa Hudgens. She sold them to celebrity-frequented stores including **Kitson**, **Madison** and **Fred Segal**, and the hats were featured in celebrity magazines.

Hamabla's New Bricks-and-Mortar Experience With Beach Pajamas

By Dorothy Crouch Associate Editor

Following the successful 2017 launch of her direct-to-consumer beach-lifestyle brand called **Hamabla**, Joelle Maynard decided to introduce the **Beach Pajamas** collection during the Fall/Winter 2018 season.

While the East Coast-raised Maynard has always lived near the beach—from Connecticut and New York to holidays spent in the Hamptons on Long Island, N.Y., and Nantucket, Mass.—it was a move to Malibu, Calif., that inspired her to create pieces made from natural materials that women could invest in for the long term.

“Because I am very passionate about the oceans and the beaches, and my environment inspired me, I decided to make all of my apparel and accessories out of natural materials,” Maynard explained. “You won’t find any polyester or rayon—except for the fabrics used to make the outdoor goods. The clothing is all cotton, linen and silks.”

Named for Maynard’s grandmother, who emigrated from Italy, the Hamabla brand started with a focus on beach accessories such as umbrellas, pillows and chairs. She admits that building a successful clothing brand was not her intention. But due to customer demand she decided to cultivate her apparel offerings.

Throughout the remainder of 2019, Maynard intends to focus on the Beach Pajamas line with designs inspired by liberating 1920s-era fashions that included loose silhouettes resembling sleepwear such as those favored by Coco Chanel.

“Over the course of the past two years, the apparel has really taken off,” she said. “It was almost an afterthought when I started the company, but it was something that people really gravitated toward because of the feel of the material and the design.”

Made in small batches in downtown Los Angeles, Beach Pajamas relies on 100 percent natural double-gauze cotton. While the pieces can be worn as sleepwear, true to the collection’s name, they are created to be worn as part of a



woman’s wardrobe.

The next collection, which launches on May 20 for summer, will include two new colors and 12 pieces, five of which are new silhouettes—a skirt, hooded poncho, scarf, tube top and shirtdress.

Beach Pajamas will feature pieces in black and Nantucket red, which is a light hue resembling a pink, popular with men who summer in the affluent seaside resort destinations in the Northeast region of the United States.

“We’re planning on that collection to be the foundation of our apparel,” Maynard said. “Because they are classic pieces, we expect them to repeat. We might add new colors or additional silhouettes, but because these are so classic this will be our enduring collection season after season.”

As a former finance-and-technology executive who worked with companies including **Salesforce** and **Oracle**, Maynard is experiencing a second career as an apparel designer. She has



quickly learned valuable lessons regarding maintaining the quality of a clothing brand. After starting her brand with a small manufacturer located in downtown Los Angeles, she moved on to a larger producer as the company grew but quickly realized that bigger isn’t always better.

“Working with a big manufacturer was a process that was overcomplicated,” she explained. “I went back to this one woman, and we have a wonderful relationship. For my production runs at this point, I don’t have to farm it out to China or a larger company in L.A.”

Part of the excitement Maynard is experiencing with Beach Pajamas is due to a temporary 1,600-square-foot bricks-and-mortar location launched April 1 on Santa Monica, Calif.’s, Main Street, which will remain open through the end of August. Preferring to use the term “residency” rather than the popular “pop-up shop” description, Maynard is enjoying the shift from an exclusively online presence to the client interaction she experiences with her storefront.

“When people come in, I can talk to them about the materials and the fact that we’re a direct-to-consumer brand,” she said. “They can see the value proposition where we’re not marking things up three times. I am able to provide high-quality items at a fraction of the price of a lot of other brands.”

For the launch of her shop, Maynard chose to bypass a large public-relations campaign, opting instead for a smaller push on social media and promoting the news herself. The move proved successful with traffic from women of all ages. Shoppers have included local Santa Monica residents and tourists alike.

“We are true to ourselves in terms of branding, materials and our network of folks, who help us do what we do. We talk about being an all-natural brand, but we’re also all naturally true to ourselves,” she said. “There are choices that I could make to make what I do a lot easier, but we focus on quality, and we stay true to the brand at all costs.”

Available in the shop until August and online at www.hamabla.com/, the Summer 2019 Beach Pajamas collection features the Carmen Cami, Carmen Pant, Carmen Short, Perline Playsuit and Suzel Slip in sizes XS–L. The collection’s Bruna Robe and Tosca Wrap Top are available in two sizes, XS/S and M/L. Retail pricing ranges from \$60 to \$175. ●

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FASHION

Halston Goes to the Desert for Pre-Fall 2019

The **Halston** label has been a fixture in Los Angeles ever since the brand moved from New York to downtown L.A. seven years ago.

The man behind the move was Ben Malka, who is the chairman and chief executive of the label and decided that Los Angeles was the place to be. He should know. For 16 years he was president of the **BCBGMaxAzria Group** here. He still believes that Los Angeles is a global city with world recognition when it comes to fashion innovation.

The label continues along the path of sophisticated and sleek looks for the contemporary woman. For the brand's pre-Fall

2019 collection, Chief Creative Officer Marie Mazelis said she wanted everything to feel peaceful and warm, "like the desert, the feeling of sun against the skin, a warm breeze," she said.

Most of the photos of the styles were shot in a stunning desert that looked like an oasis in a foreign land. Mazelis said she incorporated a soft, muted palette of neutrals and vegetables dyes with an occasional pop of neon to keep it fun and playful.

When it comes to the fabric, she said, "think gauzy stripes, weightless volume and airy pleating."—*Deborah Belgum*



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On the Eve of a New Product Launch, Hingeto Revolutionizes Drop-ship Technology

By Dorothy Crouch Associate Editor

Since its founding in 2015 by Leandrew Robinson, Ismail Maiyegun and Yaw Owusu-Barimah, Oakland, Calif., drop-ship technology company **Hingeto** has been revolutionizing direct-to-consumer apparel manufacturing. Drop-ship supply-chain management allows retailers to order only the amount of goods that customers are demanding. Manufacturers then ship these products directly to consumers, which reduces waste and cultivates a healthy economic environment for retailers and brands.

As the founder of the **Karmaloop** company **PLNDR.com**, Robinson, Hingeto's chief executive, worked with Owusu-Barimah, who is now a chief product officer, and met Chief Technology Officer Maiyegun through a mutual college friend. With an impressive stable of licensing, retail and manufacturing partners, the company is about to launch a new product on May 6.

"When a large retailer is buying new product, it's taking three to six months, from seeing a catalog to getting that product to actual sale within a store location or on the website," Robinson said. "One major benefit of our platform is shortening that timeline. They can add product within days. We're creating a virtual catalog of product on behalf of each brand that we integrate."

Major retailers aren't the only businesses benefiting from partnering with Hingeto, as the platform affords greater efficiency for suppliers to cultivate their connections with retail partners. From a supplier point of view, the technology available through this product reduces setup time, which translates into dollars.

"Selling on a big retailer, typically you need to be EDI [electronic data interchange] compliant, and that is a cost factor that a big supplier can onboard, but for a smaller supplier it's hard to figure out where to start," Owusu-Barimah said. "It speaks to the technology Ismail and the team built, which has a lot of small vendors to be able to sell to a large retailer within days."

While saving on the costs of building strong relationships with retailers can allow suppliers to focus on production, working efficiently to add inventory has also become a priority for the apparel industry as a whole. With its innovative drop-ship technology, the Hingeto team is refining the on-demand method of manufacturing, bringing it to a mainstream level that was once seen at smaller operations.

"From a technical level, it will make it much easier for established and new retailers alike to add more products with a few clicks of a button without advanced purchasing or having inventory. We built a marketplace and drop-ship platform that is seamless," explained Maiyegun. "We facilitate drop-ship and marketplace operations on both sides without

significant investment."

Partners from both the retail and supply sides are seeing exceptional results from the existing Hingeto platform and are excited about the future of their partnerships. From relationships with retailer **PacSun** to parenting-lifestyle brand **Scary Mommy**, Hingeto is working with larger companies who are major forces within the apparel industry.

For Anaheim, Calif.'s PacSun, the company's relationship with Hingeto began approximately three years ago, according to Senior Buyer Paige Becker. She notes that the founders' knowledge of the industry allowed the two entities to build a true partnership, and the tech company's startup

employees and sales through the marketplace software increasing 470 percent since last year, the company notes that its success has been strengthened by its partnerships with such leading brands as PacSun, Scary Mommy and subscription-box service **Lootcrate**.

Hingeto is expected to increase at a greater pace following the introduction of its new product, which will expand a supplier's SKU count and vendor base in addition to offering enhanced features that help manufacturers monitor inventory without excessive charges they would normally incur through traditional EDI.

"If brands are sending an inventory sync every hour to retail partners, they are potentially getting charged, which means they are disincentivized to send retail updates, thereby affecting their entire ecosystem and supply chain," explained Maiyegun. "When we said to ourselves, 'In 2019, someone shouldn't have to pay per message,' we decided we were going to hone in on getting rid of character-based pricing."

The pricing structure for Hingeto relies on a membership structure for retailers to subscribe to the software. A \$199 basic monthly package and \$499 premium pack-

age are currently waitlisted. Enterprise memberships are available, but pricing is not publicly listed as it is dependent on the level of support the retailer requires. On the supplier side, Hingeto charges a percentage of the wholesale cost per transaction that the brand lists within the system.

"If retailers operate the system well enough and recruit the right number of brands they can double their e-commerce even if they're pretty large," explained Robinson. "We typically monetize that side up-front."

At Hingeto, the founders recognize the challenges that manufacturers face when building a business when the specialty of these professionals is more geared toward artistry and creating. This realization helps the company's supply-side clients cultivate a better business without diluting their specialty.

"A supplier is typically good at making product and being ahead of the trends—they are great makers," Robinson said. "It is a chore for them to figure out how to run a great website and monetize influence—it's super costly and risky. They want to team up with retailers that are amazing at selling their product."

While the size of smaller brands could have been a hindrance in the past, with a more on-demand-centric system that utilizes enhanced technology, these businesses that provide goods to retailers could potentially scale at a greater rate.

"The ability to be a billion-dollar retailer has never been so tangible due to the Internet," said Maiyegun. "Before, you needed hundreds of millions of dollars of square footage, but because of our model you are able to sell a big operation to your audience." ●



Ismail Maiyegun



Leandrew Robinson



Yaw Owusu-Barimah

culture generated an environment of mutual growth.

"We really liked that Hingeto was a startup and we would be the first exclusive partner and we could flex it to our needs for the program. It was always great that they not only knew things from a tech side but also knew our consumer and anticipated their needs for the programs," she said. "It's really a partnership, and they're really flexing to what we need them to do."

The company is also connecting with smaller brands who can experience growth that otherwise wouldn't have been possible nor easy to accomplish. For Orange County, Calif., brand **Lira**, using Hingeto's existing platform has afforded increased exposure from its PacSun business since it began using the technology two months ago. When the retailer's customers visit the e-commerce site, they have experienced greater ease with discovering more Lira products that might not be available through the retail experience.

"We've seen a lot of success with repeat customers coming back and finding us through PacSun. It's where we're getting a lot of our business within drop ship," said Brian Barlow, director of sales, marketing and operations at Lira. "My PacSun business has grown this month by 25 percent. Now we're trying to dive in and figure out what is driving that business and capitalize on it to project that growth to see how we can market it a little more."

The team at Hingeto is excited to roll out features that will make an enhanced experience possible for retail and supply partners through introducing tools that will ease the process of monitoring demand. Now with a team of 11 em-

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