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LAS VEGAS RETAILERS FACE TOUGHER ODDS

BY ANDREW HARMON

LAS VEGAS — If what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas, then tourists may be harboring fewer dirty secrets when it comes to retail splurging.

With hotel occupancy and gambling revenue down, many Sin City retailers are struggling with a significant decrease in foot traffic and an aspirational shopper reluctant to, well, aspire.

Not everyone is struggling, and some retailers have reported sales gains. But those with even slight upticks in sales say

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MAGIC Tricks

New areas for eco-friendly apparel and progressive streetwear top the trade show's new and notable

ECOLLECTION

The Magic Marketplace is banking on the allure of eco-friendly apparel with its first designated area for sustainable clothing. ECollection at MAGIC will host more than 70 exhibitors during the biannual trade show, including Threads for Thought, a brand known for eco-aware slogan T's, Narwhal, an accessory company that uses recycled ties, and surf/skate brand Freesys. Located in the central hall near the men's contemporary and designer sections, ECollection will feature green design with concrete floors and recycled booths, and will present fashion shows each day of the show at 11:30 am. Special seminars featuring environmental pioneers from Nike and Patagonia are also on tap.



Threads for Thought's T's will be shown in new ECollection area

include graphic elements like medieval crests and Asian prints. Retail prices average around \$45 for denim, \$25 for tops and \$85 for outerwear.

With the goal of catering to the middle market, Macaluso believes MO7 (which stands for "Most Official" with a number 7 thrown in for good luck) will "give the guy a reason to buy when money is tight. The new urban guy," he says, "wants to look more premium, but not at higher prices."

THE MVMT

Eli Salome-Diaz is no stranger to MAGIC. He and his cohorts at the New York City creative firm 503Lab have been involved in brands like Riddem Driven, Greedy Genius and PNB Nation, just to name a few. 503Lab's newest project is the multibrand showroom, called The MVMT, which will be exhibiting several of its brands at the S.L.A.T.E. show at MAGIC.

"Most of the brands in the showroom are products of guys that were involved in the early movement of streetwear," explains Salome-Diaz. "We want to bring back those elements of originality."

Although The MVMT has around a dozen labels under its umbrella, at MAGIC look for limited-edition collaborative T-shirts from Grin & Fury, wovens and swim trunks from Top Rankn and "a return to basics" from Square 1, a new brand from former Undfted designer Hue Vo.



The MVMT's Top Rankn

MO7

Already a go-to licensee for young men's brands including Akademiks, Money and Troop, Geoffrey Allen will soon add its own name to the streetwear industry, with the launch of MO7 in MAGIC's streetwear section.

MO7 revolves around the premium denim aesthetic, explains Peter Macaluso, the brand's senior vice-president of sales and marketing. "We went back to what premium denim was before it started cleaning up," he continues, pointing to heavy treatments on bottoms. Tops



MO7

TOMMY BAHAMA

At MAGIC, all of Tommy Bahama's sub-brands will be under one, albeit smaller, roof. Last month, the company announced it would unify its related brands, such as the denim collection Indigo Palms, under the Tommy Bahama nameplate—a move that will be reflected at the trade show.

The company will be offering its reconfigured collections, including the luxury-level Tommy Bahama Island Estate, Tommy Bahama Relax and the golf line, in one place. But don't expect to find the two-story villa that has dominated the show's skyline in years past. The company, which moved its women's collection to WWDMAGIC, is opting for a new one-level space that reflects the brand's new retail concept.

"It's more understated but still upscale," says the brand's men's president Don Kerkes of the plan for the new stores, which will bow this fall. He added that the company's consolidation will also allow the brand's diverse retail base to buy Tommy Bahama in a variety of ways, from island-inspired dress clothes to beach-friendly resortwear. "We didn't change our point of view. We just reengineered so that it can work in a lot of different [retail] venues." The brands licensed product will be shown in a separate booth nearby.



From Tommy Bahama's Island Estate collection

assortment of briefs—inspired by the neon lights of Las Vegas—which features contrast white binding and brightly colored waistbands.

RISTEFESKY MACHEDA

Founded by Australian designers Stephen Ristefsky and Vincent Macheda in 2005, this fashion-focused underwear and beachwear brand makes its U.S. debut at MAGIC this week. The collection, which blends European sex appeal with the relaxed Australian lifestyle, offers new, masculine interpretations on traditional boardshorts in chic stripes, solids and prints.

The Aussie duo will launch three bold new swimwear styles at the show—St. Tropez, Australiana and Bondi—whose retail price points range from \$49.95 to \$149.95. New underwear styles include a neon



Ristefsky Macheda

"These collections are meant to reinforce swimwear and underwear as fashion accessories," says Macheda. "We are targeting a combination of worldwide specialty store and department store buyers." Though Macheda would not disclose company volume, he said the next six months are dedicated to raising brand awareness in the U.S. and, according to Macheda, establishing Ristefsky Macheda as "the European-influenced Australian designer underwear and beachwear label."

FORSYTH OF CANADA INC

This 100-year-old Canadian shirt brand, which was brought to the U.S. 14 years ago, returns to MAGIC this week with a newly expanded fancy shirt collection in a host of new colors.

“Normally, blue and grays are our first priority, but in an effort to stimulate retail business, we have to give a guy a reason to buy a dress shirt,” says Joe Visconti, executive vice-president of Forsyth’s U.S. division. As a result, bright shirts—in shades of melon, magenta, coral and lime—driven by stripes and checks, dominate the brand’s spring and holiday offerings.

Also taking center stage at the premier shirtmaker are white collars and wrinkle-free fabrications, which are currently the fastest growing portion of the brand’s business at better specialty stores. The label’s European fit, whose wholesale price points range from \$35 to \$48, is also driving new business. According to Visconti, “We had a decent first half of the year, but we’re hoping to attract new, better customers and new, high-end specialty stores.”



Forsyth of Canada

KANE'OHE BAMBOO PROVISIONS

Kane’ohe Bamboo Provisions, an eco-luxury company, will be making its debut in the new ECollection area at MAGIC with high-end men’s island wear made from a blend of bamboo fiber and organic cotton. The initial line of 22 pieces includes camp and polo shirts, as well as T-shirts, in various colors and patterns.



Kane’ohe Bamboo Provisions

Kane’ohe founders, brothers Bryan and Kyle Harris, plan to expand on the current offerings, and introduce women’s apparel and home accessories in the next few years. The brand will be sold to high-end island-wear boutiques in U.S. coastal cities.

Based in New Smyrna Beach, Fla., the family-owned company (including Tom, the Harrises’ father) believes in preserving the natural beauty of the islands. The earth-friendly bamboo fiber, they point out, is naturally grown, biodegradable and thrives without pesticides or fertilizers. It’s also anti-bacterial, durable, hypoallergenic and naturally protects against UV rays. Prices range from \$38 to \$130.

MULHOLLAND

Encouraged by what company president David Dow calls a strong luxury market, San Francisco-based leather maker Mulholland is returning to MAGIC with a slew of new offerings for next season. Standouts include its \$13,800 oil-rubbed and tumbled Bel Air gym bag in a unique pyrite color and an Aussie cowboy-inspired Vintage Waxed Canvas collection, which offers a broken-in feel and an urban look as well as water-repellent capabilities.



Mulholland

The California leather company is also

Evening Where

Wolfgang Puck, a \$70 cocktail tree—the newest hot spots to hit the Strip



SUGARCANE

This brand-new boutique nightclub from the people behind the SushiSamba restaurant chain brings samba dancers, geishas and distinctive cocktails to Las Vegas nightlife. The 4,000-square-foot venue—located adjacent to SushiSamba’s Las Vegas outpost at the Palazzo Resort Casino—houses one of the largest sake collections on the West Coast and also boasts its signature Cocktail Tree (\$70), which showcases 12 different drinks creatively placed on the branches of a wrought-iron tree. Also not to miss at this new hot spot: Japanese taiko drummers, models posing as Brazilian soccer players and capoeira—a Brazilian dance that incorporates martial arts. *SugarCane at The Palazzo, 3325 Las Vegas Boulevard South; 702-607-0700*

CUT

Wolfgang Puck’s Vegas outpost of his see-and-be-seen, award-winning steakhouse in Beverly Hills offers an innovative menu in a contemporary environment. Executive chef Matthew Hurley dishes up CUT’s signature mini-Kobe beef sliders and tuna tartare sandwiches at the bar and lounge, while wine enthusiasts can also choose from an international list of more than 500 selections. The 160-seat restaurant and 60-seat bar and lounge—designed by Las Vegas-based firm ABA—marks a departure from the sleek white interior of its Los Angeles location, instead featuring comfortable leather booths in a warm lamp-lit ambience. *CUT at The Palazzo, 3325 Las Vegas Boulevard South; 702-789-4141*

STRATTA

The recently renovated version of the former Corsa Cucina, Stratta—named after Michelin-rated chef Alessandro Stratta—brings rustic Italian-American fare to the Wynn hotel. Standouts on the seasonal menu include comfort-food standbys like fettuccine carbonara and Margherita pizza, while heartier entrées, such as roasted pork chops and rib-eye steak, are also available. Created by Wynn’s in-house designer, Roger Thomas, the revamped space, which features rich hardwood floors, bright red chairs and hanging light fixtures made from 300-year-old Indonesian teakwood, makes for a comfortable, sophisticated setting. *Stratta at the Wynn Las Vegas, 3131 Las Vegas Boulevard South; 702-770-3463 —GILLIAN KOENIG*

unveiling its new Boardroom collection, which is constructed of men's suiting fabrics and foulard necktie prints—in gray or walnut pinstripe suiting or bronze and garnet tie prints—as well as its white pebble grain and patent leather Worth collection, which flaunts contrast topstitching, silver lining and antique silver zippers.

“Our corporate gift business is driving a lot of revenue,” says Dow. “In a tough business environment for retailers, this is a missed opportunity for most of them. We are talking to high-end retailers and starting to do programs with Mario’s, Garys and Stanley Korshak, because these stores are already serving the key decision makers at a lot of these corporations, but missing sales associated with gifting through event, employee or customer recognition programs.”

ARTFUL DODGER

After pioneering the colorful graphics that so characterized the streetwear industry in recent seasons, Artful Dodger will take a sharp turn for spring '09. Creative director Scott Langton's latest collection is a practice in subtlety, with the “street sophisticate” in mind.

“Our new direction is much more grown-up than what we first started with,” explains Langton. “Our graphics are more sophisticated, there's a really nice blend of tailoring, and we're using better quality fabrics and production.”

As part of its goal to expand its reach, Artful Dodger will continue to push its sea-



son-old women's line. And Langton expects footwear to launch for fall '09—one of the many categories that will help stock the first Artful Dodger store, debuting just off London's Carnaby Street next spring.

KOSTELLO

With its eye on the cost-conscious customer, Kostello will likely be a welcome addition to S.L.A.T.E. this season. The Los Angeles-based brand, launching at the MAGIC show, touts “fashionable affordability” for men and women, with a collection of nearly 100 pieces retailing under \$100.

The brand's aesthetic crosses fashion and streetwear, according to Bradley Day, Kostello's sales and marketing director. Kostello intends to “dismiss the myth that inexpensive fashion equals diluted design,” he explains.

Standout pieces, Day says, include an eight-pocket, button-fly worker pant and a short-sleeved, button-up chambray shirt. Logos are discreet, he says. “We're promoting more of the design identity.”

—GILLIAN KOENIG, BRENDA LLOYD, JESSICA PALLAY AND BRENNER THOMAS



In the Swim at Pool

Emerging brands make waves in premium sportswear

3SIXTEEN

3sixteen debuted at Pool four years ago, when the New York-based collection was limited to graphic T's and fleece. Without any formal training in fashion, business partners Andrew Chen and Johan Lam have grown the brand into a full collection in the past two years, reinterpreting classic men's wear basics with creative and unexpected details. For example, a seersucker shirt in the spring collection features contrasting twill tape and asymmetrical front-pocket flaps. Lightweight jersey cardigans have a herringbone pattern running horizontally. Instead of buttons, the cardigans utilize small, military-style snaps. Outerwear options include khaki canvas, cropped peacoats and rip-stop-cotton field jackets. Piqué knit V-necks, vests, lightweight thermal sweatshirts and graphic T's round out the line. 3sixteen's slim-fit selvedge denim is hand-sewn in the U.S.

REVL

REVL is a San Francisco-based label that moves clubwear beyond T-shirts. Founder Chris Gorog emphasizes rapid design-to-market schedules to capitalize on trends. For spring, REVL (pronounced *revel*) celebrates 1940s, blue-collar style. Think dockworkers and delivery boys. The collection features



Gytha Mander



chambray and oxford-cloth shirts in gray, blue and black, and various pin and bengal stripes. The fit is meant to show off a man's build. Pants are cut like jeans, but there is no denim. Gorog says 2009 will be a big year for denim alternatives. T-shirts, cotton vests and skinny ties are key items as well. The ties summon themes from city life in the '40s, from concrete skyscrapers and heavy machinery to fishmongers and work uniforms.

GYTHA MANDER

Gytha Mander creates ready-to-wear inspired by the craft and individualism of London bespoke tailors. Colorful accents, elegant detailing, and bold pairings of old and new are hallmarks of the collection.

Founder Michael Moskowitz was studying public policy at the London School of Economics when he sewed some pieces for himself, and admirers encouraged him to start a business. For spring, Gytha Mander (*A gift from me* in Old English) dials up the volume with larger prints and patterns, more-daring contrasts, references to the '60s, and plenty of plaid and madras. Themed on “childhood fantasies and fears,” the collection features images of wolves, killer bees, UFOs, the Loch Ness Monster, airplanes and more. The overall look blends British schoolboy and playboy. —JEAN SCHEIDNES

REVL

