

Buyers Navigate Changed Landscape in Las Vegas

By Alison A. Nieder Executive Editor

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Visitors to Mandalay Bay shopped the men's lines showing at MAGIC Menswear, Street, Premium and S.L.A.T.E., as well as the men's and women's lines at Project and the men's and women's lines at Workroom, a new

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boutique show featuring upscale contemporary brands.

Over at the Las Vegas Convention Center, MAGIC's women's show, WWDMAGIC, took over the Central Hall, with Pool-tradeshow located at the back. MAGIC's new footwear show, FN Platform, and its garment and fabric sourcing show, Sourcing at MAGIC, were held in the convention center's North Hall.

Buyers had plenty of other venues to shop around, including the Off-Price Specialist Show at the Sands Expo & Convention Center, MRket, Accessories the Show, Moda Las Vegas, Curve NV and Capsule at The Venetian, ENK Vegas at The Bellagio, and Women's Wear in Nevada at the Rio All-Suites Hotel.

"Last year, it was more condensed," said retailer Naomi Loewe, owner of Chelsea Enterprises Inc., a retail store in Honolulu. Loewe shopped Moda Las Vegas, WWIN and MAGIC but didn't have time to stop by Project this season.

Similarly, retailer Gaynell D. Potts, owner of Dianne's Decorative Designs in Dallas, was racing between shows, making stops at MAGIC, Moda Las Vegas and Off-Price Specialist and trying to find time to shop WWIN and ENK Vegas, as well.

For veteran Los Angeles women's retailer Diane Merrick, this



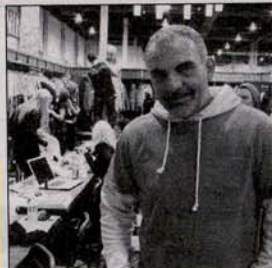
TREND WATCH: Fashion Snoops created the trend gallery at the MAGIC Marketplace.

show's separation of men's and women's fashions made it the best-organized MAGIC in memory. "I did not have to walk through all of the men's stuff. I only need to look at women's fashions, and it was all right there at the convention center."

Among the lines showing at WWDMAGIC at the Las Vegas Convention Center was Los Angeles-based Velvet Heart. The contemporary label is the brain child of Moshe Tsabag, whose previous labels include juniors brand Hot Kiss and contemporary label Jak & Rae. Tsabag recently brought Jak & Rae designer Joe Pham in to design Velvet Heart, which has shifted its focus from denim to more of an emphasis on silks and chambray fabrics. Velvet Heart recently inked its first licensing deal with New York-based coat maker Comint Apparel Group, which had held



CENTRALLY LOCATED: WWDMAGIC moved from the North Hall to the Central Hall for the latest run of the MAGIC Marketplace.



BACK TO BASICS: Christian Audigier eschewed his typical embellished branded aesthetic for his new line, The Same Guy, which bowed at the Project Global Trade Show.

the outerwear license for Hot Kiss. At MAGIC, Velvet Heart was showing its new coats, including styles in fleece, wool and leather.

Tsabag said the first day of the show was quite busy, with every

table in the booth filled with buyers reviewing the line.

"Stores are coming out with more of a positive attitude," he said. "They feel confident in sitting and writing orders. At the end of the day, I'm happy with the show."

Over at the Mandalay Bay, visitors to MAGIC Menswear crowded the narrow aisles, perusing the suits, ties and upscale casual offerings.

Scott O'Connor, sales representative for Los Angeles-based men's suit label Suits America, said suit buyers were replenishing low inventories but were taking a more-cautious stance when it came to price points.

"Last year, retailers were still sitting on goods," he said. "This year, there's not much change in fashion, but it's gone conservative and cheap."

To accommodate buyers' budgets, Suits America has been importing moderately priced suits in wool for key customers.

At Project, marketing maven Christian Audigier unveiled his latest offering, The Same Guy, a line of premium tees. The collection is a departure from Audigier's signature emphasis on branding, such as his namesake collection and Ed Hardy line. The Same Guy features no branding except for a tiny embroidered patch at the hem.

"It's a recession, and I decided to do something completely different," Audigier said.

The Same Guy features more than 40 bodies in 62 colors for men and women. The garment-dyed collection is made in Los Angeles from Supima cotton and wholesales from \$13 for a tank top to \$36 for fleece hoodies and track jackets.

Audigier said the new collection is being ordered by his existing Ed Hardy and Christian Audigier customers. "They know me as a T-shirt maker, and they did a lot of money with my brands before," he said.

But Audigier said the new collection is also helping him open up new accounts, including contemporary boutiques such as Los Angeles-based Lisa Kline.

"This morning, my first early bird was Lisa Kline," Audigier said on opening day. "She said, 'Finally, Christian, I can get something from you.'" ●

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