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WWD WEDNESDAY

Sportswear

King and Queen

NEW YORK — Shorter is better. That is, if you're going to the prom. This season, retailers are stocking traditional fare along with more abbreviated, retro-inspired frocks. Here, Betsey Johnson's silk taffeta dress, Rampage shoes, Cornelia James gloves, L. Erickson headband and, on him, cotton and spandex pants and cotton shirt from Ennio Capasa for Costume National Homme and What Goes Around Comes Around shoes, shot on location at Ardsley High School. For more on prom, see pages 4 and 5.

Chargebacks Survey: Vendors Claim Abuses Worse Than Ever in '05

By Vicki M. Young and Arthur Zaczekiewicz

NEW YORK — After years of chargeback compliance, vendors threw down the gauntlet this year by taking several retailers to court and forming a coalition aimed at making the practice more fair.

Although it's too early to predict how this drama will play out, one thing is clear: A large percentage of vendors said this year was one of the worst years for chargebacks, according to a survey of online subscribers conducted exclusively for WWD by Demographix during the third quarter of 2005. There were 98 respondents; 27 were retailers and 71

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Retail Stocks OK on Poor Market Day

By Vicki M. Young

NEW YORK — U.S. stocks ended Tuesday's trading sessions lower over fears of a recession looming on the horizon, but retail shares essentially held their own.

The Dow Jones industrial average lost 106 points and closed at 10,778, while the Nasdaq lost 23 points to close at 2,227.

Investors on Tuesday were concerned about an economic slowdown as the bond market indicated the yield curve inverted for the first time in five years. The inversion meant that short-term interest rates are higher than long-term ones. In the past, a similar move in the yield curve has preceded an economic slowdown.

Yet fears of a recession didn't seem to impact retail shares, even though most retailers are aggressively promoting sales to clear out inventory so spring merchandise can be moved onto the selling floors.

"The post-Christmas rush remains important to holiday sales results, as last year it accounted for approximately 10 percent of sales and we expect it to be bigger this year with the continued growth of gift cards," observed Merrill Lynch retail analyst Mark Friedman in a research note Tuesday. "Schools are now closed, people are on vacation and returns are being done. This means store credits or cash to burn. This is well

timed for clearance sales."

The specialty retail analyst wrote in his research note that gift cards remain significant to the holiday season, as they have become popular gifting items.

"With post-holiday markdowns being taken across numerous retailers, we anticipate a large portion of gift card holders will utilize their cards this week to take advantage of the sales," he concluded.

Shares of some specialty stores gained ground in Tuesday's trading session. Abercrombie & Fitch, which offered few markdowns during the holiday selling season, rose 64 cents to close at \$65.62 in Big Board trading. Shares of American Eagle Outfitters, its competitor in the mall, lost just 2 cents to close at \$22 in Nasdaq trading.

Shares of teen retailers were mixed, as evidenced by Pacific Sunwear, which rose 3 cents to close at \$25.28, while Urban Outfitters closed at \$25.87, down 17 cents. Both PacSun and Urban trade over the counter.

However, teen retailer Zumiez Inc., which went public earlier this year, gained \$1.01 to close at \$42.34 in over-the-counter trading.

Citi Trends Inc., a retailer of urban fashion and accessories for men, women and children that also went public earlier this year, saw its shares climb 60 cents to close at \$39.25 in over-the-counter trading.

Among the other specialty chains trading on the New York Stock Exchange, many gained ground on a day when stocks mostly tumbled.

Some of the winners were Aeropostale Inc., which closed at \$25.82, up 32 cents; Buckle Inc., \$32.34, up 20 cents; Gap Inc., \$17.66, up 2 cents, and New York & Co. Inc., \$20.81, up 6 cents.

There were a few trading on the Big Board that lost ground, such as Chico's FAS Inc., \$43.92, down 40 cents; Tiffany & Co. Inc., \$38.30, down 86 cents, and Talbots, \$27.30, down 20 cents.

In the department store group, shares of Federated Department Stores fell \$1.28 to close at \$64.97, while Saks Inc. rose 29 cents to close at \$16.70 after an analyst at A.G. Edwards upgraded the stock to "hold" from "sell," noting there was a 50 percent chance of a buyout over the next two years. Both stocks trade on the NYSE.

Sears Holdings, which owns the Sears and Kmart nameplates and trades over the counter, rose 11 cents to close at \$119.95.

Among the discounters, Kohl's Corp. climbed 54 cents to close at \$49.24, while Target rose 7 cents to close at \$55.58. Wal-Mart Stores, which has been aggressive in pricing during the holiday selling season, fell 61 cents to close at \$47.73. The stocks of all three discounters trade on the Big Board.

WWD WEDNESDAY

Sportswear

FASHION

4 Girls just want to have fun at this year's prom, so designers are channeling retro chic, from Fifties flounce through Eighties sweetness.

GENERAL

1 Vendors threw down the gauntlet on chargebacks this year, taking several stores to court and forming a coalition to make the practice fairer.

2 Dov Lautman, founder and chairman of Israel-based Delta Galil Industries, will succeed Arnon Tiberg as ceo on Jan. 31.

3 Moscow's Aizel launched Oscar de la Renta's spring line and store owner Aizel Guseinova projects sales to reach \$1.5 million in the next year.

Classified Advertisements 14-15

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Tiberg to Step Down at Delta Galil, Founder Dov Lautman Will Fill Role

NEW YORK — Dov Lautman, founder and chairman of Delta Galil Industries, Israel, will succeed Arnon Tiberg as chief executive officer on Jan. 31. Delta's board elected Lautman ceo for 12 months. He will continue as chairman for 15 months. Since Israeli law requires shareholder approval for someone to serve simultaneously as chairman and ceo, a special shareholder meeting will be called to confirm his appointment.

Tiberg, who has been ceo for the past decade, helped transform the Tel Aviv-based manufacturer of private label intimate apparel, underwear and leisurewear into a global apparel resource. Tiberg is credited with the company's entry into the U.S. mass market, transferring production to countries with lower labor costs, diversifying the company's customer base and overseeing several acquisitions, including the purchase of intimates firm Berlen in 2004 and Auburn Hosiery Mills from Kellwood Co. in 2003.

"A few months ago, Arnon Tiberg asked me to look into the possibility of his resignation as ceo. I asked him to remain in his position," Lautman said in a statement. "We have now agreed that he would finish his term as ceo Jan. 31, 2006. Due to my great appreciation for his talents, I intend to ask the board of directors to nominate Mr. Tiberg as a director in the near future, so that Delta can benefit from his vast knowledge and experience."

Regarding the future, Lautman noted, "In this period, when Delta is in the midst of reorganization, it is important that the person leading the company be a person who understands the company well. Therefore, I agreed to take upon myself the appointment as ceo for 12 months. I am sure that together with Delta's high-quality management, we will succeed in completing the reorganization."

Zack H. Salino, vice president of marketing for Delta Galil USA Inc., said in an interview, "Dov



Dov Lautman

has always been an active executive at the company, and has always been the heart and soul of the company of Delta Galil. He's been extremely involved in the U.S. business, coming to the U.S. three or four times a year, minimum. He's very active with Delta's businesses in Europe and the U.K., especially the Marks & Spencer stores. And everyone in management at Delta around the world is congratulating Arnon for taking Delta to the next level."

Delta Galil, which manufactures for Calvin Klein Underwear, Donna Karan, Tommy Hilfger, Victoria's Secret and Nike, generated sales of \$654 million in 2004, and overall sales are estimated to be \$750 million in 2005, according to Miki Laxer, controller of Delta Galil.

— Karyn Monget

In Brief

• **GOODY'S SET TO GO PRIVATE:** GF Acquisition Corp., an affiliate of investment firms Prentice Capital Management and GMM Capital, said on Tuesday it has completed a \$327 million tender offer for Goody's Family Clothing Inc. GF Acquisition is expected to take Goody's private on or after Jan. 27. Shareholders will receive \$9.60 in cash for each share they own, without interest. Robert Goodfriend, whose father founded the company, will resign his posts of chairman, director and chief executive officer. Isaac Dabah, a principal of GMM Capital, will become a director of Goody's and its new chairman. Goody's, based in Knoxville, Tenn., operates 381 stores in 21 states.

• **NEW DISH:** Robert Singer undoubtedly ate plenty of pasta during his nine-year tenure as chief financial officer at Gucci Group and his new job in Italy promises even more exposure to carbohydrates. Barilla Holding SpA has tapped Singer as chief executive officer and interim cfo. Barilla Holding controls pasta maker Barilla and food companies in Europe. A Barilla spokeswoman clarified that Singer's role will be a purely financial one. Singer, in fact, replaces former cfo Vittorio Ogliegnog, who left the company earlier this year. Luca Bolla will continue to oversee strategy for Barilla as ceo of the operational arm of the company, Barilla GeR. Singer, who already sat on Barilla Holding's board, will start his new job Jan. 15 in Parma. Singer was Gucci Group's cfo until 2004. In September, he resigned as president and chief operating officer of Abercrombie & Fitch after 15 months at the company.

• **WAL-MART APPOINTMENTS:** Wal-Mart Stores Inc. named Charles Holley as senior vice president of finance to oversee investor relations. Holley, who reports to Tom Schoewe, executive vice president and chief financial officer, continues to manage other areas of finance and accounting, including tax and financial reporting. Holley was senior vice president and controller, and from 1994 to 2002, was cfo for Wal-Mart International. Also, Carol Schumacher was named as vice president of investor relations, reporting to Holley, and will lead all investor relations activities. Schumacher was vice president of corporate affairs. Pauline Tureman continues as director of investor relations, reporting to Schumacher. The changes enable Jay Fitzsimmons, senior vice president treasurer, to focus on treasury, capital markets, strategic planning and analysis, and to support merger and acquisition activity.



Gucci Ads Show Soft Side of Spring

By Alessandra Ilari

MILAN — Gucci's new design era has trickled down to its spring ad campaign. Without changing the photographer but intent on moving the brand forward, Gucci's Frida Giannini wanted Craig McDean to trade the steamy poses of the past for reportage-style images with a twinge of Seventies nostalgia.

The campaign, which breaks in January's *Vogue Italia* and *Uomo Vogue*, is Giannini's first since she took control of Gucci's women's division in May, when she started designing ready-to-wear as well as accessories.

"The most important message that I wanted to give with this ad campaign was optimism. I wanted the new Gucci woman to express this through light, color and a new way of being real and natural," said Giannini.

Doug Lloyd, Gucci's art director for 11 years, oversaw the shoot. "We worked to reflect the new direction that Frida has set with her clothing and accessories," said Lloyd. "It's younger and fresher, while still the confident sexy Gucci girl you know."

Northern European models Freja Beja and Iselin interacted leisurely as they were photographed in Los Angeles. Giannini and Lloyd wanted the light, wind and movement that generally come through in shoots on location.

The pictures are an evolution of cruise; the warm light and sunspots were carried over, but the wind is softer and the movements are looser.

Furla's Women Take Center Stage

MILAN — Furla is charging up its female power.

The Bologna-based leather goods manufacturer has conceived a spring ad campaign to reflect its identity by juxtaposing black-and-white portraits of female workers from its offices worldwide next to color still lifes of its spring wares.

Giovanna Furlanetto, Furla's chairman, and communications directors and product managers are some of the women who left their desks to pose for photographer Aldo Fallai.

While it's not usual for fashion companies to have a primarily female workforce, Furla wants to convey the fact that women at an average age of 34 account for 80 percent of its staff.

"We wanted to evolve, but at the same time we wanted to speak to our consumers, who are women, by communicating the values of the company," said Furlanetto. "The faces and personalities of the women in the photos express the spirit of Furla better than words."

The portraits were shot during Milan Fashion Week last September, when managers from Furla's international branches were in town for the shows. To drill the point home, Furla will run three double-page spreads in a handful of titles, which will include *In Style* in the U.S., *Vogue Japan* and *WWD Japan*, and the Italian versions of *Vogue* and *Vanity Fair*. Other magazines will run only the product shots. The campaign will break in February.

—A.I.



Actual Furla employees are featured in the new campaign.



Oscar de la Renta a Hit in Moscow

By Olga Zaretskaya

MOSCOW — Wives of Russian oligarchs are choosing Oscar de la Renta.

The Moscow store Aizel held a trunk show of the designer's spring collection earlier this month, which was overseen by Boaz Mazor, executive at large at Oscar de la Renta. Aizel Guseinova, the owner of Aizel, estimates her store will sell about \$1.5 million worth of de la Renta clothes over the next 12 months.



Aizel Guseinova and Boaz Mazor

"This winter is the first time I brought Oscar to Moscow and before Christmas we sold 70 percent of the collection," said Guseinova, whose store also carries designers Michael Kors, Marc Jacobs, Chloé, Stella McCartney, Nancy Gonzalez and Collette Dinnigan.

"For me, it is easy to sell American designers here — American fashion is a little bit relaxed, so it is easy to wear, even the outfits for special occasions," she said. "There are a lot of cocktail dresses that sell best, but generally the [de la Renta] collection meets the needs of women starting from 24, but also I have customers who are 68 and they can also wear Oscar."

"The thing is that the clothes are unlike anything else and my clients feel like the members of a club, which is really important for them."

Guseinova decided to carry the collection when she saw it at Bergdorf Goodman and realized "its sophisticated and photogenic look would sell well in Russia."

"Now there are many people in Moscow who can afford those clothes, not necessarily a \$15,000 gown in the window, but prices for dresses start at \$1,500 to \$2,000," she said.

Aizel carries de la Renta's cocktail and evening dresses, daywear, shoes, bags and accessories.

"Starting with spring, we gave Aizel exclusive rights for Oscar [in Moscow], though it is also available in St. Petersburg at the Babochka store, Kiev at Sanahant and Kazakhstan at the Avenue Montaigne boutique," Mazor said. "I am not surprised the brand is doing well in Russia; a large percentage of people who buy Oscar's clothes in



Oscar de la Renta's Boaz Mazor with Russian models at the trunk show.

Harrods are Russians. Now we are thinking of opening a monobrand Oscar de la Renta store in Russia.

"According to my feelings, Oscar's style must be close to the Russian heart and it is not by chance that the Russian model Eugenia Volodina is the face of our autumn-winter 2005 campaign and five of the 20 models in our New York spring show were Russian," he added.

Aizel — in Moscow's Stoleshnikov Pereulok district of luxury stores where people shop for Dior, Hermès and Salvatore Ferragamo — opened a year ago. Guseinova also owns the Agent Provocateur shop in Moscow and the city's Chloé store (together with the big Russian retailer Crocus) and plans to open an Aizel

men's wear store that will sell Michael Kors, Alexander McQueen, Tom Brown, Adam, Jil Sander, Belwest, Ravadzotta, Billionaire Couture and Ted Baker.

And, now that it's been 12 months since she opened Aizel, Guseinova can begin to boast about her client list, many of whom she will target for de la Renta's designs.

"We dress Irina Abramovich, whose husband owns the oil company Sibneft and the Chelsea soccer club in London; Irina Kasyanova, the wife of the former prime minister; Lady Foster, the wife of architect Sir Norman Foster; Nadezda Novikova, whose husband owns the best Moscow restaurants, and Olga Slutsker, who owns the chain of expensive fitness clubs World Class," she said.

Prom Prom Girls

NEW YORK — This prom season, girls just wanna have fun. Designers are channeling retro chic, from Fifties flounce through Eighties sweetness.



Jessica McClintock's polyester taffeta and charmeuse dresses. Ben-Amun earrings; Rampage shoes and Stuart Weitzman shoes. Cotton and spandex tuxedo suit from Ennio Capasa for Costume National Homme; cotton shirt and shoes from What Comes Around Goes Around.



Thread's silk chiffon dress. Stuart Weitzman shoes; Ben-Amun earrings. Cotton and spandex tuxedo suit from Ennio Capasa for Costume National Homme; cotton shirt from What Comes Around Goes Around. Dsquared tie.



XOXO's cotton and nylon dress. Ben-Amun earrings; Barbara Bui shoes; L. Erickson headband. Cotton and spandex pants from Ennio Capasa for Costume National Homme; cotton and polyester shirt and shoes from What Comes Around Goes Around.



Tuxedo suit from Ennio Capasa for Costume National Homme; cotton shirt and shoes from What Comes Around Goes Around. David Meister's nylon and mylar dress. Sergio Rossi shoes; L. Erickson headband. Necessary Objects' polyester dress. Barbara Bui shoes; Ben-Amun earrings; L. Erickson headband. Hugo Boss' silk suit and cotton shirt. Costume National Homme shoes.

PHOTOS BY KYLE ERICKSON, MODELS: LISALAN/NEW YORK MODELS, KATIE FLOYDE/LITE AND AARON/REQUEST, JOSEPH ROSALLY, HAIR BY MZU, MAKEUP BY KENSHIM ASANO; FASHION ASSISTANT: NANCY BELEW, STYLED BY DAVID VASSKY

In the Mainstream

Overcoming the Challenges

By Julee Greenberg

NEW YORK — For sportswear firms in the moderate, better and bridge zones, the past year has been one of mixed blessings and 2006 looks set to be just as complicated.

With hurricanes and high gas prices putting a damper on sales and new quotas on Chinese imports causing vendors to rethink their sourcing strategies, 2005 was challenging throughout the supply chain. On the plus side, there has been good reaction to more innovative and creative products, as women look to misses' departments for more fashionable, younger-looking apparel.

Here are some thoughts on the past year and the year ahead from five executives in the sector:

Goals: "One of our 2006 goals is to take our Caribbean Joe brand and make sure the 'legs' we have created through the addition of new product categories and our extensive licensing program further enhances the lifestyle dressing we have created. The addition of new product categories, like home textiles and watches, also helped to maximize our past successes.

"Our other 2006 goal is further diversification by creating or buying a company and/or a brand having higher price points that also has the ability to achieve substantial sales volumes on their own."

Lynn Ritchie, owner of Ritchie Corp.

Accomplishments: "This year was very challenging with both national and natu-

Jamie Gorman, president, Only Nine

Accomplishments: "Some positive things that happened to Only Nine and me personally was, of course, the birth of my daughter, Dylan, and the increase in our production abilities by the addition of several new factories in Los Angeles and in China. We now have better and bigger production factories and facilities specializing in novelties, specifically embroideries, beading and crochet. Working with new factories overseas allows us to produce more fashion-forward key items. All of this has allowed our business to grow significantly since 2004."

Disappointments: "On a sad note, Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, as well as the tsunami [in Indonesia] had effects on all of our customers and factories."

Goals: "We hope to expand and grow our

Customs regulatory changes were detrimental to our business by delaying our typical product turnaround — which can be as quick as 48 hours — by two to three weeks in early 2005. We proactively addressed this challenge by opening a warehouse in Plattsburgh, N.Y."

Goals: "The FDJ French Dressing brand awareness and enhancement will be a primary focus in the New Year. Although a manufacturer of women's lifestyle clothing, FDJ French Dressing is a marketing-driven, not a production-oriented, company. The emphasis will be on the brand and how to leverage it best.

"Some of the new initiatives that will take place in the new year include: consumer advertising, both on national and regional levels; a new brand catalogue that will be direct to consumer, distrib-



Caribbean Joe will launch new product categories.



FDJ French Dressing will have increased marketing efforts in 2006.



Only Nine will increase international production.



Ginny Hilfiger is on the hunt for a showroom for Ginny H.

goals '06

Ken Sitomer, principal at Apparel Holdings Group, which markets the Caribbean Joe brand

Accomplishments: "In 2005, the Apparel Holdings Group navigated the massive structural and personnel changes that occurred within the retail sector. This meant having to service the various retail groups, many having their own individual philosophy of assortment and presentation. For instance, some placed more emphasis on private label than others.

"However, the common thread was that whether branded or not, every retailer wants to be looked at as having an assortment or presentation different than their competitors. This forced us to think out of the box in order to satisfy those needs. We believe that with our strength in branded merchandise and our substantial growth in the private label area, we represent a diversified resource to almost any retailer. In addition, with our increased exposure of our junior and children's divisions we would like to take them to the next level, again reinforcing our diversification.

"The most challenging issue in 2005 was to understand the changes and restrictions of the global sourcing community and make them work for us. We were able to successfully stay on top of those issues."

ral disasters that affected our business as an industry. However, I believe we accomplished the goals we set for ourselves this year:

Cruise and holiday were exceptional seasons for us and helped us to increase our assortments. We did great with skirts this year, when we were known primarily for our tops. We also worked very hard on the fashion basics and had one camisole in particular that just kept selling and selling."

Goals: "For 2006, which will be my 16th year in this business, I'm planning to create even more for our customers. For the first time, we are launching a collection of jeans, which we've tested and seem to be fitting the customers really well. That, I'm sure, will increase our printed top business, which we are already known for.

"Personally, I plan to keep my wonderful work staff happy since they've done such an amazing job this year. These are the people that helped me to become successful, so really, it's all about the people. Also, I just keep in the mindset that I want to keep creating clothing that I want to wear. Misses' sounds so old lady-like. I don't want to dress like an old lady and I don't plan to."

Also, we look forward to our Dylan Ava girls collection, which we just launched. We look forward to increasing our customer base through continuing the growth of our private label business by feeding back quick-turn fashion items at great prices into our stores."

Bob Taylor, chief marketing officer, FDJ French Dressing

Accomplishments: "Most importantly, we offer a brand with a heart. We've supported breast cancer research and treatment since 1996, having raised over \$2.2 million over the last 10 years. FDJ French Dressing plans to increase this support for 2006 by offering to the cause 50 cents for every garment sold. We originally donated a certain amount from every bottom sold, the support will now be doubled.

"One of the best things for us in 2005 has been the partnering with our best retail customers to create a shop-within-shop concept. The results to date have been phenomenal and we are planning another 60 to 100 shops-in-shops across North America in the new year."

Disappointments: "Since we are a Canadian-based company with headquarters in Montreal, Quebec, recent U.S.

offshore production. Also, we look forward to our Dylan Ava girls collection, which we just launched. We look forward to increasing our customer base through continuing the growth of our private label business by feeding back quick-turn fashion items at great prices into our stores."

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Ginny Hilfiger, co-owner and designer, Ginny H

Accomplishments: "The best things that happened in 2005 were that Roopal Patel, the women's fashion director of Bergdorf Goodman, got an e-mail suggesting she look at my line, which she picked up; my husband, Chris Mahl, decided to work with me, and I found the very best factories Stateside, so I can continue to produce in the U.S."

Disappointments: "A couple of the worst things were my choice to take the summer off, which I used to design my spring 2006 collection, and my husband decided to work with me."

Goals: "Looking ahead, in 2006, I hope to establish a showroom for Ginny H, sell full exclusively and keep my sanity."

Marketing

Women's Wishes: Control, Security and Peace

By Valerie Seckler

NEW YORK — What do women really want?

As their lives are buffeted by an increasingly diverse array of demands in a world growing ever more fragmented, there's evidence American women nonetheless agree about most things these days. That unlikely finding is based on wide-ranging research conducted as the basis of "What Women Really Want" (Free Press: \$26), which included interviews, focus groups and polls.

"It's not a red-state/blue-state world for women, it's purple," said co-author/political consultant Celinda Lake, a specialist in framing issues to women voters. "Most agree on most things."

Chief among their commonalities is a desire for control in their lives and a related sense of security, which emerged as the most strongly experienced emotions among women interviewed for the book, published in October and subtitled: "How American Women Are Quietly Erasing Political, Racial, Class and Religious Lines to Change the Way We Live."

Today, more than 22 million women live alone, representing an 87 percent surge over the last two decades. The steep rise in single-woman households has empowered more women to make purchasing decisions — which now account for about 90 percent of all apparel transactions and about 80 percent of purchases overall, Lake said. For example, in 2003, twice as many single women as single men bought houses and 54 percent

of single women owned their own homes.

"There's far less guilt attached to luxury spending, compared with four or five years ago," co-author/consumer researcher Kellyanne Conway contended. "As women work hard and 9/11 fades farther into the past, women are realizing they have disposable income and want to reward themselves."

Their purchases range widely, she added, from finer apparel and more luxurious vacations, to first-time homes, spa weekends, massage therapists and personal trainers.

Women valuing control in various aspects of their lives — health, finances, time, "any area" Lake said — "is something for apparel marketers to think about as well: How to give women [a feeling of] control no matter what they're wearing." When asked, the first thing Lake, 52, suggested to fit the bill was customized clothing, which she thought would have the most appeal among multicultural youths, and women 60 and older.

Technology is already playing that role for American women and distinguishes their purchases of various gadgets from those of men, Lake related. "Women see technology as a way to get more control," she said; for example, they carry mobile phones to stay in touch with their children. "Men see technology as an end in itself, like buying an Xbox to play a game."

About 51 percent of technology purchases in the U.S. economy are made by women, who spend roughly \$55 billion a year on products for themselves and others, Lake and Conway have found. iPods

Kellyanne Conway



Celinda Lake

and associated accessories, from sound ports to covers, were the runaway best-sellers in 2005, Conway said.

Concerns about beauty and wellness also fell under the influence of a longing for control, as "healthfully" was the way in which most women ages 40-64 would prefer to age, among a handful of choices. The others were sexy, gracefully and prettily. Slightly more than half, 53 percent, of women indicated they'd rather look thinner than younger. A premium was placed on "improvement instead of perfection," Lake discovered to her surprise.

In another comparison, 79 percent of female college students, among the book's subjects, put a premium on financial stability over shedding extra pounds, saying they'd rather be 20 pounds over-

weight than \$20,000 in debt.

Most surprising to Lake while researching "What Women Really Want" was that the biggest wish among women was for peace in their lives. "It's the culmination of 40 years of dramatic change, increasing stress, turmoil," Lake said, a period in which "women have tried to have it all."

In the years ahead, said Conway, 38, "an explosion of women who are unmarried as a choice, rather than a condition, will rock all things, from the way products are packaged to the way loans are structured and politicians put out messages."

It's a phenomenon, she projected, that will give rise to a sense of "solitary connectedness," an awareness that this group is "doing the same things at the same time, but not together as a group."

Star Power Propels Cyber Site

By Nina Jones

LONDON — It's no secret that young consumers look to celebrities for their fashion inspiration — but the teen set isn't the only one charting the stars.

ASOS, short for As Seen on Screen, a U.K. e-tailer, has offered apparel, jewelry and beauty products modeled on the style of various celebrities favored by teens and young adults. At any given time, styles inspired by between 30 and 100 stars have been put up for sale in cyberspace at asos.com.

Trading on the tastes of the rich and famous had been clicking for ASOS prior to an explosion and fire on Dec. 11 at its new warehouse: Sales climbed 86 percent to \$14.4 million in the six months ended Sept. 30.

The Web site's roster of registered users also had robust growth this year, expanding to 725,000 people as of November, up 73 percent over year-ago levels.

However, the December explosion and fire that occurred at an oil plant located just 1,600 feet away from ASOS' warehouse in Hemel Hempstead, northeast of London, ended the company's holiday selling as roughly half of its merchandise was damaged. The remaining merchandise is being delivered to a backup warehouse in Peterborough, and ASOS expects to resume its business online in early January.

Analysts predicted the truncated holiday season would hit the firm hard in 2006, both financially and in the public's perception of the brand.

Costs associated with the move in August to the 70,000-square-foot warehouse from a 10,000-square-foot facility had already resulted in a pre-tax loss of \$209,000 for ASOS for the six months ended Sept. 30. A year earlier, the publicly held e-tailer notched a pre-tax profit of \$220,000.

Jonathan Jones, marketing director of As Seen on Screen, said the company had no access to the Hemel Hempstead warehouse, and had not been told yet when it would. Approximately half the company's merchandise was lost; Jones said the company was fully insured.



As Seen on Screen is interpreting styles worn by celebrities like actress Sienna Miller, right, and serving up those takes for sale at asos.com.

Despite ASOS' insurance policy, Anne-Marie Hartnett, senior analyst at retail consultant Verdict Research, projected, "It will be a big upset for the brand. ASOS had moved to a bigger warehouse because they couldn't cope with demand last Christmas. That affected their performance in the first half of the year," she recounted. "Having to shut the site during Christmas this year will have a further negative effect on the company's performance."

Still, Hartnett was sanguine about the brand's long-term prospects — if it recovers quickly — based on its strong growth, an upswing fueled by its sharp focus on women and girls in their teens and 20s who want to dress like celebrities. ASOS markets itself in the U.K. through a combination of e-mails sent to its registered users; print ads placed in celebrity weeklies and in titles such as U.K. Glamour; and online banner ads posted at Web sites like Internet portal Wanadoo and Sky TV's online destination.

Currently, 3 to 4 percent of the company's sales come from the U.S., but Jones said the company has no plans to actively market itself there in the near term. "We still have a lot of work to do educating people about the brand in the U.K.," he noted.

While ASOS commissions about 80 percent of its products directly from manufacturers, it also sells pieces under such labels as Miss Sixty, Rock & Republic and Triple Five Soul. Commissioned items include a red Empire-line dress in the style of Sienna Miller, as she was photographed leaving Nobu on a night out in London, and a lace-and-cotton top in the style of Keira Knightley, similar to one she wore to a memorial service in London following the terrorist attacks in July.

ASOS researches such looks by perusing photo agencies' Web sites; newspaper gossip columns, and fashion runway shows. The e-tailer does not seek permission from celebrities to feature the styles it markets as having been inspired by them, but it does post a disclaimer on its Web site stating the entertainers have not endorsed the interpretations.

As Seen on Screen was launched in 2000 by Nick Robertson, the great-grandson of U.K. retailer Austin Reed. The company name reflects the e-tailer's original offer of apparel and home products that had been featured in films and on TV. Robertson was inspired to launch the venture after learning NBC received numerous calls from viewers inquiring about a lamp they'd seen in an episode of "Friends." The company began specializing in takes on the fashions sported by TV entertainers when they proved to be the most popular.

Belts Buckle Down for Spring Business

By **Alessandra Ilari**

MILAN — Women will be tightening their belts come spring, and it won't be because of the economy.

Belts are back as a key accessory in spring collections now hitting store floors.

According to A.I.M.P.E.S., Italy's association of leather goods manufacturers, from January through August, exports of Italian belts rose by 24.3 percent to \$27 million against the same period in 2004. Chanel reported a 10 percent increase in belt sales; Armani, a 15 percent hike, and Dolce & Gabbana, a 28 percent jump.

Carla Sozzani, owner of the 10 Corso Como store here, said accessories were the driving force behind business these days and sales of belts this spring are expected to be brisk.

"We have to thank [Miuccia] Prada, who started using belts over dresses and coats, making them more versatile," said Sozzani. "Belts are great with jeans or to make a look more feminine."

Elizabeth Kanfer, market director for accessories at Saks Fifth Avenue, described the belt business "as going from nonexistent to tremendous."

"The trend started with fall and we're expecting a great spring season," Kanfer said. "Belts have become like pieces of jewelry because there are so many different styles. The spotlight is moving down from the neck to the waist because belts are easy, pretty and trendy."

She said Saks would dedicate more display space in some of its stores to belts.

Jovanka Novkovic Davies, a leather goods buyer at Harrods in London, said she had increased her budget for belts from each of the store's brands for spring.

"This is a particularly strong belt season because, from wide to skinny, waist emphasis is key," said Davies. "I'm particularly excited about Alexander McQueen's embossed leather belt."

A Gucci spokeswoman noted that consumers' continued interest in logos has turned belts into an immediate and accessible accessory with a distinct designer mark.

"It's not by chance that our bestsellers are the double-G logo for both the regular line and La Pelle Guccissima, and styles with the green-red-green webbing," she said.

Armani is banking on its logo belts and expects the GA logo belts and the Giorgio buckle belt to sell well.

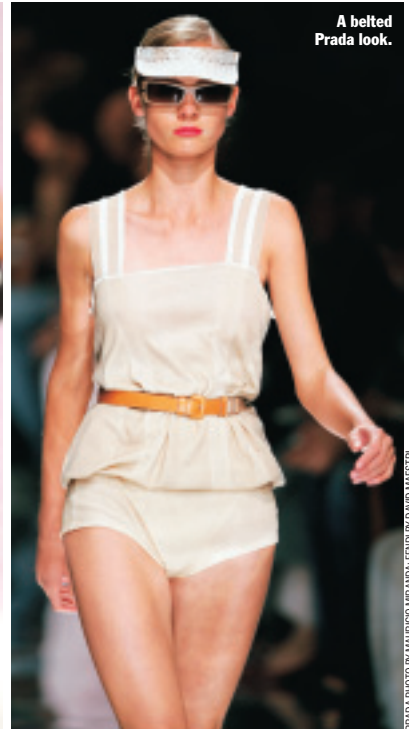
Besides black, Dolce & Gabbana's best-selling belts include colored patent leather styles and designs made from exotic skins in fuchsia, red and yellow. All the belts feature precious details, especially the brand's 20th anniversary belt, a thick calfskin style with a huge celebratory buckle sprinkled with Swarovski crystals.

"Belts allow women to personalize a look or add a touch of color," said Stefano Gabbana. "They can be matched to other accessories or to the clothes for a perfect look."

At Fendi, belts adorned many of Karl Lagerfeld's clothes. The season's top style is the B Fendi belt that features a bold, rounded buckle similar to the ones on the B Fendi bag crafted in black patent, white canvas and sheer plastic.

"Similar to the bags, I designed belts that are simple yet important and that stand out even without spotlighting the logo,"

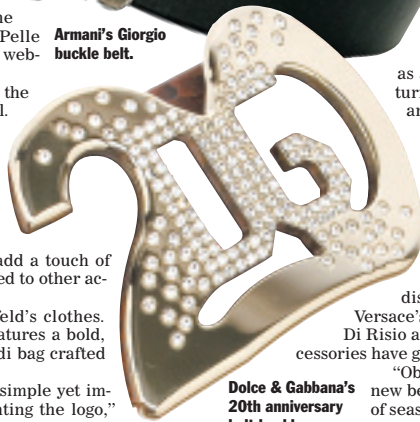
Fendi's B Fendi belt on the spring 2006 runway.



A belted Prada look.



Armani's Giorgio buckle belt.



Dolce & Gabbana's 20th anniversary belt buckle.

said Silvia Venturini Fendi, creative director for accessories. "Belts, like the rest of Fendi's accessories, are recognizable for their details, materials and different methods of craftsmanship."

A Chanel spokeswoman cited fashion's greater focus on the waist as a generator of the belt trend and listed as top sellers those belts featuring the house's iconic symbols, such as chains, embroidered fabrics and charms.

"There is a lot of growth potential in this category at Chanel," she said. Versace paired denim and python in midnight blue for its featured belt styles.

In the company's remodeled Milan boutique, an example of the brand's new international store concept, an entire corner is dedicated to women's belts. The backlit display features white leather shelves to showcase the wares.

"Since the new concept launched at the beginning of this year, concurrent with the growing belt trend, belts have enjoyed a better display and are more visible to the customer," said Giancarlo Di Risio, Versace's chief executive officer.

Di Risio added that the growing demand for belts testifies to the importance accessories have garnered over the last few years.

"Obviously, the focus is still on bags and shoes," said Di Risio. "But the new belt phenomenon can be expected to last, certainly for the next couple of seasons."

MEMO PAD

LESS GOODSTEIN AT THE NEWS:

It's been a bad couple of weeks for **Mort Zuckerman**. First he got cast as the heavy in Radar's downfall, and now **Les Goodstein**, his longtime lieutenant in charge of the Daily News, is leaving to work for **Rupert Murdoch**, Zuckerman's bitter rival in the tabloid wars. Goodstein has been named senior vice president of News Corp., reporting to **Paul Carlucci**, publisher of The New York Post. (Carlucci replaced **Lachlan Murdoch** in that job in September, after the younger Murdoch announced he was quitting to move back to Australia.)

Goodstein, whose duties will be divided between the Post and other News Corp. properties, has spent 28 years at the News, and has served as chief operating officer since 2000. "This guy knows where the bodies are buried," said a former News employee who worked under Goodstein. "He knows everything about running the business." He also knows about selling advertising — an area in which the Post has continued to lag far behind the News, even as it has closed to within 3 percent of the News' average weekday circulation of 688,584.

Goodstein's exit from the News coincides with that of **Michael Cooke**, who lasted less than a year as editor in chief. He returned to Chicago to work for Hollinger newspapers.

How upset was Zuckerman over losing Goodstein? Enough

so, according to a source with knowledge of the situation, to interrupt his Aspen ski vacation and fly back to New York to try to persuade Goodstein to stay — without success. "Les has been trying to get out of there for years," said the source. Zuckerman was back on vacation Tuesday, but in a memo to the News' staff he disclosed his intention to name a chief executive officer to succeed **Fred Drasner**, who stepped down in 2004. He also issued a statement, via a spokeswoman: "Since buying the newspaper in 1993, it has been my pleasure to work closely with Les on all aspects of the business...I want to sincerely thank him for all his work and wish him well in a new chapter of his life with News America." — **Jeff Bercovici**

HOTELS TO THE RESCUE: New Orleans will get feature treatment in the February issue of *Condé Nast Traveler*. Editors at the magazine just closed a piece about how the Louisiana hotel industry stepped in when the Red Cross and the Federal Emergency Management Agency faltered during and after Hurricane Katrina. "It is the story of a number of hoteliers, hotel managers, who rode out the storm," said editor in chief **Klara Glowczewska**. "They had guests there who were either stuck

because the airlines were cutting flights, or locals who came in to seek shelter....They were setting up sick bays, hoarding food, going into town in search of fuel. It was sort of like a war zone. We looked at how they coped, and how they dealt with the people they felt responsible for."

The past few years of unusually active hurricane seasons and other global natural disasters have meant the magazine is occasionally writing about hotels and cities that currently cannot take travelers. "As we've done in the past, when there's a natural disaster or a war, we go ahead and feature them, because to not to do so would be punishing them twice," Glowczewska said. In the January issue's "Gold List," for instance, *Traveler* features several Mexican hotels closed by Hurricane Wilma. "We had the same situation last year, after the tsunami [in Indonesia]. Most of these places do

bounce back, surprisingly quickly. And that bounce back is so vital to the recovery of the economy," she added. "It may seem callous to some, because there are still houses that haven't been rebuilt, and medical facilities that need to be repaired. But there has to be this infusion of tourism dollars. The hotel industry is on the forefront of reconstruction." — **Sara James**



January's Condé Nast Traveler.

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Retailers, Vendors Split O

Continued from page one

were either vendors, suppliers or manufacturers. A large number of retailers admit that chargeback abuses claimed by vendors is a serious problem.

And if 2005 appears to have been a watershed year, 2006 might prove to be worse as both retailers and vendors head into markdown-money season. Many retailers now are focused on aggressive price promotions during the post-holiday rush, and consumers with gift cards in their pockets are expected to take full advantage of the sales. However, retailers are said to be keen on getting spring merchandise quickly onto their selling floors, and that might mean deeper discounts to get consumers to buy. But those discounts come at a price: lower margins for retailers, with many vendors expected to make up the difference.

That would help many consumers redeeming gift cards, as some consumers are expected to take advantage of the sales.

In WWD's online survey, 37 percent of retailers polled said chargeback abuses claimed by vendors were "very serious," while 47 percent said vendor claims were "somewhat serious." Sixteen percent said they were "not at all serious."

Of the retailers polled, 37 percent agreed that many retailers "truly abuse" the practice. However, 42 percent of the respondents said vendors complain about chargebacks because they are looking to "cut costs that they should, in fact, bear." Twenty-one percent of the retailers polled said vendors complain about chargeback compliance as an "excuse for inept shipping, poor product quality or other vendor responsibilities."

Retailers such as Saks Inc., Federated Department Stores, and J.C. Penney have stringent compliance requirements. Saks Inc.'s Vendor Standards Manual is 33 pages long, and includes compliance requirements ranging from apparel hangers to belt labels. Saks' electronic data interchange mapping specifications are covered in a separate, 49-page document telling vendors that "EDI is a requirement for doing business with Saks Inc." The EDI mapping specs cover label placement on shipping cartons, invoice formats and electronic purchase orders.

In simple terms, if a vendor does not comply, they are charged by the retailer. Other compliance issues that involve chargebacks include shipping time infractions and slotting fees as well as picking up the tab for advertising, among other things.

Retailers see vendor compliance polices and chargebacks as a needed tool to keep operations running as efficiently as possible, which bolsters their bottom lines. From the vendors' point of view, compliance can be a costly headache. And for smaller vendors, compliance can be a barrier to doing business.

Of the vendors surveyed by WWD, 38 percent described 2005 as the worst year for chargebacks, while 24 percent said 2004 was the worst. Thirty-two percent said chargebacks are "equally bad, all years."



Of the retailers that enforce chargebacks, Federated Department Stores was cited as the toughest by 27 percent of the vendor respondents. J.C. Penney was the second toughest enforcer with 17 percent of the vote, while Saks Inc. garnered 12 percent.

Vendors said EDI and shipping time infractions were the two top, most serious chargeback issues, which were followed by customer returns and mislabeling.

One dark area in the practice that is rarely discussed openly is chargebacks involving markdowns, which occurs when goods are put on sale and the balance is charged back to the vendor. Legal experts tend to see these types of chargebacks as "improper."

To say chargebacks is a contentious issue may be an understatement. And recently, it's grabbed more headlines.

Earlier this month, bankrupt Adamson Apparel Inc. filed a federal lawsuit against Saks Inc. alleging breach of

contract for various forms of improper chargebacks. The lawsuit said the charges for late payments, offsets and improper discounts resulted in "tens of millions of dollars in ill-gotten revenue" for Saks, and that the retailer "used the offsets and discounts as a source of extra profit in their operations." The suit was filed in U.S. District Court in Birmingham, Ala., where Saks Inc. is based.

Adamson Apparel is seeking class-action status for all vendors selling goods to Saks and due payment from Dec. 8, 1999, until a judge issues class-action certification. The plaintiff also is seeking compensatory damages, restitution and court-related costs.

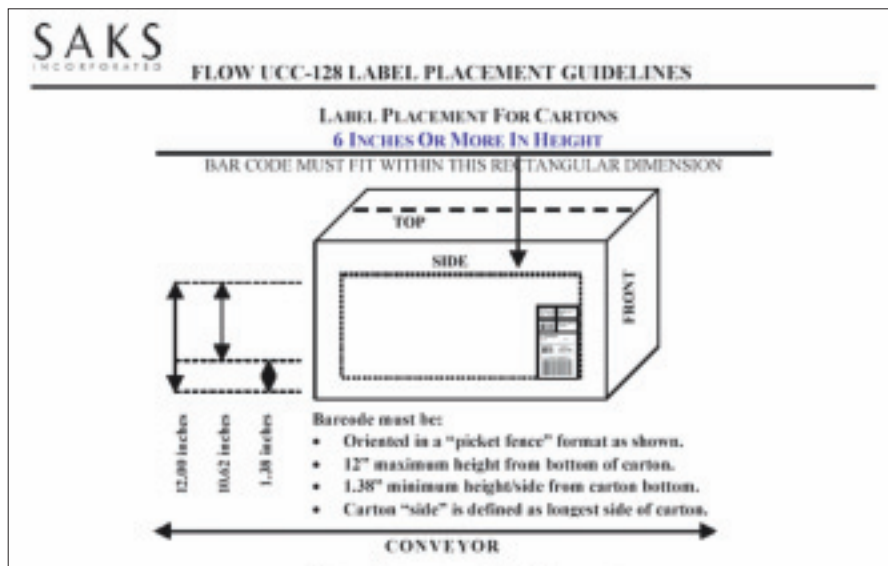
Separately, Saks is under investigation by the Securities and Exchange Commission and the U.S. Attorney's Office in Manhattan after it undertook an internal probe on excessive allowances for markdowns on unsold goods. Saks' inquiry was subsequently expanded to include chargebacks.

The Adamson lawsuit is the third of its kind this year: Saks was involved in two separate lawsuits over excessive markdown allowances and chargebacks at its Saks Fifth Avenue division. The lawsuit filed by Onward Kashiyama on markdowns has been settled and the second, by International Design Concepts, is pending.

Of course, manufacturers have been grouching for years about the enforced practice of "givebacks" after they've supposedly "sold" their goods to retailers with confirmed terms. Retailers buy from their suppliers to fill their racks and shelves. When the stores don't reach their expected profit margins, either because the goods don't catch on with consumers or the items sell at deeply discounted prices, they return to their vendors and "ask" them to share the retailers' pain.

Vendors, some say, would rather ship when and how they want and aren't thrilled about being charged for noncompliance. Besides, each retailer has its own set of requirements, and there are too many rules to track. Retailers, who each have their own logistical requirements, say they'd prefer to have no chargebacks, because noncompliance causes processing delays. The charges, they argue, merely reflect the costs to correct the problems at hand.

The practice has spawned a small industry of firms selling specialized software to help vendors meet compliance requirements and lessen the chance of a chargeback. They say the software can enable vendors to create a paper trail to help prove when certain charges are deemed improper. Despite the software programs available, the practice of chargebacks still exists, and is likely to continue. After all, from a retailer's point of view, either a vendor is in compliance or it isn't.



Labeling specifications from Saks Inc.

Over Chargebacks



Case closed. Vendors charge the process is unfair when one noncompliance can give rise to multiple charges for the same wrong. "Foul play" is their battle cry.

Comments from industry executives suggest there's very little middle ground.

"Nobody likes to be told they did something wrong," said Myron "Mike" Ullman, chairman and chief executive officer of J.C. Penney. "We're buyers, and vendors have a choice either to sell to us or not to sell to us. The amount that we charge back is what we think the cost is to fix it."

According to Ullman, communication can be an issue because oftentimes the top executives at some manufacturing firms aren't even told by their subordinates the reasons for the charges. He explained that, once the executives are told what they are being charged for and why, the problem is usually corrected.

"The chargeback is [often] less than our cost to fix it. I like to not have to charge back [a vendor]," Ullman disclosed.

Jack Mitchell, chairman and ceo of Mitchells/Richards/Marsh's, said as a smaller retailer, "we don't do a lot of chargebacks."

Mitchell explained that family members work with long-term vendors and "we have a great relationship with them due to a lot of communication. It is not a big issue for us."

Still, for vendors that sell mainly to department stores, chargebacks go hand-in-hand with corporate life. The bigger the vendor, the larger the orders and consequently the greater the headaches.

"Chargebacks haven't worsened, but it is a significant part of business. It has [in fact] become a part of how we do business," said Hal Upbin, former chairman

of Kellwood Inc.

Apparel firms targeting a well-heeled clientele seem to be better insulated from the world of chargebacks.

"Thank goodness we're in the luxury business," observed Graziano de Boni, president and ceo of Valentino Inc. "Our [goods] sell because they are what our customers want, not what the retailer is pushing down to the customer. That's where the chargeback comes from."

De Boni was referring to situations where department stores order voluminous units and then have to deal with the logistics of delivery and inventory control at the mass level. In the luxury sphere, orders even by the department stores are much smaller in scope, making them far easier to track.

And while luxury is less susceptible to a chargeback attack, the younger firms still in their infancy that sell to department stores hoping to grow may face the thinnest profit margin of all.

"I appreciate the support of Federated Department Stores, but [would also] appreciate less chargebacks," said Damon Dash, the hip-hop mogul who sold his 25 percent stake in Rocawear in September, and who is now focused on contemporary line Rachel Roy, the men's wear line Damon Dash Collection and the athletic apparel collection Team Roc.

Dash said the problem with some retailers is that they're "not amenable to negotiation, and that hurts your business plan."

He does have a solution: "I want to open stand-alone stores."

For now, some manufacturers are pushing forward with a plan to help level the playing field in the retailer/vendor relationship. The Vendors Coalition for Equitable Retailer Practices was formed in the fall.

"Its goal is to establish fairness for both sides. Some chargebacks are proper and appropriate when the goods are nonconforming," said Donald Kreindler, an attorney at the Phillips Nizer law firm involved in the spearheading of VCERP.

The coalition is in the process of conducting its own survey from a questionnaire it began sending out in October on chargeback practices, which is broken down in part into sections by retailer, sector and category.

Last month, members of VCERP had a meeting to discuss the development of position papers, the first of which it hopes to have available early in the new year.

Among the topics being discussed is the issue of when an order given by a retailer should be considered a firm purchase.

"The problem is that some retailers give orders, but practice not sending out firm purchase orders until it's very late. Most give an oral order with a delivery schedule that needs to be worked on right away to fulfill the order. Then, after some goods are produced, the retailer cancels, even though the vendor has already put its own money into the production," Kreindler said.

Another topic is claimed shortages. The attorney noted the problem comes up frequently. A recurring problem, he explained, is when retailers claim shortages or other nonconformity after the goods are no longer available, which prevents the vendor from checking out the problem or proving that there was indeed conformity after all.

Kreindler emphasized that not all retailers are alike in their practices, although he also declined to specify which ones are better than their competitors.

"Among certain retailers, there is an awareness of the imbalances that can exist and some are easing their positions, but not all retailers are doing that," he said.

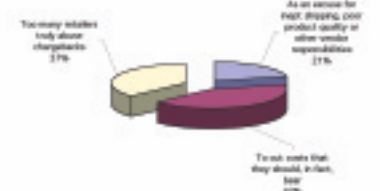
— With contributions from Nathan Weber and Steve Justice

Results From the WWD Survey

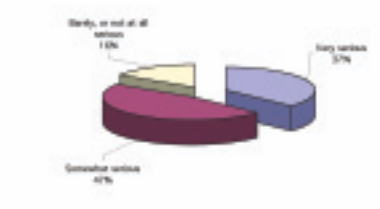
Chargebacks are fees charged to a vendor by a retailer, and relate to everything from customer returns and advertising fees to mislabeled products and incomplete orders. Over the past decade, chargebacks have become a contentious issue between retailers and vendors in the apparel industry. Privately, vendors describe chargebacks as a necessary burden of doing business with big retailers. Some vendors complain, calling chargebacks "abusive" and "unnecessary." Smaller suppliers say meeting compliance requirements to avoid chargebacks is an expensive barrier of entry for doing business. From a retailer's perspective, chargebacks are simply a way to maintain gross margins. Retailers also say chargebacks are critical to running a retail operation in the most efficient way possible. WWD asked retailers and vendors to anonymously weigh in on this important topic. Below are the survey results.

RETAILERS

Why, in your opinion, do vendors complain about chargebacks?

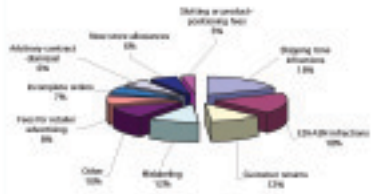


How serious are the chargeback abuses claimed by vendors?

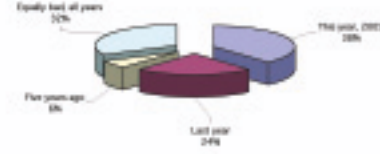


VENDORS

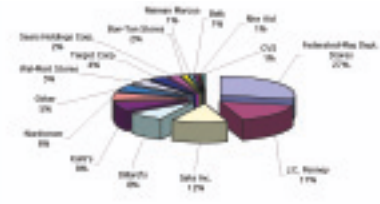
Most Serious Chargeback Issue



Worst Year for Chargebacks



Toughest Chargeback Enforcers



Methodology: This survey of online subscribers was conducted exclusively for WWD by Demographix during the third quarter of 2005. There were 98 respondents; 27 were retailers and 71 were either vendors, suppliers or manufacturers.



Australian Line to Paint the Earth Red

LONDON — Red Earth is looking to spread over the planet. Well, at least global beauty markets, with its masstige color cosmetics line.

The brand, which has been fully owned by Hong Kong-based Esprit Holdings Ltd. since 2001, has been in an international expansion mode since 2002. The brand bowed in India this month and will extend its reach next month with a U.S. launch in Ulta stores, as well as introductions in other markets.

Red Earth, created in 1989 in Australia and named for that country's landscape, features a 350-stockkeeping-unit line of color cosmetics, plus four seasonal collections, each consisting of 20 to 25 products.

"We offer affordable, yet luxurious beauty products," said Stephan Borchert, the brand's chief operating officer. He added that the line, priced from 8 pounds, or \$13.85 at

BEAUTY BEAT

current exchange, for a nail enamel, to 18 pounds, or \$31.20, for an eye shadow compact, in the U.K., is positioned at the higher end of the mass segment's price spectrum. "I believe there's a huge vacuum in this area."

Beyond price, Red Earth aims to use its sense of style to lure customers.

"We try to link our [seasonal] cosmetics collections to fashion trends," said Borchert.

The limited-edition Red Earth collections can account for up to 40 percent of the brand's annual sales, which industry sources estimate were at 50 million euros, or \$65.3 million at average exchange, last year.

Rather than investing in advertising, Red Earth pushes its products at points of sale and through in-store events.

The firm runs approximately 65 stand-alone stores predominantly in Asian countries, where China is its strongest market. Outside of Asia, however, the brand prefers to enter perfumeries and department stores.

The strategy has been particularly successful in the U.K., where Red Earth bowed in 2003. Today, the U.K.

business represents almost 28 percent of Red Earth's total turnover and, since it is being used as a test market for further European expansion, Borchert is bullish.

"The European rollout has real potential," he said. Red Earth's recent debut in some Douglas perfumeries in Germany bolstered his optimism, and he is eyeing Italy, Spain and Portugal as potential markets in the near future.

— Brid Costello

La Mer Hosts Picasso Party

BERLIN — La Mer, the Estée Lauder Cos.-owned luxury skin care brand, held a private viewing recently of the exhibit "Pablo: The Private Picasso" at the New National Gallery here.

La Mer invited selected journalists, artists, gallerists and art historians to the showing of key works, which were on loan from the Musée Picasso in Paris. The group, including 19th-century French painter Camille Pissarro's great-grandson Lionel, was guided by none other than Diana Widmaier Picasso, the granddaughter of Picasso and Marie-Therèse Walter.

The art historian and author of the recent tome, "Picasso. Art can only be Erotic," is also a friend of the house and a La Mer fan. "I especially love the serum," she said. But above all, she loves the work of Picasso. Currently compiling the catalogue *raisonné* of his sculptures, she easily offered a few private insights into the "private Picasso." For example, when shown "Nude in a Garden," a 1934 "pink period" painting of her grandmother Marie-Therèse, Picasso's gallerist refused to exhibit it on the grounds that it was too erotic.

Or, in front of another painting of her grandmother, the body-as-landscape "Reclining Nude" of 1932, Diana Widmaier Picasso recalled one of Pablo Picasso's erotic poems in which he wrote, "You are here, Marie-Therèse, my beautiful landscape."

The museum visit was followed by dinner at Borchardt's, Berlin's leading see-and-be-seen haute eatery, the "evening



A Red Earth merchandising display unit.

for art and beauty" continuing into the wee hours.

As for La Mer, the ultraprestige range has been performing "super" in cash-strapped Germany. Sales in the fiscal year ended June 30 were up 55 percent, even though distribution was scaled back 10 percent to 95 German doors, according to Claudia Sorensen, the product manager for La Mer in Germany. And at present, La Mer sales are up 25 percent over last year.

The newest La Mer product to be released in Germany, The Essence, selling at 2,100 euros, or \$2,490 at current exchange, is moving well. Some 300 pieces have been sold in 10 weeks, Sorensen reported, and there's a waiting list for the next 40 pieces, "which is as much as we could currently get," she said.

— Melissa Drier

Etoile's New Mideast Pearl

By Tina Isaac

DUBAI — In a city where everything twinkles, there is a new star in the retail firmament.

Earlier this month, some 400 guests gathered to celebrate the opening of Etoile by Jacques Garcia, the newest addition to the Etoile Group's universe. The opening of the approximately 800-square-foot space at the Mall of the Emirates here — at 4.3 million square feet, the second-largest mall in the world — was followed by a gala dinner at the Emirate Towers.

Group founder and president Ingie Chaloub, one of the region's most successful and visible female entrepreneurs, was the first to introduce European designers to the Middle East, starting with a Chanel store in Kuwait in 1983. Since then she has opened 37 multibrand stores across the region for brands such as Christian Lacroix, Valentino, Alaïa and Tod's.

"With Etoile by Jacques Garcia, we wanted to create something luxurious but modern and fashion-forward, something on the crossroads of fashion and art that would appeal to locals and international visitors alike," Chaloub said.

Interior designer Jacques Garcia decorated the curved walls with gold leaf, embellished pillars with ceiling-high resin sculptures of his own design inspired by Brancusi and hung dressing room doorways with real pearl curtains (the name "Ingie," as it happens, translates as "pearl"). A limited-edition line of Bernadaud porcelain was commissioned for the space.



Here and left: Inside Etoile by Jacques Garcia.



Guests at the gala included Burberry president Rose Marie Bravo, models Angie Everhart and Yasmin Le Bon, and designers Renaud Pellegrino and Jonathan Saunders. French actress and chanteuse Arielle Dombasle entertained guests with songs from her latest album, including "As Time Goes By" and "Besame Mucho."

Saunders noted that it was heartening to see such an eclectic range of designers on the shelves, from Dior and Valentino to Emma Cook, Frost/French and Bruns Bazaar.

"In a culture where dressing up happens not once but several times a day, there can be great opportunity for smaller designers," he said.

"In an era when there is so much minimalism in retail, this concept is extremely adapted to an Oriental market and at the same time it will appeal to visitors," observed consultant Jean Jacques Picart, who admired the accessories-as-art display designed to draw shoppers toward the clothes. He pointed out groups of women gathering in the dressing rooms, clothes in hand, adding, "There is a fairy-tale quality about the shop that makes women want to dress like a princess."

And speaking of sparkle, Chaloub's next project is to bring Chanel Joaillerie to Dubai. It will be the brand's first franchised store outside France.

The Etoile Group is privately owned and does not reveal numbers. But the city, which has risen from the desert to become perhaps the world's biggest shopping mecca, expects to see tourist numbers swell to 15 million in 2010 from six million this year. Forecasts project that by then, Dubai will account for \$7.6 billion of the United Arab Emirates' projected \$10.2 billion in retail revenues.

WWD West

'Cute' as a Retail Strategy

By Laura Cassidy

SEATTLE — If there is an aesthetic that tethers the trio of stores on downtown's Second Avenue called Fancy, Schmancy and Pants, it's cuteness.

But the cuteness employed at the "trilogy of awesome," as the stores collectively dub themselves, runs deeper than the stock of collectible toys, Pop Art-inspired accessories, sweet lacy knickers and generally artist-made, anticorporate goods. What makes this cuteness noteworthy is the friends-and-family plan employed to establish it on an otherwise completely uncute block of downtown.

When Sally Brock started working at Great Jones Home in 2001, the retailer was the only shop on the stretch. Downtown had undergone a rapid redevelopment to become a retail and cultural heartbeat in the city. Rents on nearly every other block prevented artists such as Brock from operating storefronts.

But Second Avenue was a pocket known for its homeless population and drug dealers. Except for a family-owned, landmark concert hall, the Moore Theater, neighboring businesses on the desolate block were a seedy but popular dive bar and a seedier parking lot.

So Brock, an emerging jewelry designer and metal-smith who had come to Seattle from Oklahoma three years before, pounced when rental space became available.

In 2002, she opened Fancy at 1932 Second Avenue, named after her line of chic, neo-Dada silver jewelry. She also offered the work of other artists, many of them friends from the Seattle arts scene.

Managing Great Jones Home and tending Fancy on her days off, Brock benefited from the benevolence of the Moore family, who own property around their regal theater. So when another space opened up a few doors down at 1930 Second Avenue, Brock convinced Kristen Rask, then a vendor of artful rings at Fancy, to open a store and call it Schmancy.



Schmancy specializes in collectible toys.

Rask's clever humor is evident in her store's focus: conceptual, collectible toys. Emotionally damaged stuffed creatures from the Asylum come with little case histories and sell for around \$45. Small action figures based on old-school hip-hop characters and created by Oakland, Calif.-based Warning Label Design go for \$5.95 each.

This fall, Brock opened yet another door, at 1914 Second Avenue, and named it Pants, which mainly sells a range of quirky, fun intimate apparel. "Alone again, naturally," reads one Seattle designer's T-shirt priced at \$34, echoing the sadly sweet predicament of songwriter Gilbert O'Sullivan.

Men's items are nostalgic and kitschy, too. A pair of



Accessories store Fancy was the first of the three to open.

PHOTOS BY BRIAN SMALE

woodgrain-patterned sport briefs by the Vancouver company Ginch Gonch go for \$32.

At Pants, local artist Gretchen Bennett stenciled a bright green abstract nature design high on the walls above the racks of sporty lingerie.

In fact, all three small stores are literally crowded with cuteness. Though there is scarcely room, animal-print couches are pushed under display tables at Fancy as if a sleep-over might happen at any moment. Schmancy's colorful shelves are packed and nails on the wall reveal ad hoc displays, knitted creatures or cartoon-inspired artwork.

The trio's fun, maximalist motif stands out among the refined concepts at Great Jones Home across the street and the neatly ordered bigger name brands such as DSquared at Ian, which opened around the time of Brock's first door.

Brock projected revenues for the three shops, with their combined space of about 1,200 square feet, will surpass \$200,000, or about \$200 per square foot. By contrast, retailers in the area average sales per square foot of about \$325.

Still, the attention the three shops attracts in the press and among locals and tourists has helped transform this area of downtown. Brock and Rask already have their sights on expanding to a new city with a single store under the united banner Fancy Schmancy Pants.



The third, Pants, focuses on intimate apparel.

Quen Grows by Staying Constant

By Joanna Ramey

SAN FRANCISCO — In the wedding scene of the recently released movie "In the Mix," R&B singer Usher's co-star Emmanuelle Chriqui appears in a strapless, white silk gown with a full skirt — a flattering confection Bay Area fashion enthusiasts may recognize as one of local designer Colleen Quen's creations.

Quen calls the gown "Georgia O'Keefe" because she was inspired by the famous painter in making the dress — part of her growing permanent collection of designs she never intends to drop. Departing from industry practice, instead of creating a new line of gowns and cocktail dresses each season that are supplanted by the next crop, Quen keeps her designs around.

It's a strategy seemingly at odds with Quen's interest in broadening her collection's appeal and opening salons in Paris and New York. Quen, 40, a veteran local sportswear designer who worked for labels like Eileen West, struck out on her own six years ago. She sells only 100 garments a year, including one-of-a-kind gowns for clients.

"It's a personal business. I have more control. I can be more creative and create my own path," said Quen, who views her designs as architectural sculpture with feminine lightness. Last week, she learned she is one of three finalists to be Fashion Group International's 2006 Women's Ready to Wear Designer, part of its Rising Star Awards, to be given Jan. 26 in New York.

Quen's creations, which cost \$1,000 to \$2,500 for cocktail dresses and \$2,500 to \$35,000 for evening gowns, have quickly garnered a local following among women in the arts, as well as executives, socialites, debutantes and brides. "In the Mix" is the designer's first film credit; actress Geena Davis, model Tyra Banks and British film producer Julia Verdin own Quen designs.

San Francisco Asian Art Museum director Emily Sano, ballet general director Lesley Koenig and Pamela Rosenberg, general director of the city's opera who's

soon to join the Berlin Philharmonic, own Quen designs, as does Cheryl Baxter, president of the Opera Guild.

Patricia Sprincin, who oversees San Francisco Symphony's volunteers, has 10 Quen creations, including a Georgia O'Keefe dress in bright orange satin. "Her gowns are fitted beautifully. They are such a statement," said Sprincin, who also favors Carmen Marc Valvo for evening and wears a lot of Calvin Klein during the day.

Quen creations make appearances in Alonzo King's LINES Ballet, the contemporary dance company based here. For King's high-energy Moroccan ballet, which is touring the U.S. and Europe, Quen fashioned squiggly lavender tutus out of organza shaped by boning at the hemline for the ballerinas and flowing knee-length camel-colored culottes for the shirtless male dancers.

Just over five feet tall, Quen parts her long black wavy hair down the middle. On a recent visit to her new salon, she was wearing a black ribbed turtleneck and a long gray skirt of stretchy wool gabardine covered in rows of black tabs. Its design relates to Quen's floor-length Chinese Empress evening coat, introduced this year, which is cloaked in rows of shimmering gold silk ribbon tabs. The coat was inspired by the jewelry included in traditional Chinese trousseaux.

While such nods to her heritage pop up in her designs, Quen — a third-generation Bay Area resident — said her main influence is nature, such as the calla lilies that are abundant in Golden Gate Park during the fall and winter. The flower's seductive trumpet shape is echoed in long-sleeved openings in Quen's evening coats.

Her signature design element is a flared, four-corner, stand-up collar that frames the décolletage and rises slightly behind the head like a futuristic tiger lily blossom, which is its inspiration. "When you look from the back, there's movement," she said.

Quen has used the collar in evening and wedding gowns and in her putty-colored collection of travel



Actress Emmanuelle Chriqui, Usher's co-star in "In the Mix," in a strapless confection by Colleen Quen.

A spring design by Quen.

dresses named after cities. Banks recently wore Quen's "Paris" dress with the collar on her talk show.

"Colleen's attention to detail and the structure are wonderful. I love the colors," said Banks' stylist, Leisel Quamie, before a Quen fashion show in August during San Francisco Fashion Week.

Quen makes her patterns by hand and has two in-house seamstresses. She shares her salon and studio with her husband, Rick Lee, an industrial designer, whose furniture is influenced by Italian modernists and is sold in home furnishing boutiques like Sublime in New York's SoHo. The couple's airy, two-story home in a former 1908 laundry in San Francisco's SOMA (South of Market Street) neighborhood has Lee's furniture grouped with Quen's gowns on mannequins.

"We wanted to create an ambience of design," Quen said.

Quen and Lee are now turning their sights outside their studio to Heron Street, where there's a leather apparel and whip manufacturer on the corner and a youth hostel across the street. They recently commissioned a group of local graffiti artists to cover a brick wall at the end of the dead-end street. To them, it's all a blank canvas.

"I would love to set up a runway in front and have a fashion show," Quen said.

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