

As seen in

CALIFORNIA Apparel News

THE VOICE OF THE INDUSTRY FOR 67 YEARS

\$3.50 VOLUME 67, NUMBER 12 MARCH 18-24, 2011

TRADE SHOW REPORT

Majors Market Builds on Strong Sales

Immediate deliveries and '70 styles are key.

By Andrew Asch, Erin Barajas

Stronger business and good news from the department-store sector punctuated the **Majors Market**, held April 4-6 at the **California Market Center** in Los Angeles. Showrooms reported brisk traffic and upbeat buyers in search of goods spanning *Immediates* through Fall and Holiday offerings.

Heavily attended trend presentations from **Directives West** and the **Barbara Fields Buying Office** that emphasized proven winners and new trends—chiefly the return to the '70s with prairie bohemian staples and wide-leg denim—added to the sense of momentum at **Majors Market**.

The market caters to chain store and department-store buyers, and many in that retail channel are showing strong signs of growth. Buyers from **Kmart**, **JCPenney**, **Macy's**, **Wet Seal**, **Charlotte Russe**, **PacSun**, **Target**, **Kohl's**, **Tilly's**, **Sears**, **Dillard's**, **Forever 21**, **Styles 4 Less**, **Rue 21**, **Gordmans**, **Gabriel Brothers**, **Charming Shoppes**, **National Stores**, **Buckle** and **Torrid** shopped the show, according to the California Market Center.

Nordstrom Inc. enjoyed good fourth-quarter 2010 sales, an increase of 6.7 percent compared with the same time in the previous year. For **Macy's Inc.**, same-store sales increased 4.3 percent for its fourth quarter. Macy's Chairman Terry J. Lundgren said the results showed a "culture of growth" at his company.

Good fourth-quarter results translated into a market that was more robust than the previous year, according to California Market Center showroom owners participating in the market.

Michael Gae of the **Rep Et Trois** showroom noticed the majors brought large delegations to the show, unlike last April, when these retailers



STRIPES & STUFF: Love Notes earned orders with its collection of vintage Missoni-inspired stripes in a very '70s color palette of rust, mustard, cream and oxblood.



AT ONCE: Alison Budow said buyers were ordering *Immediates* during the **Majors Market**.

only sent their top merchandising executives to the market, he said.

Stronger but still cautious

Greater confidence did not mean that majors buyers were willing to gamble on ordering merchandise many months out, said Alison Budow, co-owner of **Budow Sales**. "Everyone is ordering 5/30 delivery," she said. *Immediate deliveries* indicate buyers prefer to spend close to the season rather than buy merchandise that will be on shop floors in more than six months.

Irene Deak, vice president of merchandising and design for **Pink Angel**, a New York-based tween and kids' line, said buyers were split between those looking for *Immediates* and those ready to buy Fall. "Half [of our buyers] are still holding back; the other half are more willing to look to the future and take a position,"

Deak said. Regardless, buys were item-driven as retailers looked to create a mix of staples and trendier pieces. "Anything with crochet or in a poncho silhouette is doing very well for us," Deak said.

Carlos Gomez, owner of the **Love Notes** juniors line and **Khaotik Bleu Inc.**, said he was pleased with the market but noted that price and delivery were key to landing orders. "They [buyers] know prices have gone up, but they don't want to hear it," he said.

The company, which works on an eight-week-turnaround model and relies mainly on domestic production to do so, increased its prices approximately 10 percent for the Fall 2011 season because of increasing production costs. Gomez sought to offset the soaring cost of cotton by opting for more cotton blends, but prices

► **Majors Market** page 2

Majors Market *Continued from page 1*

for some tops and dresses were up \$1 to \$1.50. Denim was harder hit, with prices increasing almost \$3 per pair of jeans.

Still, on-trend items and a brisk turnaround on orders proved enticing for department stores and specialty stores looking to maintain momentum, he said.

The fast turn was crucial to retailers such as Scott Manson of **Hamrick's Inc.**, a 20-store chain based in Gaffney, S.C. He said Los Angeles is becoming known as a place that can manufacture quickly. "You don't want to be caught with a trend that does not work," he said. He reported the "Made in America" label also is important to his customers.

Budow estimated her sales for the market were 20 percent greater than the April 2010 Majors Market. However, greater success did not mean buyers were on an unrestricted spending spree, said Deke Jamieson, executive vice president of marketing and licensing for Los Angeles-based denim label **YMI**.

"It's all based on performance. No one will buy unless [a label] is performing," Jamieson said.



THE PERFORMANCE: David Vered of YMI, right, and Deke Jamieson, an executive vice president of the denim label, agreed that majors buyers had more money but were still selective.

Launch pad

Andrew and Barbara Strasmore, founders of the **Fire** line of juniors apparel, used the Majors Market as the platform for their West Coast debut of **Band of Gypsies**, their new juniors/young contemporary brand of woven

tops, jackets, dresses and skirts. The collection, which wholesales for \$9.50 to \$15.50, hits the '70s trend hard, with a wide range of ditsy-print dresses and long, sheer dusters in floral prints and tunic shapes. "Our take is a pretty, vintage, feminine take on 'boho,'" said Barbara Strasmore, who designs the collection. "This is the perfect time to introduce the brand. We fit right in." The collection, which launched for Fall 2011, has already been scooped up by Nordstrom and the online retailer **ASOS**.

New Fall 2011 fashion looks will convince juniors to open their wallets, said Macy's Juniors Fashion Director Adam E. Moon.

"The proliferation of soft and feminine '70s-inspired prints and silhouettes looks fresh and new, definitely offering an exciting trend for the fall season," he wrote in an email.

"Also, the vintage varsity and prep-school trend is spot on for Back-to-School. The prints, graphics and overall mood have a very Ali MacGraw à la 'Love Story' feel, all of which work perfectly back to new active and fleece fabrications." ●