



Pop music
Elin Palmer's solo muse calls her to Nashville >>>

LifeSTYLE

Ostrom on TV: Get the full Monty with "Python-a-thon" >>120 Theater: "The Sunset Limited," "Grease" >> 60, 120

BornFit >

When Colorado natives Lisa Welch and Julie Hill couldn't find clothes to match their active lifestyles during their pregnancies, they created their own line of yoga, shorts, pants, skirts and jackets to wear while they ran, practiced yoga and played tennis. The popularity of BornFit led to their creating a line of "reduced fit" styles for non-pregnant women. Photo by Jeff Hirsch



Emerging talent. Ten fashion labels are tailoring a following and building the Rocky Mountains reputation for style innovation.

By Suzanne S. Brown The Denver Post

The fashion industry in Colorado once was mostly about snow and peeling fur. No snow, no fur. From fine jewelry and upscale kids clothes to custom-sufactured leather bags and organic cotton shirts, the range of fashion products and companies has grown. Many of the companies are small and have been in business five years or less. Ten such labels and two retailers will be recognized Oct. 25 when Fashion Group International of Denver hosts its biannual Rising Star contest to designers that have been in business five years or less.

While none of these Colorado labels threatens to knock Macys, J.Crew or Donna Karan off their fashion pedestals, they're earning a following, even in a tough economy. They're doing it through careful targeting of their market and by using a variety of means to reach their customers, including online sales and trunk shows.

Designs on Colorado



A DVLV
Rustin Coburn and Noah Price have taken DVLV from a Denver firm creating original artwork to a Denver-based company that sells its collections for men, women and children across 15 countries and in Canada and Europe. Photo by Lisa Allen



LABELS
After spending years creating women's and kids' clothing for such retailers as Nordstrom, Rustin Coburn followed her passion and began designing an upscale children's wear collection. Photo by Jeff Hirsch

sponsoring athletes, and using blogging and social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter.

"The brand really prospered at the intersection of the design field here in Colorado," says Elaine Martini, executive director of the Colorado Council of the Arts, a division of the state's economic development office. She was a judge in the Rising Star competition.

STARS >>>



More inside The diversity of Colorado design is represented in the new Rising Star awards. Photo by Alvin Sanders/Silverton. Below: recycled wood scarf.

Denver Couture >

A true Colorado creation, in Paris or Denver, is custom-made and hand-stitched, and that's the case with Manon de Haan's made-to-measure blue jeans and expertly tailored handbags. The bags are in leather, herringbone and canvas and feature built-in hardware and zipper straps. Photo by Aron Ward



Andrea Li >

A self-taught designer, Li handcrafts each of her jewelry designs using semiprecious stones and metals. Design at right is smoky topaz and green tourmaline. See Patrick King Studios



Simooch

Stephanie Oltmann has participated in a number of Denver design competitions, earning a following for her girly dresses and feminine coats. This style was from her.



Rising Star Awards

The Rising Star Awards, presented by Fashion Group International of Denver, will be held from 4-6 p.m. Oct. 25 at the Metropolitan Hotel in Westminster. 10:30 p.m. Reception. All reception and silent auction will be followed by a awards program and fashion show. Tickets start at \$50 for general admission. Tickets for general admission will be used for fashion student scholarship and educational outreach programs. Reservations at hafelecolorado.com/rising_star; event code: risingstar or call 720-541-9496.

A dozen to watch

- Design:** Lisa Welch and Julie Hill, bornfit.com
- Designer:** Manon de Haan, manondehaan.com
- Outdoor/Activewear:** Photo by Stephanie Hill, stephaniehill.com
- Urban/Activewear:** Rustin Coburn and Noah Price, dvlv.com
- Children's wear:** Rustin Coburn and Noah Price, dvlv.com
- Accessories:** Stephanie Oltmann, simooch.com
- Men:** Rustin Coburn and Noah Price, dvlv.com
- Retail Winner:** Manon de Haan, manondehaan.com
- Interior Design Winner:** Stephanie Hill, stephaniehill.com

STARS: Labels stay in state for the lifestyle

FROM ID

"There's a unique aesthetic that merges the Western theme with what's hip and trendy. Colorado has a high concentration of creative designers, and that's extending to fashion design." Another judge, Jim Stevens, owner of The Current District, was impressed with the variety of fashion companies starting up. "Some seem to be shrewdly at the top of their game on how to bring their goods to market. They're thinking through the reaction retailers might have to them."

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So why aren't the companies seeking their fame and fortune in New York or Los Angeles, with much larger fashion industries? "The quality of life here is attractive," she says, and the ability to source materials and manufacture them has improved, as the companies are staying in Colorado.

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