

Oxford Launching Contemporary Line

By Brenner Thomas

ONCE RELEGATED TO THE CLOSETS OF well-heeled but conservative executives, American suit manufacturer Oxford Clothes will test the elasticity of its brand next spring with the launch of 1220, a collection of tailored clothing, furnishings and key sportswear items squarely aimed at a younger, more contemporary consumer.

"There are two opportunities in the luxury business today: the affluent, classic customer who wants traditional looks and rich fabrics, and the younger guy who dresses more casually but still wants to look refined," said Oxford president Mike Cohen. "This new collection is for that guy."

The collection is named for the address of the brand's Chicago factory and espouses what Cohen calls "iconic American style." Suits, cut in casual fabrications such as linen and cotton, will feature bold patterns, slubby textures, summer plaids and soft construction. "This is about a new dress code for the modern American guy," Cohen said.

The line will include dress furnishings as well as a number of firsts for Oxford, such as eyewear, denim and casual footwear, the last of which will likely be produced by Keds.

Off-the-rack suits will retail for between \$2,000 and \$3,000, although this is a lower price point than the primary label — a move the company hopes will help the line gain acceptance in contemporary, fashion-oriented specialty stores. Classic Oxford suits start at \$4,000.

"This expands Oxford's persona as an aspirational brand, allowing younger, rising affluent customers to experience our clothes," said Joe Blair, president of Individualized Apparel Group, Oxford's parent company.

The new collection is part of a larger restructuring at Oxford. Once under one label, the brand will now be split into two: 1220 and Oxford Highest Quality. The latter, similar to the brand's classic label, will focus on traditional, high-end tailored clothing featuring refined piece goods, noble fibers and improved construction.

Highest Quality, with suits starting at \$4,000, will showcase fine worsteds and cashmere blends in the traditional, boardroom-friendly fabrics for which Oxford is best known.

The company also upgraded the suit's make so patterns "match" at the gorge and shoulders, a signature of sartorial quality.

Included in the Highest Quality collection will be dress furnishings, hosiery, footwear and jewelry.



The two-label system is an evolution of the collection concept — a grouping of more-forward suit styles — that Oxford launched last year. While that collection addressed the needs of Oxford's more contemporary customer, Cohen said the concept needed to be further separated from the core business both in terms of branding and price.

"This new structure allows us to straddle both ends of the spectrum," Cohen added.

Debuting at Pitti Uomo in June, Highest Quality and 1220 mark the next step in Oxford's evolution from manufacturer to lifestyle brand — a move that will be supported by five additional stores, slated to bow by the end of 2011. The company currently operates one store in New York City.

It's a strategy being adopted companywide. A number of IAG's brands, including shirtmaker Gitman Brothers and suit label H. Freeman, have made or are plotting moves into contemporary market, according to Blair.

DIFFA Dallas Hosts 20th Runway Benefit

By Holly Haber

DALLAS — Neither rain nor thriftnor flu dampened the mood as DIFFA Dallas presented its 20th annual runway performance and auction of refashioned denim to benefit AIDS service organizations.

About 1,500 guests braved a downpour May 2 to attend the gala at the Hilton Anatole Hotel. Dallas bills itself as the largest chapter of the Design Industries Foundation Fighting AIDS.

"There's a lot of people here tonight. Don't panic, I brought over 2,000 doses of Tamiflu with me," joked DIFFA chairman Gary Tigges. "As you can imagine, fund-raising this year has not been an easy task. We are especially humbled to see you here tonight."

Themed "Utopia," a reference to an idyllic world without AIDS, the show featured 110 retooled Arizona-brand jackets in an exuberant production that affirmed its history of celebrating life and love. Ballet dancers in classic blush corsets and tulle skirts, a DayGlo clad acrobat dangling from ribbons and characters in giant masks shared a shifting psychedelic backdrop with the parade of jackets serenaded by retro pop hits by the likes of the Beatles, Boy George and Donna Summer.

Revenues were expected to be about equal to last year's gross of \$800,000 to \$1 million when combined with additional fund-raisers planned



Ruffled denim bolero by Tadashi Shoji.

through June, said event co-chairman Mark Stafford. Last year, DIFFA Dallas gave out \$540,000 in grants to 18 area organizations that help people living with AIDS, he noted.

"We hope to do that much or more this year in these difficult times, so we are raising money before and after the show," Stafford said.

As is customary, eight jackets were offered with luxury goods to boost bids. Tops this year was \$20,000 for a cutaway brocade coat by Dallas designer Abi Ferrin bundled with \$50,000 of dental veneers, a \$15,000 amethyst and diamond ring by Dallas jeweler Marc Arbadji, a \$5,000 shopping spree at Barneys New York and a tea party at Carolina Herrera with eight \$500 gift cards. Jackets in the silent auction sold for \$200 to \$3,800.

Most designers kept the jacket's original shape and tricked it up with paint, jewels, appliqué, leather, silk, metal or fur. Some remade them into dresses, coats and even sculpture. Designers included Emma Watson, Alberto Makali, Kenneth Cole, Marc Bouwer, Adrienne Landau, David Meister, Lela Rose, Simon Doonan, George Sharp for St. John Knits and Geoffrey Henning, who designed two, including the finale olive silk velvet gown trimmed with Siberian fox collar and cuffs.

MEMO PAD

LESS FREQUENCY: I-D, the edgy London-based style title, will reduce its frequency to six issues a year from 11 in response to the current economic climate. "We thought the best way of keeping the product strong was to bring out three issues a season," said Terry Jones, who is also the title's creative director and editor in chief. "That way we can retain the quality of photography... We didn't want to do what other magazines have done, such as drop the quality of the paper. In order to keep going in the current climate, we've made the decision to do six issues a year."

The next issue, June, will mark the magazine's 300th. The title then will publish its August issue on July 9, to fulfill prebooked advertising pages. From September it will then publish six issues a year, with the winter and summer ones staying on newsstands for around four months. Jones said the title will be using its new schedule to develop its Web site, which will relaunch during the summer. "I don't believe that print can be substituted [by the Internet]," said Jones. "I have ideas about the way i-D can use the Web and have the same impact as we do with print." — Nina Jones

STILL ROCKIN': After shows in London and New York, Fashion Rocks soon will make its debut in Rio. Marc Jacobs and Versace have signed on as the first international fashion brands to participate and Mariah Carey is set to perform. Officially called Oi Fashion Rocks (thanks to sponsor Oi, a Brazilian telecom company), the two-day event will begin Oct. 23 with a charity dinner at the Copacabana Palace, hosted by Brazilian Vogue, followed the next day by the main event, which will take place at a specially built, 6,000-seat structure at the Jockey Club of Rio de Janeiro. "We are going to feature four local designers and four international designers," said creative director Jason Herbert, who also worked on the show in London. He added that Christian Lamb, Madonna's stage director, has signed on, and KCD will produce fashion segments and handle international press. — Amy Wicks

ANNA, UNFAZED: Anna Wintour was just getting warmed up Tuesday night in front of a sold-out audience at the 92 Street Y when PETA attempted to take over. Yelling "Anna Wintour, Fur Shame," a handful of protestors burst in before being forced to the exits. A nonplussed Wintour, who has been through this a few times before, then picked up where she left off. "As I was saying, fashion means a lot of different things to a lot of different people," she said. "Vogue is there to report on the fashion industry. Fur is part of fashion and we will continue to report on it as long as that is the case." The audience applauded.

Wintour spoke with Loewe Corp. co-chairman Jonathan Tisch on

everything from her favorite Vogue cover (it was her first, with model Michaela Bercu, wearing Guess jeans and a Christian Lacroix T-shirt), to who she'd like to have at her next dinner party (U.N. Ambassador Susan Rice) to putting Michelle Obama on the cover. She also



PHOTO BY JONCE CULLEN/RENO STREET

discussed the economic downturn and how it's playing out in the pages of Vogue. "We are being as responsible as we can be about expenses," she said, adding there has been no pressure from above to change anything. "It's more about a readjustment," she said. "I don't think Vogue should turn into 'Recession Weekly,'" but she added that during run-throughs, she now inspects the price tags of every outfit. "Everyone is welcoming a certain sense of reality," she noted.

Wintour said she's been working with Mayor Michael Bloomberg on a plan to get customers back into stores. She wouldn't divulge details, only adding it will be unveiled next week.

Wintour said editors are "in deep discussions" about Vogue's future online, and breaking vogue.com away from Style.com, which will happen sometime next year. Wintour has asked some of her regular writers, including André Leon Talley, to contribute online. She likes the fact that Talley, as well as Hamish Bowles, Sally Singer and Grace Coddington, are part of a "star system" at Vogue. "I don't want doormats," Wintour noted. "I want someone who will disagree with me."

And speaking of stars of a different kind, Wintour talked about the Met gala and the theme, "The Model as Muse." Does this mean Vogue will feature more models on future covers? "Well, tomorrow is another day," she said. "But we certainly do have a model tied to the next issue, yes." A spokesman later added there is an upcoming "model" cover in the offing but it's not June; that issue will feature Cameron Diaz on the cover. — A.W.

JULIA FOR JIL: A just-posted YouTube video revealed the new face of Jil Sander's ad campaign for Jil, the house's latest fragrance — "It" girl and Pop magazine art director Julia Restoin-Roitfeld. The brunette daughter of Paris Vogue editor in chief Carine Roitfeld appears in a minute-and-a-half backstage clip where she smuses about how "proud and flattered" she is to represent the new generation Jil Sander woman. "I like this fragrance because it's strong at first but then evaporates, becoming lighter," the 28-year-old Restoin-Roitfeld says in the clip. Both the video and the ad campaign were shot by photographer Jan Welters in Paris, inspired by the perfume's graphic bottle. The fragrance is produced by Coty Inc. A Jil Sander spokesperson declined to elaborate, but said Jil will hit store counters in September, preceded by events in Munich and Milan in June and July, respectively. — Chiara Hughes