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Trade Show Report

Premium Trade Show Class Debuts

By Erin Barajas
MANUFACTURING EDITOR

Exhibitors focused on the positives at the inaugural **Class** trade show, which debuted March 1-3 at the **Santa Monica Civic Auditorium** with a premium-denim and contemporary focus.

Organized by showroom owner and boutique trade show producer Jason Bates, Class earned good reviews for its intimate vibe, brand offerings and services, which included a complimentary breakfast and lunch, buyer accommodations at the posh **Viceroy Santa Monica Hotel**, spa services, and yoga classes. More than 100 brands—including **WESC**, **Diesel**, **Quiksilver**, **Apolis Activision**, **Ever**, **Cassette**, **Matte Black**, **Atwater**, **Linda Loudermilk**, **Nudie Jeans** and **Orthodox**—were represented.

"Overall, the Class team did a great job," said Don Zuidema, co-owner of **LASC** in Los Angeles. "The venue itself was good; the vibe and energy of the show was great. It was a relaxing atmosphere and a comfortable show where you could get work done. And the buyers and brands that they were able to get

there and to support the show spoke well of [Class]," he said.

Brands were arranged under tents outside the auditorium, in a small sun-filled room and in a larger hall. Booths and signage were minimal, and two outdoor patio areas encouraged smoke breaks and socializing. A bevy of dogs kept the atmosphere friendly and casual. "This is Los Angeles. We should be outdoors," Bates said. "You can't do this anywhere else."

While most exhibitors said the buyers they saw were strong, their main critique was that they wished there had been more of them.

Class flew buyers from out-of-state and international stores, including Seattle's **Ian** and **Blackbird**; Japan's **Time Concepts**; Portland, Ore.-based **Blake**; **Chrome** and **M2M Jeans** from Texas; **NEXT** from Cleveland; and Scottsdale, Ariz.-based **42 Saint** and **The Hub**. California-based stores represented at the show included **The Vault**, **Villains**, **The Closet**, **Lisa Kline**, **Macy's West**, **M. Fredric**, **Kitson Men**, **Secret Service**, **Fred Segal**, **American Rag**, **Blue Bee** and **LASC**. In total, Bates reported approximately 200 buyers

shopped the show. Before the show, buyer attendance was expected to reach 600.

"The timing is challenging," said Steve Ellingson, vice president of sales for Quiksilver's women's line. "If it is going to be an alternative to **MAGIC [Marketplace]**, this show should be much closer [to MAGIC's mid-February dates]." Still, he said, the venue, which straddles the beach and the city, proved an ideal backdrop for Quiksilver's new contemporary line. Ellingson, who stopped short of saying Class will become a mainstay for Southern California brands or buyers, said, "The show had positive vibrations and an interesting dynamic that is good for our industry."



CLASS PRESIDENT: The man of the hour, Jason Bates, worked to give buyers the Los Angeles experience: sun, sand and a laid-back atmosphere.

Several exhibitors echoed his sentiments—good and bad—adding that with Class falling at the tail end of menswear's Fall 2008 selling period, most buyers have already promised their dollars elsewhere.

"The retailers' budget is gone," said Ian Gant, national sales manager for **Subscript**, a **Triple Five Soul** brand. If they have any open dollars, he said, they are writing notes but not leaving paper. "They are going home to crunch some numbers," he said.

Antonio Barragan, a buyer for London-based **Poison Angel**, said, "A new show like Class, in order to be a success, should piggyback the established shows capitalizing on all the buyers already in town for [**Designers and Agents**] and the others. If I didn't live in Los Angeles, I would have been hard-pressed to attend because of the bizarre timing."

Bates acknowledged the timing of the debut show was less than ideal but said it laid the groundwork for a stronger show come Aug. 18-20. "Timing was hard this first time around, but we executed a lot of things well," he said. "The lighting was good; the food and layout were excellent. The buyer mix was impeccable. There weren't a ton of them, but the ones that came were the right ones. This show was about getting the word out, getting publicity and building awareness to grow Class."

The Class show in August will fall six days before the deluge of Las Vegas shows, which include the **Project Global Trade Show**, **Pooltradeshaw** and the **MAGIC Marketplace**. "The August show will be a lot more active," Bates said. "We'll get some of that early energy."

Several brands made their debut at Class. Among them was **Rockabilly**, a new premium-denim line out of Los Angeles that focuses on selvedge denim and high-end touches. **Woven**, a new line of knits and wovens for men and women from designer Richard Yu, also bowed at Class. The line, which manufactures versatile fashion T-shirts and basics in Los Angeles, will introduce new styles every month. Key pieces include slim, screen-printed T-shirts, screen-printed wool-blend scarves, military-inspired outerwear and layering pieces for men and women. Woven sells at better boutiques, including **The Closet** and **Parasuco**.



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AGENDA

9:30-10:00 a.m.
Registration and tabletops open

10:00 - 11:00 a.m. KEYNOTE TECHNOLOGY PRESENTATION

PLM Squared: Product Lifecycle Management Powers Private Label Merchandise. Presented By: Paula Rosenblum, Managing Partner, Retail Systems Research LLC

11:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

- Leading West Coast Fashion Brands Streamline Supply Chain and Accelerate Time to Market. Presented By Computer Generated Solutions
- Transform Your Business with Integrated PLM and Global Sourcing Solutions. Presented By NGC
- Best Practices in Product Lifecycle Management: A Case Study. Presented By Centric Software

12:00-1:00 p.m.
Lunch

1:00-1:30 p.m.

- Are You Disappointing Your Customers? Fixing the Broken Process Between Assortment Planning and Replenishment. Presented By Lawson
- Think Big, Start Small, Scale Fast: Strategies for PLM Success. Presented By ENOVIA
- From Tech Pack to Final Sample – Cost: \$38, Time: 2 days. Presented By TUKATECH

2:00-2:30 p.m.

- Leading West Coast Fashion Brands Streamline Supply Chain and Accelerate Time to Market. Presented By Computer Generated Solutions
- Product Lifecycle Management – ON Time, ON Budget, ON Track. Presented By Yunique Solutions
- How Apparel Companies Can Leverage Technology for Increased Visibility and Supply Chain Optimization. Presented By ASI

3:00-3:30 p.m.

- The Complete Solution for Color Lifecycle Management. Presented By Datacolor
- Why Is PLM Gaining Momentum with Leading Companies in the Fashion Industry? Presented By PTC
- Get Board From Your Graphics? Presented By Lectra

4:00-4:30 p.m.

- The Four Cornerstones of a Successful PLM Implementation. Presented By Freeborders Inc.
- Product Development for a Vertically Integrated Manufacturer and Retailer: Using Technology to Grow. Presented By American Apparel & Microsoft
- Mastering Inventory Management to More Effectively Manage Your Fashion Business. Presented by Pebblestone

4:30-6:00 p.m.
Reception

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