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## Class Makes Case for New Trade Show

Premium-denim and designer trade show **Class** debuts March 1-3 in Santa Monica, Calif.—and despite arriving amid a crowded trade-show calendar, Class founder and director Jason Bates promised his show would be a breath of fresh air.

Class will offer a chance for retailers to see more than 100 top brands in the easygoing atmosphere of the **Santa Monica Civic Auditorium**, located a few minutes away from one of Southern California's most-popular beaches.

The trade event also might feel like a spa where retailers can get massages, take yoga classes and eat organic food. For Southern California retailers, the show could eventually mean cutting travel costs to Las Vegas or New York City, Bates said.

Bates also owns the **Derelict Showroom** in the **Cooper Design Space** in downtown Los Angeles and has been producing **Coconuts & Bananas**, a regional trade show in Hawaii, since 2004.

Although many of the more than 600 retailers expected to shop Class will be Southern Californians, Bates said that he and his silent partners spent \$200,000 to bring East Coast and international retailers to the show.

Scheduled exhibitors include fashion labels **Diesel**, **Ted Baker**, **Triple 5 Soul**, **Ever**, **Linda Loudermilk**, **Idol Radec** and **Kings of Glory**. Bates estimated that Class will offer 60 percent menswear and 40 percent womenswear. Also included will be homewares, footwear, jewelry and gifts.

Exhibitors will be spending \$4,000 for a 10 X 10 booth to \$16,000 for a 10 X 40 booth. Bates felt confident enough about Class' success that he's already scheduled the next show for Aug. 18-20 at the Santa Monica Civic Auditorium.

### Crowded schedule

The debut of Class falls shortly after the Feb. 13-15 run of the Las Vegas edition of the **Project Global Trade Show**, one of the dominant trade events for premium and designer fashions, and before the March 14-18 run of the **Los Angeles Fashion Market**.

At the most-recent Project show, many exhibitors raced to the Las Vegas show from New York, where they had been showing at **Fashion Coterie**.

Class' timing has been deemed a good idea by some retailers who typically do not shop New York shows.

"As a retailer, I don't mind if there are more shows," said Laura Fairchild, co-owner of **L.A. Fairchild Denim Bar** in Cardiff-By-The Sea, Calif., which is 30 minutes north of San Diego. "There are some great

lines [at Class]. I might as well check it out. It's close."

Some prospective vendors are taking a wait-and-see attitude with Class. Todd Kellogg debuted **Lira**, his new streetwear brand, at the **MAGIC Marketplace** recently. He said he will scout the show to see if it is a good place to exhibit in the future. "They have a lot of the right brands. A lot of people are excited about it," Kellogg said. "But it's right after MAGIC. A lot of buyers might not need to go to another show."

But there is always room for another show, said Aaron Levant, founder and president of **Agenda**, a biannual show in San Diego. "If it is innovative, people will make room for it," Levant said. "No matter how good or bad the market is. There is always room for innovation."—*Andrew Asch*