



PANIC! **At the Disco**

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instant success

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FASHIONPHILE: THE GLOBAL GURU

Casa de Soul offers handpicked clothes and accessories from around the world

words: Brooke Seldin



from Cyndi Chan's Fall 2006 Ori'En collection

Casa de Soul owner Kennedy Ashinze, a Nigerian native and former stockbroker, says originality is the driving force behind his conceptual lifestyle boutique.

"There's a story behind everything we sell," Ashinze says of Casa de Soul's goods, which range from holster belts to briefcases to hand-woven mats. With each item individually chosen in places such as London, Tokyo and Ashinze's home country, Casa de Soul provides something for everyone—high-end watches, wooden figurines, abstract paintings and leather-bound notebooks. "Your grandma can walk in here and find something for herself, along with your local fashionista," Ashinze says.

In addition to these worldly wares, clothing from Ori'En by Cyndi Chan rests on racks displaying military coats, bubble skirts and items inspired by tweeds, velvet and pinstripes. Chan, born and bred in Hong Kong, is one of several Chicago designers recently picked up by the State Street Macy's. After interning for Donna Karan in New York, Chan settled in the Second City and brought with her a love for themed fabrics, such as French country-inspired toile. "My design inspiration is classic and independent chic with a twist," Chan says. "I focus on sharp color lines and gigantic bolds with a contemporary 1950s theme." Be it mocha-colored trench coats or turquoise-lined dress coats, her detail-oriented fashion philosophy is evident in the feminine silhouettes she constructs.

The store also holds regular trunk and art shows, and turntables sit at the boutique's entrance, where Ashinze encourages people to "get behind the decks." But it's Ashinze's unique aesthetic that is key to the shop's success. "We don't care about popular items other boutiques are selling," he says. "You can't get a basic white T-shirt at Casa de Soul. You can go down the street to find that."

Casa de Soul is located at 1919 W. Division (773/252-2520); for more information visit casadesoul.net or e-intime.com

SNEAKERHEAD: BANNING THE BOOTLEGS

Get sneaker-savvy and avoid online peddlers selling fake kicks

words: Krabby Rangoon



Like fake Gucci or Louis Vuitton bags, fake shoes are made with materials that, despite looking similar, are inferior in quality and usually lack the richness in detail that major-brand, factory-made pieces have.

Up until a few years ago, bootleg makers had to wait for the product to hit the market before copying it. These days, pictures of upcoming sneakers make their way onto the Internet and circulate the world before their actual release; sometimes fakes come out before the authentic product does, creating confusion for everyone.

A popular place to buy and sell fakes is online, where some vendors admit they're selling fakes and others try to peddle their wares off as the real thing. Some bootleggers charge the price of what an authentic pair should cost—sometimes running up into the thousands of dollars. Buyers beware when purchasing or bidding on shoes through popular Web sites such as eBay or Yahoo—they don't require people to sell authentic shoes, and there's no penalty whatsoever for selling fakes.

A new auction site dedicated solely to bona fide kicks, bluesole.com, has emerged to fill the need created by the swelling numbers of fakes online. The Web site monitors all auctions by an authentication team dedicated to finding and weeding out vendors selling bootlegs to unsuspecting potential customers. Peddlers found hawking a fake pair of shoes are banned indefinitely, and the auction is promptly stopped.

Overall, the best way to make sure you're not buying fakes is to know the shoe—Web sites like niketalk.com and instyleshoes.com both rely on members for info regarding fakes. Once a member of either Web group, you can ask questions and get advice. Think a pair of Jordans you got is fake? Take a photo and post it online for feedback. Web sites like these are also excellent sources of information regarding new shoes that have yet to be released. I have found the easiest way to navigate through sites like eBay is to follow the simple rule, "If it's too good to be true, then it probably is." Jordan V's for \$100? I don't think so. ■