

MALLS & MAINSTREETS

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SHOPPING CENTERED



Summer hat styles are playful protection

BY LINDA ANN CHLOIN
STAFF WRITER

It's time to top off those summer outfits with straw hats. Of course, not any old straw will do. This season big brims with head hugging crowns in natural as well as icy blues and sherbet colors are all the rage adding pizzazz to any outfit.

New York designer Eric Javits makes it simple to travel with straw hats introducing the Squishie (\$150) available at Neiman Marcus at the Somerset Collection, Troy. This ultimate summer hat in sandstone or black is versatile. Wear it to a garden party or wedding or for running errands around town. Form it to fit your mood. Roll the brim up for a classic style. Turn the brim down to barely cover your eyes for a flirtatious, sophisticated look.

Best of all, Javits makes this chapeau chameleon durable. No clumsy hat boxes when traveling. Simply toss Squishies in a suitcase and you're off. This sewn braid hat made of cotton and viscose requires no special care except dry cleaning.

"It depends on the occasion, but it seems everybody wants a straw hat in the summer," said Neiman spokeswoman Marilyn Connor. Hats are that finishing detail. The wide, rolled-up brim is something new and a strong trend.

Wearing a hat in summer, especially one with a big brim, offers an extra benefit: it protects the skin from the aging effects of the sun. Neiman Marcus has great collection of styles from big floppy brims to a hot pink flapper number by Frank Olive. If small is more to your liking, hair adornments barely cover the crown. James Coviello adds butterflies, flowers and a big green ribbon to his little topper, \$197.

Connor suggests that wearers "be creative by tying a scarf to a brim. A scarf can change the personality of a hat."

...Or you can add a big sunflower, said Jacobson's area manager Carolyn Haun at the Birmingham store. "Some of our customers come in and design their own, buying simple styles and dressing them up any way they want to. There's a sense of adventure and fun when you add a big flower to your hat."

Animal prints are stronger than ever. The safari hat by Toucan is rimmed with wooden carvings of rhinoceros and zebra. Patterned after a hat worn by Australian children, designer Kaminski combines a rolled brim with a wide black band in a natural straw (\$125) for a school girl look.

The beret, usually considered a fall and winter accessory, is the surprise of the summer season, said Haun. For day wear, a white butter-soft leather beret by Healy is priced at \$125. Oscar de la Renta takes beaded white satin to create an elegant beret for evening.

"Hats help you make a statement when you walk into a room," said Haun. "With the dressier hats (recall Audrey Hepburn in *Breakfast at Tiffany's*) people are coming in and having fun with the tooling and netting. Black wide-brimmed hats trimmed with maribou rained into the summer. It's a very dramatic look."

Also new, is a straw baseball cap for the tennis court, golf course, or just for fun.

At JC Penney in the Westland Shopping Center, Mr. John jizzes up a navy wide-brim straw hat by adding a metallic gold band and flowers. It's on sale (\$63) along with the rest of the summer hats including a blue straw with sequin crown by Whitall and Shon (\$69.99) and simple navy straw by Street Smart (\$22.40).



Wig hats: For humid, summer hair days - a fall is attached to the inside brim of this straw chapeau from Eric Javits. (Top): another stylish Javits original.

Retailers say competition is good



BY SUSAN DEMAGGIO
STAFF WRITER

Store owners: Get back to the basics of retailing.

Yes, it's obvious: it's simplistic, but the prescription for surviving and thriving with greater competition is: Do a better job of being a retailer.

Who says so? The Minnesota Retail Merchants Association. They

Like the '90s anthem beats, "You gotta be strong. You gotta be bold. You gotta be wise." And that's the advice from Minnesota retailers battling the Mall of America for business.

week at a breakfast meeting at the Radisson Hotel in Southfield. Citing the August opening of the Somerset Collection North, and the recent arrival of Best Buy, Circuit City, Home Quarters, Home Depot, Barnes & Noble Booksellers, catalog, television and computer shopping, established retailers said they are concerned about sales.

"They, we've been there," Minnesota

Mall of America in Bloomington, it was estimated that 29-percent of the retail would be taken from the Twin Cities," Cook said. "The mall would need to generate \$1.2 billion in sales each year to be successful. Community leaders argued it would fizzle and become a big, white elephant."

"Well, we were all wrong. The mall generates \$1.4 billion annually for the state of Minnesota and downtown merchants saw their business grow by 6-percent the first year. If you want to learn about competition look at us."

(In 1995, Michigan earned \$4.8 billion from its 6-percent retail sales tax. Minnesota has no sales tax on clothing purchases.)

Cook said retail in the state exploded between 1991 and 1995 when retail space grew by 40-percent. She acknowledged numerous casualties in the new marketplace, but had no figures on the number of retailers that closed their doors.

"For the most part, we figured out how to deal with it. We turned the problem into an opportunity," she said. "Those that went out were those who refused to change. They wanted to do things the way they always did. But the new show in town brought in traffic, business and an urgency to the rest of us to action. Increased competition forces you to do a better job of being a retailer."

She overheard-projected these six lessons:

1. Do what you do best, not what they do best. Understand the strengths of the competition; is it depth of inventory? service? Know who you are. Focus on what you do best - is it convenience? product knowledge? Constantly evolve, keep up appearances.

2. Know your customer. Provide what they want, evolve with them. Don't sell what you've always sold. Buy from different markets.

3. Enhance customer loyalty. Use technology to track and list sales. Maintain your store's comfort level for regulars. Keep communicating with customers through direct mail, coupons, special offers.

4. Focus on service and inventory. Provide expected level of service, train employees, back them up with product and selection. Offer fresh inventory. Be price sensitive.

5. Be unique. Develop a market niche. Set yourself apart with a look and an atmosphere.

6. Maintain employee loyalty.

Offer flexible schedules and review your benefits before the competition arrives.

"Downtown Minneapolis knew they had to give their shoppers a reason to come downtown," Cook explained. "They knew they were not the Mall of America, but they needed to attract customers just the same. So they asked the city for \$1 million for promotion. They got it through a public/private partnership."

"Next, they went to Disney for advice and came up with a super successful program. During peak business, the holidays, the city holds a half-hour parade downtown with 250 volunteers every night."

"People crowd the streets with their children and afterward, to escape the cold, head for the skywalks and restaurants and shopping. It's become a big event. A boon to business."

"And it's really an experience. Everyone is lit with battery packs. Dayton's has its flagship store downtown and hosts its annual holiday exhibit in the auditorium. Dayton's decided against being in the Mall of America, but eventually modernized the downtown store with two new wings."

Cook said the Mall of America is now negotiating a Phase Two, with even more retailers, offices and hotels.

"The lesson is, times will change whether you change or not. You can do something about the situation or stick your head in the sand and blame 'customers who aren't loyal anymore.'"

Mary Short of Coopers & Lybrand, a sponsor of the event, said Cook's Back to Basics message "was something we forgot." But practical advice to "go back and implement."

Bob Benkert of the Claymore Shop in Birmingham said Cook's message was "right on."

"My staff and I have spent the past two years putting our arms around our customers," he said. "If we really take care of them, they'll keep doing business with us and we'll be fine in our downtown location."

Frank Belloli of Sibley Shoes, with 40 stores in metro Detroit, said he enjoyed Cook's presentation.

"Retail business changes by the month, by the week," he said. "To stay competitive, we've got to keep up. You've got to change too."



Points of interest: Judy Cook, president of the Minnesota Retailers Association, told Michigan retailers that competition will make everyone stronger - if they prepare for it.

shared their secrets with president Judy Cook, who presented these thoughts to Detroit merchants last

ta's finest reported back, and they've lived to tell about it.

"When plans were announced for a

Monday, June 10

BIG APPLE CIRCUS

Jazzmatazz through June 16 with elephants, clowns, inflatables and bands. Non-profit performing arts show under the tent in the mall's parking lot.

Oakland Mall, 14 Mile/John R. Troy. (810) 645-6666.

PUPPET SHOWS

"Goldilocks and the Three Bears" Monday-Friday, 7 p.m. Saturday 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. Sunday 1 and 3. On June 7 and 8 a mall-wide Jaguar Show with classic and modern models. Meadowbrook Village Mall, Walton/University, Rochester Hills. (810) 375-9451.

Tuesday, June 11

DESIGNER TRUNK SHOWS

Through the week at Neiman Marcus, view the latest samples of fall collections with informal modeling from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. each day. Today, see Escada June 13-14 it's Karl Lagerfeld in the Couture salon, June 15 it's DKNY Summer Stock Show in Leisurewear, June 18 it's Louis Feraud Ready-to-wear and SET Trunk Show in Couture II June 19 view Giorgio Armani Borgonuovo fall/Winter in Designer Sportswear. Somerset Collection, Big Beaver/Coolidge, Troy. (810) 643-3300.

PIANO CONCERT

Evola Music presents apiano concert by keyboard artist David Rookby noon and 7 p.m. in the mall's garden area near Sears. Questions and answer session follows. Livonia Mall, Seven Mile/Middlebelt. (810) 476-1160.

FACIAL CLINICS

LaPrairie specialists at Saks Fifth Avenue host makeovers and skin care consultations through June 13. Call for appointments. June 13-14: Chanel Skincare Event and June 14-15: Estee Lauder event features free manicure with cosmetic purchases \$40 or more. Somerset Collection. Big Beaver/Coolidge, Troy. (810) 614-3337.

AUTHOR VISITS

Harriet Sarnoff Schiff discusses her latest book How did I become my parent's parent? caring for one's aged or disabled parents. Former reporter based a series of such books on years of working with care facilities.

ADDED ATTRACTIONS

Border's Books, 31150 Southfield, Birmingham. (810) 644-1515.

Thursday, June 13

MUSIC IN THE PARK SERIES OPENS

Every Thursday from 7:30-9 p.m. through Aug. 1 in Municipal Park behind city hall. Complimentary. 6th Street/Pine Downtown Rochester. (810) 656-0060.

DESIGNER VISITS

Dominic Pangborn signs his ties for Father's Day and graduation gifts, 5-7 p.m. The Shirt Box. Shop offers a special sale on Pangborn's ties. He will also appear at Saks Fifth Ave. in the Somerset Collection in Troy on June 15 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. in Men's Clothing. 19011 W. 10 Mile, Southfield. (810) 352-1080.

Friday, June 14

JEANS COLLECTION

7th Annual Zip-Up Used Jeans for the Homeless Program. Bring in gently-worn items for distribution to the needy and receive half-off a new pair of jeans! Last year 500 pairs were collected. Shelter volunteers on hand to fill out donation forms. 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. Also needed: toys, bikes, skateboards, clothes and linens. Orchard Mall, Maple/Orchard Lake, West Bloomfield. (810) 651-1280.

TRUNK SHOW

Sally's Design Boutique hosts the fall 1996 Collection of apriori, a division of Escada, through June 15, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Orchard Mall, Maple/Orchard Lake, West Bloomfield. (810) 626-0888.

FAMILY NIGHT

Barbara Jones Clark performs traditional storytelling 7 p.m. Center Court. Westland Wayne/Warren. (313) 425-5001.

INFORMAL MODELING

Latest looks from the Foot Locker and M-Den while enjoying lunch noon to 2 p.m. at D.Dennison's and Allie's American Grille.

Laurel Park Place, Six Mile/Newburg, Livonia. (313) 482-1100.

CRAFT PROJECT

Children are invited to decorate a key chain for their Father's Day gift, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. While supplies last. Also, Media Play has a prize drawing for participants. Tel-Telve Mall, 12 Mile/Telegraph, Southfield. (810) 353-4111.

Saturday, June 15

BOWL SHOW

Ariana Gallery hosts 25 artists displaying ceramic bowls - buy a bowl and receive a free scoop of ice cream, through June 16 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. 119 S. Main, Royal Oak. (810) 646-8810.

MOTORCYCLE SHOP OPENS

Easy Riders Detroit's selling everything for the bike enthusiast, hosts a two-day opening bash through June 16, plus eating contest, scavenger hunt, Ride-In bike show, live music, tattoo artists, food and beverages, chance to win \$4,000 worth of door prizes. Owners Tom and Sue Phenagar and John and Virginia DiGiuseppe. 120 N. Main, Mt. Clemens. (810) 783-7300.

SUNRISE SALES

Early risers can enjoy savings of up to 50-percent off by shopping more than 40 downtown stores from 6-8 a.m. Savings drop to 40-percent from 8-9 a.m. and 30-percent off from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Sideways will host a low-impact aerobics class on Forest Avenue at 8 a.m. Plymouth Chamber of Commerce, Main St./Penniman. (313) 453-1540.

KIDS FUN

Magician Mike Jacobson entertains 11 a.m. Borders Children's Department. 30995 Orchard Lake, Farmington Hills. (810) 737-0110.

FARMER'S MARKET

Plymouth Chamber of Commerce sponsors stalls with produce, flowers, cheeses, breads, crafts from 7:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. through Oct. 10. Kellogg Park, Ann Arbor Trail/Penniman. (313) 453-1540.

Sunday, June 16, Father's Day!