

Modern Amusement Closes Down

By David Lipke

MODERN AMUSEMENT, THE CONTEMPORARY men's and women's label owned by Mossimo Giannulli, has shuttered its operations. The closure of the business comes on the heels of a severe restructuring of the company that saw the exit of its chief executive officer, Michael Boyes, and the layoff of most of its employees in November.

The demise of the trendy brand, known by its crow logo, stemmed from what former employees of Modern Amusement alleged was mismanagement of the company by Boyes. Boyes inked a five-year master license agreement for the brand in December 2008 and set up a firm called Blk Brd LLC to operate the business. Giannulli is now embroiled in litigation with Boyes over his handling of the company.

In an e-mail to retailers obtained by WWD, Nicole Castrogiovanni, vice president of sales at Modern Amusement, wrote, "With regret, I am writing to inform you that Modern Amusement has ceased operations effective immediately. In light of prior management disputes, it is a difficult but necessary choice. Unfortunately, this is all the information we can provide at this time and we are unable to elaborate on all the details. This is deeply troubling for myself, Mossimo and the entire Modern Amusement family."

The company is closing its Costa Mesa, Calif., headquarters. However, Castrogiovanni, a longtime Modern Amusement employee who is close to Giannulli, added the brand may be revived

at a later date. "We know you and your consumers love the brand. We do too. We hope to reintroduce the Crow to consumers in the future and look forward to reengaging with you at that point," she wrote.

The brand's wholesale accounts, which include Bloomingdale's, Saks Fifth Avenue, Nordstrom and a slew of specialty stores, will not receive spring merchandise. "It's one of our most popular men's lines, so we're not happy about it. It's pretty short notice," said Diana Oh, manager of Flying A, a boutique in New York's SoHo district.

Giannulli and Castrogiovanni declined to provide further comment on the developments, due to the pending litigation with Boyes. Efforts to reach Boyes were not successful.

"The brand went from very positive to closing down pretty quickly. It's unusual," said Vince Gonzales, whose New York-based Encore Studio showroom represented Modern Amusement on the East Coast. "They told us they were shutting down right before a planned global sales conference on Jan. 10 with agents from overseas." Those former Modern Amusement agents included Fancy Farmer Enterprises in the Netherlands, The Denim Garden in Sweden, A-Game Distribution in Austria and Marc & Betschmann in Switzerland.

Originally founded by Jeff Yokoyama, Modern Amusement was acquired by Giannulli in 2004. It was sold to Iconix Brand Group in 2006 as part of a \$119 million deal for the Mossimo brand, but Giannulli bought back Modern Amusement for \$4.8 million.



JNBY Among Asian Retailers U.S.-Bound

By Sharon Edelson

NEW YORK — Their names may get lost in translation, but Asian retailers tapping the U.S. market hope their brands have universal appeal.

The name JNBY sounds like any other fashion acronym, but the initials of the Hangzhou, China, retailer — short for Just Naturally Be Yourself — reflect the versatility of the designs.

JNBY will unveil in March a 2,250-square-foot flagship in SoHo here, its first U.S. store. Founded in 1994 by a group of Shanghai Institute of Design students, JNBY operates as a collective with a staff of 13, led by a senior designer. The group creates 150- to 200-piece collections each season, priced from \$80 to \$600.

China is poised to become the world's second-largest economy this year and the government has been nurturing domestic companies in an effort to become less dependent on exports. JNBY operates more than 500 stores in Asia, Europe and North America, with new stores planned for Barcelona and Tbilisi, Georgia. Sales were strong enough at a temporary store at 93 Mercer Street in SoHo, that JNBY was encouraged to open a permanent boutique at 75 Greene Street. "I'm hoping [to open] one more store in Manhattan by the end of the year," said Michelle Wohlers, U.S. brand manager of JNBY and a former executive of Juicy Couture. "Our next target will be Northern California."

JNBY will be wholesaled for fall to a handful of specialty stores, said Wohlers, who envisions the collection housed beside Rag & Bone and Alexander Wang in the contemporary departments of stores such as Bergdorf Goodman, Barneys New York, Saks Fifth Avenue, Intermix and Holt Renfrew. She's targeting 50 doors in the first year, and JNBY will be sold on Shopbop.com.

Inspired by industrial design, JNBY's stark pieces can be worn several different ways. For example, jackets with multiple zippers can change their look depending on which one is used, and collars can be manipulated to change a look. But fashion doesn't always translate seamlessly from country to country. "The runway shows [have] these very severe-looking Chinese models," Wohlers said. "I'm helping soften it for the U.S. We are also very sized challenged with the men's line."

JNBY isn't the only Far Eastern retailer aiming to penetrate the U.S. Who.A.U. of South Korea opened stores in New Jersey and Connecticut and is preparing to unveil a 12,000-square-foot multi-level flagship on West 34th Street. Now Who.A.U. says it's ready to open up to six units in Manhattan before moving on to other major U.S. cities. "They're working on other locations in Manhattan as well as lease negotiations at several upscale malls around the country," said Faith Hope Consolo, Who.A.U.'s broker.

South Korea, one of the world's fastest-growing economies, has had a burst of consumer wealth that's benefited retailers such as Eryn Brinie, which operates 30 stores in Asia. The brand, which opened its first U.S. store in 2008 at 501 Broadway in SoHo, is part of Avista Inc., whose fashion portfolio includes Kaylee Tankus, BNX and Kai-aakmann. Eryn Brinie's crosscultural references include an Irish-sounding name and French-inspired looks priced from \$25 for a cami tunic to \$430 for a faux fur-trimmed parka.

Then there's Uniqlo of Japan, which in 2005 entered the U.S. market with three mall units in New Jersey and a flagship on Broadway in SoHo. At the recent National Retail Federation convention here, Tadashi Yanai, chairman and chief executive officer of Fast Retailing, Uniqlo's \$7.4 billion parent, said he wants to quickly open more stores in the U.S. Retail brokers said Uniqlo has been "kicking the tires" of Manhattan properties, including some in Times Square, but has yet to conclude a deal.



PHOTO BY KYLIE EROVISEN

FASHION SCOOPS



Ciara

FASHIONABLY LATE: Ciara's late arrival at Givenchy may have irked photographers, who booed her for delaying the start of the show, but the R&B singer was determined to enjoy time out from her grueling studio schedule. "I'm so happy I was able to be on time — well, sort of," she offered. "I've been finishing my album." **Stella Tennant**, who also sat in the front row, said she's been delighting in "just regular family life, the chickens, the dogs.... I just came to Paris for an injection of chic." Meanwhile, **Lou Doillon's** eight-year-old son, **Marlowe**, and teen blogger **Tavi Gevinson** helped lower the average age of the front row. Gevinson, sporting blue hair, said she was covering the shows for Pop magazine, which recently featured her on its cover. Wearing a studded Givenchy blouson, **Joanna Preiss** said she is working on a new album due out later this year. The French actress crossed the Channel for the English-language film "We Are the Industry." "Luckily, I play a French person, so I don't have to work on this accent," she said.

REALITY SHOW: Anna Mougla is getting ready to film her second movie with partner **Samuel Benchetrit** as director. The film, which will also star French actor **José Garcia**, is a screwball comedy about a family that pretends to belong to the mafia for the purposes of a documentary. "I think it's going to be hilarious," Mougla said at the Chanel couture show. Television presenter and style icon **Alexa Chung** said she was fielding offers following the cancellation of her MTV show. "I'm in talks with different channels," she demurred. A pregnant **Claudia Schiffer**, who wore an oversize yellow jumper to hide her nascent baby bump, said she plans to take only a short break from modeling to give birth to her third child. Meanwhile, **Charlotte Gainsbourg**, who has played only a handful of private gigs due to severe stage fright, said she "finally" feels ready to launch a full-scale tour, set to begin in March or April.



Karl Lagerfeld and Charlotte Gainsbourg



Claudia Schiffer photographs Kanye West and Amber Rose.

IN THE BAG: "I'm the new spokesmodel for the brand," said Franco-American actress **Béatrice Rosen**, showing off her cream-colored Lancel bag at the Stéphane Rolland show on Tuesday. The "2012" star said she just signed to front the French accessories label, following in the footsteps of brand ambassadors **Isabelle Adjani**, **Carla Bruni** and **Laure Manaudou**. Meanwhile, **Melissa Mars** was basking in success, having just won three NRJ music titles (among France's top music awards) for the musical "Mozart L'Opéra Rock." "It's pretty cool," said the singer and actress, whose most recent film, "From Paris with Love," just hit theaters in the U.S. "I'm in the trailer; that's pretty cool, too!"

MISSING LINK: French fashion folk turned out in force for a charity dinner on Monday, but one key figure was missing. LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton chairman **Bernard Arnault**, who was due to cohost the event with former archrival **François Pinault**, has canceled all public appearances following the death of his father, Jean Arnault, last Thursday. Designers from both LVMH and Pinault's group PPR were out en masse for the fund-raiser benefiting Maison de Solenn, a treatment center for troubled



Isabelle Huppert and Nicolas Ghesquière



François Pinault and Hélène Arnault

teenagers. **Nicolas Ghesquière** said he might put in some store appearances to support the upcoming launch of his first fragrance, Balenciaga Paris. **Bethy Lagardère**, who last year staged an exhibition of couture outfits from her closet in her native Brazil, revealed she is working on another project scheduled to be unveiled there in June and July, traditionally the period when São Paulo holds its fashion week.

KNIGHT CAP: Berlin has been seeing a lot of **Nick Knight** lately and, if the London-based photographer has his way, he'll be seeing more of the German capital in the future. The photographer shot the campaign image for Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week Berlin featuring a Gareth Pugh-clad, cyber-posed **Julia Stegner** in front of an equally futuristic Mercedes SLS AMG. But beyond the Mercedes connection, Knight is working on a scent project with Berlin artist and fragrance conceptualist **Sissel Tolaas** based on violence. There also is the link with **David Chipperfield**, the master architect behind Berlin's stunning new Neues Museum, who's also built two houses for Knight. "I'm trying to get him to build a third house for me in Spain," Knight told WWD. "And as it's 100 yards down from his, maybe I have a chance." Other projects: A series of films for **Lady Gaga's** series of tours, and working with IMG and Rodarte and **Alexander Wang** on fashion films for their shows in New York.

PHOTOS BY STEPHANE FLEGERE