

Celebrating 160 years

OTTAWA CITIZEN



MARCH 26, 2005

ESTABLISHED IN 1845

Digging all the Canadian fashion designers'

WRITER KATHRYN ATKINSON

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That's almost as good as the \$2,000-plus loot bag — also a Heys — for presenters at this week's Genies.

The fashion week loot bag was one sign the Toronto showcase for Canadian design talent is on track to play in the big leagues of fashion weeks.

Another sign was buzz generated by the crush of fans vying to get into the big evening shows last week, fights over front-row seats, Canadian international models Heather Marks and Lisa Cant on the catwalk, and heck, even some polished, beautiful fashion for next fall.

"(Canadian designers) are the fashion industry's best-kept secret," said Kathryn Atkinson, a writer for Britain-based *Womenswear Buyer*. "I'm digging all the Canadian fashion designers."

It wasn't just Britain that was showing an interest in cool Canadiana. Our trend-setting neighbours to the south also



made the trip to see Canadian designs.

"(Toronto designer) David Dixon was right on trend for that contemporary customer that wants to look a little more pulled together," said Elizabeth Kanfer, market editor at Saks Fifth Avenue fashion office in New York.

"I actually really liked (Calgary's) Paul Hardy ... very luxe, feminine and pretty ... very much a Saks customer."

Kanfer will be recommending some Canadian designers to the buyers at Saks, which already carries Toronto labels such as Lida Baday and Pink Tartan.

A surprise hit of the week was Ottawa designer Jayn Simpson, who, prior to her catwalk show, was unknown outside the capital.

Inspired by Agatha Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express*, Simpson's collection featured sharp houndstooth pantsuits, soft blouses of chiffon and charmeuse, skirt suits in white

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