

boom boom boom!

Last year's Homegrown fashion show was a fantastic showcase of local talent for spectators, a creative heart-attack on wheels for designers, and the homebirth of a brainchild for Alia Munn and Neal Polonski.

Fashion is fascism. Somebody once said that. Last years "Homegrown" runway show wasn't fascism, but it was a lot of different things to different people. It was a fantastic showcase of local talent for spectators, a creative heart-attack on wheels for designers, and the homebirth of a brainchild for Azulito Boutique proprietor Alia Munn. Well, this year she is at it once more, with new designers as well as some from last year that are ready to jump into the whirlwind again.

So here we are at the first official meeting of Homegrown II, watching the new event unfold as designers introduce themselves and get the game plan. Sitting under the portal at 2nd Street's Azulito boutique are Alia, husband and goldsmith Neal Polonski, four new designers, two designers from last year, and assorted children of the above mentioned, doing whatever kids do when their parents are in meetings. They are scarily quiet and well-behaved. I don't want to know more.

Again, it's a young crowd. Some have simply no idea what kind of work they are in for in the next couple of months. Some, like Leslie Gallatin, are actually coming into this with a touch of practicality. (Oh, take the fun out, why don't you.) Of course, only at Homegrown II would stilt-walker's costumes seem practical. Leslie is saying she knew she could never make 12 outfits in time if they were all to look like the detailed bustier she now wears. She has opted to co-design with sister Beth, and Julie Anderson of the Costume Salon, and come up with wild, theatrical pieces. That fine detail, that inset lace, that little silk peplum...bag it. Those are for another day. Her presentation is about fun, frolic, good times, and circus acts. There will be stiltwalkers, clowns, ladies on flying trapezes, who knows...only flash is guaranteed.

A year's thought has gone into this show, this meeting. Alia now sits with a laptop, acting as both president and secretary, typing in all the salient points, ready to email designers their copies of every little detail. Nobody will be out of the loop, no model's flake out, no technical logistics overlooked, and no dress rehearsals missed. The size 16 Goler boot is coming down. This time we're serious.

Introducing the new golden boy of Homegrown II! 14 year old Zev Hoffman!

Alia: "I've been telling people he's 17, I don't know why...Zev, tell us about your line."



"It's sort of like everything from tails to raver pants." He is lipsticked and combat booted. A smug, happy punk if such a thing exists.

"How long have you been designing?"

He begins to answer with a shrug, and another designer helps him out, "No, no, no! She means altogether, since the beginning."

"Oh! Two years?"

"He's our headliner. We're opening the show with Zev. Boom! Zev Hoffman! And all your models will come out: boom-boom-boom-boom-boom..."

"Are your clothes for men or women?"

"Either. In fact there's one dress I'm hoping a man will wear."

"You mean a dress for men, or a woman's dress?"

"More of a crossdressing..."

"Transsexual!" There is ecstasy over the novelty. A hunk of excitement appears like a freshly cut watermelon. Alia is tappity tapping and talking all at once. One of those people that can type something completely other than what she is saying.

Alia: "Last year each designer had 3 models come out at once. This year we're going to keep it simple. One designer, and all your models come out boom boom boom...Listen, this year I'm hiring a manager. Last year? Forget it. It was FIVE MINUTES until curtain and I've got a model in a fight with her boyfriend halfway down the block. I'm running down the street in my heels and tight dress.... Also, there's this guy, he works with bones and sticks and hemp silks and he does these—he calls them environments, I'm hoping to get him on board to TRANSFORM the parking lot."

Requests come in for older models. Bigger models. Gray-haired models. Men. We move around the circle, designers passing samples around. Veteran Magita Story, with lines Youmeus and Elven Velvet, is fully prepared. She's the one to count on with her Miyake inspired flowing pantsuits and silk/linen blends. Then she reveals her zinger, "This is a fabulous, Hollywood style, bias-cut, tight skirt with a flare. I didn't want to, but I had to put this silk lining in, or else it was a liiiiiittle obscene."

"When are men going to get equal rights in this?"



FASHION EDITOR
KATIE MEHRER

"We have male models! A black and a white guy!"

"Plus Zev is bringing in some male influence."

"I want equal rights for men! I can say that because I'm her husband." Neil chuckles—the fox in a henhouse.

Handbag designer Deborah Grossman enters the picture with her dainty, beaded purses: "Dulcinea Design." She is at Laura Sheppherd, she is at Homefrocks, she is at Albuquerque's Mariposa Gallery, she is out there. Her bags are so precious: hand-crocheted, hand-beaded, and a nice contrast to veteran Diane Dascher's "Dascher Designs," now on sale at Goler. Dascher utilizes bold geometric shapes, bright colors and animal prints. Today's sample says to me: Kalahari Zebra mating with 1950's rec-room sofa.

Neil: "For jewelry, I say we match everything up WAY before the show. I mean, none of this where the designers are picking what jewelry goes with their models at the last minute."

"Oh! And we'll have someone there at the end of the runway, as the models come off, PLUCKING it off!"

"We have to match the necklaces with the necklines of the garment. Nothing last minute."

"PLUCKING it off!"

"Well, not plucking, but at least we'll have a table and someone there..."

"absolutely...PLUCKING!"

"Neil, do you want to go?"

"Well, my work is called Ronin's Alchemy, a marriage of gold and silver. I call my style ancient, or Middle Eastern."

"I think of it as Corinthian."

Susan Young follows, asking for models over sixty. She is a custom maker of sportswear, separates, coats, skirts, laces, knitwear. Another established designer.

The ante on this show is going up, but Zev seems nonplused. He muses, "I really don't have any idea how I'm going to come up with nine or twelve pieces in less than two months."

He doesn't know it yet, but he is definitely not alone. See, it's not just a fashion show; it's also a race against time. A contest, almost. Can you pull enough creativity, skill, and guts out of a hat in a few short weeks to dress twelve models for a scant five minutes of fame? Can you do it so they come out like bottle rockets, just as quick, just as dazzling? More importantly, can you make it happen just like Alia said: BOOM BOOM BOOM BOOM!

The fashion show, Homegrown II, is planned to coincide with the first ever "Experience Second Street" street fair on August 8 and 9. Stay tuned to local flavor for more breaking news on the emergence of the show, and, in the mean time, keep your eye out for Homegrown mini-shows all over town.

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was given a modern zing with a hint of sherry vinegar. A spinach and toasted goat cheese salad was sweetened with a poached pear and set spinning on a beet vinaigrette. A crispy vegetarian springroll was bursting with the flavors of earthy shitake mushrooms, carrots and red pepper and then set adrift in a sweet and garlicky chili sauce. Pork tenderloin, that had been brined for 72 hours and smoked, melted in our mouths. The parsnip purée adorning the plate tempered the brine and the fig relish and mustard sauce added the perfect final touch. Giant grilled tiger shrimp swam in a subtle carrot-Riesling sauce as they nibbled on the yummy poppy seed spaetzle they sat on.

Just when we were ready to burst, 3 small scoops of white and dark chocolate mousse, bobbing in a pool of crème anglaise, pushed us to a delicious edge.

Somewhere high above us Grandmère Manou smiles down on us. She's happy to see her Eric grown and living his dream and sharing it with Xavier, a friend and kindred spirit. And aren't we lucky as well that they followed the road to Taos—it may be a different "land of enchantment" but it's not that far from the streams of their youth.

Manou is located at 4167 Paseo del Pueblo Sur in Taos. Dinner is served nightly from 5:30 pm. 505.982.8608. Ristra is located at 548 Agua Fria in Santa Fe. Dinner is served nightly from 5:30 pm. 505.982.8608.

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