



Austin Yoshino (left), Kulani Jones (center) and Randy Embernate put on concerts to raise start-up funds for their business. *Azlie Malinao-Alvarez Emerald*

The cornerstone of sport fashion

Three students dare to start their own clothing line, keeping true to the real needs of the athletes

By Rory Carroll
Oregon Daily Emerald

Know what you sell, and sell what you know. That's the age-old business mantra that the three young entrepreneurs behind Cornerstone are hoping will fuel their up-and-coming apparel company.

The company is the brainchild of Austin Yoshino, Randy Embernate and Kulani Jones, and the three students need only look at each other to catch a glimpse of the audience they hope will eventually flock to buy their surfing, skiing and snowboarding clothing.

But it takes money to make money, another business mantra. Luckily, the people at Cornerstone have come up with a creative way to raise the much-needed start-up funds. So by doubling as an entertainment company and throwing concerts to raise money for the company's initial capital, they can spread their name to their target audience and rake in a little cash at the same time.

It's this kind of innovative business strategy that University management instructor Randy Swangard thinks young companies need to explore if they hope to contend in today's competitive business climate. Swangard, who teaches an entrepreneurship class, said that understanding the market that you are targeting is an essential ingredient to succeeding in business.

Hailing from different islands in Hawaii, the three entrepreneurs met at the University and realized they had much in common. Jones is an avid long-board surfer and all three snowboard and skateboard. Jones, Cornerstone's marketing director, feels that knowing these sports is what will propel them to success.

"These other companies that are big, they don't know what's going on. Cornerstone is about knowing what people want and being unique," Jones said.

The group is not interested in being trendy because trends

don't last, Yoshino said. Instead, they want to deliver a quality product to the people who actually play the sports the clothing is intended for.

"Guys that don't even snowboard wear snowboarding clothes because it has become so commercialized," Yoshino said.

"We're out to keep it real," Embernate added.

Emberate and Jones point to Yoshino and his artistic abilities as a strength of the company.

"We've got a great artist right here," Jones said about Yoshino. "He comes up with unique, awesome designs all the time."

That creativity also played into choosing a name for the new company. Yoshino and Embernate deliberated for quite some time about choosing the right name. They bounced names off each other throughout last summer.

"I thought the name should be the cornerstone of the company," Yoshino said. And that's when he realized the perfect

name was staring him right in the face.

So with a catchy name and a budding new business, it was time to tackle the marketing issue. And the three decided the entertainment angle would be the way to go.

Yoshino, Embernate and Jones are confident that they have a good understanding of what kind of music their target audience likes in addition to knowing what they like to wear.

"When I walk around town and I see people skating, they fit into a certain trend and they listen to a certain type of music," Jones said. "I know that when we come out with our clothing, those are the kind of people that are going to be looking for it. That's what we are going to be putting on April 20, a concert geared to that type of person."

The Wild Duck show will be chock-full of adrenaline-pumping acts, including the Courtesy Clerks, Easy Target and Compact 56. Kyle Guyer, drummer for Easy Target, describes his band's sound as "New-school-pop-punk" with a rock 'n' roll influence.

Name recognition is a top priority for Cornerstone, and every flyer promoting the upcoming show sports the name and their logo, along with action shots of surfers, skaters and snowboarders. The guys said they think they will continue putting on concerts when their clothes are in stores.

"There is always a need for marketing, from the smallest business to the biggest business," Jones said. He said he feels that entertainment is an overlooked marketing tool.

As for their ultimate goal, Jones said that he would like to see the company name go through other states and countries.

Fate will decide if the apparel company will sink or swim, but Cornerstone has already planned their second concert event — a reggae show, slated for May 4 at the Wild Duck. Natural Vibrations will headline that evening.

For now, Cornerstone is working on expanding its inventory, putting together a catalog for mail orders and negotiating with local retailers to carry their apparel.

"Hopefully the outcome of these two concerts will be that our products will be a lot more visible and a lot more available to people," Jones said.

A & E briefs

Several exhibits are on display at the University of Oregon Museum of Natural History, 1680 E. 15th Ave.

Exhibits include "Archaeology of Oregon," "Backyard Birds," "Clues to an Unknown Culture," "Living Traditions," "Visions of the Dreamtime: The Art and Myth of Aboriginal Australia," and an articulated La Brea Tar Pits saber-toothed cat.

Museum hours are noon to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Sunday. There is a \$2 suggested donation, though admission is free for University students and museum members. For information call 346-3024.

"Mingqi: Early Chinese Funerary Ceramics" is currently one of the featured exhibits at the Museum of Art, located at 1430 Johnson Lane. The exhibit includes a selection of Chinese funerary tomb figures from the Han Dynasty (202 B.C. — 220 A.D.) through the Tang Dynasty (618 — 906 A.D.).

In the museum's Chinese Imperial Throne Room, the public can view works from the museum's collection of Imperial objects from the Qing Dynasty, including textiles, furniture, glass, ceramics and the largest jade pagoda outside China.

The museum also features the newly renovated Preble-Murphy Wing of Japanese Art, including a changing print gallery with traditional wood block prints. A second gallery offers highlights from the collections including Buddhist sculpture, textiles, ceramics, metalwork, hanging scrolls and painted screens.

Museum hours are noon to 8 p.m. Wednesday, and noon to 5 p.m. Thursday through Sunday. There is a \$3 suggested admission charge, though admission is free for students, University employees and children, and museum members. For more information, call 346-3027.

Art museum plans discussed

David Robertson, the University of Oregon Museum of Art director, will present an update on the museum's plans for a major expansion in a speech at 6 p.m. April 26 at the museum, 1430 Johnson Lane.

The talk, "Museum Without Walls: An Update on the UOMA Capital Project," will cover the building plans and give an overview of activities that will be implemented while the building is closed.

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