

Alli Ditson: Allihalla

OPTIONS FOR A YOUNG GENERATION by Sheena Lahren



PHOTO BY TODD COOPER

The crowd got even rowdier as models of various shapes and sizes fearlessly paraded more of the flashy swimwear, the work of 20-year-old Eugene designer Alli Ditson.

Influenced by her parents — her father was a costume designer and her mother made Ditson's childhood clothes — Ditson began making clothes for her dolls at the age of 8 and her own clothes after she turned 11. A little more than two years ago, Ditson started selling her designs to local consignment stores such as Deluxe and Infinity Mercantile (now The Redoux Parlor) and designing based on commission.

Ditson's self-taught road to fashion design is not a rare story in the Eugene fashion world. But with short, curly hair with a tinge of pink dye, an '80s vintage look and a laidback demeanor, Ditson exudes a style that's "not the typical young woman born and raised in Eugene," she says. And she is eager to be a part of an emerging fashion consciousness.

"Eugene is opening up to fashion," Ditson says. "The younger generation, those around 18 years old, is more interested in different fashion options. They are ready for it."

Ditson thinks the problem is not that people in Eugene don't want to be fashion conscious, but that it's just not available.

"The availability of new fashions is growing," Ditson says. "It's nice, because I feel like I am helping."

She also emphasizes that she thinks men need to be included in the Eugene fashion scene.

Inspired by '80s fashion, old movies, recycled fabrics and a recent trip to Thailand and Cambodia where she bought the spandex for her swim line, Ditson designs her clothes — ranging from swimsuits to dresses to men's apparel — based on the philosophy that "sometimes design ideas just happen."

But perhaps what makes Ditson's designs stand out beyond bright colors and interesting prints is that she doesn't take fashion design too seriously; she says she keeps it "relaxing and satisfying." Currently, she is thinking about pursuing nursing.

"Not planning it as my career will keep me interested in it. I can keep it pure this way," Ditson says.

Ditson plans on selling her designs at the next Holiday Market. Until then, her one-of-a-kind designs, under the label Allihalla, can be found at Deluxe, Kitsch and Redoux Parlor. She also works based on commission. You can find her at Kitsch at 1016 Willamette St. **EW**

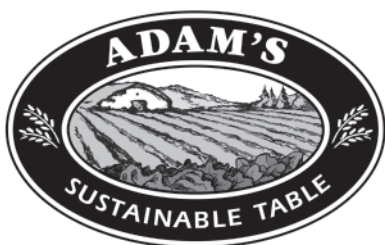
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Whistles and shouts burst from the crowd when a young lady wearing a bright green and pink printed bikini and a man in matching, snug-fit swim trunks pranced down the runway at the Aug. 7 Fashionably Urban fashion show featuring local designers.

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