

RUNWAY PARTY

The fashion show that crowds can't get enough of BY ALEX NOTMAN

Like most things in the Whit, the neighborhood style stands out from the common threads running through the rest of the city. The same can be said for the Whiteaker Block Party Fashion show. In years past, spectators have been privy to a no-holds-barred runway spectacle where parasols, antelope horns, corsets, guns (as accessories) and, of course, last year's now notorious feather headdresses can all be *de rigueur*. This year will be no exception, with a new location at Uncle Brad's Secret Stage at Cornerstone Glass, new designs, some new players and perhaps a new future for fashion in the Whit.

"It's more of a fun, crowd-pleasing event — more so than the traditional fashion show," Laura Lee Laroux says while poking a fork into a salted caramel cupcake at Sweet Life Patisserie. Laroux wears many hats — both figuratively and literally; she's a designer with her own line (Revival Clothing), owner of The Redoux Parlour on Blair Boulevard and a behind-the-scenes mover and shaker for Eugene's runway shows. Along with the help of production assistant Grace McNabb, a jewelry designer (Accents of Grace) who helped jumpstart the original Portland Fashion Week, Laroux is producing the Whit fashion show Saturday night with designs from women who work in her shop. Laroux says that she's always surprised how much attention the Block Party show attracts compared to bigger productions like Eugene Fashion Week and the Summer in the City catwalk.

"People ask more about the Block Party fashion show," Laroux says. "There's a lot of hype. The bigger the neighborhood becomes and the more well known for its artistic flair, the more excited people get about coming down and checking out what everyone has been talking about."

This year fashion fans will be talking about swimwear (by Sew Fresh), under-the-bust leather holsters (by Royal Macabre), evening gowns and boudoir wear (by Va Va Vie) and Laroux's "Western-prairie flair" line. "We kind of have the whole gamut covered," Laroux says, laughing.

Laroux and McNabb are excited for another Block Party newcomer as well: London Hair Studios. Unlike other fashion shows in town where makeup and hair must be simple and streamlined because many designers are sharing from the same model pool, the Block Party runway show has more freedom.

"This show we can go a lot more extreme with it, because this show is so much for the entertainment value of it ..." Laroux says.

"Go big!" McNabb adds, while also noshing on a salted caramel cupcake.

"It's a show we're putting on to capture people's attention and get people excited about fashion," Laroux notes.

And soon they may be turning more heads in the area. Laroux hints that plans for a garment production house where locals designers can have their designs produced on a larger scale (see "Fashioning An Industry," 12/12) has captured the attention of some local investors. Laroux and McNabb are currently looking at "industrial places in the Whit."

So make room, beer, because fashion is also brewing in Eugene's quirkiest neighborhood. ■

The Whiteaker Block Party fashion show starts at 10:15 pm Saturday, Aug. 3, at Uncle Brad's Secret Stage.



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