

Des Moines Register - Iowa life April 10, 2007

All dress up for Iowa's fashion week.

Hip, young L.A. designer Sarah Johnson organized shows featuring talent from her home state.

Iowa: Your runway is ready.

Fashion week Iowa kicks off Thursday at Crush nightclub in Clive with an evening of fashion shows celebrating couture created by designers living in or originally from the state. Shows continue through Sunday.

Labels such as Chelsea Faye Designs, Dornink, Pink Revolver and Smash Boutique have jumped at the chance to get involved in the first-ever event, according to founder Sarah Johnson.

Johnson, an Iowa native and 2004 Iowa State University graduate, planned the event from California, where she works at her own label, Rock N Reconstruct. She'll be back in Iowa for Fashion Week Iowa.

Photographers have caught celebs like Paris Hilton in Johnson's dresses, and her spokes model, Haley Marie Norman, is No. 25 on NBC's "Deal or No Deal"

Even though I'm out in L.A., I will always claim Iowa," she said. "I miss Iowa all the time, even in the winter."

Exploring the Iowa fashion scene was the first step in putting together the event. "It's been fun looking for designers," she said. "I've learned so much about the amazing group of designers (from the state).

"I'm happy to inspire people and show that, even though people stereotype Iowans as not the most fashionable people, there are a lot of designers here."

Shows will mix fashion and music, with Saturday's events including an auction of designer pieces for charity. Hair and make-up will be styled by Sage Tree Salon.

Johnson founded her own label two years ago, and creates one-of-a-kind reconstructed vintage pieces, sold locally at Smash in the East Village.

Having a lifetime subscription to Vogue is not required to attend the event. Johnson expects the audience to be a mix of trendsetters, friends and supportive parents and the fashion curious.

DESIGNERS DECKED OUT FOR RUNWAYS

Dornink

Based in: Des Moines

Founded: 2004

What the clothes are about: The dorninks – daughter Sarah and mom Faythe – design cocktail, evening and wedding gowns, including custom designs. Faythe started the business 25 years ago; Sarah moved back from New York City 18 months ago. The collections don't shy away from texture and color, even wedding dresses. "The majority of what we sell is in our studio," Sarah said. "We do lots of mother-of-the-brides. Its hard to find something cool looking."

Signature piece: a dress using fabric the Dorninks designed. I take fabric, cut it up and put it back together," she said.

Why Dornink is at Fashion Week Iowa: "its time Iowa had cool events," Sarah said. "I designed a whole new collections for it"