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## [Detroit Fasion Week 2008](#)

By **admin** | March 26, 2008

More action in Detroit, take note the heart and sole of this historic city!

## Detroit's glitzy Fashion Week Gives the runway to Michigan talent

Wendy Case / Special to The Detroit News

Wednesday, March 26, 2008

Every fall, the world watches as fashion designers descend on the catwalks of New York City, London, Paris and Milan to unveil their latest collections. "Fashion Week," as it is called, is a whirlwind of flash and dash, as famous models and fashion houses mingle with industry lynchpins, press and party people.

For local fashion photographer and entrepreneur Brian Heath, bringing that same sense of excitement and opportunity to Detroit is not just wishful thinking; it's a committed dream.

Thursday through Saturday, Heath and his volunteer staff will present the fourth annual Detroit Fashion Week at Asian Village on the city's downtown riverfront. Though smaller in scale and focus than its heady counterparts, the event's purpose is the same: to bring designers, models, beauty professionals and businesspeople together to create a more cohesive and prosperous atmosphere for Metro Detroit's fashion industry.

"If you ever wanted to experience Paris or New York, or something on a little grander scale than a small fashion show in a neighborhood club, this is it," says Heath, who estimates a nightly audience of 300 to 500. "It makes me proud, as a Detroiter, that we can present this kind of event. It's fun and it's beautiful."

While Detroit Fashion Week is accessible to everyone, its goal is to put the spotlight on Michigan talent.

"We are an industry fashion show that is interested in creating business," says Heath, a 48-year-old Detroit native who launched the event at 4731 Gallery in Detroit in 2005. "The level of talent that we have here in Michigan needs the opportunity to be seen beyond the basements that they design in and the homes that they sell from.

"Marketing is the main goal of fashion weeks across the planet," Heath says. "With Detroit Fashion Week, we literally have the designers on the runway (in front of) store buyers."

And like its major league namesakes, Detroit Fashion Week presents its cause with the same sparkle and glitz as those in Paris and Milan. Three days of runway shows featuring local models in couture gowns, cocktail dresses, urban street wear and casual sportswear are accompanied by after parties and VIP receptions — all in an effort to balance the classic traditions of fashion presentation with the fiscal realities of the business.

"It's been hard for the fashion industry to be taken seriously here in Michigan because it's just been used for entertainment for so long," says Heath, who also works to engage area schools, businesses and agencies on the project and has attracted high-profile sponsors such as Dior and advertising agency Gail & Rice. "Through Detroit Fashion Week, we've actually formed a nucleus of professionals who are interested in establishing a foundation for the industry here. We want to keep Michigan natives employed in Michigan."

Axel Harney, 30, waited in line to audition for Detroit Fashion Week as the event was gathering momentum at Asian Village a few weeks ago. As his portfolio reveals, the handsome Whitmore Lake native has modeled all over the world, but he says it's becoming difficult for models to work in Detroit with the state's flagging economy.

Harney hopes Detroit Fashion Week will be the shot in the arm that the local industry needs to show what it can do. "The cool thing about Detroit is that people are willing to take a chance," says Harney, who's one of 70-some local male and female models who'll be walking the runways this week. "They do things that are more edgy, quirky and creative. It's not as conservative and commercial as it is in places like Chicago."

Fotoula Lambros of Femilia, the Ferndale-based street couture label she owns with partner Emily Thornhill, is a big supporter of Detroit Fashion Week. Femilia showed last year and will be back again this week with 10 other local, regional and national designers.

"When we did the first Fashion Week, it was amazing," says Lambros, 25. "We revealed a 30-piece collection, and it got a huge response. People actually gave us a standing ovation.

"Brian Heath is doing a great thing by allowing designers like us to show our work," she says. "It gives us an outlet that

we couldn't have had on our own. It's done nothing but help us."

*Wendy Case is a Metro Detroit freelance writer.*

#### **Fashion Week at your fingertips**

**What:** Fourth annual Detroit Fashion Week

**When:** Thursday-Saturday

**Where:** Asian Village, 521 Atwater St., Detroit

**Thursday:**

6 p.m. Infinity Talent Group VIP Reception followed by a runway show at 8 p.m. of bridal couture from New York City's St. Pucchi at 8 p.m. Industry afterparty to follow.

**Friday:**

6:30 p.m. VIP Reception followed at 8 p.m. by a runway show featuring alternative, urban, fur and men's and women's sportswear by four designers. Industry afterparty to follow.

**Saturday:**

2 p.m. Accessory Marketplace; 6:30 p.m. VIP reception; 8 p.m. runway show featuring evening, contemporary vintage, costume, fur and men's and women's haute couture by six designers. Industry afterparty to follow.

**Tickets:** \$25-\$120. Prices vary depending on the show. Visit [www.detroitfashionweek.com](http://www.detroitfashionweek.com) for prices and information

**Call:** (313) 244-3066

#### **Designers**

See the work of the following local and national designers:

**Beulah Cooley, Detroit:** Couture evening wear

**Jill Robertson, Ferndale:** Couture evening wear

**Femilia, Ferndale:** Couture cocktail wear

**Brandi Wade, Ypsilanti:** Urban couture

**Kristine Fergusson, Midland:** Couture bridal, evening/costume wear

**Angela McBride, Royal Oak:** Alternative California wear

**Michael Humphrey, Detroit:** Sports, evening wear

**Tanya Seals, Atlanta:** Fur jackets

**Jovani of Viper Apparel, Saginaw:** Couture gowns, prom dresses

**Sherry Couture of Viper Apparel, Saginaw:** Couture gowns, prom dresses

**Rani of St. Pucchi, New York City:** Couture bridal

\*Article referenced to [Detroit News](#)

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