

WWD THURSDAY

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What the show didn't offer was anything resembling the strength of purpose that a serious designer collection demands. True, over the past several seasons, Cole has hinted at staking a claim for classics with a racy bent, and one could argue he continued that here with his lineup of lean, sexy shapes spliced and seamed ad infinitum. But racy classicism is hardly uncharted turf — hello, Calvin Klein. If Cole wants to be viewed as an apparel designer of weight, he needs to develop a clear vision rooted in something more compelling than mere clothes, and translate that into the concrete stuff of fashion.

Costello Tagliapietra: It was a superb beginning for Jeffrey Costello, formerly of VPL, and Robert Tagliapietra. They showed their first full-scale collection for Costello Tagliapietra, and one could actually swoon for the simplicity and cut of these Grecian- and Madame Grès-inspired dresses in rayon matte jersey. The fit was perfect (no easy feat in that fabric), and the dresses and few skirts swung gracefully at mid- and below-calf lengths. The drama stayed on top in subtle draping, bare backs and a bevy of beautiful necklines. The best of these: the flared tank dresses with cross-strapped backs or a steel-toned V-neck version. For the last three seasons, the duo has pulled together a few pieces, currently sold at Barneys New York Japan. Safe to say, the designers should pick up a few American accounts this season.

Project Alabama: Project Alabama's success is truly a marvel. In the company's third year, designer-founder Natalie Chanin and her business partner, Enrico Marone-Cinzano, have seen sales grow and P.A. clothes become staples at the best department stores. Who could have predicted that such a charming idea — handmade T-shirts — would have such long and profitable legs?

On Wednesday, Chanin, up from her studio in Lovelace Crossing, Ala., showed her two lines: Project Alabama Hand, the original collection made entirely by hand, and Project Alabama Machine, the line produced with Italian manufacturer Gibò SpA and now in its second season.

While the prices of the two lines are quite different — \$150 to \$2,000 for Hand and \$60 to \$700 for Machine — there is a definite coherence between them in the shared color palette of washed-out blue gray, khaki and burnt orange. Hand continues to develop beyond its original T-shirt lineup, and the reverse appliqué, embroidery and printing translated well on everything from hoodies to backless halter dresses. These pieces meshed with Machine's tailored



▲ Project Alabama

▲ Tocca

Fashion Scoops

RAIN DATE: It's just rain, except for when it falls on celebrities, prissy editors and fashion in general. Olympus Fashion Week opened to a downpour Wednesday morning that shut down for several hours an entire subway line that runs beneath Bryant Park, setting off a chain of events that will have repercussions for days to come. **Kenneth Cole's** celebrity turnout for his 10 a.m. show was just a drizzle, as only one of a fleet of rented cars managed to pick up its assigned celebrity, **Alan Cumming**, with enough time to get to the tents. Meanwhile, many mommies in the crowd were concerned about babysitters who had yet to arrive for day-care duty — something that caused several editors to miss Cole's show altogether.

Then came word that **Miguel Adrover**, who planned to show his spring and fall collections at 5 p.m. at Sara D. Roosevelt Park, has rescheduled for Friday at 5 p.m. A spokesman for the designer said that was the only time park authorities could make the space available that would also suit Adrover's need for a natural daylight presentation. Several designers are already scheduled to have presentations at that time, including **Thakoon Panichgul's** Thakoon collection, **Charles Alexander**, **Gustavo Arango** and **Edwing D'Angelo**. Naturally, those planning their shows around that time were less than thrilled by the news — and those reached on Wednesday afternoon said they had not been advised of the move prior to being contacted by WWD.

"When I heard about him doing a show outdoors, I thought it was the worst thing any designer could do," said D'Angelo. "What was he thinking? It rains every other day here. He should stick around and show at the end of the collections. I don't think it's fair, but you can't tell people what to do."

Panichgul added, "It's unfortunate, but what can we do?" His first show will be a walk-through presentation at Drive-In Studios, 443 West 18th Street, "so hopefully people can see mine before they see him."

A spokesman for Alexander, who is showing in the Mao Space at 135 West 18th Street, called back to relay a message from the designer: "Miguel is very considerate." Huh? "He meant that very sarcastically."

SCOOPING UP SPACE: With the latest lease signed by Scoop — 3,000 square feet on two levels at 430 West 14th Street — the company is poised to conquer Washington Avenue in the Meatpacking District. The space will be divided between two new concepts including Scoop Starting Young, which co-owner **Stefani Greenfield** describes as typical Scoop fashion for ages 2 through 12. In other words, she'll be manufacturing Mini Me's of the young moms who shop for Marc Jacobs, Theory and Juicy Couture. She declined to discuss the other concept, but said both are expected to do between \$1,500 and \$2,000 per square foot in sales. These days, Greenfield is all about segmentation. An existing coed store at 873 Washington Street will become a men's only shop. A new 3,300-square-foot women's store at 861 Washington Street will open in November. "The more we segregate by gender and classification, the more people will understand that Scoop is about lifestyle and items," Greenfield said. **Kim Mogull**, president of Mogull Realty and the exclusive broker for Scoop, said the new store, which replaces a nightclub, will "change the face of an important corner." Greenfield would be happy to own the entire block of Washington Avenue between 13th and 14th Streets. "We love our neighbors," she said, "but if they decided not to renew their leases, we'd take the space."