

# Harvard Pair: From Cambridge to Catwalk

By Katherine Bowers

**BOSTON** — Amid resplendent Oriental rugs, leather couches and a leering, mounted alligator, Harvard senior and aspiring designer Lewis Remele stood in the Hasty Pudding social club here and fussed with an iron over a cocoa brown cashmere dress he designed.

There were a couple of dented beer kegs tucked around the corner (the Pudding is a private, student-run party club), but that's the only whiff of undergraduate about Remele or his enterprise, which is made its debut Sunday at fashion week in New York.

His first collection — a capsule of Art Deco-inspired cocktail looks that are simpler and more mature than Remele's 22 years would suggest — took in \$94,000 through trunk shows to fellow students and others. Remele and classmate-cum-business partner Elizabeth Whitman raided their trust funds, each chipping in \$35,000 to finance that first collection and retain a New York public relations firm.

Whitman lined up a second round of funding — about \$250,000 — through two Boston-based investors in order to present 22 fall 2006 looks in New York and to produce the collection. Their label, Lewis Albert, is a combination of Remele's first and middle names.

"We're learning through the process," said Whitman, 21, who is the chief financial officer, sometime fit model and best customer. "Did I think I would be launching a business my senior year of school? Never in my wildest dreams. It's freakishly scary, but exciting."

In June, the two intend to collect their Harvard diplomas and head to New York to open permanent offices.

Their first collection started as Remele's exercise in putting together a portfolio with which to apply to Parsons The New School for Design for possible graduate school. To recoup their initial \$35,000 investments, they decided to produce and sell the designs, working with contractors as they shuttled between Cambridge, Mass., and Manhattan, Whitman's home base.

The under-25 crowd at Harvard gobbled up the dresses during a weeklong trunk show in the Presidential Suite at the Inn at Harvard.

"The New York girls who shopped at Barneys thought \$600 was a great deal [for a dress] and bought two. The Banana Republic girls thought it was an investment, but they bought, too," said Remele, who got his first sewing machine at 16. He motioned to the now-ironed cocoa cashmere dress, with racing stripe insets of cream silk at the forearms. "I see girls running to class in this [dress] with tights and boots all the time."

Whitman and Remele did even better when they raised prices, to \$1,000 a cocktail frock, and were hosts of a trunk show in his native Minneapolis, where Remele's mother, once a boutique owner, gathered some former clients. The 45-year-old-plus crowd cooed over that same cocoa brown

cashmere, praising the long sleeves and thick knit.

Launching the business properly, Remele and Whitman decided, meant a New York show. They were among hundreds of new applicants considered by fashion week organizers.

Remele's second effort, his fall looks, will juxtapose cashmere and worsted wools, in chocolate with cream dots or caramel herringbone, against bursts of bright silk. There are tight pencil skirts piped in vivid Atlantic blue silk or with accordion pleats fanning out of the hemlines. He's done pantsuits, cocktail dresses, evening coats and a couple of ballgowns.

Wholesale prices will range from \$400 for a cashmere tank to \$1,000 for a ballgown. The bulk will be daytime separates between \$600 and \$700.

The fall collection was inspired by the six Mitford sisters, the glamorous and eccentric Englishwomen from an aristocratic family who have inspired several books, many of which Remele has read.

His formal training includes a summer stint at Parsons, a couple of classes at Boston's School of Fashion Design and a summer internship with Derek Lam. Between running errands and stringing beads for Lam, Remele realized he wanted his own line. A major in art and architecture at Harvard hasn't been much of an outlet.

"It's a small minority at Harvard interested in fashion and an even smaller minority who pursue it actively," Remele said. He enjoys imagining the lives his clothes lead when classmates travel. "I love thinking about where the suitcases go — to Manhattan or London or Dubai or Kansas City."



Elizabeth Whitman and Lewis Remele



A Lewis Albert look on the runway in New York.

PHOTOGRAPH BY GEORGE CHANSEE. RUNWAY BY JULIAN COHEN

## Universal Media to Merge With Lyric Jeans

**NEW YORK** — Universal Media Holdings Inc. on Friday said it will merge with Lyric Jeans Inc. via a stock exchange.

The terms of the agreement, signed on Feb. 1, were not released.

Lyric is a Florida manufacturer of premium denim characterized by a design that incorporates the printing of lyrics and titles of songs directly onto the surface of jeans and apparel accessories.

Universal said that it "plans to enter agreements with music publishing companies and recording artists to obtain licenses for hit songs" for use on apparel. The company said it will use the lyrics and titles from all genres of

music to appeal to a cross section of tastes and interests.

Universal added that the royalty-sharing mechanism it will use "will be the first of its kind, allowing the company to share its success with hit artists, songwriters and publishers."

Plans for the merged firm include showrooms in South Beach, Fla., and in Los Angeles, Universal said. It added that its access to the Hollywood community will enable Universal, through innovative marketing, to associate stars and celebrities with its brand.

Universal, through its Universal Broadcast Network, is primarily in the business of developing a low-power television broadcast network.