

Fashion, Sydney . . . House

And starting a podcast

On a dark street in Surry Hills, when all the shops are closed, Sydney Fashion House is at work. The brainchild of David Henley and Alice Grundy, Sydney Fashion House is a monthly podcast which visits local stores and designers to try on their wares and have a bit of a chat. In a climate where high fashion is becoming increasingly commercial and debate rages over the health of models, this humble podcast explores alternate styles and what inspires Sydney's burgeoning designers.

Podcasting, or web-casting, is really still in its infancy, and we started this show for two reasons - we like clothes, and we wanted to test out the new technology. After much nagging and getting to know each other, the Carvers of Foxes Store Surry Hills opened their doors to our little experiment, and since then we've been in the deep end.

While we had an idea of our objectives it was really only after a few episodes that we started to distil our flavour. SFH shortens the distance between fashion and the consumer. By going in, having fun, being willing to expose ourselves – in the figurative sense – we manage to get to know the designers and owners we meet and the fashion becomes about the character of the stores themselves, not just the clothes and accessories that fill them.

Clothes are made to be bought and made to be worn – so our mantra has become “taking fashion off the catwalk.” Initially there was some trepidation as to the reaction from store owners - we had no idea whether they would be willing to let us inside their shops to film and showcase their wares on various-sized women, (more importantly, Alice was worried about what people would think of her ego, parading around like a model in size 10 instead of 6). The reaction has been overwhelmingly positive from the stores, and our audience of growing viewers comes from all around the globe, from the US, UK, Korea, Japan and nationally in Australia.

There is an ideology which underpins the creation of each episode. Firstly, it has to be fun – like going shopping with your friends. Secondly we're not too bothered with the artifice of video journalism – not to say we're low-tech, just that in this media-savvy world, the typical TV concealment of the how the sausage is made is a bit deceitful.

One of the joys of Sydney shopping is speaking with the smaller-scale operators and talking aesthetics. A bag from Foxes Store, for instance, is as much about its functionality (how many wine bottles it can sneak into a concert), as the fact that

it's been made in Australia from the finest leathers with impeccable attention to detail. Fiona from KYOTAP, episode 4, explains the difference between flat design and drapery – a theme which recurs in a later episode with the new fashion label Epoqu from Publisher Textiles. Fashion becomes personal and fun when you get to know what's behind the decision making. Nicole and Paul from Zukini in Newtown stock labels from Newcastle to Brazil because of their passion for colour and cut. Each of these decisions can ultimately be attributed to a personal search for beauty and style.

It's a bit of a hard slog and there's no money in it yet but we've got a good production team and we have a lot of fun making the episodes. We let personality go all the way through the show, from wardrobe mishaps through to the editing jokes Dave likes to slip in. 2007 promises a full schedule: more stores, reprises and surprises.

Sydney Fashion House can be found at www.sydneyfashionhouse.com.au, or on the iTunes podcast directory.