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Insider got a sneak(er)-peek at the "Pro-Keds for Jeffrey" collection at **Damon Dash's** headquarters in midtown Manhattan last week. A smattering of brightly colored hi-top, low-top and slip-on styles in suedes and metallic leathers set off with the brand's iconic red and blue striping, the collection carries that chic 'n' quirky **Jeffrey Kalinsky** signature on the classic, old-school vibe Pro-Keds platform. "I think [Jeffrey] reps a cool aesthetic and a cool demographic that recognizes the coolness of our brand," Dash said, showing off a few styles in the showroom. "It goes more to establish a cool factor for [Pro-Keds]." The line, which retails for \$105 to \$125, will be available at Jeffrey boutiques in Atlanta and New York, Fred Segal in Los Angeles and 12 Nordstrom doors nationwide April 15.



>>> **LIVE FROM MICAM:** The Brits were at it again on the first night of the Micam show. Londoners **Gwendolyn Carrié** and **Emma Hope** (below, left) were mwah-mwah-ing with the likes of **Raouda Assaf** at **La Banque**, a nightclub complete with gaudy décor and "spirited" live entertainment. The event was organized by the increasingly ambitious **British Footwear Association**, which has helped make bonding à la Britain a regular stop on the Milan show tour ... It's never too late to be lifestyle. That seems to be the idea at **Robert Clergerie**, where the comeback Frenchman unveiled an eyewear collection for fall '07. The four new styles (think square, oversized, Nicole Richie-esque shades) retail for \$150 to \$160 and are slated to debut stateside in June ... **ANCI**, the National Association of Italian Footwear Manufacturers, is eyeing the U.S. market as the next location for its retail concept stores dubbed "I Love Italian Shoes." Though the organization did not reveal exact plans, it's unveiling a new promotional strategy in the U.S. for the back half of 2007 in anticipation of the Italian shoe store concept, and has already launched an advertising campaign at JFK Airport in Queens, N.Y. ... **Stuart Weitzman** signed a deal for three



London store, is teasing a NY store for fall, while the Euro-comfort brand **Geox** is eyeing greater retail presence on the East Coast by the end of 2007. [For more on Micam, see p. 6] — **Michelle Baran**

>>> **TRAVELIN' MAN:** Ecco is crossing the continent — on the feet of **Detlev Henschel**. The 50-year-old German (below) plans to walk across North America along historic trails such as Route 66. According to Henschel, the walk to St. John, Newfoundland, [which began last week in Los Angeles] could take up to nine months. Ecco, which has sponsored Henschel for the past year, plans to outfit him for the length of the journey. En route, Henschel will provide the brand with feedback on the shoes' performance. Expect some Henschel-inspired developments in Ecco's spring '08 line. — **Jennifer Carofano**

>>> **PROJECT FOOTWEAR:** It's been a busy year since designer **Emmett McCarthy** graced the stage on the second season of Project Runway. He recently celebrated the one-year anniversary of his Elizabeth Street boutique and the launch of his Web store, both of which will soon feature his newest project: footwear. In August, McCarthy will bow a footwear component for his namesake collection, a smattering of embellished luxury snakeskin looks that will go for \$125 to \$350. "I'm addressing the needs of my customer," he said. "They want me to style them top to toe, and they need shoes!" — **Lindsay E. Sammon**

>>> **IN THEIR OWN WORDS:** "These flights are terrible — they're half empty. There should be fewer, fuller flights. We are ruining the world with all this cheap flying, you know," quipped **Manolo Blahnik** on a trip to Istanbul, where the shoe legend opened his first boutique last week. "Just the other day, I saw a picture of some little polar bears on the ice caps. They were dying. And there was one bear trying to catch them, with its paws out as their bodies floated away. It was terrible."



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<< By Eric Newman. Bring on the scoops: Eric_Newman@condenast.com.

Payless Taps Michael Kors Designer Bernard Figueroa

By ERIC NEWMAN

NEW YORK — Payless ShoeSource went straight to the luxe footwear world for its latest design hire.

The value-priced retailer will announce today that it has tapped Bernard Figueroa, former VP of design for Michael Kors footwear at licensee Schwartz & Benjamin, to be its new director of design for women's footwear.

"We were looking for someone who understood design," said President and CEO Matt Rubel, adding that the move was part of Payless' larger strategy to beef up the fashion quotient across its offering and expand its presence in the Big Apple.

Figueroa will join Robert Mingione, VP of product design, and other Payless personnel in the company's New York design center, which is expected to open later this year.

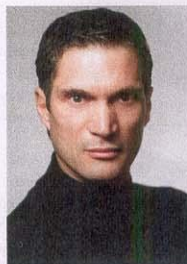
"I have one priority, and that is to make shoes that I'm proud of and that when they hit the Payless store, I want to be

able to say that I'm in love with them," said Figueroa, on a call after orientation and meetings with the women's buying team at the brand's Topeka, Kan., headquarters last week.

Figueroa added that while the world of Michael Kors, where footwear retails for hundreds of dollars, is markedly different from that of Payless, where prices average \$15, with marquee product reaching \$45, he sees no trouble making the switch.

"What I've been doing in the designer world is totally possible to do here at Payless," he said. "My challenge is to make something not so expensive look great."

Figueroa was also excited about the designer collaborations — including Patricia Field and Abaete for Payless — that has brought the brand considerable buzz recently. "Collaborations are the way the market is going," he said. "It makes people understand fashion and be more conscious of it."



Bernard Figueroa

Analysts Laud Finish Line's Pick of Nordstrom Vet Sato

By LINDSAY E. SAMMON

NEW YORK — Analysts cheered Finish Line's surprise announcement last week that Nordstrom veteran Sam Sato was joining the athletic retailer as its new VP and chief merchandising officer.

Sato — who had been at Nordstrom for 22 years and helped the department store dramatically grow its athletic business — was most recently VP and corporate merchandise manager for the department store's men's shoe division.

"Nordstrom's footwear business is one of the best in the industry," said analyst Jeff Van Sinderen of B. Riley and Company. "[Sam] is coming from a great place."

In his new role, Sato will report to Finish Line President Glenn Lyon. He will oversee

footwear, apparel and accessories for Finish Line stores.

Van Sinderen said Sato will aid the company in its goal to incorporate more casual looks into the mix. "What Finish Line has been trying to do is break out of the mold of being just an athletic performance retailer," said Van Sinderen. "I think [Sato's] perspective will help them diversify their product assortment."

Another market watcher said Sato's well-established vendor relationships will be an asset to the retailer. "It's a great combination, and it makes sense," said Christopher Svezia, an analyst with Susquehanna Financial Group. "I think Sato will bring more consistency to what they've been trying to do."

Finish Line declined to comment last week, and Sato was unavailable.