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REVIEWS

Transmetropolitan chic

Fashion

By Paul F. P. Pogue

The premiere of local fashion designer Berny Martin's spring/summer Catou Couture collection Friday night at the Mavris Arts Center was a glam happening. With 34 models, more than 100 outfits, an audience of 300 and a throbbing techno soundtrack, it was a tour de force of both event planning and the skill of Indianapolis' local models, who worked the runway with the same class and confidence you would expect from anyone on the Style Network.

Martin's fashions are largely restrained and elegant. On those occasions when he gives in to self-indulgence — an emerald green and black bustier and skirt set, for example — his ideas are still refined enough to work out. Martin's casual collection exudes sass and attitude, but his real jewels are in the evening and formal wear categories, with comely satin gowns and tack-sharp men's suits. These clothes are wearable to the last piece, distinctive enough to draw attention, but not so outlandish as to create a spectacle.

Every piece has its own story, such as a fingerless glove/black gown combo that serves as one of the line's signature works: "I wanted it to be the superchic, and at the same time supernatural woman," Martin said. "She's classy, but she can be feisty sometimes. That's one reason I cut off the fingers of the gloves on that outfit. Little pieces we add here and there bring a different character to the dress."

The highly cosmopolitan feel of the event was very deliberate, the outcome of a three-month planning process.

"I grew up in New York and that was very much an aspiration for everything I want to do," Martin said. "There's so much culture there, so much diversity. Basically life from every aspect of the world, and I wanted to present that here in Indianapolis. I wanted people to show that."

Martin's fashions are available through his catalog and Web site at www.CatouWear.com



Models Kaouthara Chamem, Baylee Zimmerman, and Shaneka Terrell flank designer Berny Martin at the premiere of his Catou Couture line.