

Jaz age: Abboud's back with two new menswear lines

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Joseph Abboud is back.

Two new fall collections from the Boston-born designer are set to hit stores next month. As Lord & Taylor's new creative director, Abboud has designed a mens line called Black/Brown 1826. He also has returned to the high-end market with Jaz, a luxury brand available at more than 150 specialty boutiques nationwide.

"It's Joseph Abboud evolved. Joseph Abboud 2.0," said Michael Macko, fashion director at Details magazine. "It's a testament to how talented he is."

Abboud has been anxious to return to designing menswear since he sold his Joseph Abboud brand in 2000. A noncompete clause, now expired, had prohibited him from working in the business. And though he can design again, he lost an ugly court battle this spring about using his name for the new Jaz line (Abboud is appealing that ruling).

"I feel like Freddie Kruger," said Abboud, last week in a telephone interview from his Bedford, N.Y., home. Abboud, who appeared in a two-page ad for Jaz in a recent issue of the popular DNR trade publication, downplayed the loss of his name.

"I don't ever play the celebrity game, but my consumers know me. People who've liked my work have found a way to connect with me," he said.

Around Greater Boston, there are already plenty of reasons for reconnection. The Roslindale-raised University of Massachusetts grad still considers Boston dear to his heart personally and professionally. Jaz shirts are being manufactured in a Fall River factory that Abboud, who spent his formative fashion years selling clothes at Louis Boston, bought last year. Among the local shops to carry the new line are Mr. Sid in Newton Centre, the North Shore's Kaps chain and Drinkwater's in Cambridge.

Details' Macko said Jaz will likely succeed even in this challenging economy. While men aren't updating the basics in their wardrobe, they are still shopping for special items.

"Based upon that, I think there's an opportunity for it," he said. "There's always room for more good fashion."

And this time around, Abboud said, that's all he wants to make. He's using the finest materials, such as Loro Piana cashmere for his shirts and suits, and described the silhouette as sleeker. Jaz is cut closer to the body. Even ties are narrower.

"I'm not a big, sexy guy thing, but it is a little sexier," he said.

The name Jaz came courtesy of a family round-table. His young, Juicy Couture-loving daughter Ari suggested "Juicy" while Lila, a high school senior, said he needed something more "jazzy."

Abboud immediately jumped at jazz.

"It's American. It's all about improvisation and innovation, and also that it didn't need translation," he recalled. "I dropped one of the zees and I own the trademark."

With his Fall River factory, a daughter looking at colleges, and a renewed membership to the UMass University Club, Abboud plans to increase his face time in the Bay State. Plus, he still lives and dies with the [Red Sox \[team stats\]](#).

"I always find my way back to Massachusetts," he said.

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