

names that people who are part of urban lifestyle and culture really can't associate with," Smith said.

ONX designs, which are casual with an urban flair, target people between the ages of nine and thirty who enjoy sports, music, and entertainment.

Though the cultures that shape city life often inspire Smith's creations, his style encompasses everyone.

Smith is committed to providing consumers with quality clothing that won't cost them an arm or a pant leg.

"People are going to spend their money for goodness sake. I don't want to give them just anything," he said.

"With what people are spending for clothes, they need to get what they're paying for."

Prices will vary, but each shirt, for example, should sell for between \$18 and \$24.

Real-world observations like an eye-catching font or a song help generate fresh design ideas.

Once he develops a new concept, Smith hand-draws several versions. After the sketch is refined, he transfers it to his computer to make a camera-ready pattern for the embellishers.

He then chooses the colors and graphics which will adorn the piece of clothing and sends a printout of the template to the screen printers and embroiderers.

The embellishers ship the finished product to stores. It typically takes four to six weeks for a



garment to go from the drawing board to the hanger.

But before any clothing can sell, Smith must establish his name in the market. He credits his fiancée, Montika Ruth, with helping to promote his designs.

A business major at Penn State York, Ruth has worked as the assistant manager in her father's clothing store for the past seven years.

She is using her classroom training to help with the financial section of the business plan.

"In the beginning, my role was mostly supportive," Ruth said.

"Now I do a lot of the book work, and I help Halman research new companies over the Internet. I also help sell shirts and give him suggestions for marketing his clothes."

Ruth added, "Halman has the vision. I just do what I can to help."

The couple's persistence has paid off. Smith has pitched his designs to retailers from South

Carolina to Pennsylvania, and many are interested in his work.

As a result, Smith and Ruth have adopted a more aggressive promotion style.

They previously sold clothing directly to the public at events like music festivals and basketball tournaments.

They also sold merchandise at some small stores in the Harrisburg and York areas.

Now they are concentrating on magazine advertising to expose the clothes to a wider market.

Smith is scheduled to have ads appear in upcoming issues of Rap Pages, The Source, and Extra, Extra Large, which target the music and entertainment industries.

Smith and Ruth also attend trade shows in New York City. These events provide forums for designers to showcase their wares.

Smith said his first show was exhilarating. He will attend another event, Vibestyles, this March.

It will feature 200 entrants. Smith and other up-and-coming designers will share space with Fubu, Karl Kanai, and other prominent names.

Though anxious to see how he fares against the established labels, he feels optimistic, and he is willing himself to succeed.

"I just can't wait to get there and actually exhibit my clothes," he said. "There's just no way I can't do well there. I really feel it."

Ruth shares her fiancée's high hopes. "Once he has his mind set on something, he will eat, sleep, and breathe it until it's to completion," she said.

"When he gets a vision in his mind, he'll keep chipping at it until it's materialized. His dream is much bigger than anyone could see."

Smith dreams of selling his clothing around the globe. He is currently trying to contact the head of an Australian production company who wants to introduce hip hop culture in his country.

Fashion design has posed many challenges for Smith, but he has embraced each one.

He said his greatest challenge, along with balancing school, his business, and a full-time job at Caterpillar, is learning to be patient about the creative process.

"I don't like not knowing right away if the embellisher will create a quality finished product. Once I find [the right people] then I can rest."

Even if Smith's fashion career does not succeed, he has no plans to slow down. He will simply submit his design to advertising agencies.

"You're doing more than just paying tuition to follow through with your major," he said. "Never feel trapped or confined. Realize that there are a lot of people willing to help, and don't let your ego get in the way."

"Ever since I've realized that I could use these resources to help develop what I want to do, ...it's really cool. It's just really cool."

The Halman Smith Model Ensemble

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Top: Halman Smith, Brad Moist and Crispin Sartwell;
Bottom Left: Crispin Sartwell, Halman Smith, Brad Moist, and Paula Marinak;
Bottom Right: Crispin Sartwell.

Page 9: Brad Moist and Serena Silverman.

All photos by Nick Ackerman