

Fashion Outlook

Simply successful

Nancy Heller cashes in on the casual

By Rochelle Chadikoff

"Casual, comfortable dressing," is how Nancy Heller aptly describes the designs that have made her a success for almost two decades. Sophisticated simplicity suits Heller to a T, especially if that's a T as in T-shirt. It was a T-shirt that launched her line 18 years ago.

It was indeed an auspicious start: She was discovered — in the true sense of the word. It has the makings of a legend — like actress Lana Turner being spotted in a soda shop.

Heller went to a Bette Midler concert wearing a T-shirt of her own creation. "It had an elastic neck and a lot of embroidery," says Heller, who recalls that at the time she had just had a baby and was doing some home-sewing, including jackets for Cher and Diana Ross. That embroidered T-shirt caught the eye of Herb Fink, a Los Angeles retailer. He ordered 30 shirts for his store, and when they sold out, he ordered more.



NANCY HELLER broke into retail with a T-shirt design, so it's fitting that she collects T-shirts.

While Heller brings back a modified version of that first T-shirt every five years or so, her current staple is a simple T with a sweet center bow and gently padded shoulders accentuated by rows of over-stitching. The bright colors of her short-sleeved model have made it a hit for the last two years.

For autumn '89 she's adapted this best-seller by using long sleeves on mellow knits. It's one of those pieces that goes with everything and a natural companion to her new stonewashed denim sweat pants, as well as an unfussy way to highlight the tailoring of her gabardine blazer with the extra dash of a yoke and self sash.

That blazer is the perfect example of "the little bit of fashion" that Heller has added to her line. "I've grown up over these 18 years," explains the designer, whose fall line includes beautifully tailored pants, a full skirt and a straight skirt, the dashing blazer and a whimsical cropped jacket with buttons going from the collarless neckline to the rounded hem.

Heller is equally comfortable using cashmere or corduroy as cotton or light wool. Her fabrics make her clothes easy to wear during fashion's fifth season — the "transition" between summer and autumn — and a

perfect wardrobe for California's moderate climate.

"I'm definitely a California-bred designer," says Heller, who admits that she loathes getting dressed up. "I'll wear a T-shirt or a very undesigned piece from my line, like my knit sweatshirt or a cashmere cardigan."

years ago, she introduced her sophisticated simplicity to the plus-size market. What next? A lower-priced line claims, Heller, who realizes that most women "collect" her designer line. And on the horizon: The designer thinks that her son, 18-year-old Jonas, a freshman at American University in

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gan." An ideal evening look? She adds jewelry to a cashmere ensemble of pants, sweater and cardigan.

Heller's cashmere ensemble costs about \$1,500, and many of her pieces are priced between \$150 and \$350. Heller, who says that her all-around customer is between 22 and 65, ships her designs to 700 stores across the country, including her flagship store in San Francisco.

"I was lured into retail," says Heller, adding another chapter to her success story. Sheldon Gordon, the owner of the San Francisco Centre, asked her to set up a store. Opened last year, the streamlined store is a perfect backdrop for her designs. It has attracted so many customers that Heller is considering opening more stores in Southern California.

She seems at ease with her expanding company, which generated about \$35 million in 1988. This year, she introduced her denims because the buyers from department stores like Macy's in San Francisco, Bloomingdale's, Neiman-Marcus and Sak's Fifth Avenue thought they would be a natural complement to her line. Heller added some distinctive touches, such as tapering the jean-leg into a sweat pant cuff and using corduroy to trim her toggle-buttoned jacket. She also expanded her outerwear line.

One of her biggest moves was to introduce a menswear line in 1986. "It's a lot of work," admits Heller. But her efforts have been recognized: In 1987 she won the California Designer of the Year Award, and last year she was nominated for the Catty Sark Award for Excellence in Menswear Fashion.

Heller plans to concentrate on expanding her line for women. Five

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The face tells all

By Mary Martin Niepold

The face this fall will be a hallmark of the American woman who feels confident about who she is, and who believes that naturalness is the best signal of her self-image. Gone are the Hollywood red lips of a year ago. Here are the barely blushed cheeks and smoky eyes of a woman who would rather be noticed than stared at.

"The face is very natural," observes Nancy Swenson, vice president and director of training for Estee Lauder. "The cheek color is very subtle and very sheer. The lips are very much the focus of the face, and still they are very warm and very bright."

This year's bright lips, however, are bright with shades of pumpkin, not fire engine red.

"The hottest news, really, for fall is color," Swenson continues. "It mirrors exactly what you see in ready-to-wear fashions. The colors are rich fall foliage colors, with the pumpkin family as the star."

Gale Hayman, owner of a new cosmetic company, agrees that orange is the big makeup news for fall. Hayman, co-founder of the famous Giorgio of Beverly Hills boutique, and creator of the top-selling fragrance Giorgio, has now launched her own cosmetic line, Gale Hayman Beverly Hills. Hayman's "mistake-proof makeup system" is based on eye color (since hair color and skin color can change).

"The biggest trend for makeup is oranges," she says. "Reds are out, oranges are in. Nail polish should be neutral. Peach blushes and nude foundations give you a less hard, more natural look."

Orange, per se, has never been a successful color for cosmetics since its yellow undertones clash with too many skin types, particularly those skins with blue undertones. Consequently, the true cosmetic story is about pumpkins, peaches and coral

tones. At Lauder, their "lead color" for lipstick is "Perfect Pumpkin." At Hayman "Ripe Peach" is suggested for blue eyes. At Revlon "Wild Berries" is the fall cosmetic theme, with emphasis on "deeper, richer, bluer" berry tones.

If lips are the focus of the face, remember to keep that focus softer than in past seasons. "Lips are warmer this year," explains Swenson. "They don't shout quite so much as last year."

Along with the pumpkin palette for lips is the same color family for cheeks. "The look for cheeks is very sheer and subtle," says Swenson. "The look you want to achieve is as if you have just come in from a brisk walk, an all-over glow."

Subtlety defines the eyes, as well. Smoky eyes in browns, greys and plums are endorsed by almost all of the major cosmetic companies, including Lancome.

Tony Michaels, vice president of marketing for Lancome, says, "The eyes are soft and smoky this year. The point is to look neutral, but there's depth and dimension." Sepia and malachite tones are suggested.

Another makeup trend for eyes this fall includes the way in which eyes are colored. According to Lauder's Swenson, "You want to apply your eyeshadows so they look like a very subtle wash of color. Lining under the eyes is becoming more and more minimal for a more natural look. A hard line under the eye is out," she continues.

Essentially, the face this fall is a healthy interpretation of beauty. Think in terms of that brisk walk, a face flushed and glowing from a good work-out.

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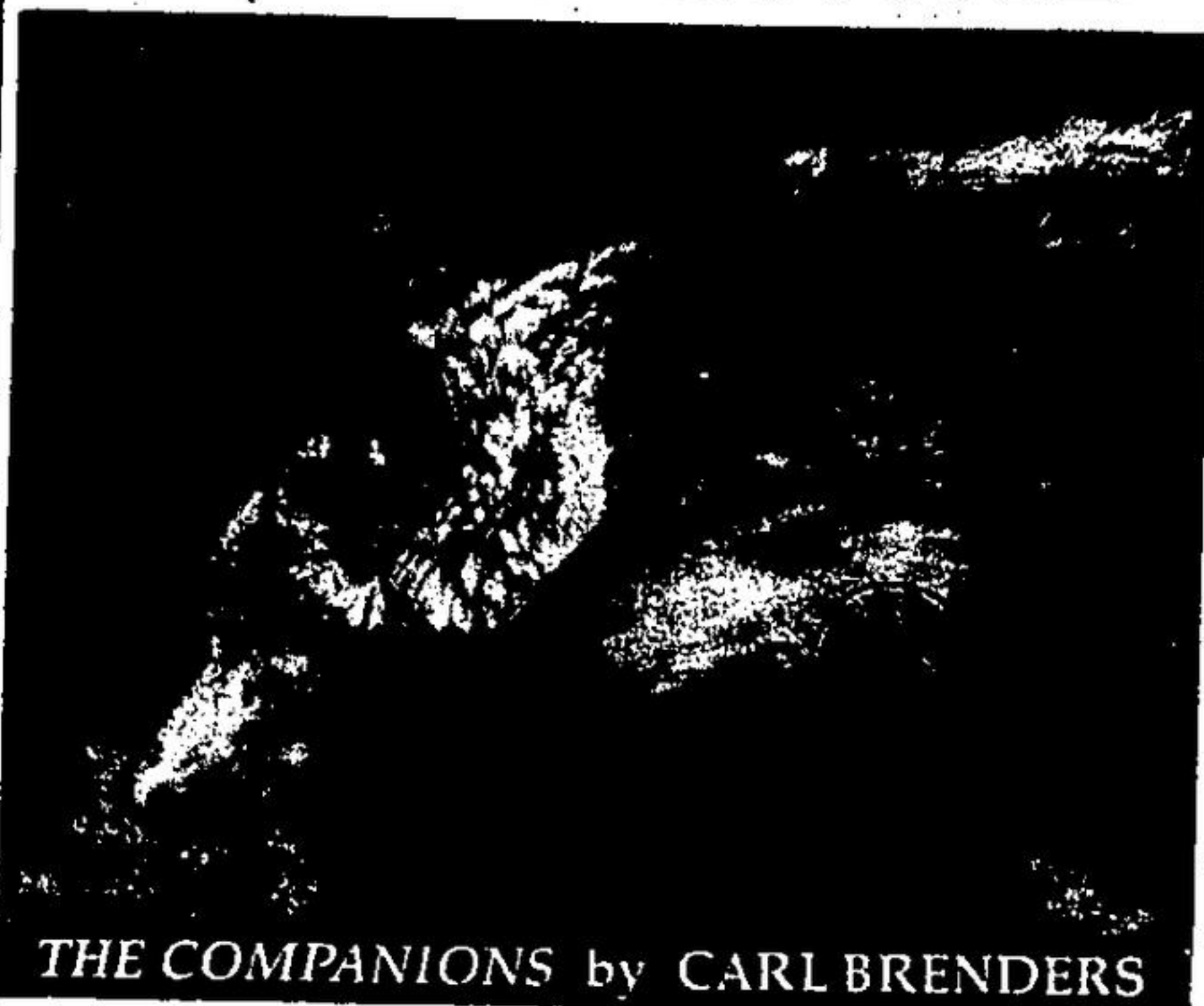
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