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WESTCOAST LIFE

INDULGE



Sisters Melissa (left) and Mari-ann Jurcevic's new Main Street boutique, Hum, specializes in independent Canadian labels, including Vancouver-based designers such as Allison Wonderland.

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WARD PERRIN/
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The fashion hum is up on Main Street

■ **SHOPPING** There's a new Euro hip-hop selection of boutiques you won't find in a mall near you, offering lines like Biviel and Coclico

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There's no doubt that Main Street is ground zero for all things fresh and unique in the fashion business.

Near Broadway and especially between 20th and 22nd avenues are boutiques you won't find in a mall near you. Many stock clothing and accessories from independent designers whose names you might not recognize, but you'll appreciate their individual sense of style.

You'll also have the satisfaction of knowing that you won't see what you buy there on a dozen other people walking down the street.

"We love this area," says Mari-ann Jurcevic, who owns the brand-new boutique called Hum (2623 Main St.)

with her sister Melissa. "People know this area as a place to find something different and unique, and that's what our vision is."

Hum, which has been open for just a couple of months, specializes in independent Canadian labels. On a recent visit, I spotted a great three-quarter-length houndstooth plaid coat by Valerie Dumaine of Montreal (\$265) and an adorable cropped vest by Hyphen (\$120) of Toronto. The store also carries the work of Vancouver-based designers like Allison Wonderland.

On the other side of Main is another new face with a different focus.

Show Off (3712 Main) is the place to pick up a little something for a night on the town, such as a beaded chiffon top with matching camisole by My Friend (\$98.99). You'll also

find an impressive selection of party dresses, from casual looks to drop-dead glamorous ones, most of which are from New York and Los Angeles.

Kam Dhamrait opened the doors on Show Off about four months ago with husband Harj. She says she loves the atmosphere on Main Street, which she describes as "very European and up-to-date, really hip-hop."

Nearby is the year-old Umeboshi (3638 Main), the eastside echo to Kitsilano's hot shoe spot, Gravity Pope.

At Umeboshi, owner Stephanie Gorrell stocks small, edgy lines like Biviel, Coclico, Terra Plana and Medium, as well as more widely available brands like Camper and Irregular Choice.

"We try to get things that are a bit

more unique," says Gorrell, who sagely saw an opening for a shoe boutique amid all the fashion stores on Main.

The grande dame on the street is the Barefoot Contessa (3715 Main), which 11 years on is aging gracefully. It has recently added clothing and shoes by top designers Michael Kors and Ted Baker to its lineup. I also loved the beaded satin and lace tops and minidresses (\$175 to \$295) by Naughty, sister line to the hot London label Nougat. And there's always something quirky and fun in the store, like the matching shopping cart (\$46) and umbrella (\$26) in a brown and turquoise floral by Three Wishes.

Narcissist (3659 Main) has been around for a decade but only three years at this location. Owner Sara Robson-Francoeur designs the

store's house label. It includes the incredibly versatile Pamela dress (\$185) and the Jennifer J. dress (\$188) in soft jersey, both of which have a top that can be wrapped differently to create a variety of looks.

Also worth a look while you're in the neighbourhood are Eugene Choo (3685 Main), Life of Riley (3697 Main), Twigg and Hottie (3671 Main), Lazy Susan's (3647 Main) and Front & Company (3742-3746 Main), the last one for second-hand clothing.

Closer to Broadway, check out Jonathan and Olivia (2570 Main), which carries designer denim and casual tops and sweaters to pair with them, and Motherland Clothing (2539 Main), home to an in-house line of reasonably priced casual wear as well as quirky T-shirts.

And stay tuned — it's a safe bet that Main Street is destined to become even more of a fashion destination in the months and years to come.

Photo: Andrew Blain/pag.canwest.com