

# LIFESTYLES

## 70's fashion guru makes comeback in New York

By Constance White  
THE NEW YORK TIMES

NEW YORK -- The spirit of Roy Halston Frowick hovers over the new company bearing his name like a hobgoblin, a presence with the potential to do good or to wreak unholy mischief. Halston, one of America's most well-known and venerated fashion names, is being reintroduced with a grandeur that would make the late designer proud.

Halston's excess -- as a designer who insisted on cashmere gowns and fresh orchids in his office everyday and as a personality who partied until the wee hours at Studio 54 -- made him a success. Some might say it killed his business, too.

Halston's real downward spiral began when, in his grandiose quest to "dress America," he licensed his name to J.C. Penney in 1982. Not only did the cheaper clothes not do well, but prestige retailers scurried in the opposite direction, soon dropping his high-end line from their racks.

Even by fashion's hyperbolic standards, Halston International is plunging ahead with extraordinarily ambitious plans for a company less than a year old. Halston is a subsidiary of Tropitex Apparel Group, a large low-price apparel manufacturer with little name recognition but a good relationship with retailers and an eye on Wall Street. Through Halston, the company hopes to expand its presence to encompass the higher end of the fashion market, said Marc Setton, who with his brother, Jack, own Tropitex.

The company's early gains have been impressive, but the final reckoning on whether Halston's legacy will be one of renewal or regret is still many seasons away.

Halston Lifestyle, a moderately priced line of sportswear, is now being shipped nationwide to stores like Macy's, Belk's and Burdines. A more expensive designer collection, Halston Signature, is to be introduced in a runway show on April 9 at the New York Historical Society, 170 Central Park West. And a bridge line is slated for 1998.

There are already 21 Halston licensees for products like lingerie, sleepwear, handbags, belts, hosiery, shoes, sunglasses and bed sheets. Halston has taken two floors on 530 Seventh Ave., where Randolph Duke, the company's creative director and designer, has been installed.

Licensees and retailers are ready to commit to a half-baked idea with no sales track record primarily because, like an invisible hand, Halston is still a guiding presence in fashion. "It's a name to be reckoned with," said Joan Kaner, a senior vice president and fashion director for Neiman Marcus. "He was a force in American fashion and it still has appeal."

Surveys conducted for Tropitex indicate that the memory and reverence for Halston is strong among consumers, Marc Setton said. It is one of the reasons the company decided to bet big on the venture. Tropitex has invested \$10 million, which includes advertising and promotion.

The expenditures on broad-based advertising, which began even before the new collections were sent to stores, is one of the ways Halston is protecting its crapshoot. Halston Lifestyle, the linchpin of the new world of Halston, has jackets that sell for \$100 and sweaters for \$30, all marketed with the slickness and attention to detail more common among high-price brands.

In fact, the biggest question is how Halston plans to appeal to a designer customer with Halston Signature.

# Cool Fashion



Bring color to summer's neutrals with a pair of pumps by Anthony Mark Hankins. Available in lime, orange and fuchsia

Pantsuits make a comeback. Classic pantsuit with gold tone buttons. Available from E-Style.

Minidress in floral print from Anthony Mark Hankins makes bold statement. Ignore the hat.

## Designers' cool colors make for hot spring/summer looks

By Jeri Young  
THE CHARLOTTE POST

Spring has sprung, bringing with it visions of cinnamon, mint, caramel, watermelon and cantaloupe.

No, we're not talking about a cool picnic buffet. We're talking spring and summer fashion.

Cool is in for design, color and fabric.

For African American women, cool color combos used to spell a fashion nightmare, but when mixed with neutrals and prints, the look can be a dream.

"The phrase versatile, neutral wardrobe basics is one you rarely hear from a black woman," says Lori Scott, co-creator of E-Style, the mail order fashion catalog created by Ebony magazine and catalog giant Spiegel. "African American customers reported a high degree of frustration when shopping for fashion. Seasonal color palettes didn't always suit their skin tones, styles were sometimes too basic, and there were unique fit issues that were largely ignored in the marketplace."

To make cool colors more palatable, try making use of another spring must, the sheer shell in lime or orange, topped with a neutral jacket or vest. Or invest in a bright jacket.

"The jacket can be mixed with all your navy, black and khaki basics such as trousers, walking shorts and slim skirts or short pleated skirts," says Colorado store buyer Dawn Thompson. "It gives a pop of color, which is so important for the season. It's the color that updates it."

Jackets should fit the shape of the body. Longer jackets flatter more ample hips and busts.

Body-conscious fashion has made a splash. The retro look, with its hip-hugging styles and A-lines makes for a look that is slim and trim.

Silks, linens, sarongs, figure skimming pants and body hugging silhouettes are all the rage for fall.

Also hitting runways and stores are ethnic prints, which when combined with color make for arresting looks.

For anyone wondering what to combine, the sky -- or the imagination -- is the limit. The big news in fashion is sheers, which means you can layer to your heart's content.

"You'll find layered sheers that are more wearable and fit into the style without being too off the runway," says Bev Carpenter, a fashion director for Dillard's. "Personally, I would buy a sheer tunic in a flowing fabric with a slim leg pant."

Although most of the season's look is "dress friendly," pants are important.

"They're just growing and growing and growing," says Houston fashion director Roz Pactor. "And clean and flat-front pants with a straight leg or flare are selling everywhere."

"Women are still going for comfort, I do believe. Pant suits are just easy to wear."

According to E-Style, emphasis will also be placed on shine, but not your mother's lamé. Iridescent silks and laminated fabric give an heavenly quality to everyday and evening wear.



Disco look in polyester. Note open toe sandals and halter tops. Available at T.J. Maxx.

## Bites, missing fingers don't deter snakeman

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SLADE, Ky. -- Jim Harrison's hands speak volumes about his life.

"I lost this finger to a desert horn viper from Saudi Arabia," he says, showing a left middle digit, a smooth nub half the size of his other fingers.

His left thumb looks a little flat on top, where it was bitten by a cobra on Jan. 4 in a near-fatal accident. The index finger on his right hand is also a stump, but that happened in a more conventional accident -- crushed while lifting weights.

Harrison is running out of fingers to mangle, but his love of snakes appears to be limitless.

"I've always been drawn to stuff that was a little bit different, even though I never thought I was different," says Harrison, who has been bitten 10 times in 21 years of snake handling. "Does that make sense?"

Everything about Harrison, a nationally known supplier of snake venom for medical research, is "different." Take his place of business -- a former Powell County restaurant that he converted nine years ago into the Kentucky Reptile Zoo.

The outside resembles a faux Swiss chalet with circus like signs promoting a good show. One mural depicts Harrison wrestling with an alligator.

Inside, though, it's a skillfully managed home for dozens of snakes, some of whom produce venom worth more than \$200 a gram. It might look like a pit stop for oddball tourists, but the zoo is a serious place.

"He's become a very respected player in the provision of venom for research," says Mike Goode, reptile curator at the Columbus Zoo in Ohio.

Harrison, 38, recently attended a snakebite conference in Paris, France. He's also helping a university in Brazil breed rattlesnakes whose venom, when mixed with elements of cow blood, forms a "glue" that may hold human skin together after surgery.

"He has built up a very good operation down there at Slade," says Sherman Minton, a retired microbiologist from Indiana University.

Harrison is hoping to build on that reputation.

Harrison has launched an expansion drive to build a state-of-the-art facility that will feature not just reptiles, but also big cats and a rehabilitation center for birds of prey. The zoo could provide more than 20 jobs for local people, says Melissa Moreland, a Clay City hair stylist who admires snakes and serves on Harrison's board of directors.

"He's not just a freak out here trying to show off and stuff," Moreland says. "What he's trying to do is help people, and he loves what he does."

And while Harrison's love nearly killed him, it also saved him.

Without the proper antivenin, cobra bites are fatal. But Harrison had the right medicine and a list of instructions for the doctors who treated him. At one point, his pulse dropped to 12 beats per minute.

"It's a miraculous substance," he said of the venom.

Indeed, snake venom is a complex product that differs from species to species and region to region. It's been tested as a treatment for tremors associated with Parkinson's disease, and some types dissolve blood clots and may minimize the effect of strokes.

Harrison is one of just a few suppliers in the country, says Minton, the Indiana microbiologist.