



But designing clothes remains Alfred Sung's main interest. And the soft-spoken, hard-working perfectionist continues to dazzle fashion-conscious people with the uncomplicated elegance of his creations.

Jean-Claude Poitras

Montreal designer Jean-Claude Poitras is a "big gun" on the Canadian fashion scene whose sophisticated separates have received accolades in Europe, Canada and the United States for more than 10 years. Poitras' unique designs emphasize a richness of fabric, colour and style that creates a spirited and elegant look.

Not only a hit with the buying public, Poitras has also received critical acclaim from numerous audiences. At an international competition held in California in 1982, he won the Moda del Amo prize for design. In 1987, Poitras was chosen to represent Canada

at Monte Carlo's Fil d'Or — where he won a prestigious award given by France's Maison du Lin to exceptional designers making significant contributions to the world of fashion. That same year, he also received the Canadian Woolmark Award in recognition of his design expertise. And recently, Dubonnet honoured Poitras for his achievements over the past decade with a presentation of his men's and women's collections during the Gala Mode Design Dubonnet that was held in Montreal.

Born in 1949, Poitras studied the basics of couture at École des métiers commerciaux and commercial design at the Studio Salette, both in Montreal. He entered the design world with the opening of his own workshop called Parenthèse (parenthesis). Then, in 1972, he joined up with Eaton's — a large Canadian retailer — as buyer and manager for the Adam Shop (the European designers' men's boutique)

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and as assistant buyer for the Ensemble Shop (women's European high fashion). Says Poitras, "I discovered then the international fashion scene, the European style of business."

Poitras left Eaton's and became the salesperson for the Peroche line at Beverini, a Canadian manufacturing company. Designing his first coats for the Beverini collection, in 1977 he became the stylist for the line, to which he brought a younger, more European look. Later, Poitras began designing under his own label, "Bof", a French expression which underlines his irreverent attitude to fashion and his intent to innovate. The Bof line was nationally distributed and the Bof boutique was its highest-profile home in Montreal. Poitras soon became known as one of Canada's most promising designers.

Poitras' first licensing agreement in 1983 affiliated him with Importations Franck, for which he creates a varied line of sportswear, knits and coats. A second licensing agreement was signed in 1984 with International Trademark Apparel (then known as Sawyer Canada — a Toronto-based company) to design a line of men's and women's sheepskin coats. As a good example of his trend-setting — never trendy — fashions, Poitras has given a totally new look to sheepskin, almost singlehandedly turning a failing market into an international success. Recently, he has entered into partnership with Amsel and Amsel, a Montreal manufacturer, to produce a collection of fur coats for men and women, for which the first designs will be launched this fall.

Harry Parnass and Nicola Pelly

Ten years ago, Harry Parnass and Nicola Pelly opened the first Parachute store in a converted boiler room on Crescent Street in Montreal. Today their designs are sold by more than 200 independent retailers in Europe, Japan, Australia, the United States and Canada, generating sales of approximately \$27 million per year. Having outfitted such celebrities as Michael Jackson, Jane Fonda, Don Johnson, Peter Gabriel and Woody Allen, the designers have clearly attained international status.

Parnass — a practising architect and Professor of Architecture and Urban Planning at the Université de Montréal — is the ideas person. He is the conceptualizer, not only of the clothing designs but also of the stores themselves. He says they are based on the Italian piazza concept, with a central open space in each showroom where people can meet, chat or just be seen. Parnass, now 52, gets his ideas from reading, travelling and teaching. "It makes for a very nervous life," he admits, "you never relax because everything is information."

Nicola Pelly, 39, studied fashion design in England and has worked extensively in Europe, the Orient, Canada and the United States as a fashion consultant. She's the pragmatic half of the team, the one who translates Parnass' ideas. She has the technical background, the sensitivity to fabric and the creative marketing skills.

For Parnass and Pelly, designing clothes is not just a matter of catering to the masses: it is a philosophy that fuses together elements from cultures past and present to make new forms and new symmetries, "hybrids" as they call them. As Parnass explained in a recent lecture in Milan: "We work in a time