

# Picks<sup>of</sup>theWeek

## LA WEEKLY

NEWS / COLUMNS / FILM / MUSIC / THEATER / ARTS / FOOD / CALENDAR

## style

AUGUST 29 - SEPTEMBER 4, 2003

### Construction Crew

by Seven McDonald

#### in this week's issue

#### features

##### MUSIC ISSUE 2005

[X Ray Vision](#): Two generations of L.A. rockers on the meaning of punk, then and now. BY GREG BURK

[I, Songwriter](#): Rivers Cuomo and the search for the perfect hook. BY KATE SULLIVAN

[The Mad Science of Fredwreck](#): Snoop, Xzibit and Dr. Dre all praise the Palestinian-American freak of beats. BY BEN QUIÑONES

[Baby Love](#): The hippie-capitalist wisdom of CD Baby founder Derek Sivers, hero to 93,000 indie musicians and counting. BY MATT WELCH

[He Can Hear Music](#): Pop genius Jeff Barry on love, songwriting, Phil Spector and the art of just doing. BY KATE SULLIVAN

[Who is Your Musical Hero?](#) BY SEVEN McDONALD

[The New Gay Blacklist](#): Corporate America is bowing to anti-gay Christian groups? boycott demands. BY DOUG IRELAND

[The Crystal Conundrum](#): Meth is the drug of the moment for gay men who thought they'd die young. So who can get them to stop? By TONY VALENZUELA

#### news

"Our clothes are very utilitarian, creative and, I like to think, inspire conversation," says Beth Ann Whittaker, the co-owner and co-designer, along with Laura S. Howe, of Matrushka Construction, named after the Russian nesting dolls. "We are really into the mystique of the Russian constructionist influence," says Howe, a former L.A. fine-art starlet ("I had a moment"). Matrushka is a new happening/clothing store that's so experiential and inexpensive it defies the basic concept of shopping, leaving one to wonder how long this refreshing Silver Lake shop can stay as is.

"We make things that are one of a kind," explains Howe, whose mother is a Marxist philosophy professor turned Methodist minister and whose grandmother sewed parachutes during World War II. "I can make like 10 things a day. It's no big deal. We can alter them — we can do it while you're here." Besides one-of-a-kind clothing items, the Matrushka girls offer monthly art openings, regular T-shirt construction nights (you design your own T-shirt for about \$8), and an impressive selection of books, including Silver Lake local Michael Rochlin's hand-bound, self-published nonfiction work about L.A.'s Eastside. "We are pro-literate," explains the bespectacled Howe, who notes the books also give guys something to do while the ladies shop.

Less than eight months old in its current incarnation (Whittaker had it on her own for about six months, but it wasn't until Howe signed on as a partner that the whole thing clicked), Matrushka also serves as a platform to propagate its owners' self-professed "bleeding-heart liberal/proletariat"



Nikki Fosmore wears a cotton jersey dress with silkscreened bears and trimmed in ribbed cotton by Laura S. Howe. (Photos by Raul Vega)

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CONTEST

JEFFREY ANDERSON looks for the highs and lows in the [court ruling on medicinal marijuana](#).

HAROLD MEYERSON on [Martin Ludlow's new power](#) as L.A.'s labor boss.

R. SCOTT MOXLEY takes aim at new [SEC head Christopher Cox](#).

MARC COOPER sees [L.A.'s future in Craig's List ads](#).

WILLIAM J. KELLY on [Gov. Arnold's selling out](#) the public this coming hot summer.

[DOUG IRELAND](#) and [PAUL KRASSNER](#) on the sins of Deep Throat.

ALAN RICH on Alberto Vilar's [bad nights at the opera](#).

STEVEN MIKULAN on the [Teamsters' toast to Coca-Cola](#).

### LA WEEKLY STAFF BLOGS

[Joshuah Bearman](#): Leveraging the Infosphere

[Marc Cooper](#): Blowing up political myths and deceits

[Doug Ireland](#): Analysis from veteran political journalist Doug Ireland

[Judith Lewis](#): Restoring environmental truths and decency

### columns

#### DEADLINE HOLLYWOOD:

Here's to You, Mrs. Robinson: Remembering Anne Bancroft by NIKKI FINKE

#### A CONSIDERABLE TOWN

[MoveOn's Republican outreach in Burbank](#).

[Hooping with the LAPD](#).

[Friday night at the races](#).

DAVE SHULMAN's [COLUMN](#)



**Fresh sewn daily: Laura S. Howe (left) is in a cotton seersucker suit that she designed, and Beth Ann Whittaker wears a rayon wrap dress of her own design.**

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Keeping the store stocked is becoming a real issue. On a recent Saturday actress-DJ Shannyn Sossamon spent an hour chatting with a friend on a bench outside after picking up a tank top decorated with a red-stitched bird, while Nicole Chavez, the set costumer for the new Fox drama *The O.C.*, played dress-up inside. "I come here every weekend," says Chavez, who ultimately left with five items, including a green juicy-fruit striped terrycloth halter dress and a new wave-inspired peasant skirt.

"Everyone at work always comments on my clothes. It's great. No one else has them, and it's so inexpensive," continues Chavez, who lives nearby and adds that her "bustier" Westside sister has started shopping here as well.

In a further act of creativity and conservation, Whittaker and Howe also sew their own shopping bags/purses from fabric scraps and silk-screen their own tags. "They say things like 'Love Somebody,' 'Stop Bush' and 'Plant a Tree,'" notes Howe, who recently silk-screened trees on a slew of dresses, tops and skirts after a weeklong Sequoia seed-collecting trip in the Sierra Nevada.

politics. For example, during the Iraq war, the window was plastered with traffic-stopping "Stop Bush" art.

"We use the analogy of a bakery," says Whittaker, who got her B.A. in English lit at UCLA and later worked at Book Soup. "Everything is changing along with our inspiration — it shows in what we sell. It's fun 'cause people come in every week, and it's a whole new stock of stuff."

"But, you have to keep up with production," adds Howe, who also built Matrushka's countertops and display racks. "On a good day, like yesterday, 20 things might leave the store, and it's like, 'Whoa, it's empty.'"



**Ela wears a cotton top with lace trim and a cotton skirt with lace trim and a jersey waist by Beth Ann Whittaker.**

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[DAVE.](#)

J.T. STEINY's [NATIVE'S NOTEBOOK.](#)

[Party shots](#) by MARK "COBRASNAKE" HUNTER

[A cartoon](#) by BRUCE ERIC KAPLAN

LA VIDA

LIBBY MOLYNEAUX on [L.A.'s funniest comedy.](#)

Plus, [our gayest HOOPLA ever.](#)

[Letters](#)

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**arts**

**FILM**

[Who was that masked man?](#) SCOTT FOUNDAS exposes *Batman*.

[That old black magic](#) ? ELLA TAYLOR spellbound by *Howl's Moving Castle* and *The Adventures of Shark Boy and Lava Girl*.

[The Other Tehran](#): Iranian crowd pleasers on Los Angeles screens by SCOTT FOUNDAS.

**TV**

ROBERT ABELE on [Hell's Kitchen's Gordon Ramsay](#), the Simon Cowell of haute cuisine.

Also ROBERT ABELE's [SURF REPORT.](#)

**BOOKS**

[Where the Disconnect Happens](#): DAVE SHULMAN goes poolside with Eric Bogosian.

**THEATER**

STEVEN LEIGH MORRIS on plays about [rage and melancholy.](#)

**ART**

[Premature Exhibitionism](#): DOUG HARVEY on portraits by the artists as young boys (and girls).

And SHELLEY LEOPOLD on [Space Invader's invasion.](#)



**Nikki is in a cotton skirt with piping and a cotton seersucker tank with cotton trim by Beth Ann Whittaker.**



The two have even opted to stay out of the traditional sizing game: Matrushka's tags simply say, "Size Is Relative." "For me the sizing thing is absurdist," says Howe, standing up behind the counter to eye her domain. "It doesn't really matter. If it's gonna make you feel bad 'cause it says 'large' or it's gonna make you feel better because it says 'extra-super small' . . . If the thing fits, wear it."



**Ela Unverdi is in a cotton cap-sleeve blouse and denim flare pants by Laura S. Howe.**



*Hair and makeup by Nikki Providence; all jewelry by Araceli Silva*

*Matrushka Construction, 3528 W. Sunset Blvd., (323) 665-4513; [www.matrushka.com](http://www.matrushka.com); next T-shirt construction night is October 10.*

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## MUSIC

**Web Exclusive:** LINA LECARO?s [NIGHTRANGER](#).

ALAN RICH?s [A LOT OF NIGHT MUSIC](#).

## RESTAURANTS

[God Damn, He?s Toothless](#):

JONATHAN GOLD?s soft spots.

Plus, [ASK MR. GOLD](#) about cold noodles.

In [WHERE TO DRINK NOW](#):

LIBBY MOLYNEAUX takes refuge at kid-friendly watering holes.

## CALENDAR

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