

A monkey hat and retro lunchbox lend a touch of whimsy.

PHOTO: CATHERINE SHU, TAIPEI TIMES



NEU Store

ADDRESS: 1F, 17, Ln 177, Dunhua S Rd Sec 1, Taipei City (台北市敦化南路一段177巷17號1樓)

HOURS: Sunday through Friday from 12pm to 10pm, and Saturday from 12pm to 10:30pm

TELEPHONE: (02) 8771-8170

ON THE NET: www.neu.tw; www.gardengirl.com.tw

NEU is the exclusive importer of many of its stocked items.

PHOTO: CATHERINE SHU, TAIPEI TIMES



Seminal album covers and vintage record players grace one corner of the shop.

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A pair of crystal-studded jelly flats by J. Maskrey for Melissa.

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NEU style

NEU Store in the East District offers a hip selection of hard-to-find imported designer lines

BY CATHERINE SHU
STAFF REPORTER

Nestled in an alley near the intersection of Zhongxiao East and Dunhua South roads, NEU Store carries a well-edited selection of clothing seen on hipsters from the Lower East Side of Manhattan to Los Angeles. Carefully arranged racks of jackets and dresses zigzag through the spacious boutique and around tables displaying velvet Melissa wedges and retro-inspired T-shirts. In one corner is a diorama with three vintage portable Columbia GP-3 turntables surrounded by walls plastered with album covers.

A lot of the clothing sold by NEU Store is available exclusively in Taiwan at the shop. Many of the designers are inspired by different genres of music and the subcultures that spring up around them.

"We picked the name NEU, so you can imagine what kind of music we listen to," says Yiling Cheng (鄭伊伶), the co-owner of Garden Girl Enterprises (花園娃娃服飾), the store's parent company, which was founded in 1992 to import American street wear brands XLarge, XGirl and Paul Frank. NEU! — pronounced "noy" — was a German krautrock band formed by two former members of Kraftwerk in 1971.

Over the past few years, Cheng notes, fashion has turned over a new leaf as consumers rely more on the Internet and celebrities for style cues, instead of waiting for high fashion designers to dictate the trends for each season. Fashionistas are now inspired by street style blogs and sites like Cobrasnake and Last Night's Party, which posted photos of the young New York City hipsters who gathered at Soho club Don Hill's for parties thrown by the Misshapes, a trio of DJs who quickly became cult fashion icons.

Cheng and co-owner Stan Lee frequently travel to the US to keep up-to-date on new designers. Buddhist Punk's bold, neon-heavy prints are saturated in the aesthetic of new rave, while Kill City's skinny jeans and tees, bold, asymmetrical silhouettes and monochrome color palette take their cue from post-punk bands. On the flip side, Jovovich Hawk's airy, lacy sundresses bring a very sweet, retro California aesthetic into the store, while Karen Zambos' well tailored vintage-inspired coats and dresses could be imagined on a 1940's debutante.

NEU Store is also the exclusive importer of the hyper-feminine clothing line designed by Paris and Nicky Hilton, and Dim Mak, the line of tees and hoodies from the record label founded by celebrity DJ Steve Aoki aka Kid Millionaire.

Scenesters on a budget can pick up Junk Food T-shirts with rainbows or Smurfs, a popular 1980s cartoon, printed on the front for NT\$1,550 each, or a pair of luscious velveteen burgundy Melissa wedges for NT\$3,980. An elegant, black wool trench coat from Karen Zambos runs for NT\$18,000, while a short dress by Buddhist Punk, with gathered tiers of raw-edged zebra-print silk is NT\$13,400. A limited edition gray jacket from the Warhol Factory X Levi's series with a skull applique on the back is \$29,500.

NEU Store also doubles as a gallery space. On Saturday, it will host RockersNYC, an exhibition of poster art from the New York based designer whose graphic tees have developed a cult following from the Lower East Side to Tokyo, from 7pm to 11:30pm. For other events, check out the store's blog at neu-store.blogspot.com.

Velvet Melissa wedges bring 1940s glamour to mind.

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