

# Retail Environments

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# GlobalShop

FOCUSED ON THE FUTURE

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Backstory: **HOT TOPIC**

INSPIRATION FROM  
Retail Design Collective

## Hot Topic Brings Social and Technological Components to the Shopping Experience

**H**OT TOPIC IS ALL ABOUT MUSIC and pop culture—and the newest evolution of the store environment is no exception. Designed by Southfield, Mich.-based JGA in collaboration with Hot Topic’s store design department and in-store technology company CRI, the 1,600-square foot Santa Monica, Calif., store is technical, sleek, and transparent. The challenge was to create an environment that mirrors the world of Hot Topic’s young, tech-savvy customers, connects social and

technological components, and brings the music to life in the store.

Cast acrylic, molded metals, and media technology contribute to the store’s high-tech feel, supporting its merchandise, music- and pop-culture-influenced apparel and accessories for 12- to-22-year-olds. JGA’s Chairman Ken Nisch says, “The point of difference within this new concept is the use of the organic, technical, and in many cases transparent shapes, along with internal illumination for accessory fixtures.”

For example, the storefront’s externally illuminated letters are sandwiched between the inside and outside of the glass to create a dimensional effect, “as if the glass is slicing through them,” Nisch says. The rest of the storefront provides total visibility into the space within a reflective tile/concrete board framework. The twisted acrylic prisms feature projections that mirror what is being displayed on the backwall screen of music-related images.

“The whole basis of this new evolution is the idea of transparency,” explains Darrell Kinsley, Hot Topic’s vice president of visual and store design.

### A FOCUS ON INTERACTIVITY

Interactivity is inherent within the space. Shoppers can listen to online music or access Hot Topic’s own music resource ShockHound. There are stations where shoppers can “co-create” micro-manufactured tunes and design their own t-shirts. The store environment itself can be modified to accommodate live music performances in the space; all fixtures, including the cashwrap cabinets, are on casters so the entire store can be transformed into a live music venue.

Between shows, elements contribute to a performance area vibe but still function in the shopping environment, including the ceiling metal grid, the stage flooring with embedded LEDs, theatrical lights, cameras, and a back-area “green room” that also functions as a portable fitting room or clearance zone.

Tables, created by CRI, offer shoppers the ability to digitally access content in the store. The multi-touch computer interface

*All fixtures are on casters so they can be moved to accommodate live music performances in the store.*



Photography: Bielenberg Associates, Los Angeles



*The T-shirt wall, a system of individual acrylic panels holding band T-shirts, curves to the ceiling. Mounting the panels to slatwall using different-sized brackets allows the overall presentation to arc.*

## Hot Topic, Santa Monica, Calif.

- Design:** JGA, Southfield, Mich. 
- Retailer:** Hot Topic, City of Industry, Calif.
- In-store technology/lighting design:** CRI, Fairfield, N.J.
- Lighting:** Juno Mfg., Des Plaines, Ill.
- Flooring:** Floricipolytech, Parker, Ariz.
- Flooring:** Dwyer Marble & Stone, Farmington Hills, Mich.
- Store fixtures and millwork:** Laurel Manufacturing, Delanco, N.J. 
- Store fixtures:** Kosakura, Santa Ana, Calif.
- Slatwall:** Spacewall West, Placentia, Calif. 
- Media wall/ceiling panels/mannequins:** Greneker, Los Angeles 
- Fabrics/upholstery:** Dazian, Burbank, Calif. 
- Exterior signage:** Blake Signs, Stanton, Calif.
- Paint:** General Coatings Corp, Rancho Cucamonga, Calif.
- Glass:** D&R Glass, Rancho Cucamonga, Calif.
- Architectural stage drape:** Daisy Cake, Scottsdale, Ariz.

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built into the custom-designed platform and enclosure provides access to programs including Hot Topic's loyalty program and its ShockHound music web site, with merchandise, MP3s, and social networking.

Los Angeles-based Greneker provided the ceiling panels and the large media wall in the rear of the store. The ceiling panels create a series of "clouds" that carry the eye toward the large rear media wall. The media wall provides a changeable background for the bands and performance groups and also accommodates social media elements that can offer customer recognition, as well as a window as to activities that are happening from in-store or theatrical venues, musical performances, and celebrity or musician interviews. The cells can function independently or linked together and allow customer interaction using RFID technology. This gives customers the ability to make purchases, monitor rewards points, social

networking, or choose the music to be played over the store's sound system.

### MAKING FIXTURES TRANSPARENT

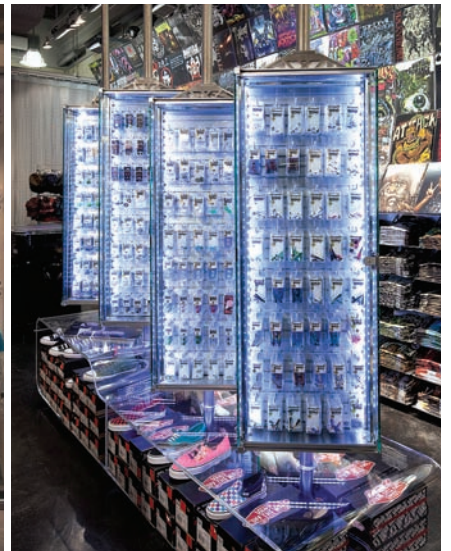
For powerful merchandise presentation, the innovative store fixtures were designed to be mostly transparent. Many incorporate acrylic as a primary material, often bent or twisted, and in some cases internally illuminated with LEDs to highlight the edges. (The mannequins at the front of the store, supplied by Greneker, are also transparent.)

Laurel Manufacturing, based in Delanco, N.J., provided fixtures and millwork, including the movable cashwraps, floor-to-ceiling body jewelry display fixtures, the curved t-shirt wall display, and accessory fixtures. Laurel, which has provided fixtures to Hot Topic for more than eight years, completed all mechanical drawings for the fixtures, and worked closely with

Hot Topic's store design department to design some of the smaller fixtures and displays. Laurel's President Daniel Iosca notes that one of the challenges of the project was engineering the fixtures to be durable enough to withstand five to seven years in a space frequented by younger customers.

The cashwrap cabinets fit an extremely small, 3-foot-by-3-foot footprint and are on casters so that they can be moved as the space transforms. Wireless communications means that they can be relocated anywhere within the space where there is access to power. The queue can be established using a moveable impulse bar/rail that defines the line—and at the same time provides a last-minute impulse shopping opportunity.

Dramatic floor-to-ceiling display fixtures for body jewelry can rotate and are supported at the bottom with shoe displays that emulate the "wave" ceiling element.



The new prototype's storefront is transparent, allowing a view into the store. Acrylic shelving and fixtures, thin chrome hangers, and smaller fixture footprints open up the store and put the focus on Hot Topic's merchandise, music- and pop culture-influenced apparel and accessories.

Two smaller helix fixtures feature twisted 1-inch-thick acrylic, with holes that allow the integrated LED lights to shine through.

The new T-shirt wall, a system of individual acrylic panels that hold band T-shirts, curves to reach the ceiling. This effect was achieved by mounting the panels to slatwall using different-sized brackets, which allows the overall presentation to arc. Monitors embedded into the display play concerts or promote merchandise related to the nearby T-shirts.

The custom slatwall for the store was developed and manufactured by Spacewall West, based in Placentia, Calif. Another longterm supplier for Hot Topic, Spacewall West worked with Hot Topic to create hand-made slatwall panels faced with Wilsonart's

Pearl River LS high-pressure laminate, which has a subtle sheen. Spacewall West glues its J-metal inserts into the board to create a stronger panel, with a closer spacing than is typical.

Dazian's West Coast office, in North Hollywood, Calif., contributed fabric and fabrication, including a granite-colored velvet dressing room curtain and track.

The results have been well received. Says Kinsley, "The open and transparent design looks so different from a traditional Hot Topic store, we've found that it's also attracting attention from customers who might not necessarily have shopped Hot Topic before."

Hot Topic is in the process of rolling out the new concept to new stores and remod-

els, in a few variations. Following the debut of the new prototype in Santa Monica last summer, a second store opened in November in Indianapolis. Four stores with the new design elements have opened in Canada and in California; the California unit also incorporates technology elements including the media wall and kiosks.

The company has more than 650 stores throughout the United States and Puerto Rico. 🌍



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