



Metro Park's hip products

the product—Hot Topic stores aren't for the timid...but they do mirror their demographic extremely well.

Their founder has now moved onto his next venture, Metro Park. Like Ruehl, this format is also designed to reach the teen customer as they move onto the next stage in their lives. Madden estimates that approximately 57 million consumers fall into the 20-35 year old segment they are attempting to segment, which matches well against our demographic projections. And, this is a segment that will see explosive growth over the next decade as well, as the 10-19 year old segment enters the target.

We literally stumbled onto this store at its grand opening in Thousand Oaks, California. There are currently three units open in Southern California. Metro Park is also traffic stopping—it caught our eye even when we didn't know who owned it. Our first thought—this is very cool. If Ruehl is all about subtlety and the concept of the New York “in-the-know” mindset, Metro Park displays more of a West Coast everyone is welcome to the party sensibility. It was easily the hottest thing in the mall. In this case, it brings the hipness of a Melrose Avenue boutique to the previously unhip suburban locale of a Thousand Oaks.

Relying on a more multi-media approach, Metro Park features an arresting use of plasma TV's and a stunning sound system to draw customers into the doors. We were greeted by a combination of Johnny Cash on the stereo and vivid video images. It is a deliberate blend that celebrates the cross-over between fashion, music and media.

Like Urban Outfitters, the store is freshly liberated from any direct classification emphasis. While apparel is the star, they were also selling trend appropriate magazines like FHM, Stuff, Blender and Maxim. Alternative CD's were both



Metro Park's alluring facade

Metro Park

A New Breed of Retailer

It is said that great minds think alike. And there probably have not been two bigger influencers on teen fashion than Michael Jeffries, the decidedly hands-on CEO of Abercrombie & Fitch and Orval Madden, the founder of Hot Topic.

Hot Topic is one of our favorite retailers. By intensely focusing on trends within the music scene, the chain has shown a remarkable ability to stay current with a laser like focus on their customer. The environment and service matches

being sold and sampled, drinks like Red Bull and Rockstar were for sale and make-up lines like Urban Decay were also for sale. A smattering of candles, jewelry and books completed the non-apparel mix. There is a cool lounge area in back to hang out as well.

Apparel is for both men and women with the store more or less bisected between the two. The brands consist of smaller but well-known labels that have an urban sophistication—Ben Sherman, Rave, Ecko, etc... We really liked the information cards that accompanied each brand and told the brand's story and origins—a great idea.

Prices aren't cheap, by the way, but are consistent with the more or less limited edition nature of the products being sold. The bet here (and a good one) is that the aging Gen Y will continue to devote a greater portion of their disposable income to the things that matter to them—fashion, beauty and music.

Like Ruehl, the store is geared more for what they would wear after-work and on the weekends.

Though we are wistfully out of the real age range of this store, we were blown away by its various elements. While Ruehl at the end of the day is just another apparel store, Metro Park takes a bolder attempt to truly mirror the lifestyle of this next generation. Like Hot Topic, the store is not content to simply sell clothes—it is reflective of a lifestyle as a whole.

We loved Metro Park. It should become a destination store for an emerging generation of consumers to hang out, get inspired and ultimately buy some very cool fashion. This is a concept to watch closely.



Metro Park's sound system draws in customers



Metro Park's multi-media approach