

Susan Lazar

fashion designer

Philadelphian fashion designer Susan Lazar has an impressive resume for a 32-year-old: she studied at Moore College of Art on weekends while at the Baldwin School, graduated from Cornell University and the Fashion Institute of Technology, honed her skills under Randolph Duke and Michael Kors, launched her own business with a line of accessories in 1993, debuted her designer sportswear collection in 1995, built a solid distribution which includes

department stores and specialty boutiques, and now has a list of celebrities—Jennifer Aniston (who bought almost the entire collection for Fall '99 and Cruise 2000), Courtney Cox Arquette, Charlize Theron, Ellen Barkin, Minnie Driver, Reese Witherspoon, Gretchen Moll, Madelaine Stowe, Katie Holmes—strutting her stuff.

Lazar describes her clothes as "classic with a twist." The "subdued elegance" of her line makes sense to the Philadelphia woman—"a woman who understands quality and luxury," says Lazar. While the sophisticated urban career woman has been Lazar's typical customer, a new line, Susan Lazar Dresses, caters to the whimsical side of women of any age. Whether it be a chic blue tasmaania wool dress, an easy black turtleneck dress, a sharp red twill, or a tailored gray and black herringbone, each silhouette in this collection walks a lovely line between sassy and sophisticated. Lazar has carried over this fun, sexy theme into her Moroccan-inspired spring sportswear collection: "There's a lot of color—red, yellow, and white—and a lot of embroidered fabric and embellishment. It's a very ethnic collection in mood and spirit through the coloration, but the silhouettes and shapes are very modern and classic."

While Lazar must make every stitch in time for New York shows and Hollywood fittings, she ducks out to her old haunts on occasion. She made a store appearance in the fall at Sak's Fifth Avenue in Bala Cynwyd during a shopping weekend to benefit Fashion Targets Breast Cancer and Lazar attended Phashion Phest as the guest of honor. "It was a great honor and it was really fun. It was wonderful to see the city supporting the retailers in such an incredible way. There are a lot of really great stores in Philly, and people don't always realize that. They think they have to come to New York to shop, but there's such a good selection there and this event was one of the ways for the stores to reach their customers."

I asked the New York resident what she misses most about Philly. "Philadelphia is like a small town. Everyone knows everyone, and there's a sense of community that you don't necessarily have in New York. I miss that the most," said Lazar.

—Jill Johnson

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