



A Fairfielder brings
Parisian chic stateside

la garçonne

BY JILL JOHNSON

I'VE SEEN HER ON PRINCE STREET in SoHo. I've seen her all over the streets of Paris. I've even seen her on Greenwich Avenue and on Main Street in Westport. She is that woman with a certain *je ne sais quoi* — a sense of style that makes her look at once chic and hip, classic and quirky, tomboyish and sexy. Oh, how I want to be her.

But, alas, I haven't a French gene in my ill-clad body, and she — that woman who dresses with such ease and originality — usually does. The French seem to have an instinct for melding unexpected items — a pair of skinny jeans, a simple tee, a classic blazer, army boots — with synergistic effects. If only one could bottle that knack and sell it to wardrobe-challenged Americans like me.

Fairfield resident Kris Kim may have created just such a magic potion with Lagarconne.com, an e-commerce site that captures the essence of this fashion muse and carries the goods to bring her to life. The site is named after a controversial 1920s French novel, *La Garçonne* ("tomboy"). The "garçonne" is a bold woman with the inimitable style of fashion icons like Jane Birkin and Catherine Deneuve. Well, maybe not inimitable,

if one carefully studies Kim's comprehensive site.

Lagarconne.com offers not only an impressive inventory of clothing, accessories, shoes and bags from more than 100 designers, but also *Le Magazine* — a virtual guide to all things garçonne. There are mood boards to illustrate trends such as "Le Smoking" and "Bohemian Belle." "Garçonne We Love" features profiles of today's Francophile-style role models, such as Clémence Poésy and Charlotte Gainsbourg. Visitors can learn about hot designers and scroll through editorials for ensemble ideas.

Integral to every aspect of the site is the creative and innovative Kris Kim. "I've worked in fashion all my life," says Kris, who started her career at Dana Buchman, helped launch *Marie Claire* in her native Korea, and worked in PR at a number of design houses in New York, including Hermès. "I've always loved a slightly boyish sense of style and admired the women who have put this look together over time. It's a look magazines talk about constantly, but there wasn't a retail outlet for it."

Kris considered opening a store in Tribeca, but she never found the right location. "When I was pregnant, I had the

worst morning sickness and had to buy everything online, but I soon realized there wasn't an e-commerce store that carried the clothes I wanted to wear." Kris began developing the idea of a site that offered edgy fashion and gave people the same aesthetically pleasing experience online as a visit to an upscale boutique can — from product display to packaging.

Kris sat down with a graphic designer and plotted out every element of Lagarconne.com. Determined to present items clearly on the site and include original editorial shoots, she set up a photo studio that would be active five days a week. She began cold calling designers and explaining her vision. "About ten designers, including Anna Sui, Daryl K and Vivienne Westwood, took a chance on me and it grew from there." The site launched in 2005, with word of mouth fueling interest. When *Lucky* magazine ran a half-page editorial about it, Lagarconne.com hit the radar big-time. "Kris Kim condenses that certain carefree-cool-chic style into a super well-edited selection of products that makes you want to import the entire website into your own closet," says *Lucky* Fashion News Director Jen Ford.

"Lagarconne.com is not just another

eternally chic essentials



trendy cute girl online store because it is really fashion people's fashion — very insider and very forward, with a lot of the more obscure brands," adds Roxanne Robinson-Escriout, senior accessories editor at *Women's Wear Daily*. Costume National, Les Prairies de Paris and Repetto are just a few of the hard-to-find brands on the site, along with popular lines like Alexander Wang and Comme des Garçons. Not surprisingly, the cutting-edge residents of New York and California make up much of Kris's clientele. "Linda Evangelista and Michelle Williams shop with us all the time," says Kris.

Is the Connecticut woman ready for the La Garçonne look, complete with this fall's must-haves: houndstooth, turtlenecks and shoulder pads?

"Absolutely," says Kris, who lives in Fairfield with her husband and their four-year-old. Kris's husband left finance to head up the business side of Lagarconne .com. When she drops off her daughter at preschool, "women respond to what I'm wearing," says Kris. "They're interested and there isn't another outlet where they can find this look."

I'm interested. Once I'm donning my La Garçonne wardrobe, I can just hear the gossip on the street: "Oooh la la, she must be French."



FRANCO FERRARI
Carletto scarf,
\$285



RACHEL COMEY
Muff clutch,
\$450



ALYSSA NORTON
Silver chain & silk
wrap bracelet,
\$276



UNDER.LINE
Knit leggings
with leather detail,
\$495



RAG AND BONE
Great coat,
\$595



RACHEL COMEY
Traveler's vest,
\$680



ALEXANDER WANG
Trudy tote,
\$825



SIGERSON MORRISON
Peep-toe
cape booties,
\$750