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Store Fronts

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Shifty's Adds Spice To Edison's Youth Stores In its nearly completed emergence from Chapter 11, Edison Brothers Stores Inc. is discovering still more depth in its retail fountain of youth. The St. Louis-based company, parent firm for such retail youth concepts as Wild Pair, 5-7-9 and Jeans West, is continuing the expansion of Shifty's, one of Edison's newer apparel and accessories concepts.

"It's what you'd call, 'the missing link' in Edison's strategy of dominating the youth market," says Paul Eisen, president of Shifty's. Eisen notes that, although the chain (introduced in 1994) is relatively new to the retail youth market, Shifty's is considered to be an asset as the company looks to return from bankruptcy protection. (See Shopping Center World, April 1997.) "Shifty's is largely considered to be one of the shining stars of the future for Edison Brothers," he says.

Shifty's fits perfectly with the re-emerging popularity of malls with teen-agers, says Eisen. "If shopping centers fell out of the good graces or the cool image with kids a few years ago when they became somewhat stale or cookie-cutter, I think they've remerchandised well enough that ... the youth [of America are] definitely still in the

malls," he says. "[They shop] sometimes with mom, more times by themselves, but they're there."

The store's design sets a comfortable, entertaining tone for its patrons, with couches (the company reports that teen-agers have come to the store to do homework) and rich wood fixturing. "Shifty's was intended to be theater for youth," says company general merchandise manager Jay Spencer.

The store's merchandise -- equally a contributor to the store's theme -- is one of Shifty's best assets, with boys and girls apparel, accessories, novelties, and most recently, shoes. "As far as the merchandise mix goes, the greatest thing about Shifty's is that it's not nailed down to one product line to drive the business," he says.

Edison's other youth-based stores offer Shifty's the opportunity for co-branding and store adjacencies. However, Eisen notes, those ventures are in the future. "In the case of Shifty's, we have to get a bit more entrenched into our niche before we roll-out adjacent stores," he says.

Although Eisen is optimistic about Shifty's expansion, he does not point toward immediate plans. "We're in the process of some administrative changes at the company, so it's probably a little bit premature to predict what will happen in 1998," he says. "However, Shifty's has met Edison's plan as to what is needed in order to grow."

By the end of the year, Shifty's will have 18 units open in such markets as St. Louis, Philadelphia, Chicago, Atlanta, Houston, Charlotte, N.C., and Fort Wayne, Ind. Expansion markets for Shifty's lie coast-to-coast, says Eisen. "So far, we're pretty well focused on the Midwest and East Coast, which leaves an awful lot of tempting markets available," he notes.

"Florida has a tremendous amount of influx of youth at various times of the year -- spring break, holidays and summers -- so there is tremendous opportunity there," he

continues. "And we haven't started anywhere west of the Mississippi, so there's still an awfully long way to go."

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