



MADE IN CHICAGO

ATTAIN A CHIC AND DISTINCTLY CHICAGOAN STYLE WITH HELP FROM THESE LOCAL INDEPENDENT BOUTIQUES

BY CORY ROBERTSON



▲ Wolfbait & B-girls

(3131 W. Logan, 312/698-8685)

If you had a crazy but loveable aunt hip enough to run an indie boutique, Wolfbait & B-girls would personify her. Co-owners Shirley Novak and Jenny Stadler stock their store with varied trinkets and baubles (like Sophia Defoe's friendly \$14 felt pins depicting cartoon-like owls, flowers and birds) and Chicago-made clothes that typify a "punchy yet practical" look. One such item is a tailored shirt by Brazen Judy (Stadler's own line) in army green with quiet polka dots, accented by copper-colored, crested buttons and demure princess sleeves (\$87). You'll also find a bevy of useful yet stylish totes, such as a roomy wine- and cream-colored purse with a subtle paisley pattern by the Handbag Company (\$90). Spools of material adorn the turquoise wall in Novak and Stadler's back-of-the-store studio space. With bi-monthly workshops on screen-printing,

stamping and stenciling, it seems that Novak and Stadler want not only to bring the best of independent fashion to Chicagoans, but to let them peek in on the creative clothes-making process itself.

▲ Habit

(1951 W. Division, 773/342-0093)

Habit owner Lindsey Boland describes her ideal customers as "fashion-forward women with an independent spirit," and if such women crave respite from their busy lives, they'll find it at Habit. The Wicker Park boutique is a sanctuary-like space featuring a selection of casual wear and jewelry for under \$100, and half the pieces are Chicago-made and designed. If Wolfbait & B-girls is the crazy aunt, then Habit is the polished older sister, offering plenty of silky secretary shirts and oversized leather handbags, as well as funkier items like Sarah Staskauskas' cotton weave handbag (\$110) featuring a neon-leather heart (depicting the organ, not the shape) or Stephanie Simek's delicate silver necklace strung with a pair of human-hair eyelashes (\$38). Looking to splurge? Try a silky frock of a dress in chocolate bronze by Kit Kit Dodge for \$360—the neckline's flopsy black bow will make you feel part Victorian schoolgirl, part coquettish Twiggy; it's a combination representative of Habit on the whole.

► pistol bazaar

(1717 W. Chicago, 312/929-2350)

Stepping inside pistol bazaar is like walking into your grandma's attic, or your best hipster-packrat friend's apartment—

basically, it feels like home. From its spray-painted sign to the interior's safari-style art (by local graffiti artist Joe Suta), pistol bazaar is a multifaceted boutique that expresses more than vintage and cutting-edge fashion: It also expresses community. When Michelle deLeon and Lana McAllister staged an impromptu sale operating out of McAllister's storefront apartment in 2005, the two began inviting artist friends to sell their work beside vintage duds. As word spread, says deLeon, "it became friends of friends, and it just circled out like that." Besides all kooky retro dresses, a men's section filled with plaid and even a hefty offering of vinyl records, pistol bazaar carries an ever-replenishing selection of pieces by independent artists. Treat your eyes to one of Derek Erdman's candy-colored pop-art paintings (\$65-\$125), warm your neck with a buttoned tweed scarflet by Cutie Coodie (\$15) and keep your hands busy with one of Josh Dorster's handmade journals, filled with varying paper textures and original images by the artist (\$9-\$15). You certainly won't be bored.

