



Sam Mendoza's clothes combine rough edges, punky elegance, and the inspiration of the moment.

FASHIONABLY EARLY STUDENT DESIGNER IS ALREADY DRESSING FOR SUCCESS

THIS IS WAY beyond *Project Runway*. Fashion, as Sam Mendoza has done it thus far in his young career as a clothing designer, is conceptual, painterly, and sensual. It's not about winning some prize — it's about the feeling of silk on skin, the movement of a seam, the artful fraying of a hemline.

Mendoza (COM'08), a senior advertising major, is a designer with a strong air of inevitability and enough fabric swatches to clothe a city. He has already broken through on Newbury Street, Boston's fashion epicenter. His designs are sold — and sell out — at the hip boutique Stil, where he also works. He's been featured in *Boston* magazine and

in the *Boston Globe*. He wants to start a couture house someday, one that would also be a sewing collective. Mendoza seems destined for *Vogue* and beyond.

The designing "started as a joke," he says. "I had a conversation with friends freshman year about what people were wearing, and we decided we could do better. I just sort of took it and ran with it."

Mendoza began by hand-stitching everything, but when he went home to Houston that summer, he worked on his mother's sewing machine. "That's when I started to really be interested in: if I put this seam here, where does it fall; if I curve this seam, what does it do to the shape of the dress," he says.

He and his younger brother haunted thrift shops all summer, "sifting through each hanger, looking at each detail," Mendoza

says. "I'd look for things I thought were interesting, and then try to pick apart why. Is it the buttons, or the colors, or the fabric, or the cut? And then I'd think, how could I make that mine?"

His style reflects a thrift-shop sensibility: "rough edges; taking what you have and making something of it. I don't have rolls and rolls of fabric. I have squares of fabric that I piece together. But it's not really a patchwork so much as an economy of fabric."

The pieces from his most recent collection are at once elegant and unfinished. Long gowns of flowing silk, many with an alarming amount of décolletage, have a glamorous and decadent feel, but they're often paired with sharp vests or jackets, the texture and styling almost businesslike, in preppy hues like navy. The ensembles are dramatic, projecting moods of vintage chic and modernist punk almost simultaneously.

"That's the silhouette that's going to be coming out for next fall," he says, "so that means I was on point. I was just watching the shows, and out of London it's all long. Oscar de la Renta showed these tiny cropped vest things over these long formal dresses. I showed, like, ten of those in my last collection. So I'm thinking, OK, I had something there, I was passionate about a silhouette that I thought would be perfect for the season, and now I'm done with it."

His next collection will be his last at BU. He'll unveil it on April 26, at the spring show mounted by BU's Fashion and Retail Association, a club Mendoza has helped build into a thriving networking group for students interested in fashion and the business of retail. "I want this to be a collection of all my experiences in four years at BU. I want it to be all of my friends, all of the fabric," he says. "I just want it all to come together." **BARI WALSH**

 **web extra**

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