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Survival tips for the well-dressed recessionista man

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As the slow trudge through January marches on, clearance sales and going-out-of-business closeouts drying into a paltry trickle by mid-month, the stylish gent finds himself in that vast wasteland of post-holiday shopping. The racks are depleted, the spring gear has yet to arrive, and with a light pocketbook, he starts to ask himself how best to survive as a recessionista?

That punny term of art hit big in 2008, gracing all manner of word-of-the-year lists. Modeled on the perpetually stylish fashionista, but aimed at that sect of the down-at-the-heel glitterati who refuse to lose their luster, recessionista describes those whose meager means impose only the most superficial of stumbling blocks to further sartorial acquisition. Gone are the days of the "frugal shopper." The recessionista is king, leaving the less expansive frugalista to drown its sorrows with the local barista.

In late summer of last year, The Chronicle's Carolyn Zinko explored what the female recessionista is to do, but where might we find the male version of this crafty consumer? This week the Pocket Square highlights a handful of spots around town that consistently offer the kind of designer discounts that one finds at Bloomingdale's only between Dec. 26 and Jan. 1. The answers are few and far between, and require some serious digging once you get there, but any smartly dressed man will relish the challenge.

The first on my list is that old standby in Union Square, **Loehmann's**, the Ross of designer brands. The men's section on the lower level of Loehmann's is not for the weak of resolve, or those with a plane to catch. A near-constant disaster area, the racks are overstuffed with unsold merchandise, castoffs and last year's styles - all at considerable savings. The brands run toward the upper echelon of fashion with Versace and Armani holding court alongside offerings from John Varvatos, Penguin, Calvin Klein and the like, all at savings of around 50 percent.

Be forewarned, the vast majority of what the joint has to offer is on the ugly side, an unwelcome second pass at what you rightly eschewed last season. But take heart: Those in the market for basics - decent plain slacks (I got two pairs of DKNY dress pants there, each at around \$45), socks, ties and the occasional suit can be had if you're not above picking through the disheveled racks.

Another decent bet, particularly if you wear an extra-extra large or extra-extra small, is **Jeremy's**, another emporium of the overstocked, underappreciated and slightly damaged. The shop has a branch in San Francisco and another in Berkeley. The men's section is in better repair than Loehmann's, and the stock is somewhat more fashion-forward, and includes a small selection of men's shoes, something Loehmann's lacks.

There are, however, a couple of stores around town that offer the same kind of merchandise - samples, overstock and their ilk - in a far more hospitable environment. **Thread Lounge** at 597 Hayes St. in Hayes Valley offers all sorts of samples in a more boutiquey environment, though whenever I've gone there, the men's selection is pretty limited.

A better bet is the newly opened **Cary Lane** in Noe Valley. Whereas Loehmann's and Jeremy's feel like repositories for last-chance garments, Cary Lane owners Cary LaScala and Jeff Saltzman opt for a more curated feel. "Though our men's apparel is constantly changing," said LaScala, "at Cary Lane we strive to target the man who is confident, fashionable and enjoys the classic look with an urban twist." He mostly achieves it, with jeans from Lee and J. Lindeberg as well as suits from natty Brit brand Merc, ties from Apolis and a smattering of whatever he happens to get from the likes of Oliver Spencer, Y-3 and Keds.

Selling his wares at wholesale or below, LaScala saw an opening in the market for a designer discount shop, one that moonlights as a makeshift studio for his other career as a session drummer for bands like the electroclashionistas Fischerspooner.

"We are catering to the sensitive economy by offering incredible deals on merchandise that people normally pay extravagantly for," LaScala said. And considering that the shopping at Cary Lane is leagues more pleasurable, if only because one isn't faced with mountains of clothes in a paucity of sizes, one is advised to stop in before facing the grislier scenes elsewhere.

In a final note, I'd like to mention another, largely untapped spot, for men at least, to pick up a designer deal: the **Next-to-New Junior League shop**. Going in you have to be prepared to dress, or at least shop, like a deceased Republican, as double-breasted blazers and generously pleated trousers are the norm. But before writing off the notion entirely, recall dapper deceased Republican movie star Steve McQueen, and know that on a recent visit I happened across a very fine Kenzo blazer for \$75 and on a different occasion bought a handsome jacket for \$30. At the very least, search the pockets of what you try on. You may very well find a stray \$50 some Marina widow overlooked or, better yet, a carefully concealed stock tip - something every recessionista could use.

Mondaine, mon dieu! I've gotten a lot of interest in the watch I wrote about in the first installment of Pocket Square, Mondaine's Swiss Railway Watch designed by Hans Hilfiker. It's available, with either a red or black band, for \$175 at the classy design shop ATYS in San Francisco's Cow Hollow or on its Web site, www.atysdesign.com. You now have no excuse to be late.

Where to buy guy gear

ATYS 2149-B Union St., San Francisco; (415) 441-9220. <http://www.atysdesign.com/>.

Cary Lane 3813 24th St., San Francisco; (415) 896-4210. <http://www.carylanesf.com/>.

Jeremy's 2 South Park St., San Francisco; (415) 882-4929, and 2961 College Ave., Berkeley;

(510) 849-0701. <http://www.jeremys.com/>.

Loehmann's 222 Sutter St., San Francisco; (415) 982-3215. <http://www.loehmanns.com/>.

Next-to-New Shop & Consignment Boutique 2226 Fillmore St., San Francisco; (415) 567-1627.

Thread Lounge 597 Hayes St., San Francisco; (415) 269-3557.

<http://www.threadlounge.com/>.

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