

# WWD TUESDAY

Ready-to-Wear/Textiles

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## Simmons Doing Line for J.C. Penney

By Rusty Williamson

J.C. Penney Co. Inc. is launching an exclusive junior sportswear collection designed by Kimora Lee Simmons. The line, called Fabulosity, is to hit stores in July for back-to-school.

Fabulosity will retail from \$29 to \$108 and take inspiration from Simmons' own lifestyle as a former couture fashion model, hip-hop fashion designer, fragrance marketer and business and media executive as well as a high-wattage presence on the glam-party circuit.

Penney's is partners with Kellwood Co. in the Fabulosity collection. Simmons is creative director of the Kellwood-owned Phat Farm Fashions empire and oversees product development, marketing and advertising for brands. The portfolio includes at least 30 domestic and eight international licensees stretching over 38 product categories — including a Kimora Barbie doll dressed in floor-length fake fur and pink thigh-high boots.

Simmons also has created a Baby Phat Fabulosity fragrance with Coty that is to hit about 2,000 U.S. department store doors in April.

Penney's, with 1,073 units across the U.S. and a multibillion dollar Web site, is aggressively searching for exclusive lines as customers deal with



Kimora Lee Simmons

job reductions, declining home values, the credit crisis and falling consumer confidence. Polo Ralph Lauren Corp. just launched its American Living brand at Penney's. The retailer last week cut first-quarter profit projections by one-third after disappointing Easter business.

The economic slowdown is expected to hit other retailers, as well, when comparable-store sales are reported April 10 and first-quarter results are dis-

closed in May.

The Plano-Tex.-based chain already has a strong junior business with exclusive national brands such as Miss Bisou and C7P, national brands including SouthPole, B.Wear, Self-Esteem, Fang and Levi Strauss & Co. and its own private denim line, Arizona.

Penney's "has a proven track record of delivering a wide array of must-have styles and brands to some of our most discriminating customers: teen girls," said Ken Hicks, president and chief merchandising officer. He added that the new line expands the chain's offerings and deepens "our emotional connection with our younger customers through a truly authentic brand."

Commenting on the new line, Simmons said: "Fabulosity is all about celebrating who you are and your individual greatness — living your dream and being whatever you want to be. This is a great message for young teens."

Penney's same-store sales for February decreased 6.7 percent, compared with guidance for a low-single-digit decrease. In the same period a year ago, comparable store sales increased 1.5 percent. Total sales in February decreased 4.4 percent. The retailer has said comps for March are expected to drop to a low-double-digit range.