



Seat at Table: Christopher Guy at his furniture showroom in West Hollywood.

Designer's Plans Guided By Stars

Christopher Guy holds show-biz parties to draw celeb customers.

Having provided furniture for such movies as "The Devil Wears Prada," "Ocean's Thirteen," "The Hangover" and "Casino Royale," luxury designer **Christopher Guy** already had close ties with Hollywood.

But now he's looking to step up those entertainment industry links by staging a string of show-biz parties and events at his West Hollywood showroom.

The idea is to attract a new set of high-end customers to boost business still further for his brand which,

the British-born designer said, saw a 43 percent increase in sales in 2014 over the previous year.

"The fact our furniture is featured in movies, which is the industry so many people aspire to, gives it credibility and we want to build on that association," said Guy, 54.

By using the 10,000-square-foot space at 8900 Beverly Blvd. for entertainment events rather than just as a showroom, it will give specially invited Hollywood guests greater exposure to Guy's furniture than they have had in films or at local hotels where it is featured, such as the **Beverly Hills Hotel** and **Beverly Wilshire**.

Among the 400 or so pieces on sale: a \$10,000 high-back armchair, a \$6,600 mirror and a \$15,000 carved bed headboard.

Of course, there is a risk

to throwing open the doors to a party crowd. What happens if a guest spills red wine on one of the expensive white sofas?

Guy has already thought of that.

"We will only be serving champagne and white wine at our functions here, never red," he said.

The first in a series of forthcoming show-business events to be held in the space will be a Feb. 19 celebration of the work of Oscar-winning moviemaker and Hollywood graphic designer **Arnold Schwartzman**, whose work will be displayed there for a week afterwards.

"Guests will see this is a beautiful space, a wonderful environment, the perfect party backdrop and the coolest luxury space in town," Guy said.

— Sandro Monetti

Old Maker of Food Learned New Trick

Marco Giannini's move into retail unleashed growing pet chain.

Marco Giannini spent more than a decade manufacturing pet food, but now he sees more opportunity in selling kibble than in making it.

"I don't think we need another pet food in the world," he said. "I think we need to know how to find the right pet food and how to shop more efficiently."

That's why, about a year ago, Giannini founded West L.A. retailer **Protein for Pets**, which has been expanding quickly. The company last month opened a Santa Clarita location, its ninth, and plans to open as many as 16 more by the end of the year.

Giannini said shopping at big-box pet stores such as **Petco** and **PetSmart** can be



Dog Treat: Marco Giannini at Ventura's Protein for Pets.

exhausting, especially since many items are organized by brand instead of product type. In contrast, Protein for Pets locations are small – at no more than 1,500 square feet, they're about one-tenth the size of a Petco – and offer a much smaller selection of products, mostly food from low- to high-price points.

Along with all-natural wet and dry pet food, the stores offer a selection of exotic proteins such as rabbit, venison and kangaroo.

Gianni founded West

L.A.'s **Dogswell**, a maker of pet food and treats, in 2003, sold it to a private equity firm in 2008 and left the company last year to start Protein for Pets. He enjoyed his time building his previous company but said he much prefers retailing.

"Being a manufacturer you operate a little bit in a vacuum because you don't get as much consumer experience," he said. "In retail, you're much closer to the community."

— Sabrina Hudson

Pro Athletes Add Up for Accountant

Steve Piascik fields Beverly Hills office to cover roster of clients.

Steve Piascik is a suburban Richmond, Va., accountant who didn't imagine he'd ever be headed to Hollywood. But his clients – many of whom we see on TV every Sunday – demanded it.

Last summer, Piascik, chief executive of his eponymous accounting and business advisory firm, rented some space in Beverly Hills and set up an office – his firm's first outside of the Old Dominion. Now he says he's spending most of his busi-

ness time on the West Coast.

Piascik specializes in providing tax and business advice to professional athletes. The firm's clients include members of almost every **National Football League** team as well as pro basketball and baseball players, and golfers. Many of them live in the L.A. area and they prodded Piascik to open a local branch.

"They were asking us to do it," he said. "As we grew our relationships with the tremendous amount of clients in Southern California, it made sense for us to open out here."

Rather than tie his pricing to the athletes' incomes,



Piascik

Piascik charges a flat fee for different services, many of them tailored to the unique needs of pro athletes. For example, a typical eight-state NFL tax return – athletes have to file in each state in which they play road games – costs \$2,950.

Piascik has three professionals working out of the Beverly Hills office, and plans to have between 10 and 20 over the next year or two.

"There's no doubt in my mind this office will be bigger than our Richmond headquarters over the next three to five years," he said.

— Matt Pressberg

Exec Makes Waves During Meetings

Alex Boylan, season-two co-winner of CBS' "The Amazing Race," likes to take his work to the water.

The 37-year-old water sports enthusiast, who almost daily spends two hours at the beach, will often suggest moving meetings out of the office and onto paddleboards.

"Sometimes there's a very long pause and an 'Umm,' and you learn a lot from that," he said.

"And other people are excited and they're like, 'I'll try that.'"

Paddleboarding, which requires people to lie, kneel or stand on a board and pad-



Boylan

dle across the water using their arms or an oar, is one of the easiest things to do in the harbor near his Marina del Rey home, Boylan said. One of his favorite spots to dive into business is at Mother's Beach.

The unconventional twist on the boring meeting has also become a bonding exercise for the 10-person team at **DreamJobbing**, a Santa Monica startup Boylan founded that hooks people up with "once-in-a-lifetime" jobs, such as being a culinary explorer for King's Hawaiian bakery or working

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CHARLES CRUMPLEY

as Michael Bolton's backup singer.

Encouraged to take the job beachside, his staffers have started holding their own meetings by sea.

"For a startup, it's good for the soul," Boylan said.

Pier Eatery in Fashion When Yunnie Kim

Morena, 37, left the fashion world eight years ago to take over her family's seafood restaurant on the Santa Monica Pier, she didn't expect that among all the

street musicians and skateboarders she'd run into former clients from the high-end **Fred Segal Couture** store she had owned.

Morena essentially grew up on the pier, helping her immigrant parents run their business, which was then called **SM Pier Seafood**.

"I was with them all the time because there was no such thing as a full-time nanny," Morena said.

Her family opened the business as a fish market in 1977, but after her grandmother began making shrimp tempura, bringing in lines out the door, the business evolved. It moved to a larger space and then remodeled in 1983 after a hurricane wiped out more than one-third of

the pier, then moved again in the '90s to its current location, where it became a popular casual restaurant.



Retailored: Morena at the Albright.

What it never was, however, during Morena's childhood was a place where fashionistas and Santa Monica's power players would hang out.

"The pier has changed," Morena said.

So has the restaurant,

which Morena rebranded as the **Albright** two years ago, adding some modern touches.

"The pier has cleaned up, and now I see former clientele from the fashion world strolling by the restaurant," she said. "When my father died, and I look over the business, I was expecting to abandon my Fred Segal life, but I often run right into it."

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