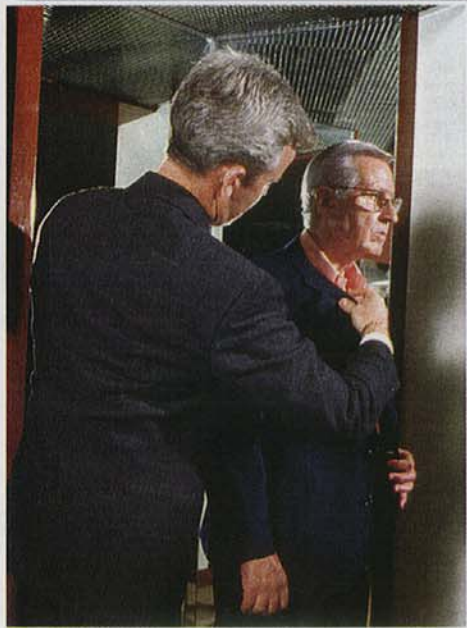


SHOWCASE

COVER STORY



Clockwise from left, Diane Matzner, owner of La Mariposa in Palm Springs, helps Vicki Sharp, of Wildomar. Jeffrey Miller, left, selling manager for Macy's West in the Palm Desert, fits Charles Dello, of Palm Desert. Rocio Aguilar, a seamstress and finisher for Air Dreams International Inc., cuts a pattern while owner Yessa Goss, left, and seamstress Juana Viurquez, right, assemble clothing at their Indio plant.

Au that Coachella Valley couture

The area's wide mix of tastes requires designers, shop owners to go eclectic

stories by DeANN LUBELL
photos by RODRIGO PEÑA

The Coachella Valley is a beautiful desert oasis that not only attracts the resort crowd and the rich and famous, but a rapidly growing business and residential population as well. Because of this diversity, local retailers must present a variety of fashion styles to match and satisfy the varying taste preferences of their clients—be they tourists, residents or people in the work force.

Up until a little more than a decade ago, this popular vacationland, with its celebrity-saturated city of Palm Springs, primarily serviced the affluent visitor who was seeking

casual play-in-the-sun fashions and must-be-seen evening elegance under the moon. Since there was little demand for anything other than resort wear or black tie, shopping was painfully limited. Today's desert retail scene is dramatically different.

"There has to be a little bit of everything for everybody," says Diane Marlin-Dirkx, a fashion writer from Rancho Mirage who has carefully monitored the changing winds of local retail over the last 10 years. "There are those who are leaders in business and industry that have to have a professional look. And then you have those who go to all of the lun-