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LAZR TRADESHOW: Revitalizing Los Angeles' Footwear Scene By Tanita Gray



“LAZR TRADESHOW is designed to inspire, inform and influence.”

- John Ruffo

At first, I was very excited to see that there was a show coming to the LA area called, LAZR (with link: <http://lazertradeshow.com/>). I remember some months back that I stumbled upon it via LinkedIn somehow and came across its founder, John Ruffo. I thought -“Well, do we really need *another* show?” And I remember my last walk through at the shows here in L.A. and thought – yes, yes we do.

But on our shoebizness facebook page I got a different reaction from some of our readers. There seemed to be the tiring idea that here is again, yet another show to shlep the suitcases to. Another show set to capture a market, yada, yada, yada. However, I decided that hey, I live in this area of the market and I have seen the shows and I have heard reactions both good and not so great. In my own experience, a client of mine – a young emerging brand – ran from TRANSIT as if had the cooties or something.

At first, I just wanted to tell the world to go to this show simply because it is new. My thoughts were one dimensional. I even used the word, *controversy* - not giving thought to the dynamics that surround our current tradeshow structure. I also changed the title a few times. The first was: “*Thank Goodness! LAZRtradeshow: Revitalizing Los Angeles' Footwear Tradeshow Scene*.” I admit – I jumped the gun.

Of course now that August is in full swing and you are on the flight to New York at this very moment – or will be on your way back from Vegas – I totally understand how important it is to schedule, budget and

plan your entry into the market place. That these types of events are not to be taken lightly. The traditional shows that have successfully been in operation here for many years are doing great for its vendors and vice versa. Respect, to those involved and those who attend.

However, Shoebizness exists to bring light to all things new, unsung and innovative.

And for that, I write about LAZR TRADESHOW in all seriousness. It is not just a new show – but a fresh approach to its regional market. I repeat, regional. California takes up a very large space on the Map of the US and its climates are from desert heat to winter snow storms. It is no wonder why so many footwear brands and diverse product development happens here. In the mist of marketing to local players, there is something deeper to achieve. It is called, revitalization. And if you have been to Los Angeles beyond the airport hotel circle, past the beaches and east to downtown and into the market area – you can appreciate the idea behind the show and its intentions.

So here I am now – talking with, John Ruffo for over an hour on the phone and a walk-through at the site of the event (LA Live – that is pretty amazing), he explained to me the vision. It is not just another show. It exists to bring together current, progressive and forward thinking brands and buyers in the regional market. Los Angeles is busting at the seams with new brands or brands that are revitalizing their offerings and need new outlets and concepts to make the connection to reach these new customers. The LAZR TRADESHOW is here to offer that synergy and connection. And something more exciting - and after my own heart – real *consumers* are able to briefly attend and take a peak and give comments and tell us what they really want! That is priceless and worth the detour to Los Angeles, on your way to Vegas.

The LAZRTRADESHOW will take place August 13,14 & 15th at LA Live, Los Angeles, CA.

Please tell us about John Ruffo - Zoomn Inc. & the LAZR Tradeshow?

John Ruffo is a 30+ year fashion industry veteran, a true footwear industry “insider.” John, recently served as Executive Vice President, ENK Footwear Group, where his responsibilities included developing strategies to re-engineer the World Shoes and Accessories Trade Show (WSA). Prior to this position, John was an instrumental architect in the development of the overall footwear presence for Advanstar Fashion Group. His efforts helped to grow the footwear business 231%, and laid the groundwork for what became FN PLATFORM.

John Ruffo currently serves as President of the Ruffo Group, a consultancy agency that specializes in marketing, retail relations, product management, venture management, and sales development. Beneath the Ruffo Group banner are two subsidiaries – K.S. Sports (the sales and marketing arm), and Zoomin, Inc. (the new business development consulting arm).

It is under the Zoomin, Inc. banner that John Ruffo, and his team are launching LAZR TRADESHOW – the new bi-annual fashion footwear event that is debuting August 13-15 in downtown Los Angeles at the L.A. LIVE Event Deck. LAZR TRADESHOW will present an inspired collection of men’s, women’s, and children’s footwear and accessories, and a curated selection of fashion apparel brands.



You plan on doing something with LAZR in Los Angeles that most people have probably thought of, but did not execute...why now or why at all?

LAZR TRADESHOW sprung from the notion that L.A. was ripe for, and desperately deserved a major fashion event. L.A. fashion is huge. In sheer numbers, the fashion workforce in L.A. is larger than New York's. And, according to the most recent Otis Report, the L.A. fashion industry is second only to entertainment, and accounts for an economic impact of \$51.4 billion dollars.

L.A. fashion is influenced by the laid-back surroundings of SoCal, but it is much more than that. It is a reflection of the city's cultural roots in art, music, sports and entertainment. L.A. fashion is a brand of creative thinking that has influenced fashion across the globe. Travel to NY, you see it. Visit Milan, you see it. Go to Paris, you see it. Go to Des Moines, Iowa, it's there too. It's everywhere.

Timing is everything. The revitalized downtown area has become the cultural hub of the city. Now, amazing restaurants, spectacular hotels, and world-class entertainment, all within a short walk of each other, has made downtown the perfect place to stage a major fashion event. L.A. LIVE is the crown jewel of the neighborhood, and we are thrilled to debut at the Event Deck – the roof-top creative space in the heart of this stunning entertainment complex, just minutes from the L.A. Fashion District.

This production will cause controversy for sure. How are you handling this from your peers and former clients, namely, WSA/ENK and MAGIC/Platform?

“Controversy?” Controversy is the wrong word. This is a change from the status quo, and change is sometimes scary to some. But, others see it as an opportunity. We see LAZR TRADESHOW as a benefit to the industry. By carefully choosing our location and dates, we are providing an innovative event for buyers and brands to connect, and move the industry forward.

We also don't see LAZR TRADESHOW as a replacement for other events. Vegas is Vegas, and is an important stop on the fashion calendar.

By running during L.A. Market, we hope to provide the critical mass to solidify downtown L.A. as the can't-miss fashion destination. Buyers will now have a place and time in L.A. where they will have access to fashion on a scale that hasn't been seen in quite a while. We see our show as a partner with the Fashion District.

You have also planned something very cool with LAZR in regards to social media, bloggers and a consumer-direct experience in the *Media Lounge*. Tell us more about what that is and something you are developing called, “Match Making.”

Changes in consumerism, distribution channels, and marketing have changed the retail landscape. LAZR TRADESHOW is designed to reflect these changes. Social media, apps and technology have created an uber-connected consumer, and allows brands to speak in new ways, and directly to this consumer. LAZR TRADESHOW will have invited bloggers and writers walking the show, reporting and posting live. The show will also feature an area that will showcase the latest in technology, and chats by thought-leaders in the field. It is an exciting time. We are in the midst of a sort of retail revolution. And we see LAZR TRADESHOW as part of the solution.

I see LAZR being able to speak volumes for exhibiting brand culture/personality, giving a home for new emerging designers and really turning out *original* designs and a better quality of product to showcase for the buyers. This is a long winded angle I am going for here, but I think you get my point.

Now, tell me how important that aspect is for you and LAZR and the people you are marketing this event to? What can buyers expect to see at LAZR that they are not going to see at any of the shows happening in August almost immediately following yours?

For buyers who want to get a jump on the season, LAZR TRADESHOW will be a welcome change to what's currently offered on the trade show landscape. LAZR TRADESHOW will be an innovative, convenient, easy to shop environment set in the heart of downtown L.A., just minutes from the Fashion District during L.A. Market. The show floor will be easy to navigate and provide a place for buyers to find new brands. Vegas is great, but LAZR TRADESHOW this is something very different. LAZR TRADESHOW will be a place that encourages discovery, and allows each brand to shine in a creative, and engaging atmosphere.

What will LAZR mean to the city of Los Angeles and the type of annual revenue it could bring into the city – that is now noted, the Fashion Capital?

*LAZR TRADESHOW will help to solidify downtown L.A. as **the** can't-miss fashion destination.*

This is a multi-billion dollar business and sometimes we need to welcome change if for the betterment of the “bigger picture.” There is always room for improvement. There are even virtual tradeshowes coming into play as we speak! LAZR needs our industry support. And there are some who are doing just that.

LAZR TRADESHOW has been given overwhelming support of the footwear fashion industry. This support has allowed us to build an amazing roster of brands, and create a show that will surprise and inspire.

Here is the short list of those who are showing at LAZRTRADESHOW:

ABS Allen Schwartz

Badgley Mischka

BC Footwear

Charles Jourdan

Clarks Original

Grazie Kids

Irregular Choice

Isaac Mizrahi

L.A.M.B.

Lalla Alia

Matiko Shoes

Naughty Monkey

OTBT

Penny loves Kenny

Relaxshoe

Rock and Candy

Sbicca Kids

Seychelles

Vivienne Westwood

Volatile

S.h.e.

ZiGi girl

Lastly, give us your outlook on the tradeshow as a whole and from your vast experience in the business - what you foresee in the LAZRtradeshow future.

Like the retail landscape, the trade show industry is changing. No longer static, the industry needs to become more agile, fluid and social. Consumers are, and will continue to play an important role in the

determining the direction of the industry. Just look at the way the consumer has changed the retail landscape.

I am still excited about attending this show. If you are in the LA area – look out for Shoebizness.com and say, “Hi!”



LAZR
TRADESHOW

Please join us
FASHION TRADE EVENT & RETAILER POP UP SHOPS
AUGUST 13 - 10AM TO 6PM
AUGUST 14 - 9AM TO 5PM
AUGUST 15 - 9AM TO 5PM

Location:
The New Downtown Entertainment Destination
EVENT DECK AT L.A. LIVE

After Show Event
AUGUST 13TH - 7PM TO 10PM

102.7 KIIS FM BROADCASTING LIVE WITH SURPRISE PERFORMANCES BY SPECIAL GUESTS

ADMISSION: \$10.00

ENJOY FREE SERVICES BY BOLT BARBERS AND OTHER LOCAL BUSINESSES

INTERACTIVE MEDIA LOUNGE POWERED BY

TWO POINT ON!

TO PURCHASE TICKETS VISIT
WWW.LAZRTRADESHOW.COM

We are here to help, contact conciierge@lazrtradeshow.com!

Visit www.lazrtradeshow.com for more information and event schedule

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