



Alpha Male

L.A.'S BOUTIQUE FOR INDULGENT GENTLEMEN

Pity the Los Angeles male with delusions of chic. He finds himself caught between the Rodeo Drive labelholics and that T-shirt-and-jeans posse known as the haute gas-station attendants. Thankfully, now there's Alpha—an all-encompassing men's-lifestyle boutique whose mission is outfitting regular guys with everything from AussieBum's cult underwear

to a caterer who can throw together a dinner party faster than the car chase in *The Seven-Ups*.

"At a lot of the stores, men are treated as an afterthought. There's really no place where in one stop you can find a Paul Smith shirt, a stylish iPod case, and a great baby accessory if you're a new dad," says **Darren Gold**, a 34-year-old DreamWorks alumnus who founded Alpha with **Christos Garkinos**, the 40-year-old former head of marketing at Virgin Megastores.

This throwback to the days when merchants were arbiters who combed the world for singular items is meant in its design to evoke a gentlemen's club. "By that I don't mean a theme park with wood paneling and leather sofas, but we'll have a lounge area with a fake fireplace and a bar stocked with cuff links; we'll host special events," adds Garkinos. "It's one of the things I learned working for Richard Branson: it doesn't matter whether someone buys something on their first visit; it's more important that he has a good time hanging out."

Another key element in building customer loyalty will be Alpha's personal-services division—capable of connecting clients with car detailers, closet organizers, and portrait painters, or merely putting together "gift gear," a mannish alternative to the congratulatory gifts that are a social lubricant of the entertainment business.

If the old saw about location being a key to success in retail is true, then Alpha is off to a blazing start. "Our landlord is **Elaine Joyce**, you know, from *Match Game*," says Garkinos of what sold them on their storefront in the shadow of the Pacific Design Center. Now, if they could only get **Gene Rayburn** as a greeter.

—JOHN BRODIE



EYE FOR FASHION
Christos Garkinos and Darren Gold, photographed in Los Angeles on August 27, 2004. Alpha shirts and ties.