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October 1, 2009

WHIP IT!

Roller derby
fact vs. film

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the a-list
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THINGS TO DO
THIS WEEK
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IT'S YOUR LIFE

FINE PRINT

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is bursting at the seams PAGE 36

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The best month for music fans PAGE 56



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ERIC ALBRECHT PHOTO

It's ironic, really.

When Raj Shroff stuck a picture of a "Lane Ave" street sign on a T-shirt and started selling them under the name Wearlane, he used the tagline "not so obvious."

Shroff, an Ohio State grad tired of seeing the same over-the-top Buckeye gear everywhere, was struck with the idea while driving by State Rte. 315's Lane Avenue exit.

But it wasn't so obvious to him that the concept would do so well. And it certainly was never obvious to Shroff that he might launch a clothing company.

"I'm a jeans-and-a-T-shirt kind of guy, but I really appreciate crazy, cutting-edge fashion," said Shroff.

He printed a version of the "Lane Ave" design for himself, just for fun, and while wearing it in Las Vegas he was recognized as being from Columbus.

So he launched Wearlane.com and went whole-hog, starting the line of men's and women's tees, track jackets and hoodies this summer with the help of designer Gabe Shultz, who now consults on the project.

Shroff is in the midst of prime-time sales season with football Saturdays and students returning to campus, but he said he's already anticipating hitting a wall.

"These are really simple, and I know that to grow the company, it's gotta be more than this," he said.

He's been experimenting at the Westerville printing house where he has the

original shirts made, creating one-offs of new ideas and playing with different colors.

Shroff has experience in brand development and web development, but not fashion or design. So he's been looking at blogs to try to play catch-up and get ideas.

He has two plans to expand: creating similar street-sign tees for other major campuses — starting, already, with Court Street in Athens — and using the "Lane Ave" lettering to create spin-off designs on bright-colored shirts under the Nightlife label, which will be available in men's sizes soon.

The idea, he said, is all about creating a look that's understated but identifiable.

"I want to grow a brand,"

Shroff said. "If this evolved into anything, it could be a whole line of men's clothing that would maybe be inspired by certain color palettes associated with a certain university. Who knows? Stay tuned."



RAJ SHROFF

WEARLANE

WEB: wearlane.com