

"Custom-made clothing - at a mass-market price"

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Whether a woman is a size 2 or 20, it's hard to find fashion that fits perfectly. Buying off the rack often means a hemline is too short, or sleeves are too long. A skirt can cling like plastic wrap to the hips, yet have a waistband that gaps in the back.

Enter April Marin, an online custom clothing company (www.aprilmarin.com) that provides an answer to the average gal's one-size-does-not-fit-all problem

Shoppers can customize every April Marin dress, coat and skirt to their own measurements, choose from a variety of color combinations and tweak style elements (a neckline can be modest or have deep décolletage, for example).

Items arrive within three weeks - and without too much damage to one's credit card. Each piece is priced at under \$200.

"You feel much better when your clothes really fit your body, no matter what your size," says co-designer Marin Milio, 27, of White Plains.

This month marks the one-year anniversary of April Marin, founded by Milio and her friend, April Bukofser, 28, of Pound Ridge.

The two met as marketing students at Pleasantville's Pace University, but drifted apart after graduating in 200

2. Milio landed a job as an event planner for MTV, while Bukofser went to work for designer Cynthia Rowley and men's leather goods manufacturer J. Fold.

They reconnected in 2005, when they each had a similar idea for a fashion business and realized that the other was the perfect partner.

So far, April Marin has logged nearly 600 orders in its short cyber-life, despite a lack of advertising. Business was boosted by mentions on Forbes.com and a handful of style blogs, but mostly, the site is thriving from word-of-mouth recommendations.

"So many times I'll go to a tailor because I want that perfect fit," says Kristina Skrela, 26, of Yonkers. "But from the get-go I can get that from April Marin."

Right now, April Marin offers an original collection of eight wardrobe staples: four jackets, three dresses and one skirt suit. Milio and Bukofser say their designs flatter women of all ages and body types, from twenty-somethings at their first job to middle-aged ladies hunting for cocktail party attire.

The two encouraged one client to purchase their Chelsea pencil dress (\$130), a figure-hugging frock with short, satin-ruffled sleeves. The woman - about a size 16 - protested that she could never pull off such a body-skimming style.

But Bukofser told her that a pencil skirt looks great on anyone, if it's fitted properly. And apparently, she was right.

"She sent us pictures," says Bukofser of the happy customer. "She said she wears it all the time, and everybody complements her."

Unlike many other Internet-based and brick-and-mortar boutiques that specialize in bespoke clothing, April Marin's silhouettes aren't ultra-conservative. Nor do the designers push the latest fashion rage.

"The old Jackie O. icon, the Chanel suit. The things that inspired us to create this line are classic," explains Bukofser.

"They're just timeless," adds Milio. "If we do the trendy route, well, things don't always last."

So April Marin's best-selling Cella pencil dress (\$130) updates a time-honored shape with ruffles and button details. The Capri suit (\$185) features a simple, sophisticated skirt, while adding flair to the jacket with balloon sleeves.

Skrela loves the Capri suit, in particular, because it's so versatile. She wore the entire suit to a recent christening, and the jacket with heels and jeans out to dinner - and she was praised equally for both looks.

"Their pieces are so darling," says Skrela. "People definitely notice them."

Though the garments are made in Vietnam, Milio and Bukofser design each item together. The duo handles shipping and customer service from Westchester, carefully examining each order to ensure shoppers have measured themselves properly. (No returns are accepted if a customer submits incorrect details.)

A user-friendly measurement guide is available on the site, and Milio or Bukofser will personally contact clients by e-mail if a mistake seems to have been made.

"Two days ago, we got an order from this girl in Virginia. She said she had a 27-inch chest," says Bukofser. "I couldn't imagine that would be correct. So we'll go back and forth [with customers.]"

Right now, April Marin is still a part-time venture. Milio is also employed by a Tarrytown event planner, and Bukofser is a new mom to a six-month-old daughter and works in a hedge fund's compliance office.

Meanwhile, the two are finalizing April Marin's Fall 2008 collection, which will likely include three new jacket styles. They hope to add pants soon, too, with custom-made jeans to follow in a few years. A local boutique is a possibility down the road.

"I get so excited, I want to do everything tomorrow," says Milio.