



**POWER COUPLE:** Magid Mehrabadi assists his design partner and wife, Michele Bernard, into a jacket of their label, Magid Bernard, during a recent trunk show at the Hotel Granduca. The duo creates made-to-order outfits from exquisite Italian fabrics for clients at trunk shows in a dozen major cities.

Magid Bernard's designs  
find a loyal following in Houston

# Dynamic duo

By Clifford Pugh  
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Sometimes opposites really do attract.

In the late 1970s, Magid Mehrabadi left Iran for New Orleans to study engineering. At a bar, he met Crescent City native Michele Bernard, an art student who owned the South's first punk/new wave clothing store.

He is courtly and soft-spoken. She is brash, with a wicked laugh.

But something clicked.

Married for 27 years and in business together nearly that long, they've lived in Los Angeles since 1989. "And we only have one car," Mehrabadi notes with amazement.

As the duo behind the clothing line Magid Bernard, they create made-to-order outfits from exquisite Italian fabrics for clients at trunk shows in a dozen major cities. With a loyal clientele in Houston, they come here three times a year, showing at the Hotel Granduca.

"These clothes work so well in Houston," said longtime client Ann Lents. "They're stylish with a West Coast feel to them, and the weights are perfect for our climate."

"No matter what I put on, it fits like a glove,"

says Cathy Borlenghi, who discovered the line about a year ago through a friend. "And I am not going to walk into a room and find anybody else dressed the same way."

Magid Bernard dubs their work "demi-couture" since each garment is custom-fit.

"Most other companies aren't willing to do that anymore," Bernard says. "Most designers don't know anything about fit. They want their clothes sold only to tall, skinny models. That's good, because it leaves us with everybody else."

Borlenghi also likes the quick turnaround. She receives the clothing four to six weeks (rather than up to six months, as is customary with many designers) after a trunk show. "To me, it's immediate gratification," she says with a laugh. "I want it. I get it. I wear it. I love it."

The fall collection emphasizes jackets that can be worn with a skirt or dressed down with jeans. Relying on his engineering training, Mehrabadi often cuts the neck of a jacket in an oblong shape or places buttons off-center. Dresses are cut on the bias for a more flattering shape. Silk charmeuse linings or lace underlays add a feminine yet sexy touch.

To distinctive fabrics such as mohair or silk jacquard brocade, he adds sparkling touches like Swarovski crystal buttons. A sleeveless top is about \$600; suits are \$4,000, and evening gowns are about \$5,000.

Mehrabadi is the dreamy one; Bernard is more practical.

"The only time we argue is when we're doing a collection," she says. "We approach it from completely opposite points of view. I'm a Leo. He's an Aquarian. But it always manages to come out the same in the end — very much like our marriage. We're complete opposites with varied interests, but we have the same value system. That is what's most important."