



Metromix Detroit Events

The Annex Boutique in Royal Oak

Hip new spot for trend-setting jewelry, accessories, home décor and more

By Andrea King

If you can imagine it, Royal Oak just got even trendier with its newest addition (and appropriately named store) -- **The Annex Boutique** -- which opened this past weekend.

Owners Annie Leblanc, 28, and Doug Schwartz, 36, have traveled the world (to hot spots Miami, New York and Europe) and brought it back here in the form of high-end, edgy and super-stylish jewelry, accessories and home décor for both men and women. All of which they boast to be new and irreplaceable with vintage pieces and brand names veering away from the mainstream, department store products.

"We wanted to deliver fashion-forward thinking outside the 'midwest' box," says Leblanc. "I always traveled and had my favorite stores here and there, where I'd look at all the books and jewelry and scarves -- fun things -- and I wished they were here (in Michigan)."

So after many months of showrooms, tradeshow and flea market visits, The Annex was formed after all their favorite art, architecture and fashion inspirations.

How would you describe it the location here?

We designed it to be unique and inviting, like the products. We want people to come in, hang out and feel comfortable. It's like they're walking into their home, they can sit, hangout, whatever.

Wow, from teaching [Leblanc] and real estate investment [Schwartz] to this...

[Leblanc] I was a kindergarten teacher, but I started in fashion merchandise in school. I loved the major, but I wasn't sure what I wanted to do and I wanted to do my own thing. My family's in teaching, too, so I got my teaching degree, yet I always wanted to open a store.

So why this...why a unisex store?

When I first met Doug I thought, wow he wears more jewelry than I do. Really, though, there's no boutique shops for men, but there were unisex things so here we have lines for just men, lines for just women and both. We want the male clientele to know and there are guys in Michigan that want these types of things. Besides, a guy's hat or a girl's hat, for example, it can go either way.

How do you keep up on the unique finds?

Traveling all over. We got some great finds, like La Petite rings, Taschen books, hats by Christy's Crown, handbags by Marc Marmel, Area Ware home decor and even cool things like a silver USB plug for an iPod. So (we carry) everything but clothes -- and basically everything in the store is for sale.

How do you think The Annex stands out?



You can find these things at other places, but we're buying things we loved. We're sticking with lines -- and the people -- who actually make the lines. They get really excited and if you're excited the clients are. Plus, in Royal Oak people get so excited when something new comes in.

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