



'Tribe' pitches in for AIDS



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FASHION EDITOR

It might be one of the biggest fashion fundraising events of the year, but there is a serious message beneath the glitz and glamour of STYLEAID.

The fashion industry's annual sit-down dinner and parade, STYLEAID raises money for HIV/AIDS research, education and community support in WA.

It's a chance for fashion lovers to celebrate the WA fashion industry's wealth of design talent and raise awareness and much-needed funds

to support those living with HIV/AIDS.

Each year, the STYLEAID committee invites established and emerging fashion designers to get involved, all of whom lend their support, and their clothes, free.

This year, 17 local fashion designers will display their handiwork at the event, which will be held, as in previous years, at Burswood's Grand Ballroom.

In a first for the event, photographer Oscar Chong and STYLEAID creative director Aly May managed to photograph all but two of this year's invited designers over the course of one hectic day.

"It's the first time we've ever done a shoot like this," said May, who oversees the creative and styling aspects of each year's event.

"It was amazing, actually, because we started shooting at 9.30 in the morning and we were done by mid-afternoon."

From Aurelio Costarella and Alvin Fernandez of Ae'lkemi, to hot new talent Timothy Godbold and young design graduates Danielle Caputi, Andrea Wolf and Zoe Trotman, it was a veritable feast of fashion as designers and Chadwick models posed for the cameras.

Each year, May comes up with a new concept for the event.

This year, the theme is "tribe", referring to the sense of community that is felt behind the scenes and in the lead-up to the night.

"I was thinking about family, which is how you feel about the people you work with backstage at STYLEAID," May said.

"Every year, from the models to the makeup artists and dressers, hundreds of people volunteer their time and their talent.

"It's also about this idea that when times are tough, people get together and feel a sense of security within their own little tribe."

Ae'lkemi designer Alvin Fernandez effectively kick-started his fashion career behind the scenes at STYLEAID, which has become an important platform for emerging designers to show their early collections to an appreciative audience.

"I was working with them as a backstage dresser when I was still a student, so altogether it's been about 10 years," Fernandez said.

"It was wonderful making that transition from working backstage to

showing my collection on the catwalk. That was a real thrill."

Now in its 13th year, venues, designers and backstage teams have come and gone, as have the hosts — everyone from Jo Beth Taylor and Tottie Goldsmith to Verity James — but the popularity of the event has not waned.

WA AIDS Council spokesperson Mark Reid, who has been involved since the beginning and chairs the STYLEAID committee, has many fond memories of spectacular parades and memorable after-parties.

"The amount of support we get from the fashion industry each year is amazing," Reid said.

"The people that come along to STYLEAID are interested in fashion, but also really want to