

# HEADWEAR HITS THE "GREEN"

Themed designs, performance fabrics and "green" elements drive this year's headwear market.

By Haley Shuler, Associate Editor — Digital Media

Whether it's the fashion-forward styles filtering down from New York runways, the latest looks sported by professional athletes or cutting-edge trends in the hip-hop world, today's successful headwear styles meld fashion, practicality and sustainability. Manufacturers have tapped into the market by targeting consumers with qualities that matter most to them, be it a popular style, moisture-wicking fabric or eco-friendly features. In today's headwear market, there's something for everyone.

## SURE HITS FOR 2008

Successful caps are created from the same basic formula, but along the way features are tweaked to yield new designs. Cap America's model i3050 cap features contrast stitching and a mesh back, and is one of the company's new styles to watch closely. "It is a twist on a classic look because of the super soft mesh fabric," says Anessa Fritch, director of sales and marketing for the Fredericktown, Mo., manufacturer. And if customers seek truly original designs, Cap America's custom overseas program moves customers' ideas from their heads to their hands. "Our talented graphics team is able to produce concepts and provide ideas for customers looking for something never before seen," Fritch adds.

For Outdoor Cap, Bentonville, Ark., variations of its garment-washed twill cap continue to be its top-selling style, says Chris McConnell, executive vice president of sales. "We carry several versions of the basic, solid-color style, including contrast stitching, sandwich visors and other treatments and accessories," McConnell adds. "Our licensed camouflage caps also are popular styles. We carry all major camo patterns in many styles." The company recently introduced a Gameday Camo collection that combines camouflage and team colors to achieve a unique, interesting look.

For many manufacturers, the ever-popular six-panel cap will remain at the top of the sales charts. "Our top-selling style is an unstructured six-panel baseball cap," says Dale Dekensohn, president for Econscious, Petaluma, Calif. "A close second in sales is our Corps hat, which is an infantry style." Magic Headwear, Compton, Calif., also shows its confidence in six-panel caps, having recently introduced style 5084, a six-panel 100% heavy brushed cotton, double-side trim cap.

Flexfit/Yupoong, Hicksville, N.Y., recently introduced its 210 premium fitted cap, which accommodates more than just end users. "We're noticing that retailers are getting caught with odd [cap] sizes in their inventory," says Mark Stern, vice president of sales. "We've developed a hat that molds and stretches so that it accommodates several cap sizes." The 210 premium fitted cap is available in sizes S/M, fitting cap sizes 6 7/8 to 7 1/8 inches, and L/XL, fitting cap sizes 7 1/8 to 7 3/8 inches. The product features a high crown, flat visor and absorbent headband.

While classic hat styles will remain just that, some companies are revealing promising new themed styles. Dri Duck Wildlife Series caps (see p. 48), distributed by S&S Activewear, were a huge success last year, according to Margaret Crow, marketing direc-