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Juicy Squeezes Into Jewelry, Handbags



Leather clutches come in a variety of colors.



Many bags are made in terry cloth — a Juicy



Charms are a key part of the jewelry line.

By Melanie Kletter

NEW YORK — Cult contemporary brand Juicy Couture is bringing its candy-colored vision into accessories for spring, with the launch of handbags and fashion jewelry.

The baubles and bags, which are being shown to retailers this week, are made internally by the accessories division of Liz Claiborne Inc., which purchased Juicy last spring and is facilitating the brand's growth into a lifestyle powerhouse with an array of categories bearing its name.

"The bags and the jewelry are the extension of the Juicy philosophy, which is fashion in a fun kind of way," said Pamela Skaist-Levy, Juicy's co-founder and co-president along with Gela Taylor, who noted that this was the first category that Juicy hasn't produced itself. "The Juicy girl loves things that match, so the accessories work together with our other offerings."

The pastel and sherbet-colored handbags are made of fabrics including terry cloth — a signature Juicy material — leather and canvas. Silhouettes include bowling bags and oversize totes, small barrel bags, clutches, a cosmetics bag and even a dog carrier, as well as a plastic oversize bag designed for the beach that comes with two terry cloth towels.

The jewelry includes gold-plated charm bracelets and oversize rings, as well as chain-link belts, ankle bracelets, toe rings and earrings, much of it made with brightly colored cubic zirconia. The jewels come in special packaging consisting of a black box lined with blue terry cloth, and each box has a Juicy crest both outside and inside the box. Wholesale prices range from about \$60 to \$200 for handbags and \$20 to \$105 for jewelry.

Ed Bucciarelli, president of Liz Claiborne's accessories division, said his team worked closely with Skaist-Levy and Taylor to develop the collections, with company executives flying back and forth to Southern California to show them handbag and jewelry samples.

"We have worked to stay true to the Juicy brand," he said in an interview last week.

While Juicy apparel has long flaunted labels saying "Made in the Glamorous U.S.A.," the handbags and jewelry are produced overseas, said a company spokeswoman.

Bucciarelli said while no buyers had seen the collection yet, Liz plans to distribute Juicy accessories in the same stores where the apparel is sold, including Bloomingdale's, Neiman Marcus, Bergdorf Goodman and Barneys New York, as well as specialty stores such as Scoop and Fred Segal. While LCI

sells some of its apparel in that channel, it's a new tier for the accessories division, which generally sells merchandise in stores such as Macy's and Lord & Taylor, as well as J.C. Penney and Kohl's with its lower-priced brands.

Bucciarelli declined to give sales projections for the first line of Juicy accessories except to say it is expected to be a significant launch. Last year, Juicy had overall sales of \$47 million. The brand has recently added men's and children's apparel, as well as categories such as outerwear and cashmere sweaters, and company executives have spoken of bringing the brand into areas like cosmetics, eyewear and footwear.

The decision to take Juicy into accessories mirrors a strategy Liz Claiborne has used for many of its recent acquisitions, which is to buy a brand and then add other categories via its internal accessories division. Claiborne rolled out Ellen Tracy handbags and jewelry for fall, and Lucky Brand accessories were introduced for the back-to-school period this year.

Claiborne also makes handbags for Sigrid Olsen, and jewelry under that label is slated to bow next fall. In 2002, nonapparel sales, which comprise jewelry and handbags, as well as cosmetics, increased 3.1 percent to \$511.6 million and accounted for 13.8 percent of overall sales of \$3.72 billion.

The Juicy Couture accessories showroom is located in the new downstairs portion of Claiborne's accessories showroom at 1441 Broadway in New York.