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Will J.Lo and Marc Anthony Fashions Top the Charts for Kohl's?

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Kohl's ([KSS](#)) is betting big on "Jenny from the Block" and her soon-to-be ex-husband.

The debut of the [Jennifer Lopez](#) and [Marc Anthony](#) Collections of women's, men's and home products -- which arrived in the chain's stores on Sunday -- marks the biggest product launch in the retailer's history, said CEO Kevin Mansell during a Goldman Sachs conference call last week.

But what's in a name? A star-backed brand doesn't necessarily translate into shopper interest and strong sales, as the crowded graveyard of celebrity product lines attests. (Remember Malibu Dave surfer wear from David Hasselhoff?)

There have of course, been notable successes, such as the George Foreman grill and Donald Trump's Signature suits for Macy's ([M](#)).

Still, as a general proposition, celebrity brands tend to lack staying power, and retailers often ink these deals for a quick hit, Mark Cohen, professor of marketing in the retailing studies department of Columbia University's business school, and former CEO of Bradlees and Sears Canada, tells *DailyFinance*.

"For the most part, these businesses are a flash in the pan, as the celebrity often doesn't have the expertise in the product they're putting their name on," he says.

The ones that do have legs tend to mirror the equity of the star, like Michael Jordan sporting goods, for example, Cohen says.

Star Power?

Kohl's, for one, is banking on the Lopez and Anthony brands, which are being positioned at the premium end of its product mix and offer a "much higher aesthetic," to woo shoppers who might not ordinarily step into one of the chain's 1,097 stores, Mansell said.



Getty Images

The Lopez clothing line, whose items range in price from \$22 to \$150, "channels the timeless allure of Old Hollywood," updated to reflect modern glamor and Lopez's own style, Kohl's says. Shoppers will find pieces in the collection reminiscent of the star's *American Idol* outfits, Mansell said.

Meanwhile, the Marc Anthony collection ranges from sportswear to suit separates, imparting a "raw masculinity tempered with impeccable style" that's inspired by the singer's musical roots and world travels, Kohl's says. Prices range from \$24 to \$240.

As the Lopez and Anthony lines are two distinctly separate collections -- and were always intended to be showcased as such -- the couple's July split has had a negligible impact on Kohl's in-store plans for them, Mansell told *DailyFinance*.

Their parting did, however, mean Kohl's had to swiftly adjust its marketing plans to avoid any awkward situations. That meant "no joint appearances and PR events," Mansell said.

Experts think the Lopez-Anthony split will have no real impact on the performance of the line -- especially as the couple have played nice in public, Amy Shea, executive vice president and director of brand development for brand consultancy Brand Keys, tells *DailyFinance*.

As a rule of thumb, a brand backed by a celebrity who has megawatt appeal tends to perform better, which is why the Lopez line has a good chance at success, says Al Ries, chairman of Ries & Ries, the marketing strategy firm.

What's more, the line should appeal to Latina shoppers, and it doesn't have heavy competition for the demographic, he says. "I don't know of any other Hispanic woman celebrity [of her stature] that has a brand -- she has an open position."

Ries is less upbeat about the prospects for the Anthony line, as the singer isn't a household name, he says.

Here's a look at why some celebrity brands made the hit parade, while others flopped.

The George Foreman Lean Mean Fat-Reducing Grilling Machine: Hit

The counter-top grill from the boxer-turned-pitchman packs a punch: It turned out to be one of the most successful housewares products of all time. But what was it about the boxer and the grill that caused them to be a match made in heaven? While the brand's success is something of a mystery, what's clear is that marketer Salton addressed a void in the market for an inexpensive, counter-top grill that worked well.

At the time, "There's was really nothing else like it," Cohen says. "The only alternatives in the market were toaster ovens and very expensive convection ovens."

Marketing prowess also propelled the Foreman grill into the heavyweight category. Salton spent big bucks advertising the grill in print and on infomercials, playing up the boxer's playful persona.

"At the height of its popularity in the late 1990s, Sears was selling hundreds of thousands of units a week," recalls Cohen, who was the head of Sears home department at the time. "It may have been the biggest product sold in the home departments of the stores that carried it ever.

"The association with George and the product made no sense, but it worked," he says. "Sometimes magic happens."



Lennox McLendon, AP

The *Sex and the City* star took her upscale, fashionista pedigree into a partnership with discount clothing chain Steve & Barry's for Bitten, an apparel line priced under \$20 that featured the tag line, "Fashion Isn't a Luxury: It's a right."

This from a woman who made ultra-upscale, pricey Manolo Blahnik shoes a household name? Therein was the disconnect. "It was a poor pairing of the celebrity brand and the outlet for the brand," Shea says.

With Bitten, Sarah Jessica Parker said, " 'You don't have to spend a lot of money on clothes' -- this is not the house upon which she built herself," Shea says.

Bitten bit the dust, as did Steve & Barry's. In 2008, the chain filed for bankruptcy and liquidated its stores that year.

White Diamonds from Elizabeth Taylor: Hit

Talk about a lasting scent: White Diamonds from the iconic, purple-eyed beauty launched in 1991, and 20 years later, it remains the world's best selling celebrity fragrance, according to [MailOnline](#).

Taylor, who died in March, "was a classic film star of the ages, and Arden created a brand that intended to have that kind of timelessness ... as opposed to a celebrity du jour, who has a hit show, movie, hits the counter at Macy's, and a year later, it's as if it never happened," Cohen says.

White Diamonds' staying power can also be attributed to the energy Taylor put behind marketing the fragrance, akin to George Foreman's tireless promotion of his eponymous grill, he says.



Peter Kramer, AP



AFP/Getty Images

Malibu Dave from David Hasselhoff: Miss

In 2006, the star of *Knight Rider* and *Baywatch* launched a surfer-inspired clothing line that came and went like a tidal wave.

"Why would he be a natural for fashion?" Shea says. "He's got no personal style. It has to be believable. He's not a good fit with fashion. Maybe hair gel, as he's got that head of hair."

L.A.M.B. from Gwen Stefani: Hit

The lead singer of No Doubt forged her own distinctive look long before she launched a clothing line. "She has this rocker chic thing going on," Shea says. And fans were not only taking in her music but her fashion sense, too.

"Stefani was mixing vintage with couture, doing high-low: She'd take a menswear shirt from the Gap and wear it with Yves Saint Laurent tuxedo pants, and it came off looking really together."



ELIOT PRESS/bauergriffinonline.com



Gareth Davies/Getty Images

So it makes sense that Stefani's L.A.M.B clothing line, which debuted in 2003, has been a hit with shoppers, Shea says.

The apparel and accessories collection, which sells at retailers such as Macy's and Bloomingdale's, reportedly generates an estimated \$90 million in annual sales.

Stefani's "sense of style is so present and respected, so people want to wear what she wears," Shea says. "She came with street cred."

The Death of Wal-Mart

The reign of the "King of Retail" is over. The Wall Street Journal reports an up-and-coming rival is growing sales at double the pace of Wal-Mart. This future blue chip is the only company in history to grow its sales from \$0 to \$3 billion in its first 6 years. The best part: The company Fortune ranks No. 1 in retail cranks out all this cash — while making life better for its employees. Get the name of this stock in The Motley Fool's FREE report called "The Death of Wal-Mart — The Real Cash Kings Changing the Face of Retail." Enter your email address below for your free report.

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