

# Castle Megastore Fans, Shoppers Flock to Annual Halloween Fashion Show



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By Ariana Rodriguez

DEER VALLEY, Ariz. — Up to 200 fans and consumers made their way to the fourth annual Castle Megastore Halloween Fashion Show, where more than 80 of the most popular styles for men and women paraded down a runway.

Castle Megastore President and CEO Mark Franks said that for the first time ever, the Halloween fashion show also streamed live online for long-distance fans.

Hosted by radio DJ Kassie, raffles and prizes from event sponsors Dreamgirl, Pipedream Products, CalExotics, Digital Playground, Liberator Forplay and Coquette, among others, kept the attendees excited during the show's intermissions.

"I love hosting this event," Kassie said. "I'm a fan of Castle Megastore and with more than 80 sexy costumes walking down the runway, there was never a dull moment. I was the host of sexiness!"

Marissa, an attendee sitting front row at the fashion show said she chose her seat to get a good view of the new styles in hopes that it would inspire her own Halloween look.

"I've attended the past fashion shows," she said, "and this one's been the best. It just keeps growing."

The theme of the fashion show, Castle in Wonderland, was inspired by "Alice in Wonderland" and was evident throughout the store with decorations and sexy body-painted mad hatter, Queen of Heart and Alice. With the recent big-budget mainstream blockbuster remake, Castle's costume buyer Pilar said this year's most-popular styles are those inspired by the fairy tale's characters.

"Indian costumes also made a big comeback this year," she said. "Schoolgirls, gangsters and naughty nurses are always bestsellers. However, Dreamgirl's reversible costumes are getting a lot of attention this year because it allows for quick changes."

Attendees also had the opportunity to pick up freebies from companies such as CalExotics, Topco Sales and System Jo, which had tables set up throughout the store.

"I have attended this event for at least four years," said Al Bloom, CalExotics' director of marketing. "It's a great opportunity for me to talk to consumers and get feedback. Castle does a great job with this event. My hat is off to Castle, its staff and especially Mark Franks...while other retailers are busy crying in their beer, he continues to be creative and proactive with programs and merchandising that makes "the Castle" a fun place to shop. Mark and I go way back, and I am proud to call him a friend...and one sharp operator."

Another major attention-grabber at Castle Megastore is the new Liberator boutique. With beds set up with Liberator's restraints and sheets, as well as shapes of all sizes, the store invites its visitors to try out all the goodies.

"I wanted to build the Liberator store so people could make informed decisions," Franks said. "People come in and ask for Liberator by name. We carry a huge supply — more than anywhere. We just opened the boutique and already we're seeing substantial traffic."

Franks said that boutique was a testament to the unique relationships Castle Megastore forms with its vendors.

"It's about brand immersion and integration," Franks said. "We're not just out there buying products."

Michael Kane, director of business development for Liberator, was at the event and credited Franks for being keen on not "selling to the shelf," instead picking up items that "sell off the shelf."

"Mark has it figured out," Kane said. "This is a partnership that had to be done. Liberator excels at advertising and Castle excels at retail, as well as branding. Castle's a consumer-centric chain and Liberator is a consumer brand. The Liberator boutique has now created a brand destination."

Kane added that there will be Liberator boutiques within all Castle Megastores and that he was pleased with the flagship location and looking forward to adding more features in the future.

"It's a constant work in progress, but I'm extremely pleased with the outcome," he said.

Frank concluded, "this is something that's never been done before — a store within a store. We consider ourselves No. 1 at raising the bar and we'll remain there because we'll keep doing what others don't."

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