

Mercedes-Benz StartUp

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Mercedes-Benz Start Up announces details for the 2014/2015 season, including new national semi-final locations and a new program bursary

TORONTO, ON – Mercedes-Benz Start Up is beginning its fourth year of operations and the next nationwide search for fashion's rising stars starts this summer with three stops: **Victoria** (British Columbia) on August 12 and 13, **Gatineau** (Quebec) on August 18 and 19, and **Burlington** (Ontario) on August 20 and 21. As the program prepares to enter its next phase, IMG Fashion and Mercedes-Benz Canada are pleased to announce the evolution of the Mercedes-Benz Start Up program.

Launched in 2011 in response to an industry need to discover, mentor and foster the careers of Canada's emerging fashion designers; the program set out to weave across the country and provide these designers a platform to succeed in their own local environment. Through a wide-ranging network of professional mentors, designers were given access to expertise that would help them hone their craft and prepare for the world of fashion business.

Commencing today, the fully re-launched, Mercedes-BenzStartUp.com website, is the place for designers to apply to the program and where fashion fans can keep up to date on designer and program news. To be eligible to participate, designers must have a registered Canadian business that has been operating for less than five years.

If their application is accepted, designers will present their collection and business plan to a seasoned judging panel that will consult, assess and evaluate whether the designer is ready for the next step. From there, a select group of designers will have the opportunity to move forward and present their collection on the local runway the following day. This three-city semi-final phase will produce six designers who will then participate in the national finale at World MasterCard Fashion Week in October 2014.

At this finale, one of the finalists will be chosen as the Awarded Designer. This designer will receive continued mentorship from the panel of experts, editorial coverage across leading domestic and international publications, a fully produced solo runway show in Toronto at the Fall Collections in March 2015. And new this season, the Awarded Designer will also receive a \$30,000 bursary that will be administered by an experienced mentoring team who will guide and support the designer's vision while ensuring that the funds are used most equitably.

"Each year the Mercedes-Benz Start Up program gains momentum and evolves in order to meet the current needs of the industry landscape," says Jarrad Clark, VP and Global Creative Director, IMG Fashion Events and Properties. "While the mentoring of designers in order to teach them how to establish long-term sustainable business remains the main goal of MBSU, the new additional monetary award, makes it possible for us to give designers much needed financial support, while also teaching them how to spend their money wisely."

Mercedes-Benz Canada's Director of Communications and Public Relations, JoAnne Caza said, "It has been extremely gratifying and rewarding to see the progress of many very talented emerging Canadian designers as they participated in the Mercedes-Benz Start Up program over the course of the last three years. We are thrilled by how well the overall program has been accepted by the fashion industry at large and by these new designers who now better understand its mandate and want to be part of it. We are delighted to be fully committed for another three years and we have made several important changes that will ensure a more robust infrastructure that will ultimately benefit even more emerging Canadian designers."

Past Awarded Designers, Martin Lim, DUY, Malorie Urbanovitch and Cécile Raizonville of Matière Noire, received international accolades and have enjoyed many exclusive benefits and opportunities through the program, demonstrating the numerous advantages and tangible benefits to potential program participants for the 2014-2015 cycle.

Deadline for applications is Monday, July 14.

About Mercedes-Benz Start Up (MBSU):

Developed and managed by IMG Fashion and launched in 2011, Mercedes-Benz Start Up is an ongoing initiative that provides a national platform to discover and support emerging Canadian fashion designers. Now in its fourth year, the program travels from coast to coast, identifying the next generation of rising Canadian talent and provides them access to fashion business experts to help them hone a broad range of skills. Designers gain the knowledge and skill set required to develop a sustainable career in the fashion industry, while elevating their professional profiles through unique and exclusive opportunities.

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Mercedes-Benz Start Up is an IMG Event.

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