

contract

commercial interior design and architecture january 2004



Designer of the Year: Shashi Caan
Designer of the Year Retrospective
25th Annual Interiors Awards
Furniture Systems
Design Ethics

25th
commemorative issue

Venturing Forward

Targeting a range of markets to facilitate the specifying process for designers, Epic Furniture launches its biggest and most comprehensive furniture collection to date

By Katie Weeks


Something big has been brewing at Epic Furniture. Since the company launched in 2000, founders Craig Watts, Robert Price, and Leonard Backer have cultivated relationships with designers and manufacturers across Europe, bringing an array of seating, casegoods, tables, lighting, and accessories to the United States and Canadian contract markets. In doing so, they have introduced products for the corporate, hospitality, education, and retail markets, among others. Often, the collections consisted of one or a small number of pieces...until now.

When David Allan Pessa—a designer who has worked with Epic's founders for about eight years—approached the company with some schematic drawings for a new collection that would cross markets Epic was addressing individually, the company decided to go ahead with a collection of, well, epic proportions. The result is Media2, a comprehensive collection that includes stacking chairs and stools, lounge seating, work/tablet chairs, benches, and occasional tables. It is by far the company's largest collection to date.

Designed by Pessa, Media2's key feature is its depth, both in components and in market appeal. "We realized that our target customers were looking for a wide-ranging, broad family that could either be specified as individual products or could be specified in a larger sense," says Backer, vice president of marketing for Epic. "We still find that a lot of the people in the A&D community are working in many different markets and are looking for products that aren't labeled just a 'restaurant chair' or a 'corporate chair,'" he adds. "We put out a multi-purpose collection and this is one of Media2's great strengths. Designers see the product line and samples and can use them in different markets."

Aesthetically, Pessa focused on keeping the collection sleek and simple in order to maximize the number of potential markets. As a result, the pieces are defined by clean geometry that's devoid of extraneous details and maintains a Modern, sophisticated look featuring a combination of wood, metal, and subdued upholstery.

Knowing that the collection would have to satisfy a variety of needs, Pessa and the Epic team were determined to test each and every component. "It's one thing to put a design on paper and see it in two dimensions, but you need to build it in 3D and get it in front of everyone," says Pessa. "It was the team consensus to kick the tires on three to four sets of samples before signing off on it." Functionality was key, Pessa adds, noting that the steel and aluminum components are designed to increase durability for high traffic and high-use areas. "That's what drove the design," he says, noting smaller touches like a solid bent wood component on the steel frame of the side chairs and bar stools that adds durability.

The reaction to Media2, which debuted at NeoCon® 2003 has been encouraging and supportive. "To come out with a program of this scope and support it so strongly in this economic climate says something about Epic's sense of optimism," says Pessa, echoing a sentiment Backer has heard from customers. "We sensed an immediate application interest in a lot of designers," he says of the NeoCon® launch. "It's a fresh alternative at good value pricing and is a really strong, comprehensive program."  Circle No. 209