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## Project Runway Review

By Edward Charkow

Project Runway is a competition-based show that features a group of talented clothing designers

who are competing to show their own fashion collection at New York City's Fall or Spring Fashion Week at Bryant Park. The honor of showing in one of the primary tents at Bryant Park is an honor that cannot be bought or quickly earned. Famous designers like Vera Wang, Dolce and Gabbana, or Calvin Klein are the top-attended shows at Fashion Week; however since the first airing of Project Runway in December of 2004 the competing designers have brought in huge audiences.

The Project Runway series is hosted by German supermodel Heidi Klum and can be seen on the Bravo cable television network. The judges are pulled from some of the top fashion design houses or fashion and beauty magazines that America has to offer. Michael Kors is a famous American designer and has served as a judge on the show during all three seasons. The other primary judge, besides Kors and Klum, is Nina Garcia who is the Fashion Director for the top-rated Elle magazine. While Kors, Klum and Garcia make up the core of the judging panel, there is always a third guest judge who is brought in according to the style or challenge of each episode. For example, in Runway's Season Two, world-class Olympian figure skater Sasha Cohen served on the panel to help judge the skating costumes that had been designed and constructed by the design contestants. Other guest judges included: the legendary Diane Von Furstenberg, musician Sarah Hudson and Tara Conner, Miss USA. One of the recent Project Runway challenges instructed the contestants to sketch, design and construct Tara Conner's evening dress for the Miss Universe pageant.

The competition is based in New York City, and much of the design work and judging take place at Parsons School of Design. The Chair of Fashion at Parsons, Tim Gunn, has become a figurehead for the show and serves as a mentor to the contestants. His oft repeated reminders to the designers to "Make it Work" and "Carry On" have become two of America's most famous catch phrases. Tim Gunn's sophisticated and calm approach to the design process enables the designers to turn out couture clothing on a small budget and even smaller time schedule. Frequently, each designer is given \$100.00 to spend at Mood Designer Fabrics in the Garment District in order to make a dress that would appear to a consumer to be well over \$1000.00 retail. The time constraints placed upon the designers are stress-inducing. Merely a day or two is given to create, shop for and construct tailored and unique pieces that speak to each designer's particular aesthetic sensibility. Each look is then worn on the

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runway by a group of fashion models selected to appear on show. While the look is paraded down the runway, the judges take notes and ascribe a score to each design. Once all looks have been shown, the designers are told whether they received a high, middle or low score and are eliminated accordingly. Typically one or two designers are eliminated per episode.

When the last three designers remain, all three are given a budget of \$8000.00 and sent home for three months to construct a collection of 12 pieces to be shown at Fashion Week in New York. Once the collections have been shown, one designer is chosen as the winner of Project Runway. He or she wins \$100,000 to start their own collection, a new car, and an apprenticeship at a major fashion house.

Find out more about Project Runway at

<http://www.reality-revamped.com>

### **Review Of Project Podcast: Tim Gunn's Podcast For The "iconic Statement" Challenge On Project Runway**

**By Edward Charkow**

Season Three of Project Runway has brought about a new and exciting feature from Bravo.

Tim Gunn is the well-dressed and sophisticated Chair of Fashion Design at the New School of Parsons School of Fashion Design. Having served as the mentor for three seasons of Bravo's most popular television show, Gunn uses a gentle but firm manner to deliver his expertise to the designers who are competing to win the show. Project Runway viewers have given Tim an Idol status - revering him for his popular catch-phrases "Make it Work" and "Carry On". Both of Tim's expressions encourage the designers to keep working without becoming disabled from fatigue or crippling self-doubt.

Project Runway viewers are embracing Tim Gunn's written blog and recorded podcast, both of which appear on [bravotv.com](http://bravotv.com) at the close of each episode. This extra serving of Gunn's analysis of each designer's work is delivered with wry-wit and genuine compassion for the designer. However, Gunn does not hold back from telling it like it is, and his podcasts are often filled with snarky remarks, verbal eye-rolling and occasionally blatant "bitchslaps" - another of Tim Gunn's popular expressions.

For the August 9th, 2006 installment of Runway, Gunn speaks of the challenge called "Iconic Statement" in which each designer was required to develop a modern look for a particular American fashion icon. Instead of the designers choosing their favorite icons, in true Project Runway style the models were given the rare opportunity to do the choosing for the designers. In the podcast, Tim describes the scene in which the models are jumping on the pictures of the icons (each icon was represented by a photo of themselves, and whoever was in possession of that icon got to design the new look) as a "feeding frenzy" but declares the selection process a success. In Gunn's words the pairings between designer and icon were "remarkable". How much better does it get than Kayne, the Southern pageant gown designer and lover of all things glitter, being able to design for a modern day Marilyn Monroe? Other fitting pairings included Michael the African American hip hop designer from

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Atlanta taking on Pam Grier, and Laura the ever-polished and often snooty designer from NYC dressing Katherine Hepburn. Young and cute Allison was paired with Farrah Fawcett, another promising combination.

After sketching, shopping, pattern-making and cutting, each model walked the runway in the creation of each designer. Tim Gunn tells us in his podcast that he has a strong suspicion of who was going to be voted out as they were preparing to hit the runway. He predicted that the bottom spot would either go to Bradley, who was forced into designing for Cher.

Most of the designers would have been thrilled to take on that challenge. As Gunn said "Cher is the ultimate chameleon so anything goes!" Incredulous, Gunn says that Bradley didn't know who Cher was. In his usual flamboyant podcast style Gunn exclaims "What self-respecting gay male doesn't know who Cher is?" In the end, however, Gunn tells us that he was "thrilled" when Michael won. In fact, he goes so far to say that he doesn't have "adequate words" to express how fantastic Michael Knight is as a designer. He says that Michael's design for a modern day Foxy Brown was truly "electrifying" and that Michael deserved to win the challenge. Michael Knight from Atlanta will have his design featured in a Tresemme Hair Products advertisement in Elle Magazine come Fall of 2006.

Find more out about Project Runway and the entire reality t.v. world at

<http://www.reality-rehashed.com>



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