

## Sneaker boutique picks Laurelwood

### R.sole's digs can double as night spot for events

BY ANDY ASHBY

R.sole, a sneaker boutique, is opening a 2,010-square-foot location in Laurelwood Shopping Center in December.

R.sole co-owner Barry Pener has been selling high-end sneakers at his Man of Fashion stores for 30 years, but the market has changed recently.

"Sneakers have become a real cultural phenomenon over the past four or five years," Pener says. "All of the sudden you've got all of these kids all over the country who are starting to collect them."

On eBay, some limited edition Nike shoes are selling for \$12,000, and it's not uncommon for other shoes to be re-sold for \$400-\$600.

"We'll release a Jordan on Saturday for about \$150 and you'll see it on eBay that same day for \$300 or \$350," Pener says. "These kids have just gone crazy for Jordans and sneakers in general. And the more exclusive the better."

R.sole's shoes will average \$79-\$125, while some can go for \$200.

R.sole's first store opened in St. Louis near Washington University, and its products have proven popular among college students. The company chose East Memphis for its second location.

"It's got a lot of good retail around it, and the demographics are right," Pener says. "Also, we didn't want to be in the suburbs. We wanted to be in more of a city location, where the University (of Memphis) isn't far away."

The Memphis store also will have clothes, such as jeans, T-shirts and hooded sweatshirts from high-end designers.

The store's design will have a flavor of nightclubs and art galleries.

Pener wanted the shoes to be the focus of the store's design.

"He came to us and said he wanted to exhibit the sneakers as if they were works of art," says Carol Tobin, principal of New York City-based Tobin+Parnes Design Enterprises.

The store has rotating color LED lights in the floor displays and in the recessed floor tiles.

The cash register area is designed to be easily converted into a DJ booth. Employees can program the lighting, video and audio equipment for parties and community functions.

"They've been doing this in St. Louis, and it's been very popular," Tobin says. "People come out for it. It's an event."

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R.sole exhibits sneakers like 'works of art.'

**R.sole**  
Collectible sneaker retailer  
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**Employees:** 7  
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