



LEONARD ORTIZ, THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

**GIRL POWER:** Runway MMC features, from left, Melody Hernandez, 16, of Newport Beach, Meghan Elisse, 17, and Chelsea Tavares, 16. Not only are the girls kicking off a singing career, but they also have a new line of clothing that will be sold through Wet Seal stores.

# The whole PACKAGE

Runway MMC is releasing a new CD and clothing line simultaneously.

**FASHION LABEL:** Each piece of clothing in the line will have a tag attached to it with a photo of the Runway MMC girl whose style inspired it.



BY KATHERINE NGUYEN  
THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

It's not enough these days to be just another cute girl band. You have to have a little extra something to stand out from the rest.

Meet 16-year-old Melody Hernandez of Newport Beach, one-third of a new pop singing group called Runway MMC that includes Meghan Elisse and Chelsea Tavares, both of Los Angeles. In addition to a debut CD release in September, the trio has a clothing line in Wet Seal stores.

So you can buy the girls' music, and if you like their clothes, you can buy what they're wearing, too. Too bad J.Lo didn't think of this years ago.

Each band member represents a different persona and style. Melody is the girly, flirty debutante - think dresses and clothing with lots of feminine detail like ruffles. Meghan is the edgy rocker - hence, you'll find pleather jackets and shrunken vests in her part of the clothing line. And Chelsea is the sporty tom-

boy, with electric-blue skinny jeans and slinky metallic hoodie tops.

Runway MMC's fall collection is already available at the Wet Seal at Fashion Island in Newport Beach and will be carried at some 200 Wet Seal locations across the country.

The idea to create a girl group with a clothing line came from Meghan's mom, Lisa Mahowald, who owns an apparel-manufacturing company.

On the music end, the girls are working with producers of artists like Kelly Clarkson, JoJo and Maya and choreographers for groups like Danity Kane. The girls describe their music as pop with an urban edge, with tracks like "Runway," "Shop 'Til You Drop" and a cover of "Kids in America."

So far, the girls have performed at the OC Fair and Stonewood Mall in Downey, with plans for other mall gigs in the future. They recently attended the Teen Choice Awards and the ALMA Awards, and they have a scheduled per-

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To watch a performance and listen to music by Runway MMC, go to [ocregister.com](http://ocregister.com).

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## Life\*trends

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formance at a pre-MTV Video Music Awards event in September.

"I'm so excited about all of this," said Melody, a junior at St. Margaret's Episcopal School in San Juan Capistrano.

It might come as no surprise that Melody is pursuing a path in entertainment. Her father is legendary mariachi singer Jose Hernandez of the Sol de Mexico ensemble. "I grew up looking up to my dad, and watching him perform has really inspired me," she said.

Her first recordings involved providing background vocals for her father's Grammy-nominated album in 2000, "Tequila Con Limon," and a full track on "Merry-achi Christmas."

Growing up, Melody said, her father introduced her to music from artists like Barbra Streisand, Ann-Margret and Doris Day. Today, she said, some of her favorite singers include Christina Aguilera, Rihanna and Justin Timberlake.

"She definitely has it in her blood," said her father. "Our family has been playing Mexican mariachi music for 125 years. She grew up singing Mexican songs, but there's another side to her."

"Melody is a reflection of how she's grown up here in the States and she's now going from singing mariachi to pop, which is pretty cool."

Asked whether he had any concerns or advice for his daughter getting into the business, Jose Hernandez said he's confident she will stay focused on the morals she was raised with, and will work hard and have passion for the music.

"She knows how hard it can be and all the pressures influences and just how



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**O.C. GAL:** Melody Hernandez is the daughter of famed mariachi singer Jose Hernandez.

#### About Melody Hernandez

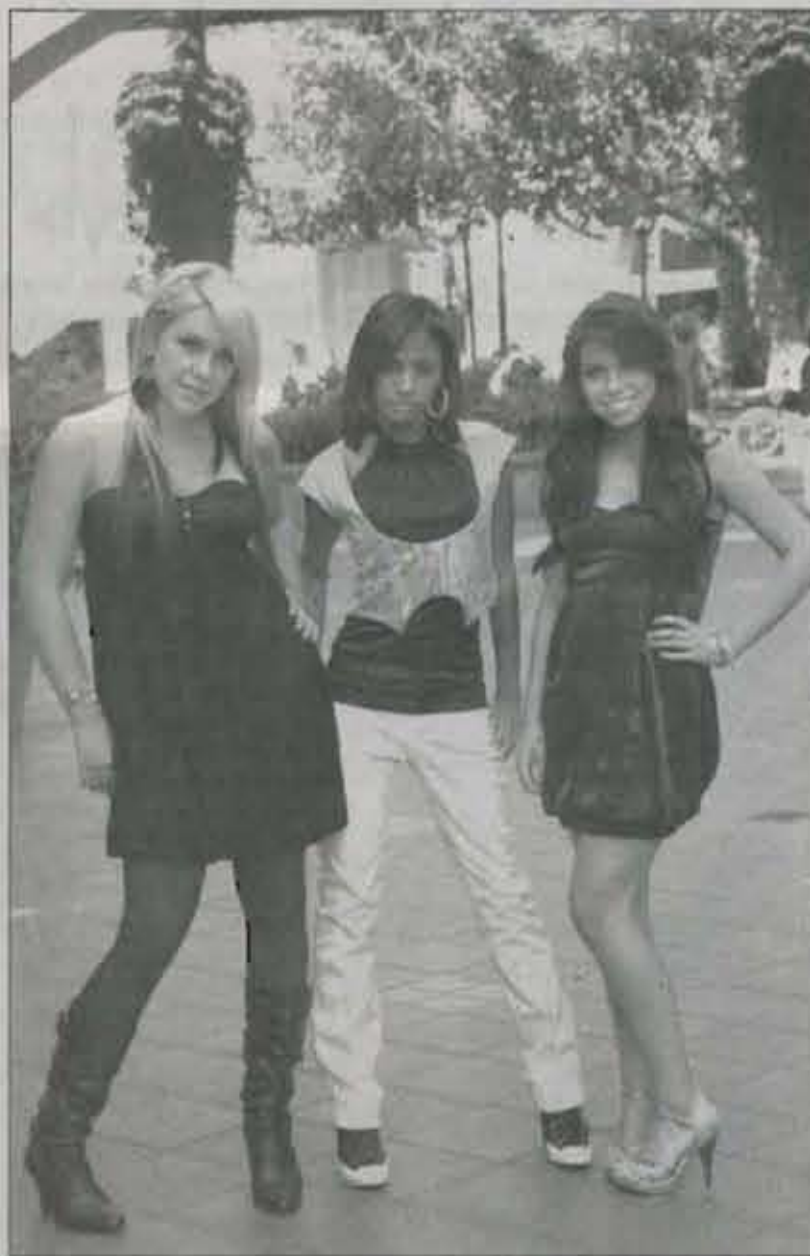
**Age:** 16  
**City of residence:** Newport Beach  
**School:** St. Margaret's Episcopal, San Juan Capistrano  
**Grade:** Junior  
**Hobbies:** Writing, hanging out with the girls, going to the pool, shopping and going to the movies  
**Favorite stores:** Crush, Forever 21 and Hollister  
**Favorite foods:** "Peppers - almost any kind except habanero. I love Golden Spoon - I could eat the peanut butter frozen yogurt with rainbow sprinkles all day - and N.Y.-style or deep-dish pizza."

sexual this generation is," he said. "But there aren't any suggestive lyrics; they're just fun, clean songs. I'm very proud of Melody."

Melody also has aspirations to get into acting. She has landed guest roles on "Hannah Montana."

While she says she can't wait to see what happens with her entertainment career, her family and friends say she has a solid head on her shoulders. She said she has a 3.8 GPA and her dream is to attend USC to study music.

"She's wholesome and gets excellent grades," said her trainer, Cassie Piasecki.



**THREE PERSONAS:** Runway MMC's style consists of the edgy rocker look of Meghan Elisse, from left, the tomboy chic of Chelsea Tavares and the frilly femininity of Melody Hernandez.

"This kid is so driven and smart. She's as excited about doing well on an AP test as she is about being in a girl group."

Still, even Melody has admitted to already feeling the pressure of maintaining a certain image in the entertainment industry. "Especially because we're supposed to be modeling the clothes from our line, too," she said. "I grew up as the sort of ugly ducking kid, the chubby girl."

So she went to a nutritionist and "measured everything I ate," using a kitchen scale to weigh out portions of chicken.

"I wanted to transform

my body but do it the healthy way," she said.

Since the group officially came together last December - Chelsea became the third member after a round of auditions - the girls have learned how to strut across the stage in high heels, met with producers and then met with designers to go over details of how each of their clothing lines would look.

A camera crew has been following them as they launch their pop-music and fashion careers in the hopes that their story will get picked up by a network like MTV for a reality show.

For now, Melody said, she

and the girls would love to get on the air with Ryan Seacrest of KIIS-FM and have some hits.

"It's such a cutthroat business, but we all really get along and it's nice to know we're all on this journey together," she said.

And when the day comes to move on from the hoopla of a girl-band lifestyle, Melody said, she hopes to continue to make music that her grandkids would want to listen to.

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