

Made In Memphis: Bluff City is Shopper Central for Homegrown Gifts

By Lisa Matte

In a world of mass-produced gadgets and trinkets, it's refreshing to find unique souvenirs and gifts. The longtime home to the one-and-only Elvis Presley, Memphis is also a treasure trove of one-of-a-kind shops offering handcrafted items that will leave you swooning. So grab your money, honey, and let's shake rattle and roll.

Phillip Ashley Chocolates

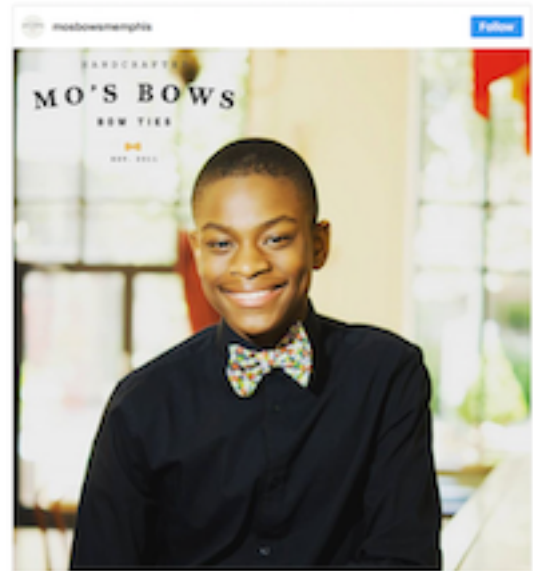


Chocolate lovers worldwide crave the sweet satisfaction of designer chocolates created by Memphis's own Phillip Ashley Rix. A native of nearby Bartlett, Tenn., Rix traded a career in corporate sales to earn his chops as a self-taught designer chocolatier. While some of his flavor profiles are surprising — pineapple ginger wasabi, Moscow Mule vodka ginger lime, gorgonzola dolce apricot — the hundred-plus varieties include some more traditional blends like Madagascar vanilla bean caramel fleur de sel and Key lime pie.

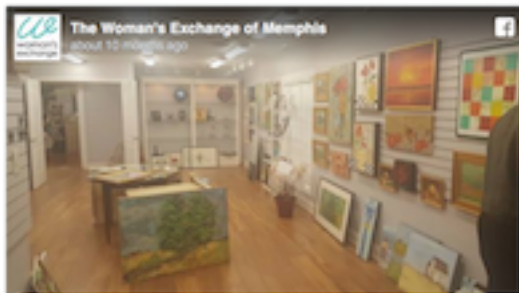
Since opening his shop in the Cooper-Young neighborhood in 2013, Rix has built a worldwide following. He was named one of the Best Chocolatiers and Confectioners in America by TasteTV, dubbed him the “Real Life Willy Wonka” and British Vogue listed Phillip Ashley Chocolates in its May 2017 Top Picks column. At the request of Memphis Mayor Jim Strickland, Rix created an official “Taste of Memphis” collection. The 12-piece box showcases chocolates with a direct connection to Memphis including The Blues (vodka rum sour blueberry); Sit In, a reference to the National Civil Rights Museum (black coffee vanilla bean); and King Me, smoked peanut butter banana, a nod to one of Elvis Presley’s favorite snacks.

Mo's Bows

Founded in 2011 by then 9-year old Moziah Bridges, Mo's Bows gained wide appeal in 2015 when the young entrepreneur appeared on ABC-TV's Shark Tank where he made an unusual (for the show) deal: Shark Daymond John, founder and CEO of fashion empire FUBU, agreed to mentor the teen. The colorful, handcrafted bow ties were an immediate hit and Mo's Bows product roster has grown to include traditional ties and children's bow ties. More recently, Bridges entered into an agreement with the NBA to manufacture a series of ties featuring the logos of NBA teams. Check the Mo's Bows website for retail locations selling Mo's Bows in Memphis and beyond.



Women's Exchange Memphis



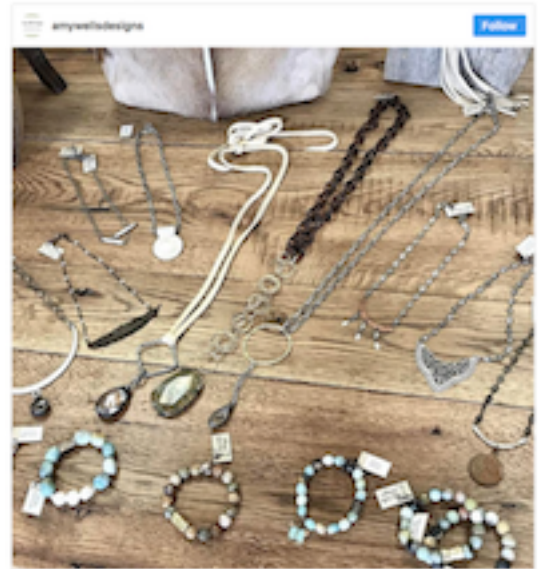
Founded in 1885, the Woman's Exchange in Memphis traces its heritage to an exchange movement that began in Philadelphia in 1832. The initiative began as an opportunity for women to gain financial footing by providing retail space to sell their handiwork on consignment. Today, The Women's Exchange in Memphis showcases the work of local consignors, offering everything from heirloom children's and infants' clothing crafted by expert seamstresses to pottery, artwork and jewelry. Insider tip: The Tea Room at the Women's Exchange in Memphis was named "Best Lunch in Memphis" by Memphis magazine.

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Amy Wells Designs

In the midst of a 10-year career in the financial services industry, Amy Wells was scheduled to return from maternity leave when she discovered her talent for making unique jewelry. Wells created her first piece — The Picture Bracelet — on a whim when she strung colorful beads interspersed with photos of her daughter. Orders started coming in and the rest, as they say, is history.

For more than a decade, Wells has created unique jewelry including necklaces, bracelets and earrings incorporating natural gemstones, fresh-water pearls, metals and naturally dyed leather. Because they are handmade, no two pieces are exactly alike. Each design reflects Wells' personal style aesthetic and some, like Penny Lane, These Boots are Made for Walkin' and Lay Down Sally, are named for her favorite songs. Today, Amy Wells Designs boasts a worldwide fan base, but each piece is still made right here in Memphis. Check the Amy Wells Designs websites for retail locations in Memphis and beyond.



Of course, no visit to Memphis would be complete without a touch of Elvis. Good news for guests staying at The Guest House at Graceland: Not only is the hotel adjacent to Graceland, the hotel gift shop is choc-full of iconic Elvis memorabilia and souvenirs.