

# GDS: putting the boot in

The anti-dumping duties on leather shoes and boots from China and Vietnam seemed to be affecting what was on offer at GDS. It isn't always fashion that leads the way in a nervous market. For example, NC, an agent based in Portugal and selling men's fashion shoes to the UK and Scandinavia, had been making great soft leather boots in Brazil. Currency exchange rates have meant that the company has now gone back to Portuguese production for rugged dirty leather. Natural leather men's shoes also need a strong fashion content with hand stitching and hand polished details.

Long boots have been a hot fashion item and combined with deep, deep snow in February and March they are bound to be hot next winter too. Up to the knee boots have taken over from Frye and cowboy boots, with rounded bump toes and clunky or wedge heels the most common. Timberland's rich berry coloured long ladies' fashion boots were inspired by Bhutan with hand

embroidery or patchy textiles up the shaft. The same rich deep berry mixed colours appeared on casual boots, too, mixed tone on tone, with a touch of zigzag stitching. Converse types abound, often with woolly knitted sock tops, attached Scandinavian sweater knitted tops or embroidered travel patches.

Fashion boots are generally all the way up to the knee but Fly London, ahead in young fashion as usual, has brought in two new shortened lengths, just skimming the ankle and about 10cm above. They have taken the best waxy leather button and strap boots with signature heavy stitching and cut them down. What makes these boots look new is that they are not shoes but still have baggy legs and are made on boot last shapes. Very many boots come on stack wedge heels with thin foreparts. These soles are not fancy and are almost 70s simple, with straight-sided and bottomed wedges making them easy to wear. There were a lot of leather boots at the show, in soft browns





and tans with a 'real leather' look. Even dressy classic lines in petrol and plum from Comma had the natural leather waxy look.

Dressy shoes also have big toes and there are lots of dressy T bars and dance shoes. Basically, higher heels are becoming more wearable with 'T' and ankle straps. Newest for ladies are the mannish brogue lace ups on block stack high heels, which are easy to run for the bus in. The lower flatter shoes are more cutaway; also in glitzy gold and antique silver from Bronx. Mocs are still going strong and the newest are updates on the old Dexter type sailing shoes. Streamlined and lightweight boating inspired mocs on super slim rubber soles from Timberland have both low and high shafts.

For kids, the boys and girls are becoming more polarised. Small girls still want to be girlie. The popular colour for young

girls at French Mod8 is still old rose, but there were some more cool long suede black boots with gold ankle chains. Beading and sequins are still popular trims but flower appliques (tone on tone) just won't go away. Sporty boots are often boy or girl specific, with Puffa jacket uppers on sneaker bottoms for snow wear scaled down for small girls.

For boys, natural brown waxy full grain crazy horse leather—with heavy outside stitch seams on bulky toe covered crepe rubber-look soles—takes the lead. Scaled down adult shoes are always good news for the big brands, with Timberland already offering scaled down shoes with 'smart wool' collars on camel nubuck uppers. Kid's shoes are not the sizes they're supposed to be and this has become a big issue with lots of discussion about real length and the German WMS system guaranteed to create much controversy in the near future. 