

Middec — a major

As one of the largest consumers of footwear in the world—said to be second only to the USA—France seems an obvious choice of location for an international footwear exhibition, and this was highlighted with the success of Middec, which was held in Paris in September. The changes made to the show last February including new dates, a new look and a new layout proved popular with both exhibitors and visitors, and the 20% increase in visitor numbers recorded in February was maintained at the September event, with the fair attracting over 12,000 visitors. The higher visitor numbers also attracted more big brand names to the event. Wandering around the stands, one had

the feeling of browsing around a huge high quality footwear outlet with brands such as Caterpillar, Harley Davidson, Sergio Taccini, Stride Rite, Clarks Originals, Patagonia, Sebago, Timberland and Tommy Hilfiger on show, to name but a few. Whilst there was a wide variety of men's and women's footwear on offer the area that really stood out was the children's footwear 'village' where shoes for minors was a major highlight for summer 2007.

Big potential in a small world

The children's area at the show has worked well for several seasons and the fair organisers now even refer to Middec as "the indisputable leader for kids shoes".

Located at the entrance of the exhibition, visitors could not miss the 'Just for Kids' area with its bright footwear for children from both large and less well-known brands. Whilst the children's collections often reflected the trends seen in adult footwear—evoking a feeling of calm inspired by water and flora in natural, soft colours and materials—there was a wider offer of children's shoes in terms of volume and variety. As well as the theme of 'nature' and 'earth', there were also collections that highlighted the fun, vibrancy and freshness that can be achieved in children's designs.

Many of the designs for children had a vintage and natural effect, whilst whites and pastels, whitened leathers, pearly and



event for minors

delicately metallic leathers, prints and ribbons added a roundness and softness to the footwear on show. The maritime theme was also highlighted with stripes and sea-like graphics incorporated. Other collections had an 'ethnic' Latin American, Mexican and African look, combining warm colours with bright tones in vegetable leather and cotton as the textiles of choice. There was also a 'Roman' feel to many of the collections with twisted and studded details.

There was too a 'fantasy' theme evoking images of mermaids and sea creatures, princesses and ballerinas and folklore tales. These were produced in vivid colours with details such as braids, embroidery, fringe edgings and pearls

in cotton, nubuck and exotic printed leathers.

Natural beauty

The children's fashion on show combined simplicity and 'ergonomics'. The simplicity was highlighted through the use of cotton cloth, linen, English embroidery, shirting stripes and washed leather, which produced a 'Scandinavian' feel combined with the spirit of the sea for a style where eco-awareness is combined with vintage charm. It was not only the aesthetics of the children's footwear that was highlighted under these themes. The increasing awareness of the need for correctly fitted shoes for children was again a significant theme,

with brands such as Agatha de la Ruiz highlighting the biomechanical function incorporated into their children's ranges.

The themes of simplicity and 'eco-awareness' and a desire to consume in a more responsible way were evident across the collections for both children and adults. The use of natural textiles such as cotton, wood, cork and ISO14001 certified leather, as used by the environmentally conscious brand Patagonia in its new footwear range, were combined with 'natural looking' shoes such as Clarks Originals' 'wood effect' desert boots for men. More than a simple trend, it seems a 'bio-attitude' has become way of life for many of today's consumers. 

