

WORLDFOOTWEAR

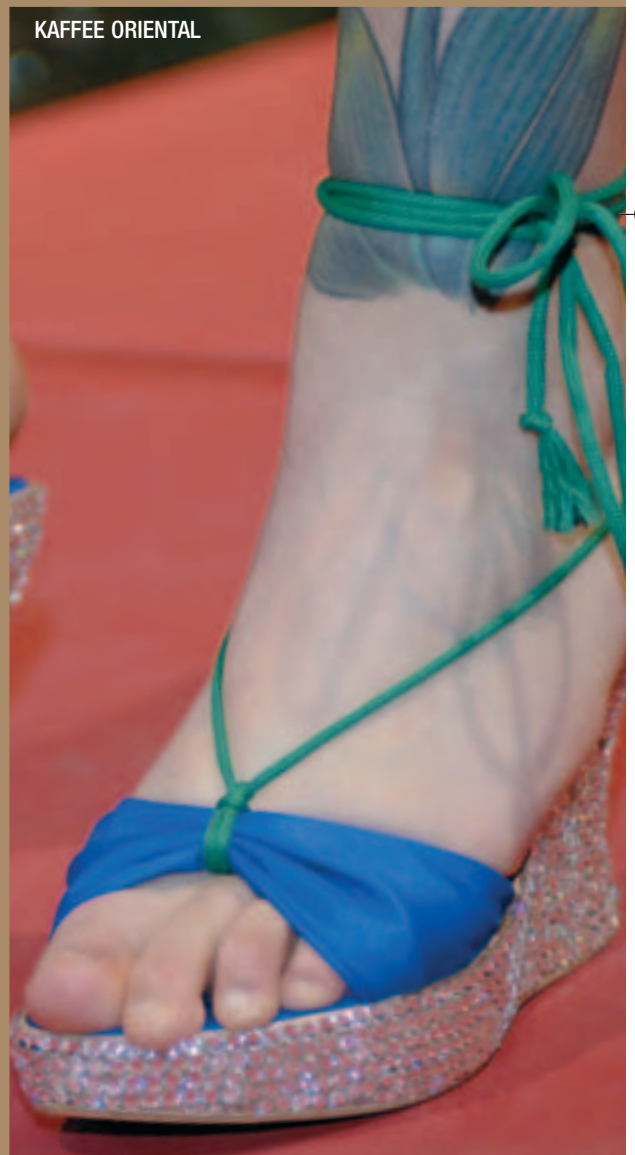
Something for **everyone**



BETULA



TAMARIS



KAFFEE ORIENTAL

As the GDS Fair in Düsseldorf becomes smaller overall, the area devoted to imported footwear becomes ever bigger, with particularly large contingents from India, China and Taiwan. Many of these suppliers now use their own European designers directly, rather than relying on European agents to supply shoes to copy or adapt.

Nevertheless, all exhibitors really made an effort to catch buyers' eyes at the September fair with both extreme shoes and colours that included brilliant neons, subtle metallics and muddy pastel leathers. Strong colour trims were also used successfully by many high fashion brands as well as all over sandals with silver inside on flip flops.

Fashion shoe designers have been inspired by sports shoe trends, so we have white leather with bright day-glo neon. Some buyers were saying it looks cheap but it is certainly not at the likes of Robert Clergerie, where it appeared just as a tiny piping on glossy white men's oxfords.

Metallics are still going strong in all the colours under the rainbow, even for men, too, with pewter being featured by Mexx who also had bright colours on ladies styles. From No Brand, there was lime, turquoise and fuchsia for ladies flat jazz dancing shoes. Silver, however, is the best seller for the time being, far ahead of gold in all categories. At the other end of the spectrum there are gentle soft colours, muddy mauves and soft roses, even for the kids in full grain Brazilian leather from Cocomma.

Women's shoes have both round and pointed toes on all heel heights and thicknesses. While young fashion shoes may still be high-heeled at the German fair, as with Paolo Santini, there were plenty of attractive and wearable shoes on heels, wedges or flats. Soft ballerinas with elastic toplines and leather linings frequently come in metallic or coloured nappas on very flat soles.

Directional men's shoes are often softer and with an almost feminine touch. Uppers are unstructured to an extreme, sometimes with so little reinforcement that they resemble slippers. Closings include laces, basic slip-ons, elastic gores and still some multiple touch-and-close fastenings, often in different widths. At the other extreme are the used work boots, a perennial style. Heels are stacked and toe spring exaggerated, soles and even uppers are brushed to look second hand.

WELLNESS

This was again a strong theme at GDS, this time even filtering into the young trendy fashion halls. Crocs (the famous lightweight clog brand) have high heel fashion shoes with Crocslite inside, so that they are soft and comfortable but look trendy on the outside.

Many of the wellness brands are very big German companies and are no longer just aiming at the granny market but making approachable and wearable fashion shoes. Shoes by companies such as Gabor have more widespread appeal. Then there are the quirky wellness brands that make a fashion statement out of their nature form toe shapes or organic leathers. Companies such as La Naturalista, Tamaris and Betula, use as many natural materials and nice veg tanned leathers as possible, through to Trippen with hand made wooden wedges or Think!, with its asymmetric toes and clunky heels.

Even comfy slippers have become fashionable. There are super lambskin house shoes, soft as gloves, close fitting to the foot with rear entry touch-and-close by Zook of Holland. This season's new fashion material is that old favourite printed pony skin.

CHILDREN'S

The German market is often called traditional but buyers also recognise good quality. Children's shoes have leather linings and flexible rubber soles even if the uppers are textile or PU. The line between kids and young fashion girls is blurring, and now we have 'tweens'. While the Hello Kitty collection might sell 50/50 to young women and kids, the brand is so hot in Italy that it sells 70% to women. Styling is also hybrid between kid and adults, with cute and pretty ballerinas and sporty styles. 

PAOLO SANTINI

MEXX

JOMOS
