



Eco-friendly footwear at ispo

By Penny Leese

Glitzy or ecological—two diverse themes competed for attention in the winter sports footwear on show at ispo 2008 in Munich at the end of January.

Since the lack of snow has hit ski producers and resorts badly in Europe, sports suppliers are compensating by upping their outdoor offers. If you can't snowboard and ski in the winter, you can go walking and hiking instead—or just look good at the ski resorts.

The theme of the annual Volvo design conference at the fair was 'Eco', covering sustainability and looking at recycling, combating global warming and what individual designers and companies can do.

Many companies are not just creating more environmentally

friendly products, but are also looking at their processes. For example, Patagonia shoes tries to reduce the numbers of shades of sample leather, since each sample skin of colour needs a drum, which uses a lot of energy.

Rossignol's Jones Experience is a snow collection designed with Jeremy Jones, five-times best freerider of the year. His association 'Protect Our Winters' will receive 1% of sales. The collection includes snowboards with bamboo top and water based solvents for printing. The boots have recycled anti-slip soles; the casing is made of natural leather and hemp.

Keen, which has done well with its quirky natureform casuals, uses renewable resources like bamboo, natural latex, cork, organic canvas and organically grown cotton. Recycled

aluminium is used for eyelets and zippers and polyester from recycled PET bottles are part of the material mix for uppers and linings. There is also a new process for attaching outsole to midsole which eliminates the need for environment-polluting glues.

With the Lava Dome CI, from the ACG Considered range, Nike has used its innovative CI construction method to attach the sole unit of the shoe to the upper. It is attached with a webbing cord, thereby minimising the use of cement and chemicals. The midsole and outsole snap together almost like children's building bricks. This allows production to use significantly less primer and cement.

The shoe contains a recycled rubber outsole, recycled content midsole, recycled content lacing and



recycled content lining. The recycling centre can easily disassemble the shoe and process each component. The sole can be detached just by cutting the tag at the end of the webbing tape. In addition, all materials are sourced within 80 kilometres of the manufacturer.

Feel for wool

The woolly look is the hottest new trend for winter wear. Tweedy looks are all over, from sporty lumberjack prints to herring-bone tweed used for winter boots with fur trims (Lowa).

The lumberjack check prints on The North Face's winter boots match the brand's clothing perfectly. The hot new fabric of the moment is Merino wool, and this is also true for footwear.

Woolpower from Sweden has supplied the merino wool lining in the new Icebug winter boots. They are Swedish-designed with comfortable roomy lasts and automatically retractable spikes for walking on snow or ice.

For normal use, Icebug has sticky-

rubber-soled shoes and boots because, when conditions are not so great, relying on rubber alone to provide footing on really slippery trails is not safe, nor fun. For wet conditions, Icebug has developed a traction system where the soles can be up-graded with six carbide-tip studs. The BUGweb fits into the pattern of the Icebug Trail sole. In the pattern of a "normal" rubber sole, there is a groove where the BUGweb fits, so it becomes integrated with the sole.

Casual low-line shoes might not be authentic sports shoes, but there is a lot at these sports fairs today that is not authentic. The low-line shoes with rubber soles from T-Shoes are designed for travel; they are simple and comfortable. Materials are tweed, and felt with full-grain leather and, for comfort, they have Gore-Tex.

AKU's Urban Outdoor line also has technical features like Gore-Tex and Vibram outsoles, but the uppers are pure casual with rounded toe shapes, mixes of leather and felt with cut-out

floral decorations and a natural rubber foxing. The company is also working on environmental sustainability, which is why it uses natural undyed wool inside. The leather is Italian and the shoes are made in Italy and Romania.

Splash of colour

In contrast to the 'Eco' look, sporty is bright and colourful for next winter in contrast to the tweedy influence on casual footwear. All-over yellow cross-trainers from Raichle, pale lemon boots from Kamik and red Ice-Bugs or mountain boots with lime details from Lowa are just some examples.

For children especially there are prints, like colourful camouflage, from Timberland. Mix-and-match is the name of the game in ski and snow wear, even down to the boots, from Chiemsee there are classic moon boots and snow boots in exactly the same prints as the clothing.

Technical too, is the updated technology from GoLite, who have

reversed original thinking with their running and cross running shoes, where the sole lugs work as independent suspension and there is a carbon fibre plate acting as a torsion stabiliser between the foot and the midsole, much higher than normal.

ACG follows a similar argument with the updated Wildedge. It has a thick removable insock with plenty of heel cushioning—8mm at the heel—a shaped heel cradle and reinforced material built into the sock instead of the outsole to provide strength and torsion.

One of the BrandNew Awards at ispo was given to the NAT-2 Shoes, with changeable uppers. Inside is a sandal, on the outside is a bootie, and the bootie can be unzipped from the upper, when the weather gets warm. These shoes have won a lot of awards already.

And the new hit for next winter? Slippers are a hugely growing category and the sports brands are making their own footwear for indoor comfort. A sure fire hit is the duvet slipper—an update on the polar down filled tent bootie—from The North Face. It is a leisure low-cut version of the super comfortable down-jacket-inspired boot, worn inside tents when out on a snowy mountain top.

Felt boots by www.ZDAR.cc can be worn indoors and out, since they have a recycled rubber outsole. The newest version is in pure creamy wool with hundreds of hand applied Swarovski crystals, and a price tag to match.

Glamour is part of the ski scene today, more than ever before. There are some seriously rich people who like to be seen on the slopes and in the cafés of St. Moritz. Black or shiny cream matching suits by Aura are perfectly complemented by slimline and elegant after-ski long boots in matching materials and trims.

Wet alternatives

With the growing demand for waterproof winter footwear—even more important where there is less snow and more rain and slush—many are looking at alternatives to the traditional membranes.



CREDIT: NAT-2

A revolutionary super-hydrophobic treatment from P2i Ltd, ion-mask, won the functional sportswear category in the BrandNew Awards. Originally developed to protect soldiers from chemical attack, ion-mask applies a protective layer, just nanometres thick, over the entire surface of the item being treated by means of an ionised gas.

In the case of footwear, not only are the external surfaces nano-coated but also the inside, and between and around the individual fibres, making the process particularly effective on shoes containing synthetic materials. Extensive evaluation at the three leading footwear test-houses has already confirmed that the treatment offers unprecedented levels of super-hydrophobicity and breathability. It has already been adopted by companies like Hi-Tec.

The Italian company Nextec Srl won a Volvo design award for its OutDry technology, a waterproofing method for footwear. The company won because the judges felt that it was a more environmentally friendly solution than some other systems. OutDry is a one-step direct lamination of a waterproofing and breathable membrane onto the upper inner side.

The result is a perfect seal of the

upper. Traditionally, a waterproof or breathable function in footwear requires a combination of many different kinds of materials (membranes), chemical substances and cements. The standard system is actually based on a sock-shaped waterproof lining that is completely separated from the external shoe layer.

This technical solution is not effective as the rain can still penetrate in between the upper and the bootie, soaking the shoe and making it damp and heavy. To compensate for such a lack of performance, shoe upper materials are therefore heavily impregnated with perfluorinated chemicals.

OutDry takes a different approach. With OutDry, the rain is stopped at the shoe surface, and with the more efficient use of less material, the waterproof function is greatly enhanced. Its 'direct lamination' concept presents a more effective (higher performance) and efficient (less material involved) method. The OutDry lamination process is realised by hot-melt glue mesh—there is no use of solvent-based glues, which are widely used in standard 'bootie' process to keep the traditional waterproof element in the correct position. ●