



Nicole Van Enter predicts the popularity of sneakers in new quirky colours.
CREDIT: LE COQ SPORTIF

Footwear for the new rebels

Young rebels have a bit of a dilemma at the moment. Parents the world over are embarrassing their teenage sons and daughters by wearing trendy trainers, three-quarter length surf pants and baggy polo shirts to meetings with teachers, and by walking round the supermarket listening to the Beep Seals on iPods. If parents are the new punks, what is a self-respecting teenage iconoclast supposed to wear these days?

According to Nicoline Van Enter, founder of fashion consultancy Y Trends, the answer is to look to the past, to a time when sports and outdoor activity had far less influence on everyday wear for everyday people, to a time, in fact, when we were all Barbarians. "There is a rawness, a raw violence, that is very prominent in movies now," Ms Van Enter says, "and it reflects society as it is now. Young people are almost used to it, because it's in films like the ones from the Harry Potter series as well as more obvious ones such as Beowulf."

Amsterdam-based youth fashion trends specialist Nicoline Van Enter explains why there are more factors than the world of high fashion influencing the design of casual footwear for young people.

Her main point is that this can, and does, offer inspiration for designers, on colours and on materials and textures. Armour-style decorations, with components attached by big rivets, are already appearing on lifestyle shoes from companies including Caterpillar and more youth-focused brands such as Bunker, which has used 'armour' on sneakers.

Furry, veined and cracked effects in athletic shoes are another manifestation of this, and Ms Enter singles out Le Coq Sportif as a brand that has caught this particular young



Footwear brand Zipz offers interchangeable uppers so a traditional black shoe can be transformed into a pink Argyle number after school. CREDIT: ZIPZ SYSTEM

fashion mood by using “burnished, metallic effects in copper tones” in its latest ranges, particularly in shoes such as the Symbolic Low and the Monseigneur.

These examples also highlight another trend she has identified, that brands and manufacturers are more willing than ever to use combinations of textures within the same shoe, with newly waxed canvas, felt and wool all appearing with leather in the mix.

Conservative tendency

Moving forward several centuries, young people can also distinguish their shoes and clothes from those of their upstart trendy parents by turning to neo-conservatism. “This theme, which we call ‘Preachers of Prudery’, is one that will last,” Nicole Van Enter says. “It’s totally conservative, with long, pleated skirts over the knees for women and braces and baggy trousers for men, and 50s retro stuff, with humour, and it will hit footwear. There are plenty of middle-class boring shoes out there, but this trend will mean adding some colour to say something about young fashion.”

This will probably be more apparent in athletic and casual footwear than anywhere else. Young people will use shoes to add a splash of colour to a look that centres on sober, grey apparel. “For sneakers there will definitely be lots of quirky colours,” she continues, “including mixes of new combinations, such as green-and-black checks with

purple, all shades of purple. Tartans and Argyle checks will be very important in this; they will help young, fashionable people achieve a conservative look, but with a bit of tongue-in-cheek, a bit of humour.”

Turning her attention to the spring-summer season next year, she believes nautical themes will be common in casual footwear with brands combining sneaker and boat-shoe forms in a single design, with more of the “intentionally clashing” and unusual (pink summer shoes for men—you heard it here first) colour combinations mentioned above.

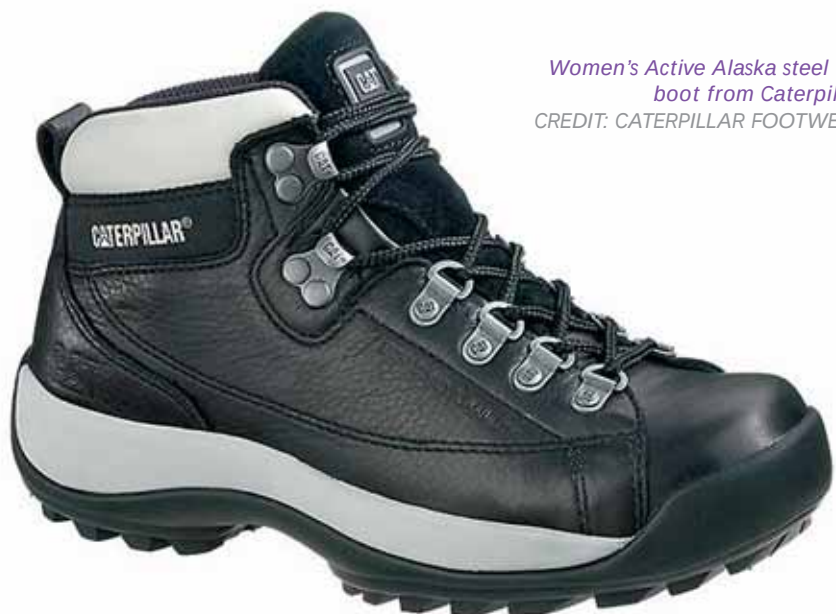
Ruggedness will still be the theme, Nicoline Van Enter insists, an eco-inspired ruggedness for summer, but still a look that’s in keeping with

youth. “It will be ‘young’ rather than ‘alternative,’” she continues. “Young people will not want to look as though they were entirely dressed in hemp. It will be more multicultural, more diverse.”

This, again, will require a mix of footwear materials: leather and cork (wedges will be all the rage too), for example, or leather and canvas, with design motifs burnt into the leather. Espadrilles will also be a popular summer choice, but not necessarily with a rope sole; rope foxing with a rubber sole could well be more popular.

The world of haute couture, undeniably, has a huge influence on footwear design. And in the specialist field of athletic footwear, marketing initiatives led by elite sports stars, and plenty of investment in design, have produced fierce brand loyalty among young consumers. These are powerful influencing factors on casual and athletic shoe fashion.

But as Nicoline Van Enter shows, forces and ideas from outwith these more recognisable areas also influence what young people choose to wear. Where less formal footwear is concerned, young people have often sought shoes that allowed them to indulge their rebel spirit. To be able to do that now may require a bit of extra thought and creativity, but there are clearly lots of exciting ideas waiting to come to the surface. 🌱



Women's Active Alaska steel toe boot from Caterpillar. CREDIT: CATERPILLAR FOOTWEAR