

*Aldo Premoli explains the sensual appeal of the red stiletto, which always attracts instant attention.*

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## Aldo Premoli tells us what shoes we'll be wearing in 2009

Journalist and footwear expert Aldo Premoli delivered an enthusiastic presentation at Modacalzado, held in Madrid from September 25-27. The footwear trend forecast for spring-summer 2009, developed for the national association for Italian footwear (ANCI), covered the latest looks for men's and women's shoes. Mr Premoli has a wealth of industry experience having been editor of *L'Uomo Vogue*, *Vogue Pelle* and *Vogue Tessuti* and having given lectures at various institutions including Boccioni University and the European Institute for Design. Not only has he worked alongside designers such as Bulgari, Giuseppe Zanotti and Burberry, he has also written several important works, including a soon to be released book entitled *Shoe Shine: Manuale di Manutenzione della Calzatura*.

Mr Premoli's passion for shoes was evident during the presentation, and particularly his love of women's shoes. While the trends for women were extensive and detailed, the men's forecast was much briefer. However, this does not mean the men's trends were in any way insignificant. Three

important themes for men were discussed during the session: Plastic Elegance, Evanescence and Street Tribe. He explained that trends were moving away from the traditional blacks and browns for men, who he claims are now "embracing more colourful shoes".

### *Sport, music and superheroes*

Mr Premoli explains the impact of sport on the men's shoe sector, as well as men's fashion in general. He suggested that the idea of liberation was key here, that the link with sport somehow represented a freedom of colour and bold design from which classic men's shoe designers often shy away. "In sport, men can wear all colours," he points out. "Young men are getting closer to wearing shoes that reflect this." A fitting example he gave was Olympic Gold medallist Usain Bolt who made a big show of his gold Puma trainers after breaking world records in both the 100 and 200 metre events at the Beijing Olympic Games. Mr Premoli said that the blue jean and gold shoe look was really taking off among

young men in Milan as a result of the 'Usain Bolt effect'.

The Plastic Elegance trend features a number of neutral colours such as peach and brown alongside blues, greens and golds. It offers clear-cut, minimal plastic lines and materials are soft and light. Mr Premoli cited the influence of music within the trend, showing how new, edgy shoe styles are becoming fairly standard on influential music video shows such as MTV. There is also a strong link back to the late 1980s within this theme, and some of the shoes have an almost androgynous appearance as styles move away from the typical men's shoe look.

Another influence here is superhero iconography, reflecting a metropolitan outlook supported by strong colours and photographic references. Mr Premoli points out that the most recent Batman film, *The Dark Knight*, attracted more viewers than blockbusters such as *Titanic* and claims that the huge popularity of such films, which fuse fashion and fantasy, is filtering down into the footwear industry in a big way. Leathers include nappa, brushed leathers and effects such as lacquering and glazed spreads.

### Colour and light

Evanescence offers an entirely different look. Using light, delicate colours such as white, blue and green, it plays with the idea of artificial light and, more specifically, synthetic materials reflecting light. Described as "aggressive and ethereal", the trend is designed to bridge the gap between glam rock and poetic romance. Reptile skins are widely used alongside light chamois and pearlised calfskin. Meanwhile, compact cotton and technical satins appear beside netting and tulle. In terms of model, Mr Premoli claims moccasins and ankle boots will be a big hit, as will two-tone designs.

The third trend for men, Street Tribe, has a strong African link. Bright colours such as yellow and green are used as a way of representing African art with a modern twist. Again sport has an influence, although streetwear



*Mr Premoli, pictured right, is a true industry veteran and his passion for footwear comes across clearly during his trends presentation. CREDIT: GDS*

is perhaps a more obvious theme. Mr Premoli describes how ethnic looking moccasins and short boots will be worn unlaced to give a provocative, rock star look, which would ideally be accompanied by an unbuttoned shirt. Colour contrasts are important and coloured sneakers, designed to be worn with denim, are at the heart of the trend. Leathers are natural, vegetable tanned and grainy, and are combined with contrasting materials such as metallic spreads and canvas.

### Redefining femininity

Having said at the beginning of the presentation that he could speak for five hours about these trends, Mr Premoli promised he would be concise. However, there was so much to say when it came to women's shoes, it was obvious he was struggling to constrain himself. As a general aside, Mr Premoli points out that the stiletto is a permanent feature and should be super-feminine and light. In particular, he says that the red stiletto gives out a precise signal, "you notice it straight away," he says. All six women's themes were engineered to represent "a return to an ethereal, seductive and radical femininity".

According to Mr Premoli, the Les Années Folles trend recreates the elegance of the 1920s following a

recent exhibition about the period at the Galleria Museum in Paris. Looks from the period, well known for its glamorous women's styles, have been tweaked to bring them up-to-date. Heels are not overly high and leather is used alongside fabrics to create a contrast. This trend also captures a hint of early Japanese art and culture, using delicate botanical patterns and neutral blonde shades.

Similarities could be drawn here with the Déco trend, which marries European design with oriental decoration. Gloss and matte contrasts play an important role, as do leathers with fabric prints and defined grains. Ballerina styles are more common with this theme than heels and Mr Premoli says that the right type of ballerina "can be very beautiful" providing it is made from quality materials. "They are very simple, but can attract attention," he says. Often worn by Carla Bruni, the songwriter and singer wife of President Sarkozy of France, and a throw-back to the days of Brigitte Bardot, the 'chic in town' ballerina style has always attracted attention.

European Sophisticate is again feminine and chic, with a distinct continental feel. Shoes are "ironic and urban", urban being the buzz word for the intricate "bare" sandal or the summer pump. Mr Premoli spoke of

voluptuous Italian actress Claudia Cardinale in the film "Il Magnifico Cornuto" (The Magnificent Cuckold) and how this trend reflects something of her essence. Shoes are low-cut on the foot to reveal the tops of the toes and delicate high heels are designed to echo the Tunisia-born beauty's seductive style. Like the men's Plastic Elegance trend, film and photography are significant factors here.

### More "must-have" looks

Again mirroring the men's trends, Sport Chic is sporty and urban, although for women the look must be both comfortable and luxurious. Mr Premoli makes it clear that these shoes are not sports shoes but are designed to reflect "an attitude of activity". Flat heels and comfortable shapes are paramount and materials used include natural leather and fabric, cord and tartan.

According to Mr Premoli, women are still wearing stilettos when they hit the disco, but are choosing to wear more practical sandals or pumps when they get up in the morning. Therefore, comfortable shoes are a must for the modern active woman. At the opposite end of the scale from Claudia Cardinale, Sport Chic is a slightly more masculine style reminiscent of French writer and actress Françoise Sagan, who was known for her country-dwelling, free spirit look.

The Plateau Sandal is a variation on a recurring theme. Plateau and wedge styles are reappearing for a third consecutive season and, according to Mr Premoli, are a "must-have" item. Strong colours are used and the modern Africa theme again mirrors the men's Street Tribe look. He makes it clear that it is not a focus on African nature or poverty, but a reference to the continent's diversity, culture and energy. Strong colours are used and ankle straps are plentiful. Wood, leather, metal and fabric appear in this trend, all on one model at times, and sculptured heels are a recurring theme.

Finally, the Gem Sandal has a nautical theme with plenty of jewel



*Film was a recurring theme during the conference with icons such as Brigitte Bardot (pictured) and Claudia Cardinale inspiring seductive shoe styles for women. CREDIT: WIKIPEDIA*

detail. Coral reef-coloured stones and mother-of-pearl are designed to co-ordinate with necklaces worn over jumpers and to reflect the link between "sea, sex and shells". Said to encapsulate a look of "the slightly retro siren with a touch of Star Trek", netting, braiding and shells really catch the eye. Gold sandals are less yellow and more antiquated, with undertones of Gustav Klimt's distinctive art.

### What women want

With so many ideas flowing together for both men and women, there are plenty of options to suit different tastes. Mr Premoli points out that manufacturers need to offer a range of looks and that they need to be prepared to accommodate different

international markets. He points out that while the US market is somewhat stagnant at present, the UAE and Russia offer excellent opportunities for shoe makers. However, seasonal conditions and cultural differences mean that "you can't offer the same collection across the board". He says that the 'Made in Italy' label continues to work its magic in the overseas footwear sector. "The Italian art of making shoes is inimitable," he says. "When we go to China or Congo, people look at us as if we are gods." Nevertheless, when it comes to women's shoes, perhaps the most poignant point Mr Premoli makes is that, however varied and beautiful a collection is: "only women know what they want – not me, and not the shopkeepers!"