

A key feature of the collection is the dual-purpose style that converts from a shoe to a boot by attaching an extension using an innovative lacing system. ALL IMAGE CREDITS: PO-ZU



What goes around comes around

As a company specialising in walking boots, Timberland prides itself on the longevity of its products. But a recent collaboration with eco-conscious, London-based footwear company, Po-Zu, has seen the brand launch a collection of shoes that are not only made for walking, but which will also fall apart when they are no longer wanted.

The Po-Zu/Timberland men's shoe collection consists of nine styles, all of which have been made with biodegradable components which are also 51% recyclable. At the end of their first life, the shoes can be easily disassembled and their parts recycled or reused, where possible, to make new pairs.

The collaboration is the latest step by Timberland to promote eco-friendly, sustainable products, and follows the company's 2009 climate strategy for reducing its greenhouse gas emissions as well as its first

A footwear collection featuring natural materials, innovative lacing and products that fall apart at the end of their life-cycle is the eco-friendly result of a collaboration between Timberland and ecological footwear company Po-Zu.

'disassembling' shoe which launched in June 2010.

Po-Zu was founded six years ago with the deliberate intention of creating eco-friendly shoes and was an obvious choice for Timberland, who approached the small company in early 2010. "I immediately embraced their suggestion," says Sven Segal, founder of Po-Zu. "To collaborate felt instinctively comfortable as I was familiar

with Timberland's ethical stance and eco-consciousness."

This is not the first time Po-Zu has collaborated with another footwear brand; in 2008 the company joined forces with like-minded UK label Maharishi to create a series of multi-functional shoes and sandals. For autumn-winter 2009, Po-Zu unveiled the 'Well boot', a waterproof Wellington boot made entirely with natural materials, which was the result of a collaboration with sustainable product developer, Amazon Life.

So when the opportunity came to collaborate with such a prominent brand as Timberland, Po-Zu made the most of promoting its eco-friendly ethos. "I believe that awareness for being eco-friendly is increasingly becoming mainstream," says Mr Segal. "Shoes are becoming more and more expensive and people are thinking more about their purposes, and I think in our case, beyond the fact that the shoes are eco-friendly, their durability is playing an important role. Timberland is obviously well-known for making shoes very durable and the fact that you can return them back to Timberland stores is an extra benefit that people seem to like."

The shoes are made entirely of natural materials. The sole is made of natural latex rubber (and, incidentally, carries the sustainable message, "What goes around comes around"), and the footbed uses Po-Zu's signature material of coconut husk mixed with natural latex rubber. Most of the nine shoes in the spring-summer 2011 collection have vegetable-tanned leather uppers, although several feature hemp and for the autumn-winter 2011 collection, Po-Zu and Timberland will use 100% wool and



The 'cocobox' is a compostable shoebox that doubles-up as two seed trays or planters, made from coconut husk and natural latex.

a wool/tweed mix to make cosy warm shoe uppers. In line with Po-Zu's sustainable outlook, all the hides they use are sourced from organic farms in Portugal and vegetable-tanned in the same country, before the shoes are manufactured in a Portuguese factory and shipped directly to retailers throughout Europe.

Mr Segal has good reason for selecting Portugal as the manufacturing base for his company. After graduating in 1995 from Cordwainers Technical College in London (which has since been absorbed into the London College of Fashion), he began a career as a freelance footwear designer, during which he visited numerous footwear factories. "What drove me to start my own brand was that I just didn't like what I saw, especially when visiting factories in the Far East," he says. "I didn't feel comfortable working for companies that turned a blind eye to the ethical side of the industry, especially in terms of manufacturing. And that's the main reason that I started Po-Zu."

Mr Segal decided that Portugal represented the best place for his Po-Zu shoes to be made. "In terms of quality and ethical practices, I think Portugal is one of the best places to make shoes because of the knowledge of the manufacturers. It's also quite near to travel to for development, so strategically, particularly for the European market, it's very convenient."

The nine shoe styles in the Po-Zu/Timberland spring-summer 2011 collection are being sold mostly across Europe and North America. They are packaged in a unique coconut fibre shoebox, which consumers can re-use as two planters for the home.

The result of the Po-Zu/Timberland collaboration is an interesting and design-conscious push to promote sustainability within the footwear industry, and one that will no doubt be noted by companies large and small looking for ways to increase their eco-credentials. 🌱



Po-Zu claims the simple, functional designs of the shoes have a European aesthetic.