

Jimmy Choo is now offering the comfort of a trainer with the same glamour seen across its shoe collection.

CREDIT: JIMMY CHOO



Jimmy Choo gives heels to the trainer boot

Jimmy Choo's glamorous shoes have been seen on the feet of a whole host of celebrities including Nicole Kidman, Gwyneth Paltrow and First Lady Michelle Obama, who wore green patent Jimmy Choo pumps to the presidential inauguration ceremony. The company's president Tamara Mellon often heads to Hollywood when awards ceremonies are coming up to give nominees and other celebrities a glimpse of the firm's latest looks. Last year Jimmy Choo launched a £235 (\$341) Wellington which attracted £1 million in advance orders. And now the brand is releasing a high-fashion sneaker line.

The designer range now includes eight sneaker styles for women. The most luxurious model is the purple Tokyo, made from embossed leather and exotic elaphe snakeskin. Elaphe are medium to large, non-venomous constrictors found in Eastern Europe and Asia. A number of top designers use this type of snakeskin in their ranges because of its distinctive sheen and scaly appearance. Used in a trainer, it offers instant glamour and femininity. The Tokyo features glamorous gold eyelets and star-printed soles and retails at £395.

The Tokyo, a high-top, basketball-style shoe reflects the hip, trendy look popularised by Converse. Those looking for a less costly version could go for the glossy black patent leather and soft, supple suede version of the top of the range style, which retails at £325. Alternatively, a white leather and silver suede, described by the company as being "perfect for chic run-around days", costs £345. "The high-top design is sleek, lux and combines a hint of old school trainer style with a glamorous yet effortlessly cool look," said Ms Mellon, who is rarely seen without a pair of heels. "I'm looking forward to wearing mine."

Jimmy Choo's Miami range also offers three variations. The most expensive model in the more traditional low-rise sneaker line also features elaphe snakeskin and embossed leather. However, it comes in a more natural, taupe colour for a more laid-back, casual look. The middle of the range Miami shoe mirrors the white Tokyo trainer boot in white leather and silver suede, while the most affordable style combines suede and patent leather and is available in both black and taupe. Both the Tokyo and Miami are also available in a leopard-skin style model.



The Tokyo white is made from soft white leather and silver suede.

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Obviously with this kind of price tag, the Jimmy Choo trainers will not be worn out on the field. The white-soled, round-toed sneakers are designed to be worn as the highlight of any outfit and work well with jeans, leggings and even skirts. Teamed with a matching oversized bag and large sunglasses, the trainers are designed to make as big an impression as a pair of killer heels but with added comfort benefits. According to the company, there has been a long waiting list for the new range since an announcement about the line was first made. The trainers launched in May.

The designer

Shoe designer Jimmy Choo was born in Penang, Malaysia, and is of Chinese Hakka descent. According to reports, he was born into a family of shoemakers and made his first pair of shoes for his mother at the age of 12, under the careful tutelage of his father, who made all his shoes by hand. "My father was an artisan, and he taught me so many of my skills," he said in an interview. "He told me that if you have a skill, you can travel the world with it."

Mr Choo honed his skills at the Cordwainers Technical College in London—now part of the London College of Fashion—graduating in 1983. He supported himself through college by working part-time in restaurants and as a cleaner at a nearby shoe factory.

The young designer opened a workshop in Hackney in 1986 in a refurbished hospital building. His shoes soon gained renown, particularly after they were featured in an eight-page spread in a 1988 issue of *Vogue* magazine. And having his shoes appear on the feet of the Princess of Wales didn't hurt either. Lady Diana

discovered Jimmy Choo when he was hand making just two pairs of shoes a day at his studio.

"Lady Di helped me a lot," Mr Choo said. "She trusted me, and for the first seven years I was making shoes for her, I kept it quiet and nobody knew it was me. Even though she was a princess, she often wanted very simple things. She loved flat pumps, even though I always wanted to put her in sandals because she had the most perfect feet."

"She was always eager to exchange ideas, and she never said no to anything. When I started doing her evening shoes, everyone noticed and in those days anything she wore, people followed. She was wonderful and used to invite me to Kensington Palace at Christmas for champagne and mince pies. I made her last pair of shoes just before she died. Gold pumps. I was going to deliver them when she came back from her summer. I am sad I never could."

Birth of the brand

In 1996, he co-founded Jimmy Choo Ltd with British Vogue accessories editor Tamara Mellon. However, Mr Choo sold his 50% stake in the company for £10 million in 2001 amid rumours that he and Ms Mellon had a different view of the direction of the brand. Since then he has focused his efforts on the exclusive Jimmy Choo Couture line produced under license from Jimmy Choo Ltd.

Mr Choo makes bespoke shoes in the basement workshop of his only shop, carefully measuring his clients' feet before crafting the shoes. "I design like an architect," he said. "It's a beautiful, distinctive art, and shoes are like the foundations. If the foundations aren't right, the building won't stand upright, and if a woman's balance isn't right, nothing else is."

Although Mr Choo still lives in London, he is currently involved in a project to set up a shoemaking institute in Malaysia, where he is somewhat of a celebrity. He is also an ambassador for footwear education at the London College of Fashion and, in 2002, he received an OBE from Queen Elizabeth II in recognition of his services to the shoe and fashion industry in the UK. 🇬🇧

There was a waiting list for Jimmy Choo's new trainers long before they launched in May.

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