



According to the designer, platforms used to be more popular among men than women.

CREDIT: ANCI

Putting men back on the platform

New York-based footwear designer Steve Madden says he longs for the return of platform shoes for men. In a recent interview with Florida newspaper *Tampa Bay Times*, Mr Madden revealed that, back in the 1970s, platform shoes were more a part of men's footwear fashions than women's.

He said men's shoes these days are more conservative and less interesting and that a revival of platforms would liven up the world of men's shoes once more. Mr Madden commented: "I'd love to do platform shoes for men, but not feminine ones. They would look cool with jeans and stuff. There's a perfect shoe. If you ever watched the movie *Saturday Night Fever*, there's one shot of a guy walking away from John Travolta. You see him walking down the block. Those are the perfect platform shoes for men."

The bigger the better

The celebrated shoe designer says that platforms should certainly appear on the feet of women this season. He revealed that flat sandals are out and that "big, big platforms, à la 1974" should be taking their place. "Really big, really over-the-top platforms I think would be a lot of fun," he says.

While the flats have obvious comfort benefits, Mr Madden claims the time for platforms is upon us once again.

However, while women are more than likely to embrace the trend, it is men that should really take advantage of them, he suggests. One of the reasons for this, he says, is that men's shoes are a lot less interesting than they used to be. While footwear used to be an important focus for men, it seems clothing has now taken over in the significance stakes and, as a result, men's shoes have become plainer and more conservative, the company founder implies.

Nevertheless, he believes this will change in time. "I'd love for it to come. I'd love to do crazy men's shoes," Mr Madden says. The American designer has first-hand experience with platforms, so he knows what he's talking about. "I actually did wear them once upon a time," he reveals. One of the biggest benefits, he points out, was the added height they offered.

"When I started in the business I was a stock boy in a shoe store when I was 16 years old. I'm 52 years old [now]. So when I started, believe it or not, platforms were a bigger trend for men than they were for women. So all

“...as a matter of interest...”

Italian Footwear Manufacturers' Association ANCI hosted an event at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York City last December. The theme, chosen by trends expert Aldo Premoli, was 'Inner treasures: the secret story of the fashionable platform in Italy'.

According to ANCI, the platform first appeared in Italy in the sixteenth century. It arrived in Venice from the Far East and was used as a functional shoe to protect the wearer on muddy roads as well as to give women extra height. Over time, however, the platform has become an important fashion item, and one that reappears time after time.

On display were exhibits that reflected developments within the Italian footwear industry, mainly from the 1930s to the mid 1970s. The aim was to show the craftsmanship and design capabilities of Italian shoemakers since the early 1900s. Platforms on display came from far and wide and included a ladies' velvet platform with a multicoloured sole from Giuseppe Zanotti's private collection, which was made in 1975.

However, the selection also included an impressive number of platforms for men from the P Bertolini International Footwear Museum in Vigevano, and from Renzo Rossetti's, Zaffaroni's and Giannini's private collections. These models ranged from fairly traditional looking men's loafers with the platform heel to laced platforms with cork heels and brightly coloured uppers.

the guys wore platforms. I remember when I was 16, I went to all the sweet 16s, and I was forced to get a big pair of high heels because I was so much shorter than everybody else."

The inspiration

Mr Madden began his shoe company in 1990 from a factory in Queens, New York, with just \$1,100 in his bank account. Today, his eponymous brand has expanded to include clothing, handbags and 92 retail stores worldwide. His vision is to give young women a unique way of expressing their individuality through the beautiful shoes he creates. His first platforms launched in 1991, based on traditional platforms but with modern twists. Inspired by his favourite 1970s musicians, the thick, chunky heel became Steve Madden's signature and caught on fast.

According to the designer, he gets his inspiration from what people are wearing on the streets "from New York to London and beyond". "I get my ideas and inspiration from pounding the pavement all over the world. Today, fashion is dictated by individual style. To me, the fashion of the future

is anything that a young guy or girl feels good wearing as long as it's put together in the right way," he says.

Although most of the shoes he makes are for women, he clearly also has strong feelings about men's shoes. It seems Mr Madden is not alone in his desire to see the platform shoe take centre stage once again. His call for the widescale return of platforms has been confirmed by trend consultants from the Italian Association of Italian Footwear Manufacturers, ANCI, and at Germany-based shoe trade show GDS. However, he seems to be the only person suggesting that men start wearing them. It will be interesting to see whether his hopes will be realised on the high street. 

Steve Madden would like to see men wearing more flamboyant footwear.

CREDIT: ANCI

