

*The winning shoe:
Valentino's elegant design
was voted the sexiest shoe
of 2011 by US voters.*

IMAGE: SAKS FIFTH AVENUE



The sexiest shoes of 2011

Of all the shoes for all the different people in the world, women's high heels have always held a special appeal. Just look at the logos for shoe events such as GDS and Micam – slinky, pointy and undoubtedly a women's evening shoe – and not a trainer or loafer in sight. It was with this spirit of celebrating the attractiveness of women's shoes that the 'Sexy Shoes' contest was started in 2010 by luxury US retailer Saks Fifth Avenue, in partnership with online new website Footwear News (FN).

A contest in the US to find the 'sexiest shoe' of 2011 saw Valentino take the accolade for a pair of lacy, leather peep-toe pumps, showing a turn towards elegant sophistication in women's footwear.



Stuart Weitzman's shoes made it into the final 25 in the 2011 contest, but missed out on top place.

IMAGE: GDS / CONSTANZE TILLMANN

Almost 8,000 consumers across the US voted on 23 designer shoes in the online contest back in 2010. That year's winning pair, by French footwear designer Christian Louboutin, were dazzling Swarovski crystal-embellished Maralena mesh pumps. With a towering crystal-encrusted stiletto heel measuring 14cm, the design is a playful interpretation of the high heel. Bold, strong and empowering, the French designer's shoe features luxurious detailing and the trademark glossy red sole.

The winner of the 2011 award, announced in October, was a simpler, more demure high heeled shoe by Italian footwear designer Valentino. It perhaps indicates not only a step towards more a sophisticated style, but also towards more modest prices, as it retails at \$695 compared to Louboutin's 2010 winner at \$2,445. As the contest grew in popularity in its second year, about 35,000 voted to decide the 25 finalists. The winners were chosen by staff at FN from among the finalists, which included shoes by Manolo Blahnik, Christian Louboutin, Dior, Gucci, Givenchy, Gucci, Oscar de la Renta and Stuart Weitzman.

Christian Louboutin's fiery stilettos won the award in 2010.

IMAGE: CHRISTIAN LOUBOUTIN



The winning leather and lace shoe by Valentino was described by voters as "sophisticated and feminine," with the combination of leather and lace creating a striking yet elegant aesthetic.

But crystals remain in favour with US consumers; Jimmy Choo's Swarovski crystal-encrusted sandals with double ankle straps took second place in the contest. Prada came in third with knee-high leather boots, while newer name Chrissie Morris stepped into the spotlight in fourth position with her suede, mesh and stingray peep-toe ankle boots.

So what combination of attributes make a shoe sexy? London-based designer Manolo Blahnik told media in the US that you have to have a hint of flesh. "You see hands all the time. You see faces all the time. But the toes, that's something you don't always see," he said. "A sexy shoe has open straps of leather on the foot. The most important thing is that you have to do it beautifully because if you show too much toe, it can be kind of vulgar." 🍷

Jimmy Choo kept the crystals theme going in the 2011 contest with these intricate Swarovski crystal-encrusted sandals.

IMAGE: SAKS FIFTH AVENUE

