

Ashley Roberts made her name as a member of US girl group The Pussycat Dolls. She has loved performing from a young age and now she is putting her energy into something that she is even more passionate about - shoes. She spoke to *World Footwear* about what her first collection means to her.

In her shoes

The Pussycat Dolls achieved mainstream recognition during the 2000s with two best-selling albums, sold-out world tours and a series of catchy hits. Alas, all good things come to an end and in 2010 the members of the band went their separate ways. Since then, Ashley Roberts has acted in a Hollywood film, released a solo album and made herself at home on UK television screens. Conquering the footwear industry is the next target in her sights with a range of shoes bearing her middle name, Allyn.

"I've always had a huge passion for shoes so starting this as a venture seemed like the logical next step," she says. Now a familiar face for fans of popular, peak-time Saturday evening television shows in the UK, she has chosen to branch out into footwear. "I launched the collection now as I wanted to have something I owned and created myself. The timing just seemed right," she explains.

A self-professed shoe addict, she admits to losing count of exactly how many pairs she owns, estimating that her collection, split between wardrobes in London and Los Angeles, runs into the hundreds. "Shoes are like candy to me, I get excited and love finding a shoe that adds to the collection and can open up my wardrobe," she enthuses.

Allyn will be a premium brand with prices starting from £160. Although targeted primarily at 25-40 year-olds, she insists that "there are designs and shoes to suit all types of women". Ms Roberts sees beautiful footwear as a means for women to increase their confidence and, in her own words, help them "to kick ass".

Her experience of the scrutiny that comes with being in the public eye has given her a better understanding of the stereotypes women are sometimes asked to adhere to. "It's really important for me that Allyn can be worn by every kind of girl," she says. Her designs will incorporate the mix of personas that make up her own identity and with an unusual combination of features that "embody femininity and a hint of cowboy-western".

A passion for shoes is the key motivation behind the project but she was also inspired by her family's musical background. Her father was a drummer for 1960s folk rock group the Mamas & the Papas and her mother was a pilates instructor. Music and performing have always been a part of her life and these influences will feature heavily in Allyn.

She intends to take the knowledge garnered from working in the entertainment business and apply it to this new venture. She won't hesitate to use her connections within the industry to drive the brand's success but understands that she will need to seek out advice along the way as she embarks on an adventure that is "all new" for her.

"I'm very excited to have somethings that's mine," she



The Pussycat Dolls at the 2008 MTV Movie Awards. The band went their separate ways in 2010.

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effuses, describing the project as her "baby". She will be involved in "every step of the design process" and is proud to be able to call the collection her own.

"Using the best quality materials was always key to the project" because she wanted to establish a premium brand. All of the shoes will be manufactured using high quality Italian leather at the Oxmox Italy factory near the city of Naples, who will be sourcing fabrics, materials and accessories from all over the country. The "shoes will be made up of materials from all over Italy which embody passion and quality".

Oxmox Italy, founded in 1965, is a family-run business that specialises in footwear and is based in Nola, a town in the Campania region. It produces women's shoes that are made exclusively from leather and exported all over the world. Three generations of the same family work there and this struck a chord with Ms Roberts due to her own strong family values. She is impressed by the company's work, revealing that the "experience and passion in creating beautiful footwear is really incredible".

Ashley Roberts – performer, actress, TV presenter and now shoe designer. She is excited to watch her designs take shape over the coming months with the range due to hit shelves in time for Christmas 2016. 🌟

Ashley Roberts is channelling a passion for shoes into her first footwear range.

CREDIT: ASHLEY ROBERTS

