

Streetwear looks back to its European roots

The dominance of American sport and music on European street fashion finally seems to be fading. The look at the Barcelona edition of Bread and Butter was very much home grown and, in Copenhagen, there were plenty of local Scandinavian companies making limited ranges of exclusive shoes and accessories.

Soccer

Sporty shoe labels are looking back at their own archives and heritage. Soccer is a big influence and not merely due to the World Cup. Old labels that have been almost dormant have been revived with new collections like Johann Cruyff (famous Dutch player of the 1970s) and Bukta (soccer clothes from Manchester worn by soccer pin up star George Best again in the 70s). Bukta claims to be the oldest sportswear label in the world having started in 1879 and still keeps close to its Manchester roots in the North of England. Big in the UK and Japan, it makes limited editions with local celebrities such as the rock band Oasis.

Cars and motorbikes also inspire. American shoes with the same individual details like wood panelling and gilt plating used to customise cars for rock stars, the male 'bling' collection by 310 was new to Europe. Spanish off road motorcycle factory Bultaco has white screen prints on rib knit beige beanie hats, looking hand made and irregular, and bright petrol can prints on rubberised messenger bags.

'Alternative' fashion has turned its back on hip-hop and there are plenty of Goth, heavy rock and punk influences on menswear. Tie-ups with rock bands past and present like the Sex Pistols and Led Zeppelin has led Draven (a one-year-old label from California) to make shoes and bags with tattoos, skull and cross-bones and lots of black. Macbeth also started off making shoes for rock musicians. They are low line, simple and comfortable. Santa Muerte from Mexico mixed Mexican blankets and hand-made prints in rucksacks with a padded laptop bag inside. All had 'death' details such as a silver long

handled scythe as a hook and real horse hair plaited for the loop. Black Mexican death images are placement printed on to coloured T-shirts and simple Eastpack type bags.

Authentic materials

European authentic materials also appear in accessories. After the televised collaboration between Nike and wool weavers from the Scottish Isle of Harris last year, tweed has really caught on for sneakers. Gravis is using real wool from Alexander's of Scotland, with each item certificated. Scarves, bags and shoes with leather trims all mix and match in the same tweed for boys and girls. Akademiks, an American men's sportswear label, has just launched a skater inspired shoe line in leather and tweed.

Antique and used finishes retain their appeal, with 'cracked' leather still very much around in white or black, and often on a coloured suede base which shows through more as the shoes get worn in (Bukta). At the other end of the scale is black patent for men (Lotto and Bikkembergs) plus metallics such as old gold, bronze and pewter.

Low line

Vulcanised shoes have great appeal because of their simplicity and carry on through to winter for southern Europe. Ballerinas for girls come on flat calendar soles. There are plenty of boots too in lots of different materials including top quality soft nubuck with vulcanised bottoms. Lacoste found an original calendar soled tennis shoe in the box in the Paris archive that was designed by René Lacoste in 1963 and has recreated it for today in limited editions. It is a simple low line vulcanised curved vamp oxford in creamy twill weave cotton. The lower line sole and thickness make it ideal for today's understated fashion.

PF Flyers may be an American label but uses mostly Italian leathers, including one with a wood emboss. Converse's top of the line boot is made in engraved, embossed Gaucho saddle leather, while Etnies' designer range uses laser cut pony hair. ➤



Gravis



Macbeth

FOOTWEAR FASHION SHOWS



WORLD FOOTWEAR



For young girls, plenty of camouflage (Etnies) in non-standard colour combinations like fluorescent pink and grey.

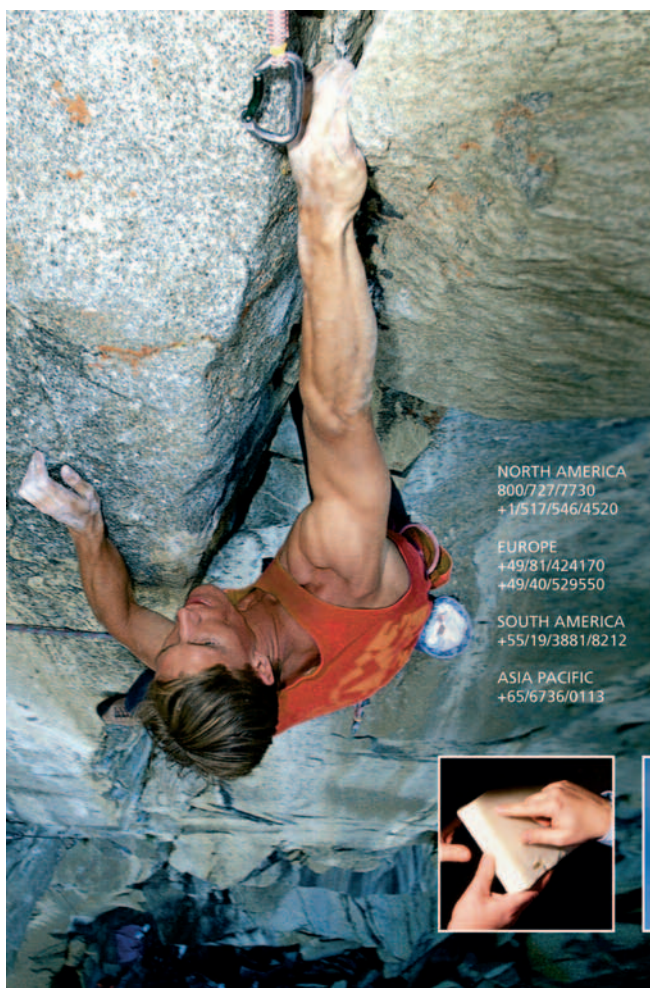
Brogue punching sometimes has frayed canvas under the edges (Blackstone) and is used as a fashion detail on Bikkembergs soccer inspired shoes. Skate shoes still have appeal but are quieter in design. Lakai is doing very well in Spain with understated designs that do not emulate other skate shoes. Vans has taken its best designs and made them up in this season's materials and colours. This time in black ballistic nylon with rubberised trims (also seen at Onitsuka Tiger). K-Swiss updates classic tennis shoes with pearlised

sheen white leathers and sliders (stripe shifters) on the side flash stripes to change colours manually.

Sporty shoe soles are generally thinner even for winter and are part of the lower line look. Driving constructions are now all-year-round as at Lacoste, where the upper design follows though into the cuts on the bottom sole. For winter it uses Mexico leather with a vintage soft feel that gets better the more it is worn.

Fur and the unusual

Fur is still in fashion and fur or 'boa' linings give summery constructions a more wintry look. Buffalo and UGG both had clogs with fur lining. Replay's fashion clogs come in all sorts of colours including lime green. Merrell's Komodo sandals for summer have been transformed into wide nature form lasted low boots with a puffa jacket effect. Turn down collars abound on all lengths and types of boots, whether in leather or showing the lining as in K-Swiss boxer boots which reveal the label as a pull tag on the side of the shaft when turned down. The inside is as important as the outside with Chinese brocade satin making a comeback with K-Swiss and in the uppers of Betula's Birkenstock type clogs.



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The grunge look for girls has gone and there are plenty of pretty shoes, red leather low vamp college shoes on a heel from Fornarina and feminine oval toes with forepart platforms from Fly London. Antique studs and rivets are used to decorate leather fashion shoes from both Firetrap and Ichi.

Although there seems to be less recycled clothing than before, there is still a good amount of ethical thinking. From Simple the Green Toe collection with lining material made from bamboo, water-based adhesives, natural crepe soles and cork with latex footbeds. Local designer Muñoz Vrandecic makes hand made shoes in limited series with vegetable tanned leather and natural pigment dyes. Wooden heels are made from table legs and shanks from spoons. Silk is hand-dyed and wooden lasts made by hand. Demano makes shoes and messenger bags by hand in Barcelona and has an agreement to recycle all the trade fair banners, so every item is different. They collaborated with local designer Dorothea to produce some unusual rain boots and shoes with bright prints.

Dressy

For men there are also dressy shoes. Fly—always a rather casual young brand—has launched glossy leather dressy shoes for men on pointed lasts and hard soles. Lotto has launched the first technical soccer shoe with no laces, the front part being stretchy. These arrive in the shops this spring and Lotto has

already made spin-off dressy shoes inspired on normal soles in black satin and patent or black croc embossed leather—very Italian.

Slippers

Slippers—sometimes called house shoes—have suddenly become trendy as part of the movement toward concentrating more money on the home. Glerup makes pure wool hand felted slippers in pretty bright colours on suede soles. The owner's mother started making them by hand but could only make two pairs per day and when demand became too great, they set up an ethical production unit in Nepal. There is also a more classic line, made from pure undyed Jacob's fleece wool in a unique patented system where the upper is moulded all in one piece around the bottom of the foot, where it is not flat but shaped naturally like the foot itself.

Felted wool uppers were also to be seen on boots for kids by Primigi and by Naturalista for ladies. From Replay, high-heeled brilliant coloured clogs in pony skin with application logos. Firetrap has little bucket leg boots with printed cotton linings that can be turned down. Another Danish brand, Shoe Shi Bar, had men's shoes with unusual asymmetric upper cuts and overlapping leathers, slimmer and rather elongated lasts, but still soft and comfortable for young men used to wearing sneakers but who want to be dressier and still a bit different. 

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