

Fashion Outlook



THE CONVERSE high top is available in bright colors and metallics.



REEBOK, which has introduced this new shoe, sold more than 14 million shoes last year and all, the company says, were designed with sports in mind.

New spunk for spring Sneakers run gamut of color and style

By Joan Lebow

Just when you think you've got the cool, must-wear sneaker, yet another style takes over the streets.

Year after year, faster than you can say "aerobically," every trendy school kid and business-card carrying yuppie sports the current "in" athletic shoe.

Over the years, tennis and basketball shoes have earned the right to be called classics, and now simple (usually white) sneakers are scoring more points than ever with consumers. Yet some of today's kookiest footwear fashions are actually sneaker classics updated with splashy colors or subtle details.

FASHION



Joan Lebow

Around the country, athletic shoe stores that sell plenty of high-price, high-tech running shoes, are also seeing the standard brands — Keds, Converse and Tretorn — trot out the door.

"Classic white styles are hot," says Malt Zale, owner of U.S. Athletics, a retail chain with 36 locations. During spring, the height of sneaker season, the company sells about 1,000 pairs of shoes daily.

Many of these are the bright-colored, functional and fashionable athletic shoes with brand names such as Reebok, Avia and Addidas. Backed by dramatic black and white TV advertisements, Nike just introduced the "Air Trainer." It has already caught on so fast that Zale says it's tough to meet demand. He points out that, amid the sports shoe fashion hoopla, there are some of "the same styles that've been around for years."

Rubber-soled, canvas basketball shoes were affectionately dubbed sneakers in the '30s when they became widely affordable. Their evolution is detailed in the recently published "The Complete Handbook of Athletic Footwear" by Melvyn P. Cheskin (Fairchild Publications).

Although the history of athletic footwear began many centuries earlier, it was back in 1917 that Converse first introduced its all-star model. Chuck Taylor, who started the first basketball clinic in 1922, soon lent his name to the product. Black or white "Chuck Taylor All Stars" have been the all-American favorite since then. This year is no exception. Converse aims to sell 300,000 pairs per week.

These high-tops now come in wild colors from bubble gum pink to metallic blue. "In a way, the Converse is really an unsexy shoe. But I guess you could say it has reverse sex appeal," shrugs Zale, who says the style is always a best seller.

Why the appeal of canvas "Cons" and simple white Keds in an era when super-comfortable leather or nylon shoes can be automatically molded to every inch of an athlete's foot? Many

people use their technologically designed shoes for sports only, and more basic, less costly styles for everyday wear.

Another reason is fashion's changing cycle. "First running shoes became streetwear, then aerobic shoes became streetwear. Now more conservative white tennis shoes are being worn on the street," says Beth Sexer, reporter for Sportstyle magazine, a trade publication.

"Tennis shoes will probably be the next big hit," agrees Kevin Brown, director of corporate communications for Nike. "Simpler shoes with very clean lines are popular, just as simple, more classic tennis clothes are in fashion again. We built Nike's Air for sports." But he adds, "We know from how much we've already sold that the shoes are also selling as fashion."

All athletic shoes are made with the sports participant in mind. "Everything we design has a sport application, then it's worn for streetwear," explains a spokesman for Reebok, which sold more than 14 million of its trend-setting aerobic shoes in 1986.

Athletic-shoe designers always try to appeal to the fashion-minded pub-

lic. Reebok has come out with Hawaiian-style colors. Even the classic white sneakers come with day-glo soles and colorful piping. Converse has introduced "Jams" sneakers to go with the brightly printed surfer-style clothing of the same name.

Penny loafer still a classic shoe-in

By Mary Martin Niepold

Oh, to have a penny for every person that has worn a pair of penny loafers.

The classic hand-stitched moccasin was introduced in 1936 by the G.H. Bass Co. They've since made about 25 million pairs, which have been sported — with and without the legendary penny — by the well-heeled and the college crowd for five decades.

The three Bass brothers were in Norway when they discovered some Indians wearing comfortable, hand-sewn moccasins. Back in their Camden, Maine, hometown, the brothers added some American know-how and styled a sturdy pair of leather slippers. It quickly looked like the \$4 "Norwegian Injun" would become a classic faster than most people could say "Weejeun."

The Weejeun's style hasn't changed much since World War II, when sailors wore loafers and bluejeans as an informal shore-leave uniform.

By the '50s, the nation considered Weejeuns a campus kick. The "bobby-

soxer" rolled on intricate layers of socks before slipping on Weejeuns and stepping out. Then Weejeuns really made the grade after "Rebel Without a Cause" star James Dean, in his white T-shirt, well-fitting jeans and black Weejeuns, became a study in cool in the 1955 film.

The '60s had just started when the University of North Carolina student newspaper declared the Weejeun to be "The thing for with-it people."

One inspired student (perhaps a business major?) deserves more than a penny for his and her thought to use the loafer's front slot to hold the copper coin. The trend spread as young men and women began to add their two cents worth to their moccasins.

The penny loafer has earned its place in American culture. It was included as basic equipment in "The Preppy Handbook" and heralded as a classic design in "The Quintessential Dictionary."

While many preppies like to wear their Weejeun without socks, singer Michael Jackson put the loafer in the limelight by pairing his with glitter socks.

Fashion goes frilly

This spring's decidedly feminine styles are just a forerunner of the eat-your-heart-out femininity being concocted for fall.

Already, American women are buying crinolines, strapless tops, backless dresses, body-hugging shapes and short, leggy skirts. You'd think they'd been sentenced to overalls for the last 10 years.

Curvy feminine styles dominated the recent couture collections in Paris.

Yves St. Laurent's floor-length evening gown exposed one leg with a top-of-the-thigh hemline. Karl Lagerfeld showed strapless dresses with short, full skirts flapping high in the back. Emmanuel Ungaro exposed whole sides under his diagonally draped evening gown. And Christian Lacroix was a hit with his sassy bustles, outrageously dramatic headwear and exposed midriffs.

Flamboyant sexiness is already on its way to America.

At a recent black-tie gala to benefit the New York City Opera's Fire Emergency Fund, more than 60 designers unleashed opera-inspired concoctions — some of which will be seen in their fall collections in early April.

Thanks to what was seen on the runway that night, plus what designers confided about their upcoming collections, plus the success of the sexy styles now in the stores and the inevitable power of the trends coming out of Paris couture, you can count on even more glamour and femininity for fall.

Not since the early '60s and the miniskirt have we witnessed the kind of leggy, curvy dramatic looks that are coming.

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Hot lunchtime appetizers include snails in pastry with tomato and garlic, while the dinner menu offers such delights as oysters baked with bacon, peppers, cream and emmental.

The main dishes at The Cellar offer a gourmet's choice of succulent foods. A beef striploin with herb and pepper butter, or stuffed chicken breast with mustard and cream are just a few samples of the lunch dishes, which include omelettes, spinach fettuccini and salmon.

Dinner can be a treat with lamb rack, breast of duck with raspberry sauce and breast of chicken with cashews, rosemary and amaretto offered among the delicious choices of the dinner menu.

But no meal at The Cellar is complete without a sample of a fine wine from France, Italy, Germany, Spain, California or Canada.

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