

Fashion Outlook

Seasonal shoe-ins

Comfy styles are off on the right foot

By Mary Martin Niepold

Few things in fashion must emphasize absolute comfort as much as shoes. Today's active woman seldom selects shoes simply because she wants a strip of leather between herself and the sidewalk. Nor, hopefully does she select shoes merely for the pretty bow, rhinestones or color.

Fortunately, this fall, shoes stress comfort — especially evident in the abundance of lower heels and flats. As with fall clothing, shoes this season offer optimum choices, but comfort is stressed more than in recent years.

Witness the season's flats, ballet-inspired skimmers and flat boots. Many heels — as in the classic pump — stand at mid-height. New styles feature platforms for extra cushioning, but not the thick Dolores Del Rio numbers from the '40s. Higher-fitting or strapped vamps offer more stability, and many styles feature padded inner soles.

There's news in heel shapes, too. The very newest heels are low "spoon" shapes, which offer maximum walkability for women who want a bit more pizzazz than flats can offer. And whatever the height, details like scalloped sides, trim in contrasting colors or leathers, and jewelling or embroidery are important fashion directions.

For women who can afford a closet for shoes only or for those who ascribe to the European notion of owning only two or three pairs of very expensive, quality shoes, the latest looks come at

a price. Major designer collections from Donna Karan, Stuart Weitzman, Manolo Blahnik, Christian Lacroix, Bennis/Edwards, Geoffrey Beene, Maud Frizon or Bruno Magli offer asymmetrical heels, lavish jewelling or choked vamps. Prices for a pair of a couturier designer shoes can easily command \$200 and higher.

For most women, however, shoes in the \$30 to \$100 dollar range are the preferred choice. According to the Fairchild Fact File, an industry research report, in 1986 women spent almost as much on shoes as men and children combined. They bought \$12.1 billion worth of the \$24.6 billion spent on shoes that year. The average price paid for a pair of shoes was \$31.91.

And with 54 percent of American women employed outside the home, it is no surprise that working women spend three times more money than homemakers, according to research conducted by Kinney Shoes.

Which brings us back to busy women wanting comfort and style.

For example, Kinney, that steadfast "Great American Shoe Store," has repositioned its shoe collections this fall to emphasize fashion. "We're not claiming to be fashion directional," observes Cameron I. Anderson, chairman and chief executive officer of the Kinney Shoe Corp., "but our new line is fashion-right, with top styles, new colors and good quality leather and suede."

Kinney, with more than 1,565 stores throughout the United States, intro-



Fall boots and shoes, all from Kinney Shoes, from left: below-the-knee suede boot (\$45); Victorian button-up black suede boot (\$38); over-the-knee black leather boot (\$70); classic leather flat (\$28); suede mid-heel pump (\$30); black patent bow flat (\$28); and snake-trimmed high-heeled pump (\$36).

duced 50 major styles for fall, which are made domestically and imported from Brazil, Italy and the Far East. Retail prices are from \$25 to \$70 dollars.

While Kinney emphasized moderate pricing for comfort and some style, another major American manufacturer, Naturalizer, puts the emphasis on fit, plus style. Offered in sizes 3 to 12 and widths AAAA to EE, Naturalizer's fall shoes stress shape and texture.

"We're showing suede, patent and prints in pumps and flats," notes Julie Austin, style and line coordinator for Naturalizer. "Colors range from darks and neutrals to jewel tones like forest green and plum. Once again, black is a pivotal fall color, but look for new interest in browns."

Whatever the price, major shoe trends for fall include

- Flats: Whether in skimmers, boots or higher-vamped styles, low

heels are right for fall. Especially good with longer skirt lengths and trousers.

- Mid-heels: The classic pump reigns again. Mid-heel heights are right for day or night. Newest are spoon or asymmetrically shaped heels. Stacked heels, but not chunky ones, have returned. Mid-heels are perfect pair-ups for suits.

- Texture: Look for suede, woven leathers and combinations of leathers. Printed and stamped leather gives texture and new interest.

- Shapely vamps and sides: More interesting than the simple pump or flat is the vamp, which rises higher on the foot or may cross the top of the foot with straps, buttons and buckles. Sides of shoes feature scalloped or cut-away lines.

- Color: The newest are deep greens, purple, eggplant, brown and burgundy. Always right is black. Choose hosiery in matching colors.

- Detail: Trim in contrasting colors or leathers enlivens new daytime styles. For evening, look for bows, rhinestones, and jewel and embroidery trims. Gold, metal ornaments, grosgrain trims, tassels, prints and perforations are other favored accents.

- All-out glamour for evening: Bar no heel heights or amount of trim for evening. Satin bows, stiletto heels, gemstone embellishments and bright jewel colors are favored. The flat "tuxedo" pump is also popular for classicists and the comfort-minded.

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