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Retail

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HINAKO: Comfort fashion range.

Head over heels

THE AUSTRALIAN SHOE FAIR WILL BE HELD IN SYDNEY FROM FEBRUARY 11 TO 13, 2011. ERIN O'LOUGHLIN OFFERS A PREVIEW OF WHICH LABELS WILL BE IN ATTENDANCE AND WHAT PRODUCT THEY WILL HAVE ON SHOW.

Women's

If there's one clear trend coming through for women's fashion shoes, it's that sky-high heels are out. Fujian Footwear's Michael Simper says labels Zala Collection and By Appointment will be among those concentrating on a lower-height offering. "The days of the big platform are gone," he says. "They're fantastic to look at but they just don't sell like they used to." Fellow fashion label Simona Ricci will also offer heels that start from a low one and a half inches. Distributor Paul Gibson of Shoe Movers says leopard, python and jungle themes dominate the summer collection, with shades including taupes and browns. He expects peep toes to prove popular. "Peep toes were some of our best sellers right through from February to November 2010."

Nigel Dowling of Iabella will be showing lots of jewelled and sequinned leather sandals, flats and mini wedges. "The heading generally starts at the toes and comes up the foot," he says.

For something different, Walnut Melbourne will add rope knots and grow grain ribbon bows to its ever-expanding range of ballet flats. Black gumboots will be complemented by riding boots in rhabarb and navy and Euro canvas flats will be available in biscuit and oatmeal tones. "We expect our leather and suede loafers to do quite well for winter also," Walnut's Kristen Leaman says.

Estilo Emporio will bring on the heels. Military-inspired ankle boots, pocket detailed biker boots and leopard and solid hair stiletto boots will be complemented by studded ballet flats and fish skin trainers.

In the burgeoning comfort category, Alan Hodgskin of Dreamwalkers will be showing styles with a mixture of materials in the upper, including leather and textiles such as denim and canvas. "We've always been mainly a leather label but there are increasing demands for new ideas," Hodgskin says. Nelson Cheng of Dynamic Shoes says the company will be showing three comfort labels, namely Addiction to Comfort, Move On and Sapatoterapia. The first is new to the Australian market and features orthopaedic styles, including therapeutic sandals and shoes for diabetics. Move On specialises in stitch and turn construction, "so the shoes are very soft and you can twist and turn in them easily". Styles include flats, sandals, thongs and low wedges in lilac, orange, red, blue and khaki.

Last but not least, Sapatoterapia is a higher-end Brazilian brand that only recently commenced offering women's styles after over 50 years of creating shoes for men. Product includes sandals and court shoes and the brand counts over 50 hues in its colour palette.

Kids'

Cristina Maglio of Red Bootie says she is taking her girls' and boys' label back to basics. "The emphasis for me now is on beautifully constructed sandals with sturdy backs on the heels and adjustable fronts across the toes," Maglio says. The label also does a canvas range to complement its leather styles, with a purple, pink and green check story featured in the canvas range this summer.

Also showing checks will be Childi Kids, with checks dominating the label's boys' summer product. Key for girls will be floral prints and traditional leather sandals in metallics.

Catering for littles will be Skeanie, with the label's Skeanie Ugg suitable for newborns to two year olds. Popular Skeanie product for toddlers and beyond includes its winter boot, Skeanie sneakers, loafers and Mary Janes, while rounding out the offer will be the new 'Skirtle' - footless tights combined with a skirt - as well as knee-high socks. "Retailers have been telling us they can't find knee-high socks anywhere," says Skeanie's Natasha Barber.



SKEANIE: For littles.

Men's

Rob McHugh of McHugh's Shoes will be showing two men's labels, Bartolesi and Bernard. The trend coming through for Bartolesi is for finer, lighter-looking sole units, with finer toes too. The Bernard label meanwhile is introducing more leisure-like styles. "We're finding there's a trend for men to move into comfort footwear for business," McHugh says of the change.

Melissa Lamante of unisex label Billie says the key styles for spring/summer 2011/12 will be the leather-look boat shoe and a canvas slip-on with invisible seams. Denim and over-dyed canvas materials will add something new to Billie's leather range.



BILLIE: Denim styles for men.

Lifestyle Industries will be showing outdoor wear brand Kcen, with styles for men including the Newport H2 sandal with washable polyester webbing, suitable for the beach or sailing. Also for the beach will be styles from label Tapua, distributed in Australia by Dynamic Shoes. Styles include thongs and sandals and many are multi-coloured. "They're a bit like Birkenstocks," says Dynamic's Nelson Cheng. ■

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