



Patrick Cox is back with a bang

Italian footwear brand Geox asked former high-profile shoe designer Patrick Cox if he knew anyone it could work with to build up its presence in the UK market. It didn't have to look too far.

Italian footwear brand Geox has lured London-based designer Patrick Cox back into the shoe business. Mr Cox, absent from the footwear scene since 2007, has designed a capsule collection for Geox's spring-summer 2012 season comprising 20 styles for women and 18 for men. Uppers are made of high-quality leather and a special additional shoe made, at the designer's insistence, from genuine python skin will follow.

Designs include classic wing-tip moccasins and derby shoes, but all come with Geox's breathable soles. The shoes went on show at the Geox showroom in Via Speronari, Milan, during the autumn edition of the Micam exhibition. Mr Cox was also in Milan to show off the collection and told World Leather the new partnership with Geox will be ongoing.

Canadian-born Patrick Cox is one of the star graduates of the former Cordwainers College in London (now part of the University of the Arts), finishing the course in 1985. He collaborated on footwear collections with high-profile fashion names including Vivienne Westwood and John Galiano before launching his own label in 1986. Michael Jackson, Madonna, Kylie Minogue, Tom Cruise, Nicole Kidman and David Beckham all became customers and the designer won the British Accessories Designer of the Year Award in 1994 and 1995, and the Fashion Medal of Honor from the Footwear Association of New York in 1996. In terms of the shoes themselves, the launch of the Wannabe loafer in 1994 is something Mr Cox still talks about as a real highlight.

Patrick Cox told World Leather that he worked happily for 18 years without investors, but found that when investors did become involved with his label on the second half of the last decade, he "couldn't get along with them" and left. The label itself subsequently closed down. It took until September 2010 for Mr Cox to come back to business, but not the footwear business; he has set up a cake shop in Soho, London, called Cox Cookies & Cake.



Combining Geox's patented soling technology with the upper materials, including exotic leathers, that he wanted to use presented Patrick Cox with no problems.

IMAGE CREDIT: GEOX

"What made me come back was simply that Geox asked me," he said. "They came to London and asked if I knew anyone who could help them make more of an impact in the English market, and I said 'me'. Both sides had a great feeling about it and within only five days or so we reached an agreement."

Comfort considerations

He describes the partnership as a good match as both he and Geox are known for comfort and says this has come out in the collection, which he describes as "very sneaker- and loafer-oriented, but also very London". The consumer he had in mind when coming up with the designs is someone who has worn a lot of sneakers and may now be looking for something in a similar vein in terms of performance and

comfort, but with a little more design.

During his break from the industry, Patrick Cox took a lot of holidays and, while travelling, wore a lot of "free-time, casual footwear" himself. "There's nothing really wrong with those shoes," he says now, "except they've maybe got too many logos on them. This collection is much more designed, more grown up. It's casual in spirit and reflects London's cool urban vibe, but you don't have to be in hip-hop clothing or an adidas track-suit to wear them."

Asked if he found it restrictive to combine his ideas for upper materials and the overall look he was attempting to achieve with Geox's soling technology, he answers: "Not at all. The Geox technology is so hidden, it didn't interfere with anything. I had to insist about the python



skin because I have a reputation for using exotic leathers. All Geox said was that it would take that particular shoe above the price-point they had in mind for this collection [€100-150 at retail] and I just said that it's all right to add a special shoe to a collection. But they sell 25 million pairs a year and know what tanners they like to work with and which leathers and finishes work. We had no difficulty reaching agreement."

Lost in translation

Geox is proud of its part in promoting Italy, Italian technology and the country's footwear industry. Patrick Cox needed no convincing of the quality of craftsmanship in the industry in Italy or of the leather and other materials Italian footwear manufacturers have at their disposal. When he first set up his own label, the manufacture of his shoes took place in the UK, but within two years, he had

moved production to Italy, working with high-quality craftsmen and women in some of the most famous footwear regions, Veneto, Tuscany and Le Marche.

Nevertheless, there is a big emphasis from both sides of the partnership on the connection between the new collection and the London fashion scene. So does this represent a departure for Geox? "I think

so," Mr Cox says, "and I think it's a smart move. Geox has six stores in the UK [five in greater London and one in Belfast; a seventh is about to open, again in London] and a very small percentage of market-share here. I think there are some Italian shoes that just don't translate. I don't know why this happens, but I'd put [Tod's brand] Hogan in that category and possibly Tod's itself. In just the same way, there are aspects of British fashion that don't translate to Italy either."

The shoe designer believes his own tradition of Italian craftsmanship speaks for itself, as does his understanding of London fashion and design, therefore he is in the best position possible to bring the two worlds together, which Geox is attempting to do now. But Patrick Cox is sure it will be a good move for him too. "It's me coming back with a bang, not with a whimper," he says. "It's something global and not just me making a small collection of shoes and trying to get that off the ground." ●

With the emphasis on London's urban vibe, the new capsule collection from Patrick Cox represents something of a departure for Geox.

IMAGE CREDIT: GEOX

