

Hallo sports fan. No Pumps, no Discs: the Renaissance of Retro trainers.



They are exactly the same. I always used to have to wear them for sport and I always hated them – almost as much as my gym bag. They were blue and white, stripy and suited my skinny legs about as well as ice-skates would suit a stork. My sneakers. A synonym for a time when we played Brennball in the school yard, secretly puffed at our first cigarettes and got overly excited about our first kiss. And today? I have just bought them for myself once again. My sneakers.

At the end of the 80s, basketball shoes vanished from the street scene. Nobody would have wanted to bet a shoelace on any sort of comeback by the sport shoe – aside from its use in physical training. And yet today there they are once again in every hip fashion store. “Everything comes back in eventually” comments Ralf Metztenmacher, product developer at Puma, the worldwide Comeback. For many years manufacturers concentrated on technical gimmicks like air pumps and disc fastenings, but now the product designers are placing more and more emphasis on shoe models with a story. Keyword: Retro.

When in 1997 DJs and scene-goers presented a new nonchalance with their Puma suedes in New York discos, fashion experts and trend scouts believed it would just be a flash in the pan. A flirtation with the past, that would last one or two seasons at the very most. Today, six years later, sports shoes with Retro-elements occupy almost without exception every shelf in fashionable stores. The sports shoe is universally presentable and now it seems that no price is too high. Materials that were en vogue in the 60s and the 70s are upstaging every high-tech trainer. And not just on the sports field but also on the

catwalk. Sneakers, previously hated by so many, have become a classic. Once a fast friend on the fitness track, they have advanced their status to today's most modern fashion accessory. Unerring as Carl Lewis, Retro-runners are breaking record after record. In 2002 Retro-Sneakers had already made around three million euros – ten per cent of the total worldwide sport shoe turnover. And the tendency appears to be a further increase. At Adidas alone the Retro models contribute 20 per cent of total sports shoe turnover. And it seems as though things will get even better. "This year we expect a further increase of between five and ten per cent", says Jan Runau from Adidas.

The designers mostly focus on old styles and colours. Particularly beloved are trainers belonging to former football stars. The shoes of today are slightly modified versions of those used by legends like Pelé or Maradona to dribble the ball across the pitch of world fame – guaranteeing a stylish appearance off the football field. In the meantime boxing and racing driver boots have also found their buyers away from the ring and the race track. These shoes have always been used for particular sports but now fans are also wearing them on the street. Proof that nothing is more recyclable than fashion and design.

In addition to manufacturers like Adidas, Puma, Nike, Gola or Reebok, fashion designers are also supplementing their classic shoe ranges with numerous Retro-elements – Prada, Gucci, Versace and Boss, among others. And it's not for nothing that the industry has chosen to use 60s and 70s designs as a basis. "It's a question of the most expressive decades. The pulse was missing in the 80s," explains Metzenmacher from Puma. However he also doesn't wish to categorically rule out a comeback of Velcro® and neon laces. His comment: "Combined with up to date elements, it's conceivable."

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