

T1602

NC 0020831 0



- 1 -

NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

Faculty of Design
Fashion Department

THE DOC MARTEN: ITS CHANGING
IMAGE SINCE THE 60'S AND HOW IT
HAS EVOLVED IN THE 90'S - FROM
THE BOOT WEARING THE PERSON TO
THE PERSON WEARING THE BOOT

by

KITTY CLANCY

Submitted to the Faculty of History of Art and Design
and Complementary Studies in Candidacy for the
Degree of Bachelor of Design 1996

My sincere thanks to
Hilary O'Kelly
R. Griggs Group Ltd., Wollaston, England
D.V.8, Temple Bar, Dublin
The Black Boot, Wicklow St., Dublin
Korkys, Grafton St., Dublin

CONTENTS

	Page
Introduction	6
Chapter 1: The Doc Martens changing image from the early 60s to the late 80s	9
Chapter 2: Teenagers, students and Doc Martens in the 90s - the footwear choices they make and why they make them	26
Chapter 3: The post-students and Doc Martens in the 90s - who wears them and why	57
Chapter 4: Children and Doc Martens in the 90s - the recently established success in this market	63
Conclusion:	68

List of Plates

Fig. 1	1995	R. Griggs Group Ltd. Information Pack
Fig. 2	1994	Street Style
Fig. 3	1986	14:24 British Youth Culture
Fig. 4	1995	Street Style
Fig. 5	1986	14:24 British Youth Culture
Fig. 6	1995	Dress Codes -Meanings & Messages in American Culture
Fig. 7	1994 June	Just Seventeen Magazine
Fig. 8	1994 June	Just Seventeen Magazine
Fig. 9	1994 June	Just Seventeen Magazine
Fig. 10	1994 July	Just Seventeen Magazine
Fig. 11	1994 Nov.	Just Seventeen Magazine
Fig. 12	1995 Feb.	Just Seventeen Magazine
Fig. 13	1995 Feb.	Just Seventeen Magazine
Fig. 14	1995 April	Just Seventeen Magazine
Fig. 15	1994 Dec.	Just Seventeen Magazine
Fig. 16	1995 May	Just Seventeen Magazine
Fig. 17	1995 April	Just Seventeen Magazine
Fig. 18	1995 April	Looks Magazine
Fig. 19	1995 Oct.	Sugar Magazine
Fig. 20	1995 July	Sugar Magazine Complimentary Booklet
Fig. 21	1995 Oct.	Just Seventeen Magazine
Fig. 22	1994 Dec.	Just Seventeen Magazine
Fig. 23	1995 Oct.	Just Seventeen Magazine
Fig. 24	1994 Dec.	D'Side Magazine
Fig. 25	1995	Airwair Catalogue
Fig. 26	1995	Airwair Catalogue

Fig. 27	1995	Airwair Catalogue
Fig. 28	1995	Airwair Catalogue
Fig. 29	1994 Dec.	D'Side Magazine
Fig. 30	1994 Dec.	D'Side Magazine
Fig. 31	1995	Airwair Catalogue
Fig. 32	1995	R. Griggs Group Ltd. Information Pack
Fig. 33	1995	Airwair Catalogue
Fig. 34	1995	Airwair Catalogue

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

The Doctor Marten is first and foremost an outer covering for the foot. However, even the most routine, seemingly dull object can surpass its physical uses and be conceived as a symbol of an identity, far beyond its original purposes. Today, the Doc Marten is a living legend.

Since its arrival in Britain in 1960, it has been at the centre of many subcultures. In fact it could be recognised as a culture in itself. Branded officially as 'Dr. Martens', they are known by many as Doc Martens, Docs or DM's. In this thesis, I choose to document it as the Doc Marten because this is the name that people readily identify with. In fact, their whole identity has changed significantly in the 90's. It has overcome the labels of specific subcultural symbols. However, the Doc Marten can still be recognised as a symbol of individuality.

I propose in this thesis that it is now the wearer who dictates the way the Doc Marten is worn. Instead of it stamping the individual as a Punk or a Skinhead etc., each wearer gives the Doc Marten a unique identity.

In chapter one, I examine the history of the Doc Marten from 1960 to 1990. I found no one book exclusively devoted to the Doc Marten but collected information from various sources. I looked at books, magazines, newspapers and an information pack from the company which own the Doc Marten label, R. Griggs Group Ltd. Together, they

combine to give an unbiased account of the history of the Doc Marten.

The remaining chapters were researched through interviews, Doc Marten promotional leaflets, magazines and recently-published books. The interviews were conducted with a representative from three shoe shops in Dublin that sell the Doc Marten. They are The Black Boot, D.V.8 and Korkys. The main aim of the interviews was to establish the identity of the Doc Marten wearer. The shops also gave current promotional leaflets and catalogues. I looked at three girls' teenage magazines - **JUST SEVENTEEN**, **SUGAR** and **LOOKS** as further research for the beginning of chapter two. **STREET STYLE** by Ted Polhemus and **DRESS CODES - MEANINGS AND MESSAGES IN AMERICAN CULTURE** by Ruth Rubinstein are two recently published books that provided useful up to date information.

Chapters two, three and four look at the Doc Marten wearers in the 90's, from students to pensioners to children. I examine who wears them, where and why. The conclusion is self-evident. Today, it is the person who wears the boot rather than the boot who wears the person.

CHAPTER 1

The Doc Marten - from medical aid to symbol of cultural identity and how it reached its current position as part of mainstream fashion.

THE 60's

When the Doc Marten was originally produced in Germany, its primary function was as a support boot with a comfortable air-cushioned sole and a design which was stylish but not fussy. The boot proved to be extremely successful in Germany and had obvious commercial potential across the globe. Other boots were being produced with vulcanized (to treat rubber, or rubber-like material with sulphur, etc., at a high temperature to increase its strength) soles, but the revolutionary air-cushioned sole was a radical development in the history of boot making.

Bootmakers in Britain in the 50's were undergoing a crisis. Traditional methods were being jeopardised by the arrival of the 'Tuf' boot from America. This boot had a vulcanized sole and a production method that allowed vastly higher output than traditional methods. Although British bootmakers began to advance and use the new processes, it became evident that to maintain a successful business was not just to meet the competitors' standards but to set standards themselves.

A company in Wollaston, Northamptonshire recognised this and approached the Dr. Marten Company for the U.K. rights to manufacture the Doc Marten boot. Wollaston Vulcanizing, pioneered by William Griggs, was a Co-op

containing all the bootmakers in Wollaston (about twelve in all). This company had new moulding machinery to make vulcanized soles for all members of the Co-op. William Griggs was part-owner in one of these bootmaking companies, R. Griggs & Company, a family bootmaking company that had little or no growth to show for fifty years manufacturing. He recognised the need to move with the revolutionary developments of the times. He campaigned for, and secured the U.K. rights for the Wollaston Co-op to produce Doc Martens. The various companies in the Co-op produced the boot under their own names. 'Air-wair' used by R. Griggs & Co. is probably the best known. The name of the boot was anglicised from Doctor Maerten to Doc Marten, and in 1960 the first British Doc Marten arrived in the shops (Fig. 1). However, revolutionary as the boot was, nobody could have predicted the impact it would have or its changing image through the decades - from working boot to a youth symbol of identity and aggression, to mass fashion appeal. (R. Griggs Group Ltd., 1995, pages 1 - 8)

During the 60's, the original British Doc Marten eight-eyelet boot in black or cherry-red became part of the youth revolution. Its appeal broadened and it became a symbol of membership and identity for the escalating numbers in the new youth culture - far removed from its practical origins in Germany. It was with the breakdown of the Mods in the early 60's, that the Doc Marten was adopted as a symbol of cultural identity for Skinheads.

Male Mods wore apparently conservative suits in

Fig. 1

The original 1960's eight-eyelet Doc Marten



dull colours (Fig. 2). They were excessively neat and the female Mod wore strong, contrasting make-up with startling geometric haircuts and clothes. Fashion in the 50's had been dull and based on upper-class clothes - military style for men and adopted haute-couture for women. The Mods in Britain reflected the increasing independence among the working-class and lower middle-class teenagers. A new surge of life was coming from the lower-classes. The 60's celebrated mass cultures that for the first time were not dependent on the upper classes. Due to its initial status in Britain as a working man's boot, the Doc Marten was relatively cheap and therefore accessible to the lower classes.

"culture extends beyond the library, the opera house and the theatre, to encompass the whole of everyday life".

(Hebdige, 1979, page 9)

However in the mid-60's, there was a distinct division of Mods taking place - one group obsessed with fashion and looking the part, who developed into Hippies and the other group who grew into a tough subculture, later identifiable as Skinheads. (Hebdige, 1979, pages 52 -54)

THE SKINHEADS

It was the first Skinheads or the 'Hard Mods' as they were originally known, who took Doc Martens as part of their uniform. They had cropped hair, braces, short wide Levi jeans or similar shaped trousers with plain or striped buttoned Ben Sherman shirts (Fig. 3). Within a short time - the late 60's - the Skinheads were a very identifiable subculture, whose ideals and morals were quite removed from their origins as Mods.

Fig. 2

The Zombies, pop group in mid 60's Britain, wearing the Mod style



Fig. 3

Skinhead wearing Doc Martens in the mid 60's



The Mods were emotionally linked to black people and soul music as were the first Skinheads, but this was to change in latter years.

Where the Mods dressed up, Skinheads dressed down. The Skinhead image was aggressive and a curious mix of two cultures - the West Indian immigrants and the white working-class. They were fiercely territorial and channelled their energies into ridiculing other alien groups, namely Hippies, Asians or Gays. The Pakistanis in particular suffered at the hands of the Skinheads or to be more correct, their boots. Unfortunately all the Skinheads wore Doc Martens, and so the boot which began the 1960's as an innovation in comfort, worn by working people such as builders, closed the decade as an instrument of a violent subculture. (Hebdige, 1979, pages 54 - 59)

Since the Second World War the power of traditional social groupings was gradually diminishing. Class, religion and ethnic background became less important factors for defining an individual's ethics and consequently, dresscode. Although this is undeniably a breakthrough for freedom of choice, it also contributes to a lack of community. Every individual needs an identity and this is where the subcultures derive their strength.

"It is no coincidence that the decline of traditional social grouping parallels the rise of a new type of social group, the style tribes. Hippies, Teddy Boys, Mods, Rockers and so forth arose to satisfy that need for a sense of community and common purpose that is so lacking in modern life".
(Polhemus, 1994, page 14)

To differentiate themselves, the Skinhead code of dress was not just aggressive but also a conscious

effort to keep up their working-class identity. The Doc Marten was heavy, widely available, strong and affordable. It also came with a steel toe-cap which proved to be a dangerous weapon at football matches, so much so, that the boot was banned from entering the stadium. The brogue variation of the boot was also worn, especially in the evening time, and as with all groups, there were factions who preferred different extremes of the look.

The look was Modernist sharp, Rude Boy cool and working-class tough. Perhaps, most importantly, here was a style which was the opposite of that of the Hippies. And what was true of appearance was also true of attitude, and behaviour. Instead of 'love and peace', the Skinheads seemed to welcome conflict and , in many cases, physical aggression". (Polhemus, 1994, page 70).

THE 70's

Gradually, in the early 70's, the Skinhead got submerged under the popular fashion of the decade - flares, pointed collars and hippy 'chic'. However, it still left its mark on the objects it had adapted. So when the Punk phenomenon burst on the scene, the Doc Marten was back in as a crucial symbol of a new aggressive identity.

THE PUNKS

The birth of Punk in England in the mid 70's was in direct opposition to the cultural feelings of the time. It was a revolution against the Hippy ideals of freedom, peace and harmony. The Hippy dress code was bare feet, loose flowing coarsely structured clothes, and long unstyled hair. Flowers were conceived as a symbol for Hippies - they wore flower-printed fabric and wove blossoms through their hair (Fig. 4).

Fig. 4

Hippies in Hyde Park, London, 1969



Punk embodied an aggressive and a tough, non-conforming attitude and promoted this through their style of dress. They wore heavy, black, leather studded jackets, ripped t-shirts with vulgar, insulting slogans and pictures, drainpipe trousers and Doc Marten boots. Their hair was brightly coloured, shaved and sections standing upright in sharp spikes. Safety-pins and body-piercing were also extensively used (Fig. 5). It is a frightening and potentially threatening image - a youth culture responding to the growing lack of community. This is where the Doc Marten began to be associated in a big way with teenagers. (Polhemus, 1994, pages 89 - 93)

The Punk movement was mostly young people who had no group to identify with when they left the confines of family life. Instead of being forced into a social scene dictated by their class, race, religion or place of birth, the loosening of social boundaries in the 60's and into the 70's left them floating in oblivion. For an individual to find an identity, he could join a gang. Punks with their attitude of

"No future for you, no future for me,"
(God Save the Queen, Virgin, 1977)

summed up the feelings of large groups of young people in the 70's. The Punks, through their clothes, their music and their actions were making a statement. It was not just a style or phase.

Style isn't just a superficial phenomenon. It's the visible tip of something much greater. And encoded within its iconography are all those ideals which together constitute a (sub) culture. Like-looking is like-thinking and in this sense, the members of a style tribe have a great deal in common".

(Polhemus, 1994, page 15)

Fig. 5

Young people dressed in the Punk style



Because Punk was such an anti-society movement, the media picked up on it in a big way. Punks were more than willing to perform for the camera - making rude gestures and signs. Their extreme style of clothing also made them very 'captivating' in photographs. Because they got such widespread coverage, the objects they chose as symbols of identity also became well-known associations of the Punk culture - safety pins, studded leather jackets, and inevitably - the Doc Marten boot.

THE 80'S

This image of the Doc Marten continued into the 80's, when it was used to a lesser extent by the New Romantics, the Goths, the Psychobillies and the New Age Travellers. As well as having been adopted by these subculture groups, it was also taken up by girls and gays to make statements which differed from those of the original Skinheads.

"In the late eighties, fashion exploited the contrasts of mismatched items of clothing which are paired in such a way as to break all the accepted rules. London clubs have been full of girls in frilly nets and lace tops worn with Doc Martens to temper the message of feminine frailty and vulnerability with a degree of toughness and self-reliance".

(McDowell, 1989, pages 210 & 211)

A late 80's edition of **i-D Magazine** was accompanied by a handbook called **The i-D Bible, Every Ultimate Victims Handbook**. Included in it was a description of how a female should dress Doc Martens up for a contemporary look:

"14 hole Doc Martens - if you're wearing a mini-skirt, then heavy boots are the obvious accessories for that 'view but don't touch otherwise I'll do you more damage than you'll be prepared for' look. Consequently the higher the mini-skirt, the higher the boot. Top the Doc Martens with sawn off white

leg warmers tucked inside and show a tanned leg, or contrast with pure silk stockings rolled down to the knee. Ladies Doc Martens start at size 5 and cost £30."

(Jones, 1987, page 149)

The early 80's saw gay men dressing in an understated style which was invisible to an outsider, but easily identifiable to a fellow homosexual. They wore jeans, lumberjack shirts, jackets, heavy boots, a moustache and sunglasses. This prevented cases of 'queer-bashing' and also gave gay men a sense of identity. Other gay men chose to promote their sexuality in the 80's by wearing items such as drop earrings, t-shirts with provocative slogans (such as 'Read my Lips'), leather wristbands, tight-fitting cut-off Levi 501's, white socks and black Doc Marten boots. (Rubinstein, 1995, pages 215 - 220).

Clothing images are more powerful than many people imagine. The way a person is dressed is the first assessment an outsider can make of their personality, their beliefs, etc. The wearer has to be careful of the image they create. Due to the way it was worn by Skinheads, Punks and gays, and promoted by media hype, the Doc Marten developed an image which prevented it from being worn by anybody who did not want to promote a rebellious, aggressive or possibly gay image.

By the mid-80's, the Doc Marten was losing popularity - fast.

"Sales were halved from 40,000 to 20,000 forcing Griggs & Co. to shed 200 jobs".

(The Sun, 1993, page 6)

To survive into the 90's, the Doc Martens desperately needed a change of image. There were two factors in the 80's which gave the Doc Marten the scope to be

successful in the 90's.

The first was the brainchild of a stall-holder in Camden Market called Wayne Hemingway. In the early 80's, he converted the Doc Marten from an aggressive image to a fashion boot by customizing it. He was extremely successful and on the strength of his success, he set up a chain of shoe shops called 'Red or Dead', today still renowned for their trendy, quality footwear. R. Griggs Group Ltd. acknowledged Hemingway's success and collaborated with him to bring the Doc Marten from obscurity, due to its previous associations, to fit the foot of every man, woman and child in the 90's.

By the late 80's, the Doc Marten was gradually building up its new fashion image, but it was another factor of the decade which launched the boot in a way no amount of pre-conceived advertising could - Grunge. This new fashion phenomenon could be construed as a reflection of the economic climate of the time.

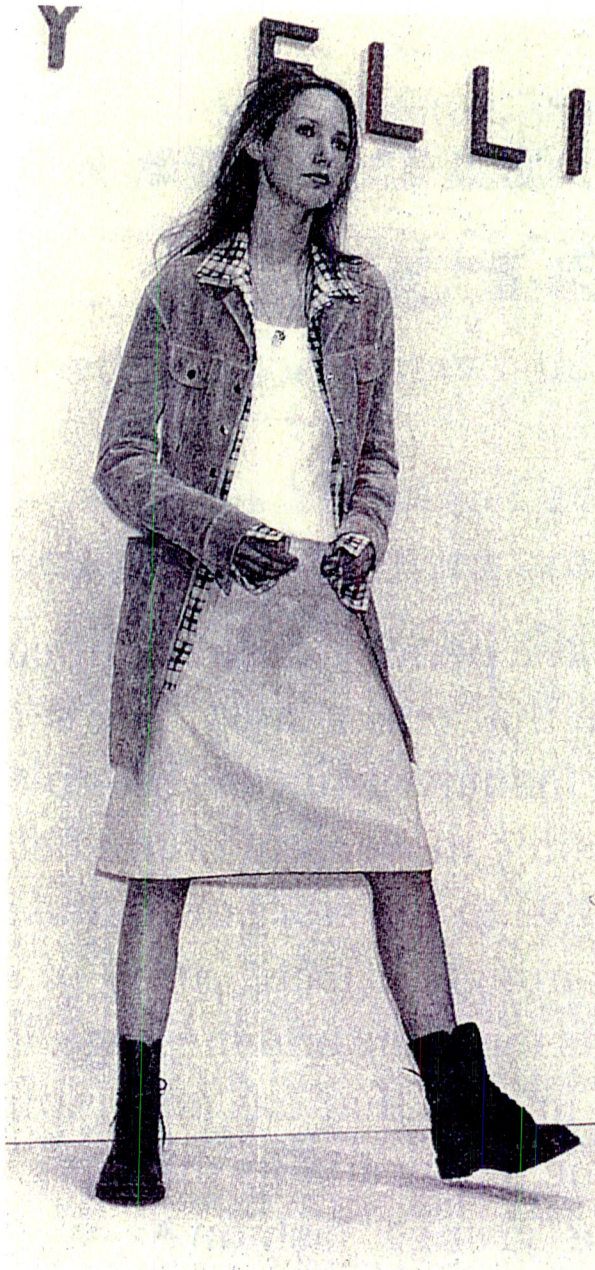
"The 'grunge' movement with its 'couldn't give a damn' attitude towards appearance, favoured a return to inexpensive used clothes and revival rags".

(Chenouve, 1993, page 316)

The look was anti-fashion yet was universally paraded on the catwalks of the 'haute couture' fashion houses. Clothes were layered - floppy skirts, flimsy dresses, loose, undefining and unkempt. Footwear comprised of chunky heavy boots or shoes - namely the new customized Doc Martens (Fig. 6). The grunge phenomenon catapulted the Doc Marten into high fashion and subsequently filtered through to the fashion-conscious masses. The sight of a super-model in knee-high purple Doc Martens was enough

Fig. 6

Grunge Fashion



to make them sold out the next day. Naomi Campbell
(supermodel) wore a pair in a television with Jonathon
Ross and it was this kind of fashion exposure that made
the Doc Marten in the 90's.

CHAPTER 2

Teenagers, students and Doc Martens in the 90's - the influences they encounter over their footwear choices. Where the Doc Marten stands as youth footwear and how it is promoted to this age-group.

YOUNG TEENAGERS

A young teenager is concerned with fitting-in - to be one of the crowd is safe and so one must have the acceptable clothes, shoes, accessories, etc. They are influenced by older 'young people', pop stars, actors, actresses, teen-scene paraphernalia - teen shops and teen magazines. To be accepted one must have the right gear - to look wrong means rejection and isolation. Many teenagers blindly follow fashion trends but they also like to promote a rebelliousness - from their parents, from themselves as 'children'. With the advent of grunge, the Doc Marten became a desirable fashion item for teenagers, but because of its previous tough individualist image, it struck a chord for a teenager struggling to establish a new identity. (Rubinstein, 1995, pages 208 - 210)

To define the relationship between teenagers and Doc Martens today, I will look at female footwear first through the most popular girls' teenage magazines - **Just Seventeen, Sugar and Looks**. As there is no equivalent literature available for male teenagers, I shall look at two popular influences in their life - music and sports personalities, and how this bears reference to their choice of footwear. The information gleaned from interviews with three popular Doc Marten shops in Dublin - Korkys, D.V.8 and The Black Boot - will further describe

the relationship between Doc Martens and teenagers today.

YOUNG FEMALE TEENAGERS

I have looked at **Just Seventeen** magazine issues over 1994 and 1995 and selected random issues from 1993, documenting the appearance of the Doc Marten, and how it has withstood competition since the grunge fashion fad.

When grunge was at its peak among teenagers in the summer of 1993, **Just Seventeen** ran a feature article celebrating the Doc Marten boot (**Just Seventeen**, 1993, pages 17 and 18). (Fig. 7) is featured in a summer 1994 issue of **Just Seventeen**, but the article is promoting the lurex tight, not the Doc Martens. However, they are still evidently in vogue and the Doc Marten combined with a feminine flowered mini-skirt and clingy top, make the original classic eight-hole oxblood Doc Marten seem distant from its previous image as a symbol of violence.

The same issue also featured the heeled Converse All-star (Fig. 8). This was a large hit in the U.S.A. and its promotion in Britain reflected the popularity of the regular Converse All-star shoe in the 80's and 90's. This American brand also had a good name for quality and like the Doc Marten was responding to customer demands to hopefully broaden its market. They were created when the companys' scouts noticed that New York clubbers were getting shoemakers to stack the soles of their baseball boots with rubber to create platforms. However, this also demonstrated the existence of two rapidly developing directions in the world of footwear -

Fig. 7

Girl in eight-hole cherry Doc Martens



Fig. 8

Heeled Converse All-star shoes



the growing popularity of sportswear for everyday wear and the advent of the stack heel. The heel was the antithesis of the anti-fashion, unkempt look of the grunge movement.

A July 1994 issue of **Just Seventeen** promotes the launch of the new Doc Marten stationery range. They ran a competition and the prize included a folder, pencil case, courier bag, pen and notepad. This provision is an extension of the Doc Marten product range - taking advantage of their popularity with youth and creating products boldly displaying their logos and so creating a label frenzy for Doc Marten merchandise.

At this time, the more adventurous Doc Martens were being advertised to teenagers in the **Just Seventeen** fashion spreads - camouflage Doc Martens (Fig. 9) and silver Doc Martens (Fig. 10) were shown worn by two girls dressed in two very different looks. A feminine long-haired blonde girl wears the camouflage Doc Martens with a military inspired skirt and army jumper. The silver Doc Martens are worn by a dark, short-haired denim clad female. This shows the diverse styles, even within an age group, in which Doc Martens were beginning to be worn.

A November 1994 issue of **Just Seventeen** produced a fashion spread that was unmistakably the 'grunge look', which was dying out at this time (Fig. 11). The models wore long skirts, mismatching jumpers and skirts with the heavy Doc Marten boots - mostly the reliable cherry-red. The reason for this choice of Doc Marten style was possibly because the fashion feature

Fig. 9

Girl wearing camouflage Doc Martens



Fig. 10

Girl wearing silver Doc Martens



Fig. 11

Cherry-red Doc Martens and the grunge look



was rural based, highlighting practicality and comfort. Although the wacky, funky Doc Marten shoes, such as the aforementioned silver Doc Martens, were gaining in popularity, the original Doc Marten was still in vogue as wearable fashion footwear.

A fashion spread in the February 1995 issue of **Just Seventeen** exemplifies the three styles of popular footwear for young female teenagers at that time - the Doc Marten, the trainer and the stack heel (Fig.12). The same issue prints an article promoting the new pastel Doc Marten boots in lilas and lemon (Fig. 13). The concept behind the design is to give girls 'attitude' yet remain feminine. This colour scheme also compliments the explosion of pastel in fashion at that time (Fig. 14), and the increasing promotion of femininity on the catwalk with the revival of the pencil skirt and hourglass shape. **Just Seventeen** also features the knee-high lime green patent Doc Martens, (April 1995), but less than a month later the magazine tells readers to 'ditch those dirty Doc Martens'. Due to the success of Indie Bands such as Blur, the Doc Marten is advised to take a back seat to the trainer.

Trainers are tops for summer, as sported by well just about every Indie personage on pop planet. Team them with trendy tops and join the ranks of four-strong Blur or Elastica for a little 5-a-side-footie"

(**Just Seventeen**, May 1995, page 10)

As far back as December 1994, **Just Seventeen** featured a two page spread of trendy trainers - fast becoming the hottest footwear for young people (Fig.15). Adidas, Nike, Chevignon, Chipie and Benetton to name but a few, produce running shoes that are comfortable but have latched on to a trendy image - extending their use from

Fig. 12

Stack heel, trainer and the Doc Marten boot



Fig. 13

Doc Marten boots in lilac and lemon



Fig. 14

Two teenage girls in the seasons pastel colours



Slip dress £12.99
Tops £4.99
Cropped cardigan
£8.99
Skirt £9.99
all for ages 8-15 years

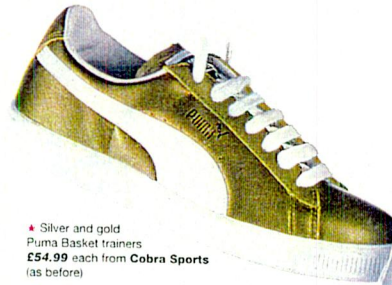


Fig. 15

Customized trainer spread



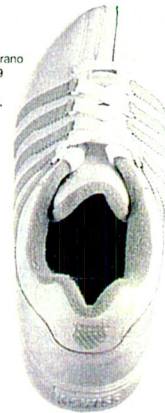
★ Tartan trainers
£59 from **Chipie**
(as before)



★ Silver and gold
Puma Basket trainers
£54.99 each from **Cobra Sports**
(as before)



★ Simple suede trainers
£55 from **Office** (see
elsewhere)



★ K-Swiss Murano
trainers £54.99
from **Office**,
60 Neal Street,
London WC2
(tel: 081-838
4447 for
mail order
enquiries)

spotting

★ Adidas Samba
trainers £44.99 from
Olympus Sports, 301
Oxford Street, London
W1 (tel: 0533 320003
for enquiries)



orking-out, they're for looking cool in!



★ Adidas Pro-Model
boots £59 from
Homo (as before)



★ Blue and red trainers
approx £40 from **Benetton**
(tel: 071-731 4564 for
stockist enquiries)

the athletic's track to the clubs and street styles of young people. Like the Doc Marten, they have customized their shoes to extend their market. Chipie produced a tartan trainer and Puma designed silver and gold sneakers. The two page trainer spread was titled:

Trainer spotting - these trainers aren't just made for working-out, they're for looking cool in".
(**Just Seventeen**, Dec. 1995, page 19)

To further confuse the issue, the Birkenstock sandal and its many imitations became the big hit of the summer of 1995. A May issue of **Just Seventeen** features a photograph of supermodel Christy Turlington stepping out in the sandals, exchanging more classy leathers for trendy comfort (Fig. 16). The pink Birkenstock sandals pictured beneath the photograph of Miss Turlington embody the colour palate for that summer. Like the Doc Marten this is an update of a stalwart in footwear.

The Kicker shoe and boot is another example of a classic footwear style being updated to fulfil the new fashion criteria. Through 1995, the new stack heeled Kickers were promoted. An advertisement placed in a number of issues of **Just Seventeen** in that year, displayed the new silver stack heeled Kicker ankle boots (Fig. 17). As well as the new stack heeled look, Kickers could now be purchased in a variety of colours and materials including black patent, red, navy and in washable materials. Two other popular girl teenage magazines ran competitions to win the new style Kickers:

(a) a pair of classic blue ankle boot Kickers with

Fig. 16

Christy Turlington and Birkenstock sandals



Fig. 17
Girl with silver Kickers



Kick Chick

Kickers

Hatched by Shellys

For 24 hour Mail Order delivery, order by credit card on
0181 450 0066 or fax 0181 208 4340.
Kick Chick High £54.99 + £4.00 p&p. Colours available:
Silver, Black Patent, Red, Navy, Blue Washable, Tan Washable.
For more information and free catalogue write to:
Shellys Shoes Ltd, 1-3 Edgware Rd London NW2 6JZ, or by contacting the above numbers.

Shops
• 266-270 Regent St. London W1 • 159 Oxford St London W1 •
• 1-4-18 Neal St London W1 • 42-46 Market St, Manchester M1 •

24 hour delivery only applies to shoes in stock. Not all shoes available for
24 hour delivery please phone number above for details.

Washable
Patent
Silver

heels (Fig. 18)

(**Looks**, April 1995, page 96)

(b) black heeled Kickers shoes, (Fig. 19). These shoes were recommended for use as school shoes.

(**Sugar**, October 1995, page 5)

Not to be beaten, the Doc Marten launched a new collection of shoes aimed at young girls. The new, shiny, happy footwear went by the title of 'Catwalk' and complimented a newly conceived clothes collection featuring mini-skirts, jackets and trousers in silver and fake snakeskin P.V.C. (**Just Seventeen**, July 1995, page 5).

To sum up this section on teenage girls choice of fashion footwear as documented in teen magazines, I have selected one page from a complimentary booklet which was included in a summer 1995 issue of **Sugar** magazine. The booklet is sectioned in the four looks for young girls at that time - classic, romantic, trendy and sporty (Fig. 20). The booklet is titled "**The Sugar guide to fashion - find the look to really suit you**". The footwear consists of stack heeled granny or dolly shoes, heeled boots and flat trainers. The Doc Marten boot or a similarly styled boot is not featured in the line-up. This suggests that although the Doc Marten has provided footwear styles which would suit this market, they are yet to be taken on as popular footwear. The young female teenage market can be a very difficult market to define. Not every parent would allow their young teenage daughter to walk around in knee-high, patent Doc Martens. The key is to strike a balance between styles which are morally acceptable, yet trendy enough to spark a teenager's interest.

Fig. 18

Ankle boot Kickers



Fig. 19

Kicker shoes



YOUNG MALE TEENAGERS

Young male teenagers have a more limited literature to show them the latest and most trendy styles, so they often look to their admired elders or idols to establish their dress-code. Richard K. Donahue, president and chief operating officer of Nike Inc. commented that

"females do not respond to the same sales messages as males. Females will not buy a product just because a superstar, Michael Jordan, for example, wears it".

(Rubinstein, 1995, page 252)

Whether this statement is true for young teenagers is difficult to ascertain due to their identity crisis and impressionable personality. However, young male teenagers often look to the fashions of music and sports stars to help them create the image they want to portray.

East 17 and Pulp are two high-profile groups who make a strong impression, not only by their music but also by their choice of dress. East 17 are a pop group with a tough image. They dress in over-sized clothes -baggy pants and jackets and cover their shaved or near-shaved heads with baseball caps, sometimes back to front. They also sport an amount of jewellery including chunky rings and hoop earrings. They wear heavy, big-tongued boots or runner boots reflecting their desire to display their 'tough attitude' look (Fig.21 & Fig. 22). However, recently their songs and their image has softened. Their music has included the occasional romantic song, for example "Stay", and they can be seen wearing more fashion-conscious rather than attitude-conscious clothes and shoes. Compare Fig. 21 with Fig. 22. The latter picture

Fig. 21

East 17



Fig. 22

East 17



shows one of the group members wearing a pair of the trendy but definitely non-offensive Adidas style trainer. Another member is wearing a non lace-up boot with a chunky, nearly stack type heel. Could this be their coming of age and rejection of their former rebellious youth, or is it the sign of the times - the up to the minute popularity for the more feminine look for males?

Pulp, and in particular their lead singer, Jarvis Cocker, are a prime example of this switch of direction. Mr. Cocker clothes his lanky, skinny frame in clingy jackets and slim trousers, which suggest a degree of femininity or at the very least a nerd-type personality. His choice of footwear is limited to sandals or feminine, slim, chunky heeled shoes. The Doc Marten would be a severe contrast to his image (Fig. 23).

Sports stars are not renowned for their fashion sense. Off the pitch, most footballers stick to a regulation suit for social events or jeans and jog-pants for more casual wear. When Ryan Giggs was spotted out on the town with television personality Dani Behr, he was dressed casually in loose jacket, jog-pants, baseball cap and trainers. Like-minded young male teenagers find this an easy to assemble look, and it fits in with their lifestyle if they are sports enthusiasts. Also, because the trainer has been accepted into fashion, as opposed to being solely a necessary sporting accessory, young males can wear this comfortable shoe style almost exclusively if they so wish (with the possible exception of school uniforms).

Fig. 23

Pulp



For young teenagers, the Doc Marten does not feature excessively in their chosen footwear styles. Young female teenagers have the choice of highly fashionable Doc Martens, provided they fit in with their code of dress, but male teenagers are more likely to opt for trainers or a more chunky boot such as Caterpillars (Fig. 24). Safety in numbers is the motto for this age group. If the Doc Marten conforms to their chosen look, it is acceptable. It does not dominate their identity. The Doc Marten is an accessory to the image rather than the roots of a statement.

OLDER TEENAGERS AND COLLEGE STUDENTS

The three shoe shops surveyed in Dublin - D.V.8, Korkys and Black Boot, find that young teenagers largely buy Doc Martens in the shoe form for use as school shoes, as many schools ban boots as uniform footwear. Without exception, the most popular Doc Marten sold is currently, and always has been, the original black or cherry-red eight-hole Doc Marten boot. All the shops, although they attract a variety of ages and backgrounds, find that it is still the cliché of the student with the long jumper who is the most popular client.

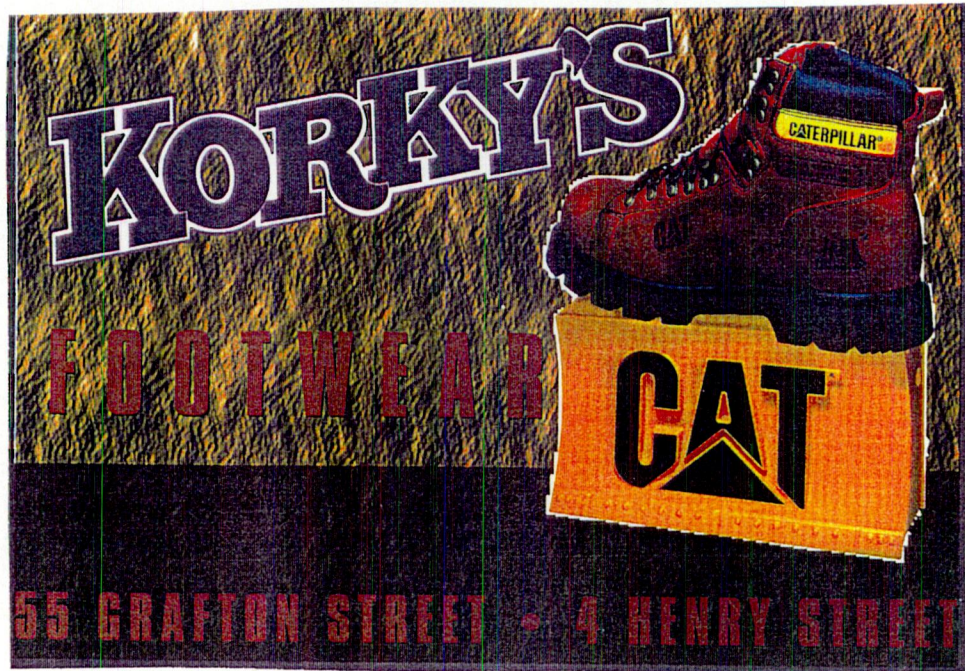
"Students come in looking for boots that are going to last, not just for 6 months but for 4 years or more".

(Louise Crampton, The Black Boot, 1995)

D.V.8 in particular, finds that there will always be a high percentage of college students buying Doc Martens - for their comfort, durability and student 'attitude' image.

Fig. 24

Korky's advertisement for Caterpillar Boots



"The average age of Doc Marten buyers in D.V.8 would be 1st or 2nd year college students".
(Ray Farrell, D.V.8, 1995)

This is probably due to D.V.8's position in Temple Bar - the heart of youth culture in Dublin.

"D.V.8 in Temple Bar has a certain type of customer one who knows exactly what they want. The one in Stephen's Green Shopping Centre gets a more passing trade".

(Ray Farrell, D.V.8, 1995)

The Stephen's Green Shopping Centre Branch stocks more way out styles of footwear. Prices range from £40 to £100, whereas their main brand-named competitor Caterpillars begin at £80.

"Average Doc Marten buyer would buy Caterpillars if they came down in price by about £15 / £20".
(Ray Farrell, D.V.8, 1995)

Caterpillars have the same durable, hard-wearing image as Doc Martens, but the price makes them inaccessible to many students. All stores agree that Caterpillars come second in line to Doc Martens for this age group - possibly because they are lesser known, and do not have the trendy image now attached to Doc Martens.

"Caterpillars used to be bought by more affluent people and primarily for practicality, ie. walking long distances, rough terrains".

(Sandra Healy, Korkys, 1995)

D.V.8 find that Kickers come third in popularity to Doc Martens and Caterpillars. They are bought more by younger teenagers. While Doc Martens have broadened their market possibilities, Kickers seem to have narrowed theirs, maybe through no fault of their own, but purely by the way they are being worn by the public, similar to how the Doc Marten was embraced and branded by Skinheads and Punks, etc.

There is a kind of stigma being attached to Kickers - sort of like boot-runners (basketball), - a rougher crowd go for Kickers, while the more affluent go for Doc Martens".

(Ray Farrell, D.V.8, 1995)

Kickers are more expensive than Doc Martens - £60 upwards, which could suggest the beginning of a fashion trend - a cheaper, quality, branded boot (the Doc Marten) is being stepped over in favour of a lesser-known brand with no better quality guarantees.

The Doc Marten is no longer the 'working-class' boot as the Skinheads in the 60's saw it, but it still plays a part in youth culture. The older teenager or student is at a stage where they are breaking away from parental and media influences, and developing their own, adult opinions. Whereas a young teenager wants to be one of the crowd, an older teenager wants to stand up as an individual. To wear a 90's Doc Marten is not seen as wearing a readymade look. The diverse styles of Doc Martens today, especially the wacky ones, create the illusion that every Doc Marten is an original. This enables the wearer to collaborate their own look, but not to be branded with a pre-conceived Doc Marten image.

HOW THE DOC MARTEN CATERS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE - THROUGH ITS PRODUCT RANGES AND PROMOTION

"Doc Marten design under 13 different style headings and sell their product under 8. Their design headings are Classic, Plain Welt, Casual, Terrain, Steel Cap, Double Welt, Streetwear, Wacky, Open Airwair, County, Kids Stitchdowns and Young Fashion".

(Doc Marten Catalogue, 1995)

The last title, the 'Young Fashion' collection is aimed specifically at young teenagers, but the range is uninspiring and lacks a definitive statement or sense of

communal spirit (Fig. 25). The Classic, the Terrain and the Streetwear styles (Fig. 26) hold some appeal with young male teenagers and the Wacky, County and Natural styles (Fig. 27) cater for teenage girls. However, the new open Airwair collection could be just what the Doc Marten needs to bridge this market gap (Fig. 28). This range could be described as bearing distinct resemblance to the Birkenstock sandal - the hit of Summer 1995 - an example of the Doc Marten responding to customer demand.

"Open Airwair - this range, which includes the world's first Goodyear welted open sandal, combines rugged good looks with all the comfort and durability normally reserved for more conventional shoes. It is typical of Doc Marten's commitment to producing distinctive footwear that is high on quality and individuality, and designed for today's more informal lifestyle".

(Doc Marten Catalogue, 1995, page 29)

As well as creating a range of footwear specifically for young people, R. Griggs Group Ltd. have acknowledged that their success has traditionally been largely due to the loyalty of young people from all backgrounds. Since 1990, the group have sponsored the Prince's Youth Trust, which has included:

(1) Catwalk displays at the Clothes Show live and the Prince's Youth Business Trust Trade Fair.

(2) The National Battle of the Bands designed to give aspiring and talented young musicians a foot on the ladder of recording success.

(Doc Marten promotional leaflet, The Black Boot, 1995)

In Ireland, D.V.8 do little advertisement for their shops or their Doc Marten range, but maintain interest in their merchandise by sponsoring fashion shows or other

Fig. 25

Young Fashion Doc Martens



Fig. 26

Classic Doc Martens



Terrain Doc Martens



Streetwear Doc Martens



Fig. 27

Wacky Doc Martens



County Doc Martens



Natural Doc Martens



Fig. 28

Open Airwair Doc Martens



similar publicity events. Korkys place frequent advertisements in D'Side - a youth magazine aimed at eighteen to twenty-five year olds, which would include mostly college students (Fig. 29). The Black Boot also place occasional advertisements in D'Side magazine, but although a good percentage of their customers are students, they also sell significantly to older and younger customers. As the shop has built up a reputation as 'the Doc Marten Shop', they have found the need to advertise less and less over the last two years. For the student market, they advertise in **Hot Press, D'Side, The Gig Guide and U.C.D. Magazine** (Fig. 30). For the older customer and also to inform parents of the Kids Doc Marten range, The Black Boot advertise in the **Evening Herald, The Irish Times, U-Magazine and Dublin - Life and Leisure**. The only advertisement they place today is in **Cara Magazine** - the complimentary Aer Lingus magazine placed in the seat of all their flights. The Black Boot finds alot of Spanish students and Americans come to the shop where Doc Martens are cheaper than in their native country. In America, they can sell for up to twice the price of here in Ireland. Businessmen sometimes buy five or six pairs to bring home to their children. The Black Boot shop also has had a stand at the Head to Toe Show Live - their boots have featured in the television show a number of times.

"At the end of the day, the Doc
Marten practically sells itself".
(Louise Crampton, The Black Boot, 1995)

This lack of 'image' publicity is very beneficial for

Fig. 29

Korky advertisement in D'Side magazine

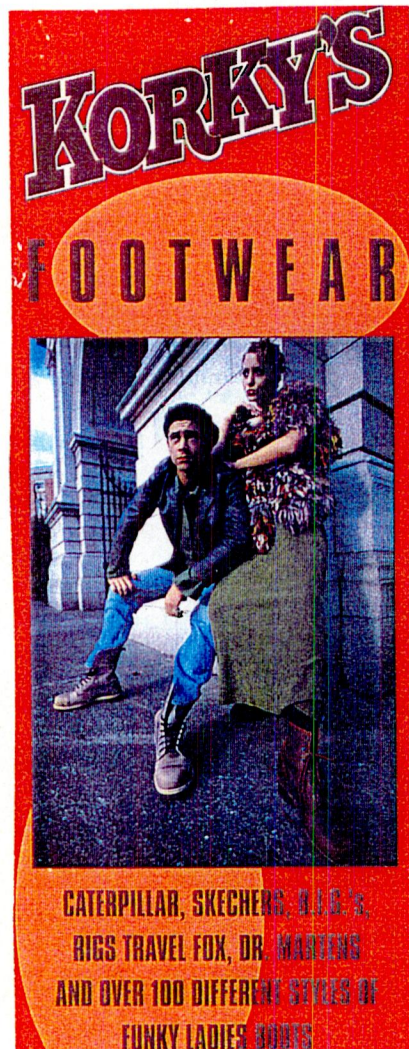
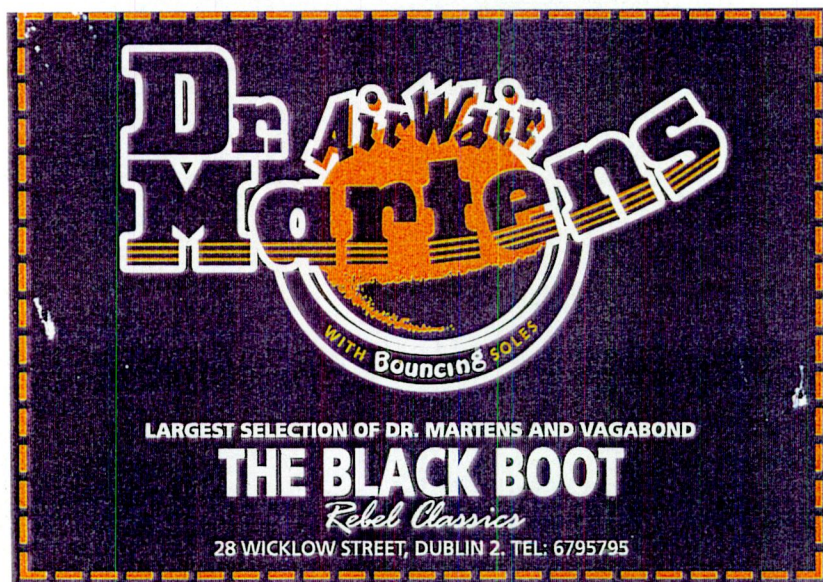


Fig. 30

The Black Boot advertisement in D'Side magazine



the Doc Marten because it broadens its market barriers. Now that the anti-social implications of the boot have been taken over by a new fashionable image, an older person can wear the boot with the added bonus that there is no youth culture stigma attached to them.

CHAPTER 3

The post-students and the Doc Marten in the 90's - today there is no age restriction on the Doc Marten wearer. Comfort and practicality are undeniably appealing to the older age group, but like students, they are also attracted to the essence of individuality that accompanies the Doc Marten.

The older Doc Marten wearers can be divided into two main categories - the group who wear Doc Martens because they like their funkiness, style and comfort, and the people who use them as durable, comfortable workwear. The former includes young post-student males and females who wear the wacky collection of Doc Martens for clubbing or casual wear if they have strict dress codes for work. D.V.8 and The Black Boot have both sold trendy Doc Martens to post-pension age men and women.

A lady in her seventies bought a pair of silver Doc Martens".

(Ray Farrell, D.V.8, 1995)

"I sold a pair of Doc Martens to a ninety year old man".

(Louise Crampton, The Black Boot, 1995)

The Black Boot, in particular, seem to have a varied age range. The regular eight-hole Doc Marten with a stack heel is very popular with women from thirty to thirty five year olds (Fig.31).

Older music stars have also visited and purchased in the shop - Andy Bell from Erasure and Luke Bloom to name but two. Dolores O'Riordain wore knee-high white Doc Marten boots to her wedding in 1994, which sparked off a copy-cat sequence throughout the country. Both D.V.8 and The Black Boot receive regular orders for white

Fig. 31

Ladies heeled Doc Martens



Doc Martens , particularly patent ones, for weddings.

"A wedding party in Donegal ordered eight pairs of white patent Doc Martens for the bride and bridesmaids".

(Ray Farrell, D.V.8, 1995)

Other high profile older wearers of Doc Martens include

M.C. Hammer, Madonna, the Clash and Sting.

They can be seen on stage in 'Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat' and on the big screen in 'London Kills Me', while Elton John's giant cherry-reds, specially made for the film 'Tommy', are now on display in the Central Museum, Northampton, England". (Fig. 32)

(Doc Marten promotional leaflet,
The Black Boot, 1995)

The second group of older Doc Marten wearers purchase the shoes and boots for their original values as comfortable, durable work footwear. Gardai can wear the plain welt black Doc Marten shoe without the yellow stitching. They are ideal for walking the hard pavement in all weathers. Jobs which demand that an individual is on their feet all day makes the Doc Marten the ideal choice of footwear. People working in kitchens find that Doc Martens are not only comfortable but the soles are resistant to oils and fats which is extremely useful.

The steel toe-cap range are ideal for workers on building sites or for those who work with heavy machinery. The boot is sold with a complimentary six month insurance form. If the steel toe-cap is at fault and neglects to protect its wearer, the individual can claim compensation from R. Griggs Group Ltd. Doc Marten promote four selling points which fulfil all the possible requirements for working footwear:

(1) Superb softness and elasticity.

Fig.32

Elton John's giant cherry-reds



- (2) Anti-shock, anti-slip
- (3) Excellent Foot Insulation.
- (4) Goodyear welted for extreme comfort.

The latest Doc Marten collections include Doc Martens for men in offices which they could wear with a suit. The designs are quite classy - some bearing resemblance to a brogue shoe. They do not have the yellow stitching and show little outer distinction to identify them as a Doc Marten shoe or boot. But one must question the use of Doc Martens in an office where an individual would have little need for anti-slip, anti-shock footwear with insulation that is probably too hot for centrally - heated offices. Also most men in suits would spend a larger percentage of their time in an office sitting down at a desk than a builder, who would be constantly on his feet. However, nothing ventured, nothing gained - after all if a ninety four year old is wearing Doc Martens, the sky's the limit!

- 63 -

CHAPTER 4

Kids and Doc Martens in the 90's - the ultimate. Doc Martens for children is a rapidly expanding addition to the Doc Marten range. This is an area which has not yet realised its full potential.

The expansion of the Doc Marten market to include a kids range could be the most successful move the company has made since its arrival in Britain. Due to the change of image the Doc Marten went through at the end of the 80's and into the early 90's, the Doc Marten could be promoted for kids without being accused of creating mini-political advocates.

"A few years ago if someone said to a parent to buy their child a pair of Doc Martens - no way - but now, everybody buys them".

(Louise Crampton, The Black Boot, 1995)

When The Black Boot opened two years ago, the only styles they stocked in kids sizes were in the original eight-hole cherry-red and black. They did not sell very well, possibly because the classic Doc Marten boot will always hold some connotations of the Punk and Skinhead movements. Also kids have a tendency to go for bright colours, so the classic Doc Marten would not appeal greatly to them. However, when the new collection of kids footwear was introduced in the summer of 1994, it was an immediate success and since then it has become increasingly popular. To such an extent that The Black Boot had sold out of a lot of its childrens styles in the autumn of 1995, and had to place an advertisement stating the arrival of the much sought after footwear just in time for Christmas, 1995. D.V.8 stocked a selection of kids shoes for the first time in the summer of 1995, and they were sold

out in just over a fortnight.

There seems to be a frenzy developing for kids Doc Martens, possibly because they fulfil all the credentials for premium childrens' shoes. Parents find that the Doc Marten can successfully compete with traditional childrens' shoe brands, such as Clarkes. The children's Doc Marten begins in price at £28, which equals the price of Clarke's range. The quality of the Doc Marten is unquestionable as is the point that it offers proper support for growing feet. Also the anti-slip soles ensure it is highly suitable for hyperactive kids. However, the Doc Marten children's range is above all colourful, trendy and very cute. When large things are miniaturized they can become altogether more attractive. A tiny floral Doc Marten boot would be irresistible to many fashion conscious parents, as it has proved to be in D.V.8 and The Black Boot. The floral Doc Marten is one of their most popular kids style (Fig. 33). Over Christmas 1995 to 1996, the kids silver and red patent Doc Marten boots and shoes were also extremely high sellers in The Black Boot. As well as the popular cute styles, the Doc Marten kids shoe styles are very suitable for school with black patent, waxy black leather or the more subtle Nubuck leather. There are sandals and more neutral colours available for summer and for easy access, some styles are slip-on, velcro fasten or buckled, as well as the regular lace-up (Fig. 34)

It seems that R. Griggs Group Ltd. has only begun to realise the value of this market, and I predict they

Fig. 33

Kids floral Doc Martens



Fig. 34

Kids sandal Doc Martens



will further expand their children's section as an extremely important part of their future business.

"Last May (1995), we had numerous mothers enquiring to purchase white patent Doc Martens for their kids First Holy Communion. They were not available. Needless to say next May we'll be prepared!"

(Louise Crampton, The Black Boot, 1995)

The buyer is looking beyond the Doc Marten making a universal statement. By the way they are using the new styles of Doc Martens, they are creating the individual statement they want to make!

CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

The Doc Marten in the 90's - is the label becoming more famous than the boot?

"Doctor Martens (n phr) (Klaus Maertens German Inventor of the sole). Proprietary name for a type of heavy (esp. laced) boot or shoe with a cushioned sole".

(The New Shorter Oxford English & Collins English Dictionaries 1995)

Doc Martens footwear have such value attached to them that they are defined in the current English Dictionaries. The Doc Marten label itself is one of the top ten most recognised brand names in the world - included with the likes of Levi and Wrangler. At the beginning of this decade a three-storey Doc Marten departmental store was opened in the heart of Covent Garden. Practically anything which can be given the Doc Marten label or trademark is there - from clothes, to stationery, to watches, not to mention the footwear. The store is extremely successful and a limited selection of the clothes and accessories are available in Dublin.

Korkys only stock Doc Marten laces and shoe wax from the accessory range. D.V.8 sell small accessories such as belts, boxer shorts and key-rings. They stocked a trial selection of clothes, but found they did not sell well. This could be because their clientele would be more student based than The Black Boot, who find that the accessories including clothes sell very successfully. They sell jeans, t-shirts and bags as well as belts and wallets. The Black Boot will be stocking a greater selection of clothes in 1996, but overall they found that if people are satisfied with the boots, they come back to buy the clothes.

"It's similar to if people like Wrangler jeans, for example. There is a strong possibility they'll go out and buy the boots, shirt, etc., with the Wrangler label".

(Louise Crampton, The Black Boot, 1995)

As long as the demand for accessories is there, The Black Boot will continue to sell them. In fact, they believe that the range will expand even further - accessories will become more popular. The original product is so solid - The Black Boot practically never get complaints. So to ignore the Doc Marten as a label for accessories would have been a major financial and promotional loss.

The Doc Marten boot could be in danger of being swallowed up by this expansion and label mania. Today it is being marketed to appeal to all ages, sexes and backgrounds. However, the Doc Marten has a history of maintaining its own specific personality. True to this, the Doc Marten in the 90's still makes a statement of being different. The choice of style and the way it is worn by the wearer gives each Doc Marten an individual identity.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ash and Wilson Juliet and Elizabeth
CHIC THRILLS
London Pandora 1992
- CHENOUNE Farid
A HISTORY OF MENS FASHION
Pan's Flammarion 1993
- HEBDIGE Dick
SUBCULTURE, THE MEANING OF STYLE
London Routledge 1993
- JONES Terry
**THE i-D BIBLE - EVERY ULTIMATE VICTIMS
HANDBOOK**
London Levelprint Ltd. 1987
- McDOWELL Colin
SHOES, FASHION AND FANTASY
London Thames and Hudson Ltd 1989
- POLHEMUS Ted
STREET STYLE
London Thames and Hudson Ltd. 1994
- REES Helen
14:24 BRITISH YOUTH CULTURE
London Highland 1986
- RUBINSTEIN Ruth
**DRESS CODES - MEANINGS AND MESSAGES
IN AMERICAN CULTURE**
Oxford Westview Press 1995
- ARTICLES
- ELVIN Jo
"Win! Three pairs of funky shoes"
SUGAR magazine
Issue 12 October 1995 Page 5
- JONES Sarah
"Four pairs of Shellys Kickers"
LOOKS magazine
Issue 113 April 1995 Page 96
- WILLIS Peter
"Ten facts on Doc Marten boots that
are stamping out trendy trainers"
THE SUN newspaper
July 1st 1993 Page 6

JUST SEVENTEEN magazine
1993 - 1995

INTERVIEWS

CLANCY Kitty

Louise Crampton - **THE BLACK BOOT** Shop,
Wicklow Street, Dublin
20th Dec. 1995

CLANCY Kitty

Ray Farrell - **D.V.8** shop, Temple Bar,
Dublin
14th Dec. 1995

CLANCY Kitty

Sandra Healy - **KORKYS** shop, Grafton Street
Dublin
14th Dec. 1995

OTHER SOURCES

D.V.8 shop

Airwair Catalogue 1995

R. GRIGGS GROUP LTD.

Information Pack 1995

THE BLACK BOOT shop

Promotional Leaflets 1995

**THE DOC MARTEN:
ITS CHANGING IMAGE SINCE
THE SIXTIES AND HOW IT
HAS EVOLVED IN THE
NINETIES—FROM THE BOOT
WEARING THE PERSON
TO THE PERSON
WEARING THE BOOT**

**BY
KITTY CLANCY**

**FACULTY OF DESIGN
FASHION DEPARTMENT**

1996

