

HIGH-END FASHION AND LUXURY LIFESTYLE TRADE MAGAZINE FOR AMERICAN RETAILERS

# FOOTW

ON FASHION RETAIL

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**TRADE  
SHOW  
CALENDAR**  
JUNE-JULY  
**2018**  
*WITH RATINGS!*

**NOTES FROM  
PORTUGAL:**

From  
**Fashion**  
to **Factory,**  
or the **Future**  
of **Footwear**  
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20<sup>th</sup>  
UITIC  
INTERNATIONAL TECHNICAL  
FOOTWEAR CONGRESS

Porto-2018  
16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> MAY



NOTES FROM PORTUGAL:

# From Fashion to Factory, or the Future of Footwear Business

by Alex Geyman, Editor

It has been only a few days since I returned from the 20<sup>th</sup> International Technical Footwear (UITIC) Congress in the beautiful city of Porto, Portugal and I am excited to share with you my still fresh memories, new information and personal thoughts about this trip.

There's an old outdated perception in America that Portuguese footwear is mostly about classic mens moccasins or, "fashion for old men." I know, because I am one of those who thought so for a long time... until now.

During this trip we, the group of international trade press journalists, had the opportunity to visit at least eight shoe factories, all producing world-class footwear for men, women and children. From high-end fashion to high-tech work shoes, from all leather to all man-made materials; shoes for men, women and children - the Portuguese make them all, exporting 95% of total production abroad!

To summarize the dominant theme of the Congress and its' bottom line in a very few words for our readers, it's the Technology, stupid!

In an environment where disruption is the norm rather than the exception, businesses must have the ability and the skills to turn changes into opportunities before their competitors do. New technologies and new methods appear almost every day and it is key to be the first to understand how these can be applied in the processes in order to drive better performances. All phases of footwear business will pretty much depend on these new technologies, from conceptual design to production, manufacture, distribution and retail.

This includes strong growth and major developments in the sourcing sector, where intelligent, high performance sustainable and recyclable new materials will play major role in the future.

In terms of human and social interaction, technology is a key as well. For example, social

networks are no longer just a hobby in our personal lives, and brands and companies are trying to learn how to take advantage of such a huge opportunity to communicate with the entire world with an easy and very accessible tool as the Internet. However, this requires complete re-thinking and re-positioning of the branding and the communication strategies. The way brands will interact with their customers in the future will be completely different than today, and we all must be better prepared for that.

During the two days of the Congress (very successful, btw! - AG), over 500 attendees and participants have learned about new groundbreaking technologies that will dramatically change all stages of footwear design and production, distribution and retail, and business strategies. There were numerous lectures by the renowned experts from all over the world sharing their knowledge and invaluable insights of the industry yesterday, today and forecasts and predictions for tomorrow. During several discussion forums the audience interacted with the panelists asking questions and receiving personalized advice and recommendations.

Speaking of the modern Portuguese footwear production: the participation in the 20<sup>th</sup> UITIC Congress and touring local manufacturing facilities of multiple brands was an incredible learning experience. Frankly, I did not expect such variety, sophistication, modernity and high quality!

AMF Safety Shoes is a Portuguese company that produces technical footwear that is innovative, attractive and functional. Imagine →



DESMA Robotic Machine



AMF Safety Shoes ToWorkFor



Lemon Jelly



Lemon Jelly



## NOTES FROM PORTUGAL:

# The Portuguese footwear industry continues to be highly focused on the international markets as it exports more than 95% of its production.

steel toe work shoes that not only protect the wearer's feet in any industrial environment, but also look cool - just like your everyday comfortable sneakers! Soon AMF will be launching a new factory integrating new 3D Bonding technology that allows producing shoes without stitching or lasting and using all types of materials, including leather. The INFINITY Collection will be the first line of safety footwear produced with only one injection DESMA machine.

*Lemon Jelly* is a Portuguese brand of urban high-tech molded shoes for women and children that exude pleasant lemony scent and come in a wide variety of fun colors and finishes from the charming shine to the waterproof velvet. I loved the simplicity and the incredible value that molded footwear creates: the Chelsea boot collection by *Lemon Jelly* is an ultimate lightweight bootie featuring sexy cuts, timeless styling, and beautiful never boring colors.

I was pleased observing factories of *Nobrand* and *Fly London*, both well known for high quality leather shoes production for modern men, women and children. Stylish and up-to-date, these brands can successfully compete with the pricier Italian footwear in the same categories. Both brands manufacture private labels as well: I saw *Zadig* and *Voltaire* fashion sneakers on the racks at *Nobrand*.

Until seeing the *Fly London's* factory, I have been quiet skeptical about this brand - for my own reasons. All I can say, in reality the *Fly London* shoes are much better in person than in print.

*A friendly suggestion to all - never underestimate the power of branding!*

A visit to *Luis Onofre* was a delicious treat, true upscale fashion at its best! These are the shoes that tell the story, and it's no wonder that *Luis Onofre* shoes have been on display behind glass at the Footwear Museum in Porto, which we also visited. I totally appreciate the designer's vision and creativity, and the stunning elegance of the shoes that he creates using the best components and handmade

craftsmanship. Even the shoe boxes of his collection have been adorned with luxurious imitation crocodile skin! As a person, *Luis Onofre* is a pleasant nice man, humble and modest and very intelligent. I really liked his down to earth personality and his honesty and straightforwardness answering questions of the press. And this what makes *Luis Onofre* shoes unique - in the sea of the sameness he stands out and whatever he attaches his name to reflects his unique personality. Great men create great shoes, indeed!

Well, this was a memorable visit and I wish I could tell more about it. Being a part of the audience at the UITIC congress was a fantastic opportunity to learn important facts and studies, meet colleagues and collaborators and make new friends. The bottom line conclusion is this - we are on the verge of BIG changes coming into footwear business, no question about that. As one of the featured speakers said, There are 500 hundred of us in the audience today, but the next time we get together again there will be very few left, implying that some businesses will not survive the challenges of the new technological age that is coming.

This is why we must know the options and better prepare for changes. Knowledge is power. I hope this article was helpful to you with a glimpse peek at the future of the footwear industry and also, by shedding some light on Portugal as a worthy footwear producing country, your possible trade partner? Thank you, and Good luck! ❖

