

Nota Bene

Comfort and Beauty All in One Shoe

By Tina Mahjoub, Staff Writer
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A blister on her foot caused Orlando-raised Jennifer Lovitt Riggs to go into the shoe biz.



Patricia

As a management consultant she was making a big presentation when she noticed her uncomfortable shoe had irritated her foot. She decided there must be a better way to combine pretty shoes with pampered feet.

In early 2002, Jennifer started an intensive survey of manufacturers, in all different price ranges, to see who made the most comfortable shoes. After months of studying the mechanics of the foot and walking and then researching the history of shoes, Jennifer determined that it was possible to create a beautiful form that was designed to be foot friendly.

“At first I was on a quest for a good but beautiful work shoes for myself. But in talking with retailers, wholesalers, shoe veterans, colleagues and consummate shoppers alike, I quickly realized that no one was making what I needed. I also discovered that many women felt the same. The market sees both large and largely unmet,” Jennifer said.



Audrey

On a trip to Spain with her director of sourcing in search of factories, Jennifer [identified additional people]¹ who would become part of the Nota Bene team. They began to apply modern sizing data to the lasts, incorporating high-tech shock-absorbing materials, quality leathers and testing the reactions in focus groups. After the first prototypes were created, focus groups rate them on looks and on fit. “Even with the first prototypes, women could tell the difference,” Jennifer said. “Women are excited that someone is paying attention to their needs and trying to build a product with them in mind at every decision.”



Kate

Nota Bene—Latin for “take note” or “pay attention, this is important”—has successfully accomplished a task many shoe designers could not. “For us, comfort means that the shoes fit well and feel good, even if the customer is walking or standing a lot. The holidays are about celebrating with loved ones and the last thing you want to do when you are

¹ Correction to original text.

at a party is thing about your aching and blistered feet because you had to park three blocks away and walk,” Jennifer said.

Because Nota Bene creates quality shoes customers can wear for several years, they manufacture styles that are considered very versatile—that can go from day to night , that can be worn with skirts/dresses or trousers and that cross seasons. For the holidays, Nota Bene uses a lot of black, velvety suede, neutral metallics, patent leathers and fun/pop colors that can be used as a neutral instead of black.

Nota Bene designs are available [in the Orlando area] exclusively at Shoooz on Park Avenue. And this shoe guru has tips for the active businesswoman for the holiday season, when shoe shopping is as much a necessity as it is a delightful way of relaxing.

- Only buy shoes that fit well and wear well. Try them on for more than five minutes. Walk around in them and don’t convince yourself they are comfortable because they’re gorgeous.
- Make sure the toplift (plastic heel cover) is not too hard, you don’t want to skid into the party.
- If the soles are slick, scuff them before you wear them (Nota Bene’s leather soles have a velvety finish so that they will not slip.)
- Make sure any cushioning is placed in the areas that will bear weight—most importantly, the ball of the foot, and to a lesser extent, the heel.
- Test the cushioning in the shoes with your feet, not your fingers. You finger cannot approximate the pressure of your whole body weight on the ball of your feet.
- There is no reason for shoes to feel hard in the toebox. When constructed properly with quality materials, soft shoes can hold their pretty shape—hard glues and cardboard are simply not necessary.
- Apple green, purple and red are colors that can be pulled off in almost any season.



Valerie