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## **MEN'S FOOTWEAR CONTINUES ITS GROWTH CYCLE AT THE UPCOMING WSA™ SHOW, LAS VEGAS FEB. 1-4**

### **Interest in Dress Looks Contributes to Rise in Crossover and Casual Styles**

(Encino, Calif.) – Jan. 24, 2007 – The rise in men's footwear sales continues as evidenced by the growth in new collections for fall/winter 2007/08 at the upcoming WSA Show, Feb. 1-4, in Las Vegas. The show heralds new men's footwear exhibitors such as **Brand Factory**, **Chinook Outfitters**, **Estate Corp.**, **Givaldi of Italy**, and **Toskana**, as well as designer lines for men at *The Collections at WSA.™*

"The full range of choices for men will be evident at the upcoming WSA Show," stated Diane Stone, chief operating officer of The WSA Show. "We are seeing this category come into its own in the breadth of the collections and the fact that all sectors, from casual to dress, are now producing men's lines at all price points. Retailers who attend the show will have an opportunity to view the scope of this growing market and make the right buying decisions accordingly."

One trend that will be evident at the show is a renewed emphasis on dress shoes. According to chief industry analyst Marshal Cohen of NPD, "men are dressing to impress and dressing for success. Those on their way up the corporate ladder want the entire package to look right, while those who are older need to dress appropriately to compete with the younger men. However you slice it, this is an increasingly active sector of the market."

The "dress to impress" factor is inspiring new lines among familiar brands such as **Mephisto**, **Alden Shoes** and **Rockport**. Mephisto's men's collections are dressing up with more suit-oriented styles while Alden is introducing a new line of elegant dress shoes, a fresh direction from its more casual lines. In another move forward to dress styles, Rockport is launching its "Houston Collection" for contemporary sophisticates.

The trend toward multi-functional products that is evident in women's footwear is also important in men's lines. **Rocky Brands** has seen a significant growth in crossover footwear for men.

"Consumers are looking for functional footwear that can be worn on the job, but that is stylish enough to be worn in social settings as well," said Bob Rutter, vice president of marketing for Rocky. The company's "Georgia Boots" and "Dickies" have introduced two new lines of crossover footwear that balance function and style.

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Styling and color treatments are also broadening for men. Men and women are starting to share each other's style sense with the use of artisan touches and distressed and embossed leathers. According to Anne-Marie Otey, editor in chief of industry magazine *WSAToday*,<sup>TM</sup> "Men are slowly stepping away from the square-toe loafer and adding color and fabric variations to their shoe wardrobes. We're seeing a wide range of men try fabric slip-ons with tattoo prints and exotic skins in genuine and embossed leathers."

The emphasis on dress shoes is also affecting men's casual-style shoes. In one of the biggest shifts in this sector, Cohen reported that sales of men's casual footwear are up nearly 11 percent for the 12 months ending November 2006. He suggested that a shift is taking place from athletic shoes to casual footwear such as loafers and boots. In this sector, the Legendary RAW Collection by **Cat® Footwear** is offering a streamlined boot that suits the latest denim trends and meets the demands of the fashion-forward consumer.

Other providers of casual lines, such as **Teva®** and **Dan Post Boot Co.**, are taking an environmentally-friendly tack by offering new lines with recycled outsoles, which will be new elements at The WSA Show. For comfort, **Timberland** is incorporating SmartWool® climate control lining into its men's casual collections while men's euro-fashion brand **Quirelli Bioessence** is being launched by **Private Label Footwear Co.**, with a new comfort system based on reflexology.

*At The Collections at WSA*, featuring the world's finest designers of luxury footwear and handbags, the attention is on designer styling and individual appeal to today's male consumer. One of the most comprehensive collections, with something for each marketplace, can be found in San Diego designer Alan Gordon's **Gordon Rush** line that blends modern aesthetics and luxury materials. Another Southern California designer, **George Esquivel**, focuses on fashion-forward, handcrafted shoes that appeal to a celebrity clientele. And from Europe comes the well-known **Preventi** collection of dress-to-casual designs from Spain, as well as a unique and fun line by **n.d.c. by hand** from Belgium.

The upcoming WSA Show, Feb. 1-4, will feature 1,600 exhibitors representing more than 6,000 brands spanning the world's most prominent names. Show organizers recommend that retailers and buyers schedule meetings in advance with exhibitors at The WSA Show and *The Collections at WSA*<sup>TM</sup>, the luxury show-within-a show. Events at The WSA Show are held at the Las Vegas Convention Center and Mandalay Bay Convention Center. Events for *The Collections at WSA* are held at The Venetian Resort Hotel. More information is available at [www.wsa.com](http://www.wsa.com).

### **About The WSA Show and *The Collections at WSA***

The WSA Show is the world's largest and most comprehensive footwear, handbags and accessories marketplace. The twice-yearly events in Las Vegas attract more than 36,000 participants from 95 countries in 2.1 million square feet of space. *The Collections at WSA*, a show-within-a-show, features over 350 luxury footwear and accessories designers from around the globe in an exclusive upscale setting in the suites at The Venetian.

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