



Designer Chat: Steven Dann

This retailer-cum-vendor knows what women want.



WITH A SHARP eye for style and unadulterated zeal for beautiful shoes, Steven Dann says he creates daily “Cinderella moments” for women at his eponymous four-year-old boutique in Great Neck, NY. He expects to replicate the magic with the

launch of his own collection for Spring '10. “If a woman is going to spend hundreds of dollars on a shoe, it better be special,” Dann asserts.

Dann was destined for luxury shoes. After working his way from part-time sales associate at a Maraolo Shoes store—a retailer Dann declared elegant and chic at the age of 14—to general manager of the Italian footwear chain’s 26 stores, he landed larger gigs at high-end mega houses including Gucci, Versace and Hogan. “I was putting all of my energy into other people’s businesses. It started to feel like I should have my own,” he says. In 2005, Dann opened his own store. After producing a successful in-house series of riding boots, Dann forged ahead with his first full collection, through which he says he’s tailoring styles to fit the gaps in the luxury market.

The spring lineup (priced between \$395 and \$596 retail), is aimed at finer boutiques and department stores and includes 12 wedge styles Dann deems ideal travel companions. He chose rich, saturated suedes, metallic leathers and python, because they “lend the versatile silhouette



EDITOR'S PICKS

Put a Cork in It

The natural material gets the designer's touch.

some luxe for nighttime,” but kept them at a wearable height. “My models tell me what is comfortable and what is not,” he says. “A beautiful shoe is ruined if a woman can’t walk in it naturally.”

Who is your customer? A smart and sophisticated shopper who wants to feel as good as she looks. There’s no age limit.

Where do you find design inspiration? I’m influenced by my travels, the color of the ocean, architecture—anything that screams to me. Sometimes I choose a color and everyone around me says “no way,” but

then it becomes a bestseller. I follow my instincts.

What shoe should every woman own? Classic python stiletto heels in a natural color. They deliver the most impact and go with anything found in a woman’s wardrobe.

Describe a shoe we’ll never see in your line. I hate open-toe boots. They’re stupid, silly and look like you stubbed your toe.

What would people be surprised to know about you? I like to cook and I’m good—especially with pasta. —*Angela Velasquez*