

There's Something About Italian Shoes!

Andrea Riccio (September 16, 2009)



Officials, vips, but also standard consumers crowded "Montenapo- Ristorante della Moda", to attend the party in honor of the winners of the "Stepping Out in Italian Shoes" contest. The initiative was promoted by ITC and A.N.C.I. in partnership with Footwear News

There's only one way to fully understand the value of a product: ask to final consumer. This is what exactly the [Italian Trade Commission](#) [2] and [A.N.C.I.](#) [3] (the National Association of the Italian footwear manufacturer) did in partnership with [Footwear News](#) [4], on the occasion of the innovative competition "Stepping Out in Italian Shoes. Popular Choice Award." The public selected through voting on the internet which Italian designers received prizes for their products. This initiative has been a great success, both in terms of voting and the presence of attendees at the award ceremony held at the Italian restaurant, [Montenapo](#) [5], a suggestive location.



Many officials and many “stars” naturally attended the party, but the most surprising aspect of the evening was the massive presence of standard people that attended the cocktail party (after a complicated process of obtaining invites on the Internet) just for love of Italian shoes. “I love Italian shoes,” in fact, was the most frequent and first comment that these people expressed when interviewed. Another widespread opinion among the “consumers” attending the event is that Italian shoes are not only extremely stylish, but also very comfortable and crafted with high quality materials.

The comments of the public are echoed by those of the experts:

Aniello Musella, Director of the ITC of North America, has expressed his positive feelings towards the event: “it has been a very successful initiative of image and communication in one of the most important areas of made in Italy: footwear. Tonight many buyers, arriving in New York for fashion week, as well as many fashion journalists, are attending this event. There are numerous consumers also; their presence here is extremely relevant because they are the final group of all the activities organized by the Italian Trade Commission that we hope to reach. It was the awareness of this big power of the public on the market that has inspired the Stepping Out in Italian Shoes’ idea: we wanted consumers to vote for their favorite stylists so that they can understand their precious role on the fashion agenda.

Moreover, the ITC is preparing another interesting initiative in partnership with the Herst publishing group about Italian fashion which will be presented at the end of September. We are organizing a huge promotion through specialized print publications, the web and 150 retailers all over the US. This promotion about made in Italy will last three weeks between March and April.

In addition, the ICT will soon bring five delegations to the main Italian fairs in order to create five special inserts to be published on Herst’s fashion magazines. We must remember that made in Italy is a “brand”, or marker, of high quality that invites consumers to buy those products even in periods of economic crisis. The ITC is doing all its best to help the development of this great brand.”

Also Fabio Aromatici, Chief Executive Officer of A.N.C.I., has shown his enthusiasm for the awards: “The organization of this competition has taken a year of work. Everything began at the acme of the crisis because we wanted to help the companies we represent, which are more than 800, to overcome this difficult period. We really wanted to do something, not only for the enterprise already present on the U.S. market, but also for all of those that wanted to “conquer” this market.

The A.N.C.I. has involved 80 companies with Stepping Out in Italian Shoes and has given American fashion journalists the hard work of making the first selection among these companies. Obviously, the final choice was in the hand of consumers that have joined the voting massively. We can state that business and the public have both responded greatly to the initiative. We firmly believe that all the comments left by voters on the Stepping Out website could be used as useful marketing cues for the companies.

However made in Italy is displaying great strength against the wind of the recession. This is probably happening because of some peculiarities of Italian companies: first of all, the presence of all the phases of the production in the same country; we are an exception in this. On the occasion of this competition, we have presented some new Italian footwear manufacturers to the U.S. market and the public is giving positive feedback. Everything make us hopeful for next winter season.”

The five winners of the Stepping Out in Italian Shoes awards have declared their commitment for the prize, but also the effort to cooperate in order to promote made in Italy, a market always growing in the US.

“This a very innovative and valuable initiative!” told us Arturo Venanzi, Sales Director of [Franceschetti](#) [6], winner in Men’s Designer category . Instead, Claudia Carnevali, of Calzaturificio [Giorgio Fabiani](#) [7] (winner for Women’s Contemporary) has expressed her surprise for the enormous number of comments left on the site of the awards by consumers : “I didn’t expect such a great



response! It's wonderful!"

On the other hand, [Claudia Ciuti](#) [8], designer and winner of the award in the Women's Designer category, has stressed the peculiarities of made in Italy shoes: "Italian shoes are not just beautiful, they are also extremely comfortable. Our designers are able to mix the emotional with the practical in a perfect way." Emiliano Baccarini, Sales Manager in the U.S. for Roberto Guerrini (awarded for Men's Contemporary Category), has the same opinion: "The Italian shoe stands out in the choice of materials and in the manufacture. That is why we produce unique products which are desirable in a period of crisis." Simona Zerchi from [Casadei](#) [9]'s staff, winner for the Innovative Design, showed her enthusiasm for the prize: "This is the right recognition for our policy of innovation and quality."

At the party was also present the Consul General, Francesco Talo', always supportive of the events organized by the Italian Community: "Stepping Out in Italian Shoes is a success and the site chosen for this celebration is wonderful, very Italian. I have really appreciated the idea of a popular awards, because it can create a solid link between final consumers and brands. In fact, I have suggested that the winners pay attention to the comments of the public. What makes Italian shoes so famous? Well, a perfect mixture of design, innovation, beauty and attention to ecology. We are unique!"

This event has been a concrete signal of the popular appreciation of made in Italy in the U.S. and of its ability to cope with a difficult moment. As we have heard at Montenapo, Italian shoes have lots of fans, thanks to their ability to go straight to the heart without hurting the feet!

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