



Miley Cyrus wears Mink Shoes' Elton John heels on "The Late Show with Stephen Colbert"



biggest proponents of the vegan footwear industry. She started the label after having difficulty finding fashionable footwear to wear or to buy for her celebrity clients. Twelve years later, her company has gone from selling 740 pairs of shoes in 2006 to an estimated 10,000 in 2018.

while environmentally friendly, are not vegan if they contain animal byproducts.

Joshua Katcher, founder of vegan fashion line Brave GentleMan, noted that the category is also on the rise due to improvements in the quality of materials. "Vegan footwear is no longer seen as just an alternative. [In fact], many of the recent innovations outperform conventional footwear," he said. "We are seeing more and more designers who are using vegan materials, creating designs that are innovative and cutting-edge and cool — very aspirational and desirable."

One of the most recent additions to the vegan fashion market is tattoo artist Kat Von D, who is launching Von D Shoes. The debut collection will be released for fall '18 and is being produced by designer Rebecca Mink of Mink Shoes.

Originally working as a fashion stylist, Mink started her eponymous line in 2006 and has become one of the

One reason Mink's brand stands out is its chic aesthetic — a departure from the clichéd hippie-esque look. Her feminine line includes towering stilettos and features bright colors and loads of sparkles. And the line is produced in the same Italian factory as haute labels like Gucci and Dolce & Gabbana. Mink told FN her goal was to offer ethical luxury. "I wanted to find a way to make a Louboutin, but vegan," she said.

As for the future of this market, Katcher predicted plenty more growth.

"Now that we have innovative materials that are better, we're going to see a rapid increase in the production and demand for vegan footwear," he said. "And with the trend that's happening in the luxury fashion industry, with so many brands committing to a fur-free policy, the next logical step is incorporating innovations to make animal materials superfluous in general." ■

MORAL HIGH GROUND

09/
The
Issue

If it seems like vegan footwear is on the rise, it is — and here are a few reasons why. **By Nicole Kirichanskaya**

The footwear industry has come a long way from the days when vegan shoes were considered appealing only to tree huggers. ▶ Stacey Chang, founder of sustainable shoe brand Veerah, told FN that while change has been slow, vegan footwear has become more mainstream, thanks in part to today's young, ethically minded consumers. ▶ "The purchasing power of the millennial generation has driven the demand for companies to take stock of their practices and be more eco-conscious," said Chang. "Social media and sustainable-fashion role models, like Emma Watson, Natalie Portman, Petra Nemcova and so many others, are championing the eco-conscious cause and putting it under the spotlight." ▶ Just last month, pop star Miley Cyrus wore several styles from the vegan footwear brand Mink Shoes in an Easter-themed photo shoot on Instagram, and she also sported the brand on a recent late-night appearance with Stephen Colbert.

"The purchasing power of the millennial generation has driven the demand for companies to take stock of their practices."

STACEY CHANG, VEERAH

The most commonly used material in the production of shoes is leather; however, recent sales numbers show that alternative materials are gaining popularity in the fashion industry. In fact, according to a 2017 report conducted by Grand View Research Inc., the global synthetic-leather market is expected to reach \$85.05 billion by 2025. The footwear category in particular is expected to show the fastest

growth over the next nine years, with an approximated compound annual growth rate of 9.7 percent from 2016 to 2025.

To clarify, shoes are defined as vegan only if their materials do not contain animal components — that rules out the use of fur, leather, wool, feathers and silk. Shoes that are made out of resources like recycled chewing gum and certain types of plastic,



Brave GentleMan monkstrap shoe