

TERRY DE HAVILLAND WILL FOREVER BE ASSOCIATED with dizzy heights: not least because he pioneered the legendary platform shoe. From 6-inch stilettos to S&M rubber thigh highs, de Havilland's footwear has become as iconic as his celebrity clients. With a new studio workshop in East London specialising in bespoke couture, de Havilland is bound to have every fashion whore at his beck-and-call.

TRACE: Your claim to fame is the platform shoe. What inspired this?

Terry de Havilland: Well my first memory as a kid, just after the war was my dad making them in the house for the black market. I went up to his loft one day and I found an old three-tier wedge. And I said 'God! Can we still make these dad?' And he said 'Yeah, yeah the old guy who used to make the heels is still around.' So we made a few and we got a few into Johnny Moke who had a little stall in Kensington Market. And they just went potty. Everybody wanted them. All the pop stars were buying them.

Is this popularity what inspired you to open the flagship Cobblers to the World in the '70s?

de Havilland: What I really wanted was a shop where I could put an idea in the window and test it out that way. So we opened Cobblers to the

World on the King's Road with all the Cs—a few ounces of coke, a few hundred bottles of champagne and some beluga caviar which was stolen from Fortnum and Mason!

After the company went into liquidation, you took a huge directional change from glamour topunk. Why?

de Havilland: When the company went bust, it really affected me and it was totally out of my hands. By that time I only owned 49% of it. I'd been taken over by my father-in-law who sold 51% of me. So when it all went I was quite devastated. I wasn't sure what to do. And then there was the punk movement... So I formed a company in 1980 called Kamikaze with a guy called Andrew Kephalis making punk shoes. All of a sudden we were the biggest punk shoemakers in London. At the height of it we were making about 800 pairs a day. We were turning them out like sausages. And then Kamikaze finally did it. It nose-dived in 1988.

By 1989 Terry had started up Magic Shoes, the success of which is largely due to his collaborative efforts with Liz Cotton. Liz, can you tell me how you both met?

Liz Cotton: I met up with this guy called Garth Beatty who saw some of the holographic fabrics I was doing with this company called Space



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Time, and he said 'You should go and meet my old mate Terry de Havilland'. So we arranged to meet one night and I expected to find a moustachioed, bitchy little queen. Then this big burly geezer opened the front door! He loved the fabric that we were doing and we just realised that we could really work together. We used to do all the fashion shows. At this point we'd go to Torture Garden, Fantastic and Skin 2's Rubber Ball, schlepping around with these huge grip bags filled with shoes and that's how we actually built the company up. Then the high street discovered us and that's when it went pear-shaped.

How and when did this happen?

Cotton: We started selling through to the high street around '95-'96 but what we didn't take into account was the money back/no credit policy. We were getting hundreds of pairs of shoes back and there was nothing wrong with them. We had 50,000 pounds worth of returns in one month. Then we got a government grant in 1996 to show at GDS in Dusseldorf, which is the biggest shoe fair in the world. When we went there the first time, we took a few orders but not many. Then, when we went back the second time, we realised that all the people at our stand who weren't buying were spotting. So all of a sudden we were being copied absolutely everywhere. By the third show we were being

copied in China! Funnily enough, this was about the time Terry was rediscovered by Anna Sui. She said, 'Oh my God, you're still alive!' and commissioned Terry to do a collection for her, which went really well. When she phoned us up to do the second collection, we had to turn her down because by that time we'd been discovered by Sandy Powell for the film 'Velvet Goldmine'. All of a sudden, people were like 'Oh my God, Terry de Havilland is back', which gave him the itch to start designing under his own name again.

Are you shocked by the continued level of celebrity interest in your shoes?

Cotton: Yes. There's a funny story actually. A very posh lady called and said 'I need a pair of very good quality black leather thigh boots made. I said 'What we tend to like to do with our thigh boots is take the measurements to make sure that they fit you properly. What size are you?' and she said, 'No, they're not for me. They're for our Kylie Minogue waxwork at Madame Tussaud's' and we just howled!
de Havilland: I've always wanted to do Kylie's shoes because she's a little treasure, but I think the great god of shoes got it wrong and I got her waxwork!
Cotton: Madame Tussaud's just got in contact with us again the other day to do shoes for their

Shakira and Britney waxworks. So we'll have three pop princesses!

You've worked on "Velvet Goldmine", which won a BAFTA for costume design in 1999, and most recently you've been asked to create an underwater boot for Lara Croft in the next "Tomb Raider". Have you had similar challenging experiences with other films?

Cotton: Definitely. We got a phone call recently from this woman at the wardrobe department of Harry Potter who needed some shoes made. I said 'I really think you are calling the wrong person because there is no way we make little pixie boots' and she replied 'no, there's a character in it like Carmen Miranda.' So she came in with a bowl full of cherries, chilli peppers and leaves and said, 'this is what we need on the front of them but for goodness sake, whatever you do, they can't look phallic'. Everything we did with those cherries and chilli peppers just looked rude! After about two days I finally cracked how to do it. That was a challenge! ■

*Terry de Havilland's 'Future Retro Classics' can be ordered from:
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Sole Survivor.

*Heels, Drugs and Rock 'n' Roll: London's cult cobbler and his sole mate Liz Cotton.
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