

Carmen Steffens Steps Into Spring

NEW BRAND HOSTS FASHION TREND FORECAST

SHERMAN OAKS, Calif. (March 29, 2007) – Last night the Brazilian shoe and handbag brand **Carmen Steffens**'s U.S. flagship store gave customers the lowdown on spring trends with a fashion forecast hosted by StyleChic analyst **Aly Scott**. Models showed off the brand's latest sandals and handbags in custom-made Kirstie Kelly dresses while Scott explained the importance of flats, gladiator sandals, and bright color for the season.

"White is definitely in, and dresses are hot," Scott, who has been a style expert on E! and "Access Hollywood," explained. "People are using shoes as a focal point, and we're seeing unexpected pairings of shoes with clothing. It's more interesting to the eye." Scott also urged guests at the event to avoid matching handbags with shoes, having a model pair a bold white leather handbag with a black cotton dress to demonstrate her point. "If you want to wear shoes with a bag that's the same color, try to choose different fabrics," she suggested. "This season is really about mixing and matching."

Scott also noted that "the" hemline for spring dresses was just above the knee. While the designer denim trend has sometimes covered up eye-catching footwear, Scott noted that the dress trend presented an opportunity to show off with shoes. "Bows and embellishments on both shoes and dresses are important," she said. "And gladiator flats are very in. They're comfortable, but chicer than a flip-flop."



StyleChic analyst **Aly Scott** poses with models at the event.



Kirstie Kelly designer **Anna Predola (l)**, co-owner **Mark Willingham (c)** and **Aly Scott (r)**.

For Carmen Steffens co-owner Mark Willingham, being able to provide a spring forecast to his customers is an integral part of his store's mission. "Our shoes are truly the best in the world, and we want shopping here to be about the experience," he said, noting that each shoe is handcrafted in Brazil. "We want high fashion footwear and accessories to be accessible to anyone who loves fashion, and because of that we carry shoes with price points ranging from \$85 to \$900."

The spring line, which features pointy-toed pumps, jewel-encrusted sandals, towering wooden platforms and a cross-section of other trends, has made the new store a stop for television stylists (Carmen Steffens product has appeared on "American Idol" and "Desperate Housewives") and Los Angeles shoppers willing to drive a few miles for a more relaxed shopping experience. But far flung fans of the brand may not have to trek to the Westfield Fashion Square location for very long. "We have aggressive growth plans," Willingham said. "We plan to open 50 to 200 stores in the U.S. in the next five to ten years. We've sent shoes from our store as far as Russia, and our biggest customer

lives in Washington. There is a demand."

Trying on shoes as models struck poses nearby, customer Agnes Martinez eagerly agreed. "I've bought ten pairs since they opened six months ago," she said as she slipped into a pair of pumps with a burnished metallic finish. "Their shoes are very comfortable, and they're made of excellent materials. I used to shop at **Charles David** all the time, but no more. I just hope the prices don't go up, because the prices are really reasonable for the quality."

Raves like that are music to store co-owner Leticia Quintela's ears. "I've been the number one fan of the brand myself for years, because I'm Brazilian myself. I don't own any other kind of shoe, and that's the truth. How we even thought of opening the store was because every time Mark and I would go out to a club or to a restaurant, people would stop and ask me where I got my shoes." It took three years



Models paired **Carmen**

of talks with the Brazilian company on the part of the husband-wife team to get exclusive American rights.

**Steffens shoes with
Kirstie Kelly dresses.**

For Quintela, sharing her passion for the brand through events like the spring style forecast is icing on the cake. "Being able to help people figure out how to put their outfits together with these completely original shoes, it's just so important to me."

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