

THE RADAR FASHION

BY VICTORIA NAMKUNG
PHOTOGRAPHY BY ETHAN PINES



GOODY TWO-SHOES: The S.D.-based Charmoné shoe line is decidedly vegan



FAUX PUMP *The latest A-list shoe line is more than just a pretty stiletto—it's PC to boot*

When Natalie Portman strolled the red carpet at a premiere for her action thriller *V For Vendetta*, the eco-starlet passed over Jimmy Choos and Manolos in favor of a new vegan line, Charmoné, which manages to be stylish, sexy and in harmony with animals. The actress donned a sample pair of Charmoné's Mary Janes from their debut fall collection, which features limited edition quantities of non-leather stilettos, platforms and wedges. "We read a quote from Natalie that her biggest fashion conundrum is finding a pair of vegan shoes," says San Diego-based vice-president and co-founder Jodi Koskella, 32. "We sent her a couple pairs and literally a week later she was wearing them."

Koskella and partner Lauren Carroll met in Silicon Valley while working at a high-tech software company, where stylish footwear was not a priority. "Lauren had an idea for vegan shoes and the number one issue for me was that they had to be stylish," says Koskella, who lives in La Jolla Colony. "I'm not interested in creating another Birkenstock." The duo teamed up with a vegetarian footwear designer and had the first collection produced in Italy, resulting in 10 styles that rival leather designer shoes in their category. "I have a lot of friends who are vegetarians and I'm very eco-conscious myself," explains New York-based Carroll, 37, who teaches brand management and strategic planning at the Fashion Institute of Technology.

"It's a younger generation now; they like the values of the hippie generation, but they won't tolerate some of the fashion implications."

From hybrids to prefab houses and organic skincare, the eco-chic movement is in full swing. The sweatshop-free American Apparel and Bono's clothing line Eden have paved the way for a new brand like Charmoné, whose moniker comes from blending the words charming and harmony. Ranging from \$275 to \$325—significantly lower than the other well-known vegan shoe designer Stella McCartney but way ahead of Payless, where many vegans have been relegated to shop. The line features high-quality Italian microfibers that are structured exactly like leather, making them breathable, lightweight and colorfast. Bonus point: not made in Chinese sweatshops.

"The collection is very elegant and modern, but not stodgy," says Koskella. The autumn 2006 collections feature hand-made jewels, luxurious fabrics and romantic touches like grosgrain ribbon. Multi-stripped tweed pumps, satin stilettos with removable ankle straps and velvet heels with tassels are sure to hit the mark for fall. **R**

Charmoné Shoes are available at Cedros Soles in Solana Beach and online at www.charmoneshoes.com.