
FALL '18 OUTDOOR PREVIEW: VERSATILITY, PERFORMANCE & COMFORT

ANGELA VELASQUEZ

FALL '18 OUTDOOR PREVIEW: VERSATILITY, PERFORMANCE & COMFORT

The success of the outdoor footwear category balances on a formula of versatility, weather, performance, style, price and activities. For Fall '18, outdoor footwear brands aim to check off each box with new collections loaded with trend-right designs and enhanced performance.

“People are certainly not afraid to get outdoors in the cold. Consumers are looking for more technical product for everyday use,” said Thomas Dixon, Ecco Outdoor North American product manager.

Given today’s unpredictable weather patterns, Bogs Footwear founder Bill Combs said shoes must be multi-functional. Consumers are limiting purchases and want shoes and boots that not only look good but have all the features including waterproof, comfort and style.

“It is not enough to be warm or waterproof. Styling has to be spot on and there must be a comfort factor along with all the performance features,” Combs said. “In a nutshell, our customer wants shoes that work and last a long time—shoes that are comfortable and work in the variety of environments. Performance is key, but the product must look right or they will never get tried on in the first place.”

The need to create good-looking product is a demand that Sorel knows well.

“At Sorel, we live at the intersection of fashion and function, and that’s what our customers value,” said Erin Sander, Sorel director of product. “Our unique designs are confident and bold with an

implicit functional purpose, which makes us unique in both the outdoor and fashion worlds.”

Dixon pointed out that winter trends are following the same summer trends millennials have set, mainly the demand for lighter, faster and more stylish outdoor products.

“You see it even in the big cities, where the sidewalks are cleared of snow, people are wearing heavy duty, technical product on their morning commute,” he said. ☞

“IT IS NOT ENOUGH TO BE WARM OR WATERPROOF. STYLING HAS TO BE SPOT ON AND THERE MUST BE A COMFORT FACTOR ALONG WITH ALL THE PERFORMANCE FEATURES.”

VERSATILE PERFORMANCE

Versatility drives Ecco Outdoor's story for Fall '18. "The trend of hybridization has effected every aspect of people's lives, from clothing and cars to food and electronics. Consumers are getting used to interacting with products and brands that are versatile and have multi use," Dixon said. "People are willing to invest in high quality products that have innovation, but they look at them and think, how many times and how many ways can I use this?"

Ecco's collection captures a lot of what outdoor consumers are looking for. The line is based on the hybridization of the outdoor industry, which Dixon said is the combination of modern utility and functional credibility.

"People are looking for technical, functional products that fit well into their personal brand and everyday life. We have seen a lot of apparel brands create success in this space and we're excited about products for fall which tell the same story," he explained.

Ecco's line includes a series of upgraded performance materials. The brand's halo product for fall is the Exostrike line, a hiking product built to resonate with the outdoor category's overall versatility story. With Exostrike, Ecco is introducing the world's strongest leather, which was a collaboration between Ecco Leather and fiber company Dyneema, as well as a new midsole material designed to be lighter weight and have more rebound.

Created in Ecco-owned tanneries, the company

developed a process to bond Dyneema fabric to leather.

"Dyneema has a fantastic reputation and are always pushing the envelope and innovating. We're very excited that we could collaborate with them to launch a leather that no one has ever seen before," Dixon said.

Instead of polyurethane, all of Ecco's shoes are made with its proprietary FluidForm process, a way to bond the upper to the midsole, creating a one-



piece seamless bond with no glue or cements. The new midsole material, called Phorene, can also withstand the elements and low temperatures.

"It's really designed for someone who is looking for a trendy outdoor boot that can withstand the elements and is designed with a high-end modern aesthetic," he said about the Exostrike line.

Ecco is also expanding its Gore-Tex Surround products to appeal to the growing multi-sport footwear category in outdoor. “Our relationship with Gore-Tex is something we are very proud of and because of that we can challenge each other to innovate together,” Dixon said.

The brand combines Gore-Tex Surround technology, which offers 360-degree climate comfort, breathability and durable waterproof protection, with Ecco’s other successful product lines, including Biom Natural Motion and yak leather.



ADIDAS

For Fall '18, Adidas Outdoor will expand its sustainable footwear collection made from recycled ocean plastic and waste through its partnership with Parley for the Oceans. The brand launches Parley knit trail runners designed for enhanced performance, long-term cushioning and comfort. Additionally, Adidas is using Stealth Rubber in more hiking, trail running, biking and water sports for its unbeatable grip, especially in wet conditions.

“The outdoor sports market is turning to next generation design and innovation to solve fit, comfort, and performance demands from consumers, as well as adopting more sustainable measures,” said Greg Thomsen, managing director for Adidas Outdoor, U.S. “We work hand in hand with Parley for the Oceans to create purposeful, functional designs. Since the launch of our first

Parley shoe, the response from the industry and consumers has been incredibly strong; this line builds upon that energy.”

Trail running is Adidas Outdoor’s fastest growing category. The company is meeting needs with the Terrex Two Parley trail runner. The shoe features a knitted upper made from yarn spun from reclaimed and recycled ocean waste, a lightweight EVA midsole for long-term cushioning and a Continental rubber outsole for grip.

The Terrex Agravic XT GTX off-trail trail runner features Boost technology in the midsole for cushion and energy return on rocky surfaces. The waterproof Gore-Tex extended comfort footwear lining and a breathable soft collar, sock-like, fit provides a snug, comfortable fit in rain, sleet or snow. Meanwhile, the men’s Terrex Heron Mid CW CP winter boot features PrimaLoft Gold Insulation Eco 100 GSM for ultimate warmth in wet conditions.

To further its sustainable footprint, Adidas Outdoor is introducing No Dye, a fabric and production process that requires no water or dye stuff. The natural color shoe will pick up its colors from where the wearer runs.

Timberland is moving forward with its new material innovation, a compound engineered wool called NXTWool. Gregg Duffy, Timberland senior director of performance footwear, said the next generation wool is a blend of 25 percent nylon and 75 percent wool. Each fiber is treated with a durable water-resistant process, bringing together some interesting properties.

“Wool is naturally absorbent, pliable and rugged, and the nylon enhances its durability,” he said.

Bogs is betting on a new combination flow-molding and vulcanization construction with a drop-in Rebound mid-wedge, the brand’s proprietary cushioning technology. Combined, Combs said it reduces weight, provides comfort and adds a

thermos-barrier, which keeps warmth in the shoe during cold weather months.

Sorel's brand new styles for fall, include its Phoenix collection of cool, waterproof, every-day city boots and the Whistler collection, which includes two styles with needle punched genuine wool collars

“OUR CUSTOMERS CRAVE FUNCTIONAL AND STYLISH FOOTWEAR THAT ALLOWS THEM TO STEP BOLDLY FROM OUTDOOR TO INDOOR, DAY TO NIGHT AND SEASON TO SEASON.”

and OutDry waterproof construction.

The company is also introducing a new injected molded heel in its Margo collection, one of the only injected molded heels on the market. Sander said the new heel provides comfort and durability and is lightweight for all-day wear.

“Our consumers ask for versatility, which is so important in the fall fashion boot category and is imperative at Sorel,” Sander said. “Our customers crave functional and stylish footwear that allows them to step boldly from outdoor to indoor, day to night and season to season. Our Fall '18 collection was designed through a style lens and proves boots can be chic, yet practical.”

Sorel looked to its consumers in key markets, including New York, London and Los Angeles, when developing the new collection.

“For Fall 2018, we referenced what was relevant to women who do something in the world of culture—music, art, tech, street style—and infused bold silhouettes, hardware details and exaggerated proportions as a nod to military inspiration,” Sander explained.

Emu Australia taps into the demand for versatile product with the All-Weather Collection. The line boasts a thermal rating of -22F what does that mean? and is SATRA-certified. For the line, Keith Barnett, Emu sales manager for North America, said the company combined hand selected tanned waterproof leather and suede uppers with waterproof membranes and a durable outsole, delivering footwear that is “adventure-ready.”

“This range has been designed and tested with performance in mind, incorporating comfort and warmth—making it the perfect accompaniment to any outdoor adventure,” he added. ☞

WOMEN ONLY

Ecco sees more demand in women's footwear.

"We have been and will continue to increase our focus on women's only outdoor product. Designs and styles that are made to fit into the way women approach the outdoors and their lifestyles," Dixon said.

In particular, Dixon said Ecco's Aspina collection for women has been very successful. The line balances performance with feminine details and is made with waterproof yak nubuck leather uppers.

Bogs is introducing two new styles, the Snowday and B Puffy, geared toward a female consumer that wants an all-in-one winter boot. Combs says the shoe works well at a Saturday morning soccer game, or a trek through the snow to a mountain cabin.

"These styles are unique because of their comfort story with Rebound technology, waterproof breathable uppers and comfort ratings of -22F to -40F. We believe they are the only shoes on the market solving so many needs in a single product," he said.

Barnett said Emu's female customers are continuously seeking newness and improvement in every category. "In particular to outdoor footwear, our ladies want everything—to look beautiful, feel cozy and enjoy lasting footwear. Gone are the days purchasing a pair of shoes just for functionality alone," Barnett said.

Mini and micro heights and wintry sport luxe themes are among the requests Emu delivers with its new Explorer collection. Built on a sturdy sole, the collection offers feminine silhouettes with soft, highly durable and waterproof full grain leather. With styles in varying heights and all fully sheepskin lined, Barnett says the collection provides winter warmth for the fashion forward woman. 

"WE HAVE BEEN AND WILL CONTINUE TO INCREASE OUR FOCUS ON WOMEN'S ONLY OUTDOOR PRODUCT. DESIGNS AND STYLES THAT ARE MADE TO FIT INTO THE WAY WOMEN APPROACH THE OUTDOORS AND THEIR LIFESTYLES,"

RETURNING FAVORITES

The season will also see the return of fan favorites.

In fact, Timberland scoured its archives to bring back and reimagine two of its classics—the 1978 Hiker and the World Hiker. The brand will offer replicas to key specialty accounts and modernized riffs for larger distribution.

“Reimagined styles are a heavy trend in footwear and consumer goods. Lots of things are being improved upon and modernized for today’s use, while harkening back and drawing inspirations from vintage styling,” Duffy said.

The updated 1978 Hiker is designed on Timberland’s Aerocore energy system. The lightweight sole design delivers high-rebound cushioning and comfort for a sneaker-like feel. The result is a sneaker boot with a nod to a classic hiker.

The updated World Hiker features a SensorFlex sole for better wearability. The comfort system is comprised of a three-layer outsole that delivers support, active cushioning and dynamic flexibility. The firm upper layer provides all day-comfort and stability, a softer EVA middle layer adapts to uneven surfaces and the bottom outsole layer features a grooved sole that flexes with every step.

For Fall ’18, Sorel has updated some of its most successful fall franchises. “The Joan of Arctic Wedge and Out ‘N About boots are being upgraded, but with the same style and functionality our consumer loves,” Sander noted.

The Joan of Arctic Wedge will feature a slender shape and new D-ring hardware. Sorel is also introducing the Joan of Arctic Wedge II Shearling, featuring genuine shearling and micro-fleece lining. Sander describes the style as “the perfect fall/winter transition boot.”

Dixon said Ecco’s Biom Venture, which features Gore-Tex Surround has been a big success for the company and will return for Fall ’18.

“REIMAGINED STYLES ARE A HEAVY TREND IN FOOTWEAR AND CONSUMER GOODS. LOTS OF THINGS ARE BEING IMPROVED UPON AND MODERNIZED FOR TODAY’S USE, WHILE HARKENING BACK AND DRAWING INSPIRATIONS FROM VINTAGE STYLING.”

“It is a fantastic shoe for almost any activity and can be worn for all seasons, year-round. We have expanded that technology and the group to add in a few more styles that are more geared toward cold weather,” he said.

Meanwhile Ecco’s women’s warm boot package, Noyce, continues to resonate well in cold weather

markets. Dixon said the on-trend collection’s look, feel and construction “radiate quality.”

Vibram continues to have success with Artic Grip, the company’s most advanced cold weather gripping system. Vibram sees momentum building as more lifestyle brands like Ugg and L.L. Bean introduce the technology into their collections.

“The best thing about Artic Grip is that it gives the wearer confidence on snow,” said Allon Cohne, Vibram chief marketing officer. “We call it the self-esteem program.”



BOGS

Artic Grip isn't an absolute technology, but Cohne says it is a “confidence booster” and helps the wear to tread confidently on icy surfaces. Plus, he said, the technology outperforms anything else in the market.

Bogs welcomes the return of the Bozeman, which Combs says represents the future of the brand. Made with a seamless construction and Rebound midsole technology, the Bozeman has the ability to flex 2.9 million times and touts a -72F cold rating. And the boot is about 33 percent lighter than other

vulcanized rubber boots, Combs said.

The brand is also bringing back the women's B Moc, which Combs said was well received for Fall '17. The shoe offers warmth without bulk, waterproof performance, Rebound comfort technology and an easy on and off construction. “B Moc for women addresses the versatility the consumer is looking for today,” Combs said.

Emu's Mayberry slipper, designed with a versatile indoor/outdoor sole, has proved to be a winner this season. Barnett reported that the shoe has near 100 percent sell-through. The brand will carry the style forward with an improved sole and new vibrant colorways. Fall '18 will also see an expanded Waterproof Collection from Emu. The line blends advanced waterproof technology and luxe materials to create a fashionable line of street footwear. ☞

STAYING ON TREND

Outdoor footwear tends to fall into two design pockets: classic or flashy.

Being a Danish company, Ecco's design sensibility skews toward Scandinavians' "less is more" approach.

"We tend to keep our colors and color pop subtle depending on the group. There is a lot of color and boldness in apparel so you need to find ways to fit into that story as people really dress head to toe these days," Dixon said. "We have a lot of unique leather uppers and patterns of leather, especially in our women's collection. We find unique ways to add texture to our leathers. In men's we are seeing a lot of heavy oiled leathers—a look that tells the story of heritage product and classic outdoor."

Combs said there's a lot of interest in wine colors and blue for fall. Likewise, Sander said Sorel's colorways includes rich wine, as well as ash brown, camel brown and hiker green.

Rich in earthy tones and opulent metallics, Barnett said Emu's Fall '18 colorways were selected to appeal to the "traveling millennial woman." Key themes include military colors, exposed fur, tribal textiles and stud embellishments.

Adidas Outdoor is using colors like white, red and blue in the soles of shoes. Thomsen says toned down colors are trending in hiking, while there's a broader spectrum in trail running. "Runners are willing to go brighter, with shock yellows and greens," he said. 📌

LOOKING AHEAD

A didas Outdoor sees new opportunities to develop footwear for mountain biking and rock climbing. Thomsen says indoor gyms with rock climbing walls are seeing a surge in participation. The social atmosphere appeals to millennials.

Cohne agreed, adding that there will be more demand and development of products around climbing and fly fishing—any activity that requires better traction on slippery rocks. Vibram is working with outdoor and indoor climbing partners to develop better grip and traction technologies.

Emu is optimistic after a strong Fall '17 season. “We have experienced a healthier full-price outdoor business compared to last year, even with such a warm early part of the season,” Barnett said. “Temperatures have dropped significantly across North America in the new year, and fortunately we are well positioned to continue with this robust selling season into March keeping our customers cozy and warm.”

“There are always going to be peaks and valleys in this business. It is very dependent on weather, as well as new products coming into the market in general, whether it be a canoe or a cooler,” Dixon said. “Consumers only have a certain amount to spend, as long as we can stay on top of their mind and make consistent, quality products and stick to our roots we will be successful. That is why as a company we try to keep our finger on the pulse of all things outdoor, not just footwear.” 📄

“THERE ARE ALWAYS GOING TO BE PEAKS AND VALLEYS IN THIS BUSINESS. IT IS VERY DEPENDENT ON WEATHER, AS WELL AS NEW PRODUCTS COMING INTO THE MARKET IN GENERAL, WHETHER IT BE A CANOE OR A COOLER.”