

Designer Shoe Brands of the Early 2000s

by Zach Elton

Haute couture, or high-end fashion, has become increasingly popular in the last century. While the most extravagant looks are often kept on the runway and red carpet, many brands are also focused on creating beautiful pieces that are comfortable and functional as well. These fashion houses create dresses, suits, shoes, jewelry, perfume, handbags, and much more. In *Bad Dates*, Haley is a little obsessed with shoes—she claims to have about 600 pairs—and is even more in awe of their designer labels. Below is a list of the most popular fashion houses in the 1990s that would probably be found in Haley's closet.



YVES SAINT LAURENT SLING BACKS.

Name: Yves Saint Laurent

History: Yves Saint Laurent started working in the fashion industry as Christian Dior's design assistant. When Dior passed away unexpectedly in 1957, Saint Laurent took over Dior for a few years before moving on to form his own fashion company in 1961. Inspired by menswear, Saint Laurent shook the fashion industry by releasing a line of women's clothing that was gender fluid. He made suits for women that were stylish yet comfortable, and always business appropriate. Throughout his career, he continued to develop ready-to-wear fashion for women that constantly blurred the lines between chic and casual.

Claim to Fame: Saint Laurent is known for pioneering the power suit and taking functional pieces—like the safari jacket—and making them fashion-focused. He strove to celebrate female sexuality and empower the wearer.

Most Popular Shoes: Yves Saint Laurent's most popular shoes are their patent leather pumps with pointed tips, stiletto heels, and sling backs.



PRADA KITTEN HEELS.

Fashion House: Prada

History: In 1913, Mario Prada opened a store in Milan selling handbags, travel trunks, accessories, and jewelry that had sophisticated looks and used fine materials. Prada quickly rose to prominence and became a favorite brand of the European aristocracy, even becoming the official supplier to the Italian royal family in 1919. This allowed them to put the Italian coat of arms on their products. In the 1970s, the company expanded internationally, and became one of the top brands in the US. They released their first women's footwear collection in 1979, their first clothing collection in 1988, and their first men's clothing and footwear in 1993.

Claim to Fame: While they are primarily known for their handbags, Prada has also gained recognition for their shoes and clothes.

Most Popular Shoes: Though they only started making shoes in 1979, they were already popular throughout the 1980s. The first collections contained a lot of pumps, with kitten heels or stilettos; the shoes usually had pointed tips.



CLASSIC DIOR PUMPS.

Name: Dior

History: Christian Dior established his fashion house in 1946 at 30 Avenue Montaigne in Paris, and the company released its first collection in February of the next year to rave reviews. Harper's Bazaar called his dresses revolutionary and trend-setting. Contrasted to the generally straight, flat dress of the 1930s, Dior created dresses that were fitted to emphasize the female body by having a full skirt, a tight waist, and an accentuated bust. During World War II, Christian Dior had to make some troubling choices. It is known that he dressed wives of high-ranking Nazi officials, though it is unclear if this was his choice or if he was coerced. By any means, by the 1950s, Dior was a renowned brand, dressing people such as Marlene Dietrich and Ava Gardner. In the 1960s, Dior developed a ready-to-wear collection that was both practical and elegant. Through the following decades Dior would come to set the standard for female fashion.

Claim to Fame: Dior is best known for creating female fashion that is refined, sober, and precise.

Most Popular Shoes: Dior is known for creating pumps with small heels that are stylish and functional.



JIMMY CHOO STATEMENT HEELS.

Fashion House: Jimmy Choo

History: Though Jimmy Choo is a relatively young designer brand compared to some of the other fashion houses, it is nonetheless one of the most popular shoe brands in the world. The company was established in 1986 by designer Datuk Jimmy Choo Yeang Keat. At the age of 38, he opened his first store in an abandoned hospital building. After just two years, his designs were featured at London Fashion Week where he caught the eye of Vogue. Soon after, he was given an eight-page spread in Vogue and captured the attention of the world. In the coming decades Jimmy Choo would be worn by celebrities like Princess Diana, Renee Zellweger, and Reese Witherspoon.

Claim to Fame: Though the brand has ventured into handbags in more recent years to great public and critical acclaim, Jimmy Choo is still primarily known for their shoes.

Most Popular Shoes: Jimmy Choo has a wide selection of shoes ranging from everyday styles like mules and boots to more glamorous pumps and slingbacks. Their most popular shoes are probably their strappy sandals with beaded gems and unusual heels that make a statement.



VINTAGE CHANEL TWO-TONED PUMPS.

Fashion House: Chanel

History: The international fashion house, Chanel, has been established for over 100 years. At the age of 27, Gabrielle “Coco” Chanel opened her first hat boutique, Chanel Modes, in 1910. Her small business was a hit with the local clientele, and after a few years, she opened her first couture house in Biarritz, France, in 1915. After being wildly successful again, she had the courage and the money to open the now-iconic Chanel boutique at 31 Rue Cambon in Paris, which has remained the flagship store for Chanel ever since. Though one of the premiere designer brands in the world, not all of their history is so savory. During World War II, Coco Chanel was in a relationship with a German general, and was eventually outed as a spy against the Allied Forces. After the war, she fled to Switzerland, but soon she came back to France to resume her fashion career, where she began to revolutionize fashion by replacing the restricting corset and bodice looks of the early 1900s with clothing that was loose and functional.

Claim to Fame: Chanel is known as a leader in women’s fashion. Making clothing that is sleek and stylish, Chanel has been worn by celebrities from Marilyn Monroe to Keira Knightley. Chanel suits are still being produced with very little adjustments because, as Chanel proudly claims, the Chanel suit never goes out of style. Their perfume “Chanel No. 5” has become an iconic symbol of the company and was promoted by Marilyn Monroe in the 1950s. When an interviewer asked Monroe what she wore to bed, she responded, “Chanel No. 5.”

Most Popular Shoes: Chanel’s most famous shoes are probably the two-toned pumps originally created by Coco Chanel herself in the 1950s. The sides and back of the shoes were in a beige leather that helped elongate the legs, while the black tip made the foot look smaller. These two-toned shoes remained popular for a long time, and were eventually released in multiple colors, and in slingbacks.



GUCCI SNAFFLE BIT LOAFERS.

Fashion House: Gucci

History: In 1921, Guccio Gucci began his small business in Florence, Italy, where he made, sold, and repaired leather products. He soon rose to popularity when he developed a line of luggage that was stackable and easily stored in luggage racks. Due to the popularity he found with his luggage line, he decided to begin creating handbags and shoes. Eventually, he expanded his business to the US in the 1950s, and, with the help of his son, they began to brand their products with the green and red stripe trademark that is still used today. Gucci reached their highest popularity in the 1980s, when they were known for their clothing, jewelry, luggage, handbags, and shoes.

Claim to Fame: Today, Gucci is known for the sleek and sexy look of their products. In the 1990s, under the direction of designer Tom Ford, the company centered around the idea that “sex sells.” They began using risqué advertisements, and they focused their products on flattering and accentuating the human form. While other fashion houses began making loud statement pieces with their designs, Gucci remained simple, promoting stiletto heels and slip dresses.

Most Popular Shoes: In the 1980s, their most popular shoes were snaffle bit loafers and leather pumps.