

Rise above the rest!

After the launch of the flagship Camden Store, I caught up with **THE STRANGER** to get the lowdown on Transmuter boots.

The original design for Transmuter boots came from the world famous shoe designer, Terry DeHavilland. He had been in the business for fifty years, making shoes for every star imaginable; most recently Halle Berry in the latest Bond movie, *Die Another Day* and Angelina Jolie in both of the *Tomb Raider* movies. About four or five years ago, Terry was betrayed by someone close to him. "Terry is without a shadow of a doubt, a lovely guy," says The Stranger, "and possibly the least deserving candidate to have his business and his enormous standing so wounded". So, at a time when most people would look to take it easy, Terry created his *Cobblers To The World* business and the store of the same name. Then, with help from his fellow cutting edge designers such as Craig Morrisson and Dane, they set about their creations with a pair of scissors, and grafted spikes and circuit boards onto a boot design, "to make the angriest damn shoe you'll ever see!"

The Stranger claims to have been the store's best customer. "I was often accompanied by many a young lady from across the various seas, and if shoe shopping was 'bringing out the big guns' then taking them to Terry's Store was downright annihilation. In fact, I was there so frequently, that they had a company meeting to discuss my discount, as I bought more Transmuter boots retail than many stores bought from them wholesale!" he jests. The Stranger is a well-known entrepreneur and had just completed one of two photoshoots for Terry with photographer David Hindley, with a view to a creating catalogue and a deal for US manufacture and distribution. Sadly, whilst these negotiations were taking place, Terry suffered a minor heart attack. With Terry on strict orders to take it easy, The Stranger received a call from Terry's partner Liz Cotton, naming him as the most qualified and enthusiastic succeeding champion of the Transmuter boots. "A deal was struck and shortly Transmuters Ltd. became part of The Stranger Empire," he says. "As Victor Kayam said *I liked it so much, I bought the company!*"

Transmuters have been made exclusively in London since day one by the same master shoemaker. "London has always been *it* as far as creativity and style are concerned," says The Stranger. "I am a big fan of New York, LA and Melbourne, and consider them amongst my homes, but for the *real thing*, it just *has* to be made in London. Oh, you see rather pitiful attempts to copy Transmuters, but up close, they scream Taiwan. And that misses the point to me'.

So, what makes Transmuters so special? The basic boot always stays the same; either a patent or matt finish (in black or white) that is made from 100% top quality boot thickness leather, with a comfortable cushioned synthetic platform sole. The retail launch



the mens boot in July will feature the long anticipated *pirate ship* boot, "complete with portholes." The *devil* boot, the *angel* boot, and the *bat* boot are also appearing this summer.

As if this wasn't enough, designers, right on the edge of alternative design, submit ideas and prototypes for boot accessory panels based on their own designs. It's a unique way for any clothing or jewellery designer to have their own matching range of footwear without ever having to produce it. It also means that anyone can have a completely matching outfit and it is possible to keep up with the latest cool boots without having to buy a new pair - you just change the accessories. The rubber panels are designed by *Couch*, the metal panels are designed by *Allycat*, the glitter and leopard panels are original designs by Terry DeHavilland, and they have just re-introduced circuit board print panels by *Dane*. The Stranger also supply "in-house specials such as flashing lights, holographic panels and many more."

"My store manager came up with the idea to create a boot store themed as a pet store!" says The Stranger. "Hence the boots are all in cages with feeders. We feed the pink spike boots, pink latex and the red glitter boots, red glitter and so on, to give them their colour, like flamingoes. You buy your boots and are given a pet carrier box with handle and airholes and a *caution live Transmuter Boots* warning."

The boots are usually sold for £175, but The Stranger has a special deal every month. Right now, the boots can be bought online for just £99. "That's cheaper than the fakes!" he adds. The panels are anything from £35 to £75 for a complete set that dresses two boots.

So, why do you think these boots are so popular? "That's easy. They're the best!" he jests. "Just ask Marilyn Manson - the first mens pair were made just for him two years ago and now Gene Simmons of KISS owns a pair!"

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Photography by D. Hindley & D. Edmond

The new store can be found in the Stables Market, Unit 31b, Camden (Tel: 0207 482 2274) and the boots can also be purchased from High Heels in Peter Street in Soho.

The Stranger's website (<http://www.thestranger.co.uk>) boasts a colourful gallery of photos and full online secure shopping facilities.