Nostalgia and technology were both to the fore in the new footwear designs on display at the most recent edition of the ispo international sports exhibition in Munich, as Penny Leese reports.

Footwear in the spotlight at ispo

While technical features such as integrated electronics are becoming more commonplace, users are also looking backwards to a less hectic time and traditional values.

Full-grain leather and nubuck—or pony hair—boots on track bottoms are simple après ski styles, matching perfectly retro-looking leather covered ski helmets and hand knitted Scandinavian snowflake pattern sweaters.

Giesweinn, more famous for its warm felted wool slippers, has a women's collection of winter boots featuring full-grain leather, wool felt shafts and traditional Bavarian pewter buttons. Comfort, however, is not sacrificed as many of these seemlingly traditional styles include modern technology. Since the body is designed to protect the body's core temperature, extremities can get cold quickly. So Gore-Tex, Outlast, and other membrane technologies help keep hands and feet dry and so warmer. Meindl's classic boot for light trekking for women in nubuck has Gore-Tex and 12mm pile real lamb fur inside. In fact, warm pile and quilting appear on plenty of women's winter boots for 2010, with often parts of visible fur so the boots look warm and cosy. Vulcanised looks are not just for summer. These light and comfortable sporty soles are used widely on winter footwear too. Keen has built long suede boots with fur lining on imitation vulcanised soles.

Battle of the sexes

Men and women need different fits. Merrell has long made similar styles but on differently built lasts for men and women. The Q system accounts for women's more rolling gait and corrects it. Comfort too is found in winter mountain boots—Salewa continues with its



Alongside footwear innovations ispo also showcased the latest trends in ski wear including this shiny 70's jacket from MG Design.

MG Design

promises of blister-free use. The shoes developed by the Italian mountain sport specialist have important elements that facilitate this guarantee. There are four different last constructions, designed especially for different foot shapes (two for women, two for men) including insoles that can be adjusted individually, as well as the use of several layers of leather, each of different thickness, in almost all models together with breathable, windproof and water-resistant Gore-Tex membranes.

Ice Bug has added arch support insoles to its collection of winter shoes and boots. The Arch Flex System has three heights of arch support in 10 different lengths, something that newly appointed chief executive, David Ekelund, points to as being very important. He says: "Every foot is different; a one-size-cut to fit insole will never fit everyone perfectly." It means that there are 30 variations that can fit both genders too.

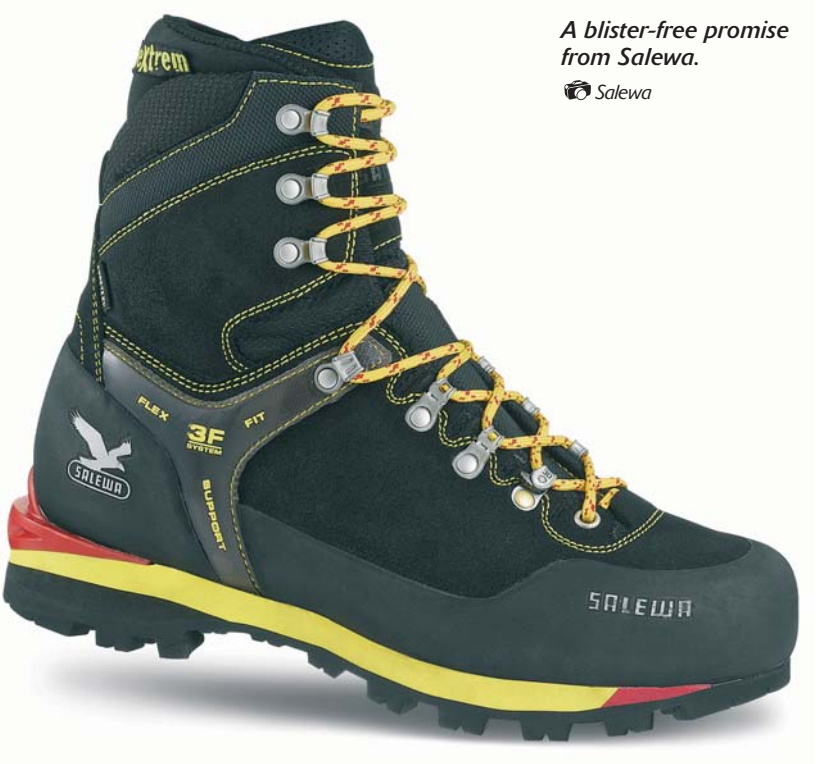
For hiking, Merrell introduced the Spring Motion technology on a waterproof boot. This technology bonds the midsole to the upper by melting the PU compound and directly attaching it to the upper, so that the stiffener 'floats' in the middle of the PU midsole. It offers longer-lasting comfort and increased stability since the board is midway between the foot and the outsole.

Perfect-fitting flip-flops

Vale was one of the ispo Brand New finalists this year. When a customer orders the sandals—choosing upper material, colour and style—the company sends out boxes with a grid marked inside with left and right that customers use to make an imprint of their own footprint. The impression is checked by a podiatrist who then orders the exact insole to fit the wearer. Vale describes this as a "perfect solution" because many people have different size left and right feet and different leg lengths too. This can be catered for with this individualised product.

The five fingers by Vibram has been a big success even without any direct sales; originally they were only sold directly on the internet, in only a single style. Now there are winter versions, too, with rough-and-ready ethnic whipped leather and fur upper patterns, long and short in the shaft.

Technical sports shoes that have been translated into street wear were another trend at ispo Winter 2009. Mammut has an 'Urban Climbing' collection with uppers based on the traditional rock climbing construction but translated for street wear, and made in trendy all-over black. The mid-high Flatop Mid DLX, featuring Mammut's Spider Grip sole with its large, smooth areas, offers maximum adhesion on all surfaces, perfect for urban climbing, travelling and everyday use. Mammut's Spider Grip sole design exhibits excellent foot rollover characteristics, fit and traction. The large, smooth areas designed into it provide superb grip on all surfaces, and it promises surefootedness even on the most challenging terrain, thanks to its web-like arrangement of flexible ribs. Typical of Mammut's Urban Climbing footwear is the asymmetrical tape lacing down to the big toe, the rubber reinforcement and the Liquid Rubber protective rand.



A blister-free promise from Salewa.
Salewa

Nike's ACG collection has reached its twentieth birthday, and many of the shoes in the collection appear to hark back to the old days, only with more consideration for the environment. The Air Salbis Mid applies modern construction techniques to create an upper with minimal seams, yet is loaded with the support and protection features of a traditionally built boot. The no-sew upper minimises opportunities for hot spots that could lead to chafing, while the quarter panel is actually printed on, to eliminate waste. The Air Salbis Mid may look minimal from the outside, but inside it is built for stability



Air Salbis Mid from ACG with minimal seaming.
Nike

and impact protection. The Nike ACG Trailframe sock liner has two densities of foam with a built-in TPU shank for torsional support. The Air Salbis Mid also has a dual density midsole, softer for comfort in some areas and a firmer medial post for stability where it's needed most. Nike Air in the heel provides long-lasting cushioning. The outsole is constructed with Nike ACG's 044 sticky rubber, and has an aggressive tread pattern for traction while moving quickly up or down the trail.

Non-slip in winter

An important asset for winter shoes is that they are not slippery. Traditional claw soles, with a metal spiked claw in the sole heel and forepart than can be flipped out, have been superseded. Haglof's sole has small pieces of glass to make them less slippery in the winter. From Ice Bug, the retractable spikes in the outsole have proved incredibly successful in Scandinavia. There are also non-slip compounds such as in Vibram's Ice Trek winter soles, which have much more abrasion resistance and still have a certain amount of recycled material. Since these soles contain no extra sharp or abrasive materials they can also be used indoors as they won't damage floors. The Ice Trek compound—easily recognised due to its aluminium like particles—is formulated with aggressive deep lug shapes and with broad flat lugs for optimised traction.

Viking's Ultimate UGC (Ultimate Grip Concept) was originally developed for heavy hunting and mountain boots. Maximum grip is achieved by a combination of the natural rubber properties, and the design of the sole pattern. A rubber mixture with a hardness of 60 Shore creates optimal grip while maintaining abrasion resistance. This sticky rubber surface with flexible lugs provides grip even on slippery and icy surfaces. Texture and drainage are adjusted to fit the individual needs of each model. All UGC soles can be studded for additional grip. The idea has worked remarkably well; the sole for hunting and trekking is much stiffer and rigid, while the UGC sole for trail walking demands a more flexible and soft sole with lateral and torsion stability. UGC has also been adapted to wet and snowy conditions.

For colours

Black is back. It is the lead colour for ski wear and leisure wear next winter, which is also reflected in many of the casual shoes. Winter white is also popular for ski wear. Puffy duvet jackets in shiny 70's cire nylon are going to be next winter's big hit, and there are plenty of after-ski boots to match with puff nylon shafts in all colours.

Clothing for snowboarders is braver and more colourful, with colour blocking and graffiti, often with boots to match. Snowboarding is still an alternative culture with hand-painted boards and graffiti, and there are also artist collaborations as part of some of the footwear designs. Vans have several snowboarders who decorate their boots. Even ice skates from Roces come in all sorts of fancy materials, and have the ultimate accessory, a bag in the same materials.



Ultimate Grip Concept sole by Viking.

Viking

Summer prints on winter boots is one of the themes mentioned by trends agency Promostyl for winter 2010, and has already been adopted by The North Face with colourful Hawaii prints on boots to match jackets.

For children

Weight is agreed to be an important factor in children's boots. In the old days, shell boots used to be heavy vulcanised rubber with nylon top. The new versions from Kamik have lighter PU shells and water-resistant uppers. Rubber boots from Viking for kids have a new lighter-weight rubber compound for the entire boot, not just the upper. Generally children's winter boots and shoes use more PU and less rubber, to keep the weight down. One bugbear of parents is that their children grow out of their equipment too fast, so Roces has designed multi-size ski boots that should last more than one season.

Lady boot from Meindl on Vibrams IceTrek sole, with lamb fur lining.

Meindl

