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Q&A: Tommy Mallet, founder/creative director of Mallet, on plans to grow his footwear business

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The Mallet Cyrus Black sneaker from the spring-summer 2021 collection. Image courtesy of Mallet

By MICKEY ALAM KHAN

Mallet is a London-based contemporary brand known for footwear designed by founder and creative director Tommy Mallet, combining sleek designs with an urban aesthetic.

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The Cyrus Black shoe is the latest product from the brand for the spring-summer 2021 collection, targeting consumers working from home during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Featuring a hexagonal mesh, leather and suede mix, melded with reflective webbing tape and finished with reflective laces, the sneaker also bears signature Mallet details such as the silver heel clip, branded lace aglets and double pull tabs.

"With more people dressing casual and working from home, our footwear and apparel has appealed to a consumer seeking comfort and style," Mr. Mallet said.

In this Q&A, Mr. Mallet explains the origins of the brand, focus, emphasis on authenticity, ecommerce and how the United States is the next market for **Mallet** to expand. Please read on:

How did you get started in the footwear industry?

I was on a very shaky path in my early 20s, switching jobs constantly, dropping out of school and living paycheck to paycheck.

I had the will and desire to succeed but wasn't passionate about what I was doing. I never thought my dreams of success would lead to footwear.

I have always been a lover of shoes, collecting the latest styles and keeping up with the trends.

I was inspired to design my own shoes when I couldn't afford the expensive designer shoes on the market.

I sketched a sneaker and asked my good friend, Evren Ozkarakasli, who is now my business partner, to manufacture the first prototype through his access to factories.

My intent was to make my own custom shoes, but when we saw the finished product we knew it had to be something bigger. From there, Mallet London was born.

Where is Mallet currently sold now?

Mallet is distributed at 145 stores throughout the U.K., Europe and locations as far reaching as Dubai and South Africa.

The brand is sold in some of the world's most distinguished stores including Selfridges, Harrods, Browns, Harvey Nichols and Level Shoes.



Tommy Mallet is founder and creative director of footwear and apparel brand Mallet. Image courtesy of Mallet

What differentiates Mallet from its competition?

Growing up, I could never afford the highly sought-after designer sneaker brands everyone was wearing.

When I started the company, it was my goal to hit that sweet spot price point. Mallet is about accessible pricing without sacrificing amazing product quality and cool designs. That is what makes us different.

What are the launch plans for the U.S.? What retail stores are you targeting?

For the U.S. we are planning an exclusive major launch at a top specialty store plus distribution at specialty stores across the U.S.

We want to build a connection to the Mallet brand in the states. Men's footwear will launch in the spring followed by women's in the fall.

How has the pandemic affected your business and how have you managed through it?

We have been very lucky to have managed well through the pandemic.

With more people dressing casual and working from home, our footwear and apparel has appealed to a consumer seeking comfort and style.

We've spent some time ramping up our ecommerce capabilities as less people are buying in-store and focused our efforts on communicating with our consumers about what they want to see from the brand.

How do you maintain brand authenticity?

I design what I love and what I know my customers will love.

We started off small, with a few loyal clients that have grown with us through this journey.

Our customers have become our ambassadors, because they know we deliver what we promise and we will keep bringing them cool shoes. We are true to our roots and we'll never stray from that.

Where do you see the brand in the next five years?

My hope is Mallet will continue on its current growth path and become a global brand.

My team and I are grateful for the success we have seen and hope to bring this to more parts of the world. People like what we do and that's enough for me to keep going.

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