

5 QUESTIONS WITH ...



Ron White

The Canadian shoe designer lands in Chicago

BY CHIARA MILIOULIS

With a following that includes

fierce females like Kim Cattrall, Céline Dion and Canadian first lady Sophie Trudeau, Ron White is the coolest shoe designer you've never heard of.

This season, though, he launched an updated Fall/Winter ready-to-wear collection at Nordstrom in Chicago, complete with suede oxfords, calf hair pumps and leather sneakers sure to make him a household name.

Here, he tells us about his white-soled shoes and the red carpet moment that started it all.

How did you break into the shoe business? I started as a [multi-brand] retailer 24 years ago. I was carrying Stuart Weitzman, so I [asked] his sales rep if I could change the heel to make it flare at the base or add extra padding. I'd doctor up the shoes and they became some of my best-sellers. Eventually,



my advisors said I should work on my own [line].

Your designs feature your trademark All Day Heels technology. How did you come up with it? I have a biomechanics background, so I know what affects the foot and ankle. Working with Italian factories, I [reshaped the shoe] to have more room in the forefoot. I made a white sole that's weatherproof and slip resistant, and put Poron — which was created by NASA — from heel to toe. It's an ultra-thin material that never compresses, so [you'll] never feel the ground.

Celebrities from Katie Couric to Paula Abdul are fans. Who spurred the Hollywood frenzy? Matt

Damon, ironically. [He] was on the red carpet with his wife and she was complaining that her feet were killing her. This Canadian woman happened to be standing beside her and said, "Next time you're in Toronto, you should try Ron White."

... Next thing you know, Matt was wearing my [men's line] and the two of them were running around talking about [the shoes].

What inspires your designs? I think of my "woman" and what she needs in her wardrobe. It's thinking about her lifestyle and who she is, and building that collection around her.

What's your favorite piece from the Fall/Winter collection? The Shana Laser [\$495, pictured]. I designed a floral print and had it laser cut into velvet, so when you touch it, it feels 3-D.

Shop the collection (starting at \$325) at Nordstrom (55 E. Grand); Shop.nordstrom.com