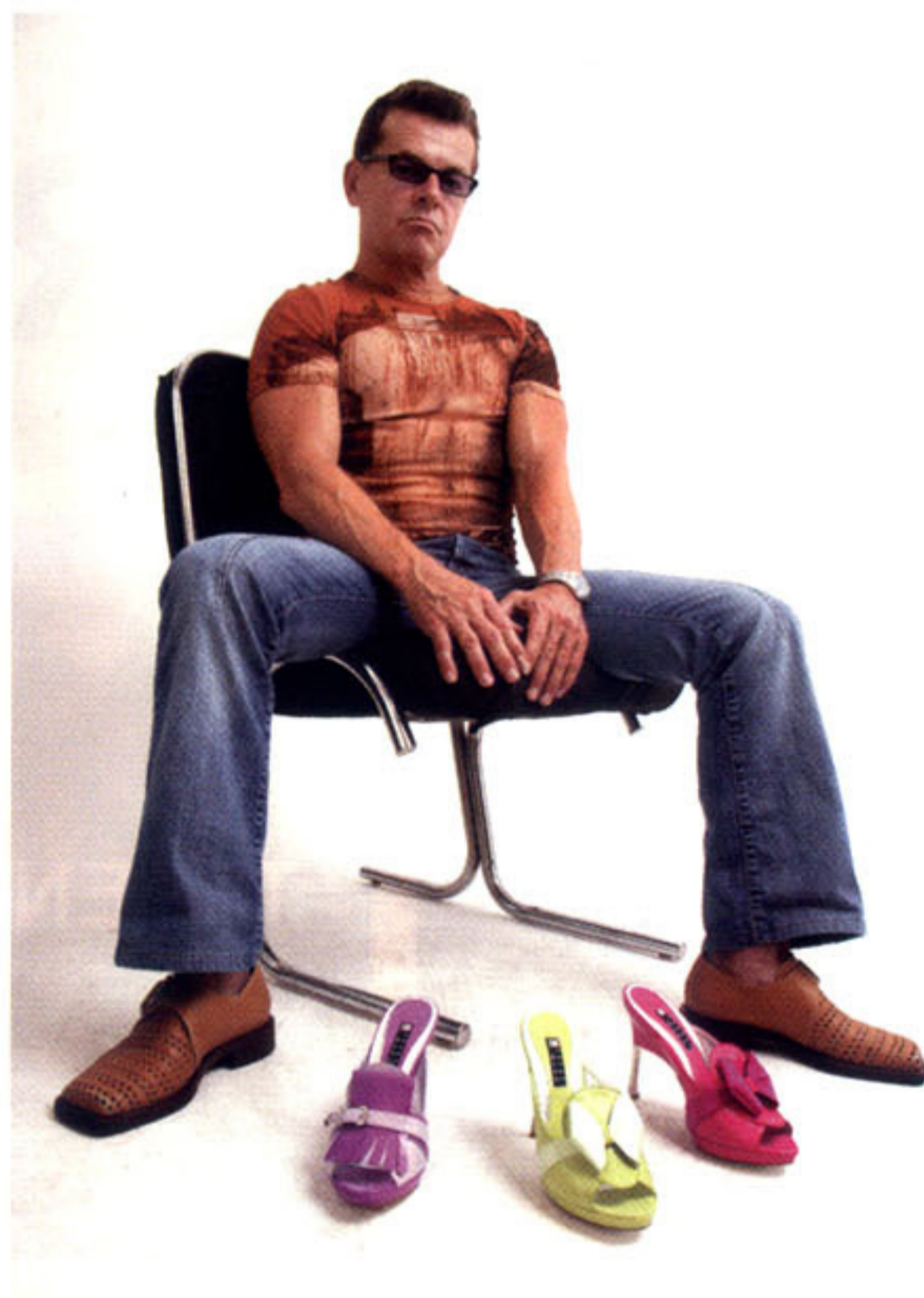


THE DISH: FASHION

BY DAWN TRIEMSTRA


PHOTOGRAPHY BY MONICA HOOVER



PLAYING FOOTsie *The next Manolo brings his rock 'n' roll-infused, red-carpet-worthy shoes to L.A.*

On his wedding day, shoe designer George Mang may have stolen his young bride's thunder: At age 19, he walked down the aisle in custom-made silver platform boots, exuding the kind of rock-star glam associated with his new self-titled shoe line, which includes a \$500 lime-colored pair named for pop siren Gwen Stefani.

Already anointed the next Manolo, Mang is designing vintage-inspired, rocker-chic stilettos to match his Keith Richards persona and his obsession with music. "Fashion and music have always been a parallel. Look at Madonna, David Bowie and Anita Pallenberg. These are fashion icons," Mang says from behind a pair of violet-tinted glasses in his Carlsbad office. Mang is tan, wearing a fitted designer T-shirt and tight jeans. His accent is more European, less Phoenix—even though he spent his childhood in the Valley of the Sun. Launched this fall, his first collection is the culmination of a long journey from shoe salesman to buyer to self-taught designer. "In the '80s I lived in La Jolla. I was all about the beach and girls," he says. "Now I'm all about business, and San Diego is a great place to come and regroup. Being here is like being on vacation," says Mang of his current home base—a refuge for the man who travels 300 days a year, flying to New York, France and Rome. His vacation is about to come to an end, however. Mang's plans include a Los Angeles move to be closer to customers who are already wearing his designs—Hollywood celebs. Christina Applegate donned a pair of round-toe silver pumps from the Mang by George Mang collection for the premiere of *Anchorman*, and stylists for Angelina Jolie and Halle Berry have already been in touch—not to mention rocker Stefani and Keith Richards' be-seen daughters, who have also gotten in line. "I really feel that I need Hollywood," Mang admits. "To see your shoes walking around the red carpet—that's what's really gratifying."

In his studio, Mang is working on "blueprints" of his future shoes. The sketches are extremely detailed, outlining the silver trim, hand-painted feathers and French lace being used to create the shoes in Italy—where Mang flies five times a year to search for fabulous new materials and oversee production—in the same factories used by Christian Dior and Gucci. His role model? John Galliano, an undeniable envelope-pusher to whom he likens himself. "My shoes have a different flavor the moment you look at them." For fall, expect bright colors like lavender and yellow—which look best, Mang advises, with a simple toenail polish like subdued peach or a French pedicure. The shoes can be found at the Jill Kohl boutique in Santa Monica, a Montana Avenue mainstay known for stocking such coveted labels as Sergio Rossi and Marc Jacobs. And about those Manolo comparisons? Mang says, "That is very flattering. I can't think of anything more flattering. But there is only one Manolo Blahnik." The same could be said of George Mang. 

LEFT: The gold satin Susan
ABOVE: Designer George Mang with
a few fall favorites, available at Jill
Kohl in Santa Monica