

## Women In Sensible Shoes

'There goes a woman in sensible shoes', one of my friends said. I looked around and saw two women walking in flat, round-toe, lace-up shoes. I looked at my friend and said: 'Are you sure?' He laughed and said: 'Haven't you heard that expression before? It's the code for lesbians.' Of course I took him to task and replied: 'Which era, the 21st century?' Not taking me to seriously he giggled and said: 'So last century darling. In the 50s and 60s.'

I reminded him that this was during the days when 'out' lesbians lived as butch's and femmes. The butch dressed in male attire, and the femme dressed in stereotypical female attire, so they could pass in public as a couple, without harrassment. Many of these femmes definitely didn't wear flats, they would be tottering along proudly in stiletto heels beside their butch mate. As for the butch, many of them would be wearing winkle-picker spiffy shoes. I assured him as for the 21st century I didn't know any woman in sensible shoes unless they were at least 70, and even some of these ladies were still teetering around in their sling back open-toed shoes.

A friend once told me that when she was a child her mum used to say: 'You can buy those shoes if you can run for your life in them,' And so she learnt to run in platforms, stilettos, and sling-backs, She professes that sneakers slowed her down. And I must admit running is definitely an experience depending on what shoes are adorning your feet.

I always wanted a pair of platforms as a kid. I remember my sisters shoes coming up to my kneecaps. I used to wonder why she wore ships to walk to school. 15 years later I understood why. Platforms make me taller in the world. I get to see things I wouldn't notice when i'm in in flats. I get to see more of the trees, sky and clouds. When I'm taller, I walk with a gait that makes me feel on top of the world and more confident.

'I have a different life in a pair of stilettos, my partner's barber tells me. 'I've always stood for a living, and would never wear running shoes to work. I would look and feel out of place. When i've got my running shoes on, I'm a woman with a purpose. I'm mowing the lawn, I'm getting the job done, focusing on the task.'

We can change a wardrobe with a pair of shoes. Try it. Put a pair of jeans on with running shoes. Keep the jeans on and now change to platform shoes, and change again to a pair of stilettos. Each pair of shoes will transform your outfit. Put running shoes on with a sophisticated suit, and see what happens.

Of course we have to learn to walk in all these different types of shoes. They have an impact on our posture. It's easier to stilt walk than to wear a pair of high heels. In stilts you walk from your knees, in high heels we have to clench

our butts and our thighs to walk elegantly. It's never felt natural to me, but has felt damned sexy, and so it's worth the torture. But for those women who wear them every day, it's like cleaning your teeth. Some claim that high heels have cured all their back and shoulder problems.

With the advent of Masai Boot Technology, maybe women will end up in sensible shoes instead of reaching for shoes that can contort us, cripple us. But then the true femme, the ultra high femme will suffer for fashion and looks. And why not, after all she is a woman in sensible shoes.

Dr Valerie Mason-John

Author, Playwright, Performer  
[www.valeriemason-john.com](http://www.valeriemason-john.com)