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# This Luxury Startup Is Paving The Way With Pain-Free High-Heels



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Gone are the days of sore feet from wearing painful stilettos: Maison Baum combines French luxury design with German medical expertise to create a timeless high heel — sans aches and blisters. Maison Baum’s patented footbed technology uses an insole with anatomical elevations to shift the wearer’s weight back by around 40%, resulting in less pressure on the ball of the foot.

“I’ve seen my sister suffer from wearing high heels, and when I worked in banking, most women I knew kept a spare pair of comfortable shoes at their desk,” says co-founder Christof Baum, who identified a gap in the high heel market when writing his undergraduate thesis on the shoe industry. “We’re in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and while there is so much innovation happening in sport shoes, high heels haven’t changed in seventy years.” Baum and his father, an orthopedic surgeon in Germany, spent four years developing the footbed patent and integrating medical research into their product development.



Made in Portugal with premium goat suede leather and insoles manufactured in Italy, the shoes retail at 265 euros per pair and look no different from a classic pair of pumps. Maison Baum's anatomical insole is a simple mechanical solution made with shock absorbing material on the heel tips, smooth leather, heel cushions and pads that hold the foot in place and prevent the wearer from slipping forwards. The result? Greater comfort and less impact on your joints —even at a 10cm heel elevation. Baum uses the analogy of a car to describe good footwear: “A good engine isn't enough: it's the combination of the seat, engine, design and more,” he says. “With shoes, you need stability, a comfortable footbed and soft leather, otherwise the shoes will hurt your feet.”

The brand's name reflects its distinctive European identity: at once a tribute to Baum's relationship with his father and reflective of his co-founder Sophie Tréhoret's French heritage. “I've wanted to tell the story of me and my dad working together on this project for years and mixing

his medical expertise with my know-how in shoe development and production,” says Baum. “This is not a business we came up with overnight: a lot of research has gone into making a product that you can wear for years.”



Co-founders Christof Baum and Sophie Tréhoret lead a team of six based in Berlin, Paris and...  
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Tréhoret, a luxury footwear veteran who spent fifteen years at popular French ballet flat brand Repetto, came on board in early 2018 and spearheads design and marketing for the startup. Tréhoret and Baum raised a seed round to cover the high product development and research costs of a high-end shoe company and intends to continue fundraising in the future to develop new product lines. The team now consists of six people based in Berlin, Paris and Portugal, who launched Maison Baum’s first collection in December at pop-up stores across European cities. Now, the company is venturing into online sales with its crowdfunding campaign, which sold 100 pairs of heels in 36 hours.

“Right now, our collection is sharply focused on only two models, but we have so many more ideas for designs in the future,” says Baum, hinting at a lower heel height and block heel versions of the current shoes. “We want to stay classic and timeless, but there is still a lot more innovation in our pipeline.”



Maison Baum high heels are the only luxury shoes on the market developed in conjunction with... [+] @WEBSTYLESTORY

Baum could have licensed the patent to larger luxury players—he admits that a major group made him an attractive offer—but decided to execute his vision of making a difference in the shoe industry on his own terms. “There is no brand in footwear that unites the old universe of medical expertise and the luxury appeal of high fashion,” he says. “Most brands spend money on influencers and campaigns, but we have a deeper story to tell.”

Maison Baum is still in early days, but sustainability from a social and environmental standpoint is a priority for the co-founders. “We’re starting by closely evaluating our suppliers and looking for highly

specialized, family-owned companies that have a strong belief in the project and reinvest their profits into taking on young people to learn about their craft,” Baum says, adding that there is still a long way to go in terms of recyclability of shoes. Maison Baum’s eco-conscious packaging consists of 99% recycled cardboard boxes and shoe bags made from biodegradable bamboo fibers.



Maison Baum unites French luxury style and German medical expertise. @WEBSTYLESTORY

As for the use of leather, Baum’s team experimented with vegetable tan leathers, but concluded that real leather brought more durability to the shoes. “We want people to consume less and more mindfully, and customers are willing to spend 265 euros on a pair of shoes if they are timeless, high quality and long-lasting,” he says. “These dependable staples that allow you to feel good are a responsible method of slow fashion consumption.”

Baum, who has worked in luxury footwear retail and interviewed dozens of customers and manufacturers from the shoe industry, admits the

shoes will never feel as comfortable as sneakers. “We can’t outcompete nature, but for those moments when heels are the most appropriate option, we want women to have an option that doesn’t kill their feet.” Maison Baum’s rave online reviews confirm this: a woman from Dusseldorf who travelled from India to Germany said that spending 14 hours in her 10cm Maison Baum heels left her in no pain. “I don’t know how I’ll ever wear another pair of heels,” she said.

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