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## Why Giuseppe Zanotti Still Loves L.A.



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.If you're part of the red carpet, you're part of the global success..



Photo: Getty Images

“I’m Italian, but when I design, I cannot feel Italian,” Giuseppe Zanotti reasoned this week, speaking exclusively to Style.com on the eve of the reopening of his just-renovated Beverly Hills boutique. “I need to think of the closet of every girl in the world.” For that, he needn’t look further than his fervent international fans and just about any red carpet. Case in point: Jennifer Lopez paired her Zanotti sky-high stilettos with Versace at Sunday’s MTV Movie Awards.

With the power to elicit strength, deliver beauty, and exude sex appeal all at once, Zanotti is clear on the pull that the perfect pair still holds. “Shoes are not a simple object, they’re something more, they’re a monster,” he explained excitedly. And as the city sings its siren song for the designer, he revealed why he thinks L.A. is a barometer for success, how the industry has changed, and why athleisure remains big business.

### How is the L.A. market unique to your other large markets?

The first time I was here was 20 years ago, and everyone knows L.A. for the art, the movies, the music, and the awards, and there are a lot of events full of energy. I think the weather changes people, and it’s a sunny atmosphere all the time, and it’s a positive place. There are different things in the same city, so you can find what you like. It’s like a little universe in one city. L.A. is very different from other cities in the world, and if you have success in L.A., I

think you can have success anywhere, because there are all kinds of people and communities—younger, older. It's a sparkling city.



Giuseppe Zanotti

*Photo: Valentin Roman*

### **Is your customer here any different than your customer elsewhere?**

New York is different. It is sophisticated but also sometimes conservative, and then there are the tourists. In New York, sometimes it's super-cold, sometimes it's not, and it's very close to one side of Europe. I know people work here, but to me, Los Angeles is very fun. It's another atmosphere. I love to check in the system [to see] what are the best-sellers here, and I compare the best-sellers here to Milan or Moscow, and I'm very surprised. I can sell here the most particular piece; it's very flexible.

### **What roles do L.A., entertainment, and celebrity play in your design process and/or marketing?**

All the events are here; everybody in the world is excited to see what's happening on the red carpets or any single event, like Coachella. Every week there's something going on, especially now with the fast social network communication, in which you can see images immediately. It's more interactive than before. I think it's a good place to have these events to promote your ideas, to promote art, and to promote product.

If you're part of the red carpet, you're part of the global success. Now everyone does shoes and you do agreements. The celebrities are not free to wear what they love, but I think it's an important part of these shows and it's a luxury show, it's elegant. It's a good excuse to show the feminine, haute couture clothing to everyone in the world. It's a culture. But it's also this nice kind of dream, this princess with a beautiful high, red sandal—high stiletto and a beautiful long dress.





Photo: Getty Images

**Your sneaker collection remains strong and you're in the casual capital of the world. Do you think athleisure is a trend that's here to stay?**

Yes, we've opened a door now. Not that I've opened—we've opened. It's one expression of a lifestyle. It can be cheaper or a super-luxe expression. It's not a seasonal story. I think it's a new story, and believe me, it's not possible to go back, because the girls feel good, and the boys feel cool and comfortable, too.

All the brands are doing sneakers, some very cool, some disgusting, but it's free, everyone can do what they want. Puma and Adidas, they've changed, they're cooler now, they're more sophisticated. Athletic companies are jumping in the direction of fashion, and the stiletto companies are jumping in the direction of sneakers, and together we're opening a big door in the market. When I design shoes now, I start with sneakers because you can do what you want with them; with stilettos, you have more limits. Then from sneakers, sometimes I have inspiration for elegance.

**After 21 years, is this the same business you set out to build? Or if it's changed, how so?**

I started in this profession 30 years ago. I was freelance before, and then 21 years ago I started my brand, and it's changed completely. There is less logo-mania than before; now, if there is something cool, I like it, I buy it. From that time to now, the idea of coordinating your colors has changed. Now you can do something wrong in an outfit, but it's personality. You can mix materials and ideas. And, of course, the price point—now you can buy beautiful things from \$29 to \$2,000, you can mix simple, cheaper things with more expensive things. You can buy fashion shoes from Adidas and fashion shoes from Giuseppe. We don't have limits anymore; the only thing is to have the DNA and the personality. I want to put my personality in the shoes. Now anything is acceptable if it's cool. If not, change your profession.

This work is not for everyone. Nobody will forgive you with a second chance. This profession is hard; you have to prove yourself. You design four times a year, but there are also special shoes you design for singers, models, the Met, and someone wants shoes only for them: Nicki Minaj shoes, Rihanna shoes, customized shoes. With my factory, I can do the shoes I want because my factory allows me to do that since I don't have to outsource or wait months. [Pointing to a sketch on the back of a loose piece of paper] I designed these for Karolina Kurkova 10

minutes ago, and she's in Shanghai, and I will send [them] to her this weekend in New York.

*Giuseppe Zanotti Design is now open at 9536 Brighton Way, Beverly Hills, CA, 90210*

*Trends / Industry: Guiseppe Zanotti on Celebrities, Shoes, and Los Angeles - Designer Stilettos*

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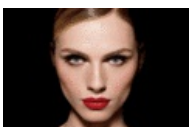
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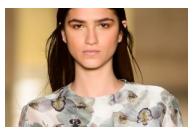
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