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Author and Collector, Caroline Ashleigh Offers Advice on Acquiring Vintage Shoes

CHICAGO, IL—To Caroline Ashleigh, author of Warman’s Shoes Field Guide, there are three criteria to use when looking for vintage shoes: condition, condition and condition. Beyond that, she advises buy what you love, buy the best you can afford and buy the best example you can afford. Moreover, she says, one of the best places to find collectible shoes is at vintage markets.

Ashleigh’s new field guide, which she will be signing during Randolph Street Market’s Modern Vintage Chicago Spring Clothing and Jewelry Explosion April 17 and 18, 2010, provides a much needed illustration and price guide. This is understandable because, she says, new or old there’s no end to women’s love for shoes.

“Shoe collecting is second only to handbags in terms popularity among collectors of vintage clothing and accessories.”

An avid shoe collector herself, Ashleigh says she had to look no farther than her own closet when beginning to compile information for the book. Her passion for shoes started as a young girl when she began dressing her Barbie doll for a night on the town with Ken, and continues to this day. She had miniature Barbie shoes in very color of the rainbow, and when she grew up she knew she wanted to wear great shoes just like Barbie.

Ashleigh points out that her book is designed as a field guide for shopping. It includes illustrations and prices of famous shoes like the ruby red slippers Judy Garland wore in the Wizard of Oz. That most famous pair holds the record for the highest-priced shoes, selling for \$666,000 at Christie’s a few year’s back.

You don’t have to spend thousands of dollars to collect shoes, however. Ashleigh says that many great examples of the best shoes ever produced can be found for less than \$100 at events like Modern Vintage Chicago. These, she says are where the fun is and the most gratifying way to feed the shoe craving. These shoes can be bought and worn, without risking a lot of money.

“I wear every pair of shoes I collect—every chance I get,” she says. “I pick the shoes first and select an outfit to match.”

Beyond Warman’s Shoes Field Guide, Ashleigh says shoe lovers can expand their knowledge by checking out the Costume Institute at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and

the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York, the Kent State Museum in Ohio or the Bata Shoe Museum in Canada which houses more than 10,000 pairs of shoes.

“But start with the field guide,” Ashleigh says, “and then go shopping.”

About Warman’s Shoes Field Guide

Shoe lovers, collectors, or anyone with a sense of fashion will love Caroline Ashleigh’s pocket-size book on Warman’s® Shoes Field Guide, an illustrated history of 20th century shoes. Acclaimed couture author Caroline Ashleigh writes with great knowledge while focusing on the fun, not just the facts, of shoes. 400 gorgeous color photos illustrate everything from chunky and wild disco platforms, celebrity and contemporary shoes to the restrained elegance of Louis Vuitton, Fendi, Chanel, Christian Dior, Michael Kors and more. The book is available through Amazon.com, BarnesandNoble.com and at Modern Vintage Chicago.

About the Randolph Street Market Festival

The Randolph Street Market Festival is home to the world-renowned Chicago Antique Market & Indie Designer Market and is the favorite destination for Hollywood set designers, as well as merchandisers, decorators, fashionista’s and style setters from around the globe. This European-style indoor-outdoor market in the historic West Loop neighborhood features 200 select purveyors of high quality, beautifully-priced “finds” offering unlimited creative inspiration and hours of fun. For more information visit www.randolphstreetmarket.com or phone 312-666-1200.

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FIELD GUIDE



Caroline Ashleigh

Values and Identification