

THE ACCESSORY

1. RIGHT FOOT FORWARD

We know it sounds early, but about a year before the big day is the best time to start shoe shopping. While bridal shops stock styles for all seasons year-round, shopping for your shoes during the same season that your wedding will be held will net you the widest variety of seasonal options. It's also important to have your shoes for your first gown fitting, so the seamstress can determine what length to make the hem.

2. STYLISH OPTIONS ABOUND

From sexy mules to demure ballet slippers, you can find your style in colors like gold and silver as well as white. Look for shoes that complement, rather than overwhelm, your gown. For example, rhinestone-covered sandals can spruce up a simple shift, but might be too much with a heavily beaded ball gown. Also, make sure the shoes are appropriate for the type of wedding you're having: Flowered flip-flops work on the beach, but a classic d'Orsay pump is more suitable for a church wedding.

3. REAL BRIDES DON'T STUMBLE

Close your eyes and walk yourself through every aspect of your wedding day, then ask yourself if your footwear will rise to the occasion. For instance, if your gown has a long train, should you risk wearing backless shoes when you might catch your heel on the hem? If you are taller than your groom, do you want to tower over him when posing for portraits? Will you be getting married outside on the grass or on the beach? If so, accept the fact that those stilettos you love now will sink into the ground like golf tees. Consider how you plan on maneuvering down the spiral staircase to make your grand entrance. We're guessing headfirst is not an option, so balance style with substance.

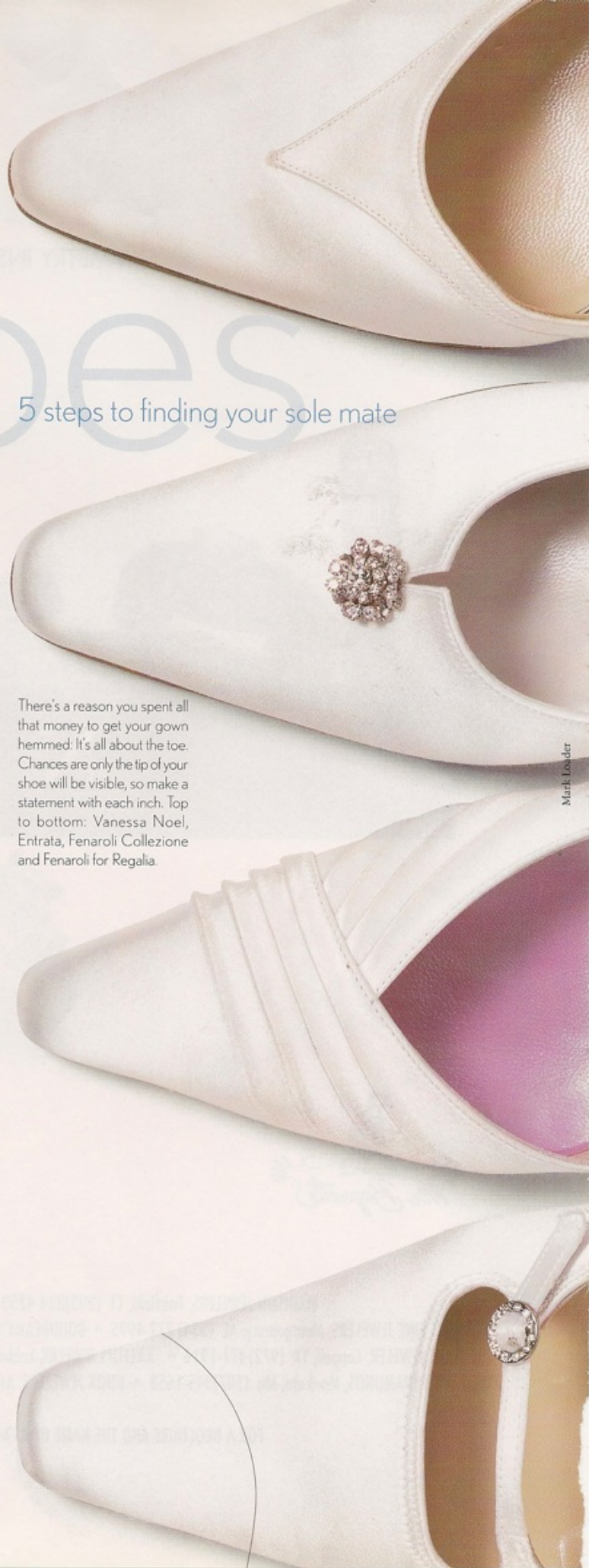
4. MUCH PAIN, NO GAIN

If you're thinking comfort doesn't matter for only one day, think again. You will be on your feet for hours. Do you really want to be one of those brides who end up on the dance floor in bare feet? If you don't normally wear four-inch heels, this is not the day to start. Two inches are much more manageable, but if you must go for something higher, try a more supportive platform. Above all, make sure the shoes fit. If you're between sizes, go bigger and place insoles in the top half (you can remove them when your feet start sweating). To play it safe, buy an extra pair of lower-heeled shoes or flats for the reception.

5. THINK OUTSIDE THE SHOEBOX

About a week before, walk around in your shoes (maybe even with thick socks) to stretch them a bit. If the bottoms feel slippery, scrape them with sandpaper or the rough edge of a key. If the shoes are made of fabric, consider spraying them with fabric protector so they hold up.

—Maryann LoRusso



5 steps to finding your sole mate

There's a reason you spent all that money to get your gown hemmed: It's all about the toe. Chances are only the tip of your shoe will be visible, so make a statement with each inch. Top to bottom: Vanessa Noel, Entrata, Fenaroli Collezione and Fenaroli for Regalia.

Mark Lander