



## **THESE BOOTS WERE MADE FOR MOSHING** *A Glimpse into the History of Rock's Most Famous Footwear*

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Sex, drugs, and rock and roll. Sadly, what was forgotten in this quintessential catchphrase of the youth in revolt, are the boots that got them there. Dr. Marten's (Doc's, or DM's as they are commonly dubbed) have taken center stage as the headlining boot made for stomping amongst the metal set for decades. Docs have not only been long established as a durable footwear for countless hours of moshing madness, but have transcended rock trends of punk, glam and grunge, proving to be a classic staple at the bottom every rock star's closet.

Not by chance are these boots the chosen means for appeasing the abused foot during endless concert tours, Doc Martens, as their history reveals, were constructed specifically for comfort and long-lasting wear. Ironically, the choice boot of rockers everywhere was originally invented in 1949, as an orthopedic shoe by two Germans, Dr. Maerten and Dr. Funk. After injuring his foot in a ski accident, Dr. Maerten and his buddy designed a revolutionary sole that trapped air inside two layers of rubber polyurethane. It was this "airwalk" design that attracted the eye of Bill Griggs who bought the "sole rights" in 1958 and made plans to put the shoe into mass production.

The first official Dr. Marten's work boot walked off the production line on April 1, 1960, hence the name 1960 to commemorate its inception. The specially engineered sole along with the trademark yellow stitching, sturdy eight-eye laces-ups and unprecedented durability were the reasons Doc Marten's were quickly adopted as the official work boot among the British working class. Worn almost exclusively by postmen, factory workers, medics, builders, and policemen, Docs were the most unlikely fashion item, which also made them ideal for popping up on the feet of a very rebellious subculture of British teenagers.

It was the young Brits that first sparked the boot's cult-like following when they were championed as the official footwear of the anti-conformist, anti-fashion skinheads of the 1960's. Doc's were readily embraced as essential garb for music icons like the Who's Pete Townsend, Johnny Rotten, and Sid Vicious. Classic punk bands like The Clash, Buzzcocks and The Damned wore the boots religiously, as did their fans. The punk trend crossed the mid-Atlantic to America where the "Airwair with Bouncing Soles" trend spread like a vicious rumor.

Legendary bands like Slayer were devoted fans of Docs, adopting them as part of their uniform. On the stages of the infamous grunge bands like Nirvana, the boots were as standard as flannel shirts and thermals. The concerts of bands like Anthrax and Rancid were practically overrun by fans sporting various styles of Docs. Rob Zombie and Prodigy rarely performed without the accompaniment of their DM's. By the 90's, it was nearly impossible to not stereotype an X generation, denim-wearing, Doc Marten-clad rebel as, at the very least an aspiring musician if not breaking the bank with a platinum album inspired by his parents divorce.

By 1993, so many surfers, skaters, punk rockers, grunge-kids, metal fans among other various subcultures of American youth caught onto Doc Martens that the boots gained notoriety as a symbol of poetic youth or in most cases associated with anarchy and social upheaval. Just like most emblems of diversity, no sooner had Docs become readily available in the U.S., that those threatened by the idea of subversive behavior would also prohibit their use. Just the idea of the notorious black boots conjured up enough radical connotations that some schools even outlawed Docs from their dress codes. This caused such an outrage that in one school in Grapevine, Texas the students walked-out entirely in protest of the decision to ban the shoe.

Today's rock stars and their fans have not abandoned Docs as the sanctioned badge of adversity. Now, however, the boot rarely raises eyebrows and has become accepted as the quintessential footwear of youth. Either that or those boots last so long that the older generation from the '60s are still wearing them. But despite changing trends and styles even within the Doc Martens brand, rock music circles remain loyal to the ever classic 1460.

P.O.D stomps around in the classic 1460's as does System of the Down. The rap/Metal masters of Linkin Park have been known to appreciate the practicality of their Docs. And if rock legends pass on their genes to their offspring, perhaps they also pass along their boots. Reportedly even Ozzy Osborne's son, Jack owns a pair or two.

Not surprisingly Doc Marten produces over 10 million pairs a year, selling 40,000 pairs a day across the world. Styles range from the traditional 8-eye boot, the low 3-eye shoe and the stomping 20-eye knee high. Doc Martens have remained customer friendly, offering a wide variety of styles in every color and fabric. The company even produces a vegetarian-friendly boot out of synthetic materials.

But perhaps the British cult heroes The Young Ones said it best in their homage to the boots:

*It's not class or ideology,  
Color, creed, or roots,  
The only thing that unites us  
Is Dr. Marten's boots!"*

Today, Doc Martens continues to be the No. 1 welted shoe manufacturer in the world. Ironically, such a simple, practical shoe born of the working class, worn en masse by German soldiers through two World Wars remains what it was invented to be--a boot that stands the test of time. A perfect fit for the rock star set, those now creating their legends and those living off their residuals, is a boot that you break in , not wear out. Perhaps part of their appeal is their long love affair with rock music, but regardless of their lore, if the average person really walks five times around the world in their lifetime, they mind as well be wearing Doc Martens.