



Rachel Bilson

# Bilson's Bet

The actress-turned-footwear designer has some serious shoe power behind the launch of her ShoeMint collection. BY WAYNE NIEMI

**R**achel Bilson is not just playing the part of a shoe designer.

The star of The CW's "Hart of Dixie" recently teamed up with her longtime stylist, Nicole Chavez, to introduce ShoeMint, a membership site that offers monthly selections based on personal taste. It's the latest addition to the BeachMint e-commerce company, which launched in 2010 with JewelMint, a jewelry line designed by Kate Bosworth and stylist Cher Coulter. The firm has since expanded with collaborations with Mary Kate and Ashley Olsen, as well as Jessica Simpson.

For ShoeMint, Bilson and Chavez serve as the designers and work with footwear veteran Steve Madden on production of the line. And so far, the partnership has been a good one, said the actress.

"Working with Steve is great for me and Nicole," Bilson told *Footwear News*. "He has built a global shoe empire and brings extraordinary expertise to ShoeMint to ensure our designs are of the best quality and work within the market."

Still, Bilson promised that the collection would stay true to her fashion sensibilities and remain affordable, at \$80.

"I work closely with Nicole to gather inspiration, and then work with Steve to bring our vision to life," Bilson said. "Nicole and I share a lot of the same design preferences, and we're both really versatile and always go for an effortless look. These shoes really reflect me; they are exactly what I want to wear."

And while Bilson said she is focused on the launch of the line, other product categories could soon be in the offing. "We're excited to get through our debut collection launch and the full collection launch in the spring. But we are already thinking up some exciting ideas, so stay tuned."

Here, the actress talks about the growth potential for the brand and how small feet — and the difficulties associated with finding fashionable styles — led her to create her own collection.

## 1 How did you get involved with BeachMint?

**RB:** I have been a fan of the BeachMint brands since my friend Kate Bosworth launched JewelMint

and I was asked to be a guest curator for the Giving Back program. I got to choose my favorite pair of earrings from the collection, and the proceeds from the sales were donated to Invisible Children, a charity I'm very passionate about. The BeachMint business model is amazing. Not only do I get to design with my friend and stylist Nicole but I will have the opportunity to be involved with customers every step of the way, giving style tips, interacting with social media and more. And Nicole and I named each shoe after important people in our lives — and some four-legged [friends] — so it's very personal to us.

## 2 What have you been doing to learn the footwear business and build your design skills?

**RB:** In the past, I've been lucky to work on design collaborations with DKNY Jeans and with Macy's for my homeware line, Edie Rose. Footwear is really exciting and challenging. Nicole and I have very strong opinions about what we like and what style elements we want to incorporate. Steve is absolutely fantastic at translating our vision and designs, and we're learning a lot about shoes in the process.

## 3 What first attracted you to the footwear business?

**RB:** I am a shoe fanatic, but I have always had a tough time finding cool shoes to fit me, as I am only a size five. I've been dreaming about my ideal shoes for years. Versatility has always been really important to me. I'm all about finding an accessory you love and making it work with different looks.

## 4 How are you balancing your acting career with your burgeoning design career?

**RB:** Starring in a network TV series is definitely tough on my schedule, but I find the time because I'm so passionate about this brand and I have a great team helping me every step of the way.

## 5 How big do you think ShoeMint can be and what are your plans for growing it?

**RB:** The potential for the site is huge. Customers have really come to trust the BeachMint brands. There's already a relationship there, so we hope to engage those members and attract new ones.



A style from ShoeMint's debut line