

Hip street blues

ME Productions gives Skechers USA's Universal City, Calif. store a high-tech, streetwise appeal.



The Skechers USA store in Universal City, Calif., designed by Marina del Rey, Calif.-based ME Productions, is as funky and cool as it is inviting.

IF YOU LOOK inside the cluttered confines of a Gen Y's closet — well, you're going to find a lot of things. Instantly you'll find that members of this generation are full-fledged trend-trackers. With this in mind, if you look down you'll undoubtedly find a gazillion pairs of shoes, mostly tennis shoes and sandals. And if you were to look even closer, you would see the Skechers label stitched inside almost every shoe. Why? Because for today's youth, this brand is synonymous with hip, trendy and cool.

When ME Productions Inc. began designing Skechers USA in Universal City, Calif., the goal was "to create a store reflecting the footwear retailer's evolution from an industrial street look to a high-tech look with street credibility," says Michael Eschger, president. "We wanted to integrate cool, new features capturing the attention of the targeted teens."

Deciding on the elements befitting the "cool, new features" bill allowed ME to embark on the implementation of new, funky ideas. For example, below large, lifestyle graphics, the kid's department is host to a nontraditional shoe store guest — a gumball machine. Not your average sugar shooter, this accessory is integrated into a seating element. When Skechers tokens

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are inserted, the contents — logo-imprinted candy — come racing out.

Another cool contraption is the "DisPlaystation," a Sony Playstation integrated into a display. It entertains young customers as dual controls lead to intense competitions. Nearby, social spots with flexible, individual seating elements give customers a reason to lounge. A web station is also accessible as a way to promote the Skechers website. To reinforce the dynamic, club appeal, monitors featuring Skechers music videos are integrated into numerous displays. The fast-paced images can be seen and the music heard anywhere in the store.

The cashwrap lends a spaceship-like, futuristic feel to the store. Within the counter's face are eight internally lit, hollow, glass boxes showcasing a specific shoe style. These floating shoe displays mimic the omnipresent monitors above. Hovering atop this fix-

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ture is an oversized sphere dotted with floating monitors, while celestial blue rays glow from behind. "The counters are cantilevered from flanking metal elements that project blue light upward," says Eschger. The cashwrap seems to mimic a control station, he says. Customers enter the futuristic chamber beneath a stainless steel logo inset into custom, sparkling "Skechers blue" terrazzo, and proceed inside between custom -S- logo door pulls. The addition of an aluminum ceiling also aids in adding depth and space.

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edge company that will experiment with new and interesting technology as it becomes available," says Eschger. "You will never find a store that is a carbon copy of another one." Though ME had the luxury of design freedom with this new site, enabling it to be individualistic was not without its share of obstacles.

With a sales floor of 2,341 sq. ft., one of the biggest challenges for ME was competing with an environment packed with visual stimuli. But these visuals proved beneficial as the store is "always visible from afar," says Eschger. ME incorporates Skechers' brand color throughout the store — a striking blue that hits customers like a tidal wave as they enter the store. While reflective metals and backlit, multi-membrane plastics help to accomplish the highly visible tech look of the store. In addition, "concrete clad bases offer 'sidewalk' space for additional color ways and P.O.M. signage," explains Eschger.

Another spatial challenge was working with the low, deep space of the site. This was quickly turned into an advantage, as the fusion of color, depth and size gives the space a club atmosphere.

The materials used by ME are as much an ethereal, yet edgy, mix as Ske-

cher's identity. The multi-membrane plastic panels, mentioned previously, reveal a vibrating 3-D effect when backlit. It is actually the same material used for insulating greenhouses. Also used throughout the store is Alumasteel metal laminate (by Wilsonart), and a concrete-like fiberglass mold used for the fixture bases, explains Eschger. To contrast with these materials, wood laminates were utilized.

So, where are the shoes? Everywhere. Curving pools of blue are backlit and serve as a backdrop on which shoes are displayed. Shoes are propped on evenly spaced peg-fitted panels. A single shoe is displayed in profile, making styles easy to find, and compare to others.

ME Production has stepped beyond the traditional footwear design boundaries with Skechers USA. "It's very exciting to keep evolving with the Skechers brand," says Eschger.

ME has successfully leaped into the future, turning this store into a total entertainment venue, meshing well with Universal City Walk's attractions right outside its door. ♦

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Erika Hutton
Assistant Editor

Project team

- **Project design and project management:** Michael Eschger, Marlene Lento, Emilio Verdugo.
- **Lighting design:** Lighting Design Alliance, Long Beach, Calif.
- **Construction:** Innerspace, Culver City, Calif.
- **Fixtures:** Premier Designs, Cypress, Calif.
- **Video:** IMPART, Seattle, Wash.
- **Audio:** DMX Music, Lake Forest, Calif.
- **Flooring:** Floor Covering Consultants Group, Culver City, Calif.
- **Graphics:** Pratt, Indianapolis.
- **Ceiling:** USG Interiors Inc., Chicago.
- **Lighting:** Premium Quality Lighting, Simi Valley, Calif.
- **Signage:** Promotional Signs, Lake Forest, Calif.



Within the cashwrap counter's face are eight internally lit, hollow, glass boxes showcasing a specific shoe style. These floating shoe displays mimic the omnipresent monitors above.

"This project brings 'fun' back to the shopping experience."



ME PRODUCTIONS • SKECHERS USA • MANHATTAN BEACH, CALIF.

Category

New or Renovated Specialty Stores

(under 2,000 sq. ft.)

Award Recipient

ME Productions

Marina del Rey, Calif.

Michael Eschger (president)

Client

Skechers USA

Manhattan Beach, Calif.

Product Manufacturers/Suppliers: Lighting Design Alliance, Long Beach, Calif. (lighting design); SCM Store Contract Management, Richmond Hill, Ontario, Canada (fixtures); Provincial Store Fixtures, Mississauga, Ontario, Canada (fixtures); Innerspace, Culver City, Calif. (construction); IMPART, Seattle (video); DMX Music, Lake Forest, Calif. (Audio); Floor Covering Consultants Group, Culver City, Calif. (flooring); Pratt, Indianapolis (graphics); U S G Interiors Inc., Chicago (Ceiling); Premium Quality Lighting, Simi Valley, Calif. (lighting); Promotional Signs, Lake Forest, Calif. (signage)

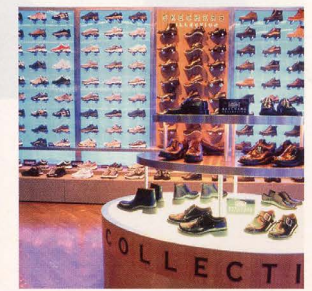
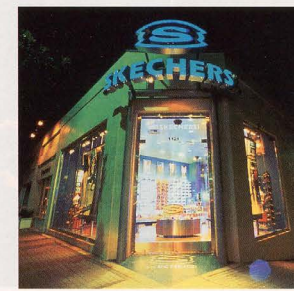
Street smarts

Manhattan Beach, Calif.'s Skechers USA is the first freestanding prototype for the new Skechers USA stores. The new look represents Skechers' evolution from an industrial street look to a 'high tech look with street credibility.' In the category of New or Renovated Specialty Stores (under 2,000 sq. ft.), Marina del Rey, Calif.-based ME Productions was awarded the 2001 SADI for its design work on the project.

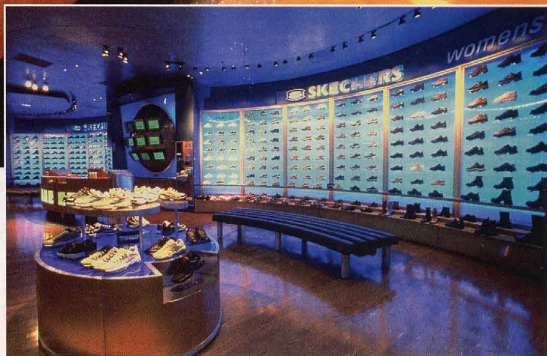
The luminous store design is visible from outside especially at night, and along with large curved window graphics, appeals to traffic on this busy intersection. Sign letters "threaded" on a massive curving pole dash around the corner where the entrance features a stainless steel floor logo inset into the custom "Skechers Blue" terrazzo and custom logo door pulls.

For added attraction, a tall, freestanding game station aims to capture, entertain and involve young customers. The game station is centrally located in the store and is visible from the outside. It has a swivel range of 360 degrees and is operable by two players while standing.

In the kid's section, a gumball machine is integrated into a seating element exposing only the globe and the controls of the machine. By inserting a Skechers token, the machine dispenses logo-imprinted candy. Concealed hinges on the bench seats allow for quick shoebox disposal inside the fixture. ■



“Dynamic, club-like design.”



ME PRODUCTIONS • SKECHERS USA • UNIVERSAL CITY, CALIF.

Category

New or Renovated
Specialty Stores
(2,000 – 5,000 sq. ft.)

Award Recipient

ME Productions

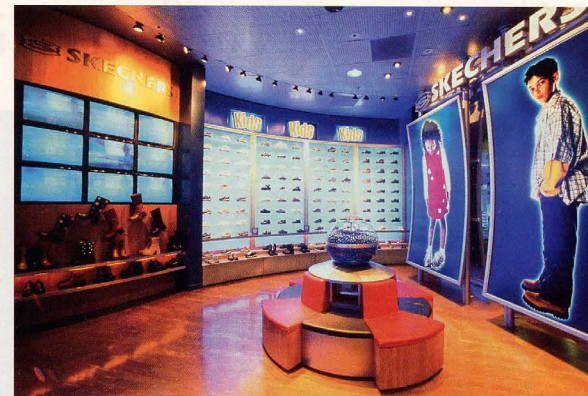
Marina del Rey, Calif.

Client

Skechers USA

Manhattan Beach, Calif.

Product Manufacturers/Suppliers: Lighting Design Alliance, Long Beach, Calif. (lighting design); Innerspace, Culver City, Calif. (construction); Premier Displays, Cypress, Calif. (fixtures); IMPART, Seattle (video); DMX Music, Lake Forest, Calif. (audio); Floor Covering Consultants Group, Culver City, Calif. (flooring); Pratt, Indianapolis (graphics); U S G Interiors Inc., Chicago (ceiling); Premium Quality Lighting, Simi Valley, Calif. (lighting); Promotional Signs, Lake Forest, Calif. (signage)



Boogie shoes

Universal City, Calif.'s Skechers USA store has design components that unite in shape and materials to form a dynamic, club-like atmosphere. In keeping with the ambiance, the store has moving, changing, “tech” elements, 360-degree sound and entertainment inviting young customers to enter, linger and buy. In the category of New or Renovated Specialty Stores (2,000 – 5,000 sq. ft.), Marine del Rey, Calif.-based ME Productions was awarded the 2001 SADI for its design on the project.

The monitor wall provides the store with constant energy by playing the latest Skechers music videos. The monitors are integrated into a variety of displays, facing into the space and outward. The store becomes an entertainment venue itself, blending in with the attractions of Universal City Walk outside.

Undulating “Skechers Blue” backlit walls draw customers inside and dematerialize the boundaries of the space. Pools of blue light are reflected by the aluminum ceiling and add the perception of depth and space. The cool palette of metal finishes and backlit panels are combined with “floating” and suspended volumes to enhance Skechers’ futuristic tech look. ■