

Breathing life into jaded leather favourites

Costly shoes, bags and other accessories live on, courtesy of the care of artisans.

Fashion on the Fields is never won by a facsimile of what everyone else is wearing. Whether you're a consummate fashionista or simply want to stand out from the crowd this Spring Racing Carnival, finding those bespoke touches – especially with accessories and shoes – is key.

"Who wants to go to the spring carnival wearing the same designer heels as everyone else? Great fashion is about uniqueness and showcasing your own style, not following the crowd," says Jenny Velakoulis, general manager of the quality leather repairer Evans.

"In many ways, fast fashion has come at the expense of individuality, and we fill that niche by providing people with the opportunity to express themselves," she says.

Evans offers a variety of custom fashion services, which involves matching shoes, accessories or handbags to outfits.

"Everything from re-covering shoes with satin or fabric to dyeing handbags to an entirely new colour. Usually, our customers come in with a very specific idea in mind and supply us with a colour sample or piece of material for our specialists to match," Velakoulis says.

Recovering shoes usually takes a week or two and requires around half a metre of fabric. "A simple court shoe is usually best.



Evans has been repairing, altering and restoring leather shoes and accessories for decades.

More straps, hardware or ornaments typically means a larger and more expensive job," she says. Dyeing shoes takes a similar time, and the process is akin to that used in tanneries, although the work is completed by hand at Evans. Experts in leather repair and professional restoration, Evans can also breathe life into treasured designer heels. If

the trademark red-lacquer sole on a pair of Louboutins is losing its sheen, they can repair soles so they look as good as new for race day. Ditto heels, heel pieces, elastics and straps.

Perhaps the loops on your Vuitton handbag are showing signs of wear? Evans specialises in restoring luxury handbags,

transforming worn corners and seams, repairing piping, zips and straps, or replacing linings. Leather jackets, briefcases, belts and wallets can also be updated.

Similarly, if you've treated yourself to a new pair of shoes for the social season, Evans can help you maximise their lifespan.

"We offer a professional leather protection service that can guard against unwanted substances for up to six months," says Velakoulis, who warns against purchasing just any waterproofer to protect designer buys against those inevitable spilt drinks and treks across racecourse lawns.

"Many off-the-shelf products contain petroleum and silicone resins that may change the complexion or colour of the sensitive leathers commonly used in these items," she says.

Located in the iconic Royal Arcade in Melbourne's CBD, Evans was founded six decades ago by Evan Skliros, a renowned leather craftsman. The boutique workshop has been in the business of repairing, altering and restoring leather for everyone from older generations, who grew up with shoemakers and artisans, to fashionistas looking for customised service.

"Unfortunately many people are now conditioned to see fashion as disposable. They buy cheap, wear for a few months and repeat the cycle. It's a short-sighted view," says Velakoulis. "Quality items not only last longer but are salvageable. By servicing your items once every few years you save on your initial investment."

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