

Billy Reid Expands Footwear Mix

By JOCELYN ANDERSON

NEW YORK — Billy Reid is going deeper into footwear.

The Alabama-based designer will debut a women's shoe line for holiday '09 and plans to launch a wholesale business for his men's styles starting with spring '10. (The designer also just opened a shop-in-shop in Bloomingdale's in New York.)

"Over the past couple of years, footwear has really been a good category for us, so the timing seemed right," said Reid.

The women's line will start small and grow for spring '10. The initial holiday offering includes a high-heel boot, a riding boot and an ankle bootie, retailing for \$495 to \$795. All of Reid's creations are made in Italy.

"There were a lot of women coming in to see the men's shoes, and they wanted something [similar], but more feminine," said Reid. "[The new line is] inspired by menswear."



Billy Reid men's style from spring '10.

The designer added that spring will also be about feminizing details from the men's pieces.

The new collection is a departure from Reid's previously planned women's launch a season before, which included several pumps and wedges. His factory went out of business, and the designer had to start over with new ideas.

"When we talk about the economy, that has been some of the fallout," he said. "We're a small company and we work with small manufacturers, and some-

times, it's not an easy business."

The men's collection, however, has been going strong since the brand's beginning in 2004 and includes a number of boot styles, as well as wingtips and a loafer. Retail prices range from \$350 to \$525. So far, Apartment Number 9 in Chicago and Los Angeles and Odin in New York have picked up the line.

"The price is just right," said Sarah Blessing, co-owner of Apartment Number 9. "I have boots that are \$900 and these are half that, yet they fit in well with [the more expensive shoes]."

The Billy Reid label is a second coming for the designer, who started in 1998 with the William Reid line. After Sept. 11, 2001, he shuttered his CFDA Award-winning business and moved back to Alabama before launching Billy Reid.

Now, Reid said, men's footwear is poised to make up about 10 percent of his business after this season. And after three years, he hopes women's will equal that.