

THE STEEL CAP BOOT

The Steel Cap Boot, also referred to as the Steel toe or Steel tip boot, started life as an essential piece of kit on the feet of workers in factories and foundries. With the growth of heavy industry it was essential that workers wore protective footwear and a formed steel cap, either under the leather, or over the leather in the case of those used in foundries where there were molten metals, afforded them some measure of protection. Steel toe cap boots with their heavy cleated soles and tough leather uppers were also adopted by the army as a combat boot.

During the 1960s the emerging skinhead movement adopted work boots and surplus army boots as part of their dress code. The original skinhead movement wore the boots as part of a look that reflected their British working class roots. Some skinheads favoured the aggressive look of work boots and the style soon gained notoriety as “bovver boots” (a lazy derivation of the word, bother) with the steel toe cap boots in particular being nothing less than offensive weapons. During the 1970s they were a common sight “in action” on the football terraces of England.

Only in the late 1970’s and early 1980’s were they rescued from everlasting infamy when steel cap boots became part of the dress code for the emerging punk movement. With their scuffed leather uppers adorned with studs, spikes and boot straps they were typically matched up with tartan bondage pants, and studded leather jackets.

In the 1990s the boots became synonymous with the Grunge look and these big boots were very popular with girls. Decorated by felt tip pens or adorned with bottle tops, coloured laces or even fruit stickers they were typically worn with mini skirts and striped tights. The Riot Grrrl look of the 1990s also took hold of the boots creating a thrashed, punked up grunge look and in Japan the boots became an essential part of the Harajuku look.

In the 2000s the boots were a popular with the emergent Rivethead and Cyberpunk movements. The tough metalwear look fitted well with the post apocalyptic and post punk industrial image that these groups developed. A profusion of straps and buckles were typically added to the boot designs. The military look also provided the boots with another opportunity to make a statement, this time more likely to be on the catwalk or red carpet than on the football terrace.

Underground Steel Cap boots are produced according to the original British army last and using the distinctive Underground screwed sole and the characteristic three rows of stitching on the cap. Apart from the typical Black leather version they are also available in Cherry (Oxblood) and a range of colours including a symbolic Union Jack rub off leather.



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