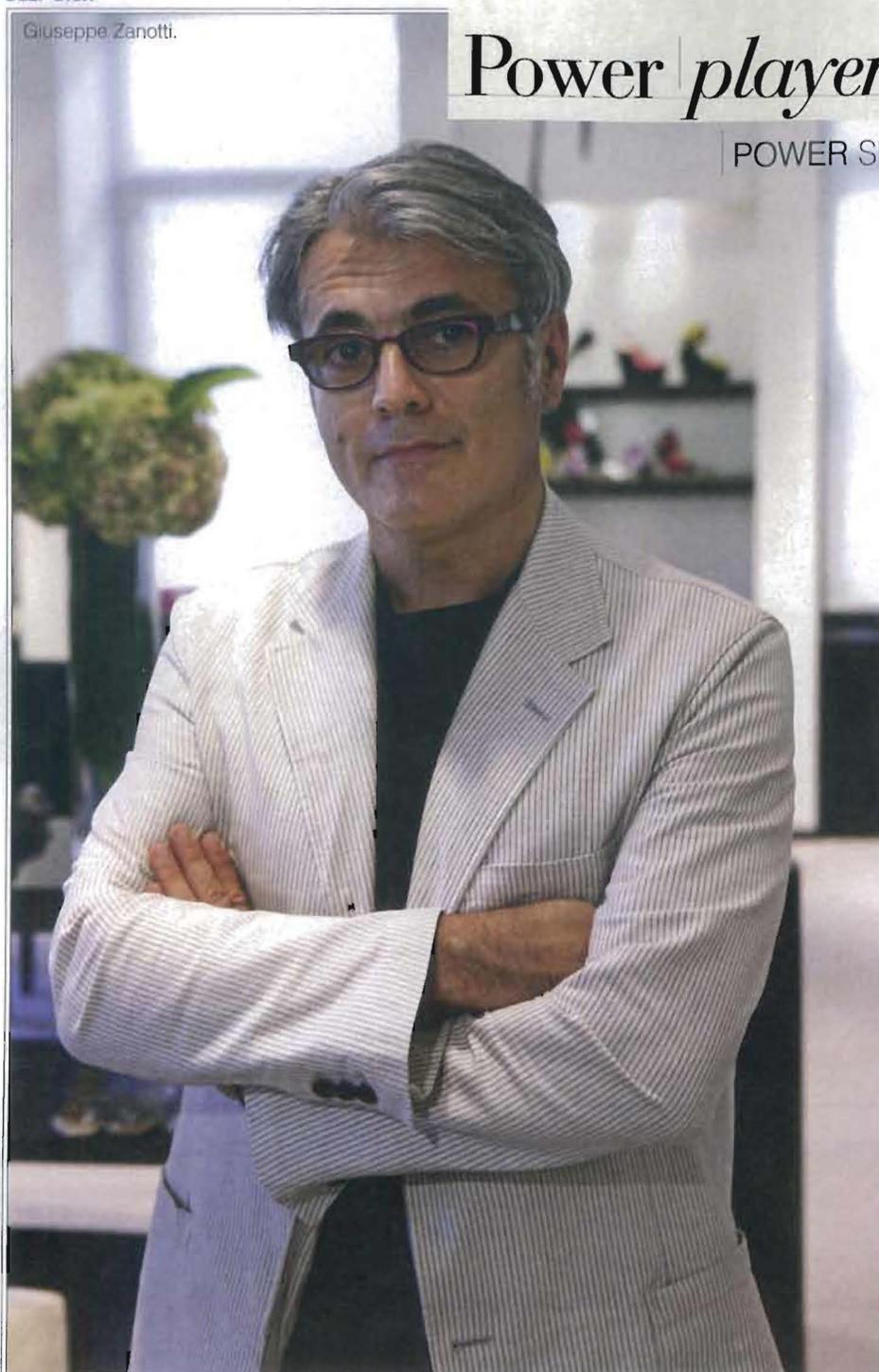


Giuseppe Zanotti.

# Power *players*

POWER SHOEMAKER



## Right in Step

### GIUSEPPE ZANOTTI'S VISION IS UNIQUE.

The Italian shoemaker behind the celebrated brand looks beyond the raw materials he works with, aiming instead to please the subject for whom he's designing. Granted, predicting trends and creating fashionable footwear is of utmost importance, but Zanotti believes that the biggest factor in his designs' success is the confidence exhibited by the women who wear them.

"High heels are like an elevator for beauty," he says. "My designs are stable and they're sexy. When a woman walks in my shoes, she feels sure of herself and more beautiful. Everyone notices her."

Zanotti is right—few can resist his jewel-encrusted stilettos and flats, deeply coveted by A-list celebrities, among them Sarah Jessica Parker, Rihanna, and Madonna. Having begun his career as a freelance designer for such houses as Christian Dior and Valentino, Zanotti has turned his passion into an empire, one that continues to grow. (He now designs shoes for Proenza Schouler, Roberto Cavalli, and Balmain.) "When I started in the shoe business, I didn't mind designing for other companies," Zanotti reflects. "If I saw my shoes on a girl that felt beautiful, I was very proud. But soon I wanted to do something more personal, to create something with my own name."

And that he did. Nearly 15 years ago, Zanotti decided to invest in Vicini SpA, the Italian-based company that manufactures the Giuseppe Zanotti brand. And while he now has more than half a million clients around the world, Zanotti says getting his start was far from easy. "My shoes were like UFOs," he says with a laugh. "They were from another world, and people—the customers, the companies—didn't understand my designs." But Zanotti didn't give up. He adjusted his work to be more commercial and waited for the trends to catch up with his couture ideas. Then, in the mid-eighties, glam shoes became all the rage.

Today Zanotti has some 40 namesake boutiques worldwide, not to mention distribution at 15 Vicini stores and retailers that include Neiman Marcus, Saks Fifth Avenue, and Bergdorf Goodman. And the designer intends to expand. "It is all step by step," he says. "I have to trust my instincts and my feelings." Which is exactly what he did for his fall collection. "I wanted to create something crazy and sophisticated," he says. "Much of my inspiration comes from music—I try to take things from the past and make them contemporary. My fall collection is dramatic, gothic, sparkling, and glamorous, with a touch of punk and rock." With a description like that, how can anyone resist?—RACHEL BOWIE