

Shoe horny

Ruth Ostrow

THE other night I happened to catch an advertisement for some woman's product or other. The 20-something model, who was the object of another female's envy, was wearing the highest high heels; the camera panned down her long legs to shoes which were admittedly gorgeous.

I was in the middle of pondering the notion of female sexual allure when the show my daughter was watching came back on, and there were more young actresses, including Paris Hilton and a host of tweenagers and teenagers wobbling about in heels. It made me realise why my own tweenager has been nagging me to get "high heel" sandals, and even school shoes.

While celebrities celebrate the heel, and Carrie from Sex and the City spends half her life obsessing over her expensive Manolos, the fact is high heels were a construct of lustful fantasy and probably should have remained there.

According to the extraordinary book *Fetish: Fashion, Sex & Power* by Valerie Steele, heels were designed to keep women's pelvises and breasts thrust forward for balance when they walked, in order to create the look of being sexually available. Tension in the lower torso also pushes the bum out.

Personally, I like a bit of pelvic thrust and power heels definitely do something to my self-confidence. In fact, my "Imelda Marcos" range includes both red and black patent stilettos, which visually send me into orbit. But, alas, this fetish fashion has had a devastating effect on my body.

After years of glam shoes, my Achilles heels and hamstrings have tightened, which has knocked my pelvis out of alignment, which in turn has been playing havoc with my lower back and hips. "Yep, definitely from wearing high heels," every doctor, every physio tells me knowingly – probably the same crew who get turned on when their lovers flash stilettos at them.

I've always suffered for beauty. But do any of us want our daughters to end up with aching hip joints and a dysfunctional pelvis? Do men want their partners having tight hips and going "ouch" at crucial moments?

The fact is, heels lift women off the ground, literally and metaphorically. We become ungrounded – unearthed and unstable in the core of our being. Being on a pedestal is a wobbly illusion.

I'm afraid heels – as yummy as they may be – are like chocolate liqueurs and Champagne: good in small doses, and definitely not for growing young bodies.

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