

Now it's kung fu biting

By [Anna Rushworth](#)

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The 1980S called: They want their shoes back.

Kung fu shoes, a style made popular by the Bruce Lee films, are back. But not everybody is celebrating.

The soft canvas shoe with the thin rubber sole was once the domain of martial arts experts: The light shoe allows easy movement and flexibility to do high kicks and turns.

The shoe became popular in the mid to late 1980s but now shoe shops around the country are selling them again.

Khan Townsend-Paley, of Auckland Martial Arts Supplies, said he was selling lots of pairs to customers at his Queen St shop. "They're generally walking in with them on and replacing them."

Townsend-Paley said customers were attracted to the price at just \$20 a pair.

Other main street chains are selling versions for as little as \$8.

However, Podiatry NZ president Bruce Baxter described them as "an awful shoe".

"There's no upper structure to them, the sole unit is flaccid at best and there's no other mechanism for support."

Baxter said the shoes were particularly bad for people who already had existing foot conditions like low arches.

"Adding unstable shoes to it – you're going to have a problem."

Auckland podiatrist Simon Speight said kung fu shoes had been glamourised on TV. But as a soft shoe they were not practical for day-to-day walking.

"Poorly supported shoes will contribute to foot pain."

Cheap and painful

You don't buy kung fu shoes for style. You don't buy them for durability.

And you most certainly don't buy them for comfort.

Genevieve Vesey says her mother wore a pair of black kung fuses in the 1980s.

And Genevieve decided to buy a pair when she saw her sister wearing them. "My sister has them and she told me to get a pair and they were cheap."

So she bought a pair of white kung fu shoes from Kmart for just \$8 – but now she regrets it.



Genevieve Vesey bought a pair of white kung fu shoes from Kmart for just \$8 - but now she regrets it. Photo / Herald on Sunday

"They're not very comfortable," she says. "I bought them and they're good for slipping on but they're not very comfortable for walking around in."

Vesey says that after a while she finds her feet in pain.

"I find they rub on my heel and the bottom of my foot."

Considering the trouble they've caused her, the 19-year-old from Christchurch is adamant she won't be buying another pair.

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