

These shoes not just a croc

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My babysitter walked into the house. She always comes bearing artsy projects for my eldest daughter, but I couldn't be bothered with what was in her arms. I was blinded by the bright flamingo-pink glare coming from her shoes.

"Just be honest. Your shoes are ugly, right?" I asked transfixed by the pepto-glow. She laughed and nodded. "Oh sure — but I love them, I just love them. They're so comfortable, have you tried them?"

I shook my head. I couldn't wrap my head around wearing what looked like a sea sponge on my foot. I refer, of course, to the ubiquitous Croc — those rubber cloggy shoes that seem to have been in a fight with a hole punch.

I know. I know. I realize I'm probably making myself the least popular person on the North Shore. I can't help it. I've consistently disliked the shoes since I first saw them in 2003 as a chaplain-intern at Beverly Hospital. The nurses wore them — and they make sense as hospital footwear. It's the rest of us: Teachers, parents and even our contractor, for whom they don't make sense.

Beyond the comfort factor, there's the innovative ventilation they claim to allow with all those little holes. Guess what? There is already a really great shoe out there that is cushiony and comfortable and allows for ventilation — you may have heard of it — it's called a flip-flop. It actually vents the whole foot, not just the part nearest to the croc-nostril or whatever those holes are called. Plus, it allows you to look moderately graceful when you walk; not like you got your foot stuck in a piece of neon Styrofoam.

My parents live in Florida. My father is the headmaster of a school. Through the years we've gotten all sorts of fun T-shirts, jackets and mugs with the school's logo. But now apparently Crocs are allowing themselves to be branded.

My dad said over the phone, "Guess what! We're ordering a gazillion Crocs in school colors with our logo across the back strap. Mom and I are wearing ours now and they are great — so comfortable."

For heaven's sake.

I sighed, knowing exactly what was coming next and I pre-empted the question by saying. "She'd probably wear a toddler size 10," referring to my oldest daughter.

“Oh good we weren’t sure and wanted to order some for her.”
Yep.

This summer, when we saw my parents at our family camp in the Adirondacks, they produced the forest-green and khaki Crocs. My daughter loves them. And now she looks like all the rest of her friends running around the playground in their rubbery shoes made out of the special proprietary ‘Croslite’ resin. This secret substance is supposed to heat up from the warmth of your foot and mold to fit your unique shape. You know what else would heat up and fit my foot? Play-doh. I could smush it into my sneakers and it’d mold right on up — I’m just saying.

It gets worse. Last week my mother called about my daughter again. “I just put a little something in the mail for her. It should get there in a few days.”

“Ok thanks!” I was imagining maybe a T-shirt or a sparkly sticker book. Nope. What arrived was from a company called “Jibbitz.” A word, that when said out loud, sounds suspiciously like giblets.

As fashion-conscious readers no doubt already know, they are charms for Crocs. Little buttons that you press into the Croc holes and then wear much like you might wear charms on a bracelet. My mother sent my daughter ice cream cone, elephant, boat, bike, and pig Jibbitz’ — or is it Jibbi when plural?

But, these are shoes, not bracelets. What could possibly make an ugly shoe worse? Zillions of little brightly colored buttons, named after — or so it seems to me — leftover poultry parts.

My babysitter stood there. “Well you ought to try them. Look, I have a spare pair in my bag. It’s the new ballet slipper style. Aren’t they cute? Look they still have the Croc holes but just in a slipper form!”

She sounded like Sam in *Green Eggs and Ham* when he makes his final plea. “You do not like them, so you say. Try them! Try them! And you may!”

What was I to do? I slipped them on, which is all the clever people in Croc-land ever want you to do. Slip them on and you are doomed. They were the most comfortable things I’ve ever worn. Like walking on sea sponges floating in beds of Play-doh.

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