

These boots were made for



GLENN BAGLO/THE VANCOUVER SUN

# Splashing

**RAINWEAR** | Rubber boots today do more than just protect you from our wet weather. They're all about being stylish while keeping you dry

BY LUCY HYSLOP

The name may be a beautiful maelstrom of cultures, but the newly opened GumDrops store is all about the Rainy City.

For Australian Shanda Jerrett — originally born in Victoria, although her family emigrated Down Under soon afterwards — the name is a combination of gumboots (their word for rubber boots) and rain drops (and you thought it was just a reference to the old-fashioned candy?).

It stands for a lighthearted approach to the weather, Jerrett explains: "Putting rainy-day frowns upside down."

Well, if anything helps to bring you up in this downpour, it's a store that evokes candy nostalgia through a

kaleidoscope of vibrant colours and designs. Choose boots adorned with rock-inspired skulls, guitars and roses, for example, or plain smiling skulls, or daisies or cupcakes — and that's just for the adults.

Children's footwear includes ones with cows, dogs, bears, frogs, and the rest of the store has everything else

you need for wet weather (jackets, toy dog coats, bags and laptop cases — and umbrellas, of course).

Prices for the boots start from about \$55 to \$170 in adult sizes and in children's from \$35 to \$50; GumDrops sources its goods countrywide as well as from Europe, California and New York City, among a few.

"For five years we were in a drought in Australia," Jerrett, who lived in a tiny outpost called Termeil, five hours outside of Sydney. "We couldn't wash our cars, or water our gardens — people would even report you if you used water when you shouldn't have. So, you guys in Vancouver are absolutely blessed — you have nothing to worry about with the rain."

Okay, okay, okay, but even this vivacious 27-year-old concedes that Vancouver's perma-drizzle can get to her every once in a while — although her upbeat philosophy is never off-radar for long.

"If you can't beat it, join it," she states. "And what better way than doing that with cool products? Let's



GLENN BAGLO/VANCOUVER SUN

Wellies at GumDrops, with owner Shanda Jerrett. She has nine pairs of boots she likes to lounge around in at home.

# Owner intends to have her own boot creations some day

From C1

spread the fun."

For Jerrett, in fact, it's more a case of "move over, Manolo Blahnik." She confesses to luxuriating at home in not one but nine pairs of boots, which dominate her 630-square-foot condo. Her favourite design? A turquoise boot that laces up the front by Ilse Jacobsen, a Danish designer whose line she has secured for her store.

Jerrett, who also interior-designs and handmade the puddle-shaped white Ottomans in her store, intends to create her own boots in the future.

"People always commented on my own colourful boots so I knew I could fill a gap in the market with this store,"

she continues. "I would like to franchise out and have a wet weather boutique in every rainy city."

Leaving a life running a fine-dining restaurant in Termeil for a spot of travel, Jerrett was drawn back to her B.C. roots three years ago. "I love it here," she says.

And the early rush of customers must be helping fuel that love too. "I projected [the turnover] and did my business plan, but I could never have predicted to sell out in a week," Jerrett says, adding (thankfully) that new stock has now arrived.

It's hard to imagine, as we approach winter, but what happens to GumDrops when the sun eventually returns?

"I'll branch out into gardening clogs,

parasols and beach umbrellas," she says, punctuating the sentence with a rather depressing "but as we know the summer is quite brief."

Many of us see rain, and think about staying inside. With more than a nod to e.e. cummings, Jerrett likely sees it and thinks "puddlewonderful."

Special to The Sun

GumDrops, 2029 West Fourth Ave., Vancouver (778-229-5005; [www.gumdrops.ca](http://www.gumdrops.ca))

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## HOT SHOP VANCOUVER

## A puddle jumper's paradise

## GUMDROPS

2029 West 4th Ave., Vancouver  
604-733-1037  
www.gumdrops.ca

BY TAMARA KOMUNIECKI VANCOUVER

Shanda Jerrett could barely wait for Vancouver's infamous yearly rains to begin. While locals got in a last few holes of golf under grey skies or ran the Grouse Grind before its trails got too mucky, she was overseeing the final details for a brand new, unique retail store - Vancouver's first wet weather boutique.

Originally from Australia, where she had experienced a five-year drought and strict water-rationing measures, the wet weather started to affect Jerrett during her second winter on the West Coast. She put on some colourful rubber boots, black with pink swirls, to cheer herself up - and ended up with a business idea.

"I would always see people with a scowl on their face, trudging through their day, carrying their black umbrella," she says. "When I wore my boots, it was almost like a ray of sunshine hit them. I wore them everywhere and people commented all the time. I would be stopped and asked questions like where did I get them, how do I find them, and that kind of stuff. So from there it was like, 'There's something in this.'"

Jerrett, a jack-of-all-trades former restaurateur and interior designer, hit full speed, and nine months after her idea, Gumdrops opened its doors to customers last month. The store's name comes from an Australian candy (and is a combination of the words gumboots and raindrops) and carries supplies for everyone from kids to man's best friend.

Jerrett's hard work paid off. Within days of the opening-night party, the store had sold out of several items and she was surprised at having to replenish stock so quickly.

Popular styles include Zeyner nylon backpacks (\$225) and laptop bags (\$325) with em-



***I would always see people with a scowl on their face, trudging through their day, carrying their black umbrella.***

Owner Shanda Jerrett, on why she opened the store

broidered flames and chrome skulls on the handles for men, women's rock 'n' roll tattoo-patterned gumboots by Choo-ka for \$95, and dinosaur and fireman boots at \$37 for kids. Even on a dry day, customers often walk out wearing their purchases.

Jerrett expects that new shipments of Doc Marten-inspired boots with lacing up the front by Danish designer Ilse Jacobsen, and umbrellas that attach onto the handle of a child's stroller will be immediate bestsellers as well.

Customer Sonja Reichert talked about the store on her first visit, as she debated be-

tween a more practical pair of black and white patterned boots and a colourful pink striped pair.

"I'm surprised a store like this hasn't existed yet," Reichert said. "It's really perfect timing and it's perfect for Vancouver. I was thinking maybe I'll get the practical ones first and later on decide to get some fun colourful ones. I'll start with the basics and then build up my wardrobe." (She bought the black-and-white ones, and threw in an umbrella for good measure.)

Designing the store herself helped Jerrett infuse the bright



and welcoming boutique with personality and thoughtful touches. Angled mirrors on the floor give the customers a better view of their footwear, while a low side of the puddle-shaped ottoman allows younger customers to perch comfortably, whether trying on boots or playing with the toys.

Future plans include having Gumdrops' own products in store and then spreading business even further.

"I'm looking at branding," Jerrett says, "And then I would like to go forward and have a store in every rainy city. I just want to spread the fun."

» Special to The Globe and Mail

**Umbrellas of all sizes, colours and patterns line the walls at Vancouver's Gumdrops.**

JOHN LEHMANN/THE GLOBE AND MAIL