

Brazil's Flip-Flop Maker, Alpargatas, Is Celebrating 100th Anniversary

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Alpargatas, manufacturer of the world-renowned Havaianas flip-flops, will turn 100 years old in April. In order to celebrate the centennial, the company will hold tomorrow this Saturday, April 21, in the southeastern Brazilian city of São Paulo, a free concert at the Ibirapuera Park.

The concert, entitled "100 Years of Brazilian Talent," will feature Orquestra Talento Brasileiro ("Brazilian Talent Orchestra") conducted by maestro João Maurício Galindo.

The concert will also feature singers Virgínia Rosa, Rubinho Ribeiro and soprano singer Céline Imbert. The Orchestra's 43 musicians and the guests will be wearing Havaianas sandals.

The most famous flip-flops or sandals in Brazil are the flagship of the Alpargatas group. The Havaianas was introduced in Brazil in 1962 inspired by Japan's flip flop Zori, with a differential: the Brazilian product is made out of rubber.

Thanks to smart marketing the product gained strength throughout the 1990s, becoming a reference in terms of Brazilian product abroad. Havaianas flip flops have been sold for up to US\$ 250 in European boutiques. They normally cost about US\$ 10 in the American market.

Currently, the "legítimas" ("legitimate ones"), as the advertising pieces call them, are present in 80 different countries, including Australia, Japan, United States, the main buyers as well as Arab nations such as Kuwait, Lebanon, United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia.

The first product made by Alpargatas in 1907 was the alpargata, a cheap canvas sandal with a rope sole that is very common throughout Latin America having originated in the 14th century in Spain.

Controlled by the Grupo Camargo Corrêa, the Alpargatas company owns, in addition to Havaianas, the brands Topper, Mizuno, Rainha, Timberland, Bamba and Conga.

With more than 14,000 employees, the company has eight industrial plants in Brazil. In 2006, Alpargatas produced 175 million pairs of shoes. The concert at Ibirapuera will begin at 11:00 am.