SHOE HEEL GUARD

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ABSTRACT

A heel guard device used to protect the heel portion of a man or woman's shoe while driving in an automobile, the guard having a main body made of an elastic material which conforms to the shape of the heel and rear portion of a shoe. The peripheral edge of the forward opening of the guard has an elastic member that secures the guard on the shoe during use. Optional pads of soft or hard material may be added to the guard to provide additional protection and comfort to the heel of the shoe.
SHOE HEEL GUARD

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The invention relates generally to the field of shoe protective accessory devices designed to prevent damage or wear to shoes during use. More particularly, the invention relates to such devices designed to protect the rear or heel of the shoe, and in particular to protect the rear or heel of a shoe during the act of driving a motor vehicle. Even more particularly, the invention relates to such devices which are only temporarily affixed to the shoe and which are quickly and easily attached and removed.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] It is known in the prior art to provide protective devices to shoes in order to protect all or a portion of the shoe from damage, dirt, mud, water, etc. An area of the shoe very susceptible to damage is the rear or heel portion of the shoe, especially when the shoe is worn during driving. While operating the gas and brake pedal, the rear of the heel and the lower portion of the rear of the shoe contact the floor of the vehicle for long periods of time. The contacting portions will undergo rocking and sliding motions in the lateral and forward/backward directions. The rear portions will be scraped along the floor when the driver changes from the gas pedal to the brake and vice versa. Sand, gravel and other debris accumulates on the mat or carpet on the floor of the vehicle, and this particulate matter abrades the shoe, especially on any leather portions. Thus, it is very common for shoes to be significantly scuffed, scratched, marred or otherwise damaged simply from the effects of driving a vehicle.

[0003] Various attempts have been made in the past to develop a heel protector to protect the rear of a shoe during driving. Some embodiments are strap-on the shoe, while others are biased in some manner such that they snap onto the shoe. Still others utilize an adhesive to temporarily mount the heel protector onto the shoe. Examples of heel protectors or guards that are strapped or tied onto the shoe are shown in U.S. Pat. No. 4,249,321 to Nagy, in which a hinged guard is held in place by a pair of crossed elastic, U.S. Pat. No. 4,662,082 to Shabazz, in which a hard plastic guard shaped to receive the heel portion of a shoe is held in place by a single strap having plural snaps to allow for size adjustment, U.S. Pat. No. 5,507,105 to Cancel, in which a guard with a height-adjustable panel is strapped to a shoe, and U.S. Pat. No. 5,775,007 to Exposure, in which a plastic guard is held in place by a pair of straps with hook-and-loop type fasteners. Examples of biased heel guards are shown in U.S. Pat. No. 1,571,466 to Barthes, in which a plastic guard is affixed to the shoe by a U-shaped spring member that laterally encircles the heel, U.S. Pat. No. 3,025,617, which has a tubular sheath design adapted to fit women's high heeled shoes, U.S. Pat. No. 3,095,659 to McClellan, in which a plastic guard is affixed to the shoe by a U-shaped spring member that laterally encircles the heel, U.S. Pat. No. 3,851,412 to Woegle et al., in which plastic cups of various configurations dependent on the type of shoe are snapped onto the rear of the shoe, U.S. Pat. No. 4,441,264 to Hantz-Guivas et al., in which the plastic heel guard snaps into the junction between the heel and body of the shoe, and U.S. Pat. No. 4,459,764 to Beck, in which a slotted, generally U-shaped plastic guard snaps onto the shoe. U.S. Pat. No. 4,794,705 to Sanders shows a heel guard that fits into the gap between the heel and body and has a clip that is inserted over the top of the rear of the shoe, with a strap optionally provided. U.S. Pat. No. 4,750,278 to Cates shows a heel guard that is adhesively mounted onto the shoe.

[0004] Each of these prior designs suffers from one or more drawbacks that may explain their lack of success in the marketplace. The heel guard devices that must be strapped onto the shoe require cumbersome and uncomfortable movements, especially within the limited confines of the driver's seat of a vehicle. In addition, the strap itself may cause damage to the shoe. As to the rigid plastic devices that are biased onto the shoe, it is impossible to provide a structural design that is universally adaptable to different shoe designs. A rigid biased heel guard designed for men's shoes is unlikely to fit on women's shoes. Unless the biased guard is correctly designed, the act of attaching and removing the guard may in itself damage the shoe. The device is also cumbersome to store in the vehicle when not in use. The use of adhesive to mount the guard to the shoe, even though the adhesive is designed not to transfer to the shoe, is not a desirable solution, especially for expensive shoes. The adhesive will also wear out over time, and the use of disposable guards require that the user replenish the supply, as well as producing refuse after each use that must be properly disposed of.

[0005] In contrast to these known devices, this invention is a heel protector guard device that is made of a soft flexible material having a peripheral elastic band that secures it to the shoe for easy installation and removal, such that the guard will correctly fit many different shoe designs and sizes, is re-usable and easily stored between uses.

[0006] It is a basic object of the device to provide a guard that protects the rear of a shoe so as to prevent the heel from rubbing and scraping against the floorboard of an automobile and causing damage to the heel.

[0007] It is a further object of the invention that the device is made out of an elastic material that stretches and then conforms to wrap around the rear of the shoe, remaining in place without the aid of any sort of additional connector, fasteners or adhesives.

[0008] It is a further object of the invention that the guard is made in such a way to easily fit around the rear of any type of shoe, regardless of the size or even presence of the heel, in that the device may be used on shoes having flat soles, regular heels or extended heels.

[0009] These and other objects not expressly set forth will become apparent upon review of the following disclosure.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0010] This invention is a device used to protect the rearward portion of a shoe that makes contact with the floorboard of an automobile while driving, including the rear portion of the sole and/or the heel, as well as the back of the upper shoe. The body of the invention is made of a flexible and preferably elastic material of sufficient thickness and durability to resist tearing, such as expanded polymer foam or rubber. The body has a generally flat bottom and a curving wall with an open front to receive the heel and rear portion of a shoe. A circular elastic member is disposed about the periphery of the open front to temporarily secure the guard to the shoe, and has the capability and advantage
of being easily stretched to fit over any type of shoe without
the use of any connectors or adhesives. Reinforcement pads
or plates may be attached to the body at the primary wear
locations. The bottom may be provided with an aperture to
accommodate women’s high heels of excessive length.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0011] FIG. 1 is a perspective view of the heel guard
device shown as removed from the shoe, showing an
optional high heel aperture.

[0012] FIG. 2 is a side view of the device removed from
the shoe.

[0013] FIG. 3 is a side view of the heel guard device
shown while in use on a flat-heeled shoe and while the
driver’s foot is on the vehicle pedal.

[0014] FIG. 4 is a side view of the heel guard device
shown while in use on a woman’s heel or pump-like shoe
and while the driver’s foot is on the vehicle pedal.

[0015] FIG. 5 is a rear view of the heel guard device on
a right shoe, showing an optional protective pad positioned
to the outer side of the heel guard device and shoe.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE
INVENTION

[0016] With reference to the drawings, the invention will
now be described in detail with regard for the best mode and
the preferred embodiment. In general, the invention is a shoe
heel protective guard, cover or device that is designed and
adapted to be self-retained in a temporary manner on the rear
or back of a shoe in order to protect the shoe from scuffing,
scratching, marring and other physical damage while the
wearer is driving a vehicle. In this disclosure, the term heel
area shall be taken to mean the rear portion of the sole and/or
heel member, as well as the back portion of the upper shoe
itself.

[0017] The body 11 of the heel guard or shoe protective
device 10 is made of a material that is flexible and most
preferably elastic in nature and of adequate size to cover
the rear heel area of a shoe 99. The body 11 of the invention
may be comprised of many different types of flexible materi-
als known in the art, but is preferably composed of a
rubber, rubber-like or expanded polymer foam material,
such as neoprene or similar type elastic fabrics. The heel
guard 10 further comprises a bottom member 17, preferably
formed of the same material as the body 11, but which may
be formed of a non-elastic material for increased durability.
The body 11 and bottom member 17 may also be coated or
laminated with a clear or colored elastic for added stain and
wear resistance.

[0018] As shown best in FIG. 1, the heel guard 10 is
preferably constructed to have a generally rounded, pyram-
didal, or cup-like shape, but may be of any other shape
sufficient to provide the heel protecting function of the
device within the functionality and parameters of this
disclosure. In the preferred embodiment shown, the bottom
member 17 is structured to be substantially planar and to
have a generally linear forward edge and a rounded rear
ege, similar in configuration to the bottom of a typical heel
98 found on a men’s shoe 99. The lower portion of the body
11 is connected to the bottom member 17. A relatively large
opening 12 is disposed in the forward portion of the body 11.
The side wall of the main body terminates generally at an
apex or ridge member 16 just rearward and adjacent the rear
of said opening 12. The perimeter of the opening 12 is
hemmed or banded with an elastic hem member 13 in the
form of a strip, cord or the like, such that the opening 12 may
be stretched in any direction simultaneously.

[0019] The heel guard protective device 10 may be pro-
vided with additional elements to increase durability or
usefulness. As seen in FIGS. 2 and 5, reinforcing members
14 comprising protective pads, plates, strips or the like, may
be attached either to the bottom member 17 and/or on the
lower portion of the body 11, these being locations where
the majority of wear on the device will be concentrated.
The reinforcing members 14 may be elastic but are preferably
composed of a non-elastic material, either non-rigid or rigid,
in order to increase durability.

[0020] For better applicability to women’s shoes having
extremely elongated heels, the heel guard 10 may also be
provided with a high heel aperture 15 disposed in the bottom
member 17, as shown in FIGS. 1 and 4. The aperture 15
may also be hemmed with an elastic member 16 to increase
durability and retention properties.

[0021] The heel guard 10 is easily employed and is
adapted by its configuration to fit a variety of sizes and
shapes of shoes 99. The shoe 99 may take on any number of
different forms including, but not limited to, boots, loafers,
sneakers, running shoes or women’s heels. The heel guard
10 can be utilized with these various types of footwear
articles without modification of the protector device. The
heel guard 10 is pulled up over the heel 98 (if present) and
back portion of the shoe 99, such that the back portion of the
shoe 99 is protected from scuffing or damage by placing the
opening 12 at the rear of the shoe 99, expanding-the elastic
hem member 13 and positioning it to the front of the heel
98 and adjacent to or over the top of the rear of the shoe 99,
preferably with the apex 16 disposed across the rear of the
shoe opening, and then releasing the elastic hem member 13
so that the heel guard 10 is attached to the shoe 99, as shown
in FIG. 3. For a “heel-less” shoe 99, such as a sneaker,
tennis shoe, running shoe or the like, the elastic hem member
13 alone will maintain the guard 10 in proper disposition on
the sole of the shoe 99. When one arrives at his or her
destination, the heel guard 10 may be easily removed by
gently pulling on the closed end of the guard 10 prior to the
person exiting the vehicle. The heel guard 10 can then be
discretely stored in the dash of the automobile or easily put
into one’s pocket or purse and stored for later use.

[0022] For high heeled shoes 99 with extended heels, as
shown in FIG. 4, the apertured embodiment is preferred,
since the length of the heel 98 may exceed the elasticity of
the device 10. The heel guard 10 is pulled over the high heel
98 with the high heel 98 extending through the heel aperture
15 so as to be left exposed while the back portion of the shoe
99 is covered by the body 11 of the heel guard 10.

[0023] It is understood that equivalents and substitu-
tions for certain elements set forth above may be obvious to those
skilled in the art, and therefore the true scope and definition of
the invention is to be as set forth in the following claims.
I claim:

1. A shoe protective device comprising a main body composed of a flexible material, an opening in said main body of sufficient size to receive the heel portion of a shoe, and an elastic hem member affixed to the perimeter of said opening, wherein said elastic hem member enables said opening to be stretched over the heel portion of such shoe and released to temporarily retain said device on such shoe.

2. The device of claim 1, wherein said flexible material is elastic.

3. The device of claim 1, wherein said main body has a cup-like shape.

4. The device of claim 1, further comprising a bottom member joined to said main body.

5. The device of claim 1, further comprising reinforcing members affixed to said main body.

6. The device of claim 4, further comprising reinforcing members affixed to said bottom member.

7. The device of claim 2, wherein said flexible, elastic material is an expanded polymer foam.

8. The device of claim 1, further comprising a high heel aperture disposed in said main body, wherein said high heel aperture allows the heel of such shoe to extend therethrough.

9. A shoe heel protective guard device comprising:

   a main body composed of a flexible, elastic material;

   a bottom member joined to said main body;

   an opening disposed in said main body;

   and an elastic hem member affixed to the perimeter of said opening;

   wherein said elastic hem member retains said device on a shoe.

10. The device of claim 9, wherein the combination of said main body and said bottom member forms a pyramidal shape.

11. The device of claim 10, further comprising an apex member disposed on said main body adjacent said opening.

12. The device of claim 9, further comprising a reinforcing member affixed to said bottom member.

13. The device of claim 9, further comprising a reinforcing member affixed to said main body.

14. The device of claim 9, further comprising a high heel aperture disposed in said bottom member.

15. The device of claim 9, wherein said flexible, elastic material is an expanded polymer foam.

16. A shoe heel protective device comprising:

   a main body composed of a flexible, elastic material, said main body having a forward portion;

   a bottom member joined to said main body, said bottom member having a linear forward edge and a rounded rear edge;

   an opening disposed in said forward portion of said main body, wherein said opening receives the heel and rear portion of a shoe;

   an elastic hem member affixed to the perimeter of said opening, wherein said elastic hem member retains said main body and said bottom member on such shoe.

17. The device of claim 16, further comprising a high heel aperture disposed in said bottom member.

18. The device of claim 16, further comprising a reinforcing member affixed to said bottom member.

19. The device of claim 16, further comprising a reinforcing member affixed to said main body.

20. The device of claim 16, wherein said flexible, elastic material is an expanded polymer foam.

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