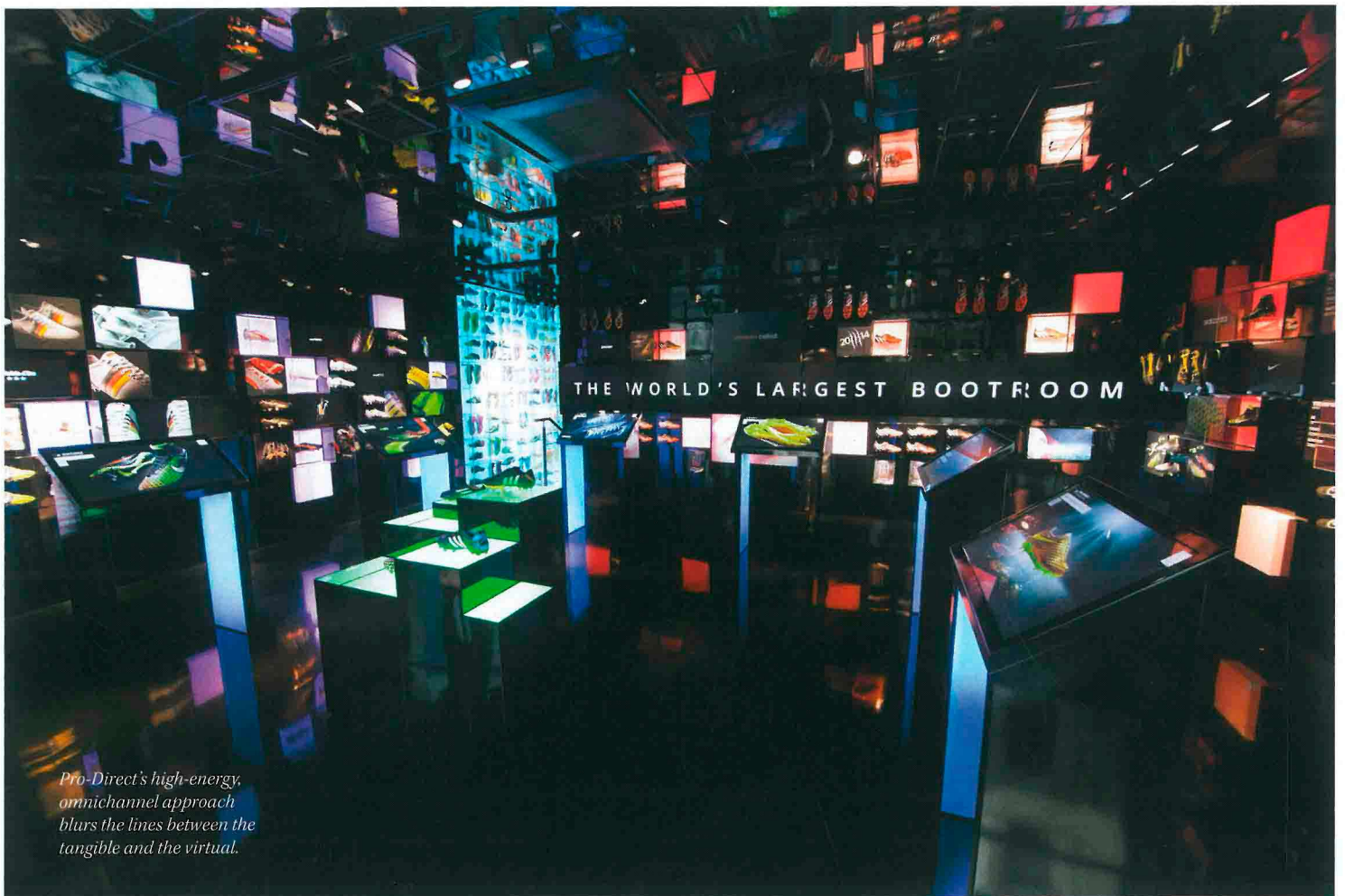
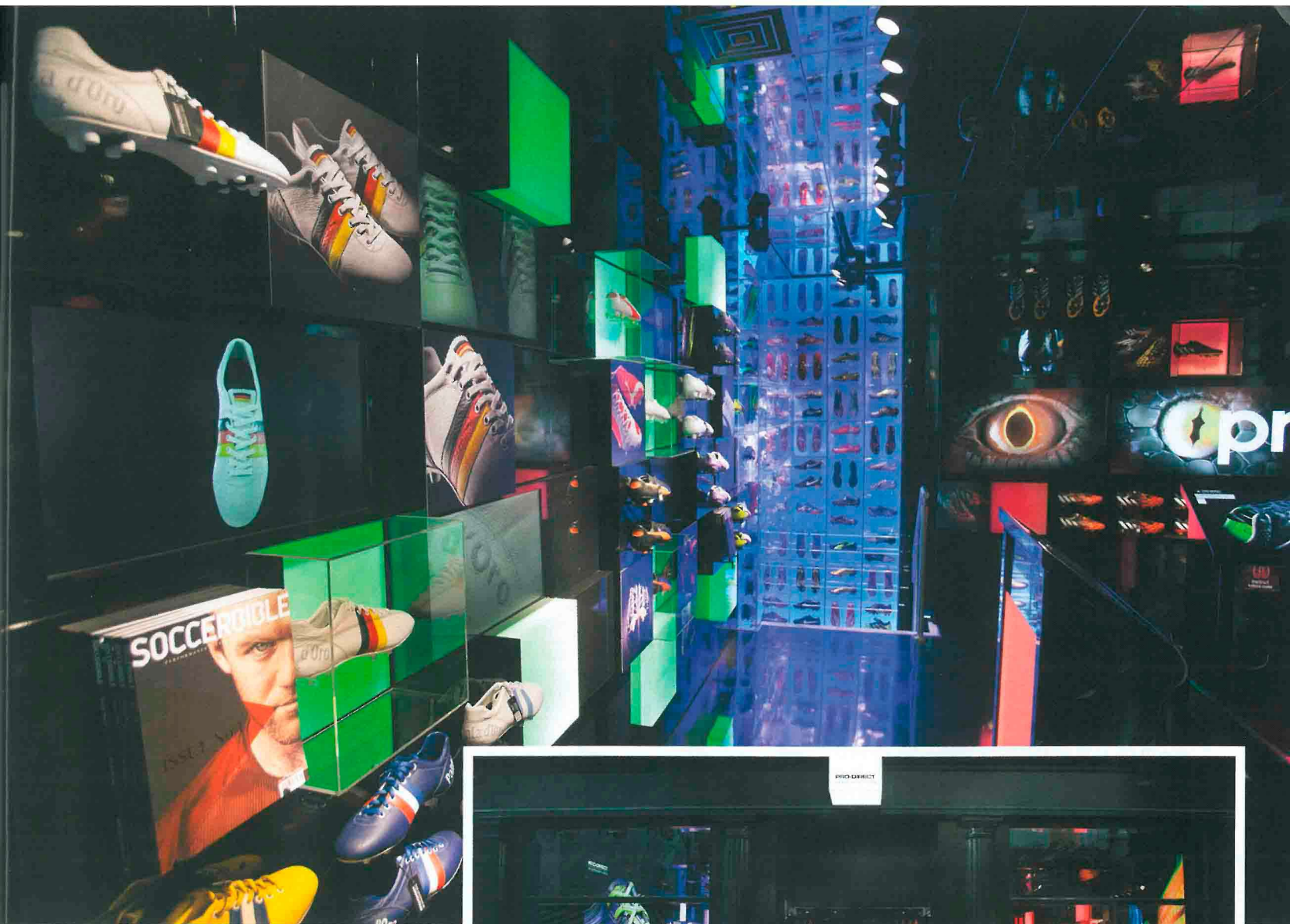


Virtual Reality

Pro-Direct's debut store translates its website into a dynamic, immersive experience.



Pro-Direct's high-energy, omnichannel approach blurs the lines between the tangible and the virtual.



BY ALICIA SHEBER, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

With a 21st Century twist to conventional retail design, online sportswear brand Pro-Direct (Newton Abbot, U.K.), has unveiled its first physical store, showcasing a fresh and engaging concept that translates its website into brick and mortar.

This immersive paradise for soccer fanatics, which opened off London's Carnaby Street last August, is a result of the careful orchestration between retail design consultancy Green Room Retail Ltd. (Birming-

ham, U.K.), technology specialist Vivid (Teddington, U.K.) and the retailer's management team. Their thorough understanding of state-of-the-art technologies, the preferences and behaviors of early adopters, and these consumers' passionate zeal to wear the same exclusive sports gear as their idols, gives the flagship an edge on the high street.

AN INTEGRATED APPROACH

In response to Pro-Direct's brief to create a live, connected retail theater perfectly synergized with the

TOP Immersive visual and audio experiences transform the digital presence of footwear brands into physical products shoppers can instantly touch and try on.

ABOVE Vibrant, constantly shifting video displays lure shoppers into Pro-Direct's flagship located off London's Carnaby Street.



Podiums, mannequins and cameras capture and display 4K images in such a lifelike way that shoppers feel like they are handling items.

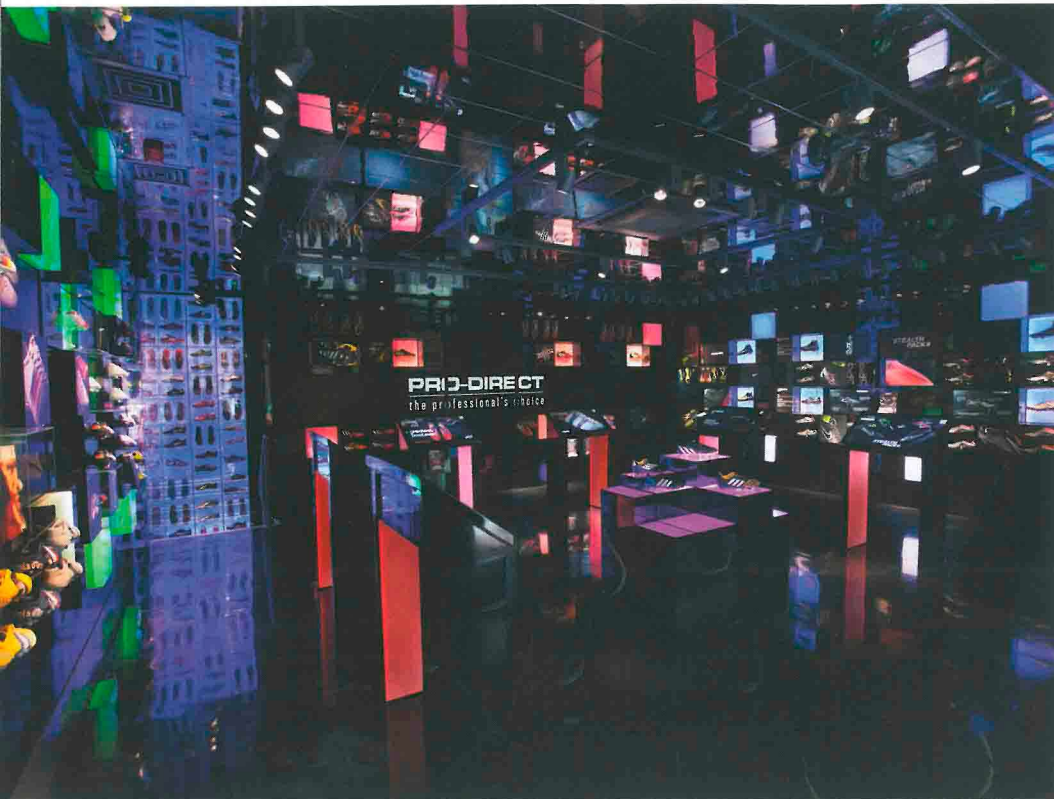
brand's online presence, the team has created a multi-sensory environment with the goal of enhancing the shopping experience. Interactive high-definition screens incorporated within merchandise displays bridge the digital with the tangible.

"This integrated approach benefits customers by providing seamless, consistent experiences across all touchpoints," says Paul Mynard, creative director of Green Room. "The store is essentially another 'device' for accessing Pro-Direct; consumers can learn about the hottest new boots online, see them 'come to life' in the store through immersive visual and audio experiences, and then at last touch and try on the actual products they've been admiring."

Ensuring that all this technology would be flaw-

lessly integrated across all platforms, as well as have the flexibility to adapt to future advances, could have been a daunting challenge. However, risks were diminished by drawing upon Vivid's expertise with hardware and software integration from the initial planning of the in-store customer journey.

This foundational understanding helped the IT whizzes translate these goals into optimized digital assets like podiums, mannequins and cameras that capture and display the high-definition, interactive 4K images that sports brands are beginning to produce. Paul O'Reilly, managing director of Vivid, elaborates, "The use of 4K displays isn't just about extra pixels; it's also about displaying content in such a lifelike way that you feel you're picking-up the item. We are con-

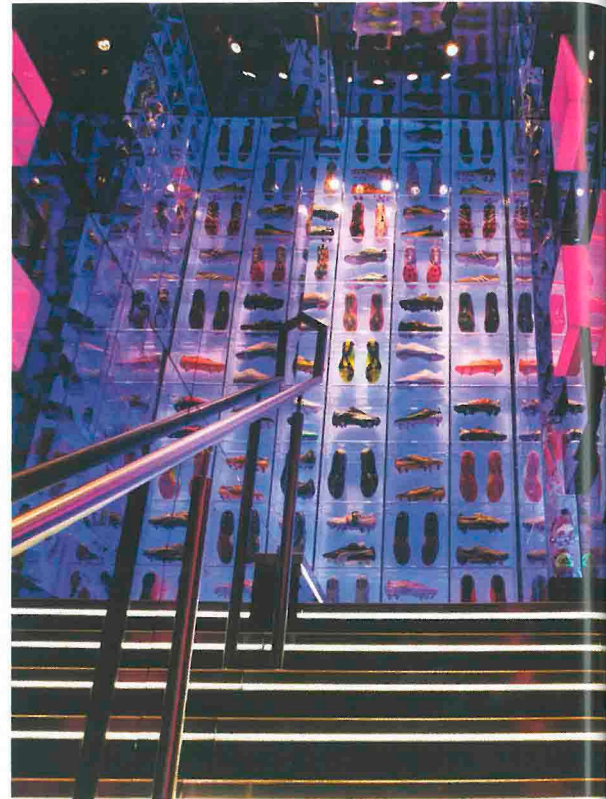


ABOVE LEFT *Portable plug-and-play screens and displays reveal curated, interactive content like player endorsements, live match coverage and real-time social media engagement with in-store shoppers.*

ABOVE RIGHT *Reputed to be the world's largest online cleat retailer, Pro-Direct highlights frequently updated in-store stock with programmable LEDs that build drama and attract customers' attention.*

fidient this is one of the first 4K retail experiences the consumer can truly engage with.”

The store, website and mobile platform all share the same dynamic content like videos or stills of footwear, product specs, player endorsements, and live coverage and recorded footage of games. Edited by curators at the brand's headquarters and based around a carefully planned marketing calendar, the material fed into the retailer's content management system (CMS) is either generated by brands like Nike, adidas and Puma, or by Pro-Direct itself. A new approach for Pro-Direct's CMS not only enables campaigns to be changed daily or in real-time with breaking news, but also provides the industry standard of quarterly updates. It also connects with social media sites so shoppers can instantly communicate with the store and each other. Once Pro-Direct's forthcoming app has launched, beacon technology will enable personalized dialogues with in-store customers, suggesting products and prompting staff to propose items in sizes and styles that correspond to shoppers' profiles.



OMNICHANNEL ENGAGEMENT

Green Room designed the store to have an adaptable layout and design. Recalling the digital network of Pro-Direct's virtual world, a square grid system of highly flexible plug-and-play interactive screens and product displays allows the store, reputed to have the world's biggest online room for boots – as cleats are called in Europe – to easily take on a different look when fresh stock arrives.

Controlled in-store via tablet, programmable LEDs allow numerous combinations of lighting and color intensity to amplify the drama and excitement of a lead campaign or product story. An exclusive lounge in the basement hosts player appearances, launch events, live match screenings and soccer-themed art collections.

As the blurring of lines between tangible and virtual worlds continues to change the game for retailers, Pro-Direct's holistic model for omnichannel engagement is at the forefront of this new digital frontier. ▲