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A YEAR OF CHANGE

2016 presented a fork in the road. A year of change - hellos and goodbyes. We've said goodbye to musical legends - R.I.P. Bowie, Cohen and Prince, while disenfranchised electorates from two of the world's leading nations have voted to welcome in a change. Heightened consumer awareness and demand means boardsports brands are starting to say goodbye to the unethical sourcing and manufacturing of goods, while we've seen the Olympics say hello to surfing and skating.

As I write this on the eve of Black Friday, one can already anticipate the madness that will ensue; retail stores will be bombarded, websites will crash. Logistics companies are becoming worth their weight in gold while internet sales continue to grow exponentially year on year. But with the growing expense of free returns, a lack of customer service and the consumer's I-want-it-now attitude, purely internet businesses and D2C aren't looking quite as rosy as they once were.

And just what will the future hold for our industry? Will 2020 see drones delivering our internet shopping? A 48-year-old Kelly Slater surfing in the Olympics? A perfect harmony of warm, sunny summers and cold snowy

winters? If I were a gambling man, I know which two I'd be placing my last two chips on.

Turning our attention to the present and plenty of snowfall across the Alps combined with cold temperatures throughout November has been a sight for sore eyes after a torrid few winters. With plenty of resorts opening their lifts earlier than scheduled, it has really given the industry a needed boost - long may it continue.

As we brace ourselves for (what we hope is a stellar) winter, the SOURCE team has already been hard at work getting to grips with what's popping for winter 17/18. In this, the first in our two-part winter series, we take a look at snowboard boots & bindings and helmets & protection in the snow category and looking away from the mountain we analyse what boardsports brands are up to in streetwear, surf apparel, skateshoes, cruisers and backpacks.

See you on the snow.
Always Sideways
Harry Mitchell Thompson
Editor

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On the cover: Neil McNair, Founder of McNair shirts off the back of Verbier. Photo by Melody Sky

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NIDECKER GROUP ACQUIRES FLOW SNOWBOARDING

The Nidecker Group has acquired Flow Snowboarding from Flow Sports. The group's Chief Marketing Officer, and Brand Manager for Nidecker, Thierry Kunz will now also be responsible for running the Flow Snowboarding brand from the Nidecker HQ in Switzerland. The Nidecker and Flow brands have already integrated some products into the Nidecker line for 17/18 and will use Flow's speed entry system to target the 'occasional participant'.

BERN APPOINTS ANDY STEEL AS INTERNATIONAL SALES MANAGER

Andy Steel has been hired as Bern's International Sales Manager to provide a key focus on growing European business for Bern. Andy is based in the UK and worked as Bern Brand Manager for the UK Distributor - Ultra Sport Europe, for the last six years.

WEST WETSUITS RETURNS TO EUROPEAN MARKET THROUGH SURF SYSTEM

West Wetsuits is returning to the market this winter under the umbrella of SURF SYSTEM, the new European owner of the brand. WEST wetsuits will deliver 10 new models with improved details across three categories. The brand uses neoprene that is 20% lighter than conventional foam and manufactured from environmentally friendly limestone, which offers exceptional thermal properties.

GOLDCOAST APPOINT MIKE VAN MOSEL AS NEW EUROPEAN BRAND MANAGER

Mike van Mosel has been appointed Brand Manager for GoldCoast in Europe. He is taking charge of all sales and marketing for the region and will manage relationships with all the distributors. Mike also continues with his role as general manager at Tom Wholesale. For the last year and a half GoldCoast's European HQ and warehousing have been located at Loosdercht, near Amsterdam.

FINISTERRE OPENS STORE IN BRISTOL

Finisterre have opened the doors to their fourth retail store, with the newest addition housed on Park Street in the English city of Bristol adding to their stores in London, St Agnes and Falmouth.

SURFCLOUD TO INCORPORATE COUNTERSTREAM IN THE ITALIAN SURF MARKET

Big changes are happening in the distribution of surf goods in the Italian market with leading surf hardware distributors from Portugal, Surfcloud Lda and Counterstream Ent. Srl from Italy combining forces. Surfcloud continues its expansion in Europe, incorporating Counterstream and now have a presence in six other European countries.

FRENCH RETAILER HAWAII SURF CELEBRATES 40TH ANNIVERSARY WITH DC AT THE HUB IN PARIS

DC Shoes hosted the 40th anniversary celebrations for French retailer, Hawaii Surf at the HUB in Paris with an exclusive exhibition of historic surf, skate, snowboard and rollerskate items.

WORLD SNOWBOARD DAY MOVES TO MID-SEASON DATE

World Snowboarding Day made the decision to move from its normal December date to January 22 for 2017 to ensure there is snow on the ground for the festivities.

WORLD ROOKIE FINALS 2017 HAS A NEW HOME

The World Rookie Tour (WRT) is the biggest youth snowboard series in the world and The 2017 World Rookie Finals will be hosted at the freestyle playground of Kitzsteinhorn, Zell am See-Kaprun, Austria.

HOFF TAKES ON EUROPEAN DISTRIBUTION FOR COBIAN FOOTWEAR

Hoff Distribution, in Anglet, SW France has been appointed the European distributor for sandal brand, COBIAN Footwear from California.

REEF APPOINTS FABIO MARANGONI AS BRAND & SALES DIRECTOR EMEA

Reef have appointed Fabio Marangoni as the brand's new EMEA Brand & Sales Director. Previous to his new role at Reef, Marangoni worked at fellow VF Corp brand, Vans where he served as Area Manager of Emerging Markets and Distributors and prior to that Fabio worked for Alpinestars, Diesel, The North Face, Intersport and Nordica.

BLUE TOMATO TO OPEN FIRST SWISS STORE

Blue Tomato have opened their first Swiss bricks and mortar premises, a 530-square foot space at Limmatquai 122 in Zurich. The Austrian company currently runs stores in Austria, Germany and does large online business.

RIP CURL OPENS NEW FLAGSHIP STORE IN PENICHE, PORTUGAL

Rip Curl opened a new 350 metre sq flagship store in Peniche, home of the Portuguese WCT stop on October 22 during the contest window. Athletes and Rip Curl crew were on hand for the opening.

GLOBE ACQUIRE 50% OF SALTY CREW

Globe International and apparel brand Salty Crew are joining forces. Under the deal, Globe will acquire 50% of the Salty Crew brand, which was started by professional surfer CJ Hobgood, retail vet Milo Myers and friends Jared and Hayden Lane.

BURTON APPOINTS MARTIN MAGIELKA AS DIRECTOR OF MARKETING IN EUROPE

Burton have welcomed Martin Magielka as their new Director of Marketing in Europe. Joining Burton's team in Innsbruck, Austria, Martin will oversee all European marketing activities for both Burton and anon.

VIMANA OPENS NEW HQ WITH R&D FACILITY

Vimana have opened a new HQ in Stavanger in the South West of Norway. The facility houses a R&D facility, which allows customers and riders to come and see the production process. There's also an on-site print house to allow for easily accessible artist collabs and a coffee shop to enjoy a brew.

BIARRITZ TO HOST 2017 ISA WORLD SURFING GAMES

The ISA World Surfing Games are to take place in Biarritz in May of 2017. It's the first time the competition will be hosted on European soil since 2008. The event gathers the best national surfing teams from across the globe and marks the first event that WSL surfers are sanctioned to compete in.

GLIDESOUL APPOINTS LIAM O'SHEA AS TERRITORIES MANAGER

Liam O'Shea, formerly of Holysport has been appointed Territories Manager for female neoprene brand, Glidesoul. The territories Liam will be looking after include UK, Ireland, France, Spain, Portugal, Italy, California, UAE and Australia. Best of luck in the new position Liam.

NICHE SNOWBOARDS MOVES MANUFACTURING TO THE MOTHERSHIP

Niche Snowboards are moving all production to The Mothership in Austria, the most environmentally responsible snowboard factory in the world, owned by CAPITA.

MIZU OPENS OFFICE IN AMSTERDAM

The reusable bottle manufacturer is expanding its European business with a new European headquarters comprising of an office, warehouse and in-house custom printing operation located in the Netherlands. ☺

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ON SNOW DEMO PREVIEWS

SNOW AVANT-PREMIÈRE, LA CLUSAZ, FRANCE, JANUARY 15-17, 2017

Sportair invites retailers from across Europe to la Clusaz to meet more than 50 brands and to test their 2017/18 range of snowboard products. Though French retailers make up the majority of visitors, last year also saw key retailers from UK, Switzerland, Benelux, Spain and Scandinavia attending. In fact Snow Avant-Première was visited last year by 340 shops and 680 visitors.

The demo is divided into two parts, an outdoor village where the exhibiting brands will have everything you want to test, no matter if you're a powder or a park rider and there is a 450m² showroom tent in which visitors will find not only softgoods brands, boots and accessories brands but also an exhibition wall with the highlights from every brand. Inside the tent is a great place to relax between rides and grab a cup of coffee. From 5pm each evening there's a 'happy hour' time in the showroom tent and this is a great way to debrief on your riding day, speak with reps and exchange with retailers and press whilst checking the exhibition wall to choose which board you'll test the following day. Afterwards visitors and exhibitors head on down to the Snow Avant Première party downtown in La Clusaz.

For this year Sportair has developed an Android and IOS app that allows retailers to note all the products they test in real time and exchange pdf files with exhibitors. This will be saved on a personal account for every visitor, meaning they'll have a personal record of what they tested at the

trade show. This will work in conjunction with the simple data recording system based at the entrance to the outdoor tent park.

Brands confirmed at time of going to press include 32, adidas Snowboarding, Amplid, Anon, Arbor, Bataleon, Bent Metal, Burton, Capita, Dakine, Deeluxe, Drake, Electric, Endeavor, Flux, Giro, Gnu, Goodboards, Jones, K2, Lib-Tech, Lobster, Never Summer, Nidecker, Nitro, Northwave, Now, Picture, Ride, Rome, Rossignol, Roxy, Salomon, Sims, Slash, Smith, Union and Yes.

Two people per shop are invited to the event with the invitation including 1 access badge, 1 ski pass for the La Clusaz resort, 1 breakfast and 1 lunch for each person.

If you are more than two persons or if you want to extend your journey, it costs 50 euros extra per person per day. For people who come from far away, the organizers provide a shuttle from Geneva to La Clusaz. The return trip and accommodation is available at special prices. Retailers can also take the opportunity to visit ASAP, Sportair's softgoods show which is held in Annecy over the same days and is only 35 minutes drive away. Here brands show their 17/18 outerwear lines at their own showrooms or at the ASAP specific showroom and you can visit the evening Fashion Show Party at the Impérial Palace in Annecy.

www.sportair.fr

SHOPS 1ST TRY, ALPBACHTAL-WILDSCHÖNAU, AUSTRIA, JANUARY 22-24, 2017

For 2017 Shops 1st try is to be held again at Alpbachtal-Wildschönau. The event location provides a spacious test area across Alpbachtal's wide and varied terrain, which also includes the snow park. Currently 65 brands have registered to exhibit, as always this is dominated by hard goods brands with all the key boards, bindings and boot brands represented but also a significant increase in the number of goggles, accessories and outerwear brands and a number of specially invited micro brands. The full list is: 686, adidas Snowboarding, Amplid, Amplifi, Anon, Arbor, Äsmo, Bataleon Snowboards, Bent Metal, Bern, Boa Technology, Bonfire, BuddyBuddy, Burton, Capita, Dakine, Deeluxe, Drake, Eivy, Electric, Flow Snowboarding, Flux Bindings, GNU, Goodboards, Horsefeathers, Icetools, Jones, K2, Karakoram, L1, Lib-Tech, Lobster Snowboards, Melon Optics, Never Summer Industries, Nidecker, Nikita, Nitro, Northwave, Now, Oakley, Pally Hi, Picture Organic Clothing, Plum, Pow, Ride, Rip Curl, Rome, Rossignol, Roxy, Salomon, Sessions, Shred, Sims Snowboards, Slash, Slytech, Smith, SP Bindings, SwitchBack Bindings, Transform, TSG Protection, Union, Vans, Volcom, Yes and Yunika. Brands exhibiting for the first time including Yunika, Buddy Buddy, Melon, Plum, TSG, Bonfire, Sessions, Nikita, Volcom, Horsefeathers, Asmo, Eivy, Oakley, Shred and Transform gloves. During the day 'Shred Buddies' (Pros, Ams and ambassadors)

provided by the brands will be ready to ride with retailers and offer their views on the products being tested.

A busy program is scheduled with a noboard demo on Sunday 16:00-18:00 on the night slope, right next to the Congress Centrum Alpbach where the two evenings of Highlight Exhibition Dinners will be held. The dinner was introduced two years ago and has proved such a success that an additional evening has been added for this year. The evening is a combination of a relaxed dinner surrounded by product displays inside the local congress hall. Besides hardware, boots and goggle brands a number of outerwear and protection brands will display at the dinner including Volcom, Sessions, Bonfire, Nikita, Horsefeathers, Rip Curl, 686, Picture, Transform gloves, TSG, Slytech and Icetools. This year there will also be some retail education programs during the Highlight Exhibition Dinner.

In previous years Shops 1st Try was only open only open to retailers from the DACH-region, but for this, it's 8th edition, the event will open its door to retailers from all over Europe. The invitation includes a free lift pass for two days, plus dinner for one night for two people from your shop (you have to be a buyer, boss or owner). Free spots are limited, so you better be fast! Registration is still open.

www.shops-1st-try.com



BRIGHT, BERLIN, GERMANY, JANUARY 17-19

This winter tradeshow season, Bright and Seek will be working even closer together than before. Two new 3 metre high and 4 metre wide connections between the halls, will integrate the two tradeshows, giving the feel of a single experience. Both shows will now be similarly divided into sections but with the focus of each tradeshow remaining as before.

At Bright, the show will be rearranged into 5 sub sections; Urban Wear & Street Fashion, Accessories, Outdoor Aesthetics, Streetwear and Skateboarding and Sneakers and a revamped version of the Sneaker market.

Urban Wear & Street Fashion will be on display in the Glashaus. This area will be highlighted through exclusive DJ sets and live performances and house a separate chill-out area for both business and pleasure.

The all-new segment Outdoor Aesthetics, located in the entrance area, is a unique platform for brands that sit right between high performance and streetwear. The Outdoor section will have selected brands from the still relatively young Outdoor and Techwear scene presenting their outdoor lifestyle styles that combine both technical performance and fashion.

Traditional core segments of Bright Tradeshow – Streetwear, Skateboarding and Sneakers will now congregate in the central part of the building. This entire middle section of the main hall will feature an all new booth concept with higher rear panels (2m) and all-black backdrops; a clean design that's all about attractive product presentation.

Accessories will now play a more important role than before, with a 300sqm area dedicated to bags, sunglasses, headwear and jewellery.

SLIDE TELFORD INTERNATIONAL CENTRE, UK, JANUARY 24-26

Slide returns to Telford in the English midlands, once again positioning itself in advance of ISPO and is again the first trade show in Europe where it's possible to see all of snowboarding's 2017/18 winter products. The early dates, which give buyers plenty of time to make their selections whilst enabling brands to meet order deadlines for production, has attracted Volcom, Salomon, Lole and Golbergh to book stands for the first time.

The majority of brands from previous years are returning and with newcomers to the show including Burnt Custard merino baselayers made in the UK, Ember heated gloves and Storm Care Solutions waterproofing coating. At time of going to press around 80 companies, representing around 200 different brands, have booked 90% of the available space. So brands looking for a choice of stand locations need to act fast to take advantage of reaching the whole UK key snowsport buyers under one roof. The 'best in show' Slide Award finalists will be exhibited with the winners announced on the Wednesday evening.

On the first evening, for those who've talked enough shop during the day, the serious business of ten-pin bowling takes place. On the second evening, the Snowsport industries of Great Britain annual AGM is held, followed by an open forum on all things relevant to the UK

The whole catering section for the combined shows has been relocated next to the Bright entrance to increase traffic flow. The Bright, Seek and Premium exhibitions now boast a range of more than 1,500 brands, attracting more than 50,000 trade visitors bi-annually during Berlin Fashion Week, with industry leaders Bright and Seek alone presenting more than 500 contemporary streetwear and lifestyle brands each season. This summer 15,000 visitors from 66 countries attended both Bright and Seek, with foreign visitors making up 41% of the total, which was made up of 9% from France & Benelux, 11% Southern Europe, 5% UK & Ireland, 3% Scandinavia, 5% Eastern Europe, 4% Austria & Switzerland and 4% elsewhere.

At time of going to press returning brands include Cheapo Brand, MiPAC, Lousy Livin Underwear, 24//7 Dist, DVS Shoe Co, HUF, The Hundreds, Independent Trucks Co, Levi's Skateboarding Collection, Makia, Neff, New Balance Numeric, OBEY, Santa Cruz, Turbokolor & Vans and first timers include Heimplanet, Supra, State Footwear, Oru kayak, Snowpeak, Simple, Faust skate, Mafia, Keen, Mountain of Moods, JeckyBeng, Dosh, Deejo and ARYS. Retailers should download the Premium group app to get the most out of the show. Regular shuttle buses will be running between Bright, Seek, Premium and Panorama to enable quick transfer from one show to another and joint ticketing will speed up show access.

This year's European Skateboard Awards in co-operation with Vans and Free mag will take place on the evening of January 17. This year's voting will be via Instagram from December 19-23. You can watch all the clips at www.awards.brightskateboarding.com

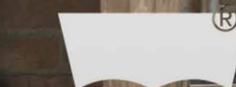
www.brighttradeshow.com

snow industry. Key topics will undoubtedly be the effect of Brexit on the UK snowsport industry and the SIGB's Go UK Buy UK campaign, supporting UK retailers.

Exhibitors correct at time of going to press included 686, Coal, Salomon, Atomic, Barts, Black Diamond, Bonfire, Nikita, Sessions, Buffera Ltd, Burnt Custard, Dainese, Dakine, Dragon Alliance, Nike Vision, Roxy, Five Seasons, Giro, Head, Horsefeathers, Atrip, K2 Snowboarding, Ride, Man O'Leisure Ltd, Olang, Mycoal, Noble Custom, Ortovox, O'Neill, Oakley, Outdoor Research, Patagonia, Picture, Planks Clothing, Protest, Rossignol, Salomon, SnoKart, SnowFalls, Sole Technology UK, Stance, Sweet Protection, The Riders Lounge, TKC Sales Ltd, Tran Am Ltd, Trespass, Volcom, Zeal Optics and Zeek. The show is free to attend and visitor registration is open online via the Slide website. Doors open each day at 9am and winds up at 6pm on the first two days and at 4pm on the final day. Visitors can take advantage of preferential hotel rates by booking on the Slide website. Slide is a must for brands operating in the UK market.

www.slideuk.co.uk

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EVENTS REVIEW

EUROSIMA SURF SUMMIT, SEIGNOSSE, FRANCE, OCTOBER 6-7

The surf industry's annual conference was held during the Quik Pro and as always the town was full of industry personnel, as this is now the definitive European surf industry get together. The 15th edition of the European Surf Summit saw two full days of presentations and debate under the title theme: "It's time to think outside the box". Day one of the conference was on issues related to the action sports markets and the new challenges that rapid innovation creates. The event was opened by Wilco Prins, Eurosima's new president. Speakers on the first day included Frédéric Tain founder of Sport Guide who presented on 10 key European market figures, Fernando Aguerre President of International Surfing Association spoke via a Skype link on what you should know about surfing in the Olympics, and Philippe Vlaeminck, expert in innovation strategies and collaborative intelligence, presented on reinventing your business model. The conference day ended with an emotional talk from free surfer and explorer Kepa Acero on realising your dreams and goals. In the evening a buffet was held at the Le Belharra Café in Capbreton followed by a presentation match of high energy Pelota. The second

day started early with an energizing workshop run by Human Skills Development. Speakers on the Friday, which concentrated on new business models, included Emmanuelle Duez, a serial entrepreneur on 'The Generation of Mercenaries, It's time to step up', Philippe Leclair founder of Stratégie de la Réussite on 'Strategies for success, Train like a champion' and Iker Aguirre, ex-Eurosima board member on 'The Business of the Future'. In the same hall, the Surfing Lounge exhibition presented the latest creative and innovative products of the action sports industry.

The traditional Waterman's Ball took place on the Friday evening at the Belambra club Seignosse, this year's theme was Ghetto Blasters, with suitably attired partygoers photographed on a themed set. The evening included the presentation of the European male Surfer of the Year Award to Leo Fioravanti and female Surfer of the Year to Johanne Defay, the Innovation of the Year award went to Patagonia for the Yulex wetsuit and they donated the 5000 euro prize to Surfers against Sewage.

www.eurosima.com

SPORT ACHAT NANTES, FRANCE, SEPTEMBER 18-19

This was the first new show for action sports in Europe for a number of years. So congratulations to Sportair, the owner, for moving ahead with this initiative to fill a gap for a European surf orientated trade show and to help brands cover the North-West of France more effectively. Most brands exhibiting came from both outdoor and action sports categories.

574 trade visitors attended over the two days with brands accepting they needed to give this event some time to settle down and grow. As with the Lyon show there was a Crème Fraiche area at the entrance for new brands, which was well received. The water sports, urban board sports and cycling were the busiest segments. Most visitors came from within a 100 km radius and used the opportunity to meet suppliers and discover new brands.

During the show the first French Forum for professionals in sport and outdoor leisure activities was held, The Ministry of Sports accompanied by the FPS and FIFAS unveiled the first report on French

sports and outdoor leisure activities. This study reviews the sporting practices of French people who spend €5.6 billion on equipment, on average €160 per year and per participant. Two panel discussions followed this presentation, the first on the economic benefits of sport and the second on the impact of sports activities on their local environment.

The Expo is right next to the river so retailers were able to test SUPs on the water and the 2nd annual Nantes Paddle Expérience SUP race was held during the show. For next year the dates are September 17 for the B2C day, including the SUP race and September 18-19 for the B2B, which means the show moves to a Monday Tuesday slot, to encourage retailers to attend the event. Nantes has air connections from a number of UK airports, so British based brands, distributors, agents and retailers should also consider the show in their planning as the UK currently has no similar event.

www.sportair.fr

PADDLEEXPO, NÜRNBERG, GERMANY, OCTOBER 7-9

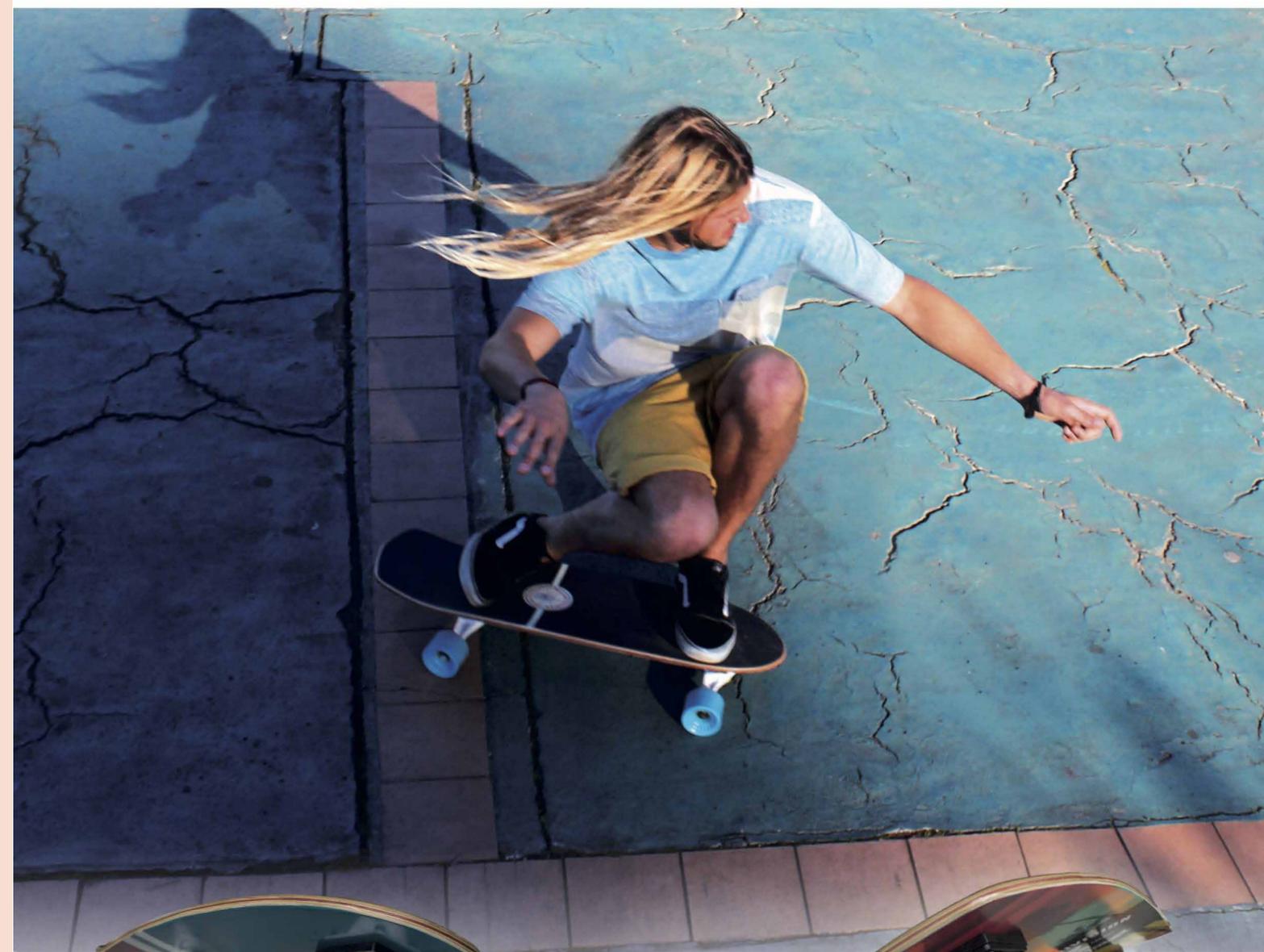
This is Europe's paddle sports tradeshow, attracting brands from SUP, kayaking and canoeing. The three-day event attracted visitors from all over Europe who came to see the latest product and technologies on offer. 282 brands including most of the key players in these industries exhibited on the 135 booths, with the 8400 sq metre hall sold out.

2016 attendance was similar to previous years with 1550 visitors from 44 nations. International visitors make up 54% of the total with most coming from Switzerland, Italy, Czech Republic, UK and France. Overall brands were happy with the show and the timing of the event meant late summer sales had put the industry in a buoyant mood. The sitdown dinner on the Saturday night saw over 200 people enjoying

themselves as the annual Coolest Product of the Show awards which were presented by KS Publishing, The world's Premier Paddlesports Media Group. Winners included NRS for their Quiver Whitewater Board in the SUP category and for accessories, Fusion Entertainments won with Stereo Active waterproof speaker. The evening was a great success and really gave everyone a feeling of belonging to a community. For 2017 the show is moving to earlier dates, September 19-21 to fit in better with the industry ordering cycle and as well changing to Tuesday-Thursday from the Friday-Sunday to make it easier for retailers to attend.

www.paddleexpo.com

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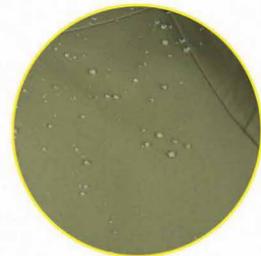
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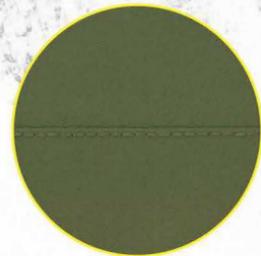
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EDGE 2 EDGE, GARMISCH-PARTENKIRCHEN

Edge 2 Edge snowboard shop in Garmisch-Partenkirchen has been serving the local area with expert advice for a quarter of a century and SOURCE thought it high time we featured the shop as our Retailer Profile spot.

Please give a brief history of your store.

The Edge 2 Edge Snowboardshop in Garmisch-Partenkirchen stands for 25 years of snowboarding, service and support. In 1991, one fine summer day three enthusiastic pioneers had the idea to open a snowboard shop in Garmisch-Partenkirchen. In the following winter, Jacqueline Gruber, who is still the owner today, and co-founders Erwin and Leo opened the very first snowboard shop here, which is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year. Established, experienced and now far beyond the county borders.

How has snowboarding business changed in 25 years?

What has changed the most in the business itself, compared to back in the day is you have to work a lot harder to generate turnover; it's not just about the opening hours of the shop anymore. Controlling and agreements are more important than ever, thoroughly checking deliveries and invoices, terms of payments, pre-orders, reorders etc. The snowboard business only became a real proper business in the last couple of years. You can't afford to make any mistakes anymore!

What's the most challenging aspect of the snowboard business at present?

Snowboarding has grown up, yet working with the offspring has been neglected for while. But that's starting to change now and we notice that snowboarding is still playing a role for the younger target groups.

What are you doing to help involve kids in snowboarding?

We support young riders in every way we can. We try to find and convince a lot of new riders in cooperation with the Snowboardclub Garmisch-Partenkirchen e.V. and offer them a platform. Our support with the Bavarian Slopestyle Championships was a great help for the Snowboardclub GaPa.

What are five products you couldn't live without right now?

The only thing that's really needed is snow at the beginning of the season so that turnover (sell through) starts at the right time and not just in the sales period. Apart from that every shop has to look after how to generate their own revenues.

What makes your store different and in what ways does your store excel beyond your competition?

We are experts; we love and live what we're trying to sell. We focus on the sport and think that this enables us to help out a lot of people.

How do you stay in touch with the wants and needs of your customers?

We search the market for all kinds of innovations, chat with colleagues and friends, and look at what's happening in other countries, even while on our private time on holiday. You always have to form your own impression to be convinced on something. The internet with all its various channels is so fast nowadays, a trend can be born on one day and gone the next. This can be very interesting to following yet is to be treated with caution.

What events do you have lined up for this winter?

In the 2016/2017 season we will once again support the Snowboardclub Garmisch-Partenkirchen with hosting the Bavarian Slopestyle Championships. And we will almost certainly organise a couple of shop screenings to watch Nitro BOOM and of course TheFourthPhase for example...

Which brands are selling well for you at the beginning of 16/17 winter so far?

In the streetwear and outerwear sectors we're happy to have a good partner in Volcom, which is a brand that appeals to a lot of different customers; whether they have been part of the scene for years or just found their way in this summer through skateboarding or something else.

When it comes to hardware, we're big into Mervin products, (Lib Tech, GNU and Roxy snowboards). And Nitro have a great offering in boards, bindings and boots and are a constant that we rely on too. But we mustn't forget the younger clients of course, which have big potential. Oakley does a great job not only with goggles - we're also very curious how the consumer will react to their helmets.

How are you using social media to stay relevant?

We use Facebook to stay in touch with our friends and clients, which is a great tool that is super easy, quick and informative. With funny, interesting and informative posts you can quickly reach the relevant target group and generate interest and rewards for our shop, explaining what we're up to and what's in the pipeline for events etc. 📌

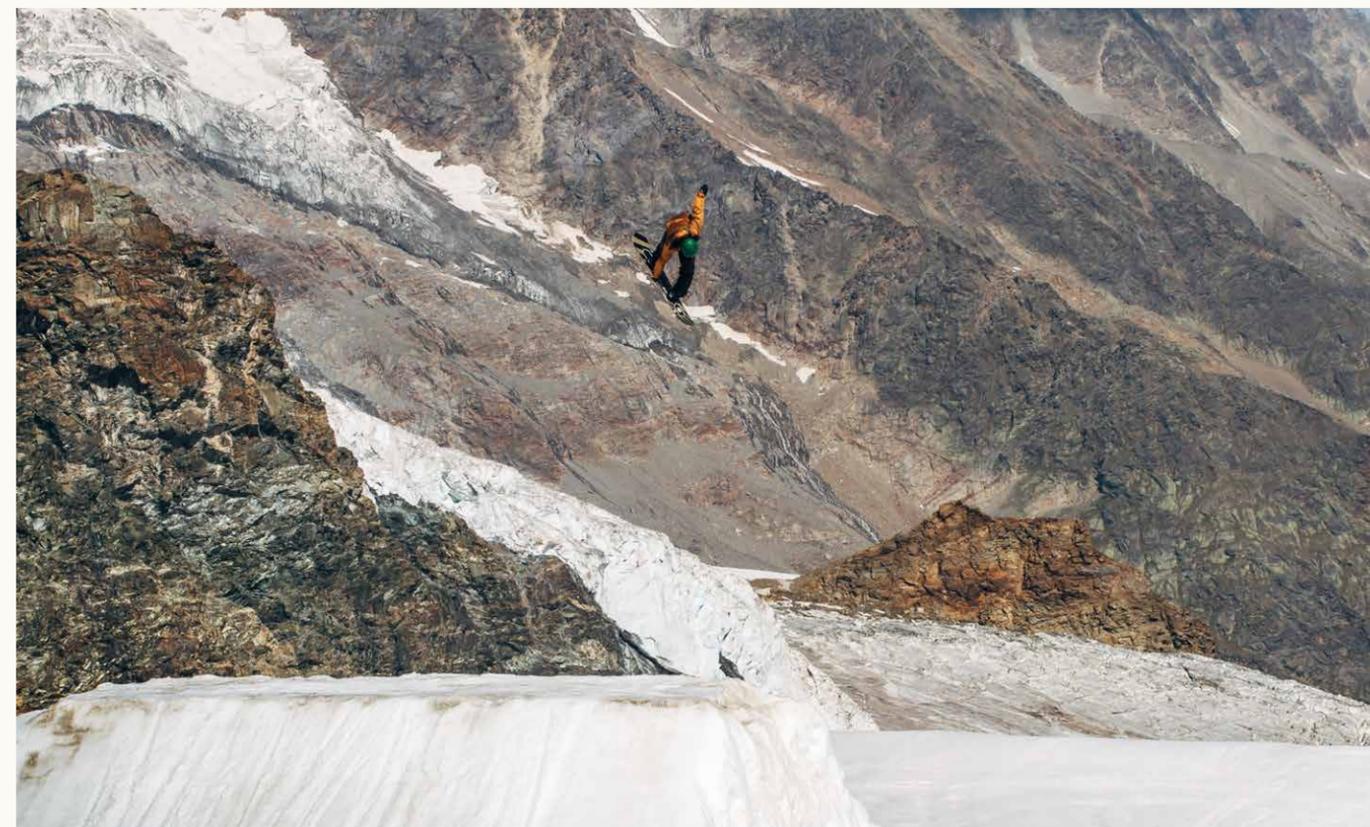
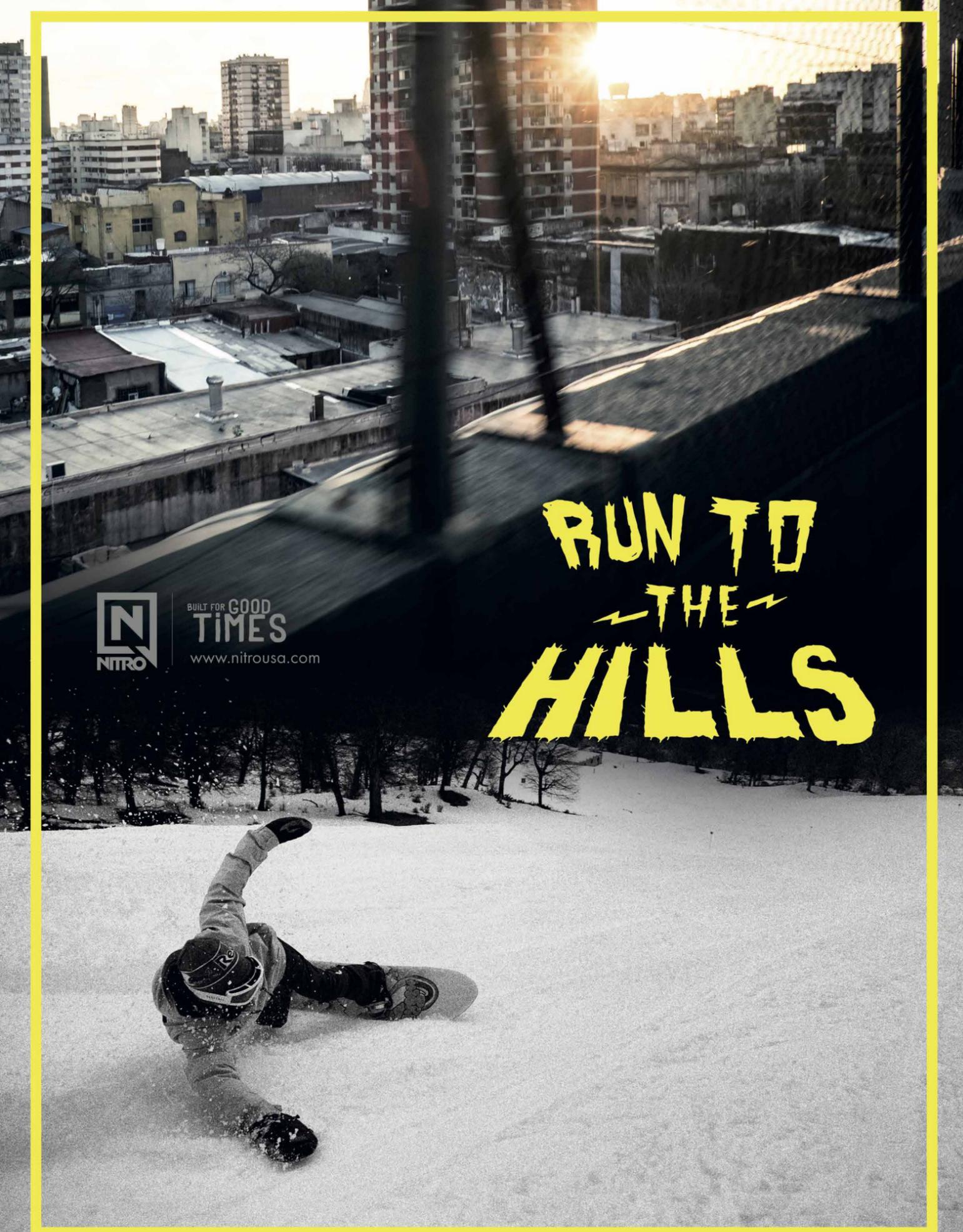


photo: Head

SNOWBOARD BOOTS FW17/18 TREND REPORT

Snowboard boots have come a long way since the puffy, oversized lumps from the turn of the century; nowadays your boots are slick, slim and hella comfy. Well, they should be. And things are only going to get better next year.

Tom Wilson-North reveals all in our snowboard boot trend report.

KEY NEW MODELS

32 take the prize for the hardest work done this spring with not one but three new models out for FW17/18; the customizable TM-3 with brand new midsole, Storm Shield weatherproofing and Exo Armour reinforcement is our favourite of the lot. Then there's their lightweight and surfy Zephyr - a throwback to the brand's skate roots with a buttery flex which also comes as a Jones Edition with half-zip gaiter. Finally, there's their Lashed Premium, which goes all top-endy with feature upgrades like full-grain leather and Performance Fit liner.

There's a new brand out there - something of a rarity in a shrinking market - which you'll want to go and see; binding masters Flux are now turning their hand to boots. Their line is full of technical details and attention, with Vibram soles linewide and reinforced top panels for maximum binding engagement. We liked their MXS-Lace backcountry boot with memory foam and neoprene around the toe for a freeride-friendly fit. Salomon are coming in heavy with a fully upgraded Synapse with new upper and outsole, and Northwave add an all-new Domain CR (Crampon Ready) with heel and toe grooves for automatic crampons. Vans are also showing a brand new backcountry specific model called the Verse, with a zip-up shroud sealing the lower portion against the elements.

Elsewhere, Adidas' new Tactical ADV boot receives a trickle-down Boost foam outsole to create a brilliant value package, and DC's Judge has been redesigned with a new BOA routing and Vibram outsole.

Rome are showing a brand new all-mountain boot called the Libertine SRT with Boa Heel Lock closure, their proprietary PowerStay Strap at the cufftop and, again, a Vibram outsole. I should buy shares in that company.

Also worth a look is, Deeluxe, who show their commitment to all things boardsport with the noboard-specific Footloose. "We provide a tool for every type of riding and style, so we didn't want to leave anyone behind. This will be the first noboard/powsurf boot ever made, two years in the making," enthuses Marketing Director Mathieu Perez.

FOR CLOSURE

The continued market demand for easy and robust lacing systems means that the only ones still used in snowboarding are the ones that work the best; trad, BOA and a couple of no-nonsense quick lace solutions.

32's Fast Track gets a complete overhaul with new eyelet guides, handles, lacing patterns and a lock with no external hardware. Vimana are also set to join the speedlace party, and adidas will be employing the Burton Speed Zone lacing system on certain models under license.

In BOA, Head come top of the innovation pile with a New Instep Comfort Enhancer (NICE, geddit?), which puts the ankle guide and liner tongue on the outside of the liner to scrub out pressure points.

Comfort Enhancer (NICE, geddit?), which puts the ankle guide and liner tongue on the outside of the liner to scrub out pressure points. "This tongue placement is a problem solver for those of us who hate the daily wrestle with the boots in the parking lot. It's designed for riders who are fairly new to snowboarding - we feel it is very important to invest at our base, making it more attractive for newcomers to enter the sport. All this starts with a comfortable boot," says Max Thurner, Head Snowboard's International Marketing Manager.

We're also seeing a couple of new ideas in heel-hold: Flow's Tracer has asymmetrical lacing and a Heel-Lock quickfit, which really locks the back of your foot in place. And on DC's Mutiny, a new lace leverage system pulls the heel back rather than crushing it down, giving more of a skatey feel.



Photo: Nitro

AESTHETICS

If a boot doesn't look good, it's not going to sell. Not at full price, anyway. Snowboard shops the world over know this, with garages or even warehouses full of what looked like a great idea at the time... but the clients voted otherwise. Earth tones seem to be the safe middleground for buyers here; nothing too flashy or garish, but interesting enough to sell. "Our aesthetic direction for the coming year is on natural tones and unique blacks that we highlight with pops. Rich browns and rich blacks definitely drive the style of our boots", says Rome's Philipp Kammerer.

DC take their lead from their outerwear design team, working closely with them on colours; SKUs like the cool Beetle colourway on the Judge work perfectly with their men's technical clothing, for example. Over at 32 it's the same story, with desaturated and muted tones like burnt orange, browns and yellows dominating the palette. "Same here, we stay away from being too flashy," says Nitro's president Tommy Delago. "We'd prefer to encourage riders to spend a bit more on their boots and get a better fitting product which they don't get sick of looking at after a few months."

TECHNICAL INNOVATION

Thankfully, gimmicks are becoming a thing of the past as brands vie to create the best fitting, best looking and best value boot out there.

But there are some cunning implementations of new technology that caught our eye. Salomon's all-new Custom Heat Liner on the women's Kiana Toast promises great fit and guaranteed warmth for up to 18 hours, whilst Vimana keep things cosy with a cold screen layer beneath their footbeds. The pinnacle of the Burton women's line is the Ritual Ltd, which they say is "recognized by our field testers as 'the most comfortable boot' in the line. It combines top-tier technology for a lighter, warmer, more cushioned experience because of the Ultraweave Shell Material."

32's new Elite Liner sounds cool; it's an injection-moulded shell made from their dense Energy Foam, then lined with Intuition Foam for heat mouldability. This liner comes with an Elite footbed with Adaptive Arch Support - four interchangeable arch wedges come in the box, so you can customize the footbeds to fit and support your plates of meat whatever crunk shape they are.

INSPIRATION

For years snowboard boot companies have followed skate shoe trends for inspiration - now things are changing. When we spoke to brands, football boots (!) came up as important influences alongside the classic comfortable runner or hiking shoe. Furthermore, functional and utilitarian footwear such as safety shoes, work boots and biker boots were also cited, far more than the inevitable skate shoe which was only referenced in a retro or old-school context.

SHOP FIT

Boots are often hailed as the lifesaver of bricks and mortar. The online and offline snowboard community is insistent that boots should be tried on before purchase, so there are still plenty of people coming in to give 'em a go. Brands are paying particular attention to enhancing 'shop fit', or how the things slide on and off first time, to make the client so blown away they buy it then and there without a hint of showrooming. "We made this a priority... now our boots fit great right out of the box. We want snowboarders to slip the boots on in-store and feel right at home, right away. It works," confirms DC's David Appel. Flow's Dale Rehberg agrees: "It is of the utmost importance that when a customer tries on our boots at the retail level that they have a perfect experience. This is where the sale is made and brand advocates are born." It's good to know that brands are thinking of us when we're scabbling around on our knees, with paper balls, smelly socks, size charts and sketchily piled boot boxes towered up around the back of the shop.

CONCLUSION

Well, it looks like next year's boot buy is going to be an easy one. With fewer boot companies out there, a lot of unnecessary crap has been removed from the marketplace, leaving only the strongest performers in terms of quality, value and fit. The brands that will work the best next will be the ones that look after their distribution; it's important that the boot brands you offer aren't commonly discounted via online mega retailers. This ought to keep that vile showrooming effect to a minimum and sell through, hopefully, sky high. 📌

HIGHLIGHTS

- Earth tones dominate
- New liner technologies
- Quick lace refinement
- "Shop fit" enhancements



BOARD: PILOT

BOOT: SIX BOA FOCUS

BINDING: NX THREE



JAKE BLAUVELT

SWITCH FRONTSIDE 900 IN THE BLAUVELT BOOT
WHISTLER, BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA



SWITCHBACK
BINDINGS

Introducing a new platform; The AERON base is the result of 3 years of hardcore research and development.

We have created a stronger and lighter base using an industry first production method, over-molding forged aluminum with the highest grade polyamide Nylon. With a smaller disc, smaller footprint, and toolless size adjustability, we now offer unparalleled boot fit regardless of brand and size.



photo: Switchback

SNOWBOARD BINDINGS FW17/18 TREND REPORT

For FW17/18, bindings will see incremental increases in quality, value and functionality instead of any world-changing leaps forward. That's not to say that development has plateaued; it's more the changes being implemented are going on 'under the hood', so to speak. A customer ideal has been set, and all the key companies in the game are coming in somewhere closeby. Let's zoom in on what FW17/18 has in store with our snowboard binding trend report.

By Tom Wilson-North.

MATERIALS & CONSTRUCTION TECHNIQUES

Nothing like fresh ingredients to keep customers interested. Nitro are using a Vibram toestrap on their Machine & Poison models; the sticky rubber normally found on freeride boots stays in place "no matter how hard you stomp your landing, even if it's wet or damn cold," according to Marketing Director, Andi Aurhammer. Also in straps, look out for Salomon's brand new Hytrel/EVA mix Shadow Strap on the Hologram. Drake switch from carbon to an equivalent natural linen fibre called Biomap Flax on their Podium FF highback, and Fix are going 100% regrind-free with their base materials. "This means that we don't grind up the waste and inject it back into our products. But unless you are standing in production every day, it is very difficult to monitor how much regrind is actually being used, so we do an audit. For every injection, the vendors must supply the excess material, which we then use to produce our plastic binding box", says Fix's Jason Broz. Top marks.

The ways in which these ingredients are being used is changing as well. Union have a new nylon injection process called Microfused which débuts on their new Falcor chassis; the injection is focused around the disc ring, making for a lighter and stronger package. "Well, our internal tooling costs for Microfused are quite a bit higher, but in the long run we really see this as the future of base design", explains Union's George Kleckner with a sideways glance at his calculator. Switchback are also changing up the injection process with an overmold technique which forges aluminium and glass filled polyamide nylon into a single unit. The result is their game-changing Aeron base. This new lightweight tray - compatible with existing Switchback

hardware - is a big deal, with smart design and increased strength; they hope it'll launch Switchback into the upper echelons of the binding market.

For Burton, it's their Flex Slider that gets us snowboard binding geeks excited: "It makes strapping in a breeze with a strategically stretched hinging zone that allows the heel strap to flex and lay fully open. Thanks to the science of forced molecular alignment, the Flex Slider is also stronger, making it worthy of our lifetime warranty."

VALUE

It's been a rollercoaster ride over the last few winters with volatility in currency markets shooting MSRPs up and down in different territories. To keep customers engaged, we're seeing tech being crammed into key pricepoint packages - Bent Metal's Solution with Spread Tow carbon springs to mind and remains somewhat peerless at its pricepoint. Next year we see an enhanced focus on midline product. Rome are introducing two new mid-price models: the men's Vice and women's Guild. Both are based off the flagship Katana and incorporate unique highbacks, dog-bone straps and lots of customization. Rossignol are showing the brand new Viper & Voodoo in their mid-range, which match polyamide and glass fibre with full length EVA footbeds, through-to-board heel pads, and new AsymFrame highbacks. Expect prices to remain somewhat stable next year, with increases in bang for buck on the shelf. This is a good thing. "No-one wins in a race to the bottom anyway: customers get worse products, retailers get squeezed, and brands move overseas", confirms Karakoram's Kyle Hansen.

QUIVER-ING

Whilst something of a universally detested word (up there with “moist” & “phlegm”), “quiver-ing” - or the ability to switch bindings rapidly between different boards - is gaining traction. It started off with Burton’s QFTD rental disc, then quickly found a home in splitboarding, with the One Binding System allowing tourers to use their trusty Spark R&D bindings on their solids. And Karakoram’s Prime Connect, out last year, were and are a true crossover resort/ split package. For FW17/18, Now are bringing the idea to solid boards: their Kingpin Tool-less Kit will allow you to swap your Nows from board to board without losing stance or angle settings; just click off the base hanger via the four catches. In a similar vein, there’s a brand-new quick swap rental solution called the Reply Rail from Rossignol, which we’ll take a closer look at in our snowboard trend report next issue.

BOARD FEEL VS CUSHIONING

One of binding design’s oldest questions is how to balance terrain feedback with cushioning. “Yeah, but that sweet spot is really hard to define though, says SP’s Rob Mathera. “It’s a very subjective matter, so we offer different models with different cushioning and stiffness which we design with the team”. Everyone agrees that striking a balance is key; the approaches, however, vary. Technine go full tech with their split-frame Niner, back for a second year and using two independent half-frames linked only via the padding and heelcup to give a ‘baseless’ feel, and Rome’s Katana uses a very thin d3o pad for cushioning without imposing on board feedback. Head use Dampiflex in multiple densities to tune feel.

Other brands prefer to limit (undampened) baseplate to board contact. Drake’s Lightsaber base is very minimal, with everything wrapped in a canted EVA pad to break up impacts, and Arbor’s X-Drive baseplate sends energy out to the edge whilst keeping the stiff material lifted away from the topsheet, thereby allowing underfoot board flex to be more natural and true to spec.

There is another school of thought that says that the board is what you paid all that money for, so that’s what you want to feel the most. Vimana’s binding has a rounded, turned-up base, which has little impact on board feel. And according to Flux’s Colin Kiesel, “Our goal is to let the snowboard handle the flex patterns, then let the boots take care of the cushioning. People don’t realize how much control they lose when they switch a solid base for padding. Binding cushioning is just not effective, so the sweet spot is having a binding that transfers movement as efficiently as possible”.

COLOURS

“No matter how good a binding is, a big part of the end consumer’s decision is still based on aesthetics and whether or not it ‘matches my board’,” laments Switchback’s Product Director, Cleay Perham. Clearly, owners of Board Brand X will lean toward that brand’s own binding with made-to-match aesthetic. But for everyone else, the foremost colour is, of course, black. “Honestly, look. The fact of the matter here is that black always wins. It seems boring, but we all like black,” says Flow’s Dale Rehberg. Literally every brand we spoke to confirmed that was where the demand was. After all, there’s no reason not to buy a black binding, whereas the fluorescent puce one... well.

Elsewhere in aesthetics, we saw fewer translucent materials, a continued tendency toward small pop colours highlighting tech features, the ‘dipped’ look remaining popular, and earth tones and subtle graphic treatments like smoke and camo trending in. True to form, Bent Metal throw all that out the window and will show a Sean Genovese collab on their resplendent acid green Logic binder, and Forest Bailey’s art on the Transfer.

BOOT MAPPING

We’ve all been there; pick the perfect boot for your feet, pick the perfect binding for your riding style, and smash your head against the wall as it becomes apparent the two don’t really fit together, with maxed out straps and huge lateral gaps. Skiesque standardization between boots and bindings is frankly never going to happen in snowboarding, but at least binding companies are making more of an effort with it. “It’s a very difficult part of the process, confirms Plum’s Christophe ‘Tal’ Etallaz, “and we spend a lot of time and attention on it. Very different volumes of boots will end up going in the same size of Plum base. So we measured the dimensions of many different models of boots, across several sizes, and we defined our sizing like to suit”. It was also interesting to learn about the vast boot library in Union’s R&D department, and see the changes that Spark R&D made to their highbacks and straps after lengthy boot analysis.

SPLITBOARDING

Well, the big news in splitboard bindings is Union who launch the Expedition Split Binding Series developed with Bryan Iguchi and the fairly well known Travis Rice. True to theme with their “less is more” product mentality, Expedition is ready to ride out of the box. Early reports suggest that there will be two different pricepoints of a lightweight, plastic based system, which promises to ride like a Union. Expect big things.

Meanwhile, over at Spark R&D they’ve got something cooking at the premium end using exotic materials and a carbon highback with lower weight and enhanced rigidity. Since Spark bought their building in Bozeman last year they’ve been able to vertically integrate a bit further and offer refinements on straps and other plastic parts. Up in France’s Arve valley, Plum keeps trucking, and FW17/18 sees Tal & the crew bringing out new models with injected highbacks, part of a plan to move toward a more familiar style and engage younger riders as the splitboarder demographic widens. Rossignol continue piggybacking the Plum system for their XV Split, now with 3D moulded toestrap for lighter weight and new smaller size. The Karakoram line remains unchanged for FW17/18 with the emphasis on quiver-ing as discussed above. Finally, SP are introducing a new multi-entry splitboard binding that offers conventional strap buckles and their Fastec system.

CONCLUSION

So, there you have it. With fewer R&D dollars going around, the impetus is on refinement rather than expansion. Also, in a shrinking market with a more clued-up customer, bindings being “just something we also do” doesn’t cut it anymore. The only way people are going to pay top dollar at retail is if they have complete confidence in the company that makes the thing, as well as your recommendation. Stick with the brands that are doing it right, buy plenty of black and it can’t go wrong.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Fresh injection techniques
- Better boot fits
- Quiver-ing
- Black, black, black
- Splitboard systems advance

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BOARDSPORTS RETAIL IT'S TIME FOR A DISRUPTION!

SOURCE's Skateboard Editor, **Dirk Vogel** analyses the the future of shopping habits, business models, and touch points between stores and consumers – and how core board shops can stay ahead of (digital) disruption.

The new Viceland television series “Abandoned” shows pro skateboarder Rick McCrank skating the ghostly remains of Rolling Acres Mall in Ohio – once a thriving shopping centre with over 50 individual stores, now a deserted wasteland of smashed store fronts. Against the backdrop of recent bankruptcies among major sports retail chains such as PacSun, Sport Chalet, and Sports Authority, the apocalyptic images of “Ghost Malls” seem rather ominous.

But no need to panic. Stationary retail is not going the way of the dinosaurs, even despite the rapid rise of e-commerce. Why? First of all, 72% of European consumers still do “all or most” of their shopping in physical stores (iVend Retail). Second, online shopping only accounts for 7.3% of total retail sales in Europe – or €477 billion in 2015 – according to a recent study by Ecommerce Europe and GfK. And third, even the much-maligned Generation Z or iGeneration – today's tech-obsessed 14-to-19-year-olds – indicated a 64% preference for shopping in-store over online (Interactions study).

However, what's fundamentally changing is the relationship between consumers and physical stores, as the process of digital disruption – the impact of networked technologies on markets and lifestyles – continues full steam ahead. “Digital transformation is happening very fast and competition from the World Wide Web has become huge and is now a competitor for every physical retail store worldwide,” says Franz Josef Hoeller at Fresco distribution.

EMBRACE A NEW SET OF RULES

In our digitally disrupted future, all the old distinctions no longer apply. Stationary retail Vs online shopping? Chain stores Vs independent boutiques? Niche brands Vs global conglomerates? Ask today's consumers what they prefer given these choices, and they are most likely to say: Both! They want to buy what they want, when and where they want it – no matter the vendor or sales channel. And they are becoming less and less loyal: Gen Z is downright brand agnostic – 81% of young shoppers in the Interactions study would switch from their

favourite brand for a similar product at a higher quality.

As for stores, responding to these developments will prove impossible without adjustments to existing retail sales models. Stationary shops that are no more than mere storehouses of products are headed the way of Ohio's “Ghost Mall”. Meanwhile, the retailers who can engage consumers on their preferences in real time across multiple touch points will not only survive, but thrive in the long run.

THE UPSIDE OF DISRUPTION

Digital disruption can be brutal and destructive, just look what happened to book, record, and video rental stores. But it can also be empowering, because it levels the digital playing field and now affords small businesses the same digital tools as major corporations. Today, influencers with enough Instagram followers can start trends, sink a brand, determine what's cool. And boardsport retailers, armed with the right tools and platforms, can future-proof their businesses by taking a page out of the big players' digital disruption playbook.

The game plan for all major brands in our industry is to attack two major areas: Beefing up direct-to-consumer (DTC) capacities to take out the “middle man”, and building omni-channel platforms for a seamless shopping experience across channels and media. As Billabong's CEO Neil Fiske said in a recent earnings call: “Our strategy is to create strong global brands with tight distribution and an omni platform that integrates wholesale, retail stores, ecommerce and social media. That's the way our consumer wants to shop.”

And while only few retailers are in a position to control their own wholesale supply chain, integrating their retail operation with e-commerce and social media channels is not only a sound strategy, but feasible for shops at any size. With that said, let's look at how boardsport retailers can get the upper hand on digital disruption by following these six strategies:

“Digital transformation is happening very fast and competition from the World Wide Web has become huge and is now a competitor for every physical retail store worldwide.” Franz Josef Hoeller at Fresco distribution.

1. Profit from impulse purchases. Forget talk of austerity and low consumer confidence. We live in a new golden age of impulse buying, with e-commerce as the main enabler. In a recent BigCommerce poll, 48% of shoppers admitted to having, “bought or spent more than planned when shopping online,” while 43% made purchases “while in bed.” At any time of day, users may feel inspired to search for a certain product – and with the right SEO, Adwords, and local search ranking, your physical or online store makes the top of the list. “The most important trend for me is that customers want to get what they’re interested in right now and with minimum effort. Most of the time, they go online for solutions, as opening times are 24/7,” said Martin Sammet, who operates Longboardshop.eu as well as longboard brands Pogo and Ninetysix.

2. Make location matter again. Board shops have always been anchors of their respective scenes. “The shop continues to be the skater’s home, many come around to hang out and many are glad there are still real skate shops not only driven by product turnover,” said Richie Löffler of Mantis store. Supporting this IRL (in real life) experience with a strong local digital footprint – listings in local and map searches, coupons for in-store rebates – is adding strength to strength. Since 2011, the amount of “Near Me” searches on Google has grown 34-fold, and in a recent Nextopia study, 44% of shoppers were more likely to hit the buy-button if the store offered “click-and-collect”: buying products online for in-store pick-up, preferably on the same day. Martin at Longboardshop.eu is noticing a strong local response, as “many of our packages travel no more than 30 kilometres,” and is considering opening a physical flagship store.

3. Webrooming is the new showrooming. For years, store-owners despaired over showrooming; customers trying product in-store, then ordering from cheaper online vendors. The next step of disruption is called webrooming; researching products extensively online before visiting the store for final physical inspection and purchase. Accordingly, retailers need to heed the old mantra: Know what you sell! Because it just looks bad when hyper-educated consumers know more about gear than the shop. “Offering an excellent customer service to keep your customer base stable and being authentic is what you can do to improve your business without spending money,” said FJ Hoeller at Fresco. At TX Sports stores, Sven Eckert is all about walking the walk: “It’s back to basics. The boss will gladly grip a board for the seven-year-old aspiring pro skater. And mount his totally tweaked trucks and throw in two free bearings and stories from the ‘good old days.’” Expertly trained staff, and the occasional email with personalized offers based on sales history will draw customers into the store.

4. Be social – online and offline. Speaking of walking the walk, building rapport with core customers remains vital. “Staying close to the customer continues to be most important. Even if we are all enthusiastic about skateboarding, a new generation may live in an entirely different world, so if you are no longer on fire for skateboarding you might as well close up shop,” said Richie at Mantis. Maintaining a good image and generating excitement are also key, said FJ Hoeller: “You have to offer side events or participate and organize stuff to make sure your store becomes noticed as a cool spot and not only a place where you spend money.” This social component

translates seamlessly into the digital domain, and is the reason why major brands such as Billabong now disclose their social media following in shareholder meetings (26 million followers between Billabong, Element, and RVCA). What brands know is: Customers shop for what they “like” online, and often make purchases directly from their smartphones. The Shopify network recently reported a 202% increase in product orders from social media. Richie at Mantis is engaging his community with “social media, newsletters, and shop blog.” Martin at Longboardshop.eu said: “We work a lot with [Google] Adwords, but Facebook remains an important marketing tool for us to maintain direct communications with customers.”

5. Blend experiences and products. Today’s customers want more than just products, and 62% of Gen Z shoppers rather spend money on experiences than material things (Interactions). Give them a reason to hang at the store by partnering up with a coffee shop – how Deus Ex built a successful business – and stage classes or invite brands for product demos. Martin Sammet not only runs online retail and longboard brands, but also the Skatesafe academy: “The longboard school definitely creates long-term customers. Our team rider and instructor Matze Ebel will find a matching Pogo or Ninetysix board for riders on any level, and every Skatesafe participant becomes a happy Longboardshop.eu customer.”

In our digitally disrupted future, all the old distinctions no longer apply. Stationary retail Vs online shopping? Chain stores Vs independent boutiques? Niche brands Vs global conglomerates? Ask today’s consumers what they prefer given these choices, and they are most likely to say: Both!

6. Realness prevails. While 89% of Gen Z shoppers indicated price as the main purchase factor (Interactions) and 72% switch brands for a lower price, board sports retailers can still play the exclusivity card to establish value. This where your image and community make a difference: “Nowadays a cool shop image is more important than ever as it gives you access to more limited product and makes you more attractive for brands, so you can access product which others don’t have, meaning you’ll make the sale in any case,” said FJ Hoeller at Fresco. Richie at Mantis agrees: “Brands that rely on selective distribution channels while doing great marketing and brand development are popular, e.g. Fucking Awesome and Quasi. They bring skaters to the store, since they can’t make appearances at online shops.” Sven Eckert at TX Sports calls for a radical switch: “Throw everything overboard that holds you down, or generates little to no revenue. Don’t buy into things you cannot sell. And only sell things you can back 100% and wear yourself.” And finally, make sure to announce rare product drops in advance on your shop’s blog and social media, and watch customers queue around the block. ☺

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“THEY DON’T MAKE ‘EM LIKE THEY USED TO...”

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photo: Penny

CRUISERS FW17/18 TREND REPORT

Easily written off as a fleeting trend, cruisers make skateboarding accessible to a broad customer demographic – with real long-term potential. Here’s our 2017 Cruiser Trend Report by our Skateboard Editor, **Dirk Vogel**.

Text: Everyone in our industry knows that the popularity of skateboarding moves in cycles. Major boom periods when everyone wants a piece of skateboarding – the mid-1970s, mid-1980s, and late 1990s – are followed by sudden drops. This poses two questions: First, why does this keep happening? And second, does it have to be that way?

The first answer is actually simple. Skateboarding, at least the kind geared around learning tricks and pushing personal boundaries, is far too difficult to keep mass consumers engaged. That’s basically why skateboarding never stays “mainstream hot” for more than two years. But does it have to be that way? No - the recent rise of cruisers has actually proven that this boom-and-bust cycle is not set in stone. If we look at cruisers as a permanent, accessible genre of skateboarding – where you don’t have to learn the latest tricks to have fun – they actually present a sustainable category that never gets “old”.

“I think the cruiser is the broadest market. Retailers should be able to show the customers these are the most approachable skates out there. Super easy to skate, not cumbersome to carry or take indoors and great for all ages,” said Ken Perkins, President/CEO Sunset Skateboard

Co. With this in mind, the recent boom-and-bust in cruisers does not automatically imply that the category is “played out” until the next big surge arrives. The last few seasons saw cruisers switch gears into steady, long-term momentum, as confirmed by endemic cruiser brands in this 2017 Trend Report.

THE MARKET: LONG AND STEADY

Looking at the European market, we are still seeing the impact of market saturation and excess inventory. “The rapid growth of cruisers and longboards definitely started to plateau about 12-18 months ago,” said Bod Boyle, President at Dwindle (Dusters California), adding: “Too much inventory being pushed through a channel that plateaued has had a compounding factor this year. I would say that the EU has been affected by this far more than the rest of the world, with revenues down around 15%. The global numbers are stronger than this, so overall if we look at the international numbers, we would expect single-digit decline for this year.”

Upon closer inspection, current problems can be pinpointed to a specific market segment. “I think there are way more lower quality boards in the market now, particularly in Europe, where the market is saturated.

Prices seem to be getting pushed down along with the quality," says Kris O'Brien, Brand Director at OB Five. But now that the category is building long-term momentum, this strategy will not suffice. "While it's tempting for some retailers to go for the cheapest price, for longevity, I think it's about working with brands who can offer unique products – anyone can stick a graphic on a skateboard – and high quality at competitive price points and a decent margin for the retailer," said Matt Wong, President of Product at Globe.

Speaking of price points and margins, the main rule is: You get what you pay for! While department store cruisers can be had for €40, authentic brands such as UK-based D Street report their pricing sweet

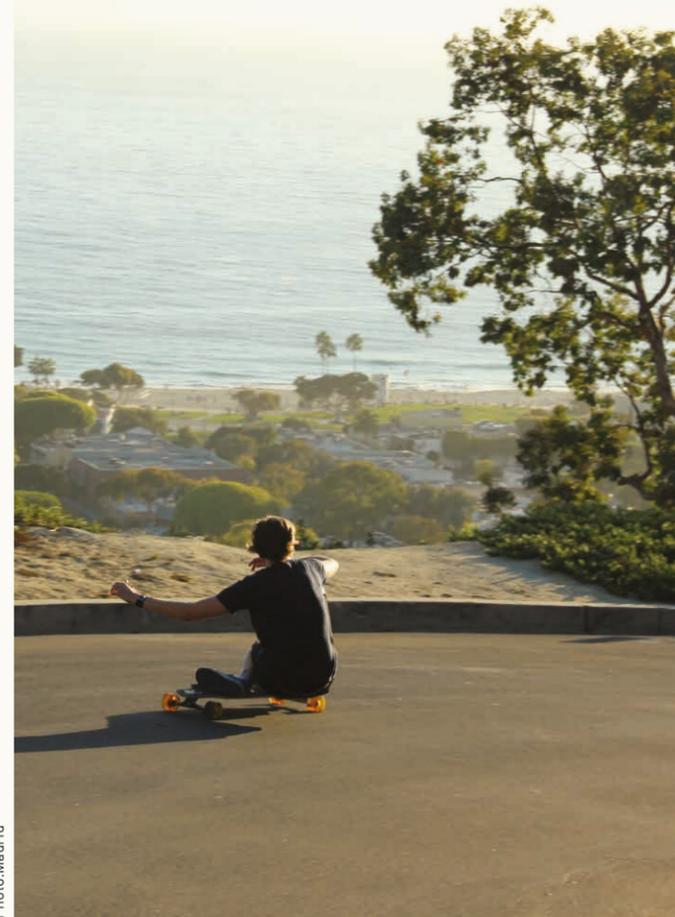


Photo: Madrid

spot for quality cruisers at €80. Cruisers packing elaborate materials and rarefied components sell well at around €150 for brands like Globe and GoldCoast, while brands such as Arbor, Sector 9, and Landyachtz are successfully selling above €220.

SHAPES: RETURN OF THE EIGHTIES

The weapon of choice for next season is a compact, snub-nosed cruiser at a total length around 28 to 30 inches with a pointed nose, bulbous mid-section up to 9 inches, short wheelbase, and a squared or "fish" tail. All major brands are pushing these responsive and versatile cruisers with the occasional twist – Sector 9 is big on trapezoidal nose shapes – in their new collections. Skinnier, retro-shaped cruisers under 28 inches – both plastic and wood – remain a staple for 2017, driven by customer demand for highly portable boards, especially among commuting students.

"Street cruisers and packable boards for surfing and carving the street make a new feeling and generate a new interest in cruising for the customers. That's the trend that retailers need to understand because more and more people are looking for this feeling," said Hoff Distribution's Benoit Brecq who looks after Flying Wheels. Another hot trend to keep an eye on: Mid-1980s board shapes – up to 10 inches wide, short nose, wide kicktail, wheel wells(!) – are re-imaged as cruisers with soft wheels and wide trucks, as seen by Dusters California, GoldCoast, Miller Division, and Madrid Skateboards. "For our 40th Anniversary Reissue Cruisers we've opened up the vault to reissue a series of iconic Madrid decks from throughout the decades including pro models from Claus Grabke, Beau Brown, and Eddie Elguera. For the first time ever, we're offering these OG decks setup as cruisers," said Shane Maloney, Madrid Skateboards.

MATERIALS: ELEVATED STATUS SYMBOLS

This season's mantra – You get what you pay for! – clearly dominates in material choices. While plastic boards are trending down, wooden cruisers are up. "This year has been great for our wooden cruiser business, we are up almost 20% on last year," said Lowri Holness at D Street, pointing out that, Cherry, Rosewood and Walnut skins not only look fantastic but give the retailer a new story." Across the board, elaborate wood panelling and finishes are elevating cruisers into bespoke status symbols and conversation pieces. "Our Revival Series features boards made from reclaimed wood sources. It's about offering something to our customers that is more than your standard board," says Nate Schumacher at Landyachtz. It's all a matter of target group, said Luke Petty at Osprey: "Brightly coloured plastic cruisers are very popular amongst younger children as they offer an easily portable and very durable first skateboard, whilst older riders also enjoy plastic cruisers, but are often more attracted to a more understated retro look."

"I think the cruiser is the broadest market. Retailers should be able to show the customers these are the most approachable skates out there. Super easy to skate, not cumbersome to carry or take indoors and great for all ages." **Ken Perkins, President/CEO**
Sunset Skateboard Co.

GoldCoast ham things up with a new printing technology that boasts clear grip tape that allows both sides of the deck to stand loud and proud.

At the end of the day, customers appreciate the extra value added by upscale finishes and materials. "If you pick up a Dusters board, the fit/finishes, small details in graphic application processes, different wood species, new types of wood finishes, ink applications, and printing processes really makes our boards stand out from the rest of the pack," says Dusters California Creative Director, Nano Nobrega. Globe is upping the ante this season with inlays from denim (!) and coconut fibres that do more than look cool, explains Matt Wong: "Coconuts are a readily available material, the husk requires minimal processing, and they come from self-sustaining crops. The natural coconut fibres found on these boards allow us to use less maple wood, netting really unique textural aesthetic and simultaneously reducing our eco-footprint."



Cusco Rebel - Dusters Headquarters



REBEL
8.75" x 29"

Dusters thrives from its collaborations with original artists from all over the globe, bringing the diversity of art and culture to our skateboards. This time around we teamed up with Brazilian graffiti artist, Cusco Rebel. The installation done at our headquarters in Los Angeles, CA, turned into this retro inspired 29" x 8.75" transition board, the Dusters Rebel. Featuring original 78A, 60mm Star-Trac Kryptonics wheels, 80's rails and the unique "Dusters Art Mount", a routed hole in the nose that allows you to display your board on any wall like a true piece of art. The Dusters Rebel is available now, worldwide, for the Holiday season.

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“There’s still a healthy scene but shops must start putting on small cruises encouraging people to come out, meet other skaters and cruise together from the shop. A healthy shop has a healthy community behind it and fostering that community is more important than ever!” **Nate Schumache, Landyachtz**

TECHNOLOGY: BRANDED QUALITY

Another area in which customers get what they pay for is the overall quality of boards and components. Needless to say, in a business where almost 99% of boards sold are completes, cruisers from actual skate companies wipe the floor with what’s on shelves at Toys “R” US and

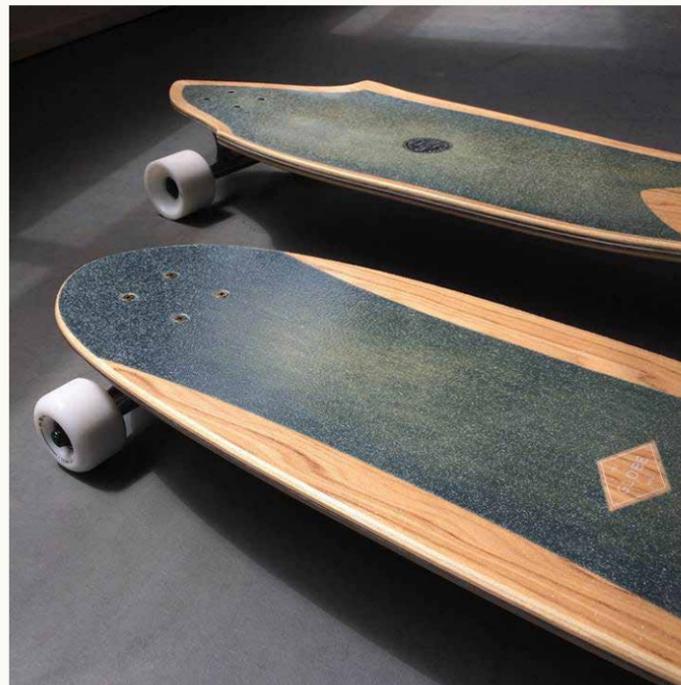


Photo: Globe

Wal-Mart. “DSM that manufactures many core skateboard brands in addition to Dusters has developed propriety manufacturing processes that are continuously improving the functionality of our boards through mould, pressing, and material development,” said Nano at Dusters California. “Quality of components is important as customers are increasingly looking for brand name trucks and wheels,” said Shane at Madrid. Sector 9’s Andreas Maurmeir sees this as a sign of evolution: “Three years ago the cruisers were designed to ride from point A to B, now they are designed to ride from point A to B while hitting every feature along the way.”

Consequently, all “serious” cruiser brands provide quality trucks and wheels that keep up with performance requirements. Responding to the “street surf” trend, Flying Wheels introduced two new trucks, the Capitol and the Cutback truck, “made for people who search that ultimate surfing sensation, they turn great, pump easily and offer that wave riding feeling everybody seeks.” Pablo Ribera at HLC Distribution in Spain is on the same page: “The surf skate stuff its going super strong. We have our last product YOW (Your Own Wave), the best surf skate in the market right now, and also another surf skate series in our Long Island Boards range.”

In search of smoother rides, wheels are trending towards super soft, 1980s-style asymmetrical shapes above 60mm diameter and 50mm wide. For another hot trend, glow in the dark treatments include Sector 9’s Lumithane wheels and the re-designed Beamer Wheels from LED-powered cruiser company Sunset. “Beamers feature opaque urethane that still lets the LED shine through. We have seen to many knock-offs of our patented LED skate core so we wanted to develop a new look to differentiate our self in the market,” said Ken Perkins. New technology also makes entire boards light up, for instance at Penny: “Our Casper skateboard is perfect for the darker evenings and they really do hold their charge,” says Liz Reynolds, European Trade Marketing Manager.

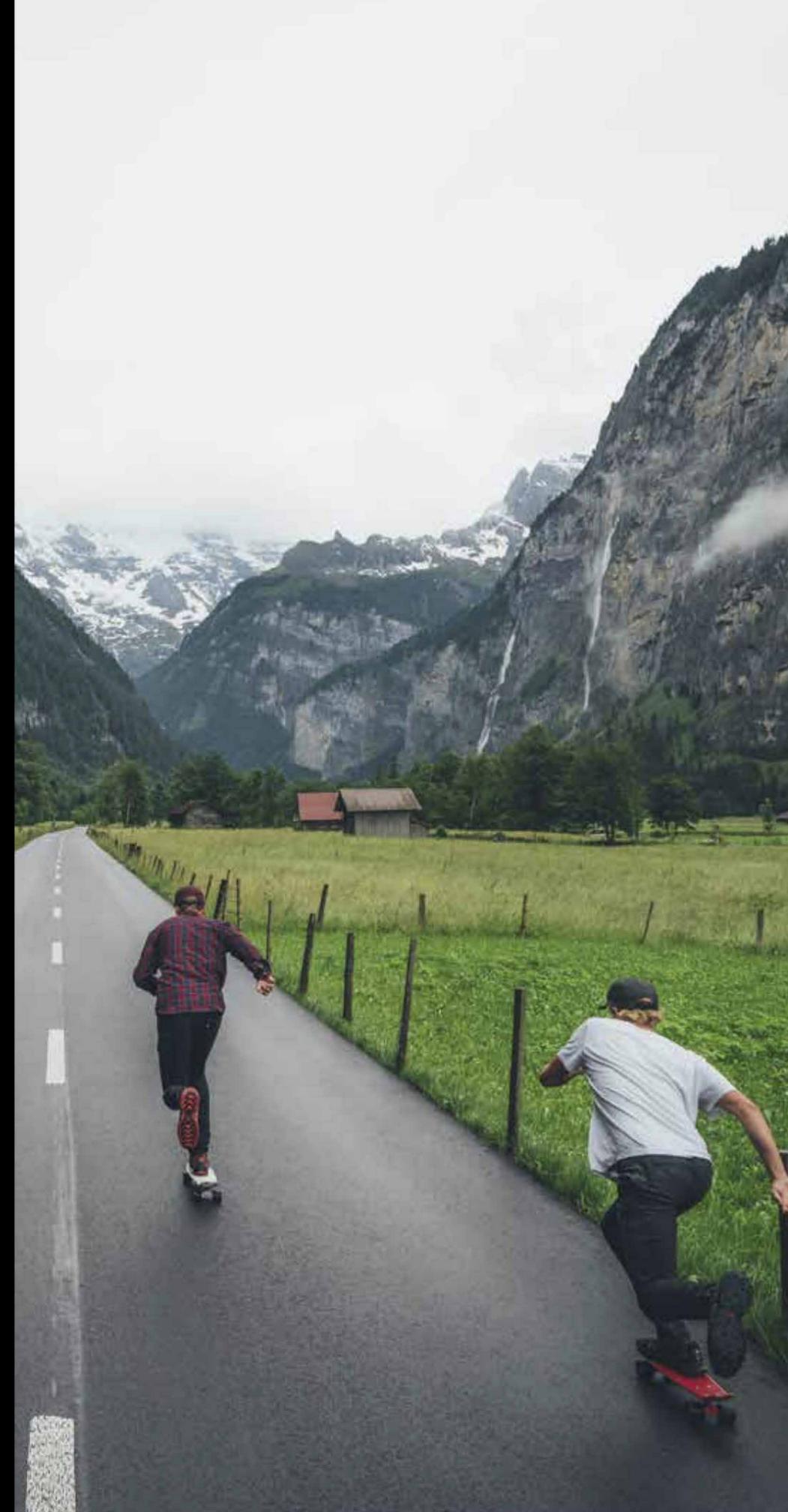
Sector 9’s Andreas Maurmeir sees this as a sign of evolution: “Three years ago the cruisers were designed to ride from point A to B, now they are designed to ride from point A to B while hitting every feature along the way.”

OUTLOOK: THE NEXT CHAPTER

Looking forward, cruisers remain a growth category with continued brand investment. “The cruiser segment will definitely play a big role in the composition of the future lines,” said Christian Siebrecht at Arbor Skateboards. Ultimately, it’s up to skate retailers to grow the culture in the long run, said Nate Schumacher at Landyachtz: “There’s still a healthy scene but shops must start putting on small cruises encouraging people to come out, meet other skaters and cruise together from the shop. A healthy shop has a healthy community behind it and fostering that community is more important than ever!”

HIGHLIGHTS

- Saturation in low-price segment
- Plastic cruisers down, wooden up
- Snub-nosed cruisers with fishtails
- Cork, coconut & denim inlays
- Upscale finishes, wheel wells
- Asymmetrical, ‘80s style wheels
- Responsive trucks for “surf skate” feeling



***Quality build,
fun to ride***



BIG WIG JOSH REID, ROME SNOWBOARDS

Rome Snowboards are one of the finest long-standing rider-owned and operated snowboard brands on the market. On top of their stellar ambassador team, hard shredding staff and healthy product innovations, the company has also been making waves with the introduction of the Rome Lodge in 2014; their annual retailer shred pilgrimage to Diedamskopf in Austria.

For this issue's Big Wig Interview we find out what led Co-founder Josh Reid to start the brand in 2001 and Josh explains the intricacies of running a snowboard company in 2017. **Interview by Harry Mitchell Thompson.**

Josh, please tell us about your story. What were you doing before snowboarding?

That's a tough question. I started snowboarding in 1981 when I was 14, so before that I was a kid. I guess before that, I was a 1970s and early 1980s skateboarder. Before I strapped into a snowboard, I had a plastic skateboard with loose bearings, an oak Sims deck with Pure Juice, the first Lonnie Toft plywood deck, a Dennis Martinez deck and a Santa Cruz Duane Peters. When I was about 10 or 11, I saw Lonnie Toft snowboarding on an early Sims board at Mammoth in Skateboarder Magazine, and I immediately knew I wanted to snowboard.

As for working in snowboarding, I've been doing that for about 20 years. Before that I lived in Breckenridge and Jackson just working at night and snowboarding every day. And I travelled the world a little, living in different parts of Asia.

So I've been riding over 30 years and working in snowboarding for 20 years, so there isn't much before snowboarding for me.

What have been the biggest lessons you've learned both in business and outside of work?

In business and in life, I've learned that I want to find the balance between evolution and consistency as Rome and I embrace the fact that shit changes. Constantly. You've got to balance dynamically evolving what you do (and who you are), while also keeping it tied into the values and things you care about. You can't try to just re-live the great moments of your business or personal life, and at the same time I don't want to throw away the things about the past that were great. In business, this means finding new product expressions and new brand expressions that evolve how we do things while keeping them inspired by a love of snowboarding. The Lodge that we have in Diedamskopf, Austria is a great example of this. We've changed our approach to the tradeshow season (in America we used to take a fairly obnoxious approach), while driving that change from our values about what matters most - snowboarding.

Poor snow has made it tough for snowboarding in recent years - what can both brands and retailers do to help safeguard against poor-snow winters?

From the long-view perspective, our opinion is that we all need to

do everything possible to hype snowboarding and not just hype our own brand, or our own store. When brands and retailers promote snowboarding and get people stoked on snowboarding, then it's more likely that we can all push through the seasons with bad snow. Snowboarding gives so much fun and so many good times that if we share that with more people, then the bad seasons will be that much easier to get through. For us, it's not just about promoting the latest Mod Rocker or D.O.D. binding; it's about getting people stoked on snowboarding.

In the short-term perspective of how to get through poor-snow winters, brands and retailers can collaborate with regards to how to best sell that product that the retailers have purchased for those winter.

Consumer habits are changing; the week-long ski/snowboard holiday is becoming less common. Any suggestions on how to embrace this?

If people are taking shorter trips to ride, but are still riding the same total number of days, then there probably isn't a lot to adjust to from the brand's perspective (whereas that would be a concern for the hotels, etc.). If, however, people are riding fewer days per year, then one solution might be to team up with the retailers to offer more comprehensive high-end demo lines. We're kicking off a program this year called Powder To The People in which we are working with some seed-program retailers to offer powder boards for hire at a very, very low price.

At the same time, we're a brand who also wants to not embrace the shorter vacation trend and rather, we want to work to counteract it. We believe in snowboarding, and the amazing times that only snowboarding can provide, so we want encourage people to do it a lot. As the entire industry moves forward, the brands and the resorts need to work together to both promote snowboarding, but also to make it a more affordable option.

Having been at the Rome Lodge the past two years, it's easy to see you have a team of guys who really live the lifestyle; employees that can shred hard and who are serious about the product and the brand. How much has the way in which business is done changed over your years in the snowboard industry?

With respect to the Lodge, and the wholesale selling season, a lot has changed in the last 20 years. In the late 90s, the tradeshow were later in the year and they were places where sales reps took real orders. Then in the early 2000s, and still now, the snowboard tradeshow have evolved into marketing events where brands present their lines and ideally who they are as a brand. It's exciting to see that evolving again in Europe with the simplification of ISPO with the goal of getting the industry back under one roof. We're excited about that and we are going to be part of this next phase of the ISPO.

We are also continuing on with the Lodge for the fourth year because it's something we do that we can never do in a tradeshow hall in Europe or America. At the Lodge, we get to share exactly who we are with our retail partners in Europe. As you know from being there, life at the Lodge is very simple—ride snowboards (and other gear), eat good food, have some drinks, talk product, and repeat the next day. It's a special time that we get to connect with other snowboarders from many different parts of the world.

And just how successful has the Rome Lodge been? What lessons has it taught you?

The Lodge has been very successful for us both in terms of a sales initiative and in terms of a key brand initiative. When we look at the sales numbers from the last three years of the Lodge, it has worked very well. But we also see it as a fundamental, clear way to express who we are to snowboard shops in Europe. The idea for the Lodge came up four years ago at Schmitzen in Zell am See where we hosted Austrian and German shops, rode product and shredded powder. After those few days, we knew we had to spend much more time riding and hanging in a communal lodge with other snowboarders. The Lodge is successful for us because of all the ways in which we spend money worldwide; it is the clearest expression of who we are as a brand.

I'm not sure we learned any lessons. Rather, I think we've confirmed what we've always believed about the value and importance of riding with other people who love snowboarding. Whether you are from Tignes, Edinburgh, Munich or some other spot in Europe, if you come to the Lodge we will all connect through the language of snowboarding.

The European market is much more diverse than its American counterpart - languages and borders make it harder to communicate a single message. What do you do to ensure your message is universal across each region?

The Lodge certainly helps with getting our message universally across the different parts of Europe. As mentioned above, since snowboarding is the common language spoken at the Lodge, we can share what Rome is without perfectly speaking a mutual language.

Apart from that, we work hard to find sales reps in each territory that share our core values. This is true in America as well, where there are more geographic differences than you might expect. As for Europe, our UK rep has been in snowboarding in the UK since the 80s, our Austrian rep is a 90s-era rider who has worked in the industry for a couple of decades, and our French reps are a couple of amazing riders who own a shop in Tignes. Having reps like these guys helps get the message unified across Europe that Rome is a snowboarder-directed, snowboarding-first brand. Then we work hard to get all these guys to be experts on Rome's unique designs and what makes our product collection different.

Where does Rome stand on kids in snowboarding?

We've been a part of the kids market for the better part of a decade now. Many of us here ride a lot with our kids, so we understand this part of snowboarding. My own kids are 11 and 13 and I probably ride with them about 50% of the time I go to the hill - with how they ride now, I'm dying to bring them over to the Alps.

Back to our involvement in the kids market, we have our Minishred collection of boards, boots and bindings for kids starting as young as three years old. I'm not one to claim our stuff is the "best", but with our NoHang-Ups 3D Rocker camber in the Minishred board, I'd be surprised if there was a better board to learn on. The 3D rocker keeps it safe from catching edges, while the "diamond" platform under foot and in the mid-section lets kids learn how to carve properly.

This year, to go with our youth Label series, we are adding a Mini Gang Plank so 11 and 12 year-olds who want to ride like Len Jorgensen can get on the Gang Plank. 🏂



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IN THE LAWRENCE
WASHED BEANIE

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photo: Makia

MEN'S STREETWEAR FW17/18 TREND REPORT

Today's customers demand quality blended with stylish design, plus a healthy dose of boardsports flavour. In response, endemic brands are creating strong value propositions with innovative fabrics and performance features, injected into refined overall looks. Trend Report by **Dirk Vogel**.

It's getting cold out on these mean streets and that's great news for brands and retailers. As temperatures drop and days get shorter, customers layer up to brave the elements. And wearing more layers means more clothes, more demand, more SKUs – which means more business, if retailers play their cards right in this fast-changing market. "It seems to be in a turmoil between contemporary, outdoors, street and classic boardsports styles. Older large companies struggle to reinvent themselves next to smaller ones that can adapt quickly to modern shopping trends and customer needs," says Joni Malmi, Brand Director at Makia Clothing.

Shopping trends and customer needs remain fragmented in a market that has replaced strong overarching trends – like 2012's full-blown retro menswear revival – with micro-trends that stay in play simultaneously. However, one common denominator emerges among FW17/18 men's streetwear offerings: The mixture of tried-and-tested functional features from boardsports and outdoors with a refined urban aesthetic. "The transformation of boardsports brands and clothing into a mixture between outdoor-oriented clothing, which is also suitable for urban use, will go further," said Michael Spitzbarth, CEO of eco-brand bleed organic clothing.

This functional urban direction also puts boardsports brands in a position of strength since most products are built on direct athlete feedback. "Globe's product is designed and influenced by people who are entrenched in the boardsport lifestyle. Our +/- collection, inspired by [pro surfer] Dion Agius, is an example of how we directly involve our team riders in the development process to build authentic product," said Globe's Design Manager Dan Preston. And what's more, boardsports

apparel packs the kind of flavour that run-of-the-mill outdoor brands simply can't match. "Apparel designed for and inspired by boardsports will remain a presence in our culture, as the lifestyle that surf and snow represents – freedom, exploration, and determination – continues to fuel a positive identity. That identity is something people relate to and wish to join," said Anjet Wesselink, Head of Marketing at Protest Sportswear.

SEASON TREND: TECHNICAL FABRICS

With function as the new premium, technical performance fabrics are increasingly at the focus of streetwear collections, also compounded by wider lifestyle trends such as yoga and athleisure. But the key to next season's garments is that technical fabrics don't automatically result in a technical look. "Evolution in technical fabrications has made it possible to apply functionality to core products without detuning its purism in classic timeless styling. When working with skateboarders, applying certain key functional attributes makes a huge difference in ensuring comfort and the right technicality in the right places," said Rey Gauthier, Global Creative Director at Element. True to its mission, bleed is using technology to blend function with sustainability, for instance in the new Lumberjacket: "As lining we use the vegan down alternative Primaloft Eco. That makes it suitable to use it as a thermal layer, too!"

Technical fabrics support garments that look "street" but pack performance under the hood. The Makia Storm jacket is a prime example as a weatherproof 3L/1000mm technical fishtail jacket with a black island camo pattern. Brixton ramps up the tech with the Maven Jacket, "an All-Terrain packable jacket featuring a 100% polyester shell with 15k water-repellent coating, critically taped seams, ventilated arm pits, and a reversible stow pocket," notes Adriana Matthews, Public

"The transformation of boardsports brands and clothing into a mixture between outdoor-oriented clothing, which is also suitable for urban use, will go further." **Michael Spitzbarth, CEO of bleed organic clothing.**

Relations Manager, Brixton. Advanced manufacturing techniques unlock seamless blends of materials, like Protest's Moss hoodie; a combination of soft-shell-like material and standard sweatshirt fabric. Across brand collections, we are seeing waterproofing, seamless zippers, and ventilation emerge as standard jacket features.

In bottoms, technical fabrics support all-day activity, summed up by the Vans Authentic chino pant: "It features a durable Sturdy Stretch fabric blend with poly covered Lycra fibres that provide long lasting stretch retention so the pant doesn't bag out over time. The Silvadur anti-microbial finish fights off the stink and requires less launderings," explained Luciano Mor, Director Global Men's Apparel & Accessories at Vans. Volcom is pushing technology into all categories by using "water-repellent and waterproof denim fabric, anti microbial poly-cotton twill, coated streetwear jacket fabrics with 5K coating. Our streetwear collection is more and more oriented toward comfort and technology according to our team riders," said Mathieu Santoni, Volcom EU Head of Product. Listening to the team, Hydroponic re-engineered their downhill hoodies with "reinforced elbow and side patches, a bigger hoodie to fit the helmet and zipper pockets everywhere," said Marketing Manager Jordi Quinto.

STYLE: CLEANED-UP STREET AESTHETIC

Summing up next season's aesthetic, Globe's Design Manager Dan Preston said: "A cleaned-up workwear mood is prevailing in our market." This means less emphasis on logo prints and messaging, cleaner individual pieces in basic colorways, assembled into put-together outfits: "Dad cap, bomber or blouson jackets, hoody, old school skate shoes, and worker wear chinos," said Patrick at Irie Daily. But that's far from the only style next season, as full-on athletic fits composed of jogger pants and performance uppers remain strong, much like the rugged "outdoorsy" trinity of beards, flannels, and beanies. It's all in play, all at the same time next season. Customers also like blasts from the past such as 1980s skate graphics, brought into the here-and-now by the Santa Cruz Natas Coach Jacket: "A classic boxy shape, pure white shell jacket combined with an oversize iconic 80s graphic back print in hot pink and acid yellow," said Andrew Maclean, Head of Apparel at Santa Cruz.

CUTS & SILHOUETTES: TOP-HEAVY FITS

The trend towards slouchier tops paired with form-fitting pants continues into next season, although Mathieu at Volcom points out: "One thing is sure is that the skinny is slowing down. For our skate riders, the trend is more on regular fit, not baggy." Brixton is catering to this trend with the Fleet Rigid Carpenter Pant, "a relaxed-fit work pant featuring 100% cotton herringbone, multiple utility pockets, and our custom Worn Wash." Michael at bleed predicted: "I think the trend is going to a new kind of baggy pant again but more tapered than the 90s version which was very straight." As they brave the cold in boots and high-tops, today's well-dressed men know to crop their pant legs at the right length. "Crisper chinos get preference in slim straight fits worn rolled up or chopped short around ankle height," said Dan at Globe.

Next season's shirts are longer and protrude from underneath jackets and other layers. Neff went all-out by reengineering their T-shirts: "We introduced a new t-shirt fit this season - the short sleeve tall fit raglan. Seeing the success of slightly longer lines, we increased the length of our classic fit T-shirt, and switched the sleeves to raglans," said Freddie Sipowicz, Director Of Merchandising & Design at Neff. "Silhouettes are getting wider and material more heavy and the bright colours like rose or royal blue have a comeback," said Patrick Kressner, Men's Designer at Irie Daily.

COLOURS & PATTERNS: SUBTLE FLAIR

Dark colours in tone-on-tone, monochromatic outfits. Low profile. This pretty much sums up the ongoing colour trend of the past two seasons, but things are getting less "undercover": Primary colours, light shades of jersey, and autumn-themed tones are adding pop and variety in FW17/18. With that said, black still rules the colour spectrum, especially in outer layers and pants, next to navy and dark greys. Pairing nicely with these strong foundations, base layers such as tees, longsleeves, work shirts, and lightweight sweaters come in a variety of heather greys, whites, denim dyes, and browns for that "clean workwear" aesthetic. In denim, darker shades rule the winter months.

Next season's trending pattern is plaid in all shapes and colours, from tone-on-tone - where red is a strong accent - to combinations of basic tones with primary colour pops. "With different weights, plaid patterns, colours, the flannel shirt is a must to have this winter. It's now one of our winter basics, but it will be stronger this next fall," said Mathieu at Volcom. Prints are marked by an influx of heritage skateboard graphics, with long-sleeve tees - think: sleeve prints - as a trending format. "Our T-shirts and hoodies have taken a 90s skate lo-fi inspiration, back when graphics were done without computers, having more D.I.Y. 'zine style, and hand-done look," said Luciano at Vans.

ACCESSORIES: REFINED BASICS

Technical engineering arrives in the hats segment, where staples such as five-panel hats receive makeovers like Huf's chinch cable closure. Weatherized versions including Brixton's Fisherman's cap or rugged wool variations on ball caps also fit the bill this season. The humble beanie gains an edge of refinement via heavier knits in straight-fit silhouettes, replacing previous season's slouch and fold-over beanies. "In headwear we are seeing growing demand for our beanies across a wide variety of colours, while incorporating new silhouettes and technical features," said Freddie at Neff. Also look out for smart scarves and gloves, which are perfect gift ideas for Holiday Season, next to (weed) patterned socks.

OUTLOOK

Endemic brands are strengthening their commitment to streetwear while driving strong value propositions with on-trend designs and innovative materials. This gives retailers a lot to play with: "A great way to generate excitement is to hype up the in-store launch of the collection in advance via social media - by the time the clothing is in stores, it will already be much anticipated," said Andrew at Santa Cruz. Although urban performance emerges as a strong common denominator next season, the co-existence of diverse styles also lets retailers pick and choose what works best for their demographic. It's a new paradigm in a market that continues to reinvent itself faster than ever. As Irie Daily's Patrick Kessner sums it up: "Streetwear isn't designed to shape an idea of the future, and it's not about eternity either. It's about today. This very day!" 📍

HIGHLIGHTS

- Technical fabrics (stretch, vent)
- Water-proofing and stretch
- Cleaned-up workwear
- Regular fit pants
- 1980s & 1990s skate prints
- Cable knit beanies
- Chinch chord technical hats

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WOMEN'S STREETWEAR FW17/18 TREND REPORT

Of course there have been tougher times, but it's not easy being a woman these days, especially when it comes to clothes. Female fashion has reached a point where not only all lines between sexes are blurred, but also between eras, segments, styles, and garments themselves. We sent our woman on the ground Anna Langer to make some sense out of it all – read on to find out whether she succeeds. Trend Report by **Anna Langer**.

"You now find streetwear is a part of womenswear, whether it's for sneakers or apparel pieces," says Vans Merchandising Manager Women, Kids Apparel & Accessories, Amelie Robert, which is showcasing the importance of this sector in the fashion world in general, yet also makes it harder to differentiate between different segments of womenswear. In itself, this is the most prevalent trend that has spanned the last couple of seasons as well as collections from all brands and continues strong in FW17/18, as Protest confirm: "We've noticed that more people are attracted towards the unusual along with the practical, and have therefore included more mixes in our fabrics for our sweaters and coats," says Anjet Wesselink, Head of Marketing at Protest Sportswear.

TRENDS

The tomboy look is still prevalent as well, inspired by the "massive influence from skateboarding in the eyes of female consumers," as Amelie from Vans describes it. She continues, "it is not only a trend picked by fashion, but also girl skaters who specifically have an overall influence on streetwear." Oversized shapes, visible logos, and long sleeves make for a classic 90s vibe that Nikita continue with mock-turtlenecks dresses. Makia go for "everything with polo/turtle neck," and Element show a lot of patches and labels, yet argues that since "streetwear is focused on minimal graphics, a huge trend that retailers can not afford to miss is graphic sleeve hits. Whether it is symbols, logos or text, this trend is usually seen in a one colour hit with a heavy ink hand. Used across all categories: Dresses, Knits, Fleece, Sweaters and coats."

To brave the colder temperatures of the Fall/Winter season, "chunky knits" are super popular for Makia, who "love the way knits can be very feminine even when oversized" as Women's Designer Elena states. Irie Daily like it oversized as well, especially with their parkas and Nikita opt for material mixing.

THEMES

Following the gender-neutral trend, Element's main theme for FW17/18 is "Borrowed from the Boys", which Cararayne Slay, Global Designer of Element Women's Line is proud: "I tapped into our men's line for silhouette, print, colour, graphic and fabric inspiration. Applying those initial design concepts into the women's range allows for an effortless, borrowed from the boys vibe." Vans follow a similar direction with "skate at the forefront of our minds," that is "in our DNA" yet updated with "feminine detailing and fashion influence," as Amelie states, next to military and workwear that are interpreted "true to Vans by showcasing icons, big logos and checkers." Protest continue to focus on the sport as well, next to "Carnival Royale, a theme that embodies a classic, luxurious, elegance, along with radicalism, innovation, and of course, fun" explains Anjet. "A force of positivity, a beam of light, representing positivity, celebration, and joy. Think steampunk, think carnival, think retro-future."

True to their Scandi-style, Makia on the other hand keep it "simple and quite minimalistic" with a focus on the "contrast between feminine and masculine silhouettes." Nikita focus on their love for outdoors, "fresh clean air and clarity, the symbiosis and coexistence of nature and city,"

“Streetwear is focused on minimal graphics, a huge trend that retailers can not afford to miss is graphic sleeve hits. Whether it is symbols, logos or text, this trend is usually seen in a one colour hit with a heavy ink hand.

Used across all categories: Dresses, Knits, Fleece, Sweaters and coats.” **Element**

to be able to produce “streetwear that both is fashion-forward but also conducive to being out there,” as Brand Director Stephanie ter Hürne outlines. Berlin-based Irie Daily also remain true to their roots with their main theme of “Reclaim the Streets” with oversized parkas and a “new interpretation of a sweat pant.”

COLOURS & PATTERNS

Vans find that “pastels and military are the perfect combo,” but add that “pastel pinks and nudes” are still super strong too. Nikita picture “frost-kissed landscapes,” with peach and aqua that are “as bright, light and crisp as freshly fallen snow.” Vans also feature a pale lichen shade and notice an “evolution to purples,” that are found in Protest’s line too, next to “dark blues combined with different shades of blue.” Nikita use “solid, grounding colours like a rich rust and mossy green,” that “bring warmth that the body craves in winter,” and Makia feature a “strong green with grey hues.” Irie Daily go for black, navy and olive as preferred shades, that are spiced up with “caramel and bright red as a highlight for this season.” Element name “black, optic white and military green,” as staples and Protest focus on black and white as well, “combined with orange tones and berry reds.”

For their Carnival Royale, Protest also weave in copper and metallic to “incorporate the visual aspects of our theme,” and Element names “Inca Gold” as “a huge colour to be seen for FW17/18 Season.”

Vans “balance the tomboy inspiration with sophisticated florals and fresh colour blocks” in black and white, “tying back to our iconic checker” says Amelie. Irie Daily sport an “expressive wool check” for their jackets, while Protest feature “more chevron and stripe patterns.” Element keep it geometric with a “tonal camo print” and Makia use melange fabrics that adds “a very nice subtle detail to simple designs.”

SILHOUETTES

One of the must-haves for fashion-forward customers in FW17/18 is the bomber jacket, that Vans name as a staple: “It is present on the market from street style looks to the Vans girl on the street, and we strongly believe it is going to last for a while, it’s again a reminder of the 90’s most iconic outerwear pieces.” Protest join the party with a “packable 3M insulated bomber jacket which features a cool graphic mountain print,” and also Element feature Bomber and Varsity Jackets. Yet Women’s Line Designer Cararayne mentions coach jackets as one of their “biggest pushes for this season”. Vans is also still carrying “iconic raglan & coach jackets” and Irie Daily feature “a modern crossover of lumber jacket and coach jacket.”

Irie Daily like “sporty and modern oversized silhouettes,” besides their classic carry over fits, says Bella Kruschinski, Women’s Designer. “Hoodies are the fleece silhouette of the moment, a perfect streetwear twist to any silhouette,” Amelie from Vans continues, with cuts ranging “from cropped to loose and/or long, some with drawcords at the hem or waist.” Nikita adopted the cropped top trend as well, while the Protest “shirts remain the same Protest fit you’ve come to expect.”

Pants stay sporty too, with a “modern interpretation of a classic jogging pant in wool optic,” in a casual 7/8 length from Irie Daily and made with “luscious tencel twill that works for a sporty jogger look or an urban

night out,” from Nikita.

Next to this sporty, short and boxy trend, slimmer and longer silhouettes stay on trend as well. Protest emphasise “a streamlined and slimming look,” in their jackets, Vans have “extended the staple bomber and made it more fashion and feminine with long bomber coat options,” and also have an elongated weather-resistant coach jacket.

Nikita hold “true to some of our classic long and lean silhouettes,” and showcase a super feminine high waisted pencil skirt, next to “some more body-con silhouettes,” in their dresses, “as well as pinafores for layering.” Vans on the other hand approach their dresses with a more sporty vibe again, showing “oversized fleeces,” that “almost have similarities to dresses,” with elevated fabrications.

MATERIALS

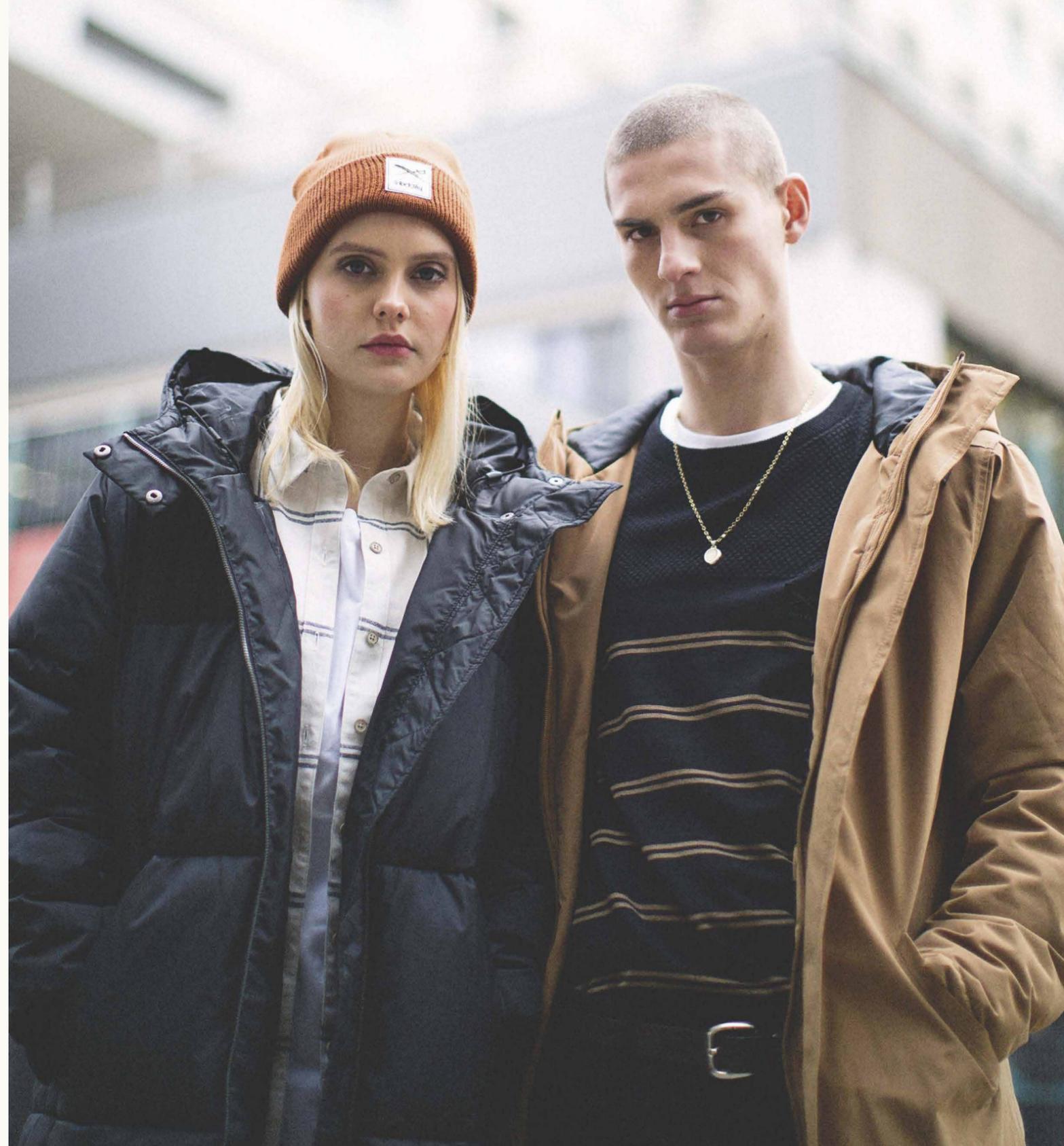
Fabrics are not just elevated but also mixed a lot, which Nikita identify as one of the main trends for FW17/18. Especially velvet is brining a new retro-vibe, reminiscing of the 90s while at the same time adding a modern touch. “Velvet is historically a feminine fabric but we incorporate it more as an homage to 90s goth grunge,” Stephanie says about the Nikita collection and also Amelie from Vans believes “velvets will match nicely with streetwear staples including bombers or court caps.” Irie Daily use velvet and waffle pique for their sweatshirts and Protest use lurex for a “luxurious, retro, and fancy look.” Vans also expand the satin material they use for their bomber jackets to “a full bunch of footwear and accessories.”

To ensure the ladies stay warm in the cold days of winter, Protest blend “acrylic and wool” and Makia is “still very in love with merino wool,” and continue “exploring with textures and finishing.” Element added two new finishes to fleece, which is one of their “biggest categories” that gets an update with “snow wash and sanded finish.” Vans continues to “put a big focus on our MTE line which features a wide offering of jackets coated with durable water repellent and insulated linings.” Nikita implement “waxed cotton for moisture wicking, rain jackets, and Thermore® Insulation for extra warmth without the bulk,” and Irie Daily feature “water-resistant high performance peach cotton for jackets,” says Bella.

For the perfect finish, Vans add “Sherpas and sophisticated faux-fur”; Protest feature a “hip faux fur jacket” and Irie Daily a “warm teddy collar.”

HIGHLIGHTS

- Bomber & Coach jackets
- Velvet
- Boyfriend-style
- Pastels



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HELMETS FW17/18 TREND REPORT

For a couple of years now, helmets have morphed from a geeky accessory reserved for hardcore riders into a mainstream must-have most consumers can't and don't want to live without anymore. And with more and more offerings to choose from, they're getting more and more educated on safety standards and technologies and have upped their demands accordingly.

Anna Langer gives some insights into what that is, exactly.

SAFETY

You could even argue that "helmets are as important and necessary as the board you ride or the air you breath," as Bern's International Sales Manager, Andy Steel does, who finds them "an essential piece of kit for anyone venturing up the hill." Yet today's consumers won't just use any lid. "Riders are becoming more and more aware about safety and brain injuries. They are thus interested in hearing about new technologies, different types of impact and energies and how to manage them," says Mattia Berardi, Product Manager Snow Helmets at Giro and continues: "This is why MIPS (Multi Directional Impact Protection System) has become almost a must have on snow helmets in the past few years. MIPS help reduce rotational energies transmitted to the brain in an angled impact." Carlo Salmini, Co-Founder and CEO of Shred, agrees but notes that: "To be effective, a helmet has to truly focus on the linear and rotational forces of impact in tandem. Solutions targeted at rotational energy alone, for example, tend to increase the thickness and weight of a helmet, which reduces its ability to safely protect its user from linear energy." Flav Foucher, Product and Marketing Manager for Technical Equipment at Rossignol sees this too, "but once you get those dialled in (all helmets pass either the CE or ASTM standard, or both) you'll be looking at design, graphics, seamless fit with the goggles, as well as comfort."

COMFORT

Which is the next major trend in the helmets sector, that also plays into the first, because "a safe helmet is a helmet that you want to wear," as Mattia from Giro surmises. "The snow consumer wants a

helmet that offers full security and dependability, while maintaining comfort," agrees Graham Sours, Snow Category Manager at Smith. Anon expand their in-shell BOA fit system platform that Head also use for their top-models, as it offers "the best performance for a snug fit." Giro address this with their "Range MIPS including Conform Fit Technology, a helmet where the whole shell moves and adapt to the shape and size of your head to guarantee the best fit possible," while Salomon offer "several adjustment systems," on a lightweight helmet with a "low profile and compact silhouette."

DESIGN

Clean designs make up the third trend in the helmets sector for FW17/18. "The look and feel of helmets are becoming cleaner and more trick. This is driving experimentation in new materials and finishes and raising the bar for the industry," says Andy from Bern. Brunotti agree that "clean silhouettes" are all the rage, as do Head, who see the "strong trend towards clean, urban aesthetics is remaining," which they translate as "technical, clean and modern." Flav from Rossignol adds that "round shapes with a few sharp lines for character are still an important characteristic in most of the new helmets," and TSG notice an "increased demand for single coloured helmets that match well to goggle/outerwear," as CEO Ruedi Herger mentions. Picture Organic match them with their outerwear, as do Oakley, Salomon and Brunotti, who facilitate cross-merchandising between helmets, goggles and outerwear, while Mivida match the "colour of the outer shell with all accessories."

Next to a wide range of colours offered by Bern, Oakley and Brunotti we'll see more earthy tones from Giro, TSG and Salomon, but also colour blocking (Brunotti & Rossignol), colour gradients (TSG) and tone-in-tone (Brunotti). Neon colours are coming back a bit (Bern), and are here to stay for the kids as they improve "safety on the slopes" as Flav from Rossignol points out. Smith have a new blend of "black designs with white detailing, white designs with black detailing," and TSG offer "glossy black graphics on matte black shells." Those who like it a bit more wild find unique prints "like a small stripe and a leopard print," at Brunotti, an Alpine Camo graphic at Oakley and denim-look from Picture.

MATERIALS

The FW17/18 season sees a lot of attention to details which are "very important to be able to create those looks and feels," says Mattia from Giro. These include "textiles with heather effect, faux leather integration and vintage climbing cords straps," from Salomon, "heather suedes and leather, canvas, rip stop and ballistic fabric," from Giro and "reflective mesh or perforated nubuk leather," from Head.

ABS is staying popular "for super strong shells," which TSG combine with "thin PE for super light shells and EVA foam for shock absorption". Oakley's MOD5 features a hybrid shell design: "a full in-mold shell and an ABS hard shell material covering the front and side portions of the helmet," explains Mike Turner, Helmet Product Line Manager. Giro work with a new material called Textreme Carbon, that is used in other industries like Formula 1 cars and allows for "a lighter, stiffer and stronger shell that helps to manage different types of energies."

Smith integrate Koroyd for impact protection and superior ventilation in their EPS foam in their Aerocore™ construction, that "increases airflow and improves temperature regulation, resulting in fog-free vision and improve impact resistance," as Graham explains. They also introduce "new antimicrobial XT2 Sweat Wicking Performance liners for warmth and comfort." Shred work with Casidion, a nanotechnology-based impact liner that "greatly reduces the thickness of the helmet's impact liner to shed weight and eliminate bulk," and a "liner made of merino wool. This liner is especially soft and naturally combats odour and bacteria," says Carlo. Salomon also use merino wool, next to an "AdvancedSkin ActiveDry technology," that "provides extra climate control properties such as high breathability and quick drying." True to their mission, Picture Organic use "recycled polyester lining and recovery EPS coming from the Japanese car industry," paired with a hard shell that is corn-based instead of oil-based. Bern developed a new proprietary Liquid Foam technology called Zipmold+®: "Its a PC microshell lined with Zipmold+® liquid injected foam to create a super low profile finish that screams style," which is also used in the kids category.

TECHNOLOGY

A lot of these new materials increase wearing comfort through enhanced ventilation and customisable climate control, which is further aided by "a large active ventilation system," with 12 active vents by anon and "various active and passive vents that channel airflow to control rider temperature," by Bern, which has the welcomed side-effect of drawing moisture away from the goggles. Salomon's new TCS Thermo Control System on the other hand "is a combination of dual active ventilation with specific airflow channels within the EPS4D construction," explains Emilie Valade, Product Line Manager Helmets.

For more comfort in usage of the helmets, Picture and Smith employ the new Fidlock System: a proprietary system concept for the chin strap that uses magnetic closure that can be adjusted while wearing gloves and with only one hand.

While making helmets more comfortable also makes them safer, as outlined above, brands are working hard to find even better ways to tackle vital safety issues, especially rotational impact forces. More and more brands are including the MIPS Brain Protection System, which is constantly refined and adapted by a strong team of scientists and engineers. Shred use their own Rotational Acceleration Absorption (RAA™) system, that "mimics the natural cushioning behaviour of the fluid between the skull and the brain and redirects rotational forces by allowing a small amount of relative movement between the helmet and the head during impacts from any direction." Paired with the proprietary Slytech NoShock™ technology that "integrates a foam with a honeycomb structure into the helmet's impact liner core to minimize linear energy." Rossignol's patented ROGRESS construction combines a Multi-impact liner with an in-mold shell, Smith's new Quantum Helmet features a "new exoskeleton design with a Hybrid ABS bombshell construction offering zonal impact protection," Picture combine a "composite fusion plus technology with a unique pyramid design that optimizes shock absorption while dual density foam system allows for extreme comfort," and Salomon's specific construction of the EPS liner made of pods "deforms independently in order to provide superior shock absorption, reducing rotational forces while being lighter and enhancing airflow circulation." Finally, POC's Damian Phillips – Head of PR, says the brand are sticking with their tried and tested VPD technology: "Our team have been working for many years with our patented Visco elastic Polymer Dough (VPD) which conforms to body shape with heat, and solidifies on impact offering a highly protective material."

Audio integration in the ear pads through separately sold speakers like Outdoor Tech Chips has already become a standard, except for Shred, who made a "conscious decision to not integrate audio components into our helmets," but rather allow riders to use their own earbuds.

Most helmets are also compatible with most goggles; a feature a lot of brands pay special attention to. Oakley even have a new patent pending helmet and goggle integration system, the Modular Brim System (MBS), "that offers a small and large helmet brim option, creating a seamless fit with any Oakley goggle, regardless of size."

One trend that didn't make it through, are soft construction helmets, ponders Head's International Marketing Manager Snowboard & Protection, Max Thurner: "Other than some brands might have expected, there was no paradigm shift towards soft-core construction. For 17/18, the helmet market is more determined by evolution than revolution." 📌

HIGHLIGHTS

- Rotational impact protection
- Clean design & earthy colours
- Climate-control liners
- Attention to details

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SNOW PROTECTION FW 17/18 TREND REPORT

Whether park, street or backcountry – every snowboarder needs protection. Which they seem to understand, making the protection segment one of the most promising when it comes to future growth.

Anna Langer looked into what's coming onto the shelves for FW17/18.

No matter how you shred, a free range of movement is key. Amplifi focus on "second skin" style protection that "you won't even feel, until you need it!" says CEO Jens Hartmann. Bliss agree that protection should "be invisible and shouldn't restrict the user," so they focus on "slim padding with great performance," explains Andi Nitsche, Global Marketing & PR. Forcefield also state that "the trend right now is closer fitting, slim and subtle armour", as do G-Form, who offer "protection so minimal that you often forget you are wearing pads." Rossignol have "reworked the fit and pattern, bringing the end consumer a perfect fit with breathable materials and stretch fabrics," says Product and Marketing Manager for Technical Equipment, Flav Foucher. Evoc combine "protection technology with a stylish piece of cloth, which offers outstanding wearing comfort."

NEW PRODUCTS & TECHNOLOGY

G-Form will slightly expand their product line for 17/18, "offering both wider coverage knee and elbow pads", says Alex Sardella, Brand & Sponsorship Coordinator. TSG introduce The Kneeguard Joint and Amplifi launch a new Cortex Polymer range: "Super clean, monocoque construction," with "punchy, simple sublimation print" for a killer unique look, explains designer, Tom Howells. Forcefield launch the "Slam Shorts, the Mons Vest and the Carve CE2 Back Protector," which is tested to -20 degree Celsius at Level 2.

Yet the main area for innovation is the technology behind it. Amplifi work with a new 3D knitted protection, Bliss introduce a material called ARG and Dainese feature a new Flexagon construction technology for their "most ergonomic and advanced design." Icetools work with state of the art specialists regarding protection: "SASTEC who have been doing motorbike protection for BMW and a lot of other big players for years." TSG introduce a new "Arti-lage foam that mimics the property of human cartilage with molecular freeflow technology," explains CEO Ruedi Herger.

HARD VS SOFT

When it comes to the debate of hard shell vs. soft protection, opinions

still diverge quite extensively. Amplifi find that "a few consumers are still looking for hard shells" and cater for them with the Fuse series. Dainese argue that a "hard shell is the precedent setting for its ability to dissipate shock over a wider area and to prevent 'piercing', leading to less injuries from sharp objects and rocks." Yet Product Manager Giovanni Fogal adds that it always depends "who is going to use the protector and how they're going to use it. Each technology finds an ideal application in a given type of use." Hence Bliss combine soft protection with "high performance cover materials like CEVLAR," yet most brands focus on "soft protection that allows freedom of movement and a second skin feel," which is facilitated by "the advances in materials technology that are being made by amazing suppliers like Sas-Tec and Armourgel," Jens from Amplifi concludes. Icetools agree that "SASTEC is one of the best inlays you can get on the market," which absorbs almost 30% of the impact. They pair it with vicso elastic foam, that is multi shock resistant and also featured in Evoc's joint protection, who find that "good soft protector concepts have the same damping properties, sometimes even better, as hardshell solutions." Evoc are also offering free crash replacement for all protector backpacks. Forcefield share this view: "As we have pioneered soft armour for over 25 years, and have the world's leading performance protection, we know that soft is both higher impact performing, and far more comfortable." Forcefield's armour is also completely removable and modular. Rossignol focus on soft materials as well, after having dropped hard plates 6 years ago, as do TSG who work with "D3O foam as well as the new Arti-Lage foam." Icetools add that hard protection is not only bound to break if an impact is too strong, they also propose an extra risk of injury.

PRICE POINTS

G-Form have lowered the price points on most of their base layer apparel over the last year, TSG add more products in a lower price range due to extensive material and supplier research and Amplifi minimize costs by "focussing on the most important elements for comfort, fit and protection," instead of loading products with unnecessary features. With a wide range of price points offered by most brands, this category is only bound to grow further in future. **S**

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Gregor Matthews & Ernest Capbert

FROM COLD WATER SURF TO CUSTOMER RESEARCH

Ernest Capbert, one of the three original guys at Finisterre and known for developing the brand over the last 10 years, is now helping online businesses to plunge into the world of customer research; a topic very close to Ernie's heart and one that SOURCE will be discussing with him over a series of articles. When people think of customer research they usually think of guys in white coats and dusty 200 page documents that cost a fortune, but Ernie and the team at Who Buys Your Stuff? are bringing it back down to earth for online retailers. Here's Ernie with the details.

We were running Finisterre, an online cold water surf business, from a workshop at the top of a cliff, totally disconnected from commerce and our actual customers. We were young and thought we had our fingers on the pulse. We believed the answers would come from more progressive actions, but instead we chose an approach that felt archaic. At that time, customer research was the last thing we thought would save us.

Finisterre was a part time thing, it was a blue waterproof fleece, being sold at national boat shows, until myself and two other guys, decided to take it full time back in 2005 and go hard after the category of cold water surfing. In those days there was no social media and digital strategy didn't exist – people were still deliberating whether to even buy a pair of jeans online. It wasn't easy to start off with. On the contrary, it was tough as hell. We were making technical apparel for surfers and trying to sell that concept into surf shops. Outdoor stores wouldn't take our products because the brand was unknown and margins were tight. The prospect of selling them online was a total long shot.

The good news was that Finisterre had a clear proposition right from the start: to make clothing that kept people comfortable and warm in the pursuit of cold waves. It was an incredible thing to be part of. We really believed in what we were doing, just like David Attenborough believes in the natural world and Elon Musk believes in humans colonising Mars. However big or small the belief, it's still yours and that's a powerful thing. This wasn't just another surf brand to us. We were cold water surfers and we were making gear that we wanted to wear. We needed this to happen.

Fast forward to 2011. We had managed to establish a solid online business and build a database of customers who understood what we were about. We took on private equity and grew the team to around twenty people. Things were going well, but something still wasn't right. We weren't hitting our sales targets and customers weren't engaging with content. Some of our products worked and others didn't work. The board members and team began to ask some really fundamental questions. It turns out these weren't the standard questions about how to increase sales or which product to make next. They wanted to know the answer to one simple question: who is our actual customer?

I remember it like it was yesterday. I was asked in a board meeting who I thought our customer was. My response was absolute junk. I came out with this really vague answer, basically ABC1 bullshit, and other key team members answered similarly. This was a turning point for the business and the catalyst that led them towards customer research. Good businesses are built on knowing who your customers are, then doing and building things to delight them. If we didn't know our customers then business was going to be a struggle.

Even after the team at Finisterre decided to turn to customer research, we weren't totally convinced it would provide the answer. The work took a long time and it was really expensive. I actually remember our Head of Marketing, Gregor Matthews, who is now my current business partner, compiling the research and me having the attitude that this customer research was going to be a big waste of time. I wanted to put our energy into something we could act on.

*"I want to do for customer research what Mail Chimp did for newsletters. We're making it affordable for online businesses, easy to understand and sexy as hell. We introduce you to your best customers and give you practical steps for how to speak with them and find more of them. It's f***ing dynamite."*

The work came back and we found out things about the actual humans driving the business that were incredibly powerful. Suddenly we could see pictures of them, understand their interests and behaviours, pinpoint the best words to use when communicating to them. The metrics on the screen became the faces of our customers. From that moment onwards, every decision was made with them in mind. It literally changed everything for us. Needles started to move, KPIs started to move, content and films got better and eventually the products did as well.

A couple of years later, I decided I needed a change and was searching for the next adventure. Looking back, my experience with customer research had addressed a genuine problem within the previous business. The options for online retailers were usually off-limits. They were time consuming and way too expensive – but the insights that came from customer research were incredibly powerful and allowed the business to grow much quicker. I needed to figure out how to connect online businesses with their customers in a much quicker and more cost-effective way. In other words, I wanted to reinvent the traditional method of customer research.

In 2015, I teamed up with my colleague from Finisterre, Gregor Matthews, and we launched Who Buys Your Stuff?, a customer research company specialising in online businesses. We are using technology to change the way companies approach customer research and make the whole process much faster and more affordable. So far Who Buys Your Stuff? has worked with seventeen brands, been shortlisted for an online retail award and helped businesses achieve rapid growth by introducing brands to their best customers.

No more vague ABC1 responses or awkward board meetings. Instead we give brands a quantifiable understanding of their customer and practical steps for how to engage them. We basically created the service we needed when we were running an online business – a practical, affordable, hands-on approach to customer research that makes a massive difference to sales. We feel lucky to be working with so many rad businesses like Flatspot, Kalon Surf, Le'strange London and Amanda Wakeley to name a few.

Without this kind of research, online businesses are disconnected from their customers and base their decisions on assumptions, which lead to wasted time and money. Maybe you're a marketing manager or a product designer. Imagine finding out exactly who your actual customers are – not the ones who like your page on Facebook, but the ones who buy your stuff regularly. If we introduce you to this person then you know what to say to them, how to find more of them, how to increase your sales, what their other interests are and what types of products they would like to see more of. It's my biggest learning in fifteen years of building online businesses and I'm really looking forward to sharing this with you.

WBYS? * L'ESTRANGE CASE STUDY

L'Estrange is redefining a category that has remained stagnant for too long: smart casual. Led by a mantra of 'nothing is finished until it is perfect, nothing is perfect', they are creating clothes that allow you to transition into any setting, without compromising on comfort and style.

THE CHALLENGE

L'Estrange was at the beginning of a very exciting journey. They were looking to better understand the customers who were actually driving their sales online and in turn, use the insight to influence sales & marketing, as well as sharing it with the talented 3rd party teams they were working alongside. The big questions were: establish the underlying drivers of their actual customers, where are they in their lives, and how and what did they relate to in the L'Estrange brand?

Most importantly, Tom and Will wanted to know how they could then use this information to build their business with them, and for them, in mind - from creative direction all the way through to their content and NCA strategy.

THE RESULTS

When we ran our methodology across the L'Estrange customer set, we began to unearth some incredibly powerful insights. We found out that they had aspirations of owning their own business, we honed in on their specific life-stage and we found out how they were consuming media enabling the team to tighten everything up across the brand and use the insights to better inform their content strategy.

L'Estrange in our opinion, is one of the finest examples of how a business has understood quantifiably who their actual customers are and then applied those understandings across their sales & marketing, to become that much more relevant, progressive and commercial. They used the insight to better inform their site design as well, aiding their external team to reflect back at their customer profile during design.

The results have been staggering - they have doubled email sign-ups, increased the right kind of traffic by 2.2x and online sales are up by 60%.

WHAT THEY SAID ABOUT US

"WBYS? allowed us to really understand who our customer is and what makes them tick. This has really changed the way we approach our decision making across the business and has allowed us to be much more focussed towards the people driving our business. We love Ernie and Gregor's approach. Their energy is infectious and left us feeling inspired." - Tom Horne and Will Green, Founders, L'Estrange London

Over the next couple of issues, we'll be hearing more from Ernie about the benefits of customer research, how Who Buys Your Stuff? works and more real stories from some of the brands he's worked with. **S**

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photo: Dakine

BACKPACKS FW17/18 TREND REPORT

Boardsports enthusiasts appreciate reliable backpacks as companions on every journey. With the advent of “always-on-the-run” lifestyles, performance-proven packs are also winning over students and commuters.
 2017 Backpacks Trend Report by **Dirk Vogel**.

Backpacks remain a safe bet: Current research values the market for backpacks at \$100 million in the UK and \$2.7 billion in the United States. Backpack sales reached an all-time high in 2015 with over 174 million units sold in the U.S. (Travel Goods Association). Overall, market growth in the segment has settled at a solid 3.9%, down from 9% in 2011 (Euromonitor), but there are breakouts: Recent NPDI Group statistics reveal an 18% increase in women’s backpack sales, at the expense of handbags, which saw a 5% drop.

Backpacks from endemic brands remain in high demand for two reasons: They follow customers through their day while visibly displaying allegiance to the boardsports lifestyle through branding and styling. And they pack the kind of features and functions – all the way to back protectors and avalanche parachutes – that our culture puts to the test on a daily basis. Brands in this trend report shared the assessment by Heimplanet owner Stefan Clauss: “We believe that packs are becoming even more important as an accessory in 2017.” As Stephane Froment at Rip Curl puts it: “Wherever you’re going for surf, you’ll need to carry stuff!”

On a product level, the two major factors – style VS. performance – reflect in two distinct design approaches. “The simplest way to divide our range is by technical and lifestyle-oriented products. Technical packs are designed responding to the specific needs of our athletes. They aim to provide the right features to spend a better day while travelling or riding,” said Markus Otto, EMEA Marketing Manager at DaKine.

SEASON TREND: MOBILE LIFESTYLES
 The importance of technical features increases as more and more consumers adopt mobile lifestyles. Whereas the home previously functioned as the go-to hub in between activities, many consumers leave home in the morning and spend their time at work, school, and play without returning before settling in at night. And since many boardsports packs are already built with travel in mind, they’re a logical stand-in for living-out-of-a-bag. “The Ful range includes all the travel gear you need to make each trip from A to B that much easier – especially if you have the day-in, day-out needs of a serious commuter,” said Ful’s European marketing expert Mark Griffiths at Concept One Europe. “It’s clean and smart products that make your journeys better. We have taken the urban style to the mountains,” said Sanna Johansson, Marketing Coordinator at Douchebags. SnoKart Founding Director Christian Williams points out that his company’s Bak Pak is, “as good for cycling as it is for skiing or commuting on a train!” One to watch out for is Doughnuts, a Hong Kong-based bag company, already big in Asia, is now taking the European market by storm thanks to their “functional heritage product design, technical outdoor mountaineering influences and detailing mixed in with an up to date colour pallet.”

PRICE POINTS
 In return for real functionality, customers are ready to pay real money for their packs in 2017: While most companies provide entry-level lifestyle packs starting at €40, technical backpacks with advanced materializations and innovative design features generate action up to €120. Meanwhile, DaKine sells their Poacher Series, “the most technical, airbag-compatible packs for the consumer with the highest

technical demands," at up to €230. Duke Johnson, Nixon's Global Category Manager Softgoods and Accessories, even said: "Our category ranges from \$25 - \$350." Retailers are best advised to know their customer base, and stock up on the right mix of flair VS. luxury and lifestyle VS. performance as the category picks up momentum: "Depending on the country, we can tell that wearing backpacks is definitely back on trend again. This was not so much the case a few years ago," said Markus at DaKine.

STYLING

Boardsports customers score big on style, as 2017's backpacks have outgrown the clanking overload of straps, hooks, and zippers for more refined constructions. Herschel is seeing great success with their Classics line of student-friendly backpacks, while beefing up their Trail Collection with progressive styling: "The backpacks have water bottle pockets, unique storage features — all the bells and whistles from outdoor, but designed from an urban perspective," said Jon Warren, Herschel's Director of Design, while pointing out that the technical ApexKnit Collection is "really pushing the boundaries of construction and what it means to create bags."

As technical demands surge, brands are reengineering their packs from the ground up. "We are playing with the shape of the bag. Traditional shapes, such as the school bag, will still be most popular but we are having fun with unique origami, folded styles. We are also seeing the trend moving away from top loaders to more front loaders," said Duke Johnson at Nixon. "As the line between tech and lifestyle becomes increasingly fluid, expect to find dialled in detail across the board," said Charlotte Wilcox, Bags and Accessories Designer at Animal. Next season sees the rise of sleek, aerodynamic, and pod-shaped packs without protruding pockets or zippers from a majority of leading brands. Meanwhile, UK brand Daniel Poole delivers refinements on their classic streetwear bags based on bomber jackets: "The original MA1 bag produced in 1994 is currently featured in the Victoria and Albert Museum," said Laurence Poole, Sales and Marketing Director.

COLOURS & MATERIALS

Next season's backpack colourways are following streetwear trends, dominated by military classics such as black, tan, olive, navy, and gunmetal grey in monochromatic finishes with the occasional colour blocking or suede accents. In terms of patterns, camo is making a big comeback: "Animal's original British Camo print features across both men's luggage and backpacks, given a new twist on a dope-dyed herringbone," said Charlotte at Animal. Nixon is injecting patterns into the line via a collab with, "US-based Pendleton, placing the brand's 100% pure virgin wool patterns onto Nixon's bags. We have also worked with British Millerain, using their waxed cotton on some of our favourite styles." Mi-Pac go a little leftfield as they "explore 'futurism', by introducing new fabrics such as transparency, glitter and mirror providing as a nod to this integral trend for a truly cosmic vibe."

Materials add value and performance across the board. "All Ful backpacks use 1680 denier super tough ballistic nylon. Ful does not compromise on the quality of the materials used," says Mark at Ful. Jon at Herschel is "exploring different types of rip stop, and different processes for cotton canvas, whether it's enzyme washes or stone washing," and is stoked on "ApexKnit, our first trademarked fabric. We're the first to do jacquard woven backpacks, so that's a huge technology for us." Rip Curl is adding overprinted heather and two-face coated high resistance fabrics to the line, while Heimplanet is pushing a specifically developed Diamond Rip Stop Nylon Melange fabric that elevates durability and creates a unique look. Duke at Nixon said: "As far as materials go, we really run the gamut from cotton to poly, to nylon to cordura, doobby and rip stops."

FUNCTIONALITY

The shift towards performance aspects is consumer-driven, said

Heimplanet's Stefan Claus: "We believe strongly in real functionality and see that our customers seek these out. They are getting more and more educated about materials and functional elements and want the real thing even if they are searching for a pack for everyday use." Customers want bags with lots of stash room, fuelling the major trend towards roll-top backpacks with roll-able sleeves secured by latches. Skateboard-specific packs feature latches for carrying a board, placed on the back — as in Ful's Overton model — or beneath the pack, where they double as holders for the ever-so-trendy yoga mats. And as Laurence at Daniel Poole points out: "Many people carry expensive tech, Mac Books, iPhones, and cameras and they need a way to transport these items securely." Pacsafe are so nuts on security, they named their company after it and are really upping the game in backpack safety, as Marcus Johnsson, VP of Design informs: "Pacsafe has made a name for itself in creating innovative solutions to the bag industry through bags that are offering a peace of mind at any journey. We have tons of patents involving anti-theft security so when getting a Pacsafe you're not getting any other ordinary bag." Today, padded sleeves for tablets, phones, and laptops and pockets for camera gear and boardsports tools have become the status quo, while sports performance features such as SnoKart's hydration drinking spout are the next frontier.

"Outdoor has arrived in daily urban life. Waterproofing and low weight are expected standard features. Reflective and transparent fabrics remain a strong trend," said Niklas Pastor at Aevor, adding: "Many brands are experimenting with supplemental features such as detachable toiletry bags, vacuum-sealed laundry sleeves, or USB smartphone chargers." Speaking of laundry sleeves, waterproofing has become important on the packs' outer shell as well as inside pockets for those sweaty gym clothes or wet shoes. Bags also fit more comfortably thanks to cushioned carrying straps, together with "padded air flow zones, integrated lash points and sternum straps to lighten the load," said Charlotte at Animal.

Customers also want more tech while riding, so DaKine is letting them have it: "We provide the full range of key tech features, from more sophisticated ones like removable airbag systems or integrated back protection to more simple ones like vertical/diagonal ski/snowboard carry systems, deployable helmet carry, snow tool and shovel pocket, ice axe loop or rescue whistle on sternum strap," said DaKine's Markus Otto. Evoc, the brand founded by freeride pro Holger Feist after an avalanche accident in 1999, also packs back protection and extra protection: "You can turn your backpack into a fully-fledged avalanche airbag pack by combining our ZIP-ON ABS pack sacks with the back system from ABS, the market leader," says Evoc Marketing Coordinator Jessica Negele.

OUTLOOK

As the functional needs of boardsports athletes align with the mobile lifestyles of city dwellers, the future of the backpacks segment holds more technology and performance without compromise on style. Future packs are bound to up the ante with built-in solar chargers for devices and other tech to support those long and active days away from home. ☺

HIGHLIGHTS

- Growth in women's
- Elevated price ceiling
- Packs for all-day mobility
- Water-proof inside compartments
- Sleeves for gadgets
- HOT TREND: Built-in tech



SLIDE, THE UK'S SNOWSPORT TRADESHOW REGISTER TO ATTEND AT: SLIDEUK.CO.UK

EXHIBITOR LISTING AS AT 24/11/16

686, Coal / Allcord / Amer Sports, Salomon, Atomic / Arctic Fox / Ardblair Sports Importers Ltd / Arva / Barts / Black Diamond / Blue Ice / Bollé, Cébé / Bonfire / Buffera Ltd / Burnt Custard / Columbia, Sorel / Dahu Sports / Dainese / Dakine / Dare 2b / Dragon Alliance, Nike Vision / Dynastar, Lange UK / Ember / Faction, Roxy / Falke / Fall-Line Skiing Magazine / Fischer / Five Seasons / Giro Snow / Goldbergh / Groove Armada Ltd / Head Apparel / Head, Tyrolia / Hestra / Horsefeathers, Atrip / K2 Ski / K2 Snowboard, Ride / Kästle / Killtec / Line, Full Tilt / Lole / Man O'Leisure Ltd / Manbi, Salice, Olang / Midas Agencies / Mountain Boot Company / Mycoal Skicare / Nikita, Sessions / Noble Custom, Ortovox / O'Neill / Oakley UK / Odlo UK / Outdoor Research / Patagonia / Picture / Planks Clothing / POC / Protest / Reusch UK / Rossignol / Salomon / Scott Sports / Sidas UK / SnoKart / SnowFalls / Sole Technology UK / Stance / Steiner Outdoor / Storm Care Solutions / Superfeet UK / Sweet Protection / Telegraph Ski & Snowboard Magazine / The Riders Lounge / TKC Sales Ltd / Tran Am Ltd / Trespass / Volcom Men / Volcom Women / Völkl, Marker, Dalbello / Zeal Optics / Zeek



INTRODUCING THE DOBH



OSIRIS 
ISPO BOOTH #236



photo: Supra

SKATE FOOTWEAR FW17/18 TREND REPORT

Big on margins and high on style, skate-specific shoes are the lifeblood of every skate shop – even during cold season. Our trend report shows how endemic footwear brands are keeping European skateboarders laced for the Fall/Winter 17/18 season.

By SOURCE Skateboard Editor **Dirk Vogel**.

Since the early beginnings of skateboard culture, riders in Europe have always needed some extra strength and perseverance to make it through the cold winter months. Although Europe has evolved into a vibrant skate scene – and sizeable market – over the years, skate-specific footwear design has largely ignored the rough realities of frozen streets and icy parking garages over here. But that's changing. The last few years saw the rise of winterized constructions and SKUs specifically tailored towards European demands. "We definitely see a seasonal shift as the lighter materials and canvases don't hold up as well in the weather. We design with that in mind. It's easy to forget that the rest of the world isn't always 72 degrees and sunny like here in Southern California," said Doug Weston, VP of Sales and Operations at Osiris.

Over at Australian brand Globe, footwear designer Morgan King is on the same page: "We definitely see a shift in the product mix during the cold season in Europe. Based on this, we tailor our colour mix to darker palettes and material mix to more suedes and leathers and water resistant materials, rather than textiles and canvas." Explaining the issue from a product angle, King continued: "We also have specific 'Winter' SKUs which have some sort of cold weather lining such as faux fur or heavier warmer linings, weather resistant tongue gussets to help keep out water, snow, and cold wind, and gripper lugged outsoles."

While "winterization" of existing footwear styles has already been trending for several seasons, these shoes were not necessarily designed to ever see griptape and support heavy skate sessions. The biggest trend for FW17/18 revolves around footwear that can do more than muck around the snow in skate-style: "There is an increasing demand for skateable winterized products," said Julian Vergnes,

Global PLM Footwear at Element, adding: "We are, for the first time, introducing the Wolfboro concept in our FW17 footwear range. It will be all about high traction outsoles, warm liners, and water resistant uppers." The main driver behind these concepts is the recent advancement of technical performance features among endemic footwear brands, which is influencing all levels of the market this coming season.

THE MARKET: NEW BLOOD

After years of brutal market consolidation – indicated by the shrinking numbers of independent footwear brands in our trend reports – the market is finally ready for fresh blood. One new upstart is West Coast company State Footwear, short for "The Free and Independent State," with a tight team and core-oriented product offering. Asked about the brand's motivation, Kevin Furtado, formerly brand director of Dekline, told SOURCE: "I believe that it is similar in Europe and most other parts of the world. The top three brands are still heavily weighted in volume, however I feel people are looking for alternatives and new things are being received with more of an open mind than in the more recent past." Small brands can also achieve big changes these days, including the supply chain, said Tomasz Naryniecki, owner of European indie shoe brand Lando: "We are the only company which is producing part of our skateboard shoes collection in Europe. Our Premium line is made specially for skateboard action and I've never seen such durable shoes on the market."

SEASON TREND: QUIET TECHNOLOGY

Better-educated than ever, customers are putting a premium on performance without sacrificing stylistics. "Technology is becoming

more important as general consumer awareness and performance expectations increase,” said Brent Phelps, Product Director at DVS. In 2017 collections, the focus is shifting away from using technology for technology’s sake. “It’s not like early 2000’s skate shoes where you just add panels and over-embellish soles to give the perception of technology – today’s consumer is too smart for that. They want to feel the tech and know it’s there, but don’t necessarily care to see it,” said Nick Pappas, Product Manager at New Balance Numeric. To hear Morgan King at Globe tell it: “I think five years ago there was a big push for tech and tech-looking treatments. Nowadays the tech has to be wearable and functional. Quiet tech is our mantra.”

Examples of this “quiet tech” include the Osiris FLX.VLK outsole construction, blending the classic look of a vulcanized shoe with the flex and protection of a cup sole. Vans has mastered the art of “hiding” technology in their vulc shoes, culminating in next season’s UltraRange Pro model: “The sole combines the Original Vans Waffle outsole with a custom-tuned Ultracush Lite formula co-moulded midsole. And a sockfit liner provides amazing fit and feel on the upper,” said Juss Apivala, Global Category Manager at Vans Pro Skate. On that note, sock liner entries are trending heavily in FW17/18 collections, including DVS’ Vaporcell Elite concept. Element is pushing the limits with “computer-knitting technology, one-piece uppers on Phylon midsoles with TPU welded reinforcements and reflective branding,” in the Travel Well Topaz Trek model. All across the board, we are seeing shock absorption blended into midsoles via new foam materials and liners.

COLOURS & STYLING: SLIP INTO DARKNESS

As the days get colder, colour palettes get darker and black remains the year-round favourite. “We are in the black shoe business so black is the main colour that we design around. We’ve found a great synthetic leather that wears incredibly and we’ve been able to apply across the line,” said Osiris footwear designer, Brian Reid. Addressing the rest of the spectrum, Brent at DVS said: “Base colours shift into darker charcoals and navy is big, especially with black combinations. Whites become more taupe and earth tones.” New Balance Numeric is enriching the line-up with, “burgundy colours as well as off-white or

“I think five years ago there was a big push for tech and tech-looking treatments. Nowadays the tech has to be wearable and functional. Quiet tech is our mantra.” **Morgan King, Globe**

antique white.” In terms of stylistics, the “white rubber toe cap” trend came and went, but still inspires variations such as Lando’s beautiful natural rubber toe caps. Designers are playing with the foxing tape connecting upper and sole, including diamond-shaped rivets from Globe and tiny imperfections on the Osiris FLX.VLK sole to mimic that natural vulcanized look.

MATERIALS: BUILT TO LAST

The trend towards quiet technology also unlocks novel materials to maximize longevity and performance. Suede remains the material of choice in FW17/18, but reinforced canvas and treated textiles – including waterproofing – are gaining ground. At Scandinavian upstarts Servant, Co-founder and head designer Rasmus Åhrberg is proud to announce: “No suede or leather at all! The NOCOW collection is made from 100% man-made materials. Apart from the obvious benefits to animals and the environment, our 4SKIN microfibre is as tough as suede but totally uniform. This makes it possible for us to

produce every pair with the same high quality, every time.” For added longevity, several brands are adding a special protective coating to the wear-intensive toe area – replacing double or triple layers of fabric with thin, perforated rubber layers – while New Balance Numeric devised a new “hidden internal lacing feature” for the new 533v2, an update to PJ Ladd’s signature shoe. Meanwhile, the trend towards winter versions of classics remains a fan favourite, said Pascal Kamp, EMEA Marketing Manager at Supra: “We do well with winterizing our existing models. Adding slight twists to previous successes are great for the retailer and consumer. Look forward to Vaider CW dropping Holiday 2016, it’s a winter lug outsole but constructed in a vulcanized way.”

SILHOUETTES & CONSTRUCTIONS: NO STITCHES

Next season’s silhouettes continue the trend towards stripped down, form-fitting cuts and stitch-less toe boxes. Behind the scenes, this shift is powered by advanced manufacturing techniques to build uppers like the DVS Drop model: “It features a one-piece suede vamp with a modern, dimensional Isoweld quarter. Mesh cut outs were added for breathability.” Vans has also broken new ground over the past five years with the hybrid “Wafflecup” sole and, “the first ever stitchless vulcanized shoe with the Rowley Pro Lite and now the same technology is available on the AV RapidWeld Pro Lite,” said Juss Apivala.

While cold season always marks an increase in mid- and high-top SKUs, the true breakouts for FW17/18 are après-skate boots built on advanced technologies. “Our cold season specific footwear is highlighted by the Apres Snow boot that we designed and developed in collaboration with Yes Snowboards, which features Vibram’s Arctic Grip outsole, a waterproof YKK Aquaguard zip for easy entry and a Cordura material quarter,” said Globe’s Morgan King. Supra’s winterized Vaider CW in a tan colourway looks like the amazing love child between a Skytop and a CATerpillar boot, while DVS is pushing the Vanguard boot with Vaporcell liner, Dri-Lex tongue lining and Isoweld toe. But as a word of warning, DVS International Sales Director Joe Marckx said: “Boots from action sports brands do not seem to be working at retail as well as in the past. Retailers and consumers have shifted to outdoor or athletic brands for this category.”

OUTLOOK

After years of massive disruption, the skate footwear market is finally seeing the advent of new independent shoe brands. In the long run, current technical advancements in shoe construction and performance-enhancing materials will allow endemic footwear brands to deliver the quality that an increasingly critical and quality-conscious consumer base demands. “Everyone is asked to step up the game on a seasonal basis. This means that brands, including the big ones, are being pushed to put out better product than ever before and from a consumer point of view, I think that’s only great news,” said Juss Apivala at Vans. 📍

HIGHLIGHTS

- New independent brands
- Sock liner entry
- Black and darker base colours
- Stitchless toe boxes
- Winter-ready après boots

SUPRA 



FLOW

DEE OSTRANDER



BUYER SCIENCE

Operating in over 20 stores across England, Snow + Rock's Snowboard & Snowboard Equipment Buyer, Sam Clark is currently in the midst of his busiest time of year. Sam was kind enough to spare SOURCE some of his time to talk to us about consumer profiles, BREXIT and how brands can use retailers in product development to help increase sales.

What's the most challenging aspect of the snowboard industry at present?

Unpredictable exchange rates, changing climates and transport costs combine to reduce customer confidence in purchasing new gear. Unfortunately these are beyond our control. "Low cost" flights aren't necessarily low cost any more, but airlines offering cheap/free sports baggage are a big step forward for our industry. Certain online-only business models pose issues for bricks-and-mortar stores as they don't have the overheads that we do. The snowboard industry needs stores; both chains and independents, manned with knowledgeable staff that customers can chat to and get honest advice on product. This is the only way people will be inspired to pick up and continue snowboarding. Despite challenges in the industry, here at Snow+Rock we are happy with snowboarding's direction. Under the new ownership of the AS Adventure Group we are excited to be pushing snowboard hardware out to more stores with wider, more exciting ranges.

What changes have you noticed and do you expect to see in your business as a result of BREXIT?

With the falling exchange rate we are currently under-priced on Europe after many years of it being the other way around, so there has never been a better time for UK residents to buy in the UK. However, if the euro and dollar rates do not recover then we will see increased costs and RRP's to align with Euro pricing for W17/18.

Could you talk us through the difference in order deadlines for winter hardgoods and apparel. How could these dates be changed to benefit the retailer?

We have a separate team that works with softgoods, however we collaborate a lot to ensure the ranges move forward in the same direction.

With later snowfall and a longer tail to the season, later deadlines would allow better sell-through analysis. However, brand and factory deadlines are getting earlier – many brands have to forecast numbers before they've seen samples. This risks mis-judging demand; either not backing the winners with enough stock or, worse still, over-backing products. Clearing that stock can flood the market with discounted product.

In balance, brands and retailers need to work together with more flexibility and forecast orders. For us as retailers, seeing product as early as possible and being involved in development can help us to give forecast numbers earlier.

What have you learned from specific snowboard product categories in the last two years?

As boots can make or break a holiday, they are generally the most



photo: James North

reliable area in UK snowsport hardgoods. No one wants to risk cold, crampy feet in rentals for a week. Boards and bindings have had a solid performance the last couple of years, and there has been an explosion in brands experimenting with shapes and quiver boards. These look stunning and keep excitement in our industry. However without proper mountains in England (Scotland got all the luck there!) a lot of holidaymakers only upgrade their kit out of necessity rather than lust for something shiny. For the UK we need to strike a balance between commerciality and excitement, and not alienate the mass market by only marketing crazy shapes.

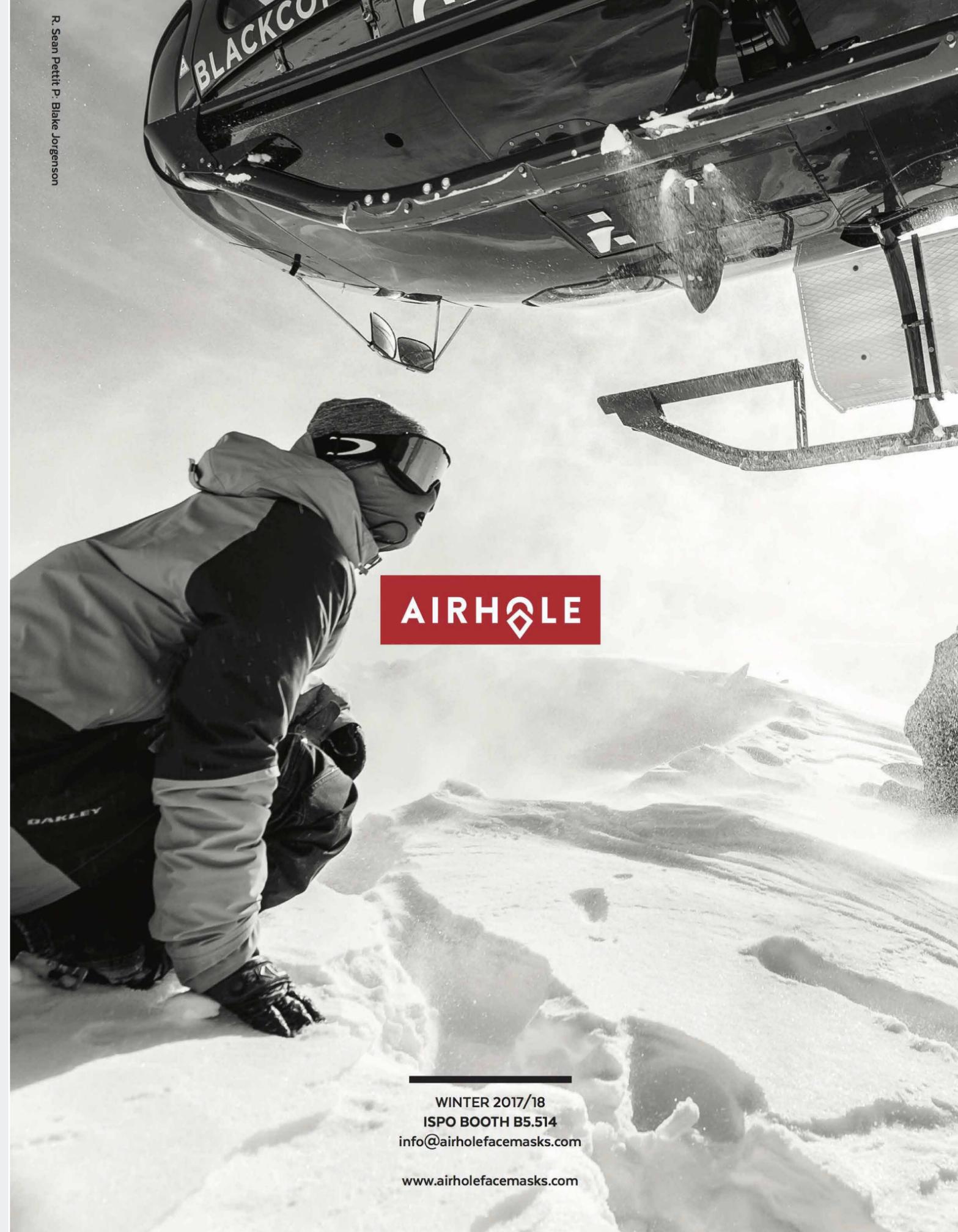
If you could ask brands for support, what would it be for?

Increase credible risk sharing opportunities and collaborative marketing. We can then offer the widest variety of product, showcase the latest and greatest for the brands, and drive traffic in store to properly expose them.

Which tradeshows do you attend, how important are they for your decision-making and how much product do you actually get to test before buying?

Snow Avant Première, Slide and ISPO are regular shows, but are not the only places we look. We aim to test every piece of hardware before buying, but we can always test more! I want to have complete faith in the products and associate each one to a customer profile before ranging them. Our brand reps and internal training team can then deliver this information to the guys in store. With multiple stores and many staff, there will always be differing opinions on products. However the stronger our belief in the range, the stronger the message to the guys in store and the better experience for the customer. As the saying goes: "You're never as convincing as when you are convinced." 📍

R. Sean Pettit P. Blake Jorgenson



WINTER 2017/18
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THE WORLD IS SUPER

JASON WEST

7:16pm

San Diego, Ca.

Product Testing the FH17 Humboldt jacket after a cold morning surf.



photo: Rip Curt

MEN'S SURF APPAREL FW17/18 TREND REPORT

Road tripping through Iceland, exiled to Chile, wild camping in British Columbia... modern exploration is appealing to more and more people - in and out of the water - making your all-inclusive boat trip to the Maldives look more like a package holiday. These are new frontiers in which surfing, the art of living, exploration, engines, nature and camping all have one common thread: clothing. Recognised for providing stylised yet technical products, the European surf industry is pulling out all stops to equip all those in search of new adventures... and waves. A focus on the standout silhouettes of next autumn/winter.

A study by **Denis Houillé**.

DIRECTIONS & TRENDS

"Modern adventure rather than oldschool 'outdoor' market, although retro keeps rearing its head," states Andrew Todd, Head Designer at Finisterre.

Live videos and photos at the ready; articles labelled #adventure are accumulating the most likes on social media. It's not surprising that magazines and Instagram accounts specialising in "explore" or "wild" are flourishing, collecting the editorials of the young and generous contributors who have gone camping into scarcely explored regions... All that remains is to kit these adventurers out for the worst conditions as they credit, tag and hashtag their beloved clothing providers along the way.

Keeping the environment close to heart, recycling and eco design have become top priorities when it comes to manufacturer and customer requirements. Innovations in clothing are pushed further each season and when we look into the description of a product: a recycled fibre for some, a renewable fabric from responsible plantations or the absence of chemical dyes for others; the scene is set for shops to tell the story.

Another growing trend that's being rightfully capitalised on by various brands is the fusion between streetwear and sportswear. In other

words, technical clothing with a knowingly crafted look. Adventurous consumers want to be able to camp and scramble in comfort without looking like a high-mountain guide. We end up with highly stylised pieces with a hefty dose of technical properties: checked shirts with waterproof finishes and warm linings, plain jeans with a brushed "jogging bottom style" lining, beanies with waterproof treatments... Far from a beach bum's wardrobe, "surf is growing up and learning how to be relevant to the urban and inland markets," observes Jason West, Superbrand's Head of Product.

STYLISTED & TECHNICAL

Straddling modernity and authenticity, manufacturers are taking it upon themselves each year to provide pieces that push innovation while retaining the creative touches that characterise them. Technical prêt-à-porter? Fashion sportswear? There's no need to coin a term for this trend because brands have been rightfully basking in its success for a good number of years now. From airport check-in to morning surf check, these get-ups guarantee comfort, function and quality.

Here and there designers are incorporating high-performance materials into their weaves, bringing new properties to basic fabrics. To face up to the highly variable weather conditions that hit the extremities of the old continent are pieces with classic appearances and additional technical capacities as well as "'cool' products for

daily use with technical & functional aspects such as light weight / breathable cooling / moisture wicking for comfort traveling or during the 'search'", explains Henri Rodriguez, Head of Surfwear at Rip Curl.

Versatile products take pride of place: sweaters with sherpa-lined hoods, light parkas that are stuffed and laminated to ensure perfect insulation and beanies from the likes of Finisterre, which are becoming waterproof thanks to hydrophobic treatments. Billabong jeans, thanks to an internal brushed lining, take on the comfort and warmth of a jogger. As for Brunotti, they are drawing directly on their wetsuit and accessory range in fleshing out their clothing collection with flexible, insulating materials such as super lightweight neoprene and thermal liners.

Throughout their collection, Rhythm are calling upon a variety of materials such as cotton, twill, canvas, nylon and linen to cover all your needs on both hemispheres. The same goes for Rusty who are inciting a combination of 90s influences brought back to the tastes of the day with updated techniques for use on their textiles, finishes and in manufacturing quality. Traditional wool finds itself linking up with technological features, as is the case at Finisterre. Generally we can see a trend towards textured fabrics such as thick linen, velvet, nylon fabric and twills.

"Modern adventure rather than oldschool 'outdoor' market, although retro keeps rearing its head."

Andrew Todd,
Head Designer at Finisterre.

THEMES & INSPIRATION

Unsurprisingly, the coastal world is a theme found at the heart of many brands' ranges. Finisterre are inspired by a trip to the north in which the feel and colours are directly influenced by each stage of the journey: the greens of high-altitude moss, the pinks of granite, the light blues of the moonlight combined with charcoal and whisky tones, not to mention the deep blues of the ocean. Lightning Bolt's designs also evoke a pure connection with nature: minimalist, classic and timeless. Autumn 2017 will carry an evolutionary message through a "less-is-more" approach where durability and versatility team up with a progressive contemporary sports theme. Rusty are bringing nostalgia and memories back from the 90s, perfectly represented on the Instagram accounts of their models and ambassadors Noa Dean and Jimmy Pizza. Superbrand seem inspired by the light and dark contrast of dawn sessions in addition to the eroded, weathered textures that you find near the coast.

MOTIFS & COLOURS

Caught between trends for "casual function" and "stylised technical", all brands are still trying to set themselves apart.

On their line of shirts, Finisterre are developing unique tartan and Scottish motifs created in-house to ensure their originality. Lightning Bolt are offering a wide range of flannel shirts, office shirts and over shirts woven in Portugal into textured prints, mottled colours and bi-tonal combinations. For next season, Billabong are using three colour schemes. One being inspired by Nordic countries and structured by blueish tones underlined with bright reds and greens. The second offers a more subtle silhouette of black and grey in which green and yellow washes bring intensity and deconstruction. The final one

offers autumnal tones such as pumpkin, green gum, sun and natural washes inspired by the 70s. True to form, Rhythm are continuing to explore natural tones, this season focussing on the brighter ones. At Superbrand's design department, Jason West is also talking about "colours that reflect natural elements and their spectacular contrasts". And for upcoming seasons, the brand intends to pursue a "distortion of classic materials and motifs to give a unique touch," to its products. Brunotti have two distinct colour schemes: on one side there's the classic arrangement (blue, orange and navy) and on the other there's natural colours (green, black, white and grey).

Rip Curl are also calling on natural, gentle colours throughout their eco-friendly line. A timeless palette with touches of off-whites and marbled greys. Notably, the black and white combo remains a favourite amongst many designers.

Lastly, at Rusty, vintage tones are approached using blue and black washes that continue to evolve and contrast with sun-faded pastels and poppier dyes typical of the late '80s/early '90s.

SILHOUETTE TYPES

From head to toe, the looks crafted by all the different manufacturers for next season are jam packed with versatility, functionality and originality.

The flagship silhouette from Finisterre consists of an "all-weather" vest, a sherpa-lined checked shirt, premium topstitched Japanese jeans, waterproof and insulating beanie and entirely waterproof baggage. Functional from the first surf check to a night out in the town centre, the Superbrand look includes tailored stretch chinos with flannel shirt and warm, thick jacket.

At Billabong's design department, one silhouette type is described as a "surf uniform" (from their Surfplus collection) structured by a trucker jacket (denim or canvas) and straight-cut jeans, all livened up with a trucker hat. The other silhouette they are pushing (from the Billabong Adventure Division) is dedicated to travel and the search for waves in winter conditions, including a convertible jacket called Tradewinds, which is packable and reversible and jeans with a unique lining that provides the comfort of a jogger. Anchored in minimalist retro, Lightning Bolt are going for a purified look with subtle details, geometric graphics and discreet logos and no pretension.

At Rip Curl the silhouette type is clearly based on the 'Search' experience of their team-riders with an Anti-series light jacket that's wind-, cold- and rainproof for protection against the elements, a Vapor tee and stretch pants for maximum comfort.

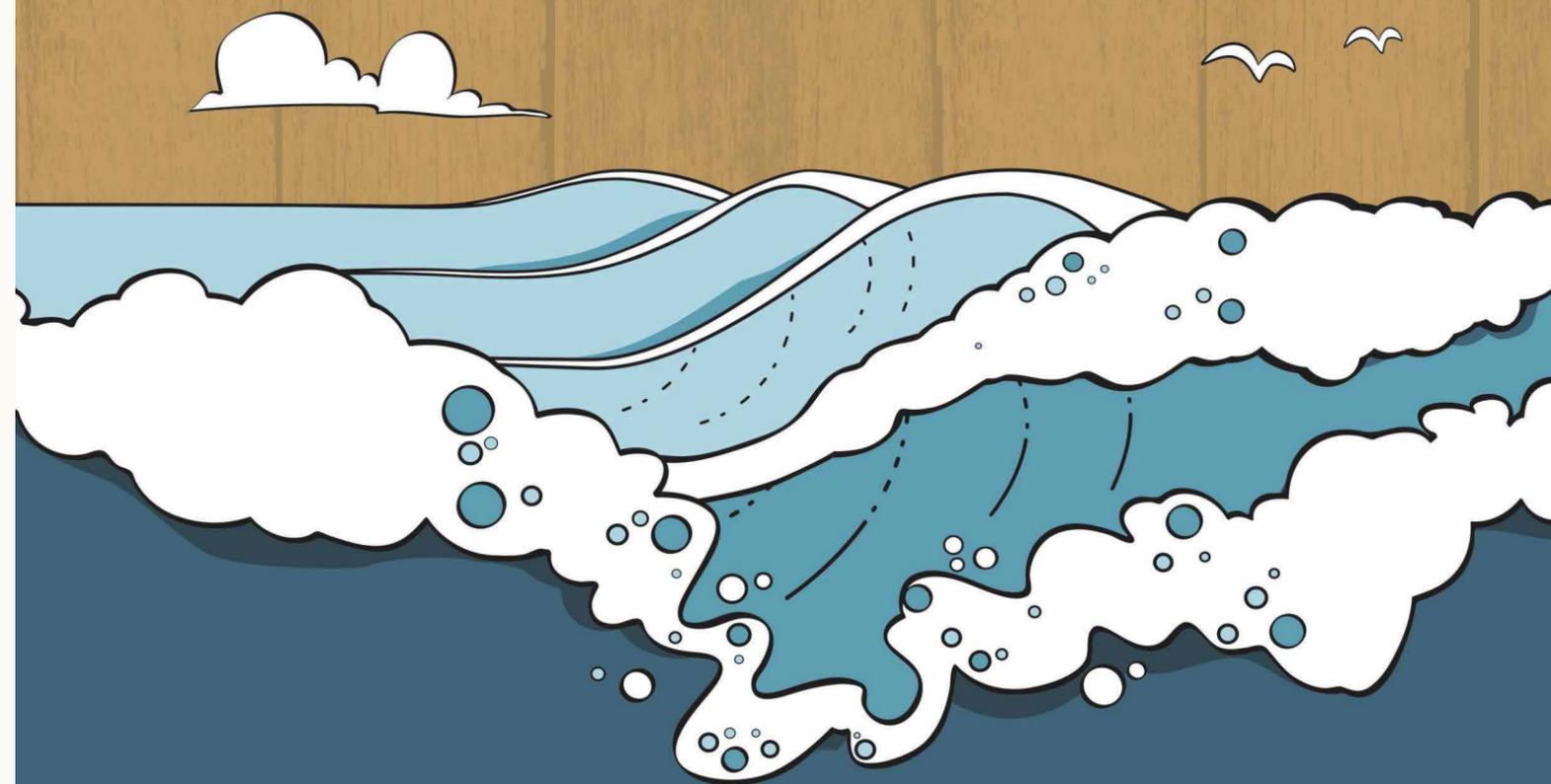
Finally, at Rusty, the components are a bit less tailored with a Tee-shirt tucked into wider, loose-cut trousers underneath, a really skateboardy velvet shirt and a cap to finish off their silhouette. 📍

HIGHLIGHTS

- Less coast and is marauding through town and into the country
- Travel and exploration replacing ageing outdoor
- Technical products stylised between streetwear and sportswear
- Classic everyday articles enhanced for exploration
- Recycling and eco-design

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UITTO BOARDS

Uitto Boards are a Finnish skateboard company founded in 2014 who produce durable and ecological boards, with great attention to detail from the latest in material technology. SOURCE spoke with CEO and Designer Joel Raivio to find out more about this unique and sustainable skateboard manufacturer from Finland.

Please give an overview on how and why the company began.

Uitto Boards started to form while I was studying in Lapland. We started to develop alternative techniques, materials and shapes with a group of friends. Most of us studied industrial design at the time, so trying different approaches to board building came naturally to us. Uitto wasn't a business until Henri Vanonen stepped on board a little over a year ago. He has a background in economics and knew what it took to build a company.

Who is on the management team, and what are their backgrounds?

Officially our management team is just Henri and myself. I design boards and Henri is the head of finances and business development. Behind the scenes we have a dedicated group of friends who help us and enjoy riding our boards. They are a valuable asset and our biggest fans and critics.

What is the company ethos?

Uitto means log driving in Finnish (a means of moving logs from a forest to sawmills downstream using the current of a river). We aim to bring this culture to the 21st century. By standing sideways against the current, riding pieces of wood just like they did a century ago. We manufacture top quality boards and develop sustainable board building methods and ecological materials.

What sets you apart from your competitors?

We go that extra mile to make sure our boards are top notch. Our design process starts from the ground up every time. We constantly develop materials, production methods and

test new board shapes and constructions.

Could you tell us about the way in which you use local resources in your products?

The Uitto Biocomposite Skateboards are made from sustainable softwood fibres, harvested from Nordic forests where tree growth outweighs the rate of forestry. Our decks are 100% recyclable as they can be re-moulded. The recycling process actually improves the characteristics of the material. The factory we use in Eastern Finland only uses certified green energy from renewable sources. Our boards are manufactured in a closed cycle process and no waste is created during the making of our boards. We don't use any harmful chemicals or compounds. Our bio composite material is even safe for food contact.

What do you find important about the European market?

We think that the market in Europe is dynamic and faster to accept new development. This makes the market interesting and more volatile. We feel like that is great advantage for us as we focus in product development.

How do you support athletes and boardsports? We are a board manufacturing company and our plan is to make good boards and have fun doing it. We love to collaborate with passionate riders to develop our products. We aren't looking to sponsor anyone just for the visibility. We believe that products should represent their riders and vice versa. We would also love to collaborate with other brands and develop products with them.

What other marketing are you running?

We launched our biocomposite skateboards with a global crowdfunding campaign last summer. Now we are starting full-scale production. I'm pleased to say that our most effective way of marketing has been word of mouth. We also invest time and effort in engaging customers by quality photos and video.

Why should retailers sell your brand?

We have a product that is both more durable and ecological. Our boards are impervious to water and moisture and do not warp, delaminate or deform. We provide a unique product with an appealing brand. Every board we make has a unique organic fibre pattern. Our boards are a feel good product with benefits. We also provide a good price point and good margins.

What do you see for the future of your company?

We hope to make a change in the disposable nature of boards. We are constantly developing better and more sustainable ways to build boards. We believe that the best way to serve our clients, the culture and the industry is to make good products.

What do you see for the future of the industry?

I believe that the industry has stagnated for too long. There is not much that differentiates most big brands. We believe that the key for the industry to survive is to focus in product development. Brand building alone won't suffice now that the market is saturated. ☹



SLOWTIDE

SLOWTIDE are a towel company harking from the beaches of California & Hawaii and is the brainchild of three surf industry bods with stellar credentials. Not just realising the perfect canvas for artist collabs, SLOWTIDE have also spotted an exciting niche in the market. Distributed in Europe through Wasted Talent.

Who's behind SLOWTIDE and what are their backgrounds?

The founding partners are Dario Phillips, Wylie Von Tempsky and Kyle Spencer. Dario was Americas Marketing Director at Quiksilver and Global Marketing Director at Huf, Wylie was a head designer at Billabong and Nike SB, and Kyle was a designer at Hurley and Design Director at DC Shoes.

How is the brand working in the European region?

The brand is performing really well; from the Nordic regions to Portugal we have a great selection of retail partners. We are present across a range of well-respected surf stores, as well as increasingly more lifestyle and fashion stores. We are working with a handful of online key accounts who are seeing solid levels of sell-through across multiple regions and platforms. At present our main priority is expanding into the non-endemic surf market, as well as into new regions across the EU.

What's special about the quality of the product?

SLOWTIDE towels are crafted with form and function in mind. Soft-hand, sheared cotton velour face plays host to our vibrant prints, while equally complemented by the plush and absorbent looped terry back. Eye-catching designs, fast drying and the ideal travel accessory for any adventure. At present we segment our towels into four different price points from small hand / gym towels to a large

premium jacquard towel, offering the consumer accessibility at different price points and quality across the range. We are continually reviewing with our factory as to different fabrics to keep it fresh.

How are you helping retailers to merchandise your products?

We have a fixture program rolling out in the spring and we now ship our towels rolled to help stock multiple units taking minimal floor space and maximizing visibility in store. As always we encourage retailers to hang some of the towels to show off the unique designs.

The management team are from surf

backgrounds – have you been seeing any traction with your product outside of the surf industry? We are seeing great sell-through at a number of retailers in the gift, resort and women's markets along with our key surf market.

How do you envision the brand's growth over the next three years?

Continuing to grow in the non-endemic space is a key focus for us. We're also constantly striving to expand and segment our product offering and really cover the gamut of all the different types, shapes and sizes of towels. We want to own the towel market; plain and simple. Within Europe we are looking to grow across different regions. For next summer we are looking to really expand our presence across the Mediterranean and from there the sky is the

limit. Eastern Europe and Central Europe could be a really interesting opportunity.

Collaborations are at the heart of what you do – what do you have in the pipeline?

We have a bunch of new collabs lined up that we're really excited about. Kassia Meador, Push, Life Without Andy and Banks are just a few that we can talk about right now.

Why did you create SLOWTIDE and why was that the right time to do so?

The beach and surfing are a part of all of our everyday lives. We'd go to the beach or pools and wonder why everyone had such boring towels. I looked around in some shops and online just to try and buy some cool towels for myself. When I couldn't find anything that I thought was that interesting or cool, I knew there was an opportunity.

There are so many amazing brands out there making great clothing, eyewear and other products. We really wanted to create something unique that there was a need for in the marketplace. A towel is an item that people use everyday, and somehow it had just been overlooked and was a pretty uninspiring product category. It was just really ripe for innovation. We really wanted to create a new canvas for artwork. We love the fact that a towel isn't just limited to one market and to one gender. ☹



atrip

ATRIP

Atrip is Icelandic pro snowboarder Halldor Helgason's new outerwear brand being made in collaboration with Stigma Distribution. Similarly to each of Halldor's other business ventures (Lobster Snowboards, Switchback Bindings, 7/9/13 belts and more), the brand is all about having fun and doing things in a legit way, that's true to snowboarding and its origins.

Halldor and atrip's Marketing Manager, Tomáš Koudela have explained all behind the brand for SOURCE.

Please explain the atrip brand name and thinking behind it.

Halldor: At the beginning, there were a bunch of names we thought about. It's not that easy to find a good name, but we knew we wanted something that started with an "A". There's nothing too deep behind it. We like the way it looks and sounds.

The main story behind the brand is our Special Interest Club. Different special interests, random hobbies; it can be whatever you're into. Our Special Interest Club members are Colin Wilson, Teddy Koo, and Frank Bourgeois on the snowboard side plus some rad people like Tyler Nixon (porn star), DJ BBQ (chef), Stanley Leveille (comedian), Java Fernandes (photographer), Johannes Brenning (Dart King) and Gisli Pálmi (rapper). We are really happy with the SIC crew.

Who is on the management team, and what are their backgrounds?

Tomáš: The day-to-day management is handled by Stigma Distribution. We're a talented team with years of experience. Pepe Setele is in charge of production, making Halldor's ideas a reality. Hanus Salz is the head of sales. His team takes care of our retailers. And I, with help from Diggles, Halldor and Kristoffer, am taking care of the marketing.

What is the company ethos?

Tomáš: Stigma distribution, like atrip, is a rider-driven company, with a strong focus on customer service. There isn't much else to say. We try to keep it real and take care of our customers and retailers who support atrip.

How have sales been since the launch of the brand?

Tomáš: It's been a very strong launch. We are almost entirely sold out in Japan and we are selling through our own stock very fast. The top selling items are the Laki jacket and the Sútur sweatshirt. We hope our retailers who carried atrip in the first season will sell through quickly, and get excited about the new FW17/18 line.

Why should retailers sell your brand?

Tomáš: We foster strong relationships with our retail partners and there is a lot of demand for a brand like atrip. We are targeting a new segment of the market. We don't produce super expensive and ultra tech products. Rather, we focus on functional and rideable garments you can wear in the city and not look like an outdoor freak. Most people aren't going on expensive Alaska trips, so they don't need a 20K waterproof jacket that costs a fortune. Our jackets provide all the support you need and leave your customers with budget to put

towards their interests.

What do you see for the future of your company?

Halldor: We don't think too far in the future. We want to make cool stuff that our supporters will like. We're not some big corporation. As long as we stay out of the red, produce sick stuff and have fun, I think we're going to be happy.

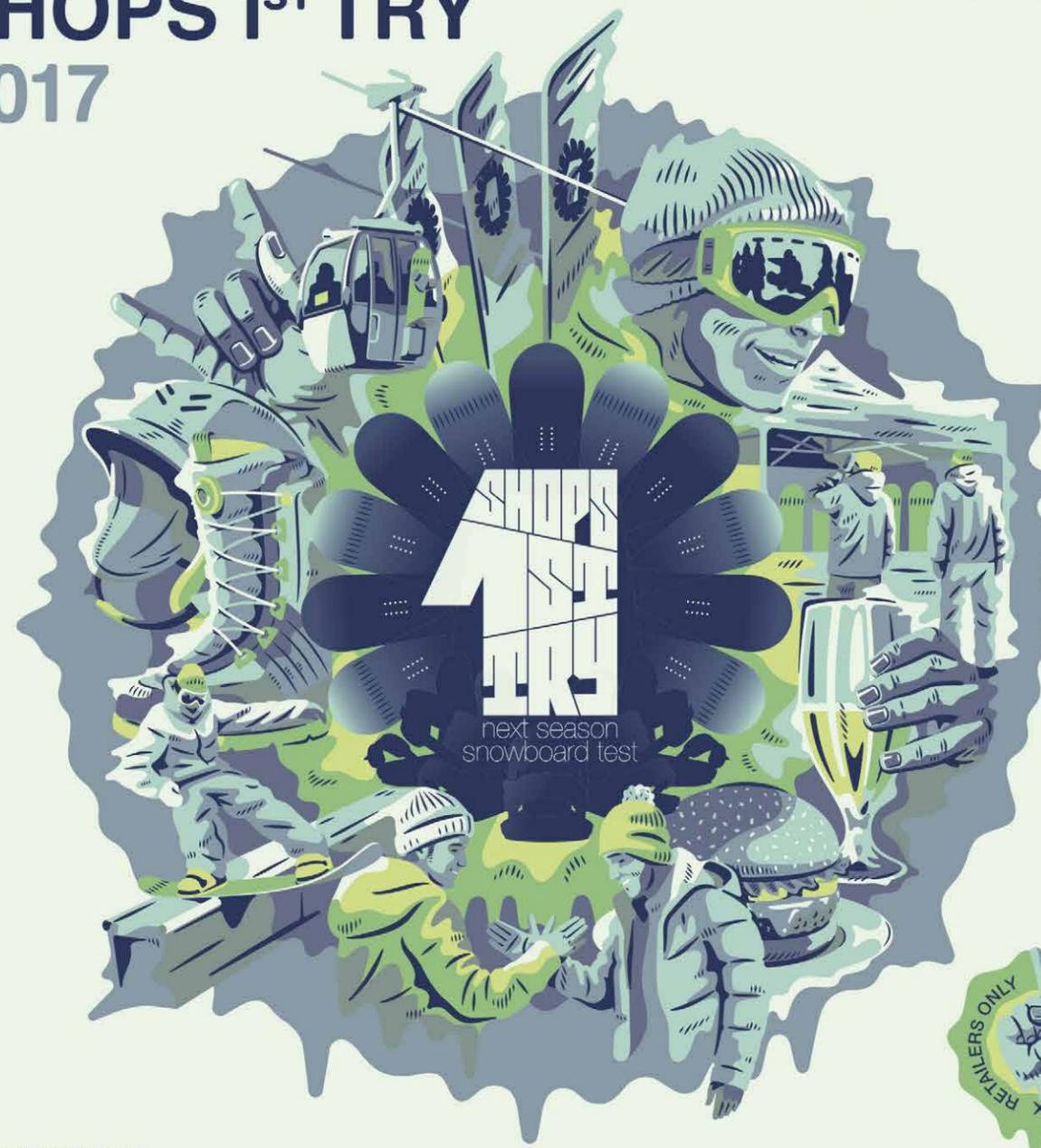
What do you see for the future of the industry?

Tomáš: The last few years were hard across the industry. The weather in Europe hasn't helped, and you can feel the stress in the industry about the future. Consumers are changing, so companies need to learn and evolve with them. There are two types of brands; the ones driven by bottom line and the ones driven by passion. We are definitely passion driven. We do it because we love it. This is a big advantage for companies like Stigma Distribution. Even when times are hard, we know why we do it, and our fans know this, the core fans, and we see it in their support. So let's all hope for better winters and then we can all breathe easier.

Wishing a good season to everyone. Keep it real! 🍷

ONE FOR ALL SHOPS 1ST TRY 2017

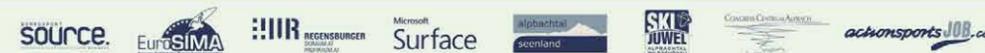
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PARTICIPATING BRANDS:



PARTNERS:



NEW PRODUCT

01- DAKINE PHANTOM GLOVE

The Phantom Glove is a new addition to their Method Series glove range. This range features a collection of gloves built with a focus on technical performance, low profile fit and progressive styling. The Phantom Glove has a Gore-Tex® insert with Gore-Grip Technology and Primaloft insulation, making it a warm, breathable and waterproof style with outstanding tactility. It is built with DWR leather and has a 200g Silky High Pile fleece lining.

eu.dakine.com

02- 686 GLCR GORE-TEX® PACLITE® MULTI JACKET

The 686 GLCR GORE-TEX® Paclite Multi Jacket is a single do-it-all jacket. The new articulated slim fit allows for full freedom of movement while extra large front zips house pockets perfect for storing your goodies that also double as vents. To top it all off, 686 has lined the entire neck and mouthflap with Merino wool to keep a soft antibacterial fabric on the part of the jacket that is closest to your skin.

WWW.686.COM

03- RIP CURL SEARCH DUFFLE WS SERIES

The search duffle WS series comes with a surf-ganizer, a removable wetsack, in waterproof fabric, as a shoulder or backpack

www.ripcurl.com

04- ANIMAL T44 MARINE TIDE WATCH

Animal's new watch collection combines excellent performance with rugged durability. The T44 is constructed to the highest specifications, featuring a Swiss designed tide movement and is water-resistant to 200m.

www.animal.co.uk

05- AIRHOLE STANDARD FACEMASK & AIRTUBE CINCH

Airhole has been a leader in the facemask industry for 10 years and they continue to improve. For 2017, they introduce revised logos, superior technical fabrics, improved functioning mask shapes, new team members and an increased marketing drive to secure their position in the market. The Airhole Standard facemask comes equipped with a DWR coating on top of a 10,000mm water and wind resistant membrane, combined with 100% recycled polyester outer fabric. The direct injected Airhole allows the wearer to breathe free, providing the ultimate protection and warmth.

www.airholefacemasks.com

01



02



03



04



05



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MARKET INTELLIGENCE

UK

FRANCE

GERMANY

ITALY

SPAIN

AUSTRIA

SWISS

At the time of writing this, value of the £ has plummeted to lows not seen for 30 or 40 years. Brexit's first major impact is being felt. Confidence in the UK and our currency is at a significant low point. Price rises are rife across the industry and across the UK in general. At the same time the Government have just managed to persuade Nissan to build a new car in the UK so the pro Brexit lobby are holding this up as a "told-you-so" banner and acting as if nothing else matters. It does. It does matter. We're not out of the woods yet.

For the first time in our company history we had a blanket price rise across the board – every product. Unprecedented changes call for unprecedented actions. Retailers were great and, almost to a man, did not moan and groan with only two retailers changing their orders. Hats off to UK boardsport retailers.

That said, over the summer we lost three more specialist winter sports retailers – two closed for good and the other...well, read on.

One retailer who is not doing so well is Boardwise in Edinburgh. It would be fair to say that the start to the season has been an absolute disaster for Brian, Carolyn, Sarah and the team. Gutted would be a good word to describe Boardwise Edinburgh. Gutted because of a fire that ripped through the shop in late August destroying everything; the stock, the fittings, the computers, the lot. "Everything has gone. Everything. It will be months before we are up and going again," lamented Brian Stark. "For this to happen just before our busiest time of year is a complete disaster." So what does the future hold? "We'll be back. We are fully insured and so from that perspective things will be OK. But not to be able to service our loyal customers is upsetting – to say the least." Brian estimates that it will be some considerable time before they are trading again from Lady Lawson Street. "Putting this all back together is going to be hard work. I am just thankful that nobody was hurt. And we'll bounce back."

At the time of writing this (October) Boardwise Edinburgh has re-started online trading using the Boardwise Cannock stocking lines. And look out for an opening party in March 2017 - there's some pressure now Brian!

It's such a shame for Boardwise Edinburgh because the season appears to have got off to a pretty good start – it's still really early days but indications are good.

I asked Matt at Absolute Snow why he was so positive: "The price rises were a concern but do not seem to have slowed anything down. We're off to a strong start and we are considering placing re-orders already." So is the currency situation helping you pick up business from Europe? "I'm sure that there is some business coming in from the EU but my feeling is that where we have previously lost customers to the EU we are now winning them back. This is great as it gives us an opportunity to demonstrate what great customer service we offer and hopefully we can keep them on board and buying in the UK."

Is there anything in particular that's performing well? "Hardgoods are good and softgoods are slow – but the weather hasn't been cold and people are always prepared to buy their hardgoods early." And women's? "Yes – improving significantly. I'm really pleased with this as we expanded our range and it appears to be working well."

Matt isn't alone. Stuart from Board Basement (Exeter) was, like Matt,

extremely positive about the start to the season echoing Matt's thoughts: "Finally after six long years we are winning back UK customers who have been shopping abroad. The GBP (Great British Public) are keen to buy in the UK. The hype is helping with some great movie launches and a lot of promotions that have really helped drive sales – particularly hardware."

Board Basement were originally set up to be an online only store: "We soon found people visiting the warehouse looking for personal service and advice. We've continued firmly in that vein and are well established as a 'destination store' as well as online – although we are also very much a warehouse which has a certain appeal with the customers." With store visitors increasing year-on-year, what's the trick? "Word of mouth appears to be the key. When you visit our store, or call us, you get a positive interaction with people who really know what they are talking about. You can't call Amazon and ask for advice and that's why we, and others, will survive. There's always room for a store that can offer the human touch. Logistics companies can have all the logistics nailed but having real enthusiasts to talk to enthusiasts is something that cannot be bettered. The beauty is that we are having a good start to the season on the back of a great 2015 and I can only see this continuing. We moved into skate recently and whilst it's not a major part of the business it's showing good solid potential and is something for us to build on." What of the future for Board Basement? The only dark side that Stuart sees is the advance of showrooming: "This is going to get more of an issue but you become pretty adept at spotting the showroomers and handling them accordingly. We're also in a good position as we are not High Street based – so we don't really get walk-ins – people have to make a decision to drive to our store."

Never one to linger on negatives he had one last comment about the 'returners'. "There's a distinct increase in custom amongst those who have taken a few years off to have kids etc and are now returning to the sport, and are bringing their kids to the snow. These customers usually have money to spend together with a bucket load of pent-up enthusiasm and a thirst for all things new – it bodes well for the future!"

Not wishing to close this month on negative issues – but they are, sadly, a fact of life. It is really sad to report that City Surf Cardiff have closed their doors. Their Facebook page sums it up "After 30 years of fun, with regret we've closed the door for the last time. Thanks for the support and the good times". These guys were (are) legends in the industry. So sad that another one bites the dust.

Finally did, did you hear the one about the snowsports retailer who, after many years, finally decided to step out of the wintersports business and focus on his bike business? He contacted all suppliers to explain the situation and most of them understood and (sadly) accepted the order cancellations. Of course there's always one who sets themselves apart and insisted that the stock be delivered. What was the result? The retailer in question simply dumped the stock on the market. As far as I can see that appears to be about the only bad start to what, so far, is turning out to be quite a decent kick off to the winter season.

Did you hear the one about... there will be more to come I am sur

Gordon Way



MARKET INTELLIGENCE

UK

FRANCE

GERMANY

ITALY

SPAIN

AUSTRIA

SWISS

With the first snowflakes making their way onto the Alpine region as early as the beginning of November, signs are finally pointing towards a proper winter season again, or at least a regular one with cold temperatures and instead of last year's seemingly endless summer.

Matze and Bobo, owners of Ruby Soho in Füssen in the Allgäu region close to the Austrian border, were definitely wishing for an early season start this year: "The last couple of winters were rather meek so it can only get better. The past late winter starts lead to strong 'sale' activities from a lot of retailers, impeding the commercial success of the business."

In the Northern part of the country, this physical start of winter with snow in the cities traditionally has less effect on sales, as the snow enthusiast customer up North has to travel in order to be able to indulge in their passion anyway. Bernhard from HaiQ in Hamburg explains: "We have ski holidays in March that are predetermined dates, which makes it harder for us to forecast the season as we don't have that much fluctuation on dates according to snowfall, but that also means we didn't really sell any less to the typical snowboard client in the last couple of seasons as they will go on their snow trip anyway." Yet he faces the same issues when it comes to prices and sales. "All big competitors in Hamburg are already on sale but if someone does need a new pair of pants in March and has not geared up in the sales, they will buy something – at almost any price."

Picture Organic Clothing is one of the main brands still generating a lot of demand and desire, Bernhard notices. "They have a face in the crowd and are bold enough to try something that others don't have. That makes their stuff interesting." His shop has always been known for the extraordinary, for which customers are sent to his shop from all over the city. Yet with all the oddities, he likes to display in his shop a wide variety from "oddly shaped skateboards to newly constructed snowboards", and Bernhard wonders, why these radical shapes don't flare more interest. "Everyone only talks about and buys what everyone else talks about, no one has the balls to buy something really cool!"

Matze and Bobo try to stay clear of such "mainstream hypes" that are quickly picked up, implemented and then burnt by the big players, "making it super hard to gain a sustainable market share, as you saw with bomber jackets, jogger jeans and longboard." Instead, they focus on smaller, owner-led labels that are developing nicely. They also notice a new trend towards "quality instead of quantity," from a certain group of customers who value individuality above interchange-ability. "Key words like organic, sustainable and faire trade are making their way from side issues to the middle." They also find that clients are more and more honouring individual design and presentation, as well as intensive, honest and qualified consultation. "This offers a great chance to engage customers through high quality and love for the profession, and successfully grow together with them."

Severin from HungryHills in Koblenz, sees a similar development in longboarding, where the insane hype is slowly dying down now. "After the huge hype, a lot of clients are equipped with completes from the lower and mid-price segments, whose quality isn't 100% convincing in most cases. Hence a lot of them are now looking for more high-end components like wheels, trucks, bushings and bearings to upgrade their existing boards.

Big wheels from Orangatang, Abec11, Sector9 and Hawgs were in high demand this year, as well as high quality built-in bearings. On top of that we notice an increasing demand for old school shapes as from Powell-Peralta, Santa Cruz and StreetPlant." Despite the prevalent over saturation in the longboard sector, they were quite happy with 2016 in general, as they didn't have very high expectations either. And even though they are happy with their sales, the upcoming years will show who will stay. "Brands and shops who tried to capitalise through growth but didn't supply enough depth and quality in their range surely lost out," Severin thinks.

Both factors are vital for his shop, as he has a wide and varied customer base due to the central location between the Eifel, Hunsrück, Westerwald and Taunus. Yet "Downhill and Freeride have been a focus for years," with a wide variety in age groups and products. Catering for the local scenes is also vitally important for Ruby Soho, whose owners see events as "fixed components of their self-image and perceptions, which has been part of the game from the beginning. Since we're a part of the scene ourselves, we always like to support artists with specially organised activities, like graffiti artists, musicians, photographers, tattoo artists etc. and are always present at all big and small contests. On top of that we do video premieres, band releases, and a lot more, which are organised and celebrated either in-house or at local venues."

After over 20 years in the business, Bernhard is taking a step back from events: "We're a family business now due to financial reasons and I value my own private time to go do the sports I'm passionate about. I'm still as passionate in the shop as I've always been, yet it seems to get ever harder to infuse customers with that passion and enthusiasm. There is a certain boredom prevalent, which is hard to describe... The real excitement of snowboarding is still happening in movies and in superlatives, but the very personal feeling of 'what an incredible amount of fun snowboarding is giving me,' is only heard from a very few. Most are more concerned with getting the cheapest deal on a new pair of bindings so there's more money to spend partying at night or I don't know where..." Instead, he's using a lot of his own time to travel – and check out other shops, something he still enjoys very much. And also to find new gems for his own store. "With the right amount of experience, looking at a product in the shops is a great way to get a feeling for it and whether it's gonna work or not. Depending on how stoked I am myself."

And even though they're not organising events anymore, HaiQ still offers a great service to their costumers; board repairs and rentals. From freeride snowboards to SUPs, ski and snowboard tuning to surf repair. The latter of which is especially sought after in Hamburg and has a big scene of hobby surfers travelling the world and a couple of hardcore diehards, taking it out to the North Sea. "The handling of materials is becoming more and more complicated and at the same time a lot of people are realising that easy self-made repairs with Solaris aren't really a long term solution as they're not durable. We already had good service in the snow segment and have expanded that to kite, wake and surf. This used to be just a side business, but since the streetwear segment started to break away a couple of years back, when a lot of mainstream players got into that game, the service segment has become an important part of our overall turnover. The product sales alone wouldn't cut it anymore."

Anna Langer



MARKET INTELLIGENCE

UK

FRANCE

GERMANY

ITALY

SPAIN

AUSTRIA

SWISS

In France, the run-up to the 2017 presidential election is already underway and the opposition are attracting everyone's attention with primaries - when the right and centre elect their candidates. The current government is trying to manage the end of its mandate as best it can by drawing up the rosier reports possible before entering into the presidential race itself. Bad news for the government; despite a probable upturn in productivity at the end of the year, INSEE (National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies) has unfavourably reviewed its prediction of French growth in 2016 to 1.3% gross domestic product instead of the 1.6% expected up to now, mostly because of bad results in the second quarter. If the figure of 1.3% is confirmed then France will have fared only marginally better than in 2015 (1.2%) although economic indicators are finally providing glimpses of an upturn eight years on from the sub-prime crisis. When all's said and done, economic growth in France should settle this year at a similar level to last year. For the third consecutive year this means weaker growth than the Eurozone's 1.6%, which according to forecasters, is in part due to the terror attacks and the British vote in favour of Brexit.

Worse still maybe: the aim of reducing public deficit - at 3.3% of GDP - may be under threat due to the failure of tax revenues to reach expectations. The situation doesn't bode well for the government just months away from the general election even if, as Michel Sapin points out, the INSEE forecasts do not take into account either the objective of reducing public deficit for 2016 or predicted growth for 2017.

Despite its complicated economic, social and political context, France remains a highly popular destination for tourists from all over the world. Indeed, Paris maintains its third place in the rankings with 18.03 million visitors expected in 2016, a figure that despite the terror attacks is clearly more than the 16 million estimated visitors in 2015. This is no small point for our leisure industry, which along with regular participants, relies considerably on tourist footfall whether we're talking about coastal retailers or in ski resorts.

For coastal shops, this autumn's weather was rather beneficial. This year we had a lovely Indian summer with high temperatures until the start of November and very good wave conditions along the whole Atlantic coast. Michel Borel from the shop Freeride in Bidart says that: "the month of September was pretty good and October was decent," and Fred from Cocoa Beach in Saint Pierre d'Oléron had the same feeling further up the Atlantic coast. Patrick Colin from Aloha Surf Shop in Six-Fours on the Mediterranean coast said: "The waves didn't really show up in spite of summery weather and good temperatures throughout early autumn, which caused a drop in customers coming into the shop." And he adds: "Winter collections hardly moved, also because of such high temperatures for the season."

But they all agree that despite the favourable conditions, the economic context is doing nothing to encourage customers to spend money in the shops. Michel Borel tells us: "The weather and the waves were there but the current climate is still difficult and isn't compelling people to buy." Fred adds: "competition is increasing and surfers are looking for the most attractive prices, sometimes at the expense of quality."

In terms of the most sought after products in shops, with the nice surf

conditions this autumn, naturally it was technical equipment and in particular boards and wetsuits that people came into the shop for. Michel and Fred talk about brands like Torq and PUKAS for boards and O'Neill, Rip Curl and Xcel for wetsuits. In the South East they didn't really get the waves so people were instead kitting themselves out with SUPs and accessories like waterproof bags and sleeves. Patrick talks about noteworthy brands such as NSP, Surftech and Nah Skwell.

In terms of customer visits, it was a similar story for town shops. Philippe from Chattanooga in Paris states that: "Autumn 2016 was pretty good with quite high visitation numbers during the back to school period." Alexis at Nozbone in Paris seems to be on the same wavelength saying: "The months of September and October weren't bad at all with more people coming into the shop than last year."

In products, it was unsurprisingly winter textiles and skateboard decks that were the star products for these shops. For Philippe and Alexis, clothing brands such as Thrasher, Carhartt, Santa Cruz and Element are the most sought after by customers. On the other hand, longboards and protective gear for skateboarding seem to have suffered considerably compared to the same period last year.

This autumn's pleasant weather was also appreciated at mountain-based and mid-mountain shops. For Martin Green at Zero G in Chamonix: "The months of September and October really depend on the weather. This year we were rather spoiled so we are in a stable position compared to last year." We get the same feeling from Norbert and Catherine Bernigaud from the shop Atmosphere in GAP: "The start of the season has been pretty decent and we had a good back to school period." They are even up a little bit on the same period last year.

In the Pyrenees, and specifically for Philippe Le Gludic from the shop Turbulences in Tarbes, "it has started pretty quietly, even a bit less good than last year." He adds that from his point of view, "the economic climate does nothing to motivate consumers."

Understandably for these shops it is mostly winter products like clothing, especially outerwear, as well as technical equipment, that are in demand. In terms of brands, he cites Picture, Burton and even small accessory brands like NEFF and, just like for streetwear shops in town, brands like Thrasher, Santa Cruz, Carhartt and Element seem to be going down well here at the moment. Once more, longboarding seems to be tapering off in these shops as well as protective gear for skateboarding. Nonetheless we should mention that on a general level, snowboarding and the brands related to it that were savaged by the comeback and development of skiing, especially in its freestyle and backcountry guises, now seems to be attracting the youngsters again.

While the Indian summer seems to have been favourable for most shops at the start of autumn, the white gold is once again highly anticipated by all mountain shops before the 2017 winter really kicks off. While the first few flakes are just starting to fall in the mountains, let's hope that it dumps properly, that the winter begins as soon as possible and that people come straight to the shops to make their choices, kit themselves out, get the best advice and launch the 2017 winter season in full.

Benoit Breccq

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MARKET INTELLIGENCE



Economically nothing much has changed in Italy over the last six months; until the heavy earthquakes we recently had in the southern part of the country. Many lost their homes and in some areas the situation is critical. Everyone hopes that these earthquakes cease, as the ground hasn't stopped shaking since mid-October in the affected areas. Prime Minister, Matteo Renzi said in his latest speech that we have to rebuild houses, schools and churches before we pay back our debt to the EU. But with the constitutional referendum around the corner, he needs to stay positive as it's not only a referendum on major changes within the constitution but it's also a vote for or against Renzi. Many Italians are in serious financial trouble and many young people are still unemployed so we need major changes and improvements that are effective immediately which means Mr Renzi is under massive pressure right now.

The boardsports business is starting the winter season in an decent mood because specialised core and sport stores pre-ordered way less than last year and try to focus on re-orders in outerwear and hardgoods. So our focus shifts to demand, and some early cold temperatures and a good amount of snow is a must if we want to have a successful season. A lot of discounted product early in the season is still an issue as it accustoms the consumer to only buy products if they are on sale, which is a very dangerous game as you loose margin and need to do more volume to compensate for that loss.

Speaking to different snow retailers there's one thing that is crucial for our winter industry; we have to bring the kids back to the mountains. We have to organise trips and events so we can get some momentum back. Being proactive and offering something, which is that extra bit special is now the most important thing if we want to

stay relevant and sell boards and outerwear in the long term. The costumer needs to be connected with the store, which then gives an overall benefit to the stores and the industry. According to Alex Berger from Fakieshop and F-tech Snowpark constructions, we need to invest in the youth generation as it's something we have never previously worried about. And now we are in the situation where we need to do it in an organized manner to keep those beginners coming through the ranks who are crucial for our business' future.

Italian snowboard brand Funky, which was founded back in 1982 has had a great comeback and stores love their colourful style and their attitude. They are in the game purely for their passion, which combined with good quality products makes them a winning team. Watch out for them expanding across Europe.

When looking at streetwear and clothing, the biggest trend this winter is Thrasher magazine. Nearly every store reports huge requests from a younger audience of customers who want those Flame hoodies at any cost! Right now demand is higher than supply and stores are currently hustling to get product in. This trend will continue for another year for sure and retailers are keeping an eye on every Thrasher collab that hits the market.

Overall the demand for streetwear and footwear has increased when compared to SS16 and stores are more confident once again, but business is still not at the same level as a couple of years ago. This means stores are still cautious with their buying attitude and pay a lot of attention to what consumers are asking for when it comes to introducing new brands or important collaborations.

Franz Josef Holler



11 months after the first round of elections, Spain finally has a government. These 11 months have featured a caretaker government, with two general elections in December 2015 and June 2016, plenty of politics in the media and little of importance to the man in the street. The country has continued to move along as usual.

The positive trend in employment indicators continued through September, with a 3% increase in people signing up to make Social Security payments. For the second month running, the unemployment rate dropped. By 9.1% on this occasion, the greatest decrease since this cycle of growth started. Families and businesses alike are in better situations, in a context of more jobs and very favourable financial conditions.

It is estimated that the GDP of the Spanish economy could grow by 3.2% in 2016.

In this context of moderate growth, Julen Arroiz from the Surf & Slate Lokal Surf Bakio shop is of the opinion that the market will gradually edge up: "But we should work hard as sellers, because this business is going at a fast pace and you could get left behind. You have to get your thinking cap on and innovate. There are plenty of talented people out there with very good ideas, and they can snatch it all away from you; we need support from the industry as allies."

"In our case, sales have not evolved very significantly. There has been a minor increase, but the weather was not so great when it was time to sell. It was a slow-starting summer. The second part went on well into October. In this sense, we have focused on the online business to save the season. People have spent similar amounts.

Foreign tourism has contributed a lot to us. Surfboard repairs and accessories sell well. Surf skates also sell well, but longboards not so well. In terms of clothing, competition from 'non-surfing' brands and stores has made itself felt, and there has been an increase in all products related to personal care, such as sun creams. We have realised that our customer type has changed; more grown up people looking for high quality and good products. People are aware of, and invest more in good materials; they spend a little more and get more enjoyment from surfing. Better wetsuits and better boards, to spend more time in the water. We have other customers like tourists, etc. who seek fast solutions for their holiday needs Our customers have become more globalised and more open to trying different things; they intersperse surfing and skating and try out all types of boards. I think that investment should also be made online, but there are too many platforms selling leftovers from major brands, and they are killing off the intermediaries. You get emails from Asian companies, offering the product directly to you, leapfrogging over the suppliers so that you can take charge of your own products. This is very risky and unnecessary."

It's very interesting to read Julen Arroiz's words. The evolution of customers towards quality, regarding more core materials, is a significant aspect to take to heart. Shops are creating their own communities of customers and surfers/skaters (many of whom also give surfing and skating classes), to whom they supply custom products. They need help from the industry on this aspect; total support, and high quality products. There is a very real threat of them manufacturing their own products, as well as from competition generated by the industry on online platforms. The balance needs to be stabilised.

Jokin Arroyo, Surf City Donostia Cluster



MARKET INTELLIGENCE



Austrians are wary people by nature and like to wait and see what happens rather than having their hopes dashed. Still, the glacier openings went well and the continuing cold weather is a good reason to be optimistic about an early winter. Some resorts are opening earlier than planned while the urban population are stuck in pea soup fog. But how are the core shops doing, are they benefitting from the cold weather? Let's find out...

Markus Hoeller from Rollin Brettssport in Villach already has already sold the first boards of the season, even though he only changed his product range from summer/fall to winter in early November and hardware isn't on display, but has to be ordered. "I sell in a higher product range than the average sports store, so my customers mostly ask for boards over 500 euros, and that is without bindings and boots. His customers are more interested in quality products, because "in a small shop with only 90 square metres, service and know-how are far more important than a wide product range." Björn Bettermann from Kanoa trd. has some good news, too - the early start of winter is noticeable both when it comes to outerwear and hardware sales: "Still not on a very high level, but it's going in the right direction. You can feel the motivation and we all hope that this will continue and we will have a good winter season. It's obvious that people are hungry for more, stoked for a good winter and all hope it's going to be a good one this year. Also, the relatively low board sales we were facing in the last couple of years show that people are now willing to upgrade."

When it comes to outerwear trends, one thing is not to be ignored in Austria: "The big outdoor brands are gaining influencing in the big sport stores. Brands like Patagonia and The North Face. We started

extremely early with these guys - this season is my fifth selling Patagonia - but many stores only began pinning their hopes on these brands this or last season," Markus reports. "These brands do a good job in their marketing and found a way into our target group, so now even 16 & 17 year-olds are buying them." Big players like Blue Tomato as well as streetwear and core skate shops like Stilladen in Vienna are emphasising brands like Patagonia and newcomers like Poler Stuff. At the moment, outdoor is omnipresent and fortunately, the topic of sustainability is influencing purchase decisions more and more: "Each season there are more customers asking about different brands' ecological footprints," Markus tells us. "There is a story to tell about products by brands like Picture or Patagonia, with their merino-sheep breeding or their oil-free wetsuits, and these things are becoming more important for my customers. Right now, there are even people coming to my store, asking for products featuring organic cotton, eco-friendly transport, certified by a label."

At the glacier openings, Björn experienced that customers had done their homework when it comes to hardware: "Regarding new shapes (hybrid, quiver boards, etc.), customers know quite a lot; people are well informed and have specific boards in mind, which they want to test at the openings. There were more tests this year than the last couple of years. Bataleon are in demand, gaining interest thanks to their Triple Base Technology, which is unique and works well. People are also open for brands like Slash by Gigi and Switchback bindings." When it comes to outerwear, Volcom is still selling well according to Björn, and he is also "pretty happy with 686, which is developing in a very good direction."

Barbara Mayer



As I write these words in mid-autumn, the least I can say is that there is a great deal of tension all around. Firstly due to the fact that the summer was not exactly the best for most shops and above all because the months of September and October were far too quiet with only a couple of exceptions to prove this rule.

Our commercial sector is now more reliant on the weather than ever before. In the current situation with all the challenges we are faced with regarding price, competition, Internet, sales, etc, where each client, each board, each bag, each beanie counts, it's easy to understand why shop owners have their eyes fixed on weather forecasts as soon as they hear whispers of cold accompanied by low pressure. There's no miracle here, snow sells and substantially too. At the start of November the snow made its first appearance at low altitude and the response was immediate, garages were packed with people having winter tyres fitted and winter sports retailers were finally called into action. Some shops had a reduced workforce due to economic reasons and were overwhelmed and panicking while others who were better organised managed to handle this sudden spike for a few days before settling down as temperatures rose.

During this eventful autumn, we should point out that once again some suppliers have had trouble delivering on time. They had difficulty meeting delivery dates in September and by the end of October some had only just delivered stuff expected 6-8 weeks beforehand. However, it's worth mentioning that these delays are a bit less serious nowadays because most shops are turning over more slowly than a few years ago and indeed, it's becoming more and more rare to see retailers putting boards out at the start of September as was done in the past. Most now do this in the first couple of weeks of October.

After visiting various shops, you can see that once again it's boots that are selling best at the start of this season and it seems as though the specialist shops are a more popular source of this kind of item than boards, bindings or clothes. Many reasons can explain this but the first one that springs to mind is that such specialised and expensive footwear deserves to be tried on first and although many websites offer free return postage if the item doesn't fit, most people would prefer to try them on in a shop and once they are there, given that the price difference is not that massive in the end, often make the purchase there and then. You also have to understand that feet are so different from one person to the next that as well as trying them on, advice is very important and difficult to get online so this is another advantage for the specialist with a shop front. From a brand perspective, we've seen a strong comeback from Vans who are making effective, good-looking products, Ride and K2 continue their rise and still have good figures, Salomon remain stable in sales and thriving in rental boots, but as for Burton, 32 and Nitro, they seem to be losing a bit of ground.

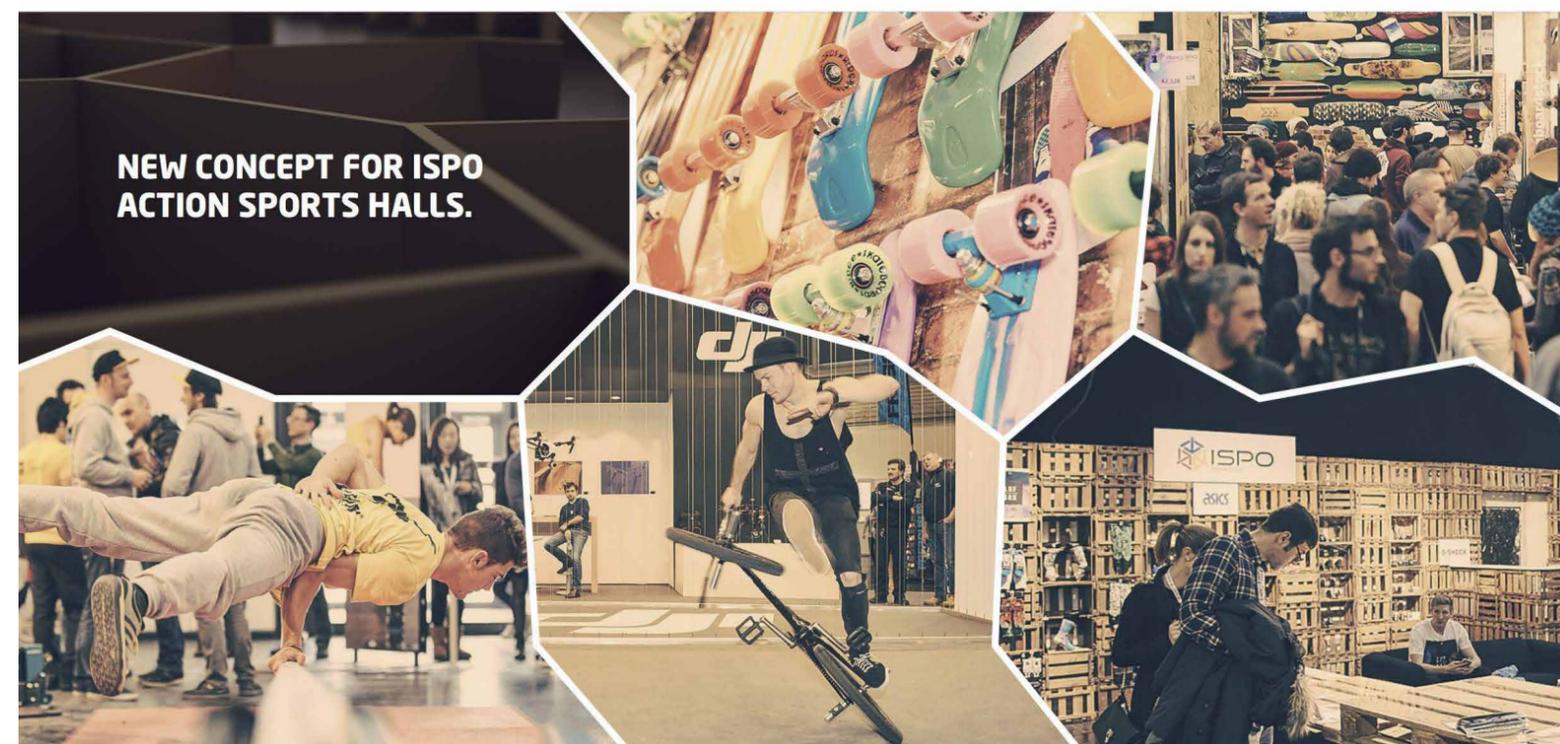
As for shop closures and openings, we are sad to hear about the impending closure of the shop Boarderking in Vevey, which was a small institution for the local skate and snowboard scene. Another page turns unfortunately. In openings, Zurich is the first Swiss town to host our friends from Blue Tomato on a shop floor. The Austrian firm is already well known to Swiss customers from their online shop and now they are taking on the classic distribution channel. At first sight it seems as though they are upholding the recommended retail prices practised in Switzerland. Only the future can tell if they will change to a more aggressive strategy.

Fabien Grisel

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|--|---|---|---|
| 4-5 DECEMBER AIR & STYLE BEIJING- CHINA WWW.AIR-STYLE.COM | 8-11 DEW TOUR BRECKENRIDGE - USA WWW.DEWTOUR.COM | 8-20 BILLABONG PIPE MASTERS OAHU - HAWAII - SURF WWW.WORLDSURFLEAGUE.COM | 15-18 CORVATSCH ROOKIE FEST CORVATSCH, SWISS WWW.WORLDROOKIETOUR.COM |
| 5-6 JANUARY AGENDA LONG BEACH USA, TRADE WWW.AGENDASHOW.COM | 9-10 BAW TOUR TYNCastle STADIUM, EDINBURGH MIDGEWHYTE@AOL.COM | 10-11 FUTURE TRY DAVOS, SWISS, WWW.SNOWBOARDBOX.CH | 10-13 PITTI OUMO ITALY WWW.PITTIMMAGINE.COM |
| 14-19 WORLD ROOKIE FEST LIVIGNO, ITALY WWW.WORLDROOKIETOUR.COM | 15-17 SNOW AVANT PREMIERE LAS CLUSAZ, FRANCE WWW.SPORTAIR.FR | 16-17 SHOWROOM AVANT PREMIERE ANNECY, FRANCE WWW.SPORTAIR.FR | 16-21 LAAX OPEN SWISS WWW.LAAX.COM |
| 17-19 BRIGHT BERLIN WWW.BRIGHTTRADESHOW.COM | 22 WORLD SNOWBOARD DAY WORLDWIDE WWW.WORLD-SNOWBOARD-DAY.COM | 22-24 SHOPS 1ST TRY ALPBACHTAL, AUSTRIA WWW.SHOPS-1ST-TRY.COM | 24-26 SLIDE TELFORD, UK WWW.SLIDEUK.CO.UK |
| 24-25 AGENDA NEW YORK USA WWW.AGENDASHOW.COM | 25 SIA INDUSTRY INTELLIGENCE WWW.SIASNOWSHOW.SNOWSPORTS.ORG | 26-27 JACKET REQUIRED LONDON, UK WWW.JACKET-REQUIRED.COM | 26-28 SURF EXPO ORLANDO, FLORIDA WWW.SURFEXPO.COM |
| 26-29 SIA DENVER, COLORADO WWW.SIASNOWSHOW.SNOWSPORTS.ORG | 27-29 BULGARIAN ROOKIE FEST PAMPOROVO, BULGARIA WWW.WORLDROOKIETOUR.COM | 27-2 FREERIDE WORLD TOUR CHAMONIX-MONT-BLANC, FRANCE WWW.FREERIDEWORLDTOUR.COM | 29-31 PRO SHOP TEST BARDONECCHIA, ITALY WWW.SNOWSHOPTEST.COM |
| 30-31 SIA ON SNOW DEMO COPPER MOUNTAIN, COLORADO WWW.SIASNOWSHOW.SNOWSPORTS.ORG | 1-3 FEBRUARY REVOLVER COPENHAGEN, DENMARK WWW.REVOLVER.DK | 3-4 AIR + STYLE INNSBRUCK, AUSTRIA WWW.AIR-STYLE.COM | 5-8 ISPO MUNICH GERMANY WWW.ISPO.COM |
| 8-12 TRENTINO ROOKIE FEST MONTE BONDONE, ITALY WWW.WORLDROOKIETOUR.COM | 10-16 FREERIDE WORLD TOUR VALLNORD-ARCALIS, ANDORA WWW.FREERIDEWORLDTOUR.COM | 18-19 AIR + STYLE LOS ANGELES WWW.AIR-STYLE.COM | 20-22 AGENDA USA WWW.AGENDASHOW.COM |
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DISTRIBUTION OPPORTUNITY

Reference on its market, the young french start-up ClipEyz offers innovative smartphone accessories for riders and photo-video makers, and is looking for distributors worldwide.

If interested by the opportunity, please contact guillaume@novaride-development.com

PLAY WIDE!



clipeyz.com

#ClipEyz

DISTRIBUTORS WANTED

AUSTRIA • BELARUS • BENELUX
CROATIA • CZECH REPUBLIC
ESTONIA • GREECE • MACEDONIA
MOLDOVA • MONACO
MONTENEGRO • PORTUGAL
ROMANIA • SLOVAKIA
SPAIN • UKRAINE

Penny Skateboards is the market leader in the plastic cruiser category, now sold in over sixty countries with more than 600,000 boards sold last year alone. Penny Skateboards was driven by the desire to put the fun back into skateboarding. These premium plastic skateboards get more people skateboarding as they enable the rider to relax and have fun without boundaries or expectations. Built with the highest quality raw materials and fine attention to detail, Penny Skateboards are designed to look good, perform well and above all be fun to ride.

Z-Flex Skateboards has a 40-year history of quality, style and stories. Z-Flex is focused on supporting and building skateboarding, creating undeniable connections for all skateboarders.

The original Z-Flex team was led by the infamous skateboarder Jay Adams from his hometown, Santa Monica, California aka Dogtown. The Z-Flex legacy is not only focused on our core cruiser range but is carried through to decks.




INTERESTED? CONTACT US:
AANGUS@ABSOLUTEBOARDCO.COM




UK AND EU DISTRIBUTORS WANTED

SEAT RACK INTERIOR CARGO RACK

KEEP YOUR BOARD SAFE INSIDE seat-rack.com




SeatRack's simple patented design makes it easy to strap down everything from surfboards, skis, snowboards, and fishing poles to lumber, pipes, and ladders. The Interior Cargo Rack also prevents theft and weather damage. The racks are adjustable to fit most vehicles equipped with removable headrests and installation and removal takes less than a minute. Say goodbye to wind noise, poor fuel economy and interior damage.

Contact Director of Business Development Glenn Brumage
gbrumage@seat-rack.com



Shop Manager (m/w)

Für unseren neuen Blue Tomato Shop in Münster

Blue Tomato ist der führende Omni-Channel Händler in den Bereichen Snowboard, Freeski, Surf und Skate! Wir bieten dir einen aufregenden Job in einem dynamischen Unternehmen mit flachen Hierarchien, angenehmer Arbeitsatmosphäre und der Möglichkeit deine eigenen kreativen Ideen einzubringen.

DEINE AUFGABEN

- Organisation im Bereich der Warenwirtschaft
- Organisation aller Shop Abläufe und Shop Mitarbeiterinteilung
- Verantwortung über Shop Umsatz
- Verantwortung für regionale Marketingaktionen
- Verantwortung über die Sortimentsgestaltung
- Kostenverwaltung
- Kooperationen mit anderen internen Bereichen
- Aktiver Verkauf
- Warenpräsentation
- Organisation von Events und Partys regional
- Team- und Mitarbeiterführung

UNSERE ANFORDERUNGEN

- Sehr gute Führungsqualitäten
- Verkaufserfahrung im Einzelhandel
- Merchandising Erfahrung
- Fundiertes Know How im Boardsportbereich und in der Szene
- Lehrlingsausbildung von Vorteil
- Englisch fließend, andere Sprachen von Vorteil
- Grundverständnis Warenwirtschaft
- Kenntnisse der BWL
- Technisches Verständnis
- Stressresistenz und Teamfähigkeit
- Gute MS-Office Kenntnisse (Outlook, Excel)

WAS WIR DIR BIETEN

Blue Tomato bietet dir eine Stelle in einem sportlichen und aufstrebenden Team sowie einen aufregenden Job in einem dynamischen Unternehmen mit flachen Hierarchien, angenehmer Arbeitsatmosphäre und der Möglichkeit eigene Ideen einzubringen. Zusätzlich stehen dir die Türen für Weiterbildungsmöglichkeiten offen.

BEWERBUNG

Schick einfach deine aussagekräftige Bewerbung mit ausführlichem Lebenslauf, Zeugnissen und Lichtbild bevorzugt via E-Mail (Betreff: Shop Manager Münster) an: jobs@blue-tomato.com

Ansprechperson: Philipp Troger

Blue Tomato GmbH
Hochstraße 628
8970 Schladming
Österreich

BEGINN & ORT

Einschulung ab sofort, Vollzeit in unserem neuen Blue Tomato Shop Münster.



Sales Representative (m/w) Eastpak

Eastpak stellt seit 1952 Taschen her, die Menschen zum Reisen inspirieren. Vom Hersteller von Militär-Rucksäcken entwickelte sich Eastpak zur führenden Lifestyle-Marke für alle, die sich in den Metropolen der Welt zu Hause fühlen. Stylistische und funktionale Rucksäcke, Taschen, Koffer und Accessoires bieten alle Freiheiten, egal ob beim Reisen durch die Stadt oder um die ganze Welt.

Eastpak gehört zur VF Gruppe, einem der größten Textilvernehmen weltweit. VF Germany vertreibt die Sport- und Outdoormarken Eastpak, Kipling, Napapijri, Reef, Smartwool, The North Face, Timberland und Vans sowie der Jeansmarken Lee, Wrangler und 7 For All Mankind in Deutschland.

Zur Verstärkung unseres Sales-Teams im Gebiet **Bayern** suchen wir **ab sofort** eine/-n

Sales Representative (m/w) Eastpak

Folgende spannende Aufgaben erwarten Dich:
Du pflegst unseren Kundenstamm und weitest aktiv die Distribution von Eastpak im oben genannten Gebiet aus. Hierzu führst Du regelmäßig Kundenbesuche durch, schulst die Mitarbeiter auf den Verkaufsfeldern zu unseren Produkten und gewinnst neue Kunden. Du präsentierst und verkaufst unseren Handelspartnern die wechselnden Kollektionen. Du analysierst Verkaufszahlen, nimmst Aufträge entgegen und kontrollierst die Einhaltung der vereinbarten Rabatt- und Preiskonditionen. Zusammen mit dem deutschen Sales-Team sorgst Du für die Umsetzung des Business Plans und der nationalen Umsatzziele. Die Teilnahme an nationalen und internationalen Sales Meetings und Messen runden Dein Aufgabengebiet ab.

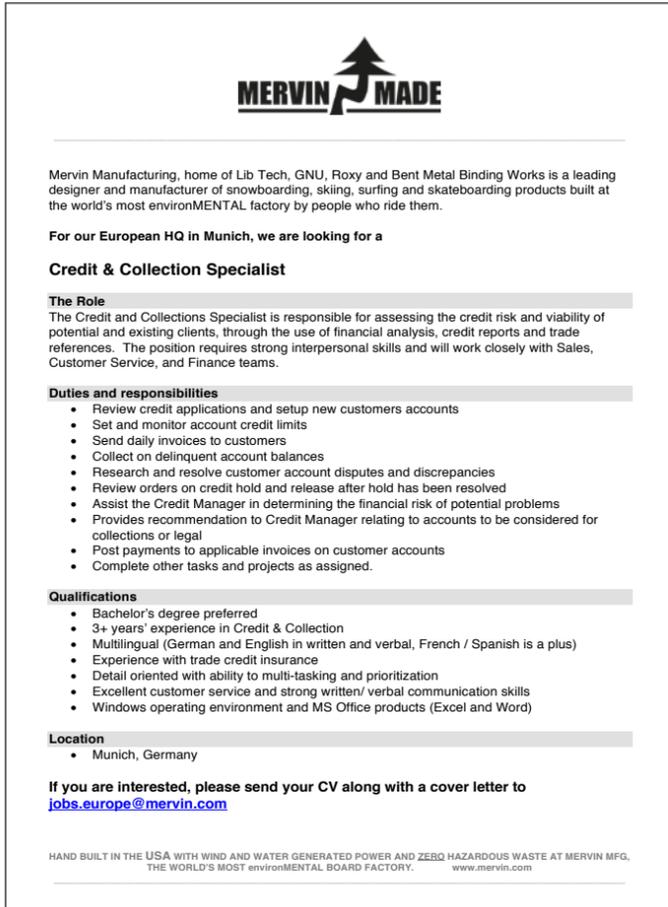
Du passt am besten zu uns, wenn Du folgende Qualifikationen mitbringst:
Du verfügst über eine kaufmännische Ausbildung im Einzelhandel, ein Studium oder eine vergleichbare Qualifikation und hast mehrere Jahre Erfahrung im Vertrieb von Lifestylemarken. Zudem bringst Du gute Kontakte zum Fachhandel mit. Du verfügst über eine hohe Zahlenaffinität sowie gute Englisch- und IT-Kenntnisse (v.a. Excel) und bist in der Lage selbstständig zu arbeiten. Die Position erfordert eine ständige Präsenz bei unseren Kunden in Bayern und geht entsprechend mit einer hohen Reisetätigkeit einher. Idealerweise liegt Dein Wohnort im Großraum München.

Ihre Aussichten:
Neben einer interessanten Aufgabe in einem dynamischen Team erwarten Dich ein attraktives Gehaltspaket und ein Firmenwagen. Wir bieten Dir spannende Herausforderungen mit guten Entwicklungsmöglichkeiten in einem wachstumsgeprägten Umfeld

Haben wir Dein Interesse geweckt?

Dann sende uns Deine Bewerbung bitte mit Angabe Deines frühesten Eintrittstermins und Deiner Gehaltsvorstellung an:

VF Germany Textil-Handels GmbH
E-Mail: German_Wholesale_Jobs@vfc.com



Mervin Made

Mervin Manufacturing, home of Lib Tech, GNU, Roxy and Bent Metal Binding Works is a leading designer and manufacturer of snowboarding, skiing, surfing and skateboarding products built at the world's most environmental factory by people who ride them.

For our European HQ in Munich, we are looking for a

Credit & Collection Specialist

The Role
The Credit and Collections Specialist is responsible for assessing the credit risk and viability of potential and existing clients, through the use of financial analysis, credit reports and trade references. The position requires strong interpersonal skills and will work closely with Sales, Customer Service, and Finance teams.

Duties and responsibilities

- Review credit applications and setup new customers accounts
- Set and monitor account credit limits
- Send daily invoices to customers
- Collect on delinquent account balances
- Research and resolve customer account disputes and discrepancies
- Review orders on credit hold and release after hold has been resolved
- Assist the Credit Manager in determining the financial risk of potential problems
- Provides recommendation to Credit Manager relating to accounts to be considered for collections or legal
- Post payments to applicable invoices on customer accounts
- Complete other tasks and projects as assigned.

Qualifications

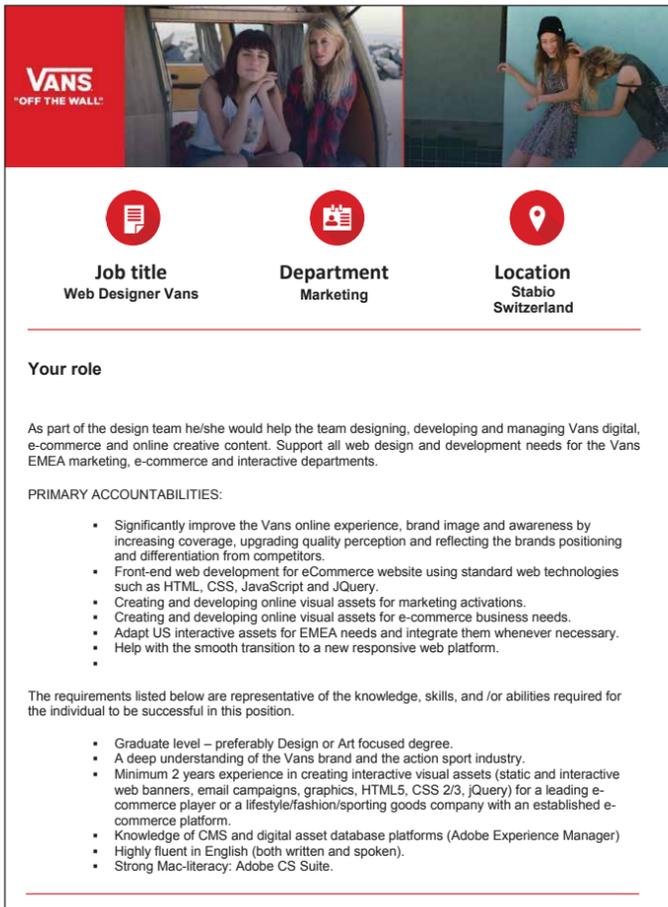
- Bachelor's degree preferred
- 3+ years' experience in Credit & Collection
- Multilingual (German and English in written and verbal, French / Spanish is a plus)
- Experience with trade credit insurance
- Detail oriented with ability to multi-tasking and prioritization
- Excellent customer service and strong written/ verbal communication skills
- Windows operating environment and MS Office products (Excel and Word)

Location

- Munich, Germany

If you are interested, please send your CV along with a cover letter to jobs.europe@mervin.com

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Vans "OFF THE WALL"



Job title
Web Designer Vans



Department
Marketing



Location
Stabio
Switzerland

Your role

As part of the design team he/she would help the team designing, developing and managing Vans digital, e-commerce and online creative content. Support all web design and development needs for the Vans EMEA marketing, e-commerce and interactive departments.

PRIMARY ACCOUNTABILITIES:

- Significantly improve the Vans online experience, brand image and awareness by increasing coverage, upgrading quality perception and reflecting the brands positioning and differentiation from competitors.
- Front-end web development for eCommerce website using standard web technologies such as HTML, CSS, JavaScript and JQuery.
- Creating and developing online visual assets for marketing activations.
- Creating and developing online visual assets for e-commerce business needs.
- Adapt US interactive assets for EMEA needs and integrate them whenever necessary.
- Help with the smooth transition to a new responsive web platform.

The requirements listed below are representative of the knowledge, skills, and /or abilities required for the individual to be successful in this position.

- Graduate level – preferably Design or Art focused degree.
- A deep understanding of the Vans brand and the action sport industry.
- Minimum 2 years experience in creating interactive visual assets (static and interactive web banners, email campaigns, graphics, HTML5, CSS 2/3, JQuery) for a leading e-commerce player or a lifestyle/fashion/sporting goods company with an established e-commerce platform.
- Knowledge of CMS and digital asset database platforms (Adobe Experience Manager)
- Highly fluent in English (both written and spoken).
- Strong Mac-literacy: Adobe CS Suite.

PADDLE EXPO, NUREMBERG, GERMANY



NSPs Andreas Mencke European Sales and Marketing Specialist and Sander Blauw



NSPs Suzanne Liar with the Performance Touring board 4



Ondas Paulo Green and Anna Monty



Red Paddles German representative Marcus Schorling



Restubes Julian Schwetz and Julia Schroder



Starboards Clement Moraniere with new model constructed with fused laminate top and bottom reducing weight and is delivered in recyclable packaging



BIC's German distributor Choppy Waters Dennis Sann and Malte Buchler



Fanatic's Kai Steimir and Karin Gertenbach with the Diamond Air designed specifically for women

SKI & SNOWBOARD SHOW, LONDON, UK



ACM's Matt Barr & The Reason Mag's James 'Northy' North



Dragon's Craig Smith, Dragon Lodge's John Bassett and Noble Custom's Sam Noble



McNair Shirt's Richard Hampshire & Neil McNair



Mpora's Tristan Kennedy & Route One team rider, Si Belson

MOREBOARDS STUBAI PREMIERE, TYROL, AUS



Burton Head of Demo Jonas Rott team



Nitro Snowboards Demo Team Alex Huber Luca Mäurer Lukas Fritsch Philipp Turba



Mervin MFGs Austria Sales Rep Didi Feichtner aka Party King of the Weekend



Head Snowboards' Claudio Schön, Joost Blauw & Christoph Hechenberger

FINISTERRE STORE LAUNCH, BRISTOL, UK



Head of Creative David Gray and Surf Videographer Luke Pilbeam



Streetview



Finisterre Ambassador and Team Manager Matt Smith & Spoke Stringer owner Kristian Crews



Founder Tom Kay

EUROSIMA SURF SUMMIT, HOSSEGOR, FRANCE



Filled the hall



Wilco Prins EuroSima President opened the two day conference



Kepa Acero free surfer, sea explorer filmmaker, blogger who took us through his own emotional rollercoaster ride of surfing experiences



Friday morning started with a presentation by ISPOs Jose Moreno Tapia Rivas to EuroSima members on the new Polygon-concept for hall A6



Summit Organiser Franck Laporte of EuroSima with Iker Aguirre



Ghetto Blaster themed



Patagonia win the 2016 EuroSima Innovation prize and donate the 5000 euro prize to Surfers against Sewage



Watermans ball EuroSima

HOTZONE.TV PARK OPENING, HINTERTUX, AUS



686 European Marketing Manager Stephane Grenet



Salomon Bonfire demo crew with Michael Schirrhofer and Karl Feldbaumer with Dragon Alliances Matti Puster in the middle



Ästhetikers one and only MonEpic Andreas Mone Monsberger



The Rome SDS squad

SPORT ACHAT, NANTES, FRANCE



Euroglass Thomas Potet, Na Pali Adrien Schübmehl and Arnaud Dubois and Roxys Isabelle le Reste



Hoff's Gus Drauille SW Sales, Benoit Breg Marketing Manager, Helena Scholl Trade Marketing Manager and Frances Chapelan NW Sales



Osprey stand: Didier Sip (Owner of Surf Machine Distribution), Christophe Costedoat, Ross Bradley & Morgan Sample from Osprey



Rip Curl's Stephane Picuet, Severine La Cave and Theo Taraud

VANS SHOP RIOT FINALS LISBON, PORTUGAL



Artist Jon Horner is responsible for 2016s Vans Shop Riot artwork



Packed for the finals



Super Final



Vans Shop Riot 2016 Champs - Bana

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JOE HINSON



20 YEARS BEING ON-BOARD

In today's complex world, clarity, authenticity and integrity are the key to truly successful and engaging marketing.

EXTREME offers a pioneering sports and entertainment marketing service that connects brands to fans through passion and experience.

What sets us apart is that we enable partner brands to tap into EXTREME's existing flow of ongoing marketing activities and brand presence that is driven by our growing array of marketing initiatives which deliver significant and guaranteed reach.

EXTREME MARKETING // LICENSING // EVENTS



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NIKE SB BRUIN HYPERFEEL
AS WORN BY GUY MARIANO
FOR ULTIMATE BOARDFEEL

