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EUROPEAN SURF/SKATE/SNOW BUSINESS

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**PORTUGUESE SURF
INDUSTRY'S RISING TIDE**



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WAKEBOARD HARDGOODS, KITESURFING, FOILING, SURFBOARDS**

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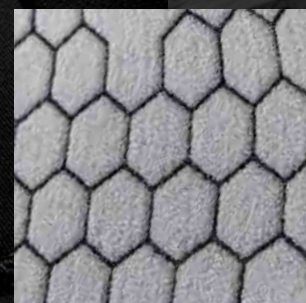
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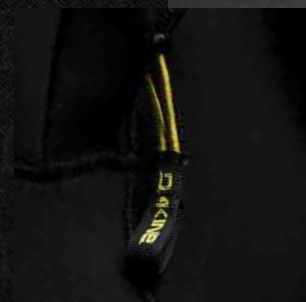
COMPRESSION CUT



SEALED SEAMS



HEXO THERM LINING



CURV LOCK
SHOULDER SEAL INNOVATION

Hanna Scott

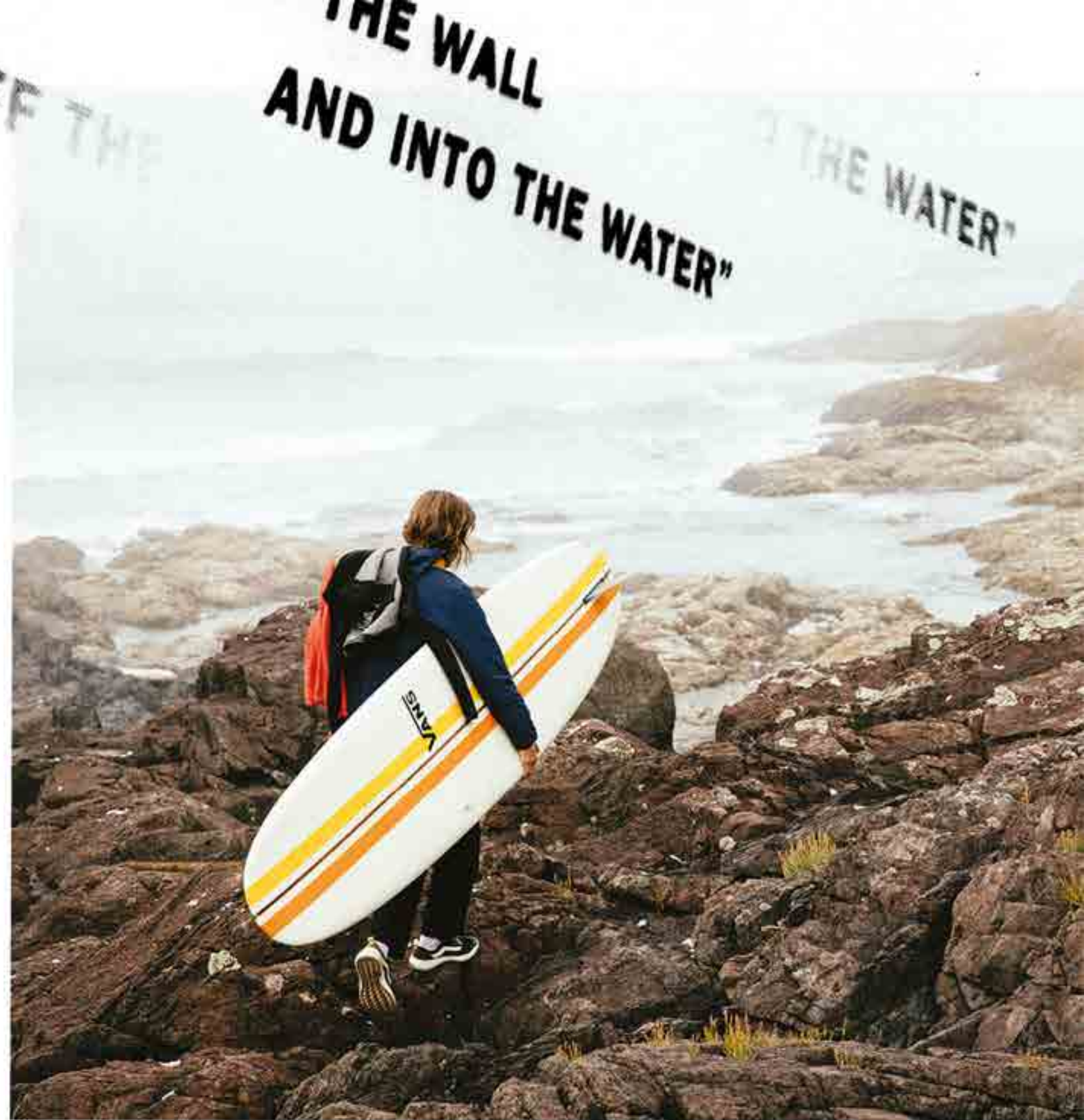


COLD, WET, WINDY...

Sometimes when the surf is good, the weather isn't.
The **UltraRange EXO MTE** is equipped to get you out there.

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OYSTERPRENE

Soöruz 's Innovation.
First high range neoprene integrates
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Aware of the impact of neoprene on the environment, Soöruz has been researching for the last ten years to reduce its environmental footprint by developing new materials based on renewable and/or recyclable materials.

The **OYSTERPRENE**, is used in our most flexible and **high-performance neoprenes** that make up our expert and pro ranges. The process consists of replacing limestone by a natural, recycled and renewable powder made from the crushing of oyster shells. This solution does not alter the technical performance of our products and improves their environmental footprint without impacting the price for the consumer.



The aim of this label is to identify our most environmentally friendly products and reduce our ecological footprint.



EDITORIAL SOURCE#103

'Unknown' ranks as the hottest, non-expletive word to describe our current situation as we sit here waiting for winter in late October. As we bid farewell to summer 2020, on the whole boardsports retailers can be relatively buoyant, all things considered. There are plenty of wonder stories of triple digit percentage growth for skateboard manufacturers and surfboard shapers and wetsuit companies not able to keep up with demand. But as we go into autumn and winter, now comes crunch time for the snowboard retailers. We're facing a really bizarre time, at what is usually a really bizarre time. With COVID-19 still looming large and people pandemic-proofing their businesses to ensure existing and new efforts are untouchable by any such virus again, it is truly mad to think just how dependent the winter sports business is on our fickle mistress, the snow. This is the time of year where old French people count the layers of their onions to predict snowfall and you'd best hope your Persimmon seed is showing a spoon shaped mark and not a fork! In a year of too many unknowns, here we go again, praying for snow. Praying that we are blessed with the best winter on record to allow us even the most modest of starting blocks to kick winter off with.

However, forget about your Magic 8-Ball! Throw away your onions and Persimmon seeds, because widespread weather reports suggest La Niña weather system is in place as we move into winter! La Niña (The Little Girl in Spanish) is the opposite of El Niño (The Little Boy, or Christ Child). Where El Niño typically brings drier-than-

average winter conditions for our (Northern) North American counterparts, La Niña is definitely the beacon of goods news, usually presenting wetter, cooler climes. While there's no direct correlation between La Niña and European snowfall, we sure could do with some positive news to get the ball rolling.

Tignes, Hintertux and Kaunertal glacier openings are all under the belt at the time of writing, and exhibitors reported strong engagement with customers there and despite COVID restrictions in place, many different sources reported on the palpable enthusiasm on display at each event.

Localism definitely rivals 'unknown' for 2020 buzzword honours, and as brands look to move supply chains closer to home to eliminate future bottlenecks, so too is the consumer looking more and more locally. We firmly believe that winter 20/21 will be the winter of ultimate localism; the French will ride France, the Swiss will ride Switzerland, Austrians, Austria etc. And catching up with some more remote regions, we hear in our Swedish Market Insight (Pro Content online) that many ski resorts are up >20% on holiday period bookings vs last year. Speaking with Aviemore (Scotland)-based Skinortwest, a holiday company specialising in tuition, rental and Scottish snowsport holidays, they've noticed a serious uptick in bookings from people across the UK, deciding to plan their Christmas holiday in the safe haven of the Cairngorms instead of dicing with a potential self-isolation period on return from the Alps. Skinorwest also noted a much earlier start in booking enquiries and reports a big increase in Christmas bookings, with many Brits fed up from a

summer locked down at home and seeing an outdoor winter holiday as the perfect way to spend time with family. Interestingly, The Ski Club of Great Britain surveyed 19,000 people and 96% of those booked a snowsport holiday in 2020 plan to do so again in 2021. Clearly there's a large appetite for snowsports this winter!

I'll leave you with some more positive parting words to accompany the end of your toilet break. We touched base with a couple of Spanish snowboard shops from Sierra Nevada to the Pyrenees, where there's a real buzz building in the anticipation for Spain's wealthier snowboarders, who usually opt for trips to the Alps, to instead spend their hard-earned Euros domestically. And this sentiment is echoed across Europe, with the hope those saving on travel and accommodation costs will splash out on products instead.

Snow brands had to cut their cloth to meet the lack in retailer confidence when orders were placed back in March. It'll be interesting to see just what happens if the stars align, if the Persimmon seeds are spoon shaped, if La Niña delivers the snowy goods. Will we see a snowboard boom similar to that of our skate and surf brethren during the summer? Only time will tell, but snow shops would be amiss not to take heed of the supply shortages seen in other boardsports during the summer. Could we be heading for a shortage of supply in snowboard gear this winter? Surf and skate retailers had to work with completely new brands to meet their demand. Which brands are in the best shape to capitalise, if so? I look forward to hearing of many new partnerships.

Always Sideways,
Harry Mitchell Thompson
Editor-in-Chief

SURFBOARDS BUILT BY SURFERS

★PYZEL

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On the cover The Wave Bristol Founder Nick Hounsfield
Photo Credit: Jack Hewett @ImageCabin

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Retro Outerwear Brand Elho Returns

Famous German snowsports brand from the 80s and 90s is coming back with a relaunch. Elho have improved their colourful, cosy, heritage collection from 1989 and is now set up for the 2020 winter season. Elho is aiming to remind older riders of the good ol' crazy days on the slopes and also respond to the new generation trend for bright and stylish outerwear.

BIC Sports Rebrands As TAHE

TAHE is the new name for BIC Sport. Tahe Outdoors is an Estonian heritage outdoor company and purchased BIC Sport from the larger BIC Group two years ago. The two parties saw the need to forge a new path for the brand and decided to lean on the Estonian company's rich heritage as a launch pad. They keep the same omni-channel distribution framework and are still made in France with best eco practices their MO.

Rip Curl Debuts Girls Store In Baleal Bay, Portugal

Riding on the decade-long-wave that is the rise in female surfers, Rip Curl has opened up a girls store in Baleal Bay, Portugal. It will be the 4th of its kind in Europe that only stocks women's apparel and technical surf gear.

...Lost Enterprises Forms Partnerships With Distributors SurfCloud & Boardtech

...Lost Enterprises is continuing to expand in Europe through forming distribution partnerships with SurfCloud in Portugal &

Italy and Boardtech in Greece & Cyprus- the partnerships will be key to bringing Lost to customers new and old.

Clown Skateboards Are Back On The Scene!

15 years after taking a break in '05, Jeff Boardman and Vikas Malik are back. Clown Skateboards have returned to the scene with a batch of Banksy Test Press Series boards that sold out faster than hot cakes

Black Peak Trading Adds Performance Eyewear Brand, Spektrum To Portfolio

UK based sales agency, Black Peak Trading are now representatives for Spektrum- the high quality, performance eyewear brand from Sweden.

Ricky Hower Promoted To Marketing Manager At Airblaster

Having worked at Airblaster since 2006, Ricky Hower has worked his way up the ranks, whilst developing his professional skills and building his career at Timberline, to be promoted to Airblaster's new Marketing Manager.

JJF By Pyzel: High Quality Funformance Surfboards In Europe

For over 20 years, Pyzel has been making boards for 2x World Champ John John Florence from their base in North Shore, Cali. Recently, JJF by Pyzel has partnered with French distribution agency Sample N'Co to bring The Gremlin, The Log and The Astrofish across the pond. The collection will be available in Europe soon!

Pyzel Surfboards Announce Formation Of The Sugar Mill Europe

Following the news last week that Pyzel Surfboards had partnered with Sample N' Co, Pyzel is furthering its' European growth through the formation of The Sugar Mill- a European sales, production, and marketing team.

Neil Fiske Appointed CEO Of Marquee Brands

With over 20 years of experience in business and brand building, Neil Fiske has been

appointed CEO of Marquee Brands LLC, the first CEO at the company. Neil joins Marquee from GAP where had been CEO since 2018.

VMDUK Appointed UK Distributors Of Eyewear Brand SPY+

Bollé Brands have appointed VMDUK to distribute SPY+, Californian based sunglass and eyewear brand, throughout the UK. The highly experienced VMDUK have also been asked to be UK distributors for Bolle RX and winter products.

Unify Brand Partnerships Appointed UK Wholesale Distributors Of Nixon

Unify Brand Partnerships, based in South Wales, has been appointed as UK wholesale distributors for Nixon, the youth lifestyle watch and accessory brand.

BOA Technology Acquired For \$454M

Compass Diversified (CODI) has brought the market leading performance brand BOA Technology in a \$454 million deal. The current leadership team will remain in place in their current HQ after the acquisition is complete.

Francois Benaben Appointed President Of Sport & Luxury Division At Bolle Brands

Bolle Brands has appointed the highly experienced Francois Benaben as the new president of their Sport & Luxury Division to work out of their HQ in Lyon.

Dewerstone Founder Rory Atton Recipient Of Entrepreneur For Good Award

1% for the Planet members, planters of over 25,000 trees and Climate Neutral Certified, Dewerstone is a business that puts the planet first. In recognition of their efforts, Founder Rory Atton is this year's deserving winner of the Entrepreneur for Good Award.

Unify Brand Partnerships Is New UK Distributor Of Rumpl

Unify Brand Partnerships has been selected as UK distributors of technical and lifestyle blanket brand, Rumpl. The partnership aims to increase the presence of Rumpl in the UK market.

Finsout Tool Is Back In Europe

Remove fins with a single wrist motion using the Finsout tool, made from 100% recycled plastic. After a few years away, the tool is now available again in Europe via distributors Surfcloud Lda.

Ryan Gellert New Patagonia CEO & Jenna Johnson New Head Of Patagonia Inc.

Ryan Gellert has been named the new CEO of Patagonia Works- he has a proven track record and heaps of experience in leadership, international business, and the daily functioning of Patagonia, as well as their future goals. Alongside this announcement, Jenna Johnson has been promoted from leader of Patagonia's technical outdoor biz to Head of Patagonia Inc.

Burton Brings Aboard New Marketing Exec & Creative Director

With almost 40 years experience between them in their respective fields, Burton has appointed Kelly Murnaghan as their new SVP of Global Marketing and Adrian Josef Margelist as Executive Creative Director.

Burton Expands To Scandinavia With New Hub In Stockholm

In 2 days, October 15, Burton Snowboards opens their first Hub in Sweden. The Hub -consisting of a shop, showroom and office spaces- will be based in Stockholm, managed by Lina Adams.

Blue Tomato Grow Presence In Finland With 2 New Shops

With one opening tomorrow (October 17) and one on October 23, Blue Tomato are growing their presence in Finland with 2 new shops. Alongside the existing shop in Helsinki, Blue Tomato's new stores will be in Tampere and Turku.

SurfCloud To Distribute NSP Surfboards In Portugal

Already distributors of NSP Surfboards in France, Spain, Italy, Germany and other European countries, SurfCloud will now distribute NSP products throughout Portugal.

Portuguese Surf Industry's Rising Tide

Portugal was one of the worst hit countries in the 2008 Global Financial Crisis. The wave-rich nation remained in crisis until 2014 but backed by strong investment from the government and tourist board, the country has emerged as one of the globe's top surfing meccas now hosting a number of high-profile surfing events and WSL EMEA CEO Francisco Spínola is based in Lisbon. Recognising the strength of its natural resource, the government and tourist board invested heavily in the promotion of not just tourists surfing in Portugal, but also a healthy competitive surf scene, backed by a strong surf industry. We commissioned native surf industry employee Nuno Príncipe to take a deep dive into just how Portugal – a nation without a Championship Tour stop in 2008 – now sees surfing as the country's number two sport, behind football.

The European surf industry is booming and Portugal has been on the rise as a surf industry player for the last 10 years. Since the Championship Tour returned to the country in 2009, Portugal has seen remarkable growth in the popularity of surfing. The Portuguese stop is part of the European leg and, on some days, around 30,000 people watch from Supertubos beach in Peniche making this one of the WSL's biggest on-beach audiences (along with Brazil). Each year a total of around 140,000 spectators attend the event.

Despite the hard times presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, within just five months, Portugal will have hosted two major WSL events: the WSL Countdown Series in September 2020 and the second stop of the 2021 Championship Tour in February (and probably also the big wave event in Nazare). It's remarkable. A lot of locations saw tour cancellations, however Portuguese fans have a couple of reasons to be stoked. This demonstrates the strength and efforts of the event's organisers who want to turn this situation around and keep surfing at the highest possible level. Usually February is a good winter month in Peniche with Supertubos experiencing strong swells and offshore winds. Before making the decision to move the event from Autumn to Winter, Ocean Events organisers had a close look at the history charts from previous years at Supertubos as well as talking with local surfers to understand whether the move would be the right one. They know it's winter; they know it could be stormy and rainy, but the organisers and Peniche City Council see this as an opportunity to show the world that Portugal has good waves early in the year. It's also an opportunity for people to visit the country, not only to watch the event but to have an enjoyable holiday (if permitted by the authorities due to COVID-19 restrictions).

"Portugal will be the epicentre of the surfing world in February," said WSL's EMEA CEO, Francisco Spínola to Público newspaper. "In essence, it's replicating what we've been doing in October, in Peniche. If we manage to transfer that visibility to February it will be another significant boost in tourism and to the economy in this continuous effort to reduce seasonality." In February 2020 Supertubos saw several classic sessions with amazing barrels and even the current World Champ Ítalo Ferreira swung by to get barrelled. With Peniche being the only Championship Tour event in Europe, let's hope conditions are the same for 2021.

The Tourism Boom

As a result of the global financial crisis from the 2008 banking crash, Portugal remained in a crisis situation until 2014. From 2014 on, tourism became a priority for our government and

our tourist board saw large fiscal investments to suit. The beaches and waves of Portugal were included in this, with the goal being to show off the wave quality, beach and landscape beauty, gastronomy, culture, pleasant weather, and the country's security. In addition, the increase in tourism would showcase how welcoming the Portuguese people are to foreigners.

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In terms of surfing, for years, Portugal has been a relatively well-kept secret, only revealed to the world due to a fortunate combination of factors: the exit from the economic crisis; the growth in tourism (surfing being one of the key factors); the Championship Tour in Peniche and the Qualifying Series in Cascais, Azores, Ericeira, Santa Cruz and Costa de Caparica and Pro Junior and Longboard in Espinho; the popularity from Nazaré having the biggest wave in the world; and the teamwork from the people who lead surfing in Portugal and the government's investment in tourism campaigns have all played their part. Portuguese surfers have always been well aware of the local wave quality and weather conditions. It's no coincidence that Australian surfers feel at home when visiting, it's also no coincidence that the Americans call Portugal the "California of Europe" and the Azores and Madeira islands the "Hawaii of Europe". The website - www.portuguesewaves.com - was created precisely to introduce the world to Portuguese waves and boost their visibility in terms of tourism while positioning Portugal as a top surfing destination, inviting international surfers to visit the country.

In 2019, Portugal was voted the 'World's Leading Destination' by the World Travel Awards, considered the Oscars of tourism, for the third time in a row. Lisbon, the capital, was elected the 'World's Leading City Break Destination' and Madeira Island was, for the fifth time in a row, the 'Best Island Destination in the World'. Along with this recognition, Portugal is one of the safest countries in the world, elected as the safest in the European Union and third in the world by the Global Peace Index (GPI) only behind Iceland and New Zealand.

In 2018, the Portuguese tourism board invested 1 million euros in surfing events such as the CT in Peniche, Nazaré Challenge (Big Wave World Tour event), QS10000 in Ericeira and QS3000 in Santa Cruz.

There are over 900 companies providing services directly related to surfing. A study from 2015 made by the National Surfers Association (ANS) pointed to a revenue of 400 million euros per year.

Peniche – Follow The Leader

As you would expect, the Championship Tour event is the one that brings the most visibility and biggest return on investment to Portugal. The CT event was launched in 2009 in Peniche and since then there has been a drastic change for the better in the region's tourism.

A socio-economic impact study made by the WSL, with the help of the tourist board, local schools and institutes, indicates that the event in 2015 generated economic profits of 10.6 million euros. According to the study, 100,000 people visited Peniche and watched the event over ten days and that attendees to previous editions were split 66.4% Portuguese and 40.3% foreigners. Portugal's event generates some of the WSL's highest internet traffic, sitting fifth place.

The research data produced by the team showed that daily expenses stood at 77.42 euros per person, with the foreign visitor spending more than a Portuguese visitor. The total income was 7.7 million euros which can be broken down into 5.2 million

by international visitors and 2.5 million by Portuguese visitors. Considering the calculated 10.6 million, for the local economy, it is estimated that 1.3 million euros are indirect profits thus generating a tax revenue of 1.2 million euros.

Surf as tourism and the international visibility given by the event are already part of a strategy for a new reality across Portugal's western region. Revenue is not the only associated positive impact. As a result, new businesses in the hospitality and sports sectors have created new jobs and generated new avenues of income for the local economy. The media return for the CT event in 2014 was over 28 million while the hotel occupancy rate in Peniche was around 100%, compared to times outside the event window where it decreased dramatically. Peniche now almost ceases to suffer from seasonality; its hotel and catering industry, as well as employment, increased substantially as new units, surf schools, surf camps, shops, tours and tourism experiences were created.

"In 2019, Portugal was voted the 'World's Leading Destination' by the World Travel Awards, considered the Oscars of tourism, for the third time in a row. Lisbon, the capital, was elected the 'World's Leading City Break Destination' and Madeira Island was, for the fifth time in a row, the 'Best Island Destination in the World'. Along with this recognition, Portugal is one of the safest countries in the world, elected as the safest in the European Union and third in the world by the Global Peace Index (GPI) only behind Iceland and New Zealand."

One key factor to tourism was the vision of Peniche's former city hall mayor, António José Correia, who has supported having WSL surfing events in Peniche since 2001 (first as QS and then CT). His proactive character and contagious stoke to have the world's best surfers in his town granted him the 'Coolest Mayor on Tour' title by the WSL and CT surf-

ers. Other Portuguese city council presidents saw the benefits to the Peniche local economy by hosting the surfing event and followed their example, completely supported by the tourism board. In reality, Peniche and all the other WSL event locations in Portugal saw their local economies grow stronger with new businesses, opportunities and jobs directly or indirectly related to surfing.

There is no longer a tough and long seasonality in Peniche. The location offers excellent conditions all year round. Surfers like to go to Portugal during the high season and outside the summer season. So, as a result, you have surfing and employment all year long.

2019 saw Portugal and the WSL push towards a QS3000 event in Costa de Caparica in springtime, raising the bar on joining Santa Cruz by hosting an event of the same importance. This makes use of a back-to-back event strategy, offering a kind of 2-for-1 package where surfers can compete at both events across two weeks while saving money on flights and accommodation. This 2-for-1 offer will make the QS Spring leg more attractive and inviting for all. It will also give the chance for people enjoying their Easter holidays to watch some of the world's best QS surfers. There's also an event in Espinho, a European Pro Junior event and Longboard Open event, which makes Espinho a top spot too. Due to the pandemic in 2020 the 7th edition of the event took place in October being the only European Pro Junior surf and Longboard Open event of the year in Europe crowning the champions in world class waves. This one was for the books since Tahitian Kauli Vast dropped a perfect heat score of 20 points in the quarterfinals before winning the event and clinching his third European Junior title.

So now, Portugal has important international events happening across the year, however the summertime - the worst for wave season - is left for regular tourism. September kicks straight off with the QS6000 in Azores, the QS10000 in Ericeira and then winter swells see Nazaré roar to life and the aforementioned CT stop in Peniche now in February.

Impeccable Waves, Year-Round

Consistent wave quality all year long is a competitive advantage, especially when accessible via short travel distances. Portugal offers world-class waves for all surfing levels going from the Carcavelos and Costa de Caparica beach breaks to the pointbreaks and slabs of Ericeira, to the barrels of Peniche or world's biggest waves in Nazaré. If you go further north you can find the endless rights of Figueira da Foz and by taking a little bit more time on the road you can surf the cool beach breaks in Porto, Espinho and Viana do Castelo. Or by going south there's the punchy beach breaks coupled with the warm weather and amazing landscapes of Costa Vicentina and the Algarve. And if you want to feel a tropical island vibe, surfing in warm waters just fly to the Azores or Madeira islands.

In 2011, Ericeira received prestigious recognition as a World Surfing Reserve (the only one in Europe) for its wave quality. It's a world-class surf zone consisting of approximately 8km of coastline. It hosts outstanding surf break quality, including iconic spots such as Ribeira d'Ilhas, Cave, Pedra Branca and Coxos, among others.

For decades, Nazaré was a place forgotten in time where you couldn't see a living soul on the beach during winter. Only a few bodyboarders would venture out onto its waves. Nazaré City Council brought big wave rider Garrett McNamara to explore the waves. This decision paid off with incredible photos and videos that shocked the world and culminated with the Guinness World Record in 2011 for the biggest wave ever surfed (a record beaten by Brazilian Rodrigo Koxa in 2018). Since then, Nazaré has been the centre of big wave surfing worldwide with the best surfers in the world searching for glory and world records. Nazaré is also the stage for WSL's event in the Big Wave season.

A Growing Surf Industry To Match

The WSL's General Manager Francisco Spínola being based out of Lisbon since 2019 acts as a key indicator for other industry players and surf brands to look at the country's business

potential. Firstly, Portugal has some of the world's most important events spread across the majority of the year, featuring some of the world's best surfers with thousands of people watching in person on the beach or watching online. Secondly, the goal now is to develop the local and national surfing industry by generating awareness, creating new brands, jobs, services, and supporting surfing brands. And all of this is done with one eye on the future and the other on sustainability. It's a win-win situation for everybody: surfers, brands, sponsors, city halls, tourism, government and the country's economy.

Portugal is currently the world's most searched country on the internet when it comes to the topic of 'surfing' after having reinforced its standing in global leadership, according to a study made by Bloom Consulting, a company specialising in brand strategy for destinations. The goal is now to convert this media boom into greater economic, strategic, and business value for the country. For the tourism board President, Luís Araújo, the goal is to have "the main brands, companies and relevant projects look to Portugal as a potential destination for their headquarters and decision centres," he said to Expresso newspaper. He also said: "Portugal appears to be more influential in the surf industry at the international level which implies that more jobs will be created, greater economic value will be generated and a greater media return is also expected".

The tourism board wants to strengthen the industry itself and its different economic agents as a whole (surfboards manufacturers, technical gear, apparel, accessories, etc...), in order to promote a more sustainable future for the sector. In terms of brands, there's some that were born in Portugal and have international visibility such as Deeply, Semente Surfboards, Janga Wetsuits, Lapoint Surf Camps, Polen Surfboards, Dream Sea Surf Camp, Matta Shapes, and Indie Campers (West Coast Campers), among others. At 33 years old, Despomar is Portugal's biggest surf company that has two business channels with more than 300 clients in dis-

tribution and servicing 34 own stores in the country, employing more than 300 people and distributing brands such as Billabong, Element, FCS, RVCA, ...Lost, JS, VonZipper and Xcel, among others. There are new Portuguese brands coming out, like Brusco from big wave rider Nic Von Rupp, or JAM Traction from professional surfers Marlon Lipke (for-

"the goal now is to develop the local and national surfing industry by generating awareness, creating new brands, jobs, services, and supporting surfing brands. And all of this is done with one eye on the future and the other on sustainability. It's a win-win situation for everybody: surfers, brands, sponsors, city halls, tourism, government and the country's economy."

mer CT surfer) and Gony Zubizarreta. Surf Out Portugal is a trade show that creates the space and opportunity to discuss how surfing will evolve in the future. It's an event that gathers several brands, entities and other stakeholders from the surfing world, inviting all surf enthusiasts for an immersive experience out of the water.

United we stand, divided we fall

There's no point in a country being lucky enough to have fantastic natural resources if the wrong people are in charge. Teamwork has been the secret of Portugal's strength, a small country with people of great vision and ambition who work for surfers and the development of surfing. Francisco Spínola is the WSL EMEA CEO, Francisco Rodrigues is the National Surfers Association President and João Aranha is leading the Portuguese Surfing Federation. All of them were competitors back in the 90's, all of them live and breathe surfing, all of them know what the best direction is for developing surfing in Portugal. They are doing for surfers what they didn't have in their high times as surfers. The teamwork between these three organisations and the Portuguese government resulted in Portugal being the first country in the world

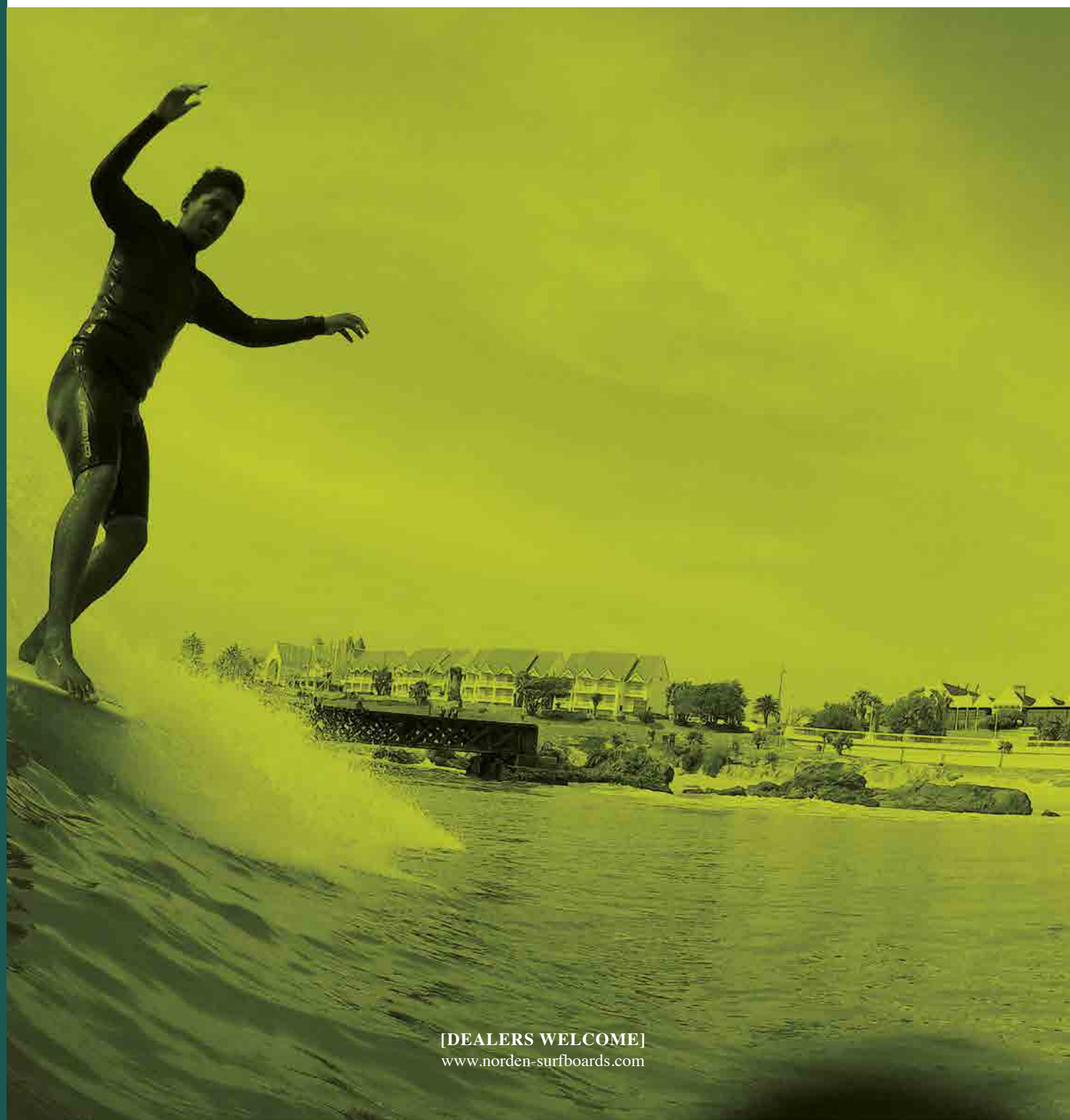
after lockdowns to have an official surfing event: The MEO League (Portuguese Surfing Championship) and managing to have all five stages from June to October, crowning Portuguese champions in this crazy year was truly remarkable. At the time of writing, it was the only National Championship league to happen during the pandemic.

Even if you have world class waves, it's still important that the surfers represent your country are at the highest level. Tiago Pires was Portugal's greatest ambassador amongst the world's best surfers competing on the Championship Tour between 2008 and 2014. Frederico Morais followed his footsteps and entered the surfing elite in 2017 and requalified in 2019 winning the QS. Vasco Ribeiro clinched the World Junior Championship title in 2014. There's a whole new generation of surfers coming through inspired by these three.

So... what now?

Once lockdown was over and flights started returning, 2020's summer under the 'new normal' was a positive one. Even though this year is incomparable to previous years, summer 2020 still saw lots of tourists. Portuguese nationals were tourists within their own country and holidayed domestically, helping out local companies and economies. From everyone being desperate to get outside, outdoor activities saw a boom; surfboards, wetsuits, accessories, skateboards, and bikes registered high sales and some of them ran out of stock. Up until the beginning of 2020, recent years would go down in the books as some of the best times ever for surfing in Portugal. The country was at Europe's forefront of surfing tourism and events, but now, with the COVID-19 pandemic nobody really knows what the new reality will be as everything's dependent on flight restrictions, new lockdowns and security measures. But one thing is certain: with solid teamwork and a huge will to push surfing to reach its best again, Portugal will do everything to be one of the most important surf industry players, not only in Europe, but in the world.





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RETAIL BUYER'S GUIDE

SURFBOARDS SS21

With the dust settling on the workshop floors, it's time for a quick run-down of the totally crazy year 2020. From paralysis to utter mania, the surf equipment market has - let's not be afraid to say it - largely benefitted from the pandemic. Overview and outlook 2021 with **David Bianic**.



Photo Kanoa

As a healthy outlet during uncertain times, surfing has seen a considerable uptick since lockdown eased in spring. Matteo Fioravanti, Head of International Development at Euroglass (Phipps, Bradley, MR, Sharp Eye, Simon Anderson, Grace, Quiksilver & Roxy Tech) doesn't hesitate to throw some impressive figures our way: "We did 25% YOY 2020 vs 2021 and 145% increase YOY on the Spring Summer 2021 delivery pre book." Many confirm to have registered unprecedented productivity. One of the explanations is: "The fact that no one has really travelled that much, no one is going out at night because they can't", relates Nick Uricchio, Shaper and co-Manager of Semente in Portugal. Up until now surf trips represented a good opportunity to buy surfboards, says Johnny Cabianca from Cabianca & Agote Surfboards, whereas now "they are buying them at home".

These forced economies have robbed customers of their indecision and are more inclined to be

"splashing out on a new board or more premium version of what they usually rode", says the team at NSP (Sander Blauw, Commercial Director and Caren Forbes, Marketing Manager). But for the brands manufacturing abroad, the upturn only lasted as long as the existing stocks did, as was

"We did 25% YOY 2020 vs 2021 and 145% increase YOY on the Spring Summer 2021 delivery pre book." **Matteo Fioravanti, Euroglass**

the case at Norden Surfboards: "As we produce a lot of stock overseas and made our plans in 2019, we could only sell what we had and could not restock as quick as we needed, otherwise it could have been the best year in brand history," says Andy Wirtz, CEO and Product Developer. With the summer over, sales seem to have returned to their normal rate, says Benoît Brecq at Venon, letting shapers breathe a little bit! A short-lived respite if

you are to believe Tara Priestley, Brand Manager for Surftech UK, whose summer 2021 pre-orders for the Learn to Surf boards aimed at schools are in good shape after a solid year in 2020.

CUSTOMER PROFILE

For Chris Grow, Marketing Director at Firewire in the United States (Firewire Surfboards, Slater Designs, Thunderbolt Longboards) the most remarkable development is the heightened polarisation of the clientele, either younger surfers (“maybe 10-14 years old”) or older than before (“late 30s to 50s”): “The two demographics can be considered together in the sense that parents who found themselves not confined to an office also found their kids not confined to a classroom and together they went to the beach after buying a new board or two or three.” This “younger/older” polarisation manifests itself in demand for totally different shapes. Nick at Semente reports enormous growth in boards for kids really interested in high performance models whereas the retro boards and in particular twinnies appeal to “a lot of older guys getting back into surfing”. Pyzel foresaw this upsurge in kids, offering a complete range for “groms” as well as XL versions of the best sellers available (Ghost, Shadow, Phantom, Gremlin, Pyzalien2 and Astro Pop) aimed at the older “weekend warrior” surfers who are “generally based in cities, not always coastal, they are not the sharpest surfers at the spot but they are definitely some of the most motivated”, assures Rémi Chaussemiche in Marketing at Sugar Mill Europe, the Hawaiian brand’s new distributor.

Geographically, Benoît from Venon declared that in 2020, northern Europe, “especially France, Germany and UK”, comprised the largest market: “The South, due to the pandemic & a lower rate of tourism than the last years & the lower government aid, was more difficult in terms of sales compared to recent years.” Andy from Norden even hints at an influx of new participants “at places which are not even that good in terms of wave quality but they could not go anywhere else!” This keen interest is confirmed by Susana Santos, Online Commercial Director for Xapheland in Portugal (Chilli, Rusty, JR, Simon Anderson): “As

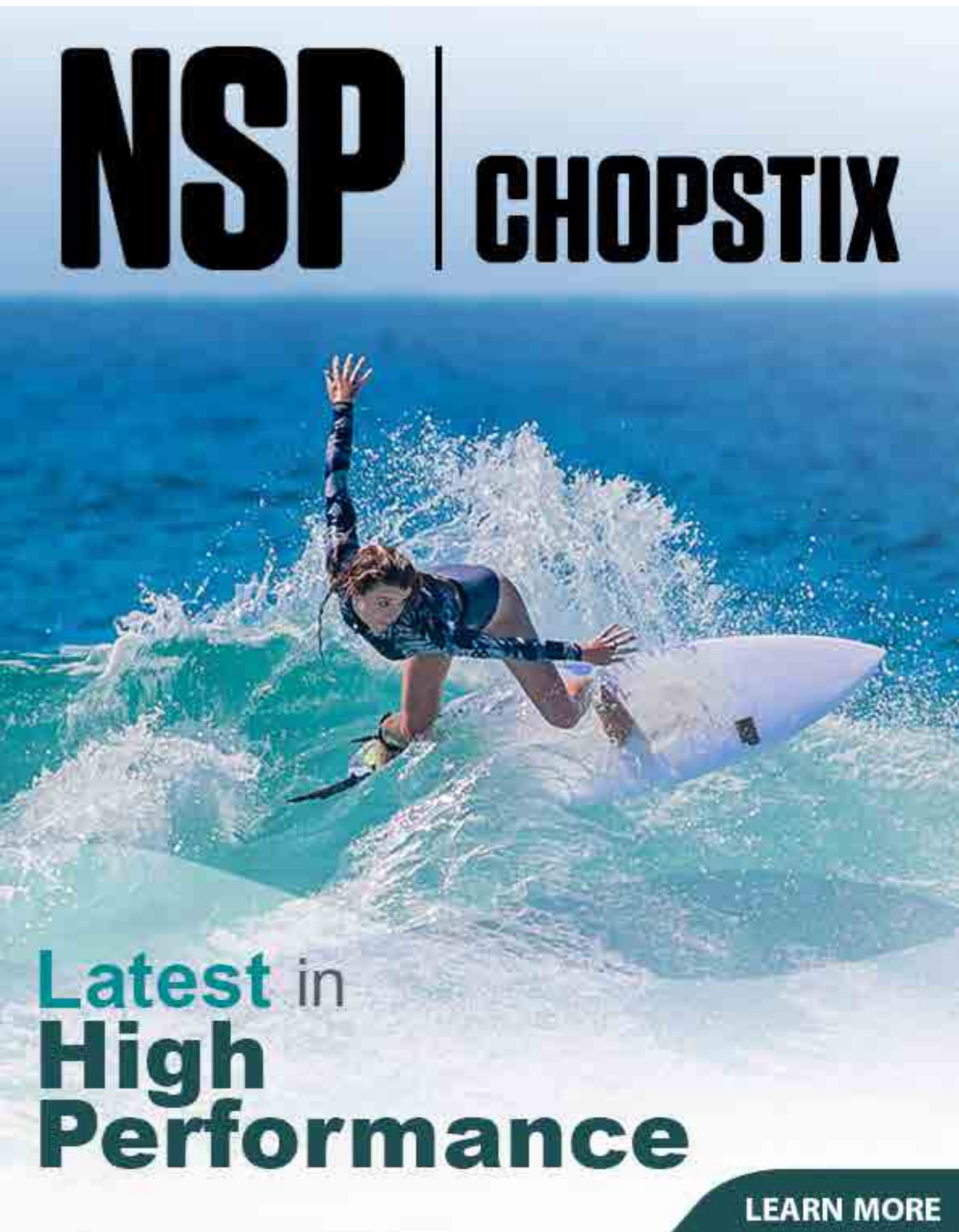
in recent years, we’ve been witnessing a rise in the demand for wave riding equipment in central Europe, following the burst of manmade wave facilities across the area.”

While an increase in demand appears throughout age groups and countries, involvement from girls/ women is even stronger than amongst men, a feeling shared by all brands, to which some are responding with specific ranges, like the Wahine models from Walden, fine-tuned versions of the original Magic model shaped for girls. In the end, the result is that you “need a big range to satisfy them all”, concludes Alain Riou at Chilli Surfboards Europe (Santosha Distribution).

“There is no social pressure to conform...in fact there is social pressure to not conform I think”.
Chris Grow, Firewire

SHAPE TRENDS 2021

We asked the brands to look into their crystal balls and predict the big hits of 2021. One of the terms most heard was “mid-length”: “Torren Martin mid-length twin fin is getting a lot of attention and I think we’ll see a lot of them in 2021. We have one coming to The Farm (the Santosha Distribution surf shop in Hossegor),” reveals Alain Riou. A rarity in the history of shapes, these mid-lengths (mostly eggs between 7’ and 8’) appeal as much to beginners who see a board that’s easy but cool, shedding the “kook” label, as they do to accomplished shortboarders. The latter, fed up of battling in the line-up with the growing number of counterparts, are in search of a breath of fresh air (and a certain advantage at take-off). Here we can cite the new Quokka model from Venon, “our new version of our EVO Model, a versatile Short-LONGBOARD for people looking for comfort & manoeuvrability”, describes Benoît Brecq. At Euroglass, they didn’t wait for the hype around mid-lengths before rolling out en masse the One Bad Egg model from Mark Phipps, an absolute best seller. It’s a similar story at Surftech whose mini nose-rider In The Pink from Takayama features in the top 3 in



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sales tables with the Mega Magic from Walden described as a “short longboard”. Beyond the mid-length phenomenon (set to last), the design’s success is a good illustration of the mentality of the modern surfer, summarised by the mantra “ride anything”: all surfing is good. From a commercial point of view it’s a blessing for surf shops, multiplying the chances to complete a customer’s quiver. Chris at Firewire welcomes this simplified movement as now “there is no social pressure to conform...in fact there is social pressure to not conform I think”. He reminds us that the brand has in recent years released a small wave fish (Seaside) as well as a mid-length fish (Seaside and Beyond), a high-performance shortboard (FRK) and a range of carbon longboards (Thunderbolt Black, notably with Harley Ingleby and CJ Nelson). Eclectic.

CONSTRUCTIONS 2021

Despite all the efforts made by the brands in the last ten years on EPS/innovative epoxy constructions, these materials still only make

up a fraction of surfboard sales, to the benefit of the traditional PU/polyester combo. From a shaper’s point of view, Nick from Semente thinks that EPS is “not as mouldable and if you want to fine tune a rail here or there or the edge of your rail it’s a lot harder. It’s like comparing steel to clay”. The result for Johnny Cabianca from Cabianca & Agote Surfboards is that manufacturing with EPS “takes more time

“Torren Martin midlength twin fin is getting a lot of attention and I think we’ll see a lot of them in 2021.” **Alain Riou Chillli Surfboards &The Farm**

than PU/Polyester boards, most big companies soon move their EPS/Epoxy production to China”. While in use, PU constructions are less susceptible to ingress and easier to repair, reminds Matteo from Euroglass, even so he admits that the new EPS construction materials, and especially ones with bigger cells, do provide new sensations by generating speed in smaller waves.

The big brands like Surftech, Firewire, NSP and Torq obviously swear by EPS alone: “we created the whole EPS genre”, proclaim Surftech. A construction with different technologies applied to it provides a lot of sales arguments: “TET serves the premium recreational market, our TEC construction is light and durable for day to day performance and ACT is the world’s first Prepreg Surfboard. Based on high end technology as used in Formula 1, Super Yachts, etc.” specifies Sebastian Wenzel, General Director at Torq. But even these big EPS players have kind of changed tack by incorporating polyurethane models into their Heritage Series line-ups: Kingfish (performance short twin), Magnet (egg funboard) and Sleepwalker (classic longboard). Even Surftech have a PU on offer with their Fusion Poly construction used on models “where it is appropriate - take a look at the Gerry Lopez boards”, cites Tara Priestley. The reason these brands are doing this is probably to bring a touch more of the “handmade” with their constructions.

Photo TORQ



Finally, the narrative on environmental impact has evolved in the last five years. After really emphasising efforts made in terms of materials (EPS, bio-resins, waste

“EPS production takes more time than PU/Polyester boards, most big companies soon move their EPS/Epoxy production to China.” **Cabianca & Agote Surfboards.**

and recycling, solar power), most brands don’t want to talk about the so-called eco-friendly aspects of boards. “As long as we use polyester, resins, acetones, polyurethane foams, it’s never going to be that way,” admits Nick from Semente. Hurricane Surf are just about the only exception here with the CEO Craig Butcher intent on reminding us that the brand are offering boards with “Green EPS Epoxy (gold level Ecoboard project certified by sustainablesurf.org) on 85% of our range.” We should highlight new drives like Yuyo Surfboards in France whose boards are made of “a 3D-printed core made from recycled plastic waste then stratified with a combination of 100% biocomposite materials, natural basalt fibres and epoxy bioresin”, explains Founder Romain Paul. Just as innovative, HRT (Honey.Roots.Tech) technology from Kanoa Surfboards employs a 3D honeycomb structured core that combines upcycling and recycling (“upcycled” wood and cork, recycled carbon). Beyond the sustainable dimension, creator Thilo von Osterhausen promises “a new dimension in flex” with more bounce and responsiveness thanks to the 3D honeycomb structure (without slats or reinforcements added to the stratification).

There is another avenue available and that is to offset your carbon output, like Firewire do through the Sea Trees initiative set up by the Sustainable Surf organisation (sea-trees.org): “The programme enables us to calculate the total carbon footprint of our business each year”, explains Chris Grow and then wiping that footprint through planting mangrove

trees in Indonesia, supporting kelp forest regeneration in California and supporting the conservation of the largest contiguous rainforest in the world”. While we wait for a truly clean board, this is one of the most honest and honourable solutions. ☺



Photo NSP

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HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 More kids and more older folk
- 2 Female surfing
- 3 Hot: Mid-length
- 4 Ride anything
- 5 Full-print patterns
- 6 PU resistance vs EPS



MARKET INSIGHT

UK

GERMANY
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ITALY

their own kit... an opportunity to drive sales in the UK.

Jeremy from TSA has already fully taken this concept on board and has produced a couple of videos to be released online via the TSA website. There's a clue in the titles:

How to drive to the Alps

Snowboarding in Scotland

Jeremy explained, "the goal is to make people realise that COVID does not put an end to snowboarding. We have snow resorts in the UK and they're a lot more accessible than people think. I can leave my house at 5am and be on the slopes by midday. I'm going to show people how easy it is."

And for those that want to go to the Alps? "We'll cover all the bases and show how easy and cost effective it can be. Resorts in France and Austria are putting their own protective measures in place, but the bottom line is they are still open. That's the message we need to get out there. Driving is not that difficult and in many ways it's a better alternative to flying."

But just how is Jeremy feeling about this coming winter? "Nerves are in play – of course they are. But I think we will come out alright and we'll get through it OK. We just have to go back to the 80's and make it easy. So far the summer sales of boards have been the same as last year – I take that as a good sign for the winter." Ian from Boardwise Cannock also has some jangling nerves. "After the most amazing summer where we did a year's turnover in less than 4 months, we are now facing an unknown winter season." I pressed Ian on the summer first. "It was incredible – we could not keep up and we ran out of products in some areas. Windsurf, surf and SUP were crazy busy.

What a summer! It's left a lot of people in the boardsports industry a bit speechless. Nobody saw it coming. Whilst the world around us appeared to be imploding we received the gift of more participants, new participants and returning participants. What a blessing! As COVID continues to wreak havoc with so many aspects of our daily lives it also appears to have driven a whole new generation of board loving souls to our doors. Whilst not all these new board members will stay for the whole ride we will undoubtedly take many with us for the journey – they've added a new dimension to their lives, a dimension that we all know will keep you on board if you get hooked. Fingers crossed for our growing tribe.

What's ahead for us? That's the biggie... I'm writing this at the end of September and the nerves amongst the UK winter boardsports industry is palpable. More so perhaps in the UK than the EU. Will the winter sports enthusiasts be allowed to travel to Europe to get their fix? Will they have the confidence to go? Flying certainly does not appeal much to me right now!

We are currently trying to put together a deal with Eurotunnel and are in talks with their PR Company to try and make sure that they focus on the winter sports customers, to highlight the fact that flying isn't the only option. Driving is easy and means that people can take

MARKET INSIGHT

Wakeboarding was up a lot as well. If the supply chain had not been slowing us down, I can't begin to imagine what we could have done. I'm super optimistic about watersports and am looking forward to 2021 but I just don't know where this winter will take us."

During the conversation Ian mentioned that he had booked a family snowsports holiday. "Yep – we're going. Whatever happens we are getting on the snow." I suggested that this determination and enthusiasm for snowboarding would be emulated by the buying public. "Yes, perhaps, but...." the conversation tailed off. I could sense the concern.

To try and encourage Ian further I brought up the Ski Club of GB survey. 19,000 respondents and 96% of them said they were going to hit the slopes this winter. There's further evidence from the Fall Line Magazine survey – the number of positive respondents were high, and the best quote returned in the survey was "Life is too short." Not a bad mantra.

Ian was not convinced and summarised his views: "From a personal perspective I am very optimistic. From a business perspective... I just don't know.

So let's face it – when you are on the slopes you are outside, wearing goggles, gloves, perhaps a face covering and probably a helmet. You are pretty well protected. Then the après ski... well that's up to individuals but if you want to stay socially distanced you will be able to. We all need to get the message out there to the customers... driving is a good alternative to flying, it's a safe way to go on your holiday... and, of course, you'll be able to take your own kit that you bought in the UK. Fingers crossed that I'm right."

And "fingers crossed" is how Darren at The Snowboard Shop / The Skateboard Shop ended his conversation with me. But he started it quite differently when I asked him how things were. "Busy, really busy," but by now you will realise that this response was not unexpected. "The summer has been great. Selling skateboards and SUP's all day long". OK, so we were not talking about winter and Darren was bullish: "Yeah- skate has been great with new customers and girls in particular – there's lots of girls taking up skating. Busy online and in store... we've never sold so many completes and it's a real good mix of customers - new and old! Completes and components – it's all selling - all good!"

I didn't want to put a dampener on things, but I had to ask how he felt about winter. "Ask me in a few weeks," was his response but I needed something now. "It's really tricky. We've started to sell hardware and some boards have moved through but we're not where we'd like to be." And soft goods? "Not selling at all. Customers are interested in getting to the snow, they want to get out there, but the bottom line is that nobody knows whether they will be able to. And that's the issue. Fingers crossed!"

By the time you are reading this you will know, or have a much better idea, of how it's panning out. Personally, I am confident that if the Great British Boarder is allowed to get to the snow – they will. One way or another they will make it out there or up there. They've been starved of their fix. They're hungry for some boardtimes. If they're not allowed to go then... well... fingers crossed, eh!

GORDON WAY



SURFARI

ZÜRICH, SWITZERLAND

VANS
"OFF THE WALL"

Located in landlocked Switzerland, Surfari Surf Shop in Zurich are proud to be a leading surf goods focused retailer. Regardless of the difficulties faced during lockdown, they've worked extremely hard to be COVID flexible. Today they stand tall and tell us the insides of their sales, partners' support and their rational attitude towards the future of the industry.

How has COVID-19 affected the outdoors sports industry in Switzerland?

Being a core surf shop in a landlocked country during the lockdown has been really challenging. Most of us usually travel in order to surf in the ocean. Luckily for us, we have two artificial waves in Switzerland and a dozen natural static waves in rivers. Being Switzerland's biggest suppliers of pool and river surfboards, we were able to actually increase the board sales. In general, we saw way more people exploring outdoor sports like biking, hiking, running, cycling. However, I have to mention that Switzerland has only shut down parts of the industry such as retail, gastronomy

and recreation, but we never had a hard lockdown where people weren't allowed to leave the house. Because the lockdown and the opening afterwards were during the summertime, we managed to recover from it. The demand for watersports equipment is on the rise. But for us, being a landlocked core surf shop, it'll become way more interesting during the upcoming winter with no reachable surf destinations. We usually sell boards, boardbags, rashies, boardshorts, wetty tops etc. during wintertime because our customers travel to tropical places. Now with all the travel restrictions in place we're definitely going to notice the lack of "reachable" summer or surf destinations in general.

How did you cope with the confinement when Switzerland closed down?

Fortunately, we were already running an online store and had an existing base of online customers. During the first couple of weeks, we worked a lot more than usual in order to show the variety of goods in our online shop. We immediately retrieved all goods from our other shops and turned our main store into a big warehouse for online order fulfilment.

Before the lockdown, we didn't sell clothing in our online channels. However, since we weren't sure at all when or if there would be regular surfing ever again, we shifted a little into the fashion segment to be sure we at least had some items still of interest to anyone if surfing disappears. But we were lucky to experience a lot of love and care from our customers, who bought gear in order to support us. So, really massive thanks for that - we definitely wouldn't be still around if it wasn't for the support of our customers.

Did you receive any support from the government?

Yes, and quite a lot. We didn't use it, but the government would have covered 80% of the salary for working hours that went missing because of shop closures. We were also granted an interest-free credit for 10% of our yearly turnover. We've used neither so far, but it sure helped a lot in terms of me being able to sleep at night. So far it looks like we're going to make it by ourselves – but, of course, paying rent for closed stores, salaries, bills and the rest of it, is not a business model we can make a living off.

During the last 2 economic downturns surfboards sales have boomed. Can you confirm?

I'm pretty sure that is not the case in Switzerland, since we're heavily dependent on travelling. If the economy is unstable, people spend less money on travelling

and Swiss surfers usually have to take a vacation in order to get close to the ocean. Travel activities came to a full stop during the lockdown, for us it resulted in 0 sales of boardbags. Living by the ocean means surfing is free once you have your gear – that, unfortunately, doesn't apply to us. But, on the other hand, we sold hundreds of surfskates from brands like Carver or Smoothstar. We, therefore, would agree on booming board sales, but only if it includes skateboards and SUPs.

What are the current opportunities and threats facing your store in terms of supply and demand?

As of now, it is ok. Shutting down the stores has led to a change of goods we sell. It wasn't that crucial for us that there was a shortage of boardbags, fins, leashes, etc. In the long term, I think, it could lead to a shift in a way of "produce/buy local". The surfboards we sell the most are made by Semente in Portugal, Europe - we had no problems in getting those boards to Switzerland. Short supply chains paid off and so did having a solid stock.

What does the new normal look like for your business and customers after country reopening?

At the moment we're living off the idea that there will be normal travelling again. Nowadays flying to surf destinations is almost impossible. And even if flying/travelling is allowed again but stays complicated (at the moment Swiss surfers, for example, have to go into two weeks quarantine after most trips) surfing for the Swiss may become less appealing. We then would have to find other fields of sports to interact with instead of surfing.

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UK

Once again, a lot has changed since our last market roundup. Last time we spoke about shops opening, regulations easing up and there was an air of relief in the industry coming into the winter season. The boardsports industry came out strong from the first half of 2020 so let's take a look at what's going on with regulations clamping back down again.

Things are looking a bit different now with 'second wave' being the buzz word and stronger regulations coming back again in Germany. Different regions have different levels of safety measures depending on their infection rates. If the infection rate per 100,000 inhabitants rises above certain levels (35 or even 50), smaller areas or even entire states tighten their protective measures or are declared as so-called risk areas. Snowboard season is on our doorstep and while hardgoods sales in boardsports soared in the summer months, last winter season was cut short leaving shops high and dry with product in their inventory. With that, boardsport enthusiasts are eager and ready to hit the slopes and regulations are set in place in Germany's neighbouring country and ski mecca, Austria, to ensure safe shredding. Hitting the slopes is on, but the rewarding après ski is not as regulations won't allow for it this season. But let's hear it from the frontlines on what's been going on in the boardsports industry.

Eric Bruweleit from Good Question Supplies gives us his take on what's been going on and what's in store for us this season. "The outdoor factor of boardsports has been a big plus that helped outweigh the personal fear of an infection. Since mid-August, the number of confirmed cases in Germany has gone up immensely which brings insecurity back to board stores. Despite the good summer business, shop owners have been alerted, sorting the situation carefully. Watching other countries or regions go back into lockdown mode doesn't help either when it comes down to investing into sponsorships, events or other 1:1 activities. Good news: with snow, there will be snowboarding. It's a passion, not a workout. It's irreplaceable. And with all those foamies and 7plies being sold in the summertime, there will be new customers striving to go sideways on snow too." When asked how brands and shops are supporting each other, he said, "it's tough on both ends. Winter pre-books were logged before the situation got out of hand. Production is pre-financed, warehouses will be filled no matter the virus. Communication and flexibility will be the key factors to make it through this together. Planning ahead with a healthy dose of carry-over product to prevent discount competition and restructuring towards more sustainable business. And despite all the threads, we need to keep on refuelling any type of boardriders with vision and thrill, which means investments."

When it comes to splitboarding the spirits seem hopeful as Johann Zeiger, Store Manager at Adrenalin Regensburg, explains that the restrictions could actually work in favour of splitboard sales this season: "Of course we bought a little less for the winter than last year. In addition, due to the

abrupt end of the last winter season, we still have a lot of winter goods in stock. Now we hope for a good winter and can imagine that the splitboard market could run better due to restrictions in the ski areas. As far as the summer order is concerned, we won't be ordering more because of this season. It's all very unpredictable right now.

Talking about strategies in these seemingly uncertain times Philipp, owner of Lobby skate shop in Hamburg, has got the following for us: "Obviously we have raised our pre-order budgets for certain product categories or actually most categories. I'm expecting a continuation of growth for the next years. With the whole Covid situation in the back of our heads and the unclarity of the US elections we didn't go too crazy though. We'd rather be sold out than overstocked. With sneaker culture finding their way into skateboarding again, we have decided to add some brands like Stussy for example to our portfolio that appeal to a wider range of customers than just skaters. For skate shops I think it's also in your own hands to keep your community growing. With skateboarding goods selling that well, you probably have the budgets to do so, so do it."

Speaking with Marcus Geier, CEO at Epoxy Shop with three locations in Bavaria we have it on good authority that skateboard hardgoods and SUPs were selling especially well the past few months, which is no surprise, but what's the feeling rolling into winter? "We took great risk for the upcoming winter season since we have not cancelled any of our pre-orders for snowboard hardgoods. We hope that the second wave will not hit us as hard as the first one and most of all we are hoping that the borders to Austria will stay open as well as the ski resorts. We feel very confident

about our young active snowboarding target group that will take advantage of almost empty slopes this upcoming season," explains Marcus.

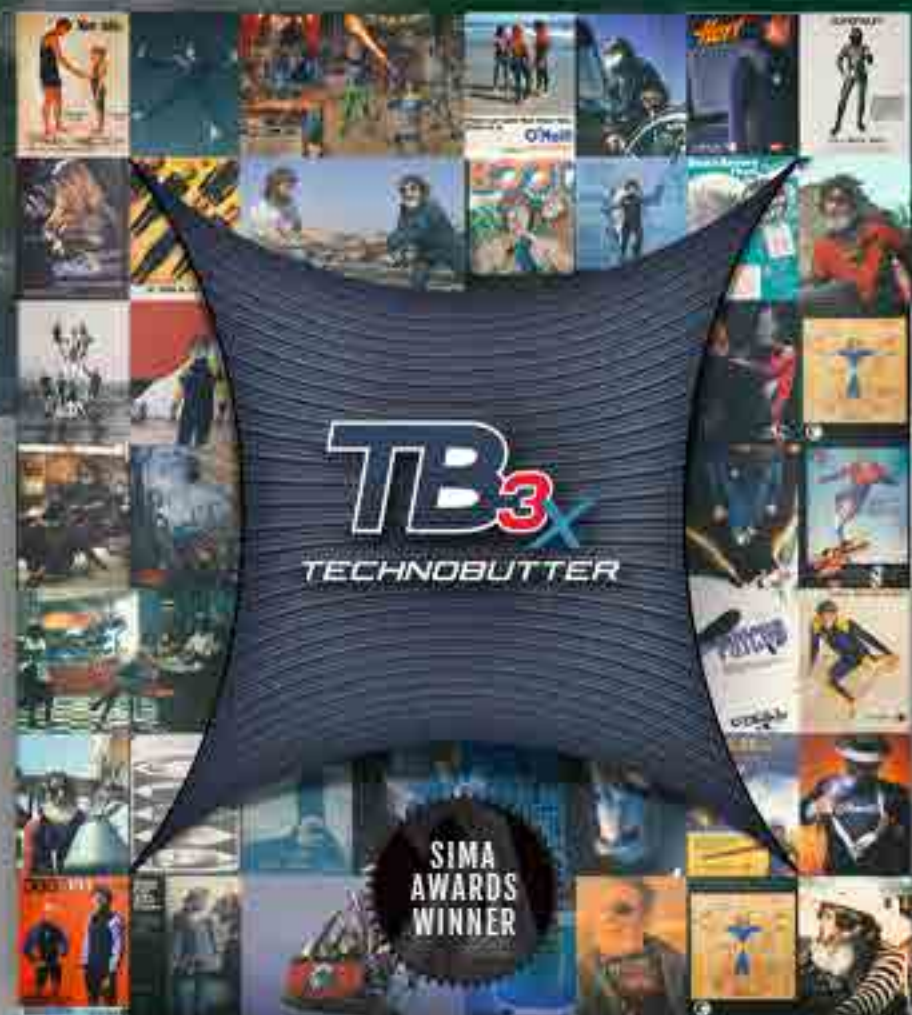
Moving West, Heiko at Concretewave Skateshop, Cologne has the following for us: "For all shops the year was really good. Most shops but do not know what will happen next year and some are afraid to order more for the next season compared to this year. Some shops still have that huge longboard boom in mind from a few years ago and so they are not going crazy again with pre-books. We all know what happened after that huge boom! Nobody wants that again. But many shops already made a good Carver order for 2021! Our strategy will remain the same as the last 15 years. We try to have a huge hardware only selection. The Corona crisis was very, very good for all skate shops. Many people cancelled their holidays and bought a skateboard instead!"

Norbert Kindl, founder, owner, developer and splitboard rider since 1992 at Der Snowboardausrüster, Tegernheim, shares with us that touring skins and poles have been working well in sales and that their sales strategies and product orders will remain unchanged and are waiting to see how the market develops. His prediction is, however, that if the second COVID wave leads to another shutdown, ski touring will be affected, and sales will slowly decrease. He does suggest that the way to go in terms of brands supporting shops and vice versa is done with good after sales brand service. This means helpful information and news, trainings and good complaint handling.

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RETAIL BUYER'S GUIDE

WETSUITS SS21

Surfers old and new raided the shops during the spring and summer of 2020, living each new day like their last. To retain momentum into the next summer season, wetsuit brands are pitting their best efforts against each other to keep the torch alight. So, without further ado, shall we take the SS21 collections into the fitting room and find out more? By **David Bianic**.



retail buyer's guide

Photo Sooruz

The leisure market is a modern day paradox; it's never more dynamic than it is during a crisis. And in 2020, we've had a belter, haven't we? Partial or total unemployment and remote working have provided new ways of managing our schedules, to the benefit

"Although the travel industry has been impacted hard by the pandemic, people have been travelling closer to home, so our shops located in hot spots such as the South of France or the North of Spain have increased their sell-through for wetsuits and we have covered the lockdown month's business". **Manon Jouanine, EMEA Product Manager, Hurley Europe**

of outdoor activities. "Although the travel industry has been impacted hard by the pandemic, people have been travelling closer to home, so our shops located in hot spots such as the South of France or the North of Spain have increased their sell-through for wetsuits and we have covered the lockdown month's business", explains Manon Jouanine (EMEA Product Manager) and Marta Turc (EMEA Marketing Director) from Hurley Europe. Although sales of technical boardsports equipment exploded during this year's global pandemic, what should we expect from the spring-summer 2021 season? Pedro Towers, Product Development Manager at Onda Wetsuits puts forward a cautious outlook, as "the possibility of a 2nd wave and subsequent prohibition of surfing/ outdoor sports is quite real."

At ION, rationality is the favoured approach, as revealed by Kerstin Geier (Head of Product) & Yann Rambla (Commercial Director) of ION Water, with the brand deciding to reattribute the spring-summer 2020 range to 2021: “Our entire new 2021 collection will be on the market in February 2021”. C-Skins are doing the same by reattributing their SS20 to SS21, “a logical decision for the benefit of all our customers during highly uncertain times,” assures Designer Jon Longman. The coming year will be equally as delicate for Dakine who are launching their first range of wetsuits. Designer Phil Bridges is happily optimistic about the feedback from their pre-bookings; the freshness effect is probably working heavily in favour for this brand which is greatly admired for their expertise in accessories. Another beneficial lever within the wetsuit market, environmental consciousness,



Photo Alder

has swelled during the economic/health crisis and the commitments expressed by brands bode well for a bright spring-summer 2021 for retailers. Already this year MDNS has seen “a good rate of sale in shops, especially our PURE ECO range which is a real response to what customers are looking for in terms of environmental considerations”, says Benoît Brecq, International Brand and Marketing Manager.

“because a European summer time can mean wearing a 5/4 or 2/1 depending upon where you are”.
Jan Michaelis, European Marketing Manager O'Neill Wetsuits.

SS21 Ranges: More Readability

Customer reassurance is, as we’ve seen, a leitmotif for lots of brands and this also applies to having clearer range segmentation. Most have (re)organised their collections around three, more easily identifiable tiers. This development is particularly noticeable at O’Neill whose expertise in neoprene has, up until now, manifested itself in a host of different models/technologies: “Recently, we have simplified our wetsuit line up so that there’s a choice of closures and multiple thickness options in one style”, reveals Jan Michaelis, Marketing manager, O'Neill wetsuits, “because a European summer time can mean wearing a 5/4 or 2/1 depending upon where you are”. Also, their UltraFlex neoprene with flatlock construction features in entry-level models while the exclusive TechnoButter and TBX3X neoprenes and the Fluid Seam Weld constructions are found in the mid to top end of the range.

Most are basing their collections around a three-tiered range that basically range from entry-level flatlock stitching, to GBS (Glued & Blindstitched) construction in the mid-

EICOPRENE

SUSTAINABLE RESOURCES

Eicoprene is a foam material that has the same technical features and profile as conventional neoprene. However, there is nothing conventional about the origins of this new material. Whereas neoprene is petroleum-based, Eicoprene is made from a mix of limestone (70%) and recycled tires (30%)



EQUATION 4/3
FLEX SKIN FZ

Flex Skin

Flexskin is an eco-friendly and extremely stretch neoprene that allows full freedom of movement while surfing. It provides both comfort and resistance but is also highly flexible around the arms, shoulders and upper-body. Flexskin merges naturally with your body during your ocean adventures. It provides a real second skin effect !



4 WAY STRETCH



SECOND SKIN EFFECT



SUSTAINABLE FABRIC



range. Then, the top models contain the best of wetsuit R&D: lighter, warmer neoprene, recycled, quick-drying mesh materials, the ability to “trap” heat (infrared, Graphene...), body-mapping for a better fit and seams with “liquid” joints as well as more advanced zips and entry systems. Only Vissla have expanded their range with a new entry-level collection, 7 Seas Comp: “The market was requesting a lower price point model for our wetsuits so we came up with a based on the design of the 7 seas with a more generic thermal lining and the seams taped on critical areas”, reveals Product Manager Arsène Vellard.

Innovations SS21

Whereas the textiles segment can recycle past trends with relative ease, wetsuits belong to the technical clothing category and that continues to go in one direction only: forwards. Innovation is constant and is focussed around the relationship between the external face, the neoprene foam intermediary and the interior liner. Starting with the exterior, we can see surfaces like the Dark Matter Liquid Skin from C-Skins, an integrated grid layer that has better flexibility than the smooth surfaces normally used to cut out wind chill. The texture effect is more discreet but still present at Alder whose FX Neoprene provides superior stretch and brings a unique visual signature to the external face: think optical illusion! Hurley are introducing a soft silicone material on the torso and the arms “which will increase warmth without affecting the stretch”. As for ION, there’s no doubt that the brand have been inspired by their special MTB protective gear with the Protection Suit Steamer equipped with “10mm thick PVC-free foam padding at shoulders, upper back, backside of the thighs, crotch and shins”. The German brand are also opting for an external DRYGRID covering that absorbs 30% less water: “The suit feels lighter in and out of the water and stays warmer for longer

because of less water evaporation.” At Patagonia, the external layer benefits from a “new recycled spandex, which brings extra stretch”, explains Gabe Davies, their Surf Category Manager.

Then there’s the layer that owes its identity to wetsuits, neoprene. Ironically, this is no longer the biggest arena for innovation, even though everyone has their own home-made formula for obtaining a lighter, warmer and stretchier rubber. Onda Wetsuits have nothing but good things to say about their Ace Foam + neoprene, “20% lighter, 20% warmer and 20% stretchier than before”, guarantees Pedro Towers from Product Development. As mentioned above, it’s the symbiosis between the different layers that matters on this front, and Picture are proud to



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announce a new innovation for SS21, FlexSkin, “a neoprene and eco-friendly lamination technology, allowing to have an exceptional stretch and to wear a suit as you would wear a lycra”, explains CEO Julien Durant. Hurley are rerunning the “+” system, which rejigs the distribution of neoprene thicknesses over the body. For example, a 3/2+Max is 2mm on the arms, 3mm on the chest down to thighs and 4mm on the lower leg.

Unsurprisingly, interior liners are still exciting many developers who are continuing to explore different materials and constructions. On the full 3/2mms, you often find the heat retention systems that are featured on winter models aren’t really required on spring suits or other models for warm water. At Xcel, two technologies stand out here: Celliant Black and Radiant Rebound. The first is the reactive textile Celliant containing minerals that absorb body heat and convert it into infrared energy. As for the second technology, Radiant Rebound, same principle, but this time using a liner containing metallic agents that “blocks cold from penetrating the outer layer and reflects the heat generated within back towards the body”, explains Design Director Lance Varon about the system featuring on the Infiniti and Infiniti LTD.

Following Billabong last year, others are also going for Graphene to boost the warmth of their liners. This is the case at O’Neill with the - deep breath - Nova Skin Air Graphene Firewall, and at ION with their Graphene Plus, sold as providing 20% more heat than their Plasma Plush liner 2.0, which is already high performance.

Colourama

While the calorific properties of black and black are justified for winter wetsuits, the spring will see splashes of colour coming onto the neoprene. Just like in textiles, the

trend is for block colour. Block colour is set to be the big “theme” at ION in 2021 across their Element and Core Level ranges while the more top-of-the-range AMP and Select

“The “fashion” aspect being essential in the sale of women's wetsuits” **Picture**

models will be adorned with “subtle and energetic patterns while trying to keep the major body parts cool black”. Xcel are also calling on more popping colours and even a camo print for 2021. At MDNS, black prevails in the Prime and Pure ranges with just the zip and the logo in different colours but the Pure models also do exist in “mottled navy blue for people looking for a refined, understated wetsuit” reveals Benoît Brecq. This elegance is also on the agenda at Alder who are using embossed inking “which improves the texture and visual depth to the logos,” explains John Westlake, Production Director. At Dakine as well, it’s an embossed external Hex structure (hexagonal) for texture, while the logos and other colourful touches serve to distinguish the different ranges.

For a bit more imagination, you have to turn once again towards women, for example Hurley and their flower and/or colour prints. The brand with the big H is also announcing their intention to make more collaborations, “as we did in Fall 2020 with our RealTree wetsuit for Men’s and Hello Kitty for Women’s”.

Some brands are even working on consistency between textiles and technical elements as Jan at O’Neill explains: “On colours, prints and graphics we work with our global team so we’re able to offer styles that merchandise well across product categories and not just wetsuits”. So, for 2021 the brand is presenting new prints for women and little girls, like the Baylen, a more dynamic version of the traditional flower motifs that you find on wetsuits,





lycras, wakeboard vests, rashies, etc... After playing around with motifs a few years ago, Picture realised that overly flashy styles were not always well received by the masculine surf community. As a result, Picture are going for mixtures of black and grey or a very classy anthracite grey while the feminine models offer more freedom with: "The "fashion" aspect being essential in the sale of women's wetsuits". At Jobe they prefer not to decide, offering "warm" palettes (red and lime) and "cold" (blue) on one side and classic black/grey on the other, complemented by one or two seasonal colours, "this year being a teal and graphite colour", reveals William Doornekamp, B2B Marketer. But beware, with the lifespan of a wetsuit often outlasting seasonal textiles trends, you have to make the right choice of colours and motifs, explains Jon from C-Skins: "We take care selecting the colours, graphics and stylistics so that they last longer than a garment of haute couture and can stay on the stands." Therefore we find mainly SS20 colours on Jobe's SS21 models to improve their lifespan.

Detoxification

The detox trend of the last five years continues with the now widespread use of so-called "dope-dyes" (less water and energy required) as well as solvent-free,

water-based glues. Also, more brands are making recycled nylon liners while the neoprene itself (except for Yulex) incorporates "carbon black" (recycled tyres). The tone set intentionally by Patagonia with their own materials (Yulex) and a Fair-Trade certified factory seems to be starting to rub off. For example, C-Skins are now working with a Blue Sign certified factory "for its responsible, transparent practises" or Dakine choosing the same Fair-Trade factory as Patagonia - Sheico. As for Soörüz, the French brand have established their own eco-friendly label christened Ocean Protect using an environmental impact evaluation chart for their products, "forcing Soörüz to rethink their products for each new collection and to stay at the forefront of innovation", explains CEO Yann Dalibot. He then proceeded to remind us that eco-conscious purchases are not necessarily only for the biggest budgets: "Our high-performance Oysterprene using oyster shells will be available on the Guru, Fighter and Divine ranges costing between €200-€369. It's with great pride that we are able to offer eco-friendly wetsuits from €200".

And the ongoing question of limestone... Brands using this limestone-based neoprene continue to emphasise its ecological benefits, to the dismay of some people, starting with Gabe Davies from

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Patagonia: “Just to be clear, the mining of limestone from quarries and melting the stone to create wetsuits is in NO way sustainable.” Let’s let Benoît from MDNS refresh our memories: “There are currently 3 types of technologies that are more eco-friendly. Yulex, which is based on natural rubber, Limestone made of stone and Ecoprene made from recycled plastic

“Limestone requires an enormous amount of energy to transform the rock into rubber and Ecoprene also consumes a lot of energy in recycling the plastic” Benoît, MDNS

bottles. Limestone requires an enormous amount of energy to transform the rock into rubber and Ecoprene also consumes a lot of energy in recycling the plastic”. So, the brand is offering either traditional neoprenes (derived from oil) or 100% natural Yulex (Pure range), refusing to greenwash.

Alongside the importance of wetsuit sustainability, product lifespan is the main aspect emphasised by Dakine, who, as we mentioned, are taking their first steps into this market after accessories. “The market’s current wetsuit designs focus on performance and warmth at a cost to durability. We set out to re-calibrate the balance,” assures Phil Bridges. A word to the wise. ☺

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HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Simplified ranges
- 2 Rerunning products/styles to 2021
- 3 Heat retention systems
- 4 Differentiated graphics men/women
- 5 Recycled materials, cleaner neoprene and processes



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Making Waves & Recovering From A Stroke: The Wave's Nick Hounsfield On A Whirlwind 1st Year

Nick Hounsfield, founder of The Wave Bristol (and cover boy of this very issue) has a 2020 story that rivals even the most shocking of this year's tales. Having finally opened the doors to his 10-year passion project, the Wavegarden Cove's first UK facility in November 2019, Nick suffered from multiple strokes in February, which took away his ability to communicate. This was just a couple of weeks before they had to close their doors for COVID lockdown.

Fast forward several months and SOURCE took our maiden voyage to The Wave, where Editor Harry Mitchell Thompson caught up with Wave Maker Nick who's made a strong recovery from his illness earlier this year. We're pleased to report the facility not only churns out epic waves but was also incredibly busy even for a Wednesday afternoon in late September. We talked through Nick's journey to funding the £28 million project, lessons learnt and how working from home now includes waves for some lucky folk. We also touch on how Nick and his crew are using the facility as therapy for mental health issues and how Nick is using his liquid gold creation to help with his own recovery process.

Nick, congrats on producing an awesome facility. Please give us a brief overview of how far you've come, from planning to opening and now re-opening after COVID?

I started 10 years ago with just £500 and a strong vision on what The Wave could look and feel like as an experience. I knew I wanted to create a place that would get people outside, in nature, encourage them to be active and to connect with themselves and each other. As an osteopath I was frustrated that I could only help one person at a time and wanted to build a space that could have a bigger impact on peoples' lives. As a surfer I also knew how being in water and waves makes a massive difference to my health and wellbeing. When I saw a video of the original Wavegarden technology it was a eureka moment - I knew that this had to be at the heart of what I wanted to deliver.

"It is still hard work and often exhausting - there are times when I feel like I've spent the day speaking a foreign language - but I'm getting there."

The journey from vision to making it a reality had many ups and downs. I built a team around me to develop the planning application, gain planning permission, and secure the £28 million investment needed to build The Wave. We went through the process of considering various wave-making technology options, before settling on the Wavegarden Cove. Finally, in November 2019 the build was complete, and we opened to the public. It felt like the culmination of 10 years' work - but in many ways that was just the beginning!

We opened in winter and spent the first few months learning about the often-difficult reality of running an inland surfing destination. We were just coming through the winter season when COVID struck - and just like that we had to shut for almost 5 months. As a new start-up there was very little financial support available to us. We worked hard to secure the investment needed to reopen and to develop a 'COVID safe' operating model. On August 1, we opened for the second time and the last couple of months have been incredible. We have really seen what a busy summer and autumn is like and have also managed to start



to deliver a lot of my original vision, in terms of bringing the benefits of surfing to people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities.

Nick, you fell ill earlier this year... great to see you back and surfing. What happened? Anything you're doing differently now?

In February, my life changed dramatically. With no warning at all I suddenly suffered multiple strokes, which took away my ability to communicate. When it happened, I couldn't talk, read or write at all. Over the last 6 months I have been on the long road to recovery and with lots of rehab and perseverance I have managed to regain my voice. It is still hard work and often exhausting - there are times when I feel like I've spent the day speaking a foreign language - but I'm getting there.

As part of the recovery process I have tried to spend as much time as I can by and in the water. As soon as I felt physically able to, I got back on my surfboard and the act of riding waves has truly become my medicine. Being in the flow state on the waves really seems to have helped reset my slightly broken brain. If I'm having a bad day and the words won't come out or I'm struggling to process things, then a surfing session helps. I come out of the water clearer and able to communicate again.

The stroke has changed my life in many ways. It has challenged me to consider what is really important and it has also shown me, first-hand, the very real impact blue spaces can have on our health. It is even

greater than I ever realised and I'm more passionate than ever about sharing this with people.

Can you talk us through any trends in different demographics you've spotted since re-opening from COVID?

I think the big thing we've noticed since we reopened is that people are desperate to get outside and into nature. We are lucky to have a large site that feels spacious and also very safe, thanks to the many COVID systems and precautions we have put in place. People feel very reassured when they visit.

Obviously during the summer holidays, we had a large number of families visiting and we found beginner lessons sold out quickly - however this has continued into the autumn with weekends being particularly popular with beginner and



intermediate level surfers. Mid-week we do get more advanced surfers - with the Advanced + and Expert sessions being a real hit - and there are definitely a few people who look like they are juggling remote working with mid-week surf sessions!

You're always fine tuning the tech - please talk us through the waves currently on offer and ones you plan to intro in the future?

We currently have 7 different surf options that people can book, starting with a beginner lesson

and going right up to our expert session. We are focused on developing a pathway that can help people progress their surfing. For example, we have recently introduced a new Waikiki setting - a session that is great for improvers looking to catch

"An exciting area we are involved in is the development of surfing therapy for mental health and wellbeing. We are keen to build the evidence and knowledge bank around the impact that surfing can have on people's mental health."

their first green waves, but also brilliant for those looking for a fun, mellow session. We are always looking to understand where the gaps are and also respond to feedback from our visitors before we introduce anything new.

What have been the biggest lessons you've learnt since opening?

You're never going to get it right all the time! We are not perfect, but we always try to learn and improve from the times when we fall down. It's not been an easy first year and we have had our fair share of challenges, not least a global pandemic that shut us down days before Easter and our first high season! However, we strive to be agile as a business and we are still here and still pushing forward our vision of bringing the joy of surfing to as many different people as possible.

What are the biggest opportunities for the surf industry at present?

I think the industry as a whole can be a driver for positive change, especially around areas such as environmental sustainability, gender equality and diversity in surfing. There are lots of great organisations doing brilliant work in these areas, but everyone in the surf industry should be doing their part and actively looking to make changes. An exciting area we are involved in is the development of surfing therapy for mental health and wellbeing. We are keen to build the evidence and knowledge bank around the impact that surfing can have on people's mental health. ☺

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58 SURF
PORTUGAL

58 Surf, the retail arm of Portuguese surf distribution behemoth Despomar, has recently opened its third Portuguese store and we caught up with shop Founder Ivo Nisa to talk business. Their physical presence is still their bread and butter, but Ivo says the 2020 pandemic means they will be upping their ecommerce efforts. Portugal is also set to host the CT in its new timeslot of February and Ivo believes this will further establish Portugal as a global surfing mecca.

Please tell us how 58 Surf is integrated into Despomar and how many shops you have across Portugal?

58 Surf is the more mature technical side of Despomar retail. We’ve always been able to provide surfing and skateboarding products to all sorts of customers. We’ve loved watching 2-year-olds doing their first-ever runs on the boards we chose for them, seen them grow up into pro’s, love boards as their hobby and retire thinking about their next new board. Sometimes it feels the store is more than just a store! At the moment, we are proud to have three stores in Portugal.

Summarise the opportunities and threats COVID-19 has presented?

COVID has truly woken people up! Everyone is suddenly ready to go about their lives and do more outdoor sports than ever before. So many regular surfers, skaters and other nature lovers. As everyone knows, it’s not easy to travel these days. But even so, we’ve seen a big trend where most European surfers are staying and surfing our European waves during wintertime, instead of venturing further abroad. This is something that we have never experienced before!

Talk to us about your target demographic.

We never stop looking around. As a matter of fact, we never try targeting everyone with our products, but instead, we try getting close to those people who are genuinely interested. If we can add a little bit of fun in the process – we go for it. Sometimes it may feel like no one is there for you in our industry. But we constantly think of that positive reality: you are working on your own, but you are never alone. A great team gives space to the creativity that a good supply chain asks for and allows for the unexpected, surprise factors.

How do you foresee the WSL's CT change of October to February affecting business?

It will definitely affect us. It will be very good for the business. October is already on the surfers’ map, thanks to the last 10 years’ CT stop. In turn, February will show surfers from across the globe how good Portugal can be in full winter. February will connect that gap between Christmas and Easter, which will be really interesting to watch.

What product categories and brands worked well for you this summer?

We’ve keep the same flow since 58 Surf started. Surfboards, wetsuits and hardgoods are the categories that have always performed well. Apart from that, we saw softgoods and accessories increase during Covid in all 58 Surf stores. Brands such as JS, Channel Island, Mar and Softech Surfboards fared well. Billabong wetsuits, O'Neill and Xcel also performed really well.

How are you approaching winter buying periods?

It’s all just about being confident in what we are doing. We kept the numbers steady in some categories and bought 10% - 20% less in other lines.

How much of your business is done online?

Less than it should! But we are getting there, the numbers are looking better every day. 58 Surf is a brand on its own, with the story, good stock and so much on offer. So I think there’s so much room for development on our side. It has been a constant evolution and we are always learning really. Many important steps were taken as the new 58 Surf in Ericeira opened in 2019. Whatever we do; open a new store or focus more on online business, we aim to keep everything we do under control. We do our jobs with passion and an open heart. It seems after 2020 we will be working on our 58 Surf online evolution more than ever.

How do you suggest brands work with retailers to ensure eCommerce business doesn't cannibalise the wholesale channel?

Brands just have to be honest and look, plan 10 years ahead. Not focus on two or three years of short-term income. Brands have to be aware that real people and shops make real feelings and create the experience that eCommerce and ‘behind the screen’ time will never manage to provide. We tell our customers: You have to feel the board with your own hands and you will know which one should be yours. The board may well pick its owner!

58SURF.COM

RETAIL BUYER'S GUIDE

SUNGLASSES SS21

The pandemic has increased consumer appetite for outdoor activities and, consequently, the demand for high-quality sports sunglasses offering protection against ultraviolet radiation during outdoor adventures on the one hand and serving as fashionable accessories on the other. The Retail Buyer's Guide for SS21 By **Natalia Maruniak**



Photo Dragon

Even the global Covid-19 pandemic could not stop the growth trend of the sunglasses market. Although the revenue forecast for 2020 has been revised downwards, according to a study ("Sunglasses Market – Growth, Trends and Forecasts 2020–2025"), the market is expected to grow by slightly more than four percent in the next three years. The pandemic has added to this trend, explains Britta Dornick, Business Brand Manager for the DACH region at Oakley: "We see an increased interest in outdoor sports since the lockdown. People were spending even more time outdoors and were willing to invest even stronger in their functional premium equipment." JP Bonnemason, Global Eyewear Product Manager at Quiksilver, confirms that while fashion eyewear sales are declining, sales of technical products are increasing: "This year the consumers were more interested by added

values and technicities such as polarized and photochromic lenses and floating frames." Although almost all brands interviewed suffered a loss of revenue at the beginning

"We see an increased interest in outdoor sports since the lockdown. People were spending even more time outdoors and were willing to invest even stronger in their functional premium equipment."

Britta Dornick, Business Brand Manager for the DACH region at Oakley

of the pandemic and during the lockdown, most of them subsequently recovered. "Upon reopening, retail has been quite strong over the last 4 months which has made up a good

portion of the decline during the early months of the pandemic", says VonZipper CEO and Founder Greg Tomlinson.

Key trends

"The key trend for spring/summer 2021 is that people are going to want to get outside and enjoy the post covid winter!" predicts Von Zipper's Greg Tomlinson. And preferably with a wide range of styles. The brand offers a collection with a "mix of classic Americana acetate frames, contemporary nylon silhouettes in accessible price points and sport performance frames with features built into the design." "Versatility" is an important keyword also for Electric's Eric Crane. A mix of trends

"It seems sport/performance is here to stay a while. We are trying to focus on our sport aspects rather than too much into fashion trends". **Neil Slinger of Melon Optics**

continues to be the order of the day: "90's and 2000's fashion forward colour on the urban side and sleek sophisticated classic styles on the lifestyle side." According to Martin Jones, VMD UK Distribution Manager at Spy+, wraps are making a big comeback. This is also the case at Dirty Dog, where "'Heritage' frames are the most heavily requested", says Tom Lazarus, Sales Operations Manager. In addition to wraps, "Shield remains the key trend for next summer," assures Quiksilver's JP Bonnemason and points to the brand's new model, SLASH.

There is a clear shift in the boardsports industry away from fashion trends and in the direction of an increased focus on sports performance. "It seems sport/performance is here to stay a while. We are trying to focus on our sport aspects rather than too much into fashion trends – even though Action Sports has been massively affected by fashion in the last years, it also makes everything have such a short shelf life which again is a cause of such overstocks and clearance sales. About time we refocused on the core stuff again," urges Neil Slinger of Melon Optics. This goes hand in hand with the

demand for durable, all-purpose sunglasses. With its Palisade model, Zeal Optics has this kind of quiver-killing style in its product range: a pair of semi-rimless sunglasses with a vintage look for every adventure – "whether you want to hit the mountains or see a show," says Mike Lewis, Director of Marketing at Zeal. It is also important for the brand to tell a story: "With people spending so much time at home and online, brand messaging has been nearly as important as the products you make. For every company."

Frame shapes

Sunglasses are still considered "the ultimate fashion accessory," which drives brands to offer timeless classics as well as trendy frames and lens styles. "Sunglasses are used for protection but also as a final touch to your outfit, in this idea, people tend to choose a cleaner look, which combines with a wider range of looks," explains Maria Adam, Europe Brand Manager at Carve. In addition, she sees unisex models as very much in vogue. But due to the pandemic, particularly oversized sunglasses are also in high demand at the moment: "Due to Covid-19, people are looking for a stylish protection also for their eyes. Sporty shapes (such as the Rocket model of the Fusion line with a base-8 shape and patented WING DTS technology) support that desire and also underline an athleisure lifestyle," says Michael Schulmeister of Red Bull SPECT Eyewear. For Melon Optics, the focus is also on a sporty look with rounded lenses, which, however, should "not look too 'performance'" (semi-wrap-around model Halfway).

Shield glasses will be an inevitable accessory in trend next summer, and Von Zipper offers a combination of semi-frameless and full-framed shields. Oakley (with its model Sutro) and Quiksilver also meet the demand for such models. At Quiksilver, in addition to shield and visor glasses, there are timeless, round shapes, wayfarer and aviator models with a focus on elegant details for a clean look, and wide, angular retro acetate frames. Roxy celebrates the "return of the cinematic squared and hexagonal styles and still thin retro cat eye shapes" and focuses on "timeless shapes like retro round with keyhole and butterfly styles," says JP Bonnemason. Liam Barrett of Dragon



explains: "Round shapes continue to trend well in the lifestyle category. Full coverage wrapped frames with coverage around the eye are relied upon by the water enthusiast."

Colours

The development in terms of colours is described by Martin Jones of Spy+ as follows: "I think we will begin to see less colour frames going forward as customers are now looking for one piece for all engagements". For Carve, subtle tones such as transparent polycarbonate frames in grey, honey yellow, olive or brown are likewise amongst the key colours; matt replaces gloss for a more elegant street style. CHPO's SS21 collection is characterized by vintage vibes; we can expect green, brown, mustard yellow and leopard brown lenses with some splashes of light blue and the classic black. Dragon chooses copper, green and blue for its glass shades, while Von Zipper opts for green and blue shades as well as various bronze and pink hues. Spektrum works "exclusively with colours that can last for many seasons and somehow relate back to the mountains or nature like

Cobalt Blue, Moss Green and Rock Grey". While Dirty Dog is all about the colour black, Zeal has created a colour palette of earth tones with poppy standouts like orange, green and blue. The lenses are available in matching dark grey and copper. Vertical goes on the safe side with its frame colours black, brown and blue; the lens shades purple and blue are particularly popular with its customers. Oakley uses retro colours inspired by the colour palettes from the brand's archives from the 80s and 90s: bold and strong colours with a heavy influence of silver and gold medals to mark the Summer Games. And the classic tortoiseshell (Dragon, Carve, Von Zipper, etc.) will also be again very popular next year. Dewestone represents an exception with its wooden frames: the natural wood pattern makes each model unique and especially the zebrano wood of the Sumbawa model highlights the uniqueness of natural materials.

Materials

A large number of the brands, including Red Bull SPECT Eyewear, Spy+, Von Zipper, Vertical, Quiksilver, Roxy, Dirty Dog, Bliz and Melon Optics manufacture their sunglasses or part of their collection from Grilamid TR90. "Grilamid® is a lightweight frame material ideal for everyday wear due to its strength and flexibility," explains Martin Jones from Spy+, while Von Zipper's

"I think we will begin to see less colour frames going forward as customers are now looking for one piece for all engagements" **Martin Jones, Spy**

Greg Tomlinson cites the low price and comfortable feel as advantages of Grilamid. Quiksilver's Floatable collection uses TPX, which gives the frames the ability to float in the water. In addition, the brand's collection also includes acetate frames, as do Roxy, Electric and Von Zipper, where Mazzucchelli acetate provides "comfort, interesting color and rich hand".

Already before the outbreak of the pandemic, the trend towards products that protect both personal health and the environment



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had become evident. “The demand is for sunglasses that provide world class protection but from companies that take responsibility for their worldwide impact,” says Rory Atton of dewerstone, calling for every single model of sunglasses to contribute to preserving the environment. The brand, whose entire collection carries the "Climate Neutral" certificate, works with wood (maple, zebrano and ebony) and bamboo frames and organic acetates.

Dragon has expanded its ‘Upcycled Collection’ and uses plant-based resin, recycled PET and TPX nylon for its floatable frames, while Spektrum also uses Swiss-made, bio-based Grilamid. Zeal is currently focusing on the

“The largest opportunity (in the wake of the pandemic) has been the need for Blue Light reduction glasses due to the increased screen time consumers are experiencing,” Liam Barrett, Brand Manager at Dragon

launch of its new Sea Grass Collection – “heavy on fashion and light on footprints. They’re made from agricultural grasses, such as hemp and straw, mixed with recycled plastic bottles... Combined with our plant based Ellume Polarized lenses, the two new styles it comes in (Aspen and Divide) are our most sustainable releases to date.” Electric also uses eco-friendly materials in its injection and acetate models: “There are castor bean based and bio-acetate based options available readily in the market these days. We will continue to bring more and more products to market using these alternatives,” explains Eric Crane, Founder of Electric.

Lens technologies

An important trend that has been accelerated by the pandemic regards sunglasses with blue light filter technology. “The largest opportunity (in the wake of the pandemic) has been the need for Blue Light reduction glasses due to the increased screen time consumers are experiencing,” notes Liam Barrett, Brand Manager at Dragon. Such demand is also being addressed by CHPO with the launch of

a new product category – “specially crafted lenses that filter out the blue light coming from your phone and computer screen. The blue light from the screen can cause eyestrain, dry or irritated eyes and can mess with your sleep,” explains Johanna Akerström, Marketing Coordinator. Electric also focuses on blue light filtering technology and the lenses (WildLife Lens Technology) "block 98% of all HEV blue light in addition to 100% UVA and UVB and are designed for long days in the sun, on the water, the glacier and other harshly lit environments."

Many brands, including Spektrum, Melon Optics and dewerstone, have teamed up with the renowned German brand ZEISS to create lenses that provide extreme “clarity and precision,” says Rory Atton. Electric continues to use synthetic melanin-injected lenses as well as Barberini glass for the polarized models. The brand's latest innovation is a polarized, melanin-infused lens with melanin infusion that provides better vision in flat light conditions. Spy+ is now launching in Europe its patented ‘Happy Lens’, which preserves the natural, therapeutic effects of sunlight and is thus designed to improve one’s mood and alertness: “Increased contrast and clarity highlight changes in terrain while enhanced colour rendering presents colours that are more pleasing to the human eye.” And Bliz has developed unique lenses for SS21 with minimal visual distortion and an integrated anti-fog treatment. The result: Nano-Optics lenses.©

Visit our website to see in depth brand previews of this category.

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HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Departure from fashion trends
- 2 Focus on sports performance
- 3 Wrap and Shield styles
- 4 Classic, versatile designs that are easy to combine
- 5 Versatile models
- 6 Sustainable products

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SUNGLASSES 2021

P I C T O R I A L



Bliz - Breeze



Bliz - Hero



Bliz - Vision



Bolle - Merit



Bolle - Prime



Bolle - Prize



Carve - Havana



Carve - Homeland



Carve - Icon



Cébé - Anna



Cébé - Henrik



Cébé - Shaun



Cheapo - Asphalte



Cheapo - Phoenix



Cheapo - Strickland



Dewerstone - Bantham Gloss



Dewerstone - Bantham Marble



Dewerstone - Sumbawa



Dirty Dog - Banger



Dirty Dog - Furnace



Dirty Dog - Muffler



Dragon - Rosewood



Dragon - The Jam Small



Dragon - Ultra



Electric - Crasher



Electric - Elsinore



Electric - Oak



Gloryfy - Kingston Irie Daily



Gloryfy - Amsterdam



Gloryfy - Barcelona Night



Melon - Alleycat



Melon - Echo



Melon - Layback 2.0



Mundaka - Chinook



Mundaka - Drakar



Mundaka - Foil



Oakley - Clifen



Oakley - Sutro Lite



Oakley - Sutro S



POC - Aim



POC - Aspire



POC - Require



Quicksilver - Nasher



Quicksilver - Trailway



Quicksilver - Transmission



Roxy - Madcat



Roxy - Minoaka



Roxy - Tiare

SUNGLASSES
2021
P I C T O R I A L



Sinner - Bryce



Sinner - Lomond



Sinner - Oak



Smith - Sun Eastbank



Smith - Sun Flywheel



Smith - Sun Wildat



Spectr - Bow



Spectr - Drift



Spectr - Leap



Spektrum - Blank



Spektrum - Kall



Spektrum - Null



Spy - Discord



Spy - Flynn



Spy - Helm



Vertical Unit - Jax



Vertical Unit - Ridge Black



Vertical Unit - Ridge Brown



Von Zipper - Defender



Von Zipper - Haussmann



Von Zipper - Ya Ya!



Zeal - Cleo



Zeal - Divide



Zeal - Palisade



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A man with short grey hair, wearing a black long-sleeved shirt, is holding a kiteboard with both hands. He is looking intently at the board. The kiteboard has a black and white checkered pattern and the 'AIRUSH KITEBOARDING' logo. The background is a workshop with various tools hanging on a pegboard.

AIRUSH
KITEBOARDING

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RETAIL BUYER'S GUIDE

KITE SS21

The pandemic has promoted a culture of One Love amongst water sports enthusiasts. Kiteboarding brands made it happen with their timely innovation achievements. Minds have opened and disciplined tribalism is fading. Kite stores are welcoming all fans of the ocean with one common goal: making the best of their local spot every day. By **Rocio Enriquez**.



Photo: Duotone

Summer 2020 was one for the kiteboarding books. The pandemic hit right in the middle of an uprising trend in popularity, but far from slowing it down, it has actually given it an extra boost. After lockdown, people were eager to swap the four walls of their homes for the open ocean. Local spots benefited the most. Travel remained unpopular, not only because of regulatory restrictions, but also for the health risks it entailed. This was good for the financial health of the kiteboarding industry. All the money not spent on travel was spent on gear to get you in the water. If any kite shops suffered problems with stock, it was through the lack thereof. In terms of product development, it resulted in a growing demand for easy to use and light wind gear. When catching a plane to chase big winds is

not an option, you want gear that will help you make the best out of your local spot. That way, you can get out and have fun in any conditions. Having water time limited to your local beach also led to an open mind about disciplines. To be able to enjoy any conditions, you have to be ready to swap your kite for a wing, or your twin tip for a surfboard or a foil.

"Winging and wing foiling has made some serious waves and the early adopters are now able to pull off massive airs and back flips, this is only the beginning". Chereé Thomson, Brand Coordinator, Airush.

Versatile products sold very well. Naish reports its Pivot "do-it-all" kite as its best-seller. Nobile says its infinity directional multi-purpose boards became very popular. Foil was a growing category for every brand interviewed, and so it shall remain, according to most. Foiling has brought together all sorts of water sports enthusiasts, because of the endless possibilities it offers. Winging – if that's the name that sticks – has become too popular to be a division of kiteboarding. With a whole new customer base, it's shaping itself to be a standalone sport. Chereé Thomson of Airush explains: "Winging and wing foiling has made some serious waves and the early adopters are now able to pull off massive airs and back flips, this is only the beginning." Airush's new Freewing Air developed in collaboration with Starboard has been very well-received. Duotone, Eleveight, Gaastra and Slingshot reported their biggest growth in this discipline. Slingshot has big plans for this category. "The growth has been insane, and the future growth of this sector will be monumental", reveals Brand Manager Alex Fox. New fans of kiteboarding who discover the joy of flying have also powered the popularity of Big Air. Cabrinha reports its biggest growth in powerful hang time kites. Eleveight has had fantastic sales in specific Big Air kites. Nobile is launching a brand-new freestyle board for schools called The Game Changer. "A real new school tool for hard power moves and serious obstacle riding", describes Marketing Manager Jan Korycki.

Kites.

The aim of every brand is to make the lightest and strongest kite possible. This is no easy task. There are not many materials that can provide the perfect balance between the weight and resistance needed to provide optimal performance. There are huge R&D efforts invested in this mission. Not only in new materials, but in new shapes and constructions as a result. "As kites become lighter and special fabrics become more available, the wind range increases, and so kites start changing again", explains Rik Haenen, Head of Marketing at Peter Lynn Kiteboarding. Airush is offering a new rendition of one of their original kites, the Lift. "During

the design process of the Lift there were a lot of people involved at varying riding levels and styles", says Chereé. "We wanted the kite to be able to perform from a full-on professional level, to the everyday rider". Slingshot will launch the results of their constant experimentation with new materials in a couple of months. Eleveight has reduced some weight of its kites by using different materials and construction techniques. Duotone has gone all in with their new SLS range. Standing for "Strong, Light, Superior", it combines the lightest materials available, like Penta TX, with the latest construction methods. The result is a kite that's 15% lighter and has 5

"As kites become lighter and special fabrics become more available, the wind range increases, and so kites start changing again". Rik Haenen, Head of Marketing at Peter Lynn

times more tear resistance. Naish shares the same goal, but cautiously. They will not rush into the launch of any new material until it proves to offer the right balance between price, performance and durability. For summer 2021, they will improve reinforcements and leading edge and trailing edge constructions. The demand for easy to use, light wind gear is met by many brands with one strut and tube kites. Airush offers two single strut kites. The Ultra has a D2 canopy and incorporates the Airush Load Frame. This was the result of a long-term pursuit of a kite that would stay in the air as long as possible while being durable enough to withstand everyday use. The One is their go-to one strut for schools and foil learners. Gaastra's One kite, also an easy to use, good for light wind and foiling, single strut, is extending its range with even smaller sizes in 2021. Nobile will be introducing a new light wind, one strut, foil kite also named The One. There are more exciting innovations for next summer. Gaastra has tweaked both its IQ and AR kites. The result is an improved turning speed and drift ability in the former, and a more homogenous power distribution at depowering in the latter. Nobile is upgrading the freeride and wave T5 kite and renaming it to VRide. Slingshot will launch the new Sentry V1 control bar, with a state-of-the-art click in

the chicken loop and auto swivel functionality that prevents the lines from twisting. The depower lines are also covered in PU, making depowering comfortable and friction free. "Our all new Sentry V1 Control bar has been long awaited. We really focused on comfort, performance and dependability with this product", says Alex Fox.

"The X:Breed is easy to use and a great board for foil learners. One board that covers two categories with almost no compromises". Christian May, Brand manager at Cabrina.

As for looks, it is worth noting the new ICON series by Cabrinha. This is a limited edition of its Switchblade and Drifter kites that celebrates the brand's 20th anniversary. Each kite will come with a badge with a collector's number and a limited-edition Icon bag. Duotone highlights the new grey and pink Dice as a team favourite. Naish will be sporting clean and bold designs by the in-house team led by Al Garr.

Boards.

In consistency with the kite trend, boards are also aiming to get lighter, without compromising strength. "The Ammergate is our light wind board. Kite schools buy it a lot because it is very light, and you don't feel the size", says Maik from Goodboards. Designs that incorporate carbon had very good sales results in 2020. For summer 2021, the use of carbon and other similar technical materials is more widespread. Duotone uses Textreme Innegra for its surfboards and twin tips, that makes boards responsive and lively. Airush has introduced Basalt fibres in its twin tips. It is said to provide a fine balance of responsiveness and light weight, perfect for big air enthusiasts. For its surf boards, like the new Cypher, it offers two constructions. Equally durable, the Reflex Carbon Innegra offers an ultra-light weight experience and the Reflex Bamboo ensures the right amount of flex. Eleveight uses a new stringer material to enhance the flex of its surfboards. Cabrinha

uses carbon for its stringer but mixes the surfboard construction with extra honeycomb reinforcements. The aim is to create a unique responsive flex control. In order to get the performance results sought, new materials need to be paired with the right construction techniques. Eleveight has tweaked its twin tips, reshaping their recently introduced Parabollic Rail Shape with a surfboard influence. Following the industry trend of narrower and longer boards, we find Naish's new Traverse board, with a pro model version signed by Ewan Jaspán. Nobile's new Game Changer also offers this shape. Goodboards has had a very good response to its Anti-Chop Technology (ACT), which it has now extended throughout its range. It offers a smooth riding with easy upwind and less splashing, making longer kite sessions possible.

Foil is getting a lot of love from product developers, as the demand keeps consistently growing. Special attention is paid to versatility. Airush is introducing the Slayer. This convertible style built with a twin tip construction can transition between strapless freestyle, wave and foiling. Cabrinha is building up on the success of its X:Breed Foil, to work on more crossover boards between surf and foil. "The X:Breed is easy to use and a great board for foil learners. One board that covers two categories with almost no compromises", says Brand Manager Christian May. Nobile is introducing two new foil boards. The Pocket Slim is a super soft small board that can be ridden with and without straps. The Fish Skim is a directional board that can be ridden either with a foil or with directional fins. Slingshot is on a mission to become the main foil brand. For summer 2021 they will be launching the new Phantasm Kite Foil range. Built with high modulus carbon, it features one of the stiffest masts in the industry. The result is improved stability and higher performance. The range covers three different packages, for different levels of ability. 633 is the entry level one, aimed for learning how to jibe, tack and switch your feet. The 730 is the medium to advanced package for foilers who want efficiency and stability. The 647 is the one for those looking for great speed and manoeuvrability.



Sustainability.

The awareness for the need of a more sustainable industry is there. It is supported by efforts mainly in the areas of production processes, packaging and shipping. As far as materials go, though, the choices are limited, as performance is key and cannot be compromised. In general, there is palpable success in reducing the carbon footprint on the products. Duotone closely monitors production and shipping to make sure its products are carbon neutral. Eveleight, Goodboards and Nobile produce in the EU, saving a lot of emissions in shorter delivery routes. Packaging volume is minimised as much as possible and plastic is ditched, generally replaced by recycled cardboard. Cabrinha chooses a Flexi Hex packing that can be reused for travelling. Airush vacuum packs its kites to make shipping less impactful and uses recycled PET for premium kite bags. The industry is still far from developing environmentally friendly kite canopy fabrics. Boards have a higher sustainability factor, with more eco-friendly alternatives available.

"The industry as a whole was preparing for the worst possible summer in history and quite the opposite, it transpired that many retailers had record summer sales".
Scott Trudon, Brand Manager, Naish.

Wood comes from responsibly managed forests. Resins used are the eco-friendly kind
There are also specific additional efforts coming from different brands. Naish has moved from toxic silk screening to digital printing on its boards. They have also incorporated a recycled top sheet. The factory that produces them runs on solar power. Nobile mentions that most post-production leftovers are recycled. Gaastra's key point towards sustainability is to use as much raw material as possible, to reduce waste.



Photo Nobile

Retailer Support.

Lockdown and its expected aftermath required special attention to retailer support. Most brands had a one-to-one approach to make sure retailers had what they needed to make it through. As it happened, the lifting

of restrictions was perfectly timed with the beginning of summer. This sent hordes of experienced kite boarders and newbies to schools and stores. A great part of that support consisted in having enough stock to cover the summer needs. "The industry as a whole was preparing for the worst possible summer in history and quite the opposite, it transpired that many retailers had record summer sales", says Scott of Naish. Gaastra helped retailers be ready for the post-lockdown demands. "We automatically sent them updates with our stock levels. They could be directly linked to their warehouse management system and online shop", explains Marketing Director Konstantin Weier. Still, some measures were taken to avoid unpleasant stock situations. Tran seasonality was applied to many product ranges. Airush extended the life cycle of every product. "It benefits our development cycle. We have used this time to refine our products



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further, giving our customers a better product as a result, while retailers have got a longer period to sell each range”, explains Chereé. Duotone did the same to some kite models, stretching them to two seasons, helping retailers to clear stock without discounts. Slingshot worked with each retailer on sales initiatives to sell the inline models, holding back on sending them new stock. If it proves effective for stores and brands, this a post-pandemic practice that could stay. Pre-order conditions were eased too. Goodboards did not demand any pre-orders, only delivering what customers needed or wanted. Naish offered additional discounts and shipping incentives for all pre-orders. One of the most effective retailer support tools in kiteboarding is the test tours. This has been affected by social distancing measures, so brands had to make necessary adjustments. Duotone is sending the test gear directly to the dealers, so their customers can try it at their local spots. Eleveight, Goodboards, Naish and Nobile have also found a way of keeping them going. More efforts have been made with digital assets to suit the times. Duotone has launched its Duotone Academy app, with hundreds of tricks and tips to improve.

Naish has digital assets readily available the moment a new product is launched. All in all, the quest for jumping higher, hanging longer and getting out in whatever wind you get is driving innovation. There is special attention being paid to new materials R&D and new shapes to go along with them. For product developers in the kiteboarding industry, there’s a lot of fun times ahead. Water sports fans will definitely be surprised. Retailers will surely benefit from satisfying their curiosity. ☺

Visit our website to see in depth brand previews of this category.
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HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Strong growth of wing and foil
- 2 Light wind and versatile gear on demand
- 3 Big Air’s popularity steadily increasing
- 4 Lighter and easy to handle kites popular
- 5 New board materials and shapes to be light and responsive

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MARKET INSIGHT

FRANCE

GERMANY
AUSTRIA
SWISS
ITALY
UK

Just like her European neighbours, France has felt the full force of the Coronavirus crisis, but in the end, the French economy might not actually drop that much this year. According to forecasts from La Banque de France, by the start of 2022 the country will be back up to the same level of productivity as at the end of 2019. Finally, a positive note in this rather bleak back-to-school period.

At the same time, France has also reassessed the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on employment for the better. Although unemployment will rise considerably this year, with around 800,000 job losses and an unemployment rate that may reach 11.1% in 2021, more than 700,000 jobs will be restored in 2021 and 2022. Despite the sharp drop in productivity, job losses and bankruptcies have been pretty well contained in France up till now, thanks to the aid packages. Also, some sectors (whose productivity has returned to fairly normal levels) have started to take people on again, restoring the jobs - particularly on a part-time or limited duration basis - that were lost during lockdown.

When it comes to the progression of the epidemic in France, at the time of writing these lines, the spread of the virus seems to be accelerating with a significant rise in infections and hospitalisations. Because of these trends, the government has tightened restrictions and the Prime Minister is even talking openly about another potential lockdown if the situation continues to

deteriorate. These measures directly affect our own domain and following the latest announcements from the Ministry of Health, the Federation of Nautical Industries was unfortunately forced to cancel the 2020 edition of the Salon Nautique in Paris. The “Nautic”, one of the biggest tradeshow in France, attracts over 200,000 visitors and over 800 exhibitors at the start of each December.

So, as you can see the situation in France is pretty unstable, but really, how is it for the industry and more specifically for our retailers? All shops in France are subject to social distancing rules to limit the spread of the virus. Since opening back up on May 11, with no exceptions, all shops have had set rules to follow, which were quickly accepted and adhered to by customers: mandatory face coverings, hydroalcoholic gels, and floor markings. Most shops have also added Plexiglas screens at cash desks, are disinfecting fitting rooms/tried-on garments and are favouring contactless payments, etc... All these measures were put in place as soon as possible to encourage customers to come back to shops and start spending again post-haste.

For shops on the coast, overall, it seems to have worked out quite well. From Ponant Surf Shop, the historic shop founded by Perros Guirec in 1973 in Brittany, Thierry Deniel tells us: “We’ve really felt an increase in visitation numbers this summer compared to previous years”. More specifically: “Increased sales in the technical section is certainly down to the desire to get back to nature sports after a period of restrictions.” It’s the same story a bit further south at ATS Surf Shop in Plouharnel where Xavier Auffray says that: “Like everyone, we suffered a lot in lockdown with the shop, the shaping workshop closed and only a trickle of sales from our website.

MARKET INSIGHT

However, the post-lockdown frenzy has allowed us to make up for the loss of turnover and we should finish the year on the same level as last year despite being closed for two months.” For him: “The sharp increase in summer visitation numbers is mostly down to the borders closing. French people targeted the French coast for their holidays.” From even further south on the Ile d’Oléron, the reports are the same, as Pierre Groot from Cocoa Gliss in Saint Pierre d’Oléron suggests: “We made up for the closed period and by August 31 we’d even surpassed our turnover for 2019”. He adds: “There’s been a lot more people this summer with a higher average basket price, but the overall margin hasn’t increased because we’ve sold a lot more technical products than in previous years”.

From the big towns, the reports are more mixed. At Sport Adventure in Bordeaux, an outdoor sports specialist with around thirty employees, manager of the watersports section Franck David says that: “We’ve had to change up our opening hours to just being open from 1pm-6pm Monday-Saturday instead of 10am-7pm; as a result, we’ve made some partial redundancies within our teams”. Adding: “In terms of turnover, we are obviously down in the shop, but our website has seen a considerable rise in sales with a really good first fortnight of September.” Once again the technical section saw the majority of sales: “We have sold a lot more surfboards than last year. The bodyboard and skimboard sections have also gone really well and SUPs have remained on the same level.”

When it comes to products and more precisely surfboards, above all, it was the mid-lengths that saw the best success this year and the most mentioned brands were Torq, Venon and Perfect Stuff. The softboard phenomenon seems to have strengthened with more and more choice in the shops and

the most sought-after brands appear to be Softech, Catch Surf and lindio.

It’s a very similar story from the street shops: at Vega Skateshop, the emblematic shop in Paris’ 10th arrondissement, François Wuest explains: “We suffered a huge loss in turnover due to the forced closures of lockdown but as soon as we re-opened skateboarding came back really strong and many people were looking for an alternative means of getting around”. He adds: “In the end, we’re coming out pretty well despite the frequent shortages in equipment from suppliers”. Even though there were a lot less tourist visitations in the big towns this year, François tells us that: “The summer has been really good with a boom in skateboarding, we sold mostly hardgoods and quite a lot of shoes. However, there was a marked drop in the clothing section”. He concludes: “At the moment, the back-to-school period seems quiet, but the skateboard craze is well and truly here. There are many new participants as well as older skaters picking it back up after a long gap and, just like we’ve seen in recent years, the number of women skateboarding is constantly on the rise”. As for brands, the most desirable for boards seem to be Real, Baker and Polar while on the shoe side of things, strong dominance comes from Nike SB and Converse.

Overall, the boardsports market and, more precisely, technical equipment seems to have held its own through this economic and health crisis. Nonetheless, France is still on alert and the situation is evolving constantly, closely watched over by a government that is continually updating its protective measures. Here’s to hoping that the winter season will be similar in resorts to how it went down on the French coast this summer...

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RETAIL BUYER'S GUIDE

MEN'S SURF APPAREL SS21

The first wave of the coronavirus pandemic in the first quarter of 2020 didn't just trouble the sales of this year's spring-summer collections, it also forced brands to rethink their 2021 ranges, and in the process, to accelerate certain honourable practices that began before the crisis. **By David Bianic.**



Traditionally, spring smiles on surf clothes - men's and women's - and by the end of summer it's already time to mark down your last items of stock, before receiving the autumn-winter collections in the shop at the end of summer. Except this year, 2020 was...you might say...abnormal. Most retailers had their closed sign dangling in March, April and in some cases even May and sales didn't follow the normal cycles at all.

PANDEMIC SURVIVAL GUIDE

Spring/summer 2020 proved to be a real logistical nightmare for all surf apparel brands; an example from Billabong: "The 60 days shutdown happened while we were still delivering Spring 2020 to some accounts, and the stores reopened just before our Fall 2020 initial deliveries, while we still had to deliver our Summer range," recalls Alexandre Berthonneau, EMEA Merchant Men, Boys & Accessories. To avoid saturating the market with

merchandise, Billabong pushed back the release of some of their autumn collection, "essentially warm weather pieces", to spring 2021, and extended some products to SS21. Hurley proceeded much the same way and were pleased not to have to cancel some collections, quite the opposite in fact, with the European division being able to introduce new product families like durable denim, caps/beanies, socks and undergarments.

"We pushed our summer range back to a May launch and Fall back to an August launch offering them more true to season. This shift is most likely something we will stick with going forward". Freddie Sipowicz & Jonathan Gilbert, Lost Enterprises.

All brands made the decision to extend a part of their SS20 range into the following year, “so dealers knew they were supported by taking styles that would not be dropped from the line once the dust settled”, explains Gabe Davies, Surf Category Manager at Patagonia. Better still, the delay that was forced on collections had reset the timer, as explained by Freddie Sipowicz and Jonathan Gilbert, President and CEO Europe of Lost Enterprises: “We pushed our summer range back to a May launch and Fall back to an August launch offering them more true to season. This shift is most likely something we will stick with going forward.”

The Indian summer is now behind us and the time for accounting is here. Between the economic standstill and the frenzied consumption of the summer, what conclusions can we draw for the surf apparel market? The example from Rhythm is quite typical: after suffering some cancellations to spring pre-orders (“especially in UK and Spain where the lockdown was longer or stricter than in other countries”), they recorded good sales, with many restock orders among them, “especially from the coastline’s stores who benefitted from a good season after all, which enabled us to gain back part of the loss from the lockdown”, relates Marie Azam.

“These items have a timeless cool that can take you from the street to the inside of a barrel without an outfit change.” **Katrina Stronkhorst, Protest**

SURF APPAREL TRENDS SS21: TIMELESSNESS

You might have guessed it: surf apparel next spring-summer will look a lot like the season just gone, because of this large number of collections being rerun. This unusual situation has reassured Rhythm in their decision to present a permanent collection, The Classics, continuing year after year, “classic style, timeless design and authentic to Rhythm”, explains Marie Azam, Brand Manager Europe. There’s the same desire at Protest to keep clothes on sale for longer through their original capsule collection, Surfables: “These items have a timeless cool that can take you from the street to the inside of a barrel without an outfit change”, promises Katrina Stronkhorst from Marketing. Examples come in the form of the Rapter 21 T-Shirt with its SPF 50 fabric for sun protection and their short called The Mask “that looks like streetwear and functions like surfwear”, thanks to multidirectional stretch and quick drying properties as well as an elastic waistband to keep it in place.



Photo Rhythm

SURF APPAREL TRENDS SS21: OUTDOOR & HERITAGE

Another sub trend, the gap between surfwear and outdoor pieces is getting narrower and narrower. Proof with two examples, firstly from Billabong who are launching a collaboration in SS21 from their Adventure Division with outdoor photographer Chris Burkard. Then it’s Hurley’s turn with an Explore collection, “hybrid products designed for an outdoor lifestyle”. We’re also thinking about Salty Crew, “born in surf but we do lean towards the outdoor market”, explains Product Manager Mike Niemann, with pieces that bring together multidirectional stretch, quick drying and antimicrobial properties and sun protection.

For some brands, the mixture between surf/outdoor is in their DNA, as is the case for Patagonia obviously, but also for Dewestone: “We are not a surf brand, but we live our lives around water. We are not an outdoor brand but we are surrounded by life in the National Park”, explains Stuart Wilson, Sustainable Actions Manager. Surfing, climbing, white-water kayaking, snow sports, the English brand doesn’t want to settle on one sole position.

So with this vein of Heritage styles lasting until next spring, at least there is some tried and tested values to bring a bit of certainty into an uncertain world. We are also thinking about Lightning Bolt who next summer are celebrating 50 years’ existence with an anniversary collection using vintage prints with the effigy of Gerry Lopez and Jack Shipley (the brand’s co-founder) in equally old-school colourways (eg



a yellow-orange that really works). The brand are also pushing a capsule collection of t-shirts that evoke the fundamentals of Hawaiian culture: Aloha, Ohana (family), Mohana (ocean and its respect) and Mahalo (thank you). At Billabong there's another 50th anniversary, this time to celebrate the Pipe Masters with a dedicated collection that echoes the Andy Irons Forever collection to be revealed next spring. Sure-fire future best sellers. Alexandre from Billabong confirms the enormous success of their Heritage styles in recent years, which explains the return of their historical Arch logo as their main logo. Gerry Lopez will also be honoured next summer at Patagonia: his Tiger Tracks camo print is to be rerun after many concurrent seasons and this will coincide with the release of a biopic produced by the brand and directed by Mr. Stacy Peralta. Yes!

PRINTS & COLORWAYS SS21

Logically, the motifs and tones for SS21 items will follow the trends mentioned above. Heritage styles most often come to rely on the 60s/70s (motifs, tropical colours, Californian sunsets, tie-dye) and/or the glory days of the 90s, or "bright colours, geometrical shapes and fun prints", explains the Hurley Europe team. As for more travel/outdoor-orientated collections, they display more neutral tones, like in Quiksilver's Endless Trip collection with its earthy tones. We are also thinking about the colour palette at Lightning Bolt, "a blend of strong tones with the effects of sunshine and sand are recreated through clever colouring techniques and faded finishes", explains Briana Mori, Brand Manager.

"For every Muted Jungle short, we'll plant 50 trees in Central America."
Stuart Watson, Dewerstone

MATERIALS AND ECO DESIGN

It's now impossible to tackle one without the other: a garment's build has to embody eco design and those labels are preaching to an audience who are highly sensitive to the issue. Recycled nylon/plastic will once again feature throughout SS21 on all fronts. Hurley remind us that all their Phantom products have been made from recycled plastic bottles since 2007. The American brand are this time presenting new materials of natural origin, as featured in the Regrind t-shirt collection, made from scraps of wool as well as a new Oceancare Denim collection; jeans using a Wiser Wash process without pumice stone or toxic chemicals: "with only one cup of water" used (per product). Patagonia are extending the use of their NetPlus fabrics (nylon recycled from fishing

nets): "The potential supply line for the disused fishing nets as a raw material is huge", assures Gabe Davies. Another recipe for success seems to be mixtures of recycled polyester and bio cotton, like in fleeces from Quiksilver who are also offering Baja Blues hemp shirts. At Dewerstone, consistency is total, between look, manufacturing and eco-consciousness: one example is their Lifeshorts 2.0 Muted Jungle whose motif intends to make "an appeal against 50 years of deforestation", made from recycled polyester, without forgetting that "for every Muted Jungle short, we'll plant 50 trees in Central America", indicates Stuart Watson.



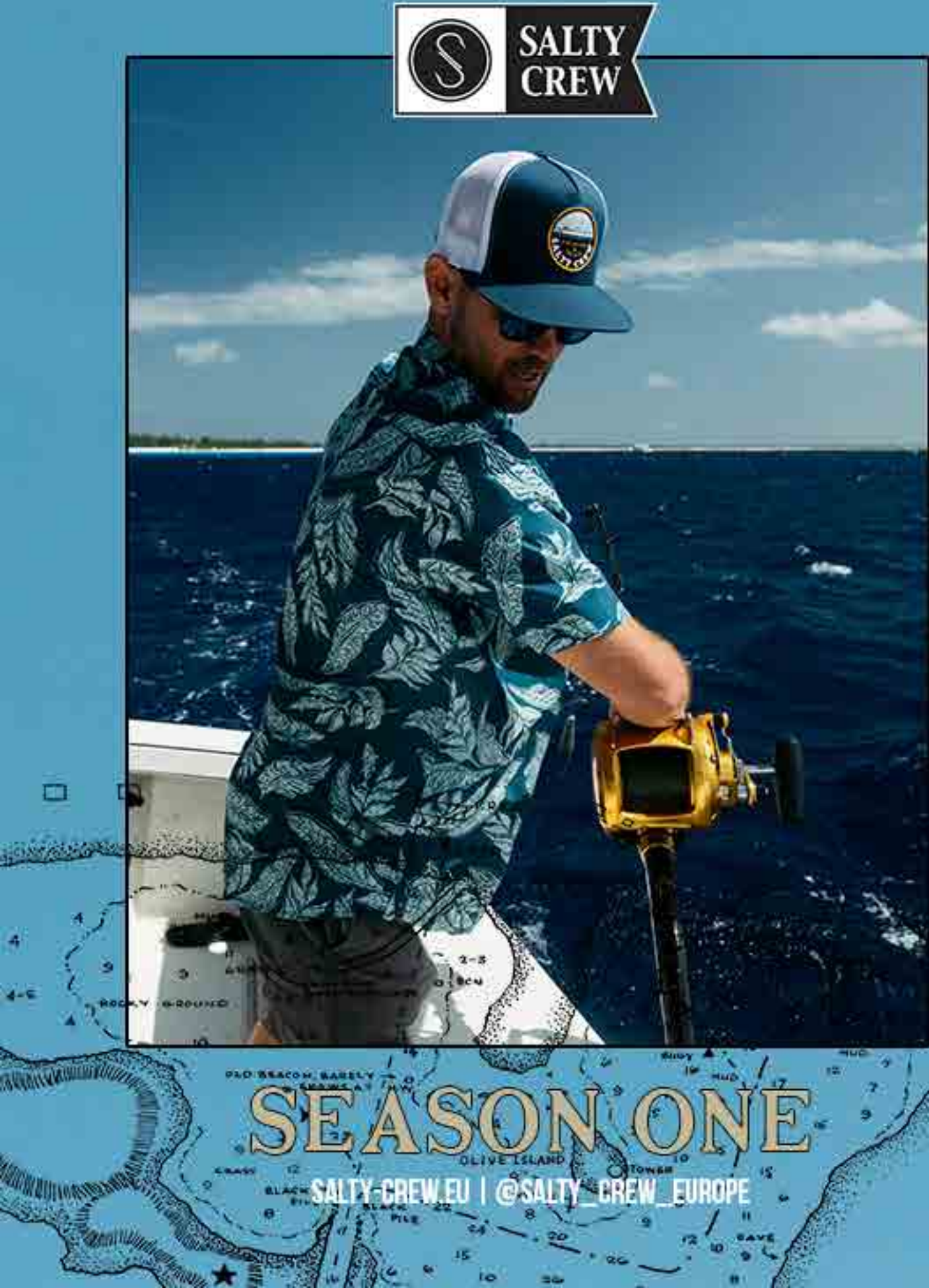
Photo Lightning Bolt

Visit our website to see in depth brand previews of this category.

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HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Continuation of pieces SS20 > SS21
- 2 Timeless classics
- 3 The success of Heritage styles continues
- 4 The surfwear/outdoor mix
- 5 Historical motifs & colourways or earthy tones
- 6 Even more recycled and bio fabrics





BIG WIG INTERVIEW EUROGLASS' STEVEN 'BELLY' BELL

Steven 'Belly' Bell arrived in Hossegor, France in 1986 as a young Australian lad on the hunt for empty waves and good times. 34 years later Belly's one of the surf industry's key figures as owner of Hossegor's Euroglass surfboard factory and having toured the world with the Quiksilver pro team, most notably serving as confidant to 11-time World Champ, Kelly Slater.

Back in April, as the world ground to a halt, we contacted Belly for his reading of the situation. Belly said if this was going to be anything like the 1996 crash or the 2008 GFC, he reckoned surfboards could be a good business to be in. Eight months later and after the 2020 surfing boom, we thought it high time for a proper catch-up. Belly's surf industry insight is peerless and in this broad ranging conversation we dig into the booming surfboard market, his thoughts on surfing at the Olympics and he talks frankly about the WSL's decision to drop France from the Championship Tour. Read on for great perspective from an industry vet not scared to tackle the ecommerce model head on in a traditionally conservative industry. Interview by **SOURCE** Editor, Harry Mitchell Thompson.

How has 2020 been for you personally and for Euroglass?

For me personally 2020 has been a challenge. 20 years following the World Tour with the Quiksilver team had just come to an end. It was an unbelievable experience and I was super fortunate being with the best surfers there have been for many years. When you are travelling around the world waiting for surf events you can have a lot of down time. But it also kept me in touch with everything that was going on in the surfing world. So I could stay a step ahead, see new opportunities and trends before most people. This year after finishing up the tour I ended up full-time back at my company Euroglass in Hossegor, France. We've gone through some difficult years, but we know the surfboard industry; margins are low and we are always mindful of productivity. It's no secret, there aren't many places you can hide in the surfboard business and you have to be quite careful. By coming back and working in the factory full time I was able to get things back on track which has been a great thing especially with the impact of Covid, now that everybody wants to surf. I have been very fortunate in having Matteo, my stepson. He's been concentrating on the global business and developing the accessories and product side.

"I was prepared this year for when they opened the beaches up and everybody could go surfing. I didn't think it was going to pick up as well as it has done in the last four months, but It's definitely followed the same trend and presently it doesn't really look like it's going to stop. "

You've worked through a few recessions now. Surfing hardgoods have always seemed to do well during these periods...

Regarding recessions, the company is in its 30th year, so it's survived a few; one in 1996, and another in 2009. So before this one hit a of few of us were thinking if this follows previous trends, everybody will go surfing. It's an individual sport and cheap. Once you have invested in a surfboard and a wetsuit it's all free, unless you're surfing in a wave pool. So remembering 1996 when the second hand surfboard market was still small, the factory was selling out and we were getting orders that we couldn't meet. Then in 2009, the overall economy contracted again but the surfboard market expanded especially in Europe but also globally. Looking back at those two trends I was prepared this year for when they opened the beaches up and everybody could go surfing. I didn't think it was going to pick up as well as it has done in the last four months, but It's definitely followed the same trend and presently it doesn't really look like it's going to stop.

Could you talk to us on your overall views of competitive surfing entering the Olympics and how you're preparing the business for any potential upticks in business because of it...

I really believe it's fantastic that the sport is going to be in the Olympic Games. But I don't think it will get as much airtime as expected, there are lots of sports already in the Olympics that don't get any coverage. So to develop into new countries I doubt really that this is going to have the impact that most people think. But I hope it does. With competitive surfing we are in a bit of a situation at the moment obviously with the Covid crisis. And then on top we have the situation of the WSL. Thankfully we

have Dirk Ziff, he's taken hold of the professional part of the sport. He's trying to copy some business modules from other sports which is a very smart thing to do and he has a lot of bright people around him putting ideas on the table. There is no existing format, which is perfect for us. The WSL is very American-based, focused on the American/Anglo Saxon part of the business which is only normal because that is where their headquarters are. European surfing needs somebody there who can wave the flag, put the opportunities on the table and put the tour in touch with local political administration. Francisco Spínola in Portugal is doing a fantastic job for the WSL and it would be great to see somebody as good in France, Spain, UK and Italy, to fulfil the potential on the European side. It is inadmissible not to have a French stop on the World Championship Tour, someone needs to be on the table to lobby the WSL, to change their format. There are no set rules with the WSL, they've been there for many years but they could do anything they want to the tour, they need to see the opportunities and the possibilities in Europe that will benefit them. My hope for the 2020s is to reach the full potential of the European surfing market and get the next generation hooked.

Any thoughts on the health of the surfboard market at present? What do you see as the shining lights of 2020?

It is healthy and very segmented, you have the softboard market then you have your entry level market, and then you have the localised performance market. Then on top of that the Asian

market with a few big players investing in factories, predominantly in Thailand, China and Taiwan.

"This year the softboard market has been exploited by big box stores, for example Decathlon in Europe and Costco in America. These companies have the financial strength to tap into those resources and to put a product on the market which is available to a lot of people who don't want to invest \$500 in a start-up play. This has brought a lot more people into the playing field."

This year the softboard market has been exploited by big box stores, for example Decathlon in Europe and Costco in America. These companies have the financial strength to tap into those resources and to put a product on the market which is available to a lot of people who don't want to invest \$500 in a start-up play. This has brought a lot more people into the playing field.

The local production market will always be there, it is a very cottage industry and it will always be that way. But the margins are so low and the infrastructure to build factories is really expensive and labour is something that can never go away. More people have access to shaping machines so I think there were a lot of people building 10-20 surfboards in their garage and a small percentage of them will go on to starting a business. However, these garage businesses can't offer a permanent supply of service to professional accounts. So

they will always supply a local market and they will always be there because that is the nature of our industry. People say surfboards are too expensive but they are cheap, a lot people might disagree with that but if you make a surfboard and look at the costings you will think differently.

Ecommerce is growing at the speed of light. Can you explain to us the opportunities and threats this brings to the surfboard building business?

As you say it is growing yes, the world we live in today is on the internet. It's taken a lot of the market, there are some big players, notably a couple in the UK and Akewatu, who are online and doing a smart consignment business for anyone who wants to put their product on the site. But it isn't as simple as a lot of people think, obviously there is the peril of investing too much money for not enough return, so if you're a small supplier who can only make a few 100 surfboards a year, then to invest 50,000 euros in ecommerce is pointless really, it's not like you can just press a button and increase production 10% .

The majority of manufacturers are at full capacity. So, it's all about supplying your existing clientele rather than trying to expand and get your figures out there, so to have that ratio of investing into an ecommerce space where you need to be wary of what other players could do. If you look at the figures of our general business I think ecommerce is about 20%, of which 20-25% of that are the big brands. At Euroglass we have invested in the last 12 months, I won't say heavily, but enough to get up and running. It's been working, but once it's online it's like anything else - you have to keep it afloat and work at it. It's a permanent cost for the company, so it's something you really need to be careful

with, you need to sell product and keep driving traffic to your page. I don't think it will ever take over the business but will always be a part of it

What would you say are the biggest lessons to be learnt from the 2020 pandemic?

I like to think the biggest lesson everyone has learnt is hygiene, unfortunately it takes a situation like this for people to learn. Euroglass is a fastidiously clean operation and this is now becoming the universal norm. In this sort of industry people neglect health and safety and cleanliness at the workplace. When the pandemic first hit everyone was disinfecting everything and I got upset with my workforce, trying to get them to wear masks, which I have been trying to do for 30 years. Unfortunately, it takes something like this for people to listen. Now 7-8 months into Covid the same standards are normal practice. I hope people start living in a cleaner place, respectful of one another's personal hygiene. Let's hope this pandemic finishes as quickly as possible, and we can learn from all this and be grateful for what we have. As everyone knows, when you can't go surfing and do something you love, it's not very pleasant. From the business side of it, it's been hard on our industry but there is always an upside. We'll see how it goes, try not to be too optimistic, be careful and prudent, learn from the past and avoid getting stuck with too much stock. Everything goes up but eventually flattens and then declines. So be wary and ready to survive the next crisis, whether it's detrimental to the business, or an opportunity. ☺

RETAIL BUYER'S GUIDE:

WAKEBOARD HARDGOODS SS21

There's a lot happening in the wakeboard industry, despite a rocky start to 2020, brands are now ready for a rocking SS21 and they're coming in hot with new constructions to shake things up. Sustainability in the industry is also levelling up to help protect our planet and keep the sport thriving. Read on for a breakdown of wakeboard hardgoods for SS21. By **Dana Miskulnig**.



Photo Sandbox

Current Market

It seems COVID could have been both a blessing and a curse for the boardsports Industry. It definitely shook sales strategies out of the usual course of action, but lockdown seemed to lift at just the right time for the wakeboard industry and worked to its advantage. Just in time for shops to move their goods for the summer months and boost boat sales for those wanting to stay put and socially distanced, which of course added to the uptick

“The situation changed totally once the lockdown was lifted. People went crazy and bought all kinds of water equipment. So finally, the season turned out to be nowhere near as bad as expected”. **Richard Ems, at DUB Wakeboards and Jetpilot.**

in wakeboard hardgood sales. “The situation changed totally once the lockdown was lifted. People went crazy and bought all kinds of water equipment. So finally, the season turned out to be nowhere near as bad as expected,” explains Richard Ems, at DUB Wakeboards and Jetpilot.

Marketing

2020 boosted e-comm sales with brands stepping up their online marketing game big time in the last few months, and that’s not stopping. Brands are continuing to band together with distributors, retailers, and riders to leverage each other’s social media skills and reach to keep those clicks going towards online sales. But there’s still the physical side to the marketing game that we can’t forget. Testing, testing, testing seems to still be key as Josef Holub, Founder & Worker at Goodboards tells

us, “We organise more than 60 test days per summer, we hand out vouchers for the tests, our team riders recommend the products, we make films and are very active on social media.” A new development in recent months was the launch of Pro-Tec’s first signature helmet with pro rider, Wesley Mark Jacobsen, in the middle of the pandemic. “It’s been doing really well. We’re stoked to be working with such a good guy and to have such good retail partners that support it.” explains R.P. Bess, global Brand Director at Protec.

“Hyperlite's primary manufacturing partner, based in Taiwan, recently completed their new clean energy facility. All Hyperlite boards are built using 80% renewable energy sources such as solar”. **Greg Nelson, VP Marketing at Hyperlite.**

Sustainability

It has become a vital pillar in the boardsports industry to protect our environment and Hyperlite are doing just that from the ground up. “Hyperlite’s primary manufacturing partner, based in Taiwan, recently completed their new clean energy facility. All Hyperlite boards are built using 80% renewable energy sources such as solar” shares Greg Nelson, VP Marketing at Hyperlite. Not falling far behind, O’Brien are also pushing the bar on manufacturing sustainably with their wakeboard factory currently making the shift to operating solely on renewable energy sources. Using eco-friendly materials has also become an industry standard with many brands using eco based resin, sustainable wood, and recycled packaging. Nobile are also making sure every piece is being used as efficiently as possible in their production with board leftovers being used for factory heat circulation and heating systems.

Construction

As pre-empted, there’s lots of exciting new things to share in terms of construction for SS21... Jobe Sports have upped their game and shaved



Photo Liquid Force

600mg off their boards with the use of BackBone Technology, which can be found in their Breach board. They are also using FSC certified wood to ensure consumers that the wood has been used to an eco-friendly standard. When it comes to board and binding weight, Liquid Force are creating fierce competition with their construction techniques and processes for 2021 as Aaron Grace, Director of Marketing tells us, “Our AeroCore wakeboards start with a high compressive strength core that is reinforced with multiple aligned carbon stringers on the top and base for rebound and response. This core is then wrapped in our lightest glass combo layer and finished with our thinnest surface material to result in the lightest boards in the industry. Our Aero bindings integrate laser cutting, sonic welding, upper-balancing, with a tuned carbon support structure to make a lightweight performance boot that, when combined with the AeroCore boards, keeps the entire setup under 4.5 kg.” Speaking of cores, there’s some great news from the production house of Slingshot as Jeff McKee, Wake Brand Manager, proudly shares, “New for 2021 we can now proudly say that all of our cores are ‘sustainably sourced’ from certified sustainable growth farms.”

Trends

Larger boards continue to be a big topic as Janek Korycki, Marketing Manager at Nobile tells us, “Following the trends, we’re introducing a new larger board model. That is where wakeboarding is going lately: larger boards, softer landings which helps save your knees a lot. That is why we’re introducing the new board model called the Jibb King and it will be up to 160cm long.” Hopping onto the bigger board trend, Slingshot Wake are bringing in the Boss Hoss wakesurf board, “It’s the first of its kind with the largest surface area of any wake surfer on the market. At 5’6” long and 26” wide, this beast was made to surf practically any wave that breaks. For all your friends out there who “just can’t seem to drop the rope,” the Boss Hoss is their ticket to freedom!” explains Jeff McKee, Wake Brand Manager. Swimming against the grain William

“It’s the first of its kind with the largest surface area of any wake surfer on the market. At 5’6” long and 26” wide, this beast was made to surf practically any wave that breaks. For all your friends out there who “just can’t seem to drop the rope,” the Boss Hoss is their ticket to freedom!” **Jeff McKee, Brand Manager for wake at Slingshot.**

Doornekamp, B2B Marketer at Jobe Sports claims, “Big boards will continue to sell but being able to call it a trend is over, it’s the new norm. Looking at ourselves and other players in the market, you will see that there will be a lot of playing with outlines (just like the snowboard market did a few years ago when Korua Shapes hit the market) and constructions. So, we’re curious to see how SS21 pans out and if bigger boards really are the big winner.”

Products To Keep An Eye On

To give you a better taste of what’s coming for you in SS21 here’s a breakdown of some of the top 5 products we can’t wait to see hit the market:



1. The Blacklist board by Hyperlite: “Graeme Burress is hands down one of the best cable and rail riders on the planet today. The Blacklist is Graeme’s 2nd signature cable wakeboard with Hyperlite. Graeme is consistently releasing content which is driving sales for his new pro model. Pre-book orders already show the Blacklist will be a top seller for Hyperlite in 2021” shares Greg Nelson, VP Marketing.

2. The Charge binding was introduced last year by Jobe Sports and is the bang for your buck binding, giving you an ‘insane level of quality’ product at €289.99.

3. Over at O’Brien we’ve got the Valhalla: “This tried and true wakeboard continues to be a best seller for us. It doesn’t matter if you are a beginner or a pro, this shape works for everyone. The Valhalla is easy to edge, very forgiving, and delivers a smooth, controlled pop that makes for a natural progression in your riding” says Sean O’Brien, Director of Marketing at O’Brien Watersports.

4. If you’re looking for something a bit more





Photo Hyperlite

personal, Sandbox have dug deep and worked together with team rider Anna Nikstad to introduce a new pro model for 2021, the Low Rider. “Anna decided to hand draw a kraken which is a symbol that exudes ferocity and depth — a representation of her” Joel Giddings, Brand Manager, explains to us. They’ve also got the Low Rider – Tag, coming in 2021 for which they contracted a local Vancouver artist to hand spray a graffiti tag. These water decals on the helmet will be hand placed and give every helmet a bespoke feel.

5. If comfort is your jam, Noah Todaro, Marketing Coordinator at Triple Eight NYC, breaks down their Sweatsaver Helmet, “Our most popular water helmet now includes a super-comfy Sweatsaver Halo Liner - constructed with three foam layers wrapped in plush fabric – making it one of the most comfortable water helmets on the market. That liner is also removable and easily washable so you can keep it looking mint after a session in some grimy water!”

Conclusion

To wrap things up, there’s clearly a lot of advances in the wakeboard industry to look forward for in SS21, not just in terms of construction and tech but

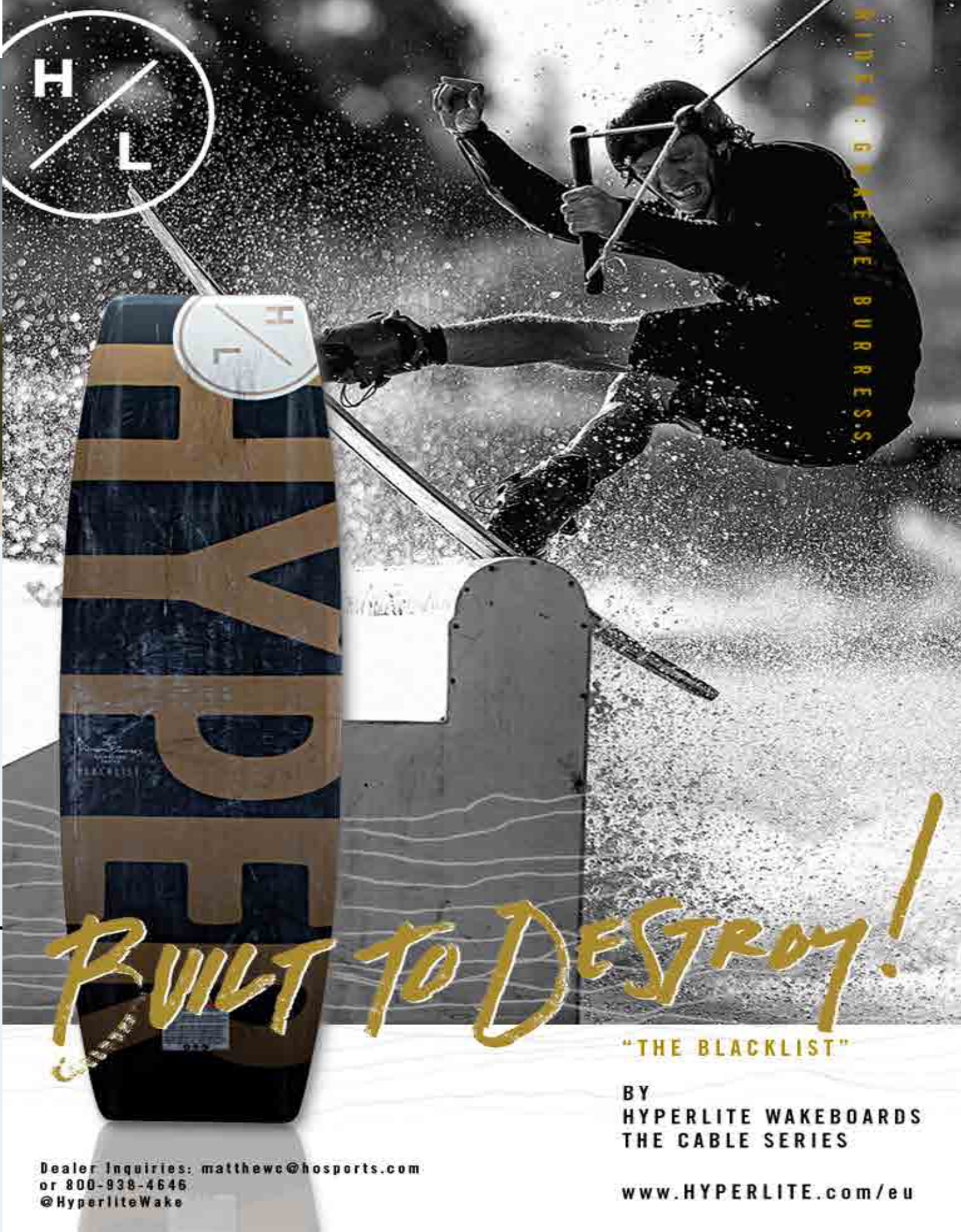
also giving environmentally conscious consumers more choices in the product line up. We’re curious to see how the big board trend pans out and if it’s reached its peak or if there’s still more in store for us there. The feeling in the industry seems hopeful with spirits still high despite an initial shake up due to COVID but the wakeboard industry seemed to come out of these tough times stronger than before. Let’s just hope the global situation improves and keeps working in favour of the boardsports industry so we can have a ripping (and safe) summer on the water in 2021! ☺

Visit our website to see in depth brand previews of this category.

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HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Boat sale boosts
- 2 Eco based materials
- 3 Sustainable energy in factories
- 4 Lighter boards
- 5 Bigger board trend



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THE CABLE SERIES

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A famous German snowsports brand from the 80s and 90s is coming back with a relaunch. Elho have improved their colourful, cosy, heritage collection from 1989 and is now set up for the 2020 winter season. Elho is aiming to remind older riders of the good ol' crazy days on the slopes and also respond to the new generation trend for bright and stylish outerwear.

Please tell us about the brand's heritage. How and why did the brand begin?

The brand was founded in 1948 and was twice the official sponsor of the Olympic Winter Games and was responsible for the 80s and 90s freestyle hype on the slopes. Elho first patented the Jet Pant in 1958 and brought the first down collection to the market in 1983. Elho is not a retro label, it's a heritage brand.

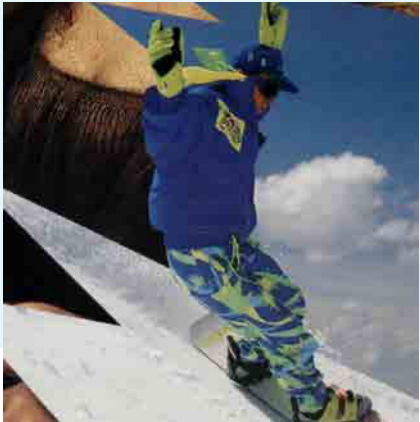
What is the thinking behind the brand relaunch?



We're aware of the opportunity that was paved by retro-brands like Ellesse, Fila, Champion and many others, whose aims was simply to return the brand to the market and be successful (again). But for our inspiration, we looked more at brands like Vans, because they have a phenomenal history and they just continue to do their own thing - delivering a great product with a great image. For sure, this is a pretty challenging goal for us at this stage, but it's our mindset.

Who are the people behind the relaunch of Elho and what is their experience within the industry?

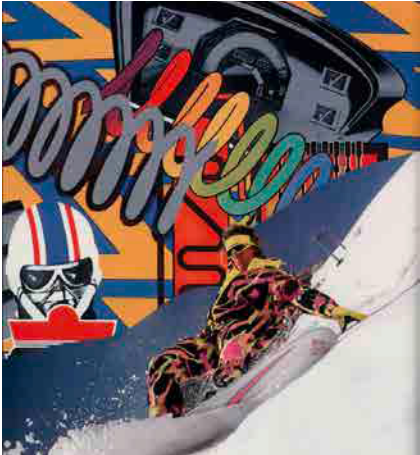
Firstly, there is Otto, the longterm owner of the trademark. With him, the recently founded Elho AG agreed to an exclusive and long term license agreement. Then there is Simone, who is the head of the AG together with Ulrich and her young, highly motivated team. Simone owned a surf and snowboard shop in Aachen and later worked for 5 years as sales manager for Ellesse in Germany and Austria. Ulrich brought Billabong to Germany in 1992



and has been in the industry ever since. Torsten from Orendt Studios and Christoph from Falkenstein Nebenwerte AG are the other members of the board for the company.

Tell us about the new line.

What you get for Winter 2020 is an homage to the wild times of 1989, but including the functional details that you want today; like a 20,000mm water column and nice details like fully taped seams and lightweight, 100% recycled padding. It's important that we look at these exclusive and limited styles from the past in two ways. First, for most people beyond the age of 40 it's a journey back in time, back to when Elho revolutionised the look of the



slopes and streets with bright colours. It's unbelievable how many people just start telling us stories, when they went riding, how they would come down the hill on a snowboard or how they partied until dawn. Secondly, the new generation looks at our style and are super surprised that it doesn't originally come from New York or Tokyo, but from "boring" Germany. As they love bright colours and the oversized look, they are pretty mind-blown by what they see.

How important is sustainability to the brand?

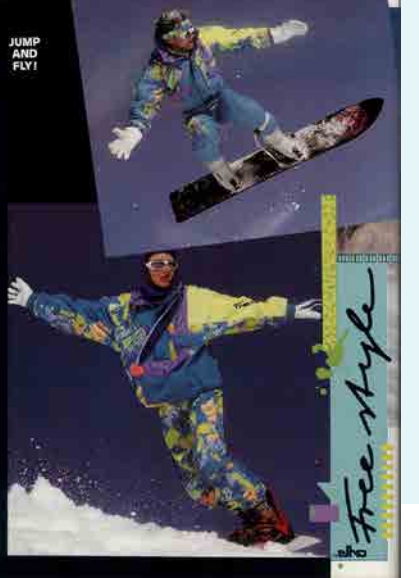
For the Winter 2020 collection, we use 100% recycled padding



in all outerwear. We also started our "Think Twice" campaign on our website to encourage our customers to actively ask themselves, if they really-really want the style. This may lead to less turnover at the checkout on our side, which you'd think we wouldn't enjoy that much, but it may also lead to fewer returns, which is good for Mother Earth. The most important improvement we can make is to switch our order process from "Push" to "Pull". Now, with our social media network in place we are able to listen to customers and combine the results with AI-driven data to produce exactly what is wanted.

How are you marketing the brand?

It's going to be a totally different ballgame in comparison to the nineties. We are already starting to communicate through our social media channels and it's amazing how much interaction we get. But, life is real, so there will be a few small surprises offline, which we can't reveal today.



What opportunities do you see in the outerwear market?

We spotted two new trends. Firstly, over the last 10 years we have seen outstanding functionality in outerwear from the leading brands. It was almost too difficult to guess what could be improved for the next season. But now the consumer wants to see a bit more colour and fashion incorporated into winter gear, people are looking for a different touch and feel. That's why, for example, for our outerwear we use the soft haptic of the past and the Elho logo is aflock. From a functional riding aspect it's quite useless, but it's super cosy, especially when out in the cold. Secondly, we have recently realised that kids in German, Austrian and Swiss cities have started to wear outerwear jackets to school again. If this becomes a more fashionable trend and they can show their style via the jackets they wear, then they can show that they are into freeskiing or snowboarding... this could be a game-changer! ©

RETAIL BUYER'S GUIDE

FOILING 2021

Unlike other boardsport families that have been around for decades, foils are yet to convert the “wow factor” into “how factor” or indeed “how much?”. Basically, it needs to pass beyond the admiration phase before it can activate the participation phase. Foil trends 2021 with **David Bianic**.

SHRED SLED 3:1 FOIL BOARD

WIND | SUP | WING // 143L 213cm X 76cm X 13cm

Photo Horue

As magical as it is to see, foils have been slow to attract the wider public, as confirmed by Catherine Blanchet, General Director and Engineer at Crazy Foil Canada: “The trend is spreading but still slower than it should, mainly because of the price barrier.” Like others, Crazy Foil are opting for direct sales. “Chopping the price by 50% has attracted more teenagers and very young adults”, reveals Catherine, whereas previously foils “appeared only to be accessible to 40 and up”. In expanding the participant base, another factor is how easy it is to pick up and play as explained by Philippe Caneri, CEO of Horue: “Customers are more beginners than a few years ago

This is explained by the product’s target: our products are easier than in the past, and we work hard on the safety aspect of the foil so we don’t scare new customers and particularly beginners.” All the brands we asked agreed in saying that the biggest growth lever for the sport rests in wingfoiling, the latest addition to the family. “Initially it was quite a niche market, especially in SUP/Surf foiling, as it’s quite technical to do – Wingfoiling has rapidly opened the foiling market up to people, especially on flat water locations and for people with windsurfing and kiting backgrounds,

as well as SUP/prone surfers looking to expand their water time on the non-glassy days,” recounts Craig Gertenbach, Brand Manager at Fanatic. By taking a new turn just a few years after its appearance, will foils finally win over the wider public? Answers from interested parties in this Foil Buyer’s Guide 2021.

FOILBOARD TRENDS 2021: VERSE-A-TILITY

“The trend is spreading but still slower than it should, mainly because of the price barrier.” Catherine Blanchet, Crazy Foil

Brands like Fanatic and F-One launched the trend three years ago: multi-use foil boards, real Swiss army knives suitable for SUP, surfing, windsurfing, wings and kites... Success had arrived and for some people like Andy Wirtz de Norden, it was above all a question of budget. “The surfer, or windsports rider of today is usually into many other water sports and therefore needs more equipment but still only has the same budget available.”

While he welcomes this trend, Andy does hold some reservations: “I think to combine sports in one board

can be still functional, more than that it will be questionable.” Rather than dreaming of the perfect board able to do everything, Takuma have divided their range into two families: on one side are the prone foilboards (surf, wake, kite) and on the other are SUP/Wing/Downwind boards. Indiana has released a versatile platform for all riding skills, a 7’8” Stubby Foil SUP which serves as a Swiss Army knife (makes sense, the company is located near Zurich) aimed for SUP surfing, SUP foiling, wing & wind foiling: “Thanks to its finbox in the middle of the board, that helps wingers and windsurfers going upwind without a foil”, says Maurus Strobel, founder & CEO. The shapes have gradually synchronized around a compact form with blunt nose, in the mould of the E2 collection from Kalama Performance, distributed by Olivier Madar in Europe. It’s the construction that determines the use, from PVC or carbon sandwich (wing/SUP foil) to traditional glass with carbon reinforcements (surf foil).

FOILBOARD TRENDS 2021: MIX & MATCH
To cater for this trend towards multifunction boards, the foil systems have become real little Lego sets with interchangeable pieces to meet the demands of the different uses. Surface area of the wing and stabilisers, length of mast and fuselage, the combinations are endless! The Hoverglide foil from Slingshot is an example of this trend, “a 5 sport modular system that

“Wingfoiling has rapidly opened the foiling market up to people, especially on flat water locations and for people with windsurfing and kiting backgrounds, as well as Sup/prone surfers.” Craig Gertenbach, Fanatic

allows you to mix and match parts to create your ideal setup,” explains Alex Fox, Brand Manager for the Wing and Windsurf divisions. Each part is then compatible with any other, whatever the sport. The idea is also to keep an eye on the medium term so we don’t end up with obsolete equipment after a couple of years. This is particularly the case at Takuma: “You can have a Lol Profoil 1600 purchased in 2019 and purchase a Kujira set (front and back wings) to put on it ...”, assures Sylvain Aurenche, International Commercial Director. We are also thinking about the Jet Slide foil from Crazy Foil where you can move the mast backwards or forwards on the fuselage to suit the needs and style of the individual. Since 2020 the brand have been selling foils with two different front wings “to cover all the winds (speeds) with only one hydrofoil.” As far as materials are concerned, full carbon setups are not

the sole option anymore, as cheaper products are made available: “Our wings are very light in pvc foam and carbon pressed in a steel mold. The fuselages and masts are made out of aluminium which makes them very stiff and solid”, explain Maurus as an example.

HOT: WINGFOIL
At first, the newcomer to the foil family didn’t seem to be destined for a great future. Adding a kitesurf wing but without the bar or lines or harness, the wing was bound to complicate foiling, which was already pretty technical, right? Not at all, quite the opposite. “Wingfoiling is certainly the easiest of the 5 main foiling sports (WS, Kite, SUP, Prone, Wing), in terms of skill set, range of conditions and relatively small gear,” reassures Craig from Fanatic. Philippe at Horue goes down the same route and, in his opinion, wingfoiling “takes the advantage of both windfoil and kitefoil, without their disadvantages”. It was wingfoiling that got Andy de Norden into foiling and for him, this discipline will not be cannibalistic to the other foil sports: “I think once people get into Wingfoiling, they quickly get interested in Surf- and SUP foiling as well and will learn this much quicker.” Alex from Slingshot supports this sentiment, reminding us that you don’t need any lessons and that the wing is really secure: “What we see is that kids have a total blast just playing with a wing on the beach [...] or pairing it with a skim board or skateboard. They learn a ton about the wind and how to control the wing while they are just out there playing without any need for formal instruction.” One of the signs of wingfoiling’s success is the number of “hardcore” surfers that are getting into it, assures Sylvain from Takuma, getting over their snobbishness for all things wind. With brands such as Slingshot (www.foil-academy.com) and Fanatic offering clinics/demos online and in the field, the market players all reckon its time for retailers to dip their toes in and get to know the sport better and so sell better. “At our last global dealer meeting we arranged training and demo sessions for all distributors to get up and foiling”, says Caren from NSP. Don’t miss the next flight my friends! ☺


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MARKET INSIGHT

SWISS

GERMANY
AUSTRIA
FRANCE
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The health situation in Switzerland remains precarious, much like for the majority of her neighbouring countries. On the whole, the protective measures and restrictions, as well as the aid packages put in place

in summer, are still with us this autumn. Like many other countries, the government are now focussing more on tracing and quarantining than on another potential lockdown.

With the summer over, the results are in and it's quite a positive outcome, if not really positive, for those in tourism as well as for sport shops. While many were worried about having no customers, it seems to have had the opposite effect and in fact, they got somewhat overrun. Obviously this didn't apply for all types of activity, it was mostly the outdoor sector that exploded in Switzerland this summer. In particular it was cycling, trekking, hiking, camping as well as watersports, SUP, wakeboarding or more urban sports like skateboarding that really came through as big winners. As a general rule, sports that you could do outside in a free environment were highly sought after while every kind of team sport suffered a lot because of the restrictions.

The success of outdoor sports is primarily explained by the simple fact that our fellow citizens stayed in our country for the summer holiday period, a large number of which would have normally headed abroad. Lots of people stayed in Switzerland, either to have a holiday, or to make the most of long weekends to enjoy the alpine air, saving those dreams of going to exotic

destinations for another time. As I said in my last article, there was government aid in place that meant many of these people kept getting their normal salaries. This aid, along with the money saved from not going on an expensive foreign holiday, meant that buying power has become stronger in recent months. To keep it simple, a large number of the population had money to spend and this time it was spent inside our borders. The frustration of not being able to go away and the fact that people's pockets were full unleashed an unprecedented frenzy for buying and consuming outdoor activities. This was particularly the case for biking.

That's not to say skateboarding was pushed to one side and according to most retailers this was a really good year for skateboarding with pleasing numbers. This strong appeal surpassed all expectations and very quickly there was no more stock of completes left, and this was the case for all brands.

These results bode well for shops with the winter season approaching and snowboard equipment being sent out for delivery. Furthermore, and probably thanks to this in part, we are seeing very few cancellations or reductions on orders for winter equipment, at least, a lot less than we feared in spring with all the uncertainty. The same goes for requests for payment extensions and delivery staggering; it seems as though most people have the cash flow to make payments for winter 20/21 equipment. Obviously there's a lot of underlying uncertainties but just being able to start the new season without having to make up for too many losses is already really encouraging.

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TAHE is the new name for BIC Sport. Tahe Outdoors is an Estonian heritage outdoor company and purchased BIC Sport from the larger BIC Group two years ago. The two parties saw the need to forge a new path for the brand and decided to lean on the Estonian company's rich heritage as a launch pad. They keep the same omni-channel distribution framework and are still made in France with best eco practices their MO.

Please give us a brief history of the Tahe Outdoors Group.
Tahe Outdoors was built in 1989 in Estonia. "TAHE" means "the will to succeed" in Estonian. Tahe Outdoors is now a European group dedicated to outdoor sports. It has developed the successful Core kitesurf brand and paddle maker Egalis. The Tahe Outdoors group's financial stability is derived from



a majority shareholding held by a Luxemburg fund manager, KJK. In 2019 KJK created KJK Sports, a new group containing all the individual brands and businesses in the KJK portfolio.

What other brands are part of the Tahe Outdoors Group?
TAHE (SUP, Surf, windsurf, kayak, dinghies), CORE (Kitesurf), SIC (SUP and Surf), Zegul (Kayaks) and Egalis (paddles).

What was the thinking behind launching the TAHE brand?
We were sold by the BIC group 2 years ago and so we had to replace the BIC Sport brand with a new brand to cement the end of this story and the start of a new one. As we had been bought initially by Tahe Outdoors (Estonia), who had a very strong history in watersports like us, it seemed logical to use this history as a merger between the BIC Sport & Tahe Outdoors stories, to form one unified brand under the Tahe umbrella. In this way, we



now provide customers with the opportunity to go on the water in almost any possible manner.

What is the brand's USP?
The core values of our new brand TAHE come from BIC Sport's legacy. Reliability, accessibility, simplicity, modernity. Made and engineered in France with Eco responsibility. These values are unique, especially our production facility located in France, being Europe's only production facility that has so many different watersports technologies, all available on one site. We are



also one of the only watersports manufacturers to have such a high ratio of recycling inherent in our production processes. Also, a large number of our products can be recycled at the end of their lifetime.

How will you operate in Europe - distributors, sales agents, direct to consumer?
Our network remains the same. Our distributors support us 100% and will explain to end consumers that TAHE rigid products are still built in our factory in France.



For BIC Sport, a large part of the reason why we are still very successful after 40 years is because we have built up a very strong distribution network and have a strong relationship with our clients at all levels. This sales network is an integral part of our ongoing development in the future, even in a modern sales environment heavily focused on the internet and web sales. At the end of the day, it is simply impossible to deliver a number of our long kayaks and SUP boards to the final client without a strong distributor and retail network support.

How do you market your products?
We are heavily focused on an omni-channel approach using all possible channels to communicate our message. Using new photos and videos content, ambassadors, focus on our eco-friendly manufacturing, product recycling, demos on the

beaches, and, of course, our sales and retail network as mentioned above. The marketing program may vary from country to country based on the strengths and weaknesses of that particular market, but we have a lot to say via social media, web media & magazines.

What trends and opportunities do you see in the current market for SUP?
For us the current SUP market is very much split into three core segments: Inflatable boards for entry-level recreational and family use, rigid boards for rental & school use, and finally a niche composite market offering all types of boards to specialist SUP consumers whether it is racing, fitness, SUP surfing or touring. In the rental & school market we still have a very strong presence with our exclusive T-TEC & A-TEC technologies, offering one of the best durability/product value ratios on the market. ☺

MARKET INSIGHT

AUSTRIA

GERMANY
FRANCE
SWISS
ITALY
UK

So, winter is just around the corner, the first snow has already conquered the mountains, the first Glacier Opening events have taken place and the Covid-19 situation continues to largely affect our everyday life. Uncertainty is very high everywhere. What will happen?

Will we experience another lockdown? In principle, a further lockdown is still being categorically ruled out in Austria, as this measure, if introduced as a last resort, would pose insurmountable challenges for many companies and individuals and thus cause the economy to collapse completely. However, the possibility of a lockdown keeps on being raised and discussed again and again. Even if government support measures – such as the short-time working model, the provision of work equipment or the moratorium on loans and tax payments – continue to be extended, this cannot be a solution!

What many experts and projections had predicted for the autumn has now materialised: the second wave with growing numbers of infections has arrived, and not only in Austria, but throughout Europe and around the world the infection curves are pointing upwards. This, in turn, has brought with it many measures and restrictions that accompany us every day. The requirement to wear masks has been reintroduced in many areas of public life, e.g. in retail shops and restaurants, alongside the obligation to register for customers of pubs and bars and an earlier closing time, a ban on larger events and private parties and the recommendation to work from home, to name but a few. Another very important point regards the restrictions on freedom of travel and the current travel warnings with mandatory quarantine periods. This is a crucial point for Austria in particular. In terms of tourism, winter is traditionally the most important season of the year and the absence of tourists considerably impacts on value creation. In all likelihood, this will not be made up for by a strong internal demand from the domestic market. It should be mentioned here that we still have a high number of people who are unemployed or on short-time working, which means that the population generally has more limited financial resources available. However, the summer can be seen as a very positive one, following the loosening of restrictions in many areas, and the

consumer backlog has largely been cleared. After a massive economic slump and a short but deep recession during the spring, the consumption engine has started to pick up speed and has really stepped on the gas. Individual sports have particularly benefited from this. Retailers of bike and outdoor goods report above-average sales. Boardsports items such as skateboard hardgoods and related categories such as shoes, as well as watersports articles such as SUP boards, for example, enjoyed high demand. In some cases, it was even impossible to find products and retailers faced supply bottlenecks. All in all, a positive development, hardly imaginable after the difficult spring.

What remains is the big question mark beyond the winter. In this respect there are certainly very big disparities and a differentiation according to where the retailers are located. Retailers in urban areas with a large number of regular customers expect, after the positive signals in summer, a strong demand for winter sports products in the freeride sector. Special freeride boards, touring equipment such as split boards and top-quality clothing in particular could become the big theme of the winter season, something that is also widely anticipated. As Hannes from Connys Sport in Brixlegg remarks, "We can feel how people want to get outdoors and are already putting together the necessary equipment, the customer traffic is good". This trend could also be reinforced by the not yet clear operating conditions of cable cars and lifts, an issue which, in turn, has retailers in tourist areas and in the valleys breaking out into a sweat, as Patrick from Greenroom in Mayrhofen, among others, reports. A major loss is expected here, for example, in the rental sector, which had been growing until now. But if tourists do not show up, this will also mean lower sales in all other sectors. After the lockdown from mid-March, this had already led to a slump in pre-orders. It was decided to order fewer products or to invest only in certain categories such as freeride articles. Positive signals, however, have come from the Glacier Opening events: despite some restrictions such as the use of face masks and limited admission, the visitors to the Openings were highly motivated, which makes us feel very positive. The snowparks attracted many visitors and this shows that we are more than ready for a good and snowy winter. Let's enjoy the snow! Stay motivated and healthy! See you for sure in winter!

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RETAIL BUYER'S GUIDE

SUP SS21

In issue 101, we left you on a rather positive note regarding the SUP market, this was back in June when European countries were coming out of lockdown. With the summer behind us, we are now able to confirm an unprecedented upsurge in outdoor sports and SUP is certainly no exception. Overview and presentation of 2021's ranges with **David Bianic**.



Photo Starboard

Was the summer good? This is a rhetorical question in 2020... "on the inflatables market sales were excellent this summer and we quickly ran out of stock on our flagship models!" enthuses Benoît Brecq, Marketing Director for Ari'i Nui in France. On the other side of the world in Shanghai, the brand Aztron saw "an immense surge in orders since April 2020", assures Founder Tony Yeung. Co-Founder of Red Paddle Co, John Hibbard, received over 9000 information requests (in English alone) through the website

*"Most containers that were ordered were almost sold even before they had arrived." **Anja Scheuermann, YOLO Board***

and "this demand flowed through our retailers".

Better still, this high demand for SUP has meant that "big companies sold a great part of their unsold inventory stock", figures Andrea Di Sante from JLID Distribution in Italy (Jimmy Lewis, Infinity, I Love Sup, Wing Clan Project), and didn't

have to “order boards or accessories for 2020”. Jan Strindler, CEO of Kona fine-tunes this analysis further by defining a very clear market trend, namely “the small resellers step down or reduce their pre-orders, while the large players more than double their pre-orders for SS21”. This situation benefitted the English brand Noah, confides Commercial Director, Tom Lazarus, thanks to stock being situated in their warehouse in the United Kingdom, “where other pre-

“Companies in China and Vietnam have delays of over six months for production time,” **Andrea Di Sante, JLID Distribution**

order-only brands may have had low stock levels”. In other words, to sell well, you still have to have the financial resources to buy enough stock...The scarcity of boards gave



Photo Tahé



Photo Norden

rise to situations never seen before, as Anja Scheuermann from Marketing at YOLO Board relates: “Most containers that were ordered were almost sold even before they had arrived.”

But will this upsurge last until spring-summer 2021? This is the purpose of the article... For William Doornekamp, B2B Marketer at Jobe Sports, “a lot of people might not want to take a risk travelling far”, and this uncertain future might well benefit local activities like SUP. For the moment, the brands are above all trying to ensure the production and delivery of their 2021 ranges that were largely delayed because of the sanitary crisis with most manufacturing sites being located in Asia. “Companies in China and Vietnam have delays of over six months for production time,” says Andrea from JLID.

Another solution is to continue the 2020 range into 2021, a choice made by SIC Maui, Gladiator and Jimmy Lewis, providing products with a two-year life cycle. Brands that manufacture on the Old Continent are rare but for Tripstix in Germany: “Covid did not affect us much! We already stopped manufacturing in the Far East at the beginning of 2019 and set up production in Europe instead.” We should also commend the efforts of ORPC (the parent

X INFINITY

AZTRON / 2021



INFLATABLE BOARDS

DOUBLE CHAMBER TECH TO THE NEXT LEVEL

AZTRON is celebrating the season with brand-new design and revolutionary tech on the most popular All-Round collection. More than that, our best-selling board of all time, NOVA 10'0" Double Chamber compact SUP, is now complemented with a 11'0" full-sized SUPER NOVA and a 9'0" youth-friendly NEO NOVA.



COMPOSITE BOARDS

THE ABOVE AND BEYOND

The most exciting newcomers in the AZTRON line in 2021 must be the FALCON foils with Wings and carbon glider plane. The 6'6" hard foil is a perfect hybrid board for all kinds of foiling activities. Our Soft Top ECLIPSE collection has now extended with upgraded design and choice of sizes in 10'6" and 11'0".



company of Aqua Marina) who set up a solidarity programme between dealers and distributors in April 2020 to help them get through the most difficult moments.

NO EXPO

Traditionally, our autumn Retailer Buyer's Guide serves as a preview to accompany the new ranges presented at the PADDLEexpo in Germany. Unfortunately, absolutely no trade shows have gone down as you already know, so much so that brands have had to find new means of connecting with retailers. Tony Lu from Aqua Marina explains how (forced) economies made from the absence of tradeshows have been reinvested in digital marketing and e-commerce, meanwhile at Jobe, this situation has given rise to a new platform, the Jobe Expo (www.jobesports.com/en/jobeeexpo) to replace the cancelled tradeshows: "We have made unique content for this explaining our product range and our latest innovations", relates William Doornekamp before adding: "We connect this with our customer service team who will answer all questions directly." For others, online Zoom conferences didn't make up for the lack of direct contact, "but came a close second", asserts John from Red Paddle Co: "Many of

"This new technology fabric is made out of stronger and lighter nylon base yarns, comparing to heavier traditional Dacron yarns." **Tony Yeung, Aztron & Aquatone**

our wholesale teams have put in efforts to build out showrooms that work for video calling." Red Paddle Co's end consumers weren't forgotten about either and their weekly Facebook Live episodes became the preferred way of talking to the dedicated customer experience team. Crisis breeds innovation!



Photo Indiana

iSUP TRENDS SS21

The dominance of all-round designs aimed at the widest audience is showing no signs of fading. Spring-summer 2021 will therefore look very much like that of 2020, 2019, 2018, 2017... because the strength of the market is still reliant on first-timers attracted by the practical aspects of inflatable boards. Amongst these beginners are more and more females. The feminine market share is significant and demand is orientated towards all-round boards like you find in the Venus range from JP Australia, "These boards are perfect for cruising, touring, fitness and yoga", invokes Franziska Müller, Junior Marketing Director. These models are also adapted to the female physique with a thickness of 5" (instead of 6" normally) "for a lower standing position and lighter weight". Tara at Surfttech confirms the success of this kind of model and they are continuing a wonderful collaboration with Prana (yoga specialists) in 2021 "and a new collab with





SPINERA



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Pura Vida the extremely popular lifestyle brand,” and boards aimed at the 16-24 year old market. At Siren, the Rubio model in 11’2” by 32” is along the same lines, mimicking the look of a rigid board with its wood colour and turquoise crocodile pad.

Another noteworthy development is the growing market share of the touring category (shared with rigid models as below) as Maurus Strobel, CEO of Indiana and Apatcha confirms: “there is an order movement from the all-round 10’6 to the 11’6 and 12’0 touring boards.” We should commend the work done by Red Paddle Co on their Voyager range, iSUPs with a “real” hull shape with their V-Hull that “really makes a difference when it comes to glide on flat water as well as control in cross chop and side winds,” explains John Hibbard. Famous for introducing the concept of the compact inflatable, Red Paddle Co have also extended the twin-fin configuration of these models onto the Ride (all-round) and Voyager ranges, “which gives them increased glide”.



Photo Aztron

While SUP on rivers and whitewater is still a niche within the inflatable market, these people are set apart from “Sunday



Photo NSP

paddlers”: as real hardcore SUPers, they are inclined to shell out for models that are ready to tackle the rapids. Amongst the specialists of the genre, the brand Hala Gear from Colorado have three whitewater models amongst their best sellers, the Atcha 96, Rado and Radito. Their system with retractable fins (Stompbox) is a healthy advantage for risky descents over the rocks. Germany also has some nice whitewater descents so it’s not surprising to see a hardcore model from Siren, the 10’2” snapper with HCT construction (Hybrid Carbon Technology).

“The water sport enthusiast of today does many different sports, having the same budget available” **Andy Wirtz, Norden.**

But even more so than the shape or the discipline, it’s the chosen construction that provides differentiation. The first thing to notice is that double layered PVC constructions are less popular, seeing a return to single layers. Stiffness and solidity are nowadays provided by other means like



reinforcement bands, as is the case at Ari'i Nui: "In 2021 we are focussing on two types of technology: single layer with our Mahana range and the single layer + double PVC stringer on the top and bottom of the board with our H-Light range." This return to single layer has mostly been made possible by the advent of woven dropstitch (X-Stitch), explains Tony Yeung from Aztron & Aquatone: "This new technology fabric is made out of a stronger and lighter nylon base yarns, comparing to heavier traditional Dacron yarns." Their All-Round 2.0 model is therefore 25% lighter than before. Just as impressive, the weight of the 9'10" Spinera with ULT dropstitch (Ultra Light Technology) is just 6.7kg! After some reticence in the last three years, the concept of multiple compartment iSUPs will swell in 2021. Safety is a good sales argument when attracting new recreational participants and this "lifeline" of two (or more) air chambers in case of a puncture constitutes a must. The external chamber, around the outside of the board absorbs distortions, while the second central compartment provides stiffness. Here we can mention the Deluxe models launched

"If we sell less boards that are hyper specialised and ultimately used rarely, we use less of the planet's resources and are more environmentally friendly."
Benoît Tréguilly & Peter Durham, SIC Maui/Tahe

in 2020 by Starboard "perhaps the most advanced technology in the 2021 SUP inflatable market," assures Svein. And the reason: double chamber, woven Fusion dropstitch, double I-Beam stringer, hot welded rails with 2000D compression band and 3K carbon reinforcement band. We should also mention the VaccuAir

multichamber technology from Tripstix with the imminent arrival of ClustAIR. The system reuses the concept of inflatable tubes of varying circumferences (to give more shape to the board), but leaves out the secret weapon of vacuum-sealed compartments full of granules that help you fold the board up more compact. So stay tuned.

RIGID SUP TRENDS SS21

Rigid construction sets the real passionate enthusiasts apart from your occasional paddler and the brands are striving to ensure an easy transition between the two. One of the fears that SUPers have in the progression phase is damaging the rails with their paddle



Photo Spinera

NSP | O² Cruiser



Double Chamber Exploring

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strokes. To reassure them, Jobe are presenting an elegant new covering on their Bamboo models that “doesn’t just look good, it’s far more durable,” assures William Doornekamp. This sturdiness meant that HIT technology brought in the best sales for NSP in 2020 as Marketing Director Caren Forbes reveals: “It’s the board you can smack with the paddle on the rails on purpose and it will likely damage the paddle quicker than the board.”

With their first experience on all-round inflatables, a certain number of SUPers are looking to expand their scope for action and, if possible, go faster. So it’s not surprising that the touring category has seen steady growth in the last few years. Amongst the flagship boards of 2021, in rigids, we’d cite the new GT-S from JP Australia. “Think ‘ease of use’ at no cost to speed,” describes Franziska Müller. “The idea is to be able to enjoy the view on SUP tours while gliding at an average



Photo Yolo

Race SUP speed.” Not to be confused with the GT (Gran Turismo) model from RRD, a best seller in 12’6” relates Jacopo Giusti in Marketing. Also take a peek at the Promenade model from Surfttech, available in classic finish or in wood veneer for a nice effect.

Sportier but still in the realms of transition between iSUP and rigid, Kona are unveiling a new Ocean Hybrid 14’x24’, “which will be the entry board for training/racing for the beginner, it will be extremely stable with high performance at an affordable price,” explains Jan Strindler. Another trend amongst race/downwind models is the strong comeback of “dug outs”, like the new Atlantis board from SIC Maui, devised for use on more turbulent water, or the full carbon Lightspeed 2021 model from Aztron. At the other end of the usage spectrum, rigids are also preferred for rental boards, either in soft-top construction or in full rigid like at Ari’i Nui, “with soft epoxy boards in our Throgger range mostly used by SUP Schools and rentals as well as an almost indestructible moulded epoxy sandwich construction in our MLX range that we sell primarily to



Photo Surfttech

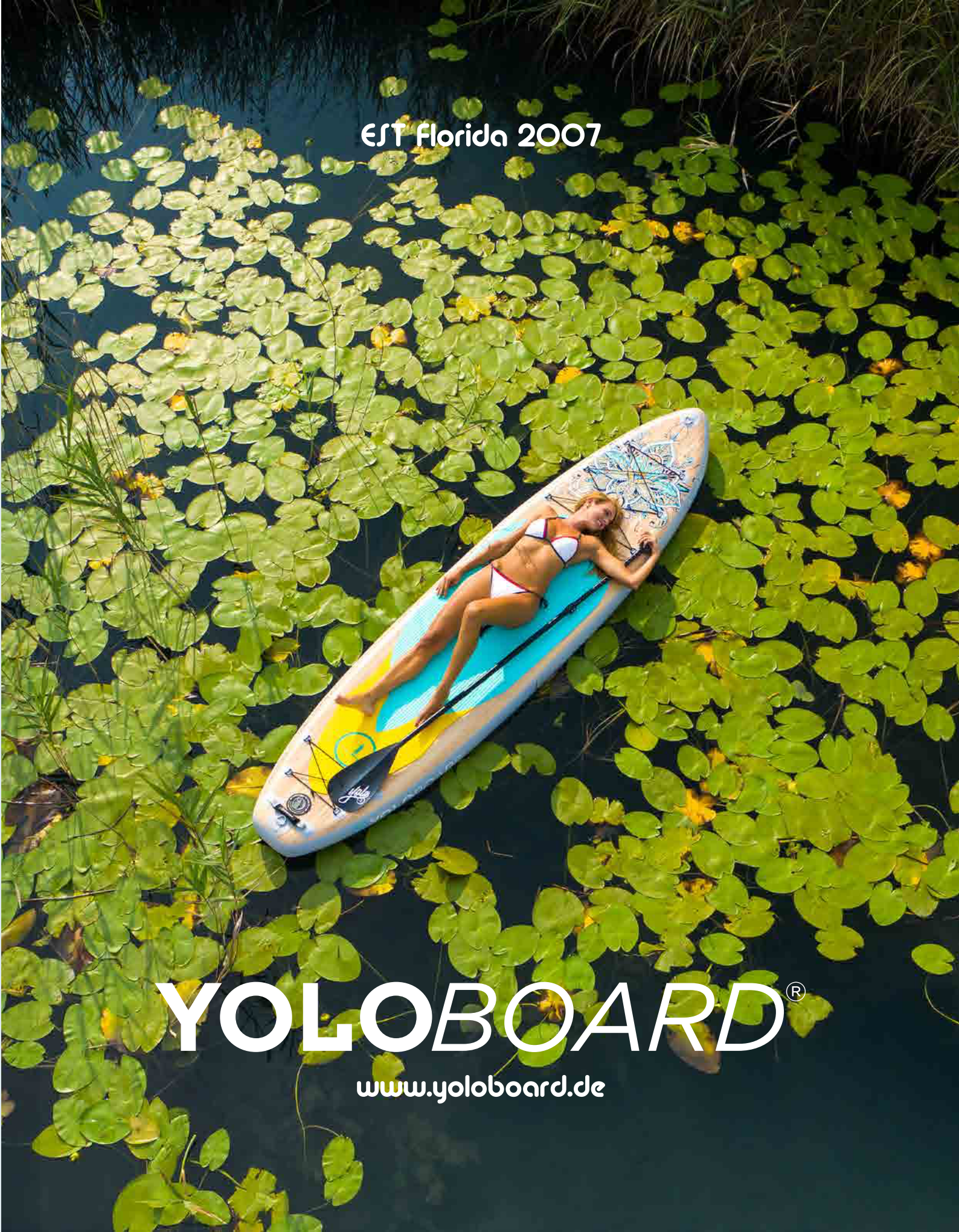




Photo Red Paddle


"Resized, smaller SS21 collections and SS20 carry over colours and styles are the main practices. This lifts off pressure on retailers and also allows them to fill up sizes of SS20 products they have in stock".

rental centres" explains Benoît Brecq. At Indiana, rental or school boards can also go hand in hand with high-performance materials, like their 10'6" and 11'6" in carbon sandwich.



HOT: MULTI-USAGE BOARDS

The emergence of foiling and more recently wingfoiling has given rise to a new category of SUP, multifunction platforms. Initiated by Starboard (Hyper Nut) and JP Australia (Slate), followed by Naish (Hover Crossover "4-in-1"), this trend is not going away because "the

watersport enthusiast of today does many different sports, having the same budget available", reminds Andy Wirtz from Norden. The German brand are also responding to this demand with their Futurama (6'1" and 5'6"), a model aimed at SUP and wingfoiling sold at around €900. RRD are proposing a hybrid model christened the Wassup Foil (SUP, SUP foil, windsurf, wind foil), as well as the Hi Flight (SUP Foil and windfoil) while their Pocket Rocket (wind/wing/SUP foil) will appeal to riders not wanting the hassle of big boards on top of their cars! Already very foil-orientated, Slingshot will also have a new model on offer in 2021, the Shred Sled, a 3-in-1 board (SUP, wing, windsurf), as well as an astonishing accessory, the SUPWINDER, a stick-on fin that can transform a classic SUP into a wingsurf and go upwind. JP Australia will also unveil a little bomb in 2021, the X-Foil, a board



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designed for wingfoiling, downwind SUP foiling and windsurf foiling. “Shorter in length, wider and thicker compared to the Foil range for generous flotation and instant reaction to pumping”, says Franziska about this model that ticks all the boxes of high performance.

SIC Maui have also joined in with their Marlin model (SUP surf, wing, windsurf foil), as have Tahe (formerly known as Bic Sport) with their 11’6” SUP Wind (SUP & windsurf). Benoît Tréguilly (Marketing & Communication) and Peter Durham (Product Manager) from SIC Maui/ Tahe don’t hesitate in highlighting the sustainability benefits of these crossover models: “If we sell less boards that are hyper specialised and ultimately used

rarely, we use less of the planet’s resources and are more environmentally friendly.” Finally there are also the pure, exclusive models, 100% SUP foil, like the Tombstone from Infinity (5’2” to 7’) or the Flying V from Jimmy Lewis (6’5” and 6’11”), models aimed at seasoned foilers. ☺

Visit our website to see in depth brand previews of this category.

BOARDSPORTSOURCE.COM

HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Touring on inflatables & rigids
- 2 Feminine iSUP
- 3 Multichamber iSUPs
- 4 Single layer Woven Dropstitch (iSUP)
- 5 HOT: rigid foil/wind/wing/surf/etc SUP


SURFTECH
DURABILITY | PERFORMANCE | TECHNOLOGY



The ALL NEW **High Seas Air-Travel** with an integrated deck pad, high pressure valve, compact carry size, and advanced Drop-stitch performance technology is the perfect inflatable SUP for travel.



@SURFTECHUSA



Maria Riding Company®

Maria Riding Company was founded by Rui Alexandre and Luís Correia, who started off by selling custom made motorcycles. Both designers and Portuguese at heart they have expanded to produce high quality alternative skate and surfboards, recently moving towards the apparel market. Having done various collaborations with brands like Nexx, DJI and Yamaha, the company trusts in differentiation and sells their products in Europe, Japan, USA, Mexico and more.

Please give us a brief history of Maria Riding Company.

Maria was born in 2010 in the same way so many other projects start, by a group of friends driven by the idea of just creating together, without boundaries or concessions. We just wanted to make our own thing, freely and passionately. Having lived our personal lives among surfing, skateboarding,

motorcycles, music and art, it was only natural that this context would provide the focus for our collective creativity. We moved on and took it further, started to work more consistently, creating products, communicating, building our vision... and suddenly we had a brand.

Who are the people behind the brand and what are their backgrounds?

Founders Rui Alexandre and Luís Correia have a background in design, advertising and creativity, and spent most of their professional lives working with brands like Nike, Billabong, Volkswagen, MTV, Universal. It was no surprise that after some time working intensively for the others, you want to put all your effort into something of your own, not limited by other people's strategies and demands.

What is your company's ethos and USP?

Maria started out by making custom motorcycles based on old Japanese and



European models. The quality and originality of these handmade builds soon gained international recognition. They then progressed along the creative path and started to make surfboards, skateboards and most recently designing and producing clothing and accessories. In Portugal we are based in the perfect location to do this. We have great weather to ride motorcycles, amazing waves to surf like nowhere else in Europe and a strong tradition in the clothing industry, focused on quality and fashion. If many of the world's most recognized brands come to Portugal to produce their finest pieces, why wouldn't we take advantage of that?



How important are collabs to your business?

We are very open to collaborations with other brands as this often leads to interesting projects. For us, as designers and creators (which is essentially what we are) that's always exciting and challenging and, as a brand, enriching. When Nexx invited us to develop a new helmet, when we collaborated with DJI to launch their new cinema lens or when Yamaha asked us to recreate one of their new bikes - the end result was something remarkable and rewarding.



Please tell us about your target consumer.

We think that there are people that value the exclusivity and originality which can only be reached through alternative and lesser known brands. We believe that as the bigger brands grow and the big hegemonic empires take over the market, the bigger part of that market will look for alternatives that stop making them feeling ordinary. This consumer does not like to look dull and predictable, they want to be different. We watch people buy our stuff and other 'alternative' brands as a statement, probably to distance themselves from that commercial establishment. We also believe that the quality level that we achieve by creating things with high standards, less compromises, attention to detail and creative criteria is perceived and understood by our part of the market. That is our territory and we think that if we end up with a product we love, hopefully other people will love it too.



How do you operate in Europe - distributors, sales agents, direct to consumer?

We operate mainly directly through our website and webstore and we also ship worldwide. We communicate through digital platforms as our market is very wide. We sell mainly to Europe but we've also been selling to countries as diverse as Australia, Japan, South Korea, Philippines, USA, Mexico and Dubai. We already have a few stores that sell our clothing in Europe and we're going to develop and extend that during the year ahead and at the same time we are looking for more partners. Although online selling has obvious advantages, we feel that selling in stores helps consolidate as a brand, giving it exposure and proximity. Besides, our new clothing has sold well probably due to the quality of the fabrics and finishes, which is easier to understand when you can touch and feel it rather than just view it online. ☺

RETAIL BUYER'S GUIDE

2021 LONGBOARDS

Demand exceeds supply as the unexpected skate boom rolls into next year. Prepare for the next chapter with our 2021 Longboards Retail Buyer's Guide – New Reality Edition by SOURCE Skateboard Editor **Dirk Vogel**.



Photo Jucker Hawaii

It's been a wild ride for the longboard business. Only five years ago, the category was crashing hard after an unprecedented boom period in the early 2010s. When mass demand for casual skates dried up, most of the specialty longboard stores that had opened during the hype were shattered. Cheap knockoff goods flooded the market, starting a price point race to the bottom. Meanwhile, legitimate brands and distributors were sitting on shelves full of unsold inventory. Fast-forward to the global shitstorm known as the year 2020, and there's much to worry about. But unsold inventory is not on the list – just the opposite. In the historic skateboard boom caused by Covid-19, longboard brands are struggling to find inventory: "Orders for goods that would have seen us through a couple of months' worth of sales in 2019 have lasted on occasion, just a few days," said

Mike Hellier, Buyer & Brand Manager at Arbor (Shiner Ltd) about the situation. Almost all hardgoods brands in this article are in the same boat when it comes to supply chains, including Mindless Skateboards with

"Orders for goods that would have seen us through a couple of months' worth of sales in 2019 have lasted on occasion, just a few days". Mike Hellier, Buyer & Brand Manager at Arbor

Andy King reporting: "Most items are presold into next year, which is a blessing that we're so busy during Covid but also a shame." At HOFF Distribution/Flying Wheels in France, Benoit Brecq said: "We are out of stock on a lot of

designs and shapes. Working hard to develop and create new boards and models for this X-mas and next summer." "Although hardgood sales were increasing since a few years, it is clear that the lockdown has allowed to see a good and higher increase in the demand and as it seems some brands are not able to deliver, we are getting more requests EMEA-wise," said Philippe Clarisse – VP Europe at GLOBE. The long-term outlook is solid, including Mindless Skateboards with Andy King reporting: "Most items are presold into next year, which is a blessing that we're so busy during Covid but also a shame." At HOFF Distribution/Flying Wheels in France, Benoit Brecq said: "We are out of stock on a lot of designs and shapes. Working hard to develop and create new boards and models for this X-mas and next summer."

"We are optimistic that the uptick in longboarding will continue even beyond Covid. That said, we are concerned with oversaturation of sub-par products as we've seen in the US a couple times and in Europe in 2014-16." Sue Denim, Loaded Boards.

MARKET: WAVE OF UNCERTAINTY

Speaking on the demand situation, Mike at Arbor said: "Both the European and U.S. longboard markets are flying right now. All manner of shapes and sizes are selling well, whilst seeing a strong uptake from beginners of all ages and genders that are looking for something solid and stable to get them rolling. We are seeing numerous skateboarders dusting off their old boards or looking for something new to get them back out there." Recent figures from ActionWatch released at the Action Sports & Culture (ASC) virtual summit in early October support this assessment: Annual participation in skateboarding increased from 6.5 million skaters in Spring/Summer 2019 to a whopping 9 million in 2020 in the United States. The statistics also revealed women and skaters over the age of 35 as major growth drivers.

These numbers are undeniable. But in light of 2015's Big Longboards Crash, many brands are wary of burning their fingers by overestimating demand once again. As Timothy Mackey, Design Manager at Rayne and DB Longboards points out: "I think both markets, U.S. and Europe, are coming off an incredible high and it is hard to tell how much longer it will continue. It remains to be seen what the landscape looks like with respect to Covid-19 and lockdown restrictions when spring rolls around." Over at LA-based Loaded Boards, Sue Denim remains hopeful: "We are optimistic that the uptick in longboarding will continue even beyond Covid. That said,



Photo Shiner



Photo: Rayne and DB

we are concerned with oversaturation of sub-par products as we've seen in the US a couple times and in Europe in 2014-16." Sub-par products definitely have no place in this article, so let's look into what quality brands have lined up for next year.

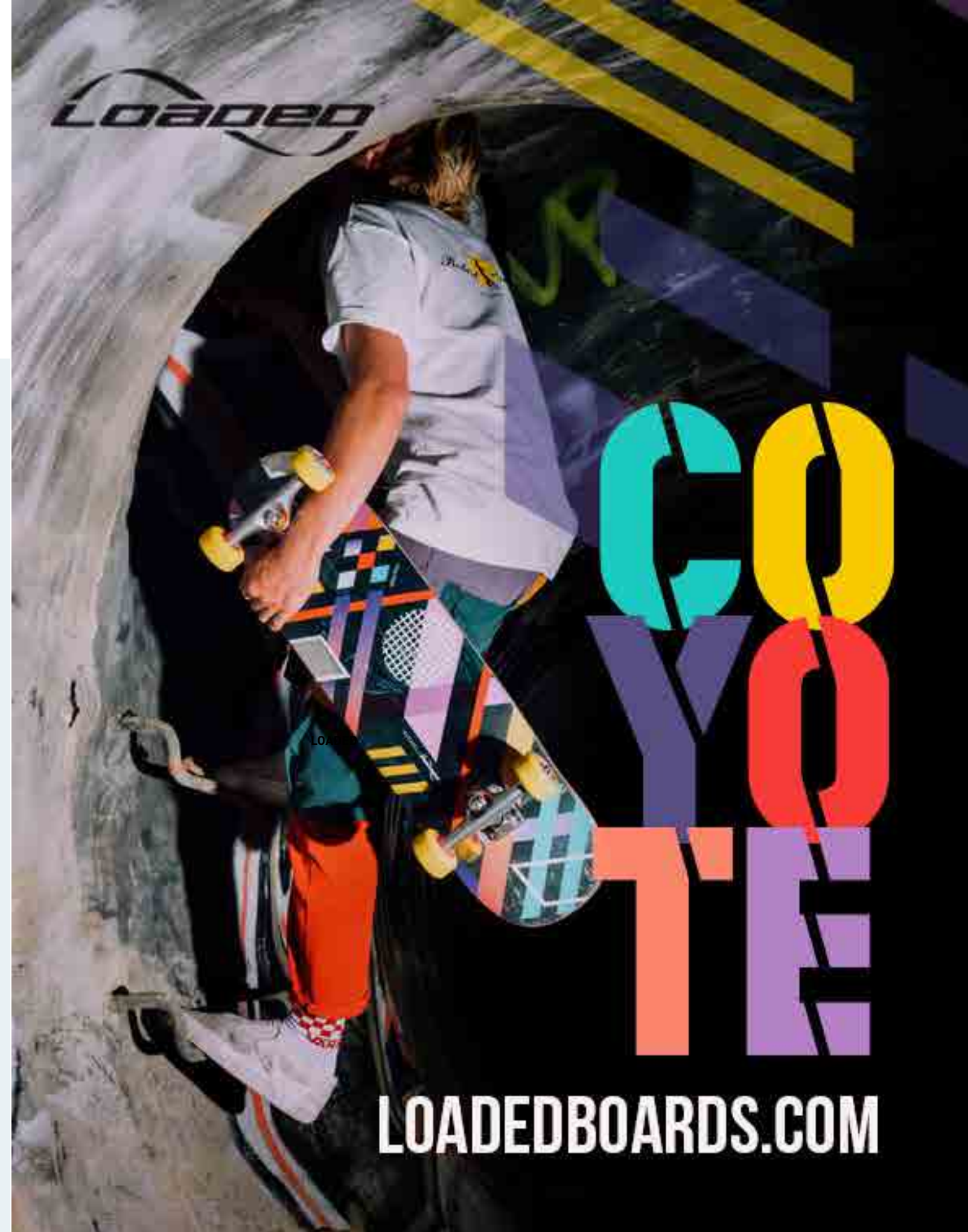
SHAPES: UNEXPECTED COMEBACK

Speaking on trending board shapes, Shane Maloney at Madrid Skateboards has his finger on the pulse: "Drop-Thru's remain the top seller, especially for new riders who want to learn on a smooth and stable setup." Madrid offers a nice long Drop-Thru, Arbor pushes the Flagship Axis 40, while DB Longboards is stoked on the Dagger Pina Colada at a nimble 36-inch length and with a subtle kicktail. Tim at Rayne is hyped on the Demonseed with a three-stage rocker and Deep Tub concave as "a pushing, freeride, sliding machine! For

more than a decade the Demonseed has been revered by downhillers and long-distance pushers for a good reason." Looking into next season, Benoit at HOFF sees a trend towards "short and wide longboards" and an influx of cruisers and surf skates. Mike at Jucker Hawaii is banking on, "classic all-time favourite longboards like the Makaha and the New Hoku." Speaking of classics, the time-honoured pintail shape is making a comeback with its natural, effortless look. OB Five has the gorgeous Psyched Tiger pintail, Arbor suggests the Groundswell Fish as a classic 37-inch pintail with Palisander top sheet.

WHEELS AND HARDWARE

Trucks are feeling the Covid supply squeeze more than other categories. Good news is that major longboard brands have developed their own custom trucks, like Madrid with the Caliber II 50° 184mm Trucks: "Our proven truck designs are praised by a community of top downhill skateboarders, core skaters, freestyle and dancers, and casual riders alike." In terms of product news for 2021, Benoit at HOFF is glad to announce: "The new Portland Baseplate is our main innovation for 2021. We sell it as a spare part and you can adapt on every board using classic trucks! You can convert your classic longboard skate to a Surf Skate thanks to this baseplate." Andy at Mindless is about to launch the new Gen X Trucks: "For too long riders have been faced with expensive limited options for standard kingpin trucks when riding wider decks that require 159mm trucks. We at Mindless decided to change that. A larger truck with good geometry shouldn't cost double." In the wheels segment, Benoit at HOFF suggests the new Forward Wheels collection featuring the Gyro (76mm) for downhill, Climax (65, 70mm) for all-rounders, and Bumper (60,65,70mm) for street and slide. Arbor is heading into the season with Axel Serrat Pro Wheels. Sue Denim at Orangatang Wheels has something in store, but only revealed: "Big chunky wheels! That's all I can say as of now." Chunky wheels are also on Mike Jucker's mind, "our SUPER BALLS freeride wheels are also doing very well. They slide really good and live a massivethane line behind." Shane at Madrid is banking on Blood Orange wheels, while Andy at Mindless introduces: "Mindless Sucka wheels



have been designed for the streets and bowls. A throwback design to one of the greatest periods of music and skating. Small enough to fit under standard skateboards, smooth enough to rip the roughest of surfaces.” Rayne is updating the 70mm Envy wheel with cool, colourful jelly styles that have been trending recently among style-conscious consumers. And here’s a novelty from GLOBE: “The one I’m happiest to discuss is our new recycled rubber grip. As a heritage boardsports brand and manufacturers of shoes and clothing as well as skateboards,

“We are answering the phone and keeping retailers informed. We also have to let them know to pre-order in advance right now if they like to stay in the game in 2021”. Mike, Jucker Hawaii.



Photo Hoff

we have to think about the lifecycle of all these products. Using it prominently on kids boards is an intentional way to get them thinking at an early age about what happens to things when we’re done using them.”

STYLE: LOUD AND ARTSY

Speaking of style, Madrid makes a heavy statement next season by collaborating with Marc Clenn in a whirl of unicorns, flamingos and kittens across boards of all sizes. “We instantly knew that Marc Clenn's mix of vibrant colours and imaginative subjects would look incredible on our hand-crafted skateboards,” said Shane Maloney. “We, like most everyone else have spent the majority of 2020 indoors. Staring at our screens. So graphically we leaned toward imagery that felt like a connection to what we were missing outside. Far off escapes, some terrestrial and the animals you might encounter, others a bit more out of this world,” said Dave Gitlin, sSkateboard designer at GLOBE. Speaking from an art perspective, Mike Hellier at Arbor is stoked on continuing “the Solstice collection and the ongoing relationship with Boarding For Breast Cancer (B4BC) with an all new graphic from artist Hilary Jane. Another new graphic from Aaron James Draplin in the Artist Collection, as well as all new graphic updates for the Photo, Foundation and Groundswell series, makes for Arbor’s strongest ever collection.” If loud and flashy designs are your cuppa, don’t miss the Flying Wheels Pileapple model with a surfy front truck and amazing griptape graphics. Also heavy on the art style is OB Five’s Psyched Tiger model: “Tigers prints are trending everywhere, but most are very cheap and cartoon looking. We’ve layered our tiger print on an exotic veneer to give it some depth and a more premium feel,” said Kris O’Brien, Founder/ Director at OB Five.

OPPORTUNITIES: SURF SKATE

Rolling into 2021, the Surf Skate category presents ample opportunities for brands and retailers. “I think we see more Skatesurfing and Mini Cruiser Type boards in demand. The cross over kind from Longboarding and Skateboarding,” said Mike Jucker. Arbor is entering the category with a massive push:



Photo Shiner

“The introduction of Arbor’s first Surfskate complete, sees the brand teaming up with Carver trucks, a relationship that started back in the mid-90’s when Arbor first began making skateboards. Now working alongside renowned surfboard shapers Tyler Warren and Ryan Lovelace to create two outstanding new products for the Arbor 2021 collection, the Shaper Series is sure to blow everyone away.” Benoit at Flying Wheels is increasing the Surf Skate category with four new technologies, including the Portland baseplate, Lombard baseplate, STR Trucks, and Capitol Trucks, as well as plenty of completes including the Palomar and Moorea models.

SOLIDARITY

Finally, let’s keep in mind that 2020 is a tough year despite all the hype. But examples of solidarity between brands and retailers prove why our industry is about more than just business: Loaded Boards has shut down all Amazon sales in early May and throttled its online store to prioritize shops and distributors. HOFF is offering flexible payment options to

retailers, while DB and Rayne are splitting available stock between retailers large and small, including multiple pre-book options. Andy and team at Mindless also ensure equal stock allocation and keep in close contact with all shops. Mike at Jucker Hawaii is on the same page: “We are answering the phone and keeping retailers informed. We also have to let them know to pre-order in advance right now if they like to stay in the game in 2021.” With that said, have fun writing those orders! ☺

Visit our website to see in depth brand previews of this category.

BOARDSPORTSOURCE.COM

HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Pandemic-strained supply chains
- 2 Shorter longboards
- 3 Pintails making comeback
- 4 Big, chunky wheels
- 5 Engineered trucks
- 6 Solidarity between brands & shops
- 7 HOT: Graphic griptape!

DB Longboards

mini COOPER 33"

HUGE 90MM WHEELS





The Heart Supply, founded by Element Founder Johnny Schillereff and his family, are focused on high-quality hardgoods essentials and completes with authentic art. With help from trusted distributors, the brand covers 90% of the world and is dedicated to expand the community by celebrating diversity and bringing more kids from all backgrounds into skateboarding.

Please tell us who the key players are at Heart Supply.

The key team members of The Heart Supply are Johnny, Kori, Lenox and Camp Schillereff. The Heart Supply is a family-owned and operated business. We have brought in trusted companies and individuals with whom we have multi-decade long relationships to execute on specific parts of the business where the expertise exactly matches the business or operational need.

What/who is the brand's target demo?

As far as a target demo, The Heart

Supply finds itself in a unique position. We appeal to young skateboard entrants, to the active core skate participants, and fanatic skate industry collectors. Due to Johnny's history and experience of over three decades in the industry and having been the Founder of Element, his relationship network is extensive. The amount of collaboration already available to The Heart Supply, which is carefully being curated by Johnny for the future, is supported by this rich history of expansive connections. Then, the simple and highly desirable canvases (of skateboard hardgoods accessories and printables that are always in demand for daily living) will provide for the needs and desires of this target demo – the skateboard enthusiast.

Which product categories are you working in?

In most cases when a brand or founder has had the opportunity to expand their business, the tendency has been to increase product categories, price points and attempt to compete, and emulate high fashion. Often, this occurs while forgetting about the original intent, the loyal customers, retail partners and distributors. At The Heart Supply, we have no desire to be

make more and more to ultimately compete with high fashion. Rather, we will continue to be an expert in the field of skateboarding. With that, we have chosen to embrace the product categories in which we are experts, and what we know the skateboarding community wants; imaginatively created, high-quality hardgoods essentials and completes, and printables. With respect to apparel, we will have a narrow focus on tees and fleece with discipline on authentic art, silhouettes and colour reliability.

What's your plan for the wholesale channel in the coming 12 months?

Operating in the current environment that is so dramatically affected by the global pandemic has presented unique challenges and opportunities. Our primary focus within the wholesale channel has been (and will continue) to be

a reliable source of product with an exceptional customer-service focus on our wholesale partners and resulting retail channel. In order to execute seamlessly, we have hand-selected two distributors with whom we have a deep history and trust, to service the wholesale channel alongside The Heart Supply. Through this preferred network, we cover 90% of the globe. We know the value to the wholesale and retail channel when they are being served by reliable and ethical brands and that is an absolute ethos within The Heart Supply.

What does the future look like for skateboard wholesale?

Simply put, the future looks bright. There are solid tailwinds the next

several years that should accelerate the growth of the skateboarding community. A silver lining to the global pandemic has been a focus and celebration of individual, outdoor sports. The growth and expansion of skateboarding for boys and girls is on-going. We finally have skateboarding represented in the upcoming Olympics in 2021, which will showcase skateboarding on an expanded global stage. These are just some of the major forces at play that will expand the industry over time. As a simple exercise in supply and demand, demand will outstrip supply and this will translate into growth and success within the skateboard wholesale marketplace, as the wholesale channel will need product to service the retailers that want to supply the excited and passionate end-customer.

Tell us more about the Schillereff family's vision for getting kids from underprivileged backgrounds into skateboarding.

The Heart Supply Family celebrates diversity and embraces all skateboarders past, present, and future. Riding a skateboard is a creative, physical activity that

sees no colour, inspires equality, and builds both self-esteem and awareness. The freedom and friendships developed from skateboarding are invaluable. Putting skateboards under kids feet allows them to roll toward positive opportunities, health and happiness. Our goal is to give kids the gift of riding their own skateboard and welcome them to the skateboarding community.

How has the current skateboard boom impacted your business?

The current skateboard boom has impacted our business in a very positive way. It couldn't be a better time to be starting a new brand due to the insatiable demand for product that can be delivered by reliable and consistent sources. That said, what is most exciting for our family is to be operating The Heart Supply during this time in skateboarding of such growth that allows us to accelerate our mission-driven focus of getting more skateboards under kids feet on a global scale. ☺

MARKET INSIGHT

ITALY

GERMANY
AUSTRIA
FRANCE
SWISS
UK

As the months have passed by, people have learnt to live with the new rules of wearing face masks, mainly because many understand that this pandemic will not just fade away; we will have to live with COVID for many more months to come.

In Italy, inside stores, restaurants, bars, etc... we still have a strict face mask rule and people are really paying attention to this. When you take a seat in a restaurant or, for example at school, then you are allowed to take the face mask off, otherwise you have to wear it. The face mask rules are in combination with disinfecting your hands when entering or leaving a building. Outside you only have to wear a face mask that covers your nose and mouth if you can't keep the minimum distance of 1 - 2m. Of course, not everyone is happy about it but it seems to be the only way to keep our infections rate low enough to keep the economy and school system running. However, the community of Coronavirus conspiracy theorists is growing pretty fast in Italy and many view the pandemic as a disease that was brought to life by the powerful influences around the world. Said community is trying to attract more and more members and is heavily attacking the government through social media, Youtube and so on...

While the economy is open everyone is just happy to be able to work and everyone is making a collaborative effort to try to avoid a second lockdown, especially as winter is approaching. Winter will be the next hurdle in terms of a holiday season infections explosion.

Business-wise a lot of small stores are still fighting for survival as the months of being in lockdown are still in their bones; cashflow and liquidity aren't back on track yet, even with the different options available for help on offer from the state. In the grand scheme of things, the help is just a drop in the ocean. It's not just small stores suffering, the bigger retailers located in

big city centres or department stores still struggle as people are still avoiding hanging out in overfilled and crowded places.

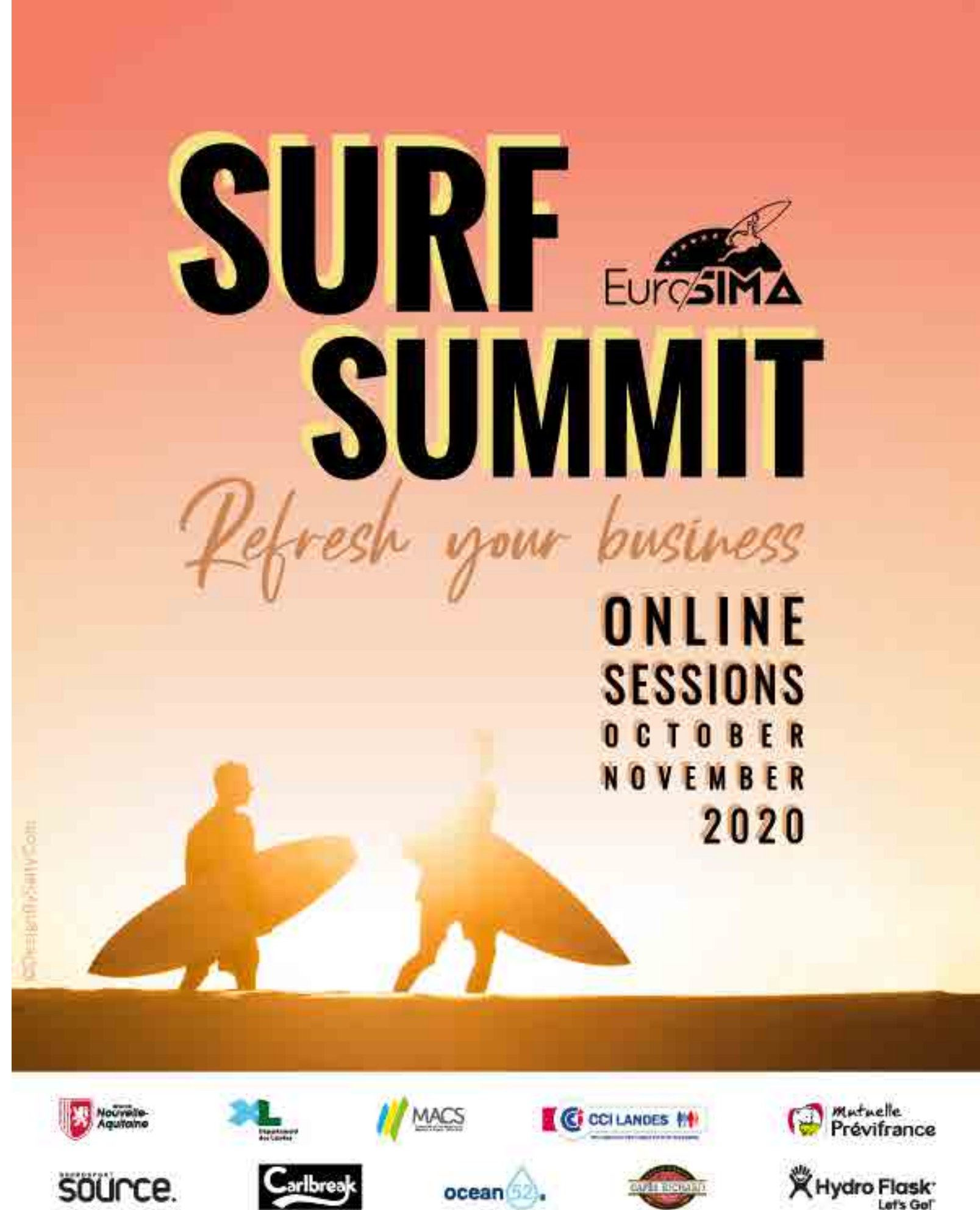
Skateboarding is still booming and complete boards are sold out nearly everywhere as out of all hardware, completes have seen the biggest increase in sales since March 2020. Even though winter is approaching, skateboarding's still doing very well and the boom sees no signs of heading towards a downturn. This keeps the skate and surf stores happy as the boom is helping them survive this very tricky 2020.

As the winter season is approaching, everyone is getting a bit nervous because if the infection rates start to go up again, which has already been slowly happening throughout August and September, the winter season will be in danger. If people cannot use cable cars or can only use them under heavy rules, it could potentially have a negative affect on winter sales and the overall season, which would be catastrophic for many retailers, rental businesses as well for apres ski, hotels and restaurants.

SS21 pre-sales have been completed and, as expected, have been conservative due to stores really fearing that the pandemic is not over yet and will still be a thing in 2021. For sure, the big winner so far in 2020 has been the online store business which has been a lifeline for stores to maintain their turnover as lockdown has seen more Italians than ever turn towards digital shopping. The need for businesses to have an online presence is now a necessity everywhere and every business owner is taking steps to making their business more digital.

But overall, the way we manage living with this pandemic will be crucial during the coming months. The collective effort of the public will decide how successful a country and their economy will be in the next one or two years.

FRANZ JOSEF HOLLER



The poster for the Surf Summit Online Sessions features a warm, orange-toned background. At the top, the words "SURF SUMMIT" are written in large, bold, black capital letters with a yellow outline. To the right of "SURF" is the EuroSIMA logo, which includes a stylized sun and a person surfing. Below the main title, the phrase "Refresh your business" is written in a cursive, brown font. To the right of this, the text "ONLINE SESSIONS" is in bold black, followed by "OCTOBER" and "NOVEMBER" in a smaller font, and "2020" in large bold black letters. At the bottom, there are silhouettes of two people walking on a beach, one carrying a surfboard. The bottom of the poster is a solid dark brown bar containing a row of logos for various sponsors: Nouvelle-Aquitaine, Département des Landes, MACS, CCI LANDES, Mutuelle PréviFrance, source, Carlbear, ocean 52, and Hydro Flask.

SURF SUMMIT

EuroSIMA

Refresh your business

ONLINE SESSIONS
OCTOBER
NOVEMBER
2020

Sponsors:
Nouvelle-Aquitaine, Département des Landes, MACS, CCI LANDES, Mutuelle PréviFrance, source, Carlbear, ocean 52, Hydro Flask



Kesslerweg 4 - 48155 Münster - Germany

We are offering an extensive range of high-quality products for skateboarding, longboarding, BMX, streetwear, protective gear and skate shoes for your local skate-, BMX- or online shop since 2005. Our main distribution area is Austria, Belgium, Germany, Luxemburg and the Netherlands, but also other parts of Europe.

As a skateboard, longboard and BMX wholesaler, we exclusively supervise a wide variety of both well-established and newer brands such as Bones Wheels, Bones Bearings, Creature, Powell-Peralta, Independent Trucks, Santa-Cruz, Toy-Machine, Welcome Skateboards, Loser-Machine, Dark Seas, Mongoose, Thrasher, TSG and many more.

We are immediately looking for a full-time **media designer** for our team.

Your Profile:

- a completed training as a media designer or a completed degree
- work experience about more than 2 years
- accomplished knowledge about Adobe Photoshop / InDesign / Illustrator and safe handling with Adobe CC
- basic knowledge of MS Office 365 and advanced knowledge with MS Outlook
- ideally you have experience with Backend and knowledge about Databases (SQL, HTML, Java, etc.)
- optimal feeling for corporate design in typography, colors, layout and aesthetics
- structured, responsible and independent way of working
- Communicative and conceptual skills

Your Tasks:

- Creative design of digital presentations (Web-Banners, Mailings, Catalogs, Clippings, etc.)
- Participation in the conception, design and further development of our website
- Maintenance of our B2B website
- Creation of print data and communication with printers / agencies
- Implementation of composites, cut-outs and icons
- Maintenance and updating of a media and image database

What You Can Expect:

- A company with flat hierarchies and a relaxed working atmosphere
- highly motivated and diverse team
- A Company with healthy economic growth and the possibility of further perspectives
- Chances for personal development and strengthening of one's own skills
- Insights into action sports

If you feel addressed and already see yourself in our company, then send us your cover letter with your CV, photo and a portfolio of your past work to the following email address:

n.gebbers@247dist.com

If you have any questions, you can contact us on the following telephone number: +49 251 91989 247



BOA Technology Inc., the creator of the award-winning, patented BOA Fit® System, is reinventing how shoes, medical braces, and equipment performs. As BOA looks ahead to the future, there is contagious excitement radiating across our offices in the United States, Europe and Asia. We are a collaborative, growing company where details matter and satisfaction with our product is paramount. The people of BOA are passionate, committed, collaborative and friendly. We know the joy of actively pursuing an idea, making it a reality and then moving on to the next challenge. If this work environment sounds attractive to you, please read on.

In-House Graphic Designer and Photographer EMEA (m/f/d)

Over the last 20 years, BOA has built a strong business foundation through a relentless focus on the innovative functionality and market leading quality of its Fit solutions. With a focus on further amplifying this success, BOA is now looking to strengthen this position through an expanding marketing programme that builds stronger brand positioning and awareness. The in-house Graphic Designer and Photographer will be key partner for the EMEA Marketing Team, ensuring all strategies and initiatives are brought to life in a dynamic, performance driven and premium way.

The specific responsibilities will include:

- Being the central creative liaison between the EMEA office and the global creative team in Denver
- The development and production of all consumer, shopper and trade focused communication concepts, tools and assets (Print and Digital)
- 3D spatial design for consumer events and trade shows
- Activation ideas for events and social media channels
- In house photography, including a mix of studio and action shots
- Basic moving image capture and editing
- Office branding and display

We don't stand still at BOA, so in order to fully exceed in this role you need to be a quick thinker, a problem solver, extremely resourceful and have a hunger to get involved in all aspects of the marketing mix. Whilst we are expecting you to have a well-honed set of graphic design skills and to be a fast learner, we are not expecting you to be an expert in all areas.

Your skills and abilities:

- Passionate about and active in different sports
- Genuine interest in exploring BOA® featured products in its various activities
- High School graduation plus formal graphic/design related degree/diploma
- Min. 2 years of full-time graphic design experience – preferably within the sports industry
- Be an expert with the key Adobe programs (Indesign, Illustrator, Photoshop, Lightroom, Premiere or similar)
- Experience with conceptualisation, creation and production of varied print and digital formats
- Fluent in English and German (written and spoken) is required – Italian, French or Spanish is appreciated
- Highly organized with a strong attention to detail and ability to adhere to timelines
- Strong ability to manage multiple tasks simultaneously
- Team oriented, flexible, open minded and thoughtful

If you are interested, please apply online [here](#).

For legal reasons, we are obliged to point out the minimum salary for this position according to the collective agreement, which is 1981.- EUR gross per month. However, our attractive salary packages are based on current market salaries and are therefore significantly above the stated minimum salary, depending on your experience and skills.



Location: Cornwall, UK | Type: Full Time

A rare opportunity to become part of the team who are responsible for supplying one of the largest ranges of Surf Lifestyle clothing and equipment in the UK. Ann's Cottage have been leading the sector for over 40 years with locations all over Cornwall and a strong online presence.

With their recent growth and expansion plans for the future both online and instore, they are now looking to expand their already established buying team to an experienced Buyer with a sound understanding of the industry and retail principles. The successful candidate must be knowledgeable and experienced in purchasing Surf and Skate hardware and accessories.

Reporting to Buying Heads, an Ann's Cottage buyer will:

- Manage existing categories, buying specific products in line with demand whilst planning for other opportunities.
- Deliver on challenging targets.
- Regularly review performance indicators, such as sales and discount levels.
- Manage plans for stock levels.
- Meet suppliers and negotiate pricing and terms.
- Maintain long standing relationships with existing suppliers and source new suppliers for future products.
- Liaise with other departments within the company to ensure promotions/launches are executed on time.
- Attend trade fairs/Buying appointments in the UK and overseas, to select and range new collections.
- Participate in promotional activities.
- Write reports and forecast levels.
- Liaise with shops personnel and our retail Director to ensure supply meets demand.
- Obtain feedback from stores.

Essential skills an Ann's cottage buyer will need:

- Wetsuit, Hardware and Accessory knowledge essential.
- Previous buying experience.
- Strong analytical skills.
- Negotiation skills and the ability to network and influence people.
- Teamworking and interpersonal skills.
- Numeracy skills and proficiency using IT.
- Comprehensive understanding of Excel.
- Good organisation skills and the ability to multitask.
- The ability to cope with the pressure of having to make important decisions and meet tight deadlines and the extended hours needed to achieve this.
- The capability to work in a fast pace environment achieve targets.
- Commercial awareness.
- Creative Flare.
- A passion for retail.

Please apply in writing with a full CV to jobs@annscottage.com



MERVIN MANUFACTURING

Die Mervin Manufacturing Inc. ist ein Amerikanischer Boardsportartikel-Hersteller mit Hauptsitz in Seattle und Produktion in Sequim, USA. Gegründet 1977 von den Boardsport Enthusiasten Mike Olson und Pete Saari, gehört die Mervin Manufacturing Inc. zu den weltweit führenden Snowboard-, Skateboard-, Ski- und Surfboard-Herstellern und ist Vorreiter in umweltfreundlicher Produktion.

Zur Mervin Manufacturing Inc. gehören die Marken Lib Tech, GNU, Bent Metal Binding Works und Roxy Hardgoods.

www.mervin.com

Für unsere Europazentrale in München suchen wir zum 1. Januar 2021 eine/n:

Account Coordinator Europe (M/W/D)

DEINE AUFGABEN

- Customer Service
- Order Management, Order Upload und Tracking
- B2B-Systempflege
- Koordination von Wareneingang und Kundenlieferungen mit unserer Zentrale in USA und unserem Europäischen Lager
- Organisation von Sales Meetings
- Sonstige Aufgaben und Projekte

DEIN PROFIL

- Bachelorabschluss in Betriebswirtschaftslehre oder vergleichbare Qualifikation
- Erfahrung im Customer Service und mit ERP-Systemen
- Organisationstalent mit sehr guten Sprachkenntnissen in Deutsch und Englisch (Wort und Schrift)
- Exzellente Kundenbetreuung und überzeugende schriftliche sowie verbale Kommunikationsfähigkeit
- Detailorientierte Arbeitsweise mit multi-tasking Fähigkeiten
- Sehr gute MS-Office Kenntnisse, insbesondere Excel

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- Büro in zentraler Lage in München (Au-Haidhausen)
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- Kostenloser Zugang zu neuem Testmaterial in Surf, Snow & Skate
- Regelmäßige Teamausflüge

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