

BIG WIG: LIBERATED BRANDS'S JOOST GROOTSWAGERS
FRESH BRANDS UNVEILED

EURO BOARDSPORT BUSINESS ANALYSIS

RETAIL BUYERS GUIDES:
SKATE SHOES, GREAT OUTDOORS, SKATE HELMETS,
STREETWEAR, FOILING, SURFSKATE, WINGS, FOAMIES,
SWIMWEAR, BACKPACKS



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When I started working in the boardsports media industry, writing for Clive in 2011, I'd speak with retailers, industry execs and journalists who all spoke of the headier days before the 2008 global financial crisis: "Oh man, you should have seen it; so much money kicking about!" "It was amazing... team trips, extravagant dinners, company credit cards, champagne!" etc. Those days are long gone... as are the days where snowboard industry employees used to work 5 months of the year, then fuck off to Bali for summer to count their pennies. The business has "consolidated", and it would seem everyone's woken up to the fact that working in our industry 12 months of the year is actually a pretty decent thing.

I speak of the 2008 GFC as it's the last major economic recession we lived through and those same industry folk who back in 2011 lauded the pre-recession days, today remind me that as an industry and even an economy in general, we go through these peaks and troughs. It's the start of July

at the time of writing, and the buoyancy provided by easing Covid restrictions is being counteracted daily by the rising cost of living crisis we are facing. There are bright spots in the industry, with this Wing craze taking hold of oceans across the globe and giving retailers a boon to talk of. The boom in surfboard sales has now levelled off, although countries such as Bali, who only just opened their doors to tourism post-Covid are now seeing a delayed peak in demand for surfboards. We're all aware there is now an overstock issue in the skateboard market, something we're hoping doesn't lead to mass discounts this summer. And snowboard 22/23 pre-orders returned to pre-covid levels, however with the steep rises in energy and raw material costs, an impending price increase seems almost inevitable.

In a recent conversation with WSL CEO Erik Logan, we found out the company's viewership figures, engagement rates and partnership roster are all up by high double, (even triple)

digit figures, when compared to pre-Covid levels. In this issue's Big Wig, we speak with Joost Grootswager, who heads up Liberated Brands group in Europe (Volcom, Electric, Spyder & now Captain Fin co) and it's interesting to hear how these core boardsports companies are marrying synergies with trad ski brand and stablemate, Spyder to great effect.

Looking at the short-term picture, we're faced by a number of large obstacles, but the longer term picture is looking brighter with a growth in participation across all our boardsports during covid. So the message now is hang on in the face of strong head winds, ride the positive draughts where you can and be prepared for the more settled economic weather when it returns.

Sending our continued thoughts and support to those in conflict in Ukraine

Always Sideways

Harry Mitchell Thompson
Ed-in-chief

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Published by ESB
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Boardsport SOURCE
is published bi-monthly
© ESB. All Rights Reserved

boardsportsource.com

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On the cover Sole Tech's Bas Janssen - **Photographer**, Rob Rouleaux

INTERVIEW

PADDLE SPORTS SHOW LYON

Paddle Sports Show made its debut in Lyon, France last summer, taking over directly from the previous PADDLEexpo. After a successful first show, establishing itself as THE European paddle event, show founder and organiser Philippe Doux has big plans for their 2022 edition, which he details here.

Please, can we have an overview of the show's launch last year.

The inaugural edition of the Paddle Sports Show last September went great, especially when you consider half of the world was still on lockdown and sanitary passes in place all over Europe. Not an easy time to launch a show to be sure, but the response has been amazing, making us even more excited for the 2022 edition this September 28th-30th.

Please give us some figures from the first show.

Last year, we had a 6500 m2 floor plan, 80+ exhibitors, and a little under 800 trade visitors.

What were you most proud of last year?

Probably the trust put in our hands by the whole industry. Despite a rather difficult situation, to say the least, industry players showed they still strongly believe trade shows are essential for our industry, and they decided the Paddle Sports Show, in Lyon, (France) was the best place for it. We were thrilled with the location; our exhibition hall is 200m from the riverbank, ideal for on-water demos. Getting the world's biggest Paddle Sports industry players together under one roof was a challenge we're proud of, as was the satisfaction of all who attended,

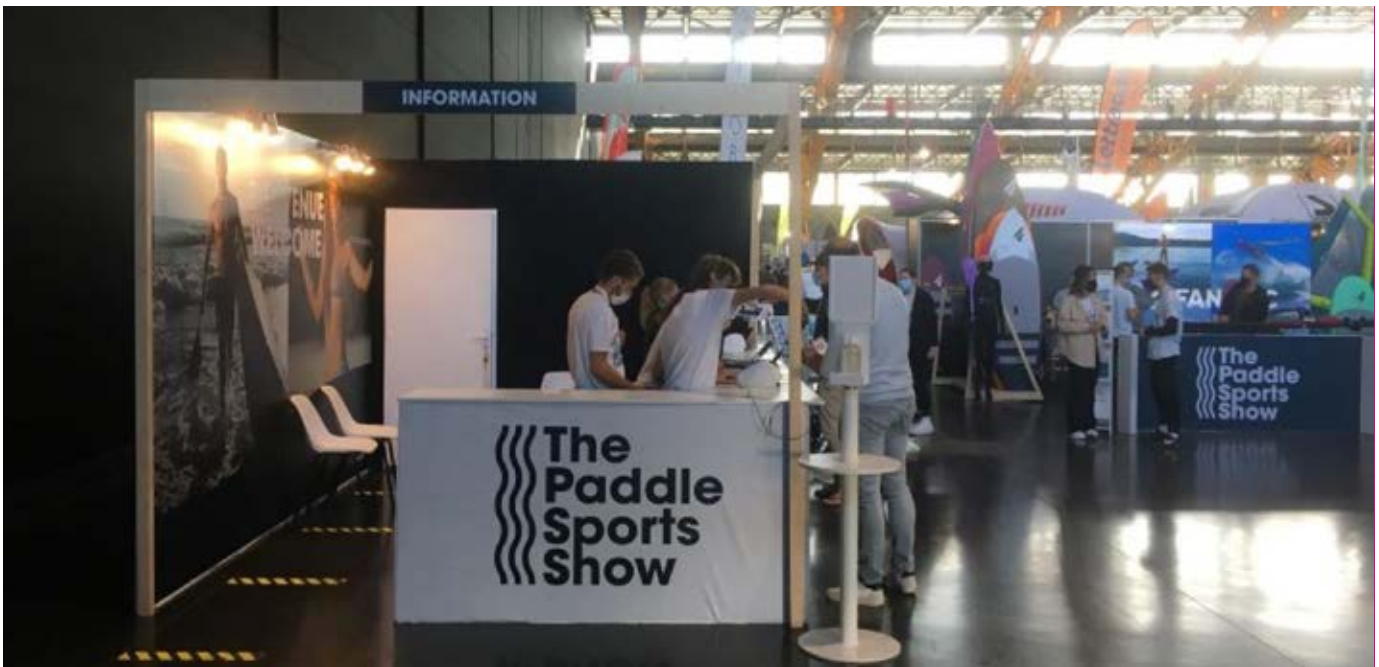
which was evident all week, especially during our final party and awards night.

What are the planned highlights for 2022?

Many! The products of the year award ceremony, conferences, and the Festival (a public day on the Rhône River, 200m from the show's gates. We really try to create an ecosystem of events that come as an added value for exhibitors and visitors. While the trade show is not open to the public, paddlers can still test the new products exhibited during the show; this is the whole concept behind the Festival, which is free for exhibitors. The Festival also allows visitors who could not make it during the show to meet with exhibitors in a more relaxed atmosphere.

What's new for the second edition?

Everything is new because everything will be bigger this year. The development of the Festival is a big one. For 2022, we are coordinating the Festival with the French Stand Up Paddling Championships and an international SUP race. We already expect 300+ racers, including some of the best in the world. The goal is to have the Lyon Paddle Show Race become a key event on the European racing and event calendar, and



we hope to reach the 500 paddler mark within the next two/three years.

What is your motivation for going above and beyond a trade show?

We want the experience at the Paddle Sports Show to be unique. For instance, we have a video studio and photo booth available where exhibitors or visitors can professionally shoot products, with a green wall, spotlights, professional photographers, and video operators - everything one needs.

You are also organizing conferences that will take place during the show?

Yep, that is another big one for us this year. The development of a conferences and presentations program targeted at exhibitors, retailers, and buyers; no less than eight conferences are scheduled with themes like new regulations, how to take advantage of social media, meeting with official governing bodies, environmental evolution in the production process, and more.

How are the bookings for the show looking?

Bookings are going great as of early May 2022. Our floor plan has increased by 30% from

2021 (10,000m2 vs 6500m2) and occupation is above 90%. As we speak, nearly 120 brands are confirmed.

Which brands or segments will be new to the show for 2022?

Many! In the board segment alone, 120 exhibitors have already signed up. Expect the usual big players such as Starboard, Fanatic, Indiana, Tahe, Aquamarina, Aztron, Aquadesign, Poolstar, Aquaglide, etc., alongside smaller and super innovative companies. Naish, SIA 425, NRS, Palm Equipment, Wavesport, Perception, Valley, and others will also be present. Another novelty is the increase in companies exhibiting foil-related products, including E-foils.

Why should retailers attend the 2022 Paddle Sports Show?

Because it is going to be fun. Because the parties will be wild. But more, because the whole industry will be gathered under one roof for three days to share in shaping our future.



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BOARDSHORTS SS23

They are a yardstick for boardsports brands, a unit of measurement to determine the extent of their surf cred. Designing a technical boardshort is a prerequisite before brands can apply all their know-how on the world of fashion for their beach shorts and other casual shorts. Spring-summer 2023 boardshorts line-up by **David Bianic**.



DAKINE

Boardshorts, walkshorts, swimshorts, volleyshorts, bermuda shorts... The world of short trousers is certainly not “short” of different names. In this field we find really varied lineages, on one hand there’s Boardies for example, a swimwear brand inspired by surf culture who develop vintage surf shorts, while on the other hand there’s Dakine, a pure brand originating from technical equipment, with boardshorts representing 70% of their range of short trousers, says Rémi Chaussemiche.

While pure surfers swear by boardshorts, brands’ surf collections are more balanced, like Oakley whose boardshorts and related beachshorts make up 50% of their shorts on offer (including lifestyle shorts). For a historic surf brand like Quiksilver, boardshorts represent 60% of their shorts turnover, but these models are versatile, “performing well in the ocean and across all watersports or hanging out poolside, with a sense of style”, explain Designer James Kindgren and Global Product Manager Maël Armellini. The brand spanning new Phantom+ Blockade Paddle Hybrid Series 18” (what a name!) from Hurley epitomizes the hybrid trend, a boardshort based

“We’re noticing a demand for longer lengths similar to what we saw through the late 90s and early 2000s” Dylan Lambert, Rusty

on the need and request of Kai Lenny, designed for SUP, foiling, wind foiling... “Its main characteristic is durability, we are using heavyweight ripstop in upper & 4 way stretch in lateral & lower parts so it’s still a super flexible and comfortable short.” Rusty can confirm the boardshort’s fluidity of use: “Any fixed short could be considered a surf short but more like half of these are a solely focused around surf specific features and fabrication,” explains Dylan Lambert, Men’s Brand Manager. Basically, boardshorts can be worn with or without a board.

BOARDSHORTS SS23 THEMES

At risk of sounding a bit Manichean, it’s tempting to divide the market into two major trends. On one side, the historic surf brands are relying on their heritage and revisiting their

emblematic styles with a 2K twist. On the other, non-endemic brands and younger labels can go off the beaten track and try new things. For example, Billabong's collection is based on two themes, one of which is called "A tribe called surf", which uses the codes of the 90s (the golden age of surfwear) "with a combination of bright and primary tones.", says Simon Charlesworth, EMEA Men's Marketing Manager. And since history is all about people, the brand will offer a new Andy Irons capsule from the Billabong Pro Pipeline, featuring "the iconic diamond patterned shorts he wore".

Another key model in this heritage x modern trend is Quiksilver's Original Scallop, the famous cotton shorts with a side slit worn in the glory years of the 80's-90's. Relaunched nearly ten years ago, the Scallop now has more technical versions, the Highlite Scallop and Highline Pro Scallop (note that Quiksilver are using the same terminology as in their wetsuits domain): "These technical boardshorts bring seamless panel changes in stretch and breathability to the iconic 'Scallop fit' through innovative weaving processes using recycled synthetic content".

Lightning Bolt also fully embraces its vintage graphic identity, though with modern fabrications (polyester/spandex), and yet tries contemporary reinterpretations of its famous lightning logo: the Surf Squad model (46 cm) is thus offered in a pied-de-coq pattern formed by lightning bolts, rather original.

Another flagship brand of the 80's, Gotcha return to Europe with prints that embody their heyday, fluoro, and three capsule collections: Tahiti Surf, Into the Wild and Y2K Rave. Old school rules!

The non-historical brands are showing strong points too. Oakley and Dakine, for example, are banking on their technical added value. The former has focused on functionality and variety of use by employing innovative and more durable materials, such as "seersucker, ripstop and hand made peach skin fabrics". Dakine treat their boardshorts like true hardware items, emphasising their technical features more than their style (see more later in Materials and Fabrics). Hurley sits in the same category with its iconic Phantom+, now offered in a Sidewinder 17" model, "more flexible due to lateral pieces giving extra stretch". As usual, the Phantom is available in a huge palette of colourways and prints: Hurley has got it covered!

For a retro-modern brand like Rhythm, the Surf Trunk is an essential piece that "reflects our brand's vision of alternative

"If the art feels better washed back we tend to go with a natural blend. If we are looking for saturation and boldness we go with synthetic blends"

Freddie Sipowicz & Jonathan Gilbert, ...Lost

surfing", highlight Jacob Byrne and Stéphane Santoni, Worldwide and European Brand Managers. It features their classic floral and paisley designs in a variety of Rhythm's signature hand-drawn house prints. While we're on the subject of hand-drawn designs, it's impossible not to mention the return of Rietveld to the market, who will be offering "boardshorts for the first time in over 15 years" for SS23, says Sales Director Rich Bouch. These

"Our products perform well in the ocean and across all watersports or hanging out poolside, with a sense of style" James Kindgren and Maël Armellini, Quiksilver

shorts will feature Rick Rietveld's famous graphics, already featured on their T-shirts and this time "applying leg and AOP".

The Critical Slide Society (TCSS) is a much more recent addition to the market, and has also given carte blanche to a number of artists since its inception in 2009. There's no change to a working formula for spring-summer 2023, with "Lots of art and prints!", including a line signed by the artist Mitchell English from Noosa in Australia, as well as references to 80s surfing.

To round off the major themes of SS23, let's take a look at crotch lengths, measurements that yo-yo from one season to the next. In this case, boardshorts are growing back again! Dilan at Rusty even confirms that this is the main development for them, as they see "a demand for longer lengths similar to what we saw

through the late 90s and early 2000s". This is also the case at Rietveld, whose boardshorts will cover the knees. The same is true for Simon at Billabong, who reports "consumer appetite for longer leg lengths creeping through", both in boardshorts and elastic waist shorts.

The price range remains relatively unchanged despite significant increases in material and transport costs, with prices concentrated between €40 and €70 (from simple beachshorts to boardshorts) although very high-end models are priced at up to €139 (O'Neill) and even \$249 (Rusty).

SS23 COLOURS AND PATTERNS

We should congratulate designers for their ingenuity in renewing palettes from year to year. Among these new additions are gold tones used to accentuate certain illustrations at Boardies. At Oakley, the focus is on colour splashes with extravagant colours, as well as realistic artwork like their beautiful wave seen from the sky. As always at Protest, there is poetry in the colour themes with their primary palette inspired by the Mediterranean (Shell Peach, Jay Blue, Deep Dive), then a second with 70's references (Butter Yellow, River Blue, Clay Orange), and finally a Matching & Botanicals theme with artichoke green and midnight blue, combined with botanical motifs. Sticking with botanicals, there's the really nice Cactus Trunks from Rhythm which are part of a capsule collection with shirts, t-shirts and caps in the same look.

As for Oxbow, the brand wants to create a link between the trips made by their ambassadors and the collections open to customers, with a first line that plays with the exotic patterns and bright colours of the jungle and a second with a look inspired by the desert and African landscapes with sandy colours transformed by the sun.

In terms of prints, again Boardies are showing their audacity and sense of quirkiness, notably with their Fresh Prince print (The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air) that is as loud and funky as the 90s TV

...lost



HYDRA

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RUSTY

series, and another called Lucha Libre that features the masks of Mexican wrestlers.

There are some collaborations with artists, but no major trends to report in this area, with TCS mentioned above or Rusty and Quiksilver, who are calling on a collab with the Hawaiian artist/skater Gregg Kaplan.

SS23 MATERIALS AND FABRICS

While beach shorts and walkshorts are open to a vast choice of natural materials, boardshorts need to be more synthetic to meet the demands of their use: flexible, quick drying, etc.

Recycled polyester is once again the material of choice for spring/summer 2023; materials derived from used plastic bottles, mixed with nylon and elastane. The Repreve label is often chosen for its traceability, as is the case for O'Neill and Oxbow. The latter combines it with natural materials such as coconut fibre (Barista and Bestie models) or cotton (Bentigo). Better still, Billabong are innovating by using Ciclo® technology, a natural enzyme contained in the product that accelerates its biodegradation once it reaches the waste disposal site.

But using a synthetic or natural fabric also depends on the desired aesthetic, explains the ...Lost team (Freddie Sipowicz/President & Jonathan Gilbert/CEO Europe): "If the art feels better washed back we tend to go with a natural blend. If we are looking for saturation and boldness we go with synthetic blends."

When it comes to fabric treatments, Quiksilver use a plant-based process with seed oils on their technical boardshorts to improve drying times. Dakine are also pushing their PFC-free water-repellent treatment. Another eco-conscious innovation from Protest is the use of bamboo charcoal, for its resistance

to UV rays and bad odours. Good practices also extend to packaging, as shown with Lightning Bolt, using recycled plastic and recyclable card boxes, closed with paper glue tape, plus hang tags in recycled paper. The brand is also committed to more transparency of its production through the Keep This Land Beautiful campaign (more info on lightningbolt-usa.com/eu).

Fit is another aspect of a boardshort's technical properties and the devil is in the detail here too. Dakine provide an inner waistband with Dobby fabric for comfort and support, a Close Fly® with stretchy gusset, a welded side pocket with waterproof zip and laser-cut drainage eyelet, as well as a slimmer lace-up fastening so that it doesn't get in the way when paddling. ...Lost are also taking care of your waistline with a faux suede inner band.

Fashion victim, hardcore surfer or Sunday surfer, tech-addict or vintage lover, the world of boardshorts is a real melting pot with everyone bringing their own style and know-how. Retailers just have to think carefully about their own clientele and stock boardshorts that correspond to their territory without forgetting to take some risks. ☺

HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 70s-80s-90s heritage styles
- 2 More prints and artworks
- 3 Natural patterns (tropics, desert)
- 4 Durable treatments (water repellent, UV, odour)
- 5 "Only a surfer knows the feeling" type finishes

CREATORS & INNOVATORS



DERRICK DISNEY





RETAILER PROFILE

DIVISION 24, WAKEFIELD



Wayne Miller is the owner of Division 24 Skate Store. Located in Wakefield, England Wayne took over the shop from his brother 17 years ago and has run it ever since. He is talking about the boom in skateboarding due to the pandemic, overproduction and the revival of the 90s in clothing. On the first floor of an old Victorian house his shop remains the only skate shop within miles, providing the local scene with the right equipment.

Please give a brief history of your store including when it was started, who started it, who the owners and key players are.

The store opened in 2001 by my brother and it was called Board-Riders. I worked for my brother Dave. In the beginning we sold skateboards, snowboards and surf products. But the shop went downhill, and my brother dropped out in 2005 and asked me if I wanted to take it over. Well, I've been the captain ever since and I took surf and snowboards out of the equation to concentrate purely on skateboarding. It has always been a one-man operation ever since. There are some people helping out but no staff in particular. My brother Dave chose another way as it wasn't his main job. By the way big thanks to him and all our team riders, without them it would not be the same.

What percentage of your sales are from online business compared to your brick-and-mortar sales?

We do roughly 10–20% in online sales. I would call it a bonus rather than our focus. I prefer the walk-ins anyway. Interacting with people and showing them around. However, during the pandemic our online sales were up to 90%. We don't do much advertising, so it supports a little but nothing major.

How have you been promoting and nurturing the local scene?

I've always had local team riders and sponsor them. There are always new people wanting to start skateboarding and people who start back up again. It works well because I have the only skateboard shop in town. The promotion usually happens at the skateparks by word of mouth as people talk about the shop in a good way (I hope, haha). Sometimes we hold jams at the local skatepark and I provide prizes for the events and comps in the area. Basically, I am helping people out wherever I can.

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

Definitely our own shop brand of clothing as that sells really well, Independent Trucks, Spitfire Wheels, Bones Reds Bearings, Death Skateboards, Creature Skateboards etc.

What opportunities do you see on the horizon for the UK skate scene this summer?

I suppose things have gone back to normal now, so the competitions will start to pick up again. Gatherings and jams start flowing. Some of the jams have been amazing recently. People are stoked to get together again. I don't think it will be as mad in general when it comes to sales, kind of a 2019 feel at the moment. The thing with skateboarding is that people drop out and people come back. Generally, it still has a gradual increase and due to the circumstances, it was peaking. Every decade you get a peak. Late 70s there was a peak, late 80s, early 2000s and then it goes back to normal. What I have noticed is when the weather is warmer, people dig their boards out and during the winter people shy off. Unless there is another pandemic, I can't see anything changing. Skating is more socially acceptable now plus there are lots of skateparks built now all over the place. When I was younger there were barely any. Skateparks produce so much talent and I doubt it will ever go back to how skating was in the 90s. Nowadays we see popularity, TV coverage, sponsors. Massive companies have come to the table and influence the scene a lot.

How do you see the new normal of skateboarding?

So, what I have noticed is that before the pandemic, business just started to increase slightly and then it went absolutely crazy! So many people wanted

to start skateboarding. Even guys in their 60s starting up again. Possibly 5 times the amount of people. This created lots of shortages and there were production problems with the closure of factories due to the Pandemic. Product was scarce, demand was high. Especially, teenage girls wanting a skateboard. Tonnes of completes were sold to girls. Female sport became more popular in general; I think, maybe that is the reason for it. People bought skateboards during the pandemic but have already stopped skating. It kind of feels like it has gone back to 2018 – 2019 level of business. The difference now is there are so many products on the market because shops and distributors panicked and over-ordered. Now there is a massive number of skateboards. It is so saturated, big companies now need to get rid of their stock and in some cases are offering ridiculous discounts. ©



THE SWEET TRANSITION

ALL-IN has become a powerhouse in the surf accessories market since starting out in 2012. SOURCE has been talking to brand founder, JB Caste, to get the skinny on their 10th anniversary plans, including a brand new office in Hossegor and new ventures into wetsuit repair.

Please fill us in on the brands progress since the last interview 3 years ago.

We have been working on our key product, the Surf Poncho by adding a lot of new details and improving its quality and sustainability. We have developed new products around our identity of the Sweet Transition; products that bring ease and comfort before and after a session: SALTY BELT (car keys solution), Clean Kit (Wetsuit bucket + Sandy Brush), Beach Towel, Plaid Poncho and Storm Gloves. We have further developed our network of distributors and dealers and now ALL-IN products are

issued in 700+ shops in 19 countries.

What have been your most successful products over the last year and why?

Of course the Surf Poncho is our best-seller since we launched it in early 2012. In the middle of December 2021, we successfully launched our latest idea the Plaid Poncho. 3 days after the first deliveries, shops started to place top up orders! Thanks to the Plaid Poncho, we are opening a lot of new accounts in the mountains which is a great point of business development for us, helping us to balance our all-season sales.



How has the brand made itself more sustainable?

We are trying to produce all new products in a sustainable way. For example: the SALTY BELT is made with Yulex in our own workshop in Hossegor, the Plaid Ponchos are 100% recycled polyester and certified GRS (Global Recycled Standard), as will be our new line of Storm Ponchos. Almost all our products are now sold in a bag that you can repurpose and we replaced our hangtags by a glass coaster made in Liege.

It's now your tenth year, how are you celebrating this?



In 2012, I launched the brand ALL-IN and now in 2022 we are leading the Surf Poncho market. Big launches this year will be the new line of Plaid Poncho, with Vest Poncho and the Plaid Chapka and a new line of STORM Ponchos. But most importantly, we have opened a new office in Hossegor and our own wetsuit repair centre.

Please tell us about your new offices.

A year ago, we started to build our office in Soorts-Hossegor in the new part of Zone Pedebert. This sits just in front of the forest which is a peaceful place to work. I wanted something very cool that doesn't look like an office, a place that feels more like a home. Our employees can work at a desk of course but also on a sofa or on the hammock. And I just grew a vegetable garden, so employees will be able to eat a few fresh products for summer lunch.

Your latest move is into wetsuit warranty repair - please tell us about this.

One year ago we were contacted by Patagonia Europe because they knew that we have the facilities for wetsuit repair due to our SALTY BELT production. So we started working with them and also with Vissla Europe. Since February we have employed one of the best seamstresses in Europe with over 30 years of experience in wetsuit repair. It's really cool to work with her and to have such an experienced person joining our adventure.

Any plans to extend this out?

Yes, we will open our business to other brands and watersports schools in June, so anyone who needs to repair a wetsuit can contact us. We will also focus on B2C, we are currently finalizing our website for the repair centre, www.all-in-wetsuit-repair.com. You can purchase your repair as you buy your product which is

easier and faster for customers. We will keep posting the stories of the centre and show videos and photos of different repairs on our social network (@allinwetsuitrepair). For more info, you can contact us on contact@all-in-wetsuit-repair.com

During this time, what business decisions are you most proud of?

I'm proud to say that I was able to grow my company on my own without investors and without losing control. My parents gave my 3000 euros to start and for 10 years, I used that to grow year by year. This year we have started to employ 4 people full time and in total, with indirect employees, we are a 10 person team. Honestly, having my own brand in the surf industry is a dream come true. ☺



Globe + Rage – The Surplus

Rage is one of the most core surf accessory brands on the market. Founded by Globe team riders Creed McTaggart, Noa Deane, Shaun Manners and their friends, the brand is known for its punk aesthetic and raw, high action surf films. The Rage x Globe shoe was designed by the boys to be worn at the beach, skate park, recording studio or at the pub.



RETAIL BUYER'S GUIDE

SKATE SHOES SS23

With the seasons changing and the nights getting longer, brighter shoes are back to accompany the lighter months ahead. We take a look at all things skate shoes with our SS23 Skate Shoes Retail Buyer's Guide by **Dave Morgan**.



MARKET

The general consensus is that the market is gradually returning to normal functionality, even with the war in Ukraine impacting obviously more than just the material aspects of the industry. The economy is suffering due to this too, but it seems that the market is still pushing on. Globe's Senior Footwear Designer, Morgan King mentioned their concerns on the current Covid issue now in China, and hopes it won't have effects on Fall22, but as we all know by now, we live in a rather unpredictable time and it's still rather challenging to plan for the future. Simone Satragno, Marketing Manager at C1RCA said that even though "the market once again seems good, the real issue now is with shipping costs and delivery times." Ronnie Mazzei - CEO at Fallen Footwear did say however

"Tech shoes are making a comeback, big pants are still pumping which means larger silhouette shoes, especially mid and hightops"

David Atkinson, Vans

that, "we source from China, and it looks like lockdown is still on trend there. This has affected us a lot in the past year, so for Spring 23 we're moving all of the calendar 30 days ahead."

Bas Janssen, EMEA Sr. Sales and Marketing Manager at Etnies made a very worthy observation, saying that "stock is catching up on demand generally which isn't a

bad thing as long as retail is not overstocked on footwear. This seems not to be the case with hardgoods which sometimes can have a negative effect on footwear due to cashflow stuck in hardgoods stock for retailers."

The current issue with the hardgoods market and shops overbuying in preparation for another hardware drought has led to overstocked shops and quiet customer bases - hopefully this will turn around as the warmer months are coming, however fortunately footwear isn't affected by the same over saturation in the market.

Bas Janssen at SoleTech explained their methods with the ever-growing social media influence: "With social media becoming an essential selling and marketing tool, we want to make it as easy as possible for all of our retailers to sell all of our products that they carry and can link to the brick and mortar as well as their own E-comm store. Providing these assets to our retailers means one less step they need to take to inform their customers on what's currently available."

Fallen provide a digital asset folder that's updated monthly. Ronnie Mazzie says, "most of the distributors prefer not to order samples to save time and money - this is also more eco-friendly."

PRICE POINTS

As expected with the current economic climate and the events affecting it, price points are always going to change, however with that also comes more technical advances, so more bang for your buck. David Atkinson, Senior Merchandise Manager of Action Sports at Vans said; "We are beginning to put additional focus on progression footwear which is also sustainable, we are exploring some slightly higher price points, but we still have a full spectrum of full skate spec footwear at a range of prices from €75-€110." It looks like the majority of brands will be focusing the price bracket between €70-€90, giving most an affordable solution for a long-lasting skate shoe.

"Our sustainable story Buy a Shoe Plant a Tree with our partner Trees for the Future, currently planted over 2 million trees and we're going for 3 million!"

Bas Janssen, Etnies

STYLES & SILHOUETTES

As with every Spring/Summer season, the brighter, slimmer silhouettes are back, and this season is no exception. DC's EMEA Marketing Lead, Manu Labadie

spoke of the "simplicity in the design but with tech features and durability details" of some of their new silhouettes in the SS23 range.

On a different note however, David Atkinson at Vans said "Tech shoes are making a comeback, big pants are still pumping which means larger silhouette shoes, especially mid and hightops are growing again - for us especially the Half Cab." For C1RCA, their pride and joy, the 'AL 50' still comes in a variety of colourways and has a 'Slim' version available in white/red/black for the summer months. Morgan at Globe noted: "With the development of baggy fit, we see an important development of Chub tech shoes. Our Encore style is doing also extremely well due to the good skate/sport look and the Dover which is booming."

Emerica will be releasing a completely reimagined pro shoe for Justin Figueroa, the 'Figgy G6'. Bas from Emerica said "With the release of the Figgy G6, we've worked closely with Figgy on designing the perfect shoe that meets all of his needs and he couldn't be happier with it."

COLLABS & COLLECTIONS

There looks to be some great collaborations within the SS23 season; Etnies collaborating with various charities such as: "Jake Wooten x Henry Gartland Foundation, Michael Worful x Sheep, Trees for the Future and Boarding for Breast Cancer." Rad to see the big brands giving back and creating awareness for good causes like this through collaboration. Vans will be dropping a "big project with Quasi this season as well as some other surprises of course!" Globe's jewel in the crown is going to be Austin Gillet's new pro shoe, as Morgan King explained: "We are introducing our debut pro shoe for Mr Austyn Gillette. Designed and tested in conjunction with Austyn, the Gillette represents everything Austyn wanted in his pro shoe." Emerica will be "teaming up with Shake Junt to release a collection consisting of signature pro models from Kevin "Spanky" Long, Jon Dickson, and Figgy as well as a team shoe along with an entire apparel capsule" as Bas Jansen explained.

TECHNOLOGY

The ever-ongoing conversation in skate shoes is the technology used, as many skaters prefer the incredibly stripped down and simple vulcanised shoe, which Vans for example are well known for- however many also favour the tech-heavy cupsole alternative as they prefer the protection and impact support these provide. With advances in technology, brands are now able to experiment with hybrid shoes/soles to provide skateboarders with both sides of the spectrum in one



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shoe. David Atkinson at Vans announced 'The Zahba', a shoe created in partnership with Vans rider Zion Wright, saying "This shoe has a new construction called Impact Waffle: a $\frac{3}{4}$ cupsole with dual density midsole – best in class impact protection whilst maintaining flexibility."

Rick Marmolijo, Design Director at Etnies spoke of their partnership with Michelin, saying "We will always be proud of our Michelin technology as it's proven to be a staple in our line over the years with its unmatched durability." Morgan from Globe spoke of "Ausytn's new ventilation system / Flex-resign and Lux footbed, all contributing to a forward thinking vulc shoe."

SUSTAINABILITY

A constant battle with any form of production is sustainability, and it's great to see skate shoe brands taking their environmental footprint seriously. David Atkinson from Vans spoke proudly of "Our VR3 sustainability certification which we introduced in the Lizzie and we continue with the Zahba. We continue to roll this out across the line to meet Vans sustainability goals."

Globe will be putting a focus on lighter, eco based materials, and C1RCA are continuing their AL50 Vegan silhouette, which is showing an increase in awareness thankfully. Manu Labadie spoke about DC's Resolve program: "We are continuing

to expand across our footwear line in 2023. We're bringing in more eco friendly materials without compromising on that classic DC performance and style. (Hemp, Refibra, Zero waste)." Etnies is going one step further: "Our sustainable story Buy a Shoe Plant a Tree with our partner Trees for the Future, has planted over 2 million trees and we're going for 3 million!" With conscious efforts like these, there is still hope for a cleaner future in footwear production.

So from what we can see, the skate shoe market is progressing and providing new technologies to help assist with the immense progression happening in skateboarding, even through the troubles the world is facing. ☺

HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Overstock not affecting skate shoes as bad
- 2 Bulky still big
- 3 Digital assets essential for retailers
- 4 Tech shoes continue to charge
- 5 Eco-conscious shoes are on their way

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Recent global events have slowed down Spain's recuperation, but it has not halted it. Boardsports fans keep their equipment high on their list of priorities.

No one said Spain's economic recuperation would be easy, but no one thought it'd be this hard. Optimistic forecasts fuelled hope; they could not have predicted the two events that would slam the global economy. War in Ukraine and Omicron in China, though far from Spain, have a direct and dire impact on the economy. War has raised the cost of raw materials, impacting international trade and spreading uncertainty. Restrictions in China have aggravated the problems in supply chains, which will persist for most of 2022. Spain's recuperation will not stop, but it will slow down. Government aid for energy bills and reforms in the training and labour market support an environment of growth. Good employment rates and internal spending will continue to drive it. However, the spending will lower due to uncertainty and fear of inflation.

Boardsports retailers report caution from the sales counters. Consumers had spent on new equipment quite boldly. The recent events and resulting inflation have promoted careful spending. Spending there is, though. Boardsports keep their appeal as individual outdoor activities that avert infections. They also require no energy but the athlete's stamina and the wind, waves, or snow that nature provides. "Part of these new consumers have consolidated their presence", says Guillermo Colomer from PlayGop Distribution.

Surf leads the popularity trend, followed closely by most other boardsports. Sales of surfskates skyrocketed. It's a fun way to improve one's surfing, and does not depend on waves, or even on proximity to the coast. Sales in water boardsports have been good throughout the winter. Stores are quite excited about the upcoming summer. Skate has suffered from an excess of stock that has slowed down business. The combined effect of excessive pre-ordering and late deliveries has saturated the market. A

similar thing happened to wetsuits, but the rest of the Spring deliveries have been good. Many stores brought their summer deliveries forward to secure stock and reaction time. "If there are cancellations, I have time to control what to do about it", says owner of Hola Ola shop in Galicia, David Martínez.

Snowboarding delivered a great season. After two years of inactivity, snow lovers were very keen. Even the ones that had stopped riding some time ago, decided to get back to it, driving new boards sales and old boards repairs. However, there's a sweet and sour feeling about the season. Sales were so good that stores wished they had bought more. Uncertainty about the opening of resorts and boxes piled up in backrooms promoted a shy pre-ordering. Brands did not take the risk of producing blindly; lack of refill stock resulted in loss of sales. "Instead of asking for specific products, people walked in our store asking what products we had to sell them", says Gerard Sol from Daffi in Barcelona. Next Winter's deliveries appear uncertain. Supply chain bottlenecks and scarcity of raw material is driving some brands to downsize pre-orders.

Inflation aside, the mood is optimistic. The influx of newcomers points to growth of the sports. Many are digital natives who are alien to the experience a specialised store offers. Gerard Sol shares an insightful anecdote. A young woman bought some snow products at his store and was amazed at the help and advice she was offered. To his surprise, she admitted she had never experienced it before, because she always shopped online. "There's a whole generation out there who does not know that this kind of shopping experience exists!", says Gerard. It would be interesting for stores to figure out how to get these young consumers to walk through their doors. Brand communication could support this idea. The benefits would be reaped by stores and brands alike. The main concern now is how the situation in Shanghai and Ukraine will affect next winter's deliveries. Stores hope that brands and distributors are already putting systems in place to avoid empty shelves.

ROCIO ENRIQUEZ

RETAIL BUYER'S GUIDE

CAMPING & OUTDOOR

Welcome to the post-Covid era. A world where people of all generations enjoy once again the simple life, reconnect with their surroundings – including the great outdoors. Ladies and gentlemen, it is 2022, summer is upon us, and this is the 2023 buyer's guide for outdoor apparel and accessories. By **Matthieu Perez**.



We are all aware of the boom in outdoor activities and recreation that has occurred during the last two years. While many of us sensed this boom, data now confirms it, revealing it to be more like an explosion. Many industries and brands in different product categories benefited from this phenomenon, some due to smart anticipation and others were simply in the right place at the right time.

Recently, at the opening of Outdoor by ISPO, the outdoor industry revealed it was prepared to face the ever-evolving challenges of a post-Covid world from a position of strength. According to ISPO, "the outdoor industry even emerges stronger from the Corona years 2020 and 2021. The European outdoor industry grew by 18.7 percent.

"All kinds of people now have become outdoor enthusiasts and made the Outdoor Market more diverse." Cathrin Sperling, Petromax

The industry also saw growth of 18.2 percent in the number of products sold last year". In other words, the European outdoor industry is actually emerging stronger from the pandemic. In 2021, the wholesale value of the outdoor industry cracked the 6 billion euro mark for the first time. With 240 million products sold, outdoor products remain in demand worldwide.

Mark Held, Non-Executive Chairman of the European Outdoor Group, put it succinctly, "Demand for outdoor products has gone through

the roof. The pandemic has caused people to reevaluate what really matters to them.”

ADAPTING TO SHIFTS IN BEHAVIOR

“Covid halted travel for long enough, encouraging people to look at what was possible within their own backyard” says Reynald Gautier, Global Creative Director at Element. “[It led to] local adventures, simple and attainable. It encouraged a lot of people to take up lost activities or discover new activities,” continues Gautier. This resulted in a significant increase in consumer demand for many brands. Gramicci confirmed that, “their customer base has grown. People who didn’t consider themselves ‘outdoorsy’ pre-pandemic got outside, explored nature, and tried new activities.” Petromax adds that “all kinds of people now have become outdoor enthusiasts and made the outdoor market more diverse.”

This impacted the way people are consuming products, as they are keeping their new hobbies in mind and realizing that they don’t have to choose between active wear products and lifestyle products anymore. Brands are now giving them both. As Duer states, “their newfound appreciation of the outdoors has increased their appreciation of higher quality, versatile products that promote a more sustainable approach.”

For brands, internally, this means a few adaptations and flexibility with the way to handle business. Long time PNW outdoor shaker, KAVU, explains that “show cancellations and lockdowns forced them to evolve how they sell. Now we use better digital assets, place more emphasis on social selling, and offer e-commerce tools so dealers are supported.”

Pacome Allouis, 686’s Brand Director for Europe, concludes, “At the end, [it] looks like everyone had to step back and rethink organizations, processes, priorities, communication and services for a new era/vision of working and collaborating with all parts of the outdoor market.”

“Cleaner product, clearer, better designed with more emphasis on what is important to us as a skateboarding brand rooted in our love of being outdoors.”

Reynald Gautier, Element

NEW PROCESSES & EXPECTATIONS

In order to provide the right answers and service, brands have revised or transformed all processes involved in sales strategies to better support retailers and target the right demographic while

“The habits and attitudes of outdoor consumers are changing fast, we can imagine the Outdoor and urban lifestyle continuing to merge together.”

Adrien Fournier, Roark

sticking to their ethos and basic inspiration. For instance, Peter Bauer at Pally’Hi says, “We always had a certain dose of carry-over styles. That helps shops to be able to sell those styles at full margin even one year later, plus from a brand perspective it is quite useful to streamline design processes and production management.”

Ready to adapt no matter what, brands like KAVU are simply willing to evolve into a new approach and timeline with the aim of improving at all stages: “Supply chain and logistics delays bring change to our sell-in plans. We’ve brought our entire sales calendar earlier, which we hope will improve deliveries.”

When the shit hits the fan, the best move is to face the situation with a grounded head. For example, Allouis notes that “686 is still facing challenges and timings with the outdoor ecosystem, similar to everyone and everywhere. The most important [move is] to keep transparency and communication between sales forces and retailers.”

Other brands, like Element, are working through these challenges with “cleaner product, clearer, better designed with more emphasis on what is important to us as a skateboarding brand rooted in our love of being outdoors,” comments Reynald Gautier. “This has provided a much clearer picture for sell-in across key and essential products, stories and partnerships.”

The team at Picture has been benefiting from a very positive sell-in plan, which increased sales by 80% for their outdoor business with an emphasis on DACH and North America. But like others, the brand is still struggling with product delivery due to container and production delays, which is limiting Picture and other brands from increasing their business for next season.

WHAT’S HOT AND OUT THE DOOR?

Brands are focusing on offering customers products that are especially versatile, capable of handling all situations. According to Roark, “[As] the habits and attitudes of outdoor consumers are changing fast, we can imagine the outdoor and urban lifestyle continuing to merge together.”

Element designs products that allow customers to skate and pursue their outdoor interests and



VOITED

engagement with nature without having to change their apparel. Similarly, 686's attempt to cater to this crossover theme revolves around fashion and function both indoors and outdoors. Brent Sandor, VP Marketing, explains that "in the past, people used to define themselves [by a single activity] but now we are truly seeing the generation of [doing it all]." Gramicci claims its products are "Perfect for any occasion – from outdoor hiking activities, to beach bumming to hanging out in the city."

ROARK also answers the call for versatility with its Adventure Ready Goods, which consist of purpose-built gear with stylish details that can accommodate one's needs from the trail to the bar.

Not sleeping and covering your back no matter what, Voited provides products designed with functionality, versatility and lots of innovative, technical recycled materials with 'Step into Comfort' as an overall theme.

On its end, California-based 686 is pushing the envelope, designing an MTB pant to work from the bike to the bar. The goal of the project was to create a pant you could ride in, or you could wear daily. A one-piece-fits all statement.

Not sleeping on the MTB tsunami, Picture is proud to launch its first MTB collection for SS23, which

will be related to the brand's activewear line and dedicated for an all-mountain use. The collection is a very complete range with shorts, pants, tops, jackets, layers, and gloves. The launch will be focused on the Alps area for Europe.

SUSTAIN OR DIE!

In their quest towards sustainability, brands are offering fresh concepts, innovation, or simply assessing how they can improve their efforts.

For Pally'Hi, "Merino is going full throttle", states Peter Bauer, Founder and full-spectrum outdoor enthusiast. "Merino is one of the most sustainable fibers—it seems customers realize that clothing made of fossil-based synthetic fibers such as polyester or acrylic are a one-way road from an ecological point of view."

For Duer, "Pants from Plants" has been an important story this past year to highlight the natural fibers that they use such as Tencel™ (lyocell), which is produced by environmentally responsible processes from a sustainably sourced, naturally-occurring raw material: wood.

At Voited, their conscious approach to recycled fabrics & components makes them mainly use Repreve®, as well as insulation and quick-dry fabrics.

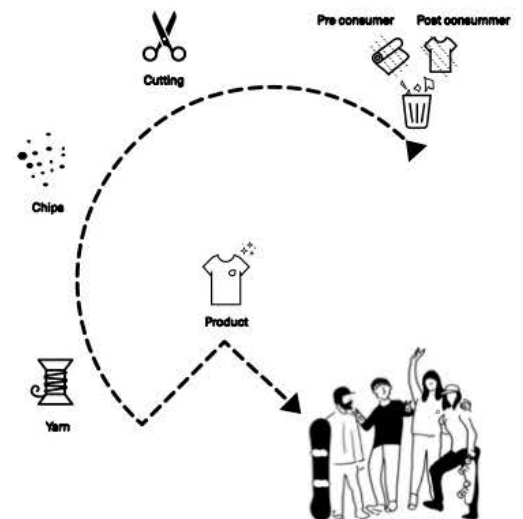


THE CIRCULAR_

MISSION
TECHNOLOGY
SOLUTION

Our new line of Activewear has been designed for all-year-round committing adventures : there is no season for outdoor activities! For SS23, all Picture's technical pieces will be part of The Circular_ program.

From recycled outerwear, organic streetwear or biosourced shells, Picture is known to have a never-ending sustainable product innovation policy. But not only. Other processes such as upcycling, waste prevention campaigns, phasing out PFCs or renting service & lifetime repair warranty are amongst other initiatives that lead the brand's way to circularity. For SS23, all Picture's technical pieces will be part of The Circular_ program, made from fabrics using existing waste within our own industry (textile).



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Furthering its commitment to conserving nature, Picture will be launching a new sustainable innovation: circular polyester. Julien Durant, CEO, says that “the launch is very innovative because that material is made of recycled garments. As you know, our industry creates so much waste since after use, [most] products are trashed or either burned and with that solution, we are starting to create a fiber which is based on 40% recycled garment post-consumer use, 60% made from waste of production cuts.”

FW (Read *Future Wild*), curator of newschool outdoor culture, claims that the recycled fabrics ratio on its collection is getting higher for SS23. Marketing Manager Irena Umek states, “We are stoked to have more and more products featuring [primarily] recycled materials, from the main fabrics, insulation, linings, and zippers—for you to not only look good but also feel good.” Finally, durability, quality, and comfort are the guiding principles for Roark as it continues to utilize and expand upon sustainable fabrics and use Fair Trade partners throughout the collection. The brand asserts that it always wants to tread as lightly as possible for future generations. Full commitment.

“Younger people have discovered the outdoors and what used to be uncool is now hip.”

Stefan Clauss, Heimplanet

LIGHT, STRETCHY, AND MINIMAL

When talking about look and style, brands are focusing on a comfortable approach, combining that one-piece-fits-all motto with durable and high-end materials. At Duer, the most important technical feature that runs through all of their fabrics is the stretch of the material, allowing their users high mobility and durability.

As customers increasingly prefer natural and durable clothes with suitable features, Petromax pays attention to this when choosing materials, such as in its Loden collection. Whether on the trail or around the campfire, the collection offers optimal support in all situations.

On the other end, Element focuses more on the cuts of the garments with critical detailing supporting functionality. Reynald Gautier reinforces, “We are a skateboard brand engaged in outdoor pursuits, and the garments are designed to provide simple access to these pursuits but

through the lens of a skateboarder. Therefore, comfort and airflow are key vs. highly technical fabrics in summer seasons.”

Others like KAVU have a slightly different approach and keep it as simple and down to earth as possible. Jeremy Goodman explains, “Our kind of outdoors is hanging by a fire and sleeping in the dirt. A single ember will burn a hole in my 300€ down jacket. If an ember lands on my canvas throwshirt, I just brush it off and have another sip of beer. This is what we mean when we say ‘true outdoor wear.’” On the same path, Pally’Hi stays open minded on cuts so their shirts may fit slightly looser than the styles of other merino brands. Bauer adds, “We don’t want to give a fake impression that we just stepped down from Mt. Everest.”

For Picture’s fits, Julien Durand explains, “we talk about a new way of selling the Picture products. We don’t want to sell only pants or T-shirts and tops anymore. We really want to sell full silhouettes!”

GEAR IN, GEAR OUT

You may have been living in a cave the last two years if you haven’t noticed how boardsport enthusiasts are using outdoor and camping gear throughout their journeys. They all want to enjoy their close-by adventures and rely on durable products. “Younger people have discovered the outdoors and what used to be uncool is now hip,” says Stefan Clauss at Heimplanet.

Helinox believes outdoor brands that have their fundamentals in the right place will continue to do well. For Hydro Flask, “[the brand] has grown the market overall with new consumers and existing consumers improving their kit for the outdoors. This altered the Hydro Flask product mix.”

Other brands, like Nemo and Nikwax, faced a booming demand but supply constraints. Needless to say, they are now happy that the pandemic is no longer affecting them.

For SS23, Helinox is focused on delivering the products that people want at the time they need them with as little disruption as possible. This proactive purchase behaviour is motivated by the fact “People choose to be outdoors and they do it quite consciously because they want to experience nature,” explains Clauss at Heimplanet.

A focus on sustainability is also becoming more prevalent in camping accessories, causing many manufacturers to offer special products, ranges, or programs.

WHEREVER YOUR ADVENTURE

STEP INTO COMFORT

BLANKETS - CHANGEWEAR - RAINWEAR - FOOTWEAR
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PICTURE

Frank Voit announces, “We are extending the Voited line with sustainably crafted recreational picnic/beach accessories, premium camping blankets, and a footwear line extension.”

Nikwax asserts that sustainability is the key trend at the moment. Rose Brain, from Nikwax’s marketing team, notes that “We are anticipating customers will choose sustainable brands when purchasing new and will look to preserve what they already own.” This was obviously the case during Covid restrictions, as brands and consumers navigated the lack of products on the market due to component shortages. “Taking care of existing gear or buying second-hand is becoming much more of a trend,” explains Brain. Primus is the first cartridge supplier to promote gas produced from biowaste. The biogas, made exclusively from food waste, is produced at a Swedish biogas plant. Because of the large demand

for sustainable products, Igloo launched the Ecocool and Evergreen line, which are made from recycled plastic.

Casstrom considers that the most important items to take on the next adventure are the ones that both enhance the product life cycle and are recyclable. And Helinox summarizes its commitment to the environment by noting that “making well-designed products that last a long time and do as little harm to the environment as possible is a focus for Helinox this season and will continue to be for many seasons to come.”

Brands are also identifying and catering to new and emerging user groups. Hydroflask asserts that camper van owners are a strong segment with a strong budget to spend on outdoor kitchen and soft coolers. Nemo notes that there is an ever-increasing demand for lightweight gear, which is driven by bikepackers and other user groups. PRIMUS has developed compact and practical products to cater to specific groups, including bikepackers, gravel bikers, commuters, mountain bikers, road cyclists, and bikers who ride for their pleasure. For Heimplanet, “tarps are a huge thing which create an outdoor living and protected space. It stands for simplicity—just being outside, because it does not enclose a space but just covers it,” explains Stefan Clauss.

Lastly, some of the most important developments are those that transcend individual products. As KAVU notes one of these trends is the creation of a more inclusive outdoor industry. And Helinox’s Head of Marketing, Joe White, captures a sentiment we all are perhaps feeling, “It’s time to kick back and enjoy nature at a slower pace because, let’s face it, the last few years have been hectic!” These are all ideas we can be stoked on! Word.©

HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Increase in consumer demand
- 2 One-piece-fits-all
- 3 Sustainability is the key trend
- 4 True outdoor wear
- 5 Quality, durability, mobility and comfort



ULTRALIGHT PORTABLE CAMP FURNITURE THAT IS AT HOME ANYWHERE



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Economic growth was zero in France in the first quarter of 2022. The main cause was weak domestic demand, dampened by a sharp rise in prices. Gross domestic product stagnated in France in the first three months of 2022 compared to the previous quarter.

Economic activity has therefore come to a halt after having increased over the previous four quarters, with a total increase in growth of 7% over the course of 2021. GDP growth in the first quarter of 2022 is therefore lower than INSEE's projections, who, before the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, were expecting a 0.3% increase.

This economic stagnation in France is mainly explained by weak domestic demand. While investment grew by 0.2%, household consumption fell sharply in the first quarter by 1.3%. This decline in consumer spending is linked to three major events:

Firstly, the Omicron wave at the beginning of the year led to household consumption expenditure dropping by 5.3% for accommodation, restaurants and clothing in the first quarter.

Secondly, the war in Ukraine has significantly boosted inflation. Price rises are at the highest level for more than 30 years, reaching +4.8% within a year, mostly because of the increasing energy prices and increases on certain food products. This sustained inflation has negative consequences on purchasing power and therefore on household consumption.

Finally, the spring of 2022 was marked by the presidential election in France. Historically, election years are not good for household consumption, with people tending to delay or postpone their spending out of fear for tomorrow. This presidential run-up, although largely disrupted by the first two factors, has also contributed to the overall situation.

To all this we could also add the return of lockdowns in China, which are once again

disrupting supply chains in the first quarter of 2022. However, since last autumn, the government has expanded the measures being implemented to help people through this difficult period. Energy vouchers, tariff caps on gas and electricity prices and 18 centimes rebate at the pump from April 1: the measures have mainly been aimed at limiting the impact of price increases on household budgets. These initiatives have helped limit inflation in France compared to its European neighbours in the first quarter.

To tackle rampant inflation, Emmanuel Macron also had to make new promises throughout his presidential campaign: abolishing the TV licence fee paid by 23 million French people, creating a food voucher that could benefit 8 million French people and establishing a new, more targeted scheme to mitigate the impact of rising fuel prices. He also committed to raise the index point for public services in the summer. As far as wages are concerned, only the minimum wage is indexed to inflation. On May 1, it will automatically increase by 2.65% - an increase of about 34 euros net per month. That's a lot of initiatives to quickly implement straight after his successful re-election, all aimed at reassuring households for whom purchasing power is the main concern at the beginning of 2022.

Like other countries in the world, France is suffering from historic inflation. So what is the real impact on our industry and on consumption for retailers at the beginning of the 2022 season? The beginning of the year 2022 has been rather quiet as Victor Rassouli, Manager of Zephyr Surfshop store in Saint Malo, confirms: "The winter has been rather quiet but we have noticed an increase in sales since the Easter holidays," he adds, "This is normally the launch of the summer season and a return of customers to the shop. However, Victor adds, "sales are down compared to last year, which is probably related to inflation and the political and economic situation."

The reports are quite similar from Ocean

Gate In Saint Pierre de Quiberon where Shop Manager Lionel Collin, tells us: "Business has picked up well, less strong than last year when the lockdowns ended but better than in 2019 before COVID." Lionel even adds, "We are on a 10% increase in turnover compared to 2021, this is partly due to inflation which for the moment does not seem to be a problem. Purchasing power still seems to be there, even though the two weekends of the presidential election had a big part to play in the serious drop in in-store traffic."

Further south at Welcome in Hyères, Shop Manager Ingrid Granger agrees: "The season really kicked off in April with a very good Easter. The tourists turned out in good numbers, especially the English, Swiss and Germans. She added: "We didn't notice any real repercussions of the political or economic events on visitor numbers or on in-shop sales during that period."

The supply and delivery of goods, which were already quite troublesome, appear to be major themes again at the beginning of the 2022 season. Ingrid from Welcome tells us: "There are big delays on most products, we've had trouble receiving everything on time, much like in the last couple of years" she adds: "We have however made good orders to avoid shortages, which will inevitably lead to less restocking as we should have enough stock for the season. Victor from Zephyr Surfshop confirms: "There are quite a few delivery delays and a really significant increase in prices, especially for neoprene." He adds: "We have been forced to overstock in order to tackle both the shortage and above all, the expected price increase." Lionel from Ocean Gate seems to be on the same wavelength: "There are indeed late deliveries or partial deliveries from many suppliers. For the most part there will be very little or no restocking possible and we have prepared ourselves for this" he adds: "But we've had quite a lot of stock since the start of the season because we accepted the late deliveries from last season so we already have stock in the shop early on."

As for product, neoprene still seems to be popular despite particularly high inflation in this category. Lionel from Ocean Gate says: "Neoprene is still leading in terms of sales, followed closely by equipment and finally textiles with the return of the good weather", but he adds: "Compared to last year, the boom in surfboards is not as strong even though it's the beginning of the season, so we'll have to see what happens in the long term." At Zephyr Surfshop Victor notes: "Clothing and skateboards are still doing well for us, but inflation, especially in neoprene, seems to have slowed the category down a little." At Welcome Ingrid tells us: "the good weather and the beginning of the season have been pretty positive for our clothing section. But one segment that we put a lot of emphasis on and which is doing very well at the beginning of the season is Wing Foil." She adds: "This new activity is really popular and more and more people are looking at this discipline, attracting an increasing number of participants."

The return of the good weather and the Easter holidays once again seem to have gone hand in hand with customers returning to our retailers. Still looking for the advice, service and interaction that you cannot find on the internet, enthusiasts are stepping into shops in search of the latest products to help them live out their passions. While inflation and purchasing power are the major issues we are faced with, the beginning of the season seems encouraging for the time being. Let's hope that these promising early-season signs are fulfilled over the summer and that the 2022 season proves as successful as the last couple of years. To be continued...

BENOIT BRECQ

RETAIL BUYER'S GUIDE

SKATE HELMETS & PROTECTION 2022

With the ongoing rise of skateboard participation, protective gear and helmets continue their successes from last season. What's new for 2022 is summed up in our Retail Buyer's Guide by **Anna Langer**.



"Skate participation is still on the rise due in part to factors like the pandemic and the Olympics. Not only that, but more diverse groups of riders are getting involved from young kids to reinvigorated adults. Protective gear is important no matter where on the spectrum your riding level falls" Noah Todaro, Marketing Manager at Triple Eight & 187 Killer Pads sums it up. Andy King from REKD Protection adds: "We feel that the 'core' rider image is still one hard to get to wear a helmet in skateboarding, but new riders seem less worried about 'looking cool' as previous eras. This is a hopeful shift!" Pro-Tec also imagine that the rise in female skaters will help fuel the use of protection, "plus with the Olympics mandating helmets for skaters under 18 it helps to

"We feel that the 'core' rider image is still one hard to get to wear a helmet in skateboarding, but new riders seem less worried about 'looking cool' as previous eras. This is a hopeful shift!"

Andy King, REKD Protection

remove the stigma that protective gear isn't cool." says RP Bess, Brand Director.

The fact that more and more kids are starting the sports at an ever younger age is also a positive factor for protective gear, for various reasons. "If you look around the local skateparks, it has really become a family sport. You see mothers and

fathers having fun together with their young kids. Protection (helmets and protectors) is extremely important here, both on the children's side (so that nothing happens) and on the parents' side (role model function and the old bones don't forgive falls like they used to)" explains Nadja Herger-Bondarenko, Marketing /Communication & co-owner of TSG. The Swiss-based brand also sees an increase in products for niche markets such as surf skate or downhill, for which they have specifically designed pads and helmets like the Pass Downhill Skateboard Helmet.

Despite this positive vibe, the aftermath of the pandemic is of course impacting this industry sector as well. If not regarding sales then certainly when it comes to supply chains and shipping times, which are short from "disastrous". Brands with a large inventory stock are suffering less than those without but close monitoring is a necessity for everyone. Still, price points have stayed stable with helmets ranging between 45-60€ and pads from 30-60€.

SAFETY CERTIFICATIONS

Consumers are becoming more knowledgeable about Safety Certifications finds Triple Eight, who highlight the things they feel the customer needs the most. Vincent Isaac, owner of ALK13 agrees that "it's a must have, it's really important to have a certification on the goods. We have noticed in each product." TSG also have the chemical composition of their materials that are worn directly on the skin certified, next to the protective properties, which are communicated on the product itself, on the packaging and also on the website. REKD has only ever sold certified helmets and products says Andy: "We're a protection brand, it would be unsafe for us

"Historically we've seen our most popular pads are all Black – but with all the new participation, there has been an increased demand for bright, fun colourways. Both Triple Eight and 187 Killer Pads have plenty of options whether you want to keep it basic or stand out!" Noah Todaro, Triple Eight & 187 Killer Pads

to sell uncertified products." Pro-Tec are launching their Hybrid Certified helmet in 2022: "It meshes our Classic skate helmet (available in the US) with our CE certified helmet. It gives you the comfort of our traditional Skate helmets (not available in the

"We used D30 technical foam in it to reduce the overall thickness yet still give you the protection you need. This along with some unique other features allowed us to increase the flexibility of it, resulting in more mobility." RP Bess, Pro-Tec

EU and UK) with the safety and protection of our certified," explains RP.

CROSS OVER PRODUCTS

TSG are in the process of developing a brand-new helmet for all terrains but for now design and test their products for a specific sport. Protec feature models for bike and skateboard, as well as some all-season snow helmets. Andy says: "REKD is designed to cater to every niche of extreme sports, from Street to Park, Mountain to City. We aim to expand into snow in the coming year and to have a full BMX protection package for 2023" and Triple Eight even supply helmets and pads to NASCAR pit crews.

DESIGN TRENDS

The half shell is still the most popular design except for e-skateboarders, who clearly prefer a full-face helmet because of the speed, says Nadja. She also finds that fit is more important than weight, while ALK13 see a very strong trend for light and comfortable protection. REKD also state their Ultralite and Elite helmets as strongest models, and Pro-Tec name their Classic half shell as most popular, adding that Full Cut is still very stylish. "We never stray too far from our classic half-shell design

to join market trends... But we are always working on new technologies to improve the performance!" states Noah from Triple Eight.

When it comes to colours, black is the undisputed best seller. "Followed by the other more inconspicuous colours such as grey and olive," says Nadja from TSG. Yet they also offer a wide range of colours for their Evolution and Meta models, which are very popular, ranging from dark cyan, oxblood red, coal grey, yellow ochre, olive, blue, cauma green, purple magic, gentle red, teal, acid yellow, eggplant, to light ocean. They also experiment with graphics and surface patterns, like a pintail stripe, Native American Art elements, or a logo all-over sticker bomb design. Pro-Tec introduces a new Christian Hosoi Signature helmet, with more to follow in 2023. ALK13 offer 4 new colours per model.



vert skate kneepads: “Flexible and soft in the normal state but when met with impact the molecules in ACF form a hard, protective shell. The remaining impact energy is converted into barely noticeable heat before it can reach the body,” explains Nadja. Pro-Tec use D3O foam in their Pro Line Knee pad for a super light feel natural: “We used D3O technical foam in it to reduce the overall thickness yet still give you the protection you need. This along with some unique other features allowed us to increase the flexibility of it, resulting in more mobility.” They also updated their best-selling pads, the Street Knee pad, by opening up the back and adding neoprene butterfly panels. So you now longer have to remove your shoes and slide them over your feet, which comes especially handy with kids. REKD pads also aim for a super comfortable feeling when worn, through Non-Newtonian foam that hardens on impact: “Molecules that usually sit freely become aligned, thus reducing energy going through. This allows the pad to feel extremely comfortable, while still protecting when it’s needed, adding an extra shell of protection.” ALK13 pair Kevlar and neoprene for perfect freedom of movement.

For their new Hybrid helmet, Pro-Tec use 2 stage foam and multiple 12-15mm dual density Dri-Tec wrapped foam liners for a more custom fit for the most comfortable and safest helmet they’ve made to date. Triple Eight highlight their Dual Certified Certified Sweatsaver model that also comes with MIPS, as does their urban-styled Gotham helmet. Besides the usual constructions like hard and In-Mold helmets, TSG offer the Kraken helmet that comes with FlexTech. “Our FlexTech Instant Fit adapts immediately to any head shape. FlexTech uses a series of connected interior EPS foam segments allowing the helmet to flex and conform to your head. It fits like a comfortable cap but still meets bike and skate helmet safety standards.”

So, whatever your customers’ terrain, skill level, style or focus of riding are, you will have plenty of options to offer them exactly what they’re looking for! You might just need to help them see what that is. ©

Pads, too, are becoming more colourful “Historically we’ve seen our most popular pads are all black – but with all the new participation, there has been an increased demand for bright, fun colourways. Both Triple Eight and 187 Killer Pads have plenty of options whether you want to keep it basic or stand out!” says Noah. They just launched a Steve Caballero Six Pack Pad Set with 187 Killer Pads with a hand-drawn dragon graphic, next to pro models by Lizzie Armanto and Tony Hawk. TSG offer the Force V and III in red and feature an old school colour design as well as a lollipop pattern on protection sets for kids.

Pad styles depend mostly on their designated area of use, from thin, invisible ones that offer lots of flexibility and range of movement to really thick padded models for heavy impact joint protection.

TECH STORIES

TSG use ACF (Arti-Lage Foam) that is engineered to mimic the physical structure of human cartilage with molecular freeflow technology for their high-end

HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 colourful pads
- 2 safety certifications
- 3 classic half shell helmets
- 4 pro models & signature lines



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TAHE FACTORY

Staying true to their French roots, TAHE continues to build a brand which makes the most of the coastal surroundings, local community, and materials right on their own doorstep. We got in touch to learn some more about their manufacturing factory in Brittany.

Please give us a history of the factory.

For over 40 years, TAHE have been sharing and communicating our passion for board and water sports. At our base in Vannes (Brittany, France) we design and manufacture a complete range of products that are reliable and long-lasting, to guarantee to our customers endless fun on the water. We also conceived and manufactured the world's first ever production surfboard, enabling hundreds of thousands of people to learn to surf. We are super proud of that!

What is its current manufacturing expertise?

Our manufacturing unit, based in Vannes (Brittany) is the only board/water sports

mass production facility to have stayed in Europe. The new (ad)venture, with TAHE, has not changed our determination to continue manufacturing our products in France. Home manufacturing is very much part of the new brand's DNA. Our industrial site, part of Tahe Outdoors Group, where all TAHE rigid products are made, features a manufacturing process that is unique globally. It enables us to exploit three different types of thermoformed technology in one location: hollow-body thermoforming, polystyrene core thermoforming, and blown extrusion. These are all options that are not available to any other manufacturer on the planet.

These three production options mean we can

consistently manufacture tough, light-weight, quality products that are excellent value for money, essential elements for delivering maximum fun whatever your skill level. It's our continuous investment in high performance machines that enables us to compete with other products almost exclusively "made in Asia".

We have invested in two brand new production systems. This new investment in our production facility is an important step for the company. These new machines will enable us to increase our production by 30-35%. More than 30,000 additional products per year can be manufactured here in Vannes. This 2 million Euro investment



allows us to properly support the rapid development of the company. It also gives us extra flexibility and agility to continue to innovate and support our continuous research and development.

This allows us to produce seven different product categories exploiting the different techniques: SUP, Surf, Wing and Windsurf boards, Kayaks, O'pen Skiff dinghies and other small boats/tenders. Tahe Outdoors France also makes its own polystyrene and polyethylene slabs at the same site.

Please give us some figures that demonstrate the scale of the factory.

Since the creation of the factory, nearly 2 million boards have left our factory.

Year of foundation: 1979

Production 2021: +70,000 products

Exports: 85%

Employees: Ca. 117 worldwide

Subsidiaries: 3

Distributors: +90

Domestic: France, Japan, Italy, UK

How do you ensure the quality of your production?

Retaining our manufacturing in France is not simply a gimmick or a question of pride, it's also the best means of ensuring quality control and offering something different from other manufacturers' products that are almost all made in Asia.

Which innovations are you most proud of?

In 2008, we conceived and produced the first ever 100% eco boat, which went on to win a prestigious award from Ademe and the French Nautical Industry Federation, the "Bateau Bleu" prize. The boat, the O'pen Skiff, originally known as the O'pen BIC, is 100% recyclable. We've also recently developed a new machine, the PSE Separator. This latest innovation solved two problems in one go: recycling our production rejects and off-cuts, while also enabling us to recycle all our Tough-Tec products. Products which are already conceived to give the longest life-span possible.

What are the advantages for Tahe/SIC in having in-house manufacturing?

The challenge is to succeed in increasing production

while retaining high quality standards. We're working on numerous projects - on higher performance products that are also more environmentally respectful. In the coming years, we will continue to reduce our environmental impact. That's a big part of our R&D: testing new materials that can make us as virtuous as possible. Every environmental gain is also a gain for our company, especially regarding the recycling of materials - that's the case with our production off cuts and our Tough-Tec technology. Our manufacturing processes are clean and efficient. The ultimate goal would be to be able to recycle all our boards at the end of their lives, which should be at least ten or twenty years. What's always in our minds is to produce a product accessible to the widest possible range of users, a product as long-lasting as possible, and 100% made in France - in collaboration with all our local and regional partners. How about recycled fishing net fins? Stay connected, it's coming soon! ☺

RETAIL BUYER'S GUIDE

MEN'S STREETWEAR SS23

After the previous year's influx, the market seems to have settled down a little, but not diminished in any way. Here, with a closer look is the Source Retail Buyer's Guide for Men's Streetwear SS23 with **Dave Morgan**.



HYDROPONIX

Skateboarding, among many other boardsports continues to surge in popularity since it's pandemic boom, and as a lot of streetwear these days is heavily influenced by this, the result is some very tasteful and also hard-wearing attire that both looks great and lasts longer.

MARKET

"The European boardsports market has been going uphill for several seasons now. People want to go outside and experience something new." Julia Böhmer- Team lead for Online

"During the last two uncertain years with recurring restrictions, outdoor activities in general have experienced a huge hype. We believe this trend will last for a while. The Feeling of freedom associated with outdoor activities including board sports, is more relevant than ever." Gesa Hollender, IrieDaily

Marketing at Alpha industries noticed and it seems like the majority of streetwear brands are feeling mutual with this. Irie Daily's Senior Designer Gesa Hollender said "During the last two uncertain years with recurring restrictions,

outdoor activities in general have experienced a huge hype. We believe this trend will last for a while. The Feeling of freedom associated with outdoor activities including board sports, is more relevant than ever."

It sounds like the streetwear market has fortunately started to find it's feet again. Julian Wolf - Head of marketing at Homeboy said "It definitely still performs very well. even if the great wave of euphoria is slowly fading. This is due to the fact that our industry always comes up much earlier with new styles and silhouettes and therefore covers almost all early adapters. Similar styles are now being adopted by large verticals. Now it shows who has made their brand irreplaceable with their marketing and who is being pushed out by Urban Outfitters."

COVID & SHIPPING/ DISTRIBUTION

Covid 19's restrictions have been lifted now for the majority, however there are still concerns regarding the situation in China and whether or not this will affect Fall22. Julia from Alpha said "Covid continues to have a big effect on global trade and therefore delayed deliveries and soared shipping costs have become commonplace for us." It sounds like this is the general vibe for all brands and industries alike, and the shipping costs/material costs are the main concern now, but of course, we keep on pushing! Matt Wong - President of Global Product at Globe Brand added "Internally we're still dealing with factory closures due to China's strict lockdown protocols whenever there are Covid cases – so that can affect raw materials, trims, actual assembly of garments – but we're doing everything we can to minimise any disruption or significant delays to our retailers."

"One of the biggest trends we see in AS, but especially skateboarding is that pants are very important and fits are getting baggier and baggier"

David Atkinson - Vans

Price point wise, things are keeping pretty similar, possibly with slight increases due to material costs, but it looks like brands are consciously trying to keep things affordable, whilst still bringing the goods. Hoods/ sweatshirts will be roughly €50-70, T's €25-35 and pants/ jeans €70-100, so things are still within reach. Jackets will be of course more,

especially with new technologies being used. sa1nt for example, have created something completely new, as Eden Palm, Head of Europe and UK for sa1nt said: "We are always innovating and for the new season we have created an Armoured Puffer Jacket. Never been done before. Fully fashioned jacked but CE rated motorcycle protection."

NEW THEMES/COLLECTIONS

Collection wise, brands look to be creating more apparel with their riders which is great. Matt Wong from Globe for example said: "For Spring 23, our skate team (Sammy Montano, Mark Appleyard, and Aaron Kim) have been working on our "Skate Team Capsule". They have been closely involved in the design process from colour, fit, styling, and testing, and have been working with Melbourne based artist Pat Rogasch on the artwork." Vans' Senior Merchandise Manager for Action Sports - David Atkinson was on the same path: "In Skateboarding apparel we will be collaborating with key athletes and brands to help add authenticity to the offering – For this season our partners are Zion Wright, Breanna Geering and Quasi Skateboards."

TRENDS FOR SS23

Julia from Alpha said "In my opinion clothing will move a lot more in the direction of unisex offerings because it doesn't matter anymore whether you're identifying as a man or a woman, you can just wear whatever you're comfortable with and what you like. In this case I think the different collections will merge more and more into one big collection." From what other brands have said, they're also focusing on more unisex approaches to lines, which shows a promising future for an inclusive streetwear approach. Julian from Homeboy spoke of his trend scope for the coming season saying: "Colours and prints/ embroidery that are fun and spread good vibes. Boxy tops and the final even wider pants. There will no longer be any skinnys out there!"

The 90's are most definitely back with the majority of pants getting bigger and baggier, and it seems most brands are catering to this need, not only with denim but with lighter, more airy fabrics. "Vans' main focus in Action Sports apparel is the Range Pant in different fits and fabrications – relaxed, baggy, baggy tapered... One of the biggest trends we see in AS, but especially skateboarding is that pants are very important and fits are getting baggier

and baggier” said David from Vans. We couldn’t agree more with that, as the importance of a good fitting pant makes for a complete outfit, and also allows you to function easier doing whatever you’re doing.

Hydroponic will be continuing its collaborations with their favourite cartoons, following on from the success of their South Park capsule, they’ll be releasing a Dragonball Z line for SS23, which is sure to be a hit.

STYLES & MATERIALS

Lighter, more airy fabrics are a must for SS23, with brands experimenting with different textiles to produce more easy-going garments. Gesa from IrieDaily said they will be “using blends of hemp fabric in several styles this season, which are particularly suitable for the summer collection due to their cooling effect. This material offers a whole range of features such as excellent durability and longevity. In addition, the hemp fibre is a rapidly renewable natural fibre that uses less water than cotton.”

Jean shorts are a hit this season, re-enforcing the 90’s resurgence. Brands like Homeboy, Hydroponic and Alpha Industries are proudly focusing their summer lines on this route. Julian from Homeboy said: “It’s been a while since shorts were a thing in streetwear. I personally always switched my boardshorts for a long denim baggy when I was done with a session. We are about to change that. Make baggy shorts great again!”

SUSTAINABILITY

The constantly recurring word within the fashion industry is sustainability, and for good reason. Brands like Globe for example produce their entire range sustainably - not just one capsule collection. Matt from Globe spoke of their ‘Low Velocity’ Clothing: “We use sustainable fibres in all of our materials (such as organic cotton, Repreve recycled polyester, Cocotex coconut polyester, PVC & Phthalate free inks), and all styles have been rigorously wear tested by our team of global nomads for fit, function, and durability. Our goal is not only to use sustainable materials, but also build high quality clothing that lasts the test of time.”

IrieDaily are introducing Apple skin vegan leather as Gesa explained: “This alternative to real leather contains bio-based wood pulp and apple waste. This waste is recovered from the fruit juice industry. Pulp and waste are



brought together with waterborne PU, which is free from heavy metals.” The more technology advances, the more possibilities become available regarding sustainability, and as long as brands are actively being eco-conscious we can at least have a good conscience that we’re not supporting ‘fast fashion’ as much as before. ©

HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Baggy pants going strong!
- 2 Washed Jorts are a big hit this season.
- 3 Tech-wear combining functionality with practicality
- 4 Lightweight cotton elasticated pants on trend
- 5 Sustainability a major focus for brands!



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At the beginning of this year the economic situation in Switzerland seems pretty good but the balance is a rather delicate one. Although it may be to a lesser extent than in

some of our neighbouring countries, the geopolitical situation causing the prices of oil and raw materials to soar is clearly affecting us as well and the effect on boardsports is starting to be felt here too. As is often the case, our currency is sheltering us from being as badly affected as others but this could change soon according to macro-economic experts. The price of goods is rising in almost all sectors and this is probably only the beginning with the current inflation not expected to subside any time soon. Obviously, wages will not follow as quickly, which will inevitably lead to a decrease in purchasing power.

In addition to prices, current uncertainties are mainly based around the ability to get stock. We know that the disruptions caused by Covid, and now the war, are having a major impact on production, transportation and traffic in general. So, as we have known for a while now, some sports have been particularly affected by equipment shortages and delivery delays and this is the case for the cycling as well as other sectors such as watersports and skateboarding.

The skateboarding industry has, like in many other countries, evolved enormously after the pandemic. There are two reasons for this, firstly due to the massive increase in demand, and secondly because distributors had to organise themselves differently when ordering from brands and factories. Today, more stock has to be acquired and more of it has to be pre-ordered than in the past.

MARKET INSIGHT

According to Markus "Soerfi" Schweingruber, the owner of the Illumate distribution and the online shop skate.ch, this situation has led to shops and distributors over-ordering and overstocking hardgoods for spring 2022. Shops received a lot of product at the beginning of the year and now have to sell it just as the frenzy of the last two years seems to be dying down a little bit. That said, for the moment it remains quite OK: as Soerfi says, we must compare what is comparable which means pitting the figures of 2022 against those of 2019 because the so-called Covid opportunities of 2020 and 2021 were exceptions. Today we are back to a more normal level, although higher than 2019, which is pleasing. So b2c sales have slowed down because of the return to normality while b2b sales have slowed down because of the large amount of pre-orders and resulting stock to sell.

When you look at the sales in more detail, you can see real progress in sales of protective gear, a type of product which was practically not even selling a few years ago. Once more according to Soerfi, it seems that "re-issue" decks, which consists of bringing back vintage-classic designs, are really popular with skaters and collectors alike jumping on them. So in his case distributing Powell Peralta and Santa Cruz (and many others of course), you can easily understand that when it comes to reissues there are some really good opportunities to be had.

We find ourselves at a pivotal moment, prices are taking off and availability shortages can present real problems. Let's hope that everyone manages to get through it successfully before the (late?) arrival of our winter products.

FABIEN GRISEL

RETAIL BUYER'S GUIDE

FOILING SS23

Propelled by wing foiling -the latest in hydrofoil sports - the market is getting a second wind, connecting it with a more accessible, less technical sport than pure surf/SUP foil. Brands have a suitably extensive range for 2023 so take note! By **David Bianic**



Faster than a Sars-CoV-2 variant, it's continually mutating and spreading unhindered throughout the boardsports world. The only handbrakes on its full expansion: getting your credit card out when it comes to buying one and the "physical barriers" which not everyone can overcome. As you will have seen, foiling has one of the fastest penetration rates in boardsports history, only its price and technical difficulty prevent it from boasting the same success as - say - the inflatable SUP.

WING SWING

Upon the arrival of wing foiling, this last constraint tends to fade, making it the most accessible form

"Wing foiling caught people from wind and kite foiling and let them switch or add that sport to their repertoire." Max Panjak, Duotone/Fanatic

of foiling. The question now is whether wing foiling will boost all hydrofoil disciplines (kite foiling, wind foiling, surf foiling, SUP foiling) or cannibalise the market. "From personal observations, online and feedback from the beaches I would say that wing foiling caught people from wind and kite foiling and let them switch or add that sport to their repertoire," comments Max Panjak, Product Manager for Duotone/Fanatic, before adding

that “Foil surfing on the other hand might have increased their number in participants through wing foilers getting into surf foiling as a next step.” Konstantin Weier, Marketing Manager at Gaastra & Tabou Boards, sums up the situation wonderfully by explaining that windsurfers appreciate the lightness of the wing foil, kitesurfers love the immediate drive of the kites and surfers have the opportunity to use the wind and still get a feeling of freedom on the waves.

For Alex Maes, European Sales Director at Lift Foils, it would not be surprising if wing foiling overtakes kitesurfing in the next couple of years but he doesn't perceive too much of a threat to the diversity of the market either because it is the ability to switch from one discipline to another without changing the equipment too much that is important. We'll come back to this...

PRICES AND PACKAGES

When it comes to the price of a complete set-up (board, hydrofoil and possibly wing), this has also diversified according to their uses. From 100% carbon foils to aluminium alternatives, accessibility is improving, as explained by Andy Wirtz of Norden, a foilboard shaper for whom low-price online competition is not a fundamental threat: “I think we learned from the inflatable SUP that the cheap stuff helps to sell the expensive stuff because it makes a bigger cake”.

“The logic behind Forward Geometry is all about the mast track position in relation to the centre of the board. The further forward the mast can go the better, it improves manoeuvrability, response and dramatically reduces the rotational swing weight effect.” Nathan Tuke, Armstrong Foils

One way to encourage foiling, as with SUP, is in part through package deals. This commercial practise differs depending on the brand and their positioning on the foil scene. At Naish or Slingshot for example, it's up to retailers to compose these packages or not, while at AFS Foils, they admit that it simplifies the choice for customers. Others like Lift Foils have gone backwards and stopped offering these complete kits in 2022 to give the buyer more

freedom given the depth of their range (9 front wings, 6 rear wings).

As far as prices are concerned, the foil world and water sports in general are “not a refuge from inflation”, reminds Bruno Sroka of Sroka Company, before adding that he has seen past mistakes repeated (in kitesurfing and windsurfing) by tending towards becoming an elitist discipline. Sroka are therefore limiting their prices without positioning themselves as a “low-coaster” with, for example, “plug and play” packages (wing + foil + board) between €2400 and €2600, and €2050 for inflatables. Indiana remind us that people who already practice windsurfing, kiting or snowboarding are already used to spending more for better quality equipment so a “high” price is a subjective notion depending on the customer's background. Not wrong.

HYDROFOIL DEVELOPMENTS 2023

Before diving into the detail of the wings, masts and other stabilisers, let's revisit a basic trend in foil set-ups: their modular options. Brands are making it possible to interchange these parts according to use and/or conditions. To provide this freedom, Go Foil, for example, have made the same mast/fuselage connection system for nine years, explains Alex Aguera, one of the legends of modern foiling, which is why their iconic Maliko 200 foil can still be found on the water.

This modular approach was undoubtedly one of the reasons for the success of Slingshot's Hover Glide foils, whose parts are all compatible with each other, with the brand also providing this capability on their most recent platform, the Phantasm.

But be careful not to drown the user in choice, warns Max from Duotone/Fanatic: “it's easy to get lost if there's like 25 different options to choose from.”, which is why the brand are trying to keep their range simple and clear. Steve West, Mistral's R&D and Marketing Director, points out another limitation of such versatility in the set-ups: “brands are wanting to market equipment as multi-functional when in fact it's often borderline dysfunctional on account of attempting to be too many things, to too many people.” He cites the



similarities between wing foiling and SUP foiling, but the very different requirements of higher power sports such as kite and wind foiling.

Sometimes this crossover dimension is the result of “happy accidents”, says Paul Burnett, Brand Manager at Unifoil, whose first Hyper kite designed for surf foiling was hijacked by windfoilers, then it was the turn of the Vyper - still designed for surfing - adopted by wing foilers! What about the Hyper 2 which will be released later this year?

“Brands are wanting to market equipment as multi-functional when in fact its often borderline dysfunctional on account of attempting to be too many things, to too many people.” Steve West, Mistral

But let’s stick with versatility and the brand new CF V2 from Armstrong Foils, a foil set-up that suits a range of riders from beginners to advanced, as Operations Manager Nathan Tuke explains: “Low stall speeds combined with excellent pitch stability provide control and increased flying time across a variety of foiling sports.”

For lighter wind conditions, Go Foil are highlighting their GT2200 front wing, a surface area that allows for very low speed flying, with which Alex advises trying the 20” rear wing, “and take off into the calm!” In the same vein, the G-Series (for Glide) from Slingshot comes to mind, which is clearly aimed at effortless gliding and pumping, yet still compatible with many foil disciplines.

The big news from Naish is not in the wing but in the fuselage with a new S27 aluminium model (in 55 and 36 cm) whose connection system makes it 100% compatible with all their front wings produced so far and with their rear wings since 2018. SIC Maui are also highlighting their new Flip Fuselage, “which allows you to customise your ride with two options: pump riding style with stability and control or manoeuvrability and aggressive turning”. For their part, Cabrinha are pushing a new Cab Fusion construction which is a mast/fuselage connector that ensures there is no play in the system, providing great torsional stiffness so it feels like it’s just one piece.

For the most experienced foilers, the high-aspect design of the wings, i.e. a large span for a small



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cord (width), has become a must: faster glide, more stability, more power when pumping, but less manoeuvrability. For example, this is the case with the HA1700 front wing from Taaroa Hydrofoils, “a true weapon for dock starts or connecting endless waves.”, assures Sales Manager Antoine Ravel, allowing you to fly “even in the tiniest breeze while Wing foiling with an impressive speed potential”. F-One are also exploiting this “high aspect ratio” vein with two foils dedicated to downwind, the Seven Seas (AR 7.5), “great for surfing the swell and downwinding on small chops or in light winds” and the Eagle (AR 9.5) made for the high sea to “fly far and fast”. Cabrinha are boasting about their new H-series range (developed with their top rider Keahi De Aboitiz for high aspect) that uses the Cab Fusion system mentioned above. This brand are working with scientists from the Norwegian institute SINTEF to gather as much data as they can about their foils such as cavitation. Takuma are joining the party with a high aspect version of their full carbon Kujira, the 1095, which reuses the brands iconic wing design and ridged leading edge inspired by humpback whales. In passing we should mention their new 1750 version of the Kujira Helium front wing, a more affordable model that has enjoyed great success for its performance to price ratio. By the way, foiling doesn’t always have to be expensive, just like the Board Shim at PPC Foiling, an ingenious prop piece which sits between the mast plate and the board, thanks to which you can add/lessen the angle: “If you feel too much back foot pressure while foiling, position the thicker end to the back & it will flatten the rocker of your board therefore giving you a more level flight.” And vice versa.

Finally, while many foil brands have complemented their ranges with foilboards, Freedom Foil is going the other way by launching two full-carbon foils for 2023, the Halcyon and Phoenix.

FOILBOARD DEVELOPMENTS 2023

As proof of the new-found importance of wing foils, all the interviewed brands - without exception - chose to highlight their new foilboards aimed at this use. In no particular order: the Wing Nut from Freedom Foil Boards and its “Quad Micro Channel Bottom engineered to reduce friction and allow for a quick release on take off”, as well as “Gradually



tapered rails redirecting water near the nose and improving flow around the tail of the board”. Another example of this is the new Code from Cabrinha (6 sizes from 4’8”/58l to 5’8”/118l) aimed at windsurfing and derived from their Macro board, a light board with ultra quick take off in an ESP-bamboo and carbon stringer construction.

Another example is the new Soar from PPC Foiling, an evolution of their first wing board, the Glide. The idea behind this shape is to provide maximum stability and minimum swing weight between the board and the foil. Armstrong Foils have also worked on reducing this effect on their Forward Geometry. Nathan Tuke explains: “The logic behind the Forward Geometry is all about the mast track position in relation to the centre of the board. The further forward the mast can go the better, improving its manoeuvrability, response and dramatically reducing the rotational swing weight effect.” Got it? This FG design can be found on their WKT board, for Wake, Kite, Tow.

In terms of boards, versatility has its limits and, generally speaking, the same foilboard can be used for two different disciplines but rarely more. This is

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demonstrated by Andy from Norden who says that “the two-in-one works very well with customers”, i.e. “2 sizes that suits surf/wing foilers, 2 pure wing sizes and 2 beginner wing/ SUP foil sizes”. This is also the case with Mistral’s Tempest, designed as a technical SUP foil board or a wingboard for light to medium weight riders, from intermediate to advanced riders.

Still anecdotal just last year, inflatable foil boards are gaining ground, like the LTF (Learn to Fly) from Slingshot, equipped with a rigid carbon plate on the hull that helps you pump and get close to the feeling of a rigid board, all folded into a small case once deflated. Sroka are also offering three choices of inflatables from 5’3” (115 l) to 6’ (140 l) and finally a 6’4” (150 l), just like SIC Maui who are offering an Air version of their Raptor to make it easier for beginners and to allow experienced riders to travel unburdened.

Lastly, the e-Foil category has managed to win over an audience from outside the boardsports world and many are now launching into electric foils: the Lift3 from Lift Foils or Takuma with their Cruising 2 Jet and Carver. The Cruising 2 Jet replaces a propeller with a more secure turbine that requires less maintenance.

FOILS & FOILBOARDS MATERIALS 2023

Let’s finish quickly with the constructions because, unsurprisingly, carbon reigns supreme in wings and masts and continues to progress technologically. Mistral are using 12k carbon fibre on their front and rear wings and will launch a carbon fuselage in 2023 (aluminium today). At Naish, a new mast appears, the C100 monocoque (4 sizes from 75 to 105cm). This breakthrough blends 3k carbon and UD (unidirectionality) to achieve unparalleled longitudinal and torsional stiffness, providing a more direct feel. For more modest budgets, Naish are offering the C35 composite mast (35% UD carbon), twin brother of the C100.

The success of aluminium masts is not only down to their lower price, says Paul Burnett from Unifoil, but also because of their rigidity and the brand is preparing to release three aluminium masts (600, 750, 850mm). We should also salute the

compatibility between SIC Maui’s aluminium Flite masts/stabilisers and their carbon Slash foil.

As for the boards, the standard remains PVC sandwich composite with the addition of carbon fibre for the sportiest models, but cheaper alternatives are appearing. At Slingshot, the Manticore (wing foil) is a very robust moulded board at a curtailed price, while Tahe are about to launch foilboards in Ace-Tec technology, which already existed under BIC, all at an affordable price.

For wingfoil, F-One are now offering their Rocket Wing and Rocket Wing-S (for surfing) in full carbon or full bamboo: “The carbon ones are more recommended for intensive freestyle sessions as the carbon makes the boards tougher and extra resistant.” The brand are also rerunning their unique FCT (Foil Compression Technology) construction in 2023; front wings with a high density foam core covered in fibreglass then wrapped in a Shield Skin to protect the wing from dings and scratches.

CONCLUSION

Increasingly diversified and technical, the world of foiling can frighten off retailers who have not yet personally taken to the discipline. While many resources exist to educate customers (platforms like Slingshot’s foil-academy.com, as well as online courses on sale at Indiana or on the beach through demos/clinics), taking ownership of foil sports is crucial for retailers if they don’t want to lose the market to online DTC sales. “If you look at the old school model of windsurfing, retailers would offer lessons first, then sell you what you need relative to your needs. This model is gold and should be brought back into service,” advises Steve at Mistral. Heed these wise words. ☺

HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Wing foiling for everyone
- 2 Packages: foil + board (+ wing)
- 3 Versatile, modular, low speed foils

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Having to start off every Market Insight piece with news about the pandemic or the war is something that makes you really stop for a moment and reflect. It would be nice to write about

something normal for a change. Or about how much fun boardsports are. Sadly, however, we can't change the situation: the war in Ukraine has been going on for almost 3 months now, that is, since 22 February, and unfortunately we too get nothing but bad news every day. The war is increasingly showing that people seem to be holding on to their money. Inflation in Germany is around 7% at the moment, and in our case this trend is not only affecting the retail sector.

Shipping prices are going through the roof, while petrol and gas prices continue to rise despite a tax cut on gasoline prices decided by the government.

This means that suppliers, retailers and online shops are confronted with this issue. What to do? That is the question. Raise prices? This is happening to trade almost every day. Free shipping? Charging the end customer for the shipping costs? We are seeing this in more and more shops. This has to happen just so that retailers can achieve a margin and profit at all. We will see it happen, it's inevitable.

Unfortunately, companies in China are struggling as a result of strict lockdowns to contain an Omicron outbreak. That continues to translate into containers being loaded too late or not at all, and factories still not operating at 100%. This

situation is likely to persist for a while longer.

And now let's take a look at the sales over the past few months, which have definitely slumped a little throughout Germany. No matter whether north or south, come rain or shine. This may be due to different circumstances... some of which we have mentioned above in this article... Another factor in relation to our sports is, of course, the fact that travelling has become easier again. Festivals, parties etc. are taking place again as normal (thank God). But that also means you don't necessarily need to buy an SUP, foil, wakeboard or new hardware. But enough is enough, slowly but surely we also need something positive... and that's what we heard from Kai Fuhrer at Fuhrer Sports. His revenue is growing, especially in the textile/fashion segment. When I asked him what brands are performing best, he mentioned Carhartt, Volcom, Iriedaily.

I then followed this up with Mossi at Iriedaily, who also expressed his satisfaction with sales, including very stable reorders. Stock levels are normal for this time of year. However, Kai doesn't know the way forward with hardware either, as longboards are unfortunately in the doldrums, while skateboarding is quite stable, but has declined extremely compared to the previous year.

Mossi, who also serves Quartar Distribution with Team Breyer Agency, experiences this too. He says that the reorders of complete boards are still limited, but that the shops' own deck designs are on the rise. They also sell a lot of the so-called "small shit", such as wheels, bearings, grip... etc.

We now come to the water sports segment: SUP SUP SUP. The sales hit of the last few years is experiencing a slump, partly due to the weather. On the other hand, this is also due to the fact that there are a lot of goods on the market and the warehouses are full. This is of course linked to the delays from last summer, and then the new orders that have arrived in the warehouses or are on their way there.

Sales are rather slow at the moment... the first online stores have already had to cut prices in order to generate cash flow. However, summer is just starting and sales have picked up in the second week of June. Jens from the 58 Sup Station in Ulm told us that before the holidays he especially sold cheap boards to the typical holiday family. Unfortunately, the high-end models are not going as well as hoped.

What is now attracting more people are events, he says: company events, birthdays, SUP tours, BBQs etc. at his station on the Danube. This is also connected with the festival effect... People want to get out and have fun again.

Ricardo from Santoloco in Munich also confirms this. More and more ocean surfboards are being sold there again... the reason is simply that people are flying to the sea and on holiday again. When asked about the current situation with brands, he answers:

"It's still difficult, what we need is usually only available after weeks, as always. But it's trickling in bit by bit."

What are the most popular surfboard brands in his shop at the moment? "...Lost and Channel Island are the strongest in the PU sector. Among the ones with new

construction methods (>Epoxy), Firewire and Lib-Tech are very stable, whereby Firewire is a bit ahead of the rest, because they have stock."

How are other product categories working? "To be honest, textiles are performing modestly in our store, but that could also be due to a construction site on our doorstep... we're a bit short of shoppers... People tend to come to the shop specifically for surfboard repair."

We conclude this German Market Insight... with a new surf event created by Jens Höper from Wavetours and Michael Zirlewagen from layday layday: the Surfersweek in Seignosse, France. This took place in the first week of June. They created a new event format with the German Open. "It was awesome considering it was taking place for the first time. Over 1100 guests attended!" The event included three live concerts, Surfcontest German Open, Surfboard test, Surfskate side events. From yoga to surf flea market and a big party, there was everything.

In conclusion, we are glad that events of all kinds are taking place again and people are keen to enjoy and experience our boardsports. See you for the next Market Insight... with hopefully a lot of positive news and business.

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RETAIL BUYER'S GUIDE

SURFSKATE SS23

What with the twists and turns the world keeps throwing at us, it seems only fitting to discuss the twists and turns of the surfskate industry (pun most definitely intended) and what brands have in store for next season. We take a closer look with the Surfskate Retail Buyer's Guide for 2023 with **Dave Morgan**.



SLIDE

MARKET

"The surfskate market definitely remains strong however the overall market conditions have returned to more of a normal and realistic scenario in comparison to 2021." Eben Woodall, VP of Sales at Carver stated, which sums up the general vibe of what's occurring in surfskate right now. The overstocking of the market is currently a big issue in every aspect of the skateboard industry, and as Andy King - Brand manager / Designer at Mindless said: "We feel it will be for the next 12 months. We've had to delay production of our new range due to shops being unable to take preorders and certain brands are forcing stock onto shops and tying up their cash flow."

Xué Gil, CBO at Yow believes surfing is continuing to provide a surge in popularity for surf skating: "I would say that the constant growth of the sport of surfing – specially in inland cities and also the increase of infrastructure dedicated to

"We feel it will be for the next 12 months. We've had to delay production of our new range due to shops being unable to take preorders and certain brands are forcing stock onto shops and tying up their cash flow." Andy King, Mindless

the sport." This is clearly evident, as the majority of surf skating is partaken by those within landlocked areas. "It's also well promoted by influencers to have a completely inclusive vibe. Low barriers to entry help as well, no tricks, just turning, people see that and believe they could enjoy it too," added Ryan Theobald VP Sales and Marketing at Landyachtz. Jordi Quinto, Skate Specialist at Hydroponic agreed, saying "Riders of all ages see it as an easier practice to master than traditional street and skatepark skating, and especially older riders and those who have been surfing for a while have embraced it quickly and passionately."



PRODUCT

The focus of the surfskate market continues to be on complete setups as opposed to individual components, as most brands make purely prebuilt, ready to skate completes, which is especially inviting to the beginner. Tim Macke, Brand Manager at Flow said “Completes definitely are far and away the most popular product currently. There don’t seem to be many people trying to tinker and construct their own complete.” Ivan Garcia Arozamena, Product Manager at Miller Division furthered this point, saying that “Although there are riders who have been using the surfskate for longer and buy the loose parts and thus assemble the surfskate to their liking, it is the minority. 90% is still the complete surfskate.” Xué Gil at Yow added that “Whilst the percentage of completes remains high, there’s also been an increase in people demanding separate parts to build custom surfskates that can adjust more to their necessities.” Like with every boardsport, the more the rider progresses, the more they begin to customise their setups to their own liking, so it’s good to hear that brands are also offering components alongside completes. For Miller Division, this involves allowing their team riders to experiment with every material and component of their setup, which is then passed onto the customer. “All this means that our surfskates are reviewed one by one so that they have a perfect and durable operation with a top design,” says Ivan Garcia Arozamena.

FEATURES & TECHNOLOGY

The trucks of a surfskate are of course the main ingredient to making it so different from a normal skateboard/cruiser and it looks like brands are continuing to improve their systems and experiment with new technologies. Loaded / Orangatang will be releasing more collaborations with Carver - using their own boards and combining them with Carver’s trucks as Pablo Castro, International Sales Director at Loaded explained: “We have a collab with Carver using their CX and C7 trucks and a specially designed Loaded deck as well as bespoke Orangatang wheel and bushing setups.” Which will no doubt blow some minds. Arbor have also joined forces with Carver, as Nate Shute- product Manager at Arbor said: “Arbor recently launched the Shaper Series, an ultra-collaboration with Carver Trucks and Shapers; Ryan Lovelace and Tyler Warren.” As Carver pioneered the surfskate technology that most brands are using these days, it seems only right to team up.

On the subject, Eben Woodall of Carver announced that “Carver has made some recent upgrades on various truck parts to improve performance and durability including an internal locking spring nut on the C7 as well as an improved softer spring and also a special kingpin lock nut for the CX.” FLOW are most proud of their “spring powered front truck with adjustable tension to dial in your perfect ride,” as Tim Mackey explained, which looks to add a little more in terms of personalisation for

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the experienced rider's preference. Landyachtz, on the other hand have a different approach, as Ryan Theobald said: "The banger truck is designed to use reverse king pin geometry with reliance on the bushings for rebound rather than a spring or other mechanical means. This creates an easy to adjust, simple product that is ideal for more than just surf turns."

SHAPE & SIZE

From what we can gather, it looks like this won't be changing too much from previous seasons, as Ivan from Miller Division said: "In terms of measurements, it will depend on their height and weight and will vary between measurements from 29" to 32" in length. As for widths from 9" to 10" depending on the foot or the stability that each rider seeks. This point has not changed." Shape-wise, brands like Hydroponic have everything covered, as Jordi Quinto announced: "The shapes follow the general aesthetics of surfing, with fishtail or diamondtail boards, as well as other models closer to 80s skateboarding. It sounds like brands are focusing on 'all rounder' boards that can be used for both aggressive carves as well as casual cruising. Landyachtz stood out here, as Ryan Theobald explained: "Our Complete packages are unique in the market because we designed them to act as a surf cruiser. A surfy hard carving cruiser board that is a very capable everyday board." Slide's best-selling shape is as Iciar Sánchez, Product Designer at Slide said, "The Gussie 31". It's great for all levels, as it's wide enough for beginners and super manoeuvrable for advanced riders." Nate Shute from Arbor added that "Arbor continues

to elevate its signature Wood aesthetic by blending sustainable materials with quality craftsmanship, driven by artists, shapers, and athletes."

Sustainability is still a constant battle for any industry to remain conscious of, especially with soaring material and manufacturing prices, however surfskate brands are positively acting upon this. Eben from Carver spoke of "working on the new 'Ghostwave' model that is a step up from our 'Ahi' model using recycled fish nets as the material." Brands are also using mixtures of different woods, combining the likes of bamboo with traditional maple in a bid to provide more sustainable production, however this does raise manufacturing costs.

PRICE POINTS

Continuing on from the choices of materials and the price points that obviously receive an effect from this, Ivan from Miller Division said "In terms of prices, our starting point for surfskates ranges from €185 to €210, the highest - those with combinations of wood that make the product more expensive." Entry level, affordable completes are coming in from brands like Flow and Gotcha starting around €130+, whereas the higher end of the scale seems to be brands like Loaded, with completes ranging between the €280-300 mark. Obviously the more experienced the rider, the more technology they desire in a board, and this comes with a price, however a price that is surely worth paying for! It's great to see brands like Hydroponic selling singular surfskate decks too for just €79.98, for those that love the undercarriage, but want to switch-up or replace their board.

It most definitely looks to be an exiting year for surfskate, with the aforementioned new technologies being introduced and becoming more normalised within the industry. As the scene grows, the demand for innovative new components will only grow alongside it, so we're all looking forward to what the future will bring. ☺

HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 All rounder boards for carve & cruise
- 2 Carry-over happening due to cancelled POs
- 3 Completes range: €130-300
- 4 Customisation on the rise, but only 10% of market



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BIG WIG INTERVIEW

JOOST GROOTSWAGERS - LIBERATED BRANDS

A snowboard fanatic from The Netherlands, Joost Grootswagers heads up Liberated Brands in Europe based out of South-West France. Volcom, Electric, Spyder & now Captain Fin Co fall under the Liberated Brands umbrella and we spoke with Joost to find out how they operate on both the front and back end. Keeping sales forces separate per brand, but marrying back office operations such as digital, Joost explains just how this approach allows them to grow brands sustainably and we explore just how the company differentiates between sales models from one region to another and how.

Read on to find out about Volcom Snow's terrific momentum, how they separate a core Alpine ski company (Spyder) from a core boardsport brand (Volcom), while promoting sustainable growth and we also hear first word from the group on the integration of Captain Fin Co. into the fold. Interview by SOURCE Editor Harry MT.

Captain Fin Co is super solidified in the core channel and we will firstly add our operational excellence to the brand and work on a dedicated website on our Liberated platform. We will then carefully start looking into where we can apply our apparel knowledge to the brand and consider future opportunities.

Joost, tell us about your career in action sports that led you to working for Volcom.

My career started in sports marketing at Canon, managing key events in Formula 1 & Football on one hand and building programs with the International Red Cross and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) on the other hand.

One day I worked on a project where we bundled an O'Neill backpack with a Canon Digital Ixus camera. After working closely with O'Neill I soon realized that the action sports world suited me quite well and luckily managed to get a job at their HQ.

From O'Neill I moved to SoleTech (Etnies, Emerica, eS, 32) eventually leading to a job at Volcom in 2011. The first 5 years were dedicated to the commercial side of the business and after gradually transferring to managing the whole company in Europe. Over the past 11 years I was fortunate enough to gather a super strong team around me which helped to transition into the Head of Liberated Brands Europe (Volcom, Spyder, Electric and now Captin Fin Co) since a little over 1 year now.

Volcom Snow is on fire at the moment and we are just coming out of the biggest sell-in season in our history.

Volcom also allowed me to fully live my passions of which snowboarding is the key one!

How has the last few years been at Volcom since leaving the Kering umbrella?

Very exciting! Working with Kering was really motivating in terms of learning how to curate and build brands. However now on top of being brand builders we are back to being entrepreneurial again. Working directly with the owners of Liberated Brands makes us very agile

and reactive. We have been lucky to benefit from the best of both worlds and now we are very well positioned for the future.

Please explain how the Liberated Brands co works.

We have built a machine with Volcom over the past decades in terms of operational excellence, premium brand building and sustainable growth.

When Covid-19 hit, these strong pillars really surfaced and we have been ready and prepared to apply this knowledge to other brands as well. Due to the strong relationship between Liberated Brands and ABG (Authentic Brand Group) we managed to tap into a brand like Spyder. Due to our existing relationships, we have onboarded Electric and we are working on other brands to follow (Captain Fin Co, recently announced). The recent growth has also allowed us to invest in doubling our warehouse capacity here in the South of France.

In the end it comes down to making key investments. One of them being very important is our teams. At Liberated one of the core values is family. We really see all our teams and relations as a big family whereby investing in time, education and attention we will continue to be strong.

To share some interesting facts:

- We have created a hybrid work model between office and home working for all staff
- We have passed the 200 employees mark at Liberated Europe
- We have an average age of 34 at our group
- We are a fully equal employer: we promote and respect diversity. We provide equal opportunities to all candidates and an inclusive environment

for all employees.

So in other words we are a super cool place to work!

How does it work with staffing teams on the back-end vs front end of Volcom and other brands under the ABG and Liberated Brands umbrella?

We have created a group called Liberated Brands Europe and under that group we separately operate Volcom, Spyder, Electric, Captain Fin Co and future brands. The back end is fully integrated on all brands where we really use our knowledge to optimize all processes.

On the front end we mix where appropriate and keep it separate where required. As an example, our sales force is completely separated between brands. On the other hand, for instance our digital department is fully operates across all brands.

How are you approaching the Spyder business? How do you keep it separate enough from the Volcom core snow channel, while still growing the business?

Volcom is a snowboarders' brand and Spyder a ski brand! So, by nature we deal with a completely different target audience.

Due to our existing relationships, we have onboarded Electric and we are working on other brands to follow (Captain Fin Co, recently announced). The recent growth has also allowed us to invest in doubling our warehouse capacity here in the South of France.

Volcom Snow is on fire at the moment and we are just coming out of the biggest sell-in season in our history. We have managed to really curate the brand well in the core channel and have been making very conscious choices over the past years in order to make sure Volcom Snow has a long and healthy future.

Spyder was completely new for us and we have

focused a lot on getting the brand up to our Liberated standards in terms of operational excellence and premium brand building. We have been very positively surprised and managed to get our orders back to pre-covid levels.

Now we are focusing on investments in marketing and collections to ensure we have a fun ride ahead of us. We will work on making Spyder relevant on and off mountain and cover the full mountain. So, besides our focus on Alpine skiing, you will see more in freeride and après ski as well. Spyder (like Volcom) has a very strong brand heritage, and we will continue to build upon that.

By making the right investments into operations, collections, relations and marketing we really feel there is a lot of potential in all the brands we run.

Please talk to us about your wetsuit program and how it's been received.

It's been very well received by the market. For us it is a small program with a dedicated distribution and marketing. The quality is super good, and it is resonating in the right way.

The program is backed by some of the best surfers in the world and we use them also actively in the product development.

For many years we used to get a huge demand for our riders' wetsuits, and according to the market it was definitely the right time to launch a proper program. After successfully launching men we are now looking at launching women's and accessories.

It feels like a full circle with Electric returning to the fold, what are your plans for the optical market going forward?

We focused first on cleaning up the distribution. Now we are working on building a strong action sports distribution in surf and snow. At the same time we have re-implemented a fixtures program.

The optical market is on our radar but we have to get the basics right first before we expand. We are building a real marketing program for Europe to ensure brand health and future demand.

We are investing in digital campaigns in surfing and snowboarding. Building a proper EU rider team with big names joining the family like William Aliotti and Jonathan Gonzalez in surfing. On snowboarding we are capitalizing on the momentum of stars like Arthur Longo, Torgeir Bergrem and Marcus Kleveland.

One of the great points about Electric is the quality of the products (eg made in Italy) and the heritage of the brand.

What lessons has the company learnt from coronavirus and how are you taking them forwards?

We really kept our focus during covid on our operations (eg we always delivered on time), never stopped investing in brand building (a lot of online activations) and last but not least we kept communicating with our partners at all times.

So going forward we keep our focus on our strategic pillars and expand them to a bigger group of brands. This is easier said than done but we put a lot of effort into staying calm and focusing on the basics of business during turbulent times.

What pros and cons do you find with working across direct, agency and distributor models? What's the future?

The key is to find the right mix for the market and for the company. Then you must treat all your partners the same. For us at Liberated Brands there is no difference in dealing with direct employees, agents or distributors. For the future the mix is key. Developing markets with distributors, mature markets direct or with a (master) agency.

The argument is also financial. Where many tend to focus primarily on the initial margin difference per model it is equally important to focus on the cost/risk side associated to the different business models. For instance, during Covid we have been very blessed at Liberated Brands with not having too many direct operations. As a result, we could clearly manage our costs. In the end it is all about the right mix and we roughly operate 1/3 direct, 1/3 (master) agents and 1/3 distributors.



Captain Fin has recently been acquired what was the thinking behind this move and how will the brand be integrated in Europe?

As mentioned before we are building a group and leverage what we have created over the last many years. Captain Fin Co is super solidified in the core channel and we will firstly add our operational excellence to the brand and work on a dedicated website on our Liberated platform. We will then carefully start looking into where we can apply our apparel knowledge to the brand and consider future opportunities. At Liberated we are really excited with this addition and we see a solid future for Captain Fin in Europe. ©

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RETAIL BUYER'S GUIDE

WINGS SS23

Few sports have experienced as fast an evolution as Wing Foiling. Retailers and consumers wait with bated breath the innovations that brands will deliver. Brands are on it. By **Rocio Enriquez**.



It's been three summers since we first witnessed a few pioneers flapping their wings about at sea. Back then we wondered if it would stick. An established water sport already, today we wonder how far it will evolve. The appeal of cruising in low winds is still high, but riders have started taking the sport to the next level. "For such a young sport, an astonishing array of riding styles have already evolved", says Hannes Burher from Ozone. The rapid development of new riding styles influences product development. "Handles are a hot topic for 2023", says Cai Wagget from Ocean Rodeo.

The largest part of the business is still driven by newcomers from other wind sports. They enjoy the possibility of gliding over water even on low-wind days. However, we start seeing riders who are aiming for jumps, waves, or speed. Product ranges are expanding their offering with designs tailored to intended use. Gin Kites will soon launch their new Alpha wing. "It's the perfect choice if you want to experience the rush of speed", says Tiana Laporte. Experienced watermen who were early adopters are now upgrading their initial purchases. On

"For such a young sport, an astonishing array of riding styles have already evolved"

Hannes Burher, Ozone

the other hand, because it is a relatively easy sport to pick up, the demand for entry level gear remains steady. F-One thinks that the ease of use and playfulness of the wing could lead to the democratisation of the sport, including children and women. "We have created a young rider programme: The F-One Wing foil Next Generation", says Chloe Scamps, Head of Marketing Communications. Konstantin Weier from Gaastra agrees: "More water sports schools are adding wing foiling to their programme".

So far, all-round designs top the best-seller charts. Duotone's Unit, F-One's Strike v2, Gin's Delta, Ozone's Wasp, Tahe's Alize, Slingshot's Sling v3, Gaastra's Cross and the HY v2 by Gun Sails all fall into this category. Naish is very confident about the



sales performance of their new all-rounder, the MK4. It is difficult to predict growth in such a fast-evolving sport. On one hand, we could see a rise on demand for wings designed for specific modalities. On the other, if the sport democratises as it's hoped, the demand for entry level wings could soar. Brands have already understood that they need to respond swiftly to the market's demands. Their product development teams stand ready to produce the wings that users are after.

"We are all paying special attention to leech tension control" Jacques Freydrich, Tahe

INDUSTRY TRENDS

The current trend in product development is stiffness. R&D teams are busy trying to come up with the newest materials that can offer the best performance. "We are all paying special attention to leech tension control", says Jacques Freydrich from Tahe. The innovative Aluula can now be found in other brands apart from its precursor, Ocean Rodeo. However, state-of-the-art fabrics come at an increased cost and result in expensive wings. Experienced wing foilers will happily spend big money on the wing that best enables their progress. Newcomers, on the other hand, will have to be lured into the sport with more affordable gear. There are differences in performance too. The more rigid the wing, the more responsive and better performing it is. However, it can also be uncomfortable to handle since it's unable to absorb as much power. F-One created the Strike v2 with

adaptive design. It emulates the depowering in kiteboarding or the mast bending in windsurfing. Handles and bars get attention. Brands are offering different designs for specific uses, such as wave, freestyle, or race. Beginners and wave riders will enjoy the lightness and comfort of a soft handle. Riders looking for a more direct handling will demand hard ones. Windows are being tweaked. Slingshot is working on a new window material. The existing PVC and TPU is too stretchy and heavy, and limits performance. Positioning is constantly re-thought, too.

WING OFFER

Let's have a run through the materials we'll find on offer in 2023. Tahe focuses on the best strength to weight ratio for the design of their Alize. Its rigid canopy material with a classic panel layout simplifies the sailing and reduces flapping. Gaastra is using the new Dacron. "It provides an incredibly stiff skeleton and leading edge and strut, enhancing the overall performance", says Konstantin Weier. They are testing new materials, and we can expect an announcement later in the year. Ozone is also testing different materials, some of them with promising results. They test for load, UV stability, temperatures, and humidity for a minimum of six months. Gin Kiteboarding is introducing the latest high-quality materials in their new Alpha model. Naish uses the same Dacron and polyester that have proved successful in their kites' construction. F-One also relies on Dacron and polyester to explore their Adaptive Wing Design programme. Gun Sails uses a double diced Dacron that increases responsiveness and wind range. Ocean Rodeo keeps developing new fabrics

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using Aluula composites. They've announced two new ground-breaking technologies for 2023. Duotone is using the latest Aluula version in their premium Unit D/Lab. Seaflight works towards a fine balance of durability, lightweight and affordability. Slingshot announces innovations, although we'll have to wait a bit longer to learn about them.

Interesting things are happening in construction. F-One has innovated with the Adaptive Wing Design featured in their Strike v2. A controlled deformation of the wing preserves a high-performance profile and stability at all times. To achieve this, they worked on the leading edge and modified the shape of the central strut. The now segmented cut allows for an improved control of its curve and deformations. They also enhanced the wing's twist. Naish offers different constructions in their three wings. The Matador has a deeper draft and a larger diameter leading edge and strut. This makes it easy to manoeuvre in ocean swells. The Matador LT comes with a window-free canopy and no removable Y-handles. The adjusted strut shape and diameter increase the canopy tension and boost the overall power. The LT has three wide ergonomic grab handles, as opposed to the Matador which features five. Their MK4 has increased the diameter of the leading edge and struts.

"It provides an incredibly stiff skeleton and leading edge and strut, enhancing the overall performance"

Konstantin Weier, Gaastra

"It adds to its stiffness, resulting in great stability and power", says Scott Trudon. Tahe's Alize has an ergonomic centre batten that enables easy adjustment of power on the go. Its two wide-tube mini booms allow you to place your hands with precision to better control your wing. Gaastra is reworking their handle systems. They aim to equip different wings with the perfect handle for their intended use. Gun Sails has also tweaked their handles for a more rigid feeling. North introduces rigid grid lock handles in their Nova Free Wing. They offer more control over the wing, letting you micro-adjust with just one hand. Ozone crossbreeds with other products manufactured at their factory, such as paraglides or kites. This results in new constructions techniques.

SUSTAINABILITY

Wing performance relies heavily on the quality of the materials used. This makes sustainability challenging. Nevertheless, brands strive to find ways to promote it. It's hard to find plastic in packaging now. Duotone ships their wings without any plastic film, and they reuse all the packaging in their warehouse. Naish uses recyclable materials in their reduced packaging. Seaflight also ditches plastic, in favour of cardboard and paper. Ocean Rodeo claims to be very close to zero plastic use. Some wing bags are made with recycled fabrics. Duotone, Gun Sails and Seaflight make their wing bags with recycled plastic. Seaflight gives them a second life, as they can be re-used for dirty laundry, shopping or wetsuit storing, for example. Most brands monitor their factories for good practices. Gaastra

reduces waste by making sure they only use the right amount of material needed. Ozone reuses the offcuts of their wing production to make bags. Their factory is powered by solar panels. Ocean Rodeo avoids air freight when possible. Duotone works with Climate Partner to calculate and compensate all the carbon emissions caused by the production and shipment of their products.

RETAILER SUPPORT

Most wing foilers are beginners. Education is an important form of retailer support. F-One, Seaflight and Slingshot have some initiatives. Slingshot is about to launch a Wing Foiling guide with basic information. It will be supported by an in-depth instructional video programme through their Foil Academy. Communication about product development is also key. Demos and testing days are helpful this way. Ocean Rodeo and F-One organise a number of them. Good commercial support makes the daily grind easier for retailers. Gin has worked on a new B2B site that offers instant access to products. Ozone's order system makes tracking of shipments and delivery updates efficient and reliable. Overall, there is abundant online and social media presence. Duotone promotes sustainability through their campaign "Save our Playgrounds", that involves beach clean-ups.

Not one brand has avoided stock and delivery issues. The pandemic's restrictions shut down factories. Lead times in production increased significantly. Raw materials are scarce, and the cost of shipping has increased substantially. This situation is affecting all industries worldwide, so both brands and retailers have learned to be patient. Brands focus on actions that can alleviate the situation. The key is to work closely with each supplier and each retailer. The goal is to secure raw material alternatives and to advance production planning. Slingshot shares an interesting insight. They have noticed that customers who see some products out of stock on their website give up on the purchase. They do not realise that their retailers have loads of it. "We have a dealer locator tool to point customers in the direction of where to make their purchase", says Wyatt Miller. Communication and collaboration between brands and retailers are the key to sail these stormy waters. With a steady offer of solutions, customers will adjust to the new climate too. ☺

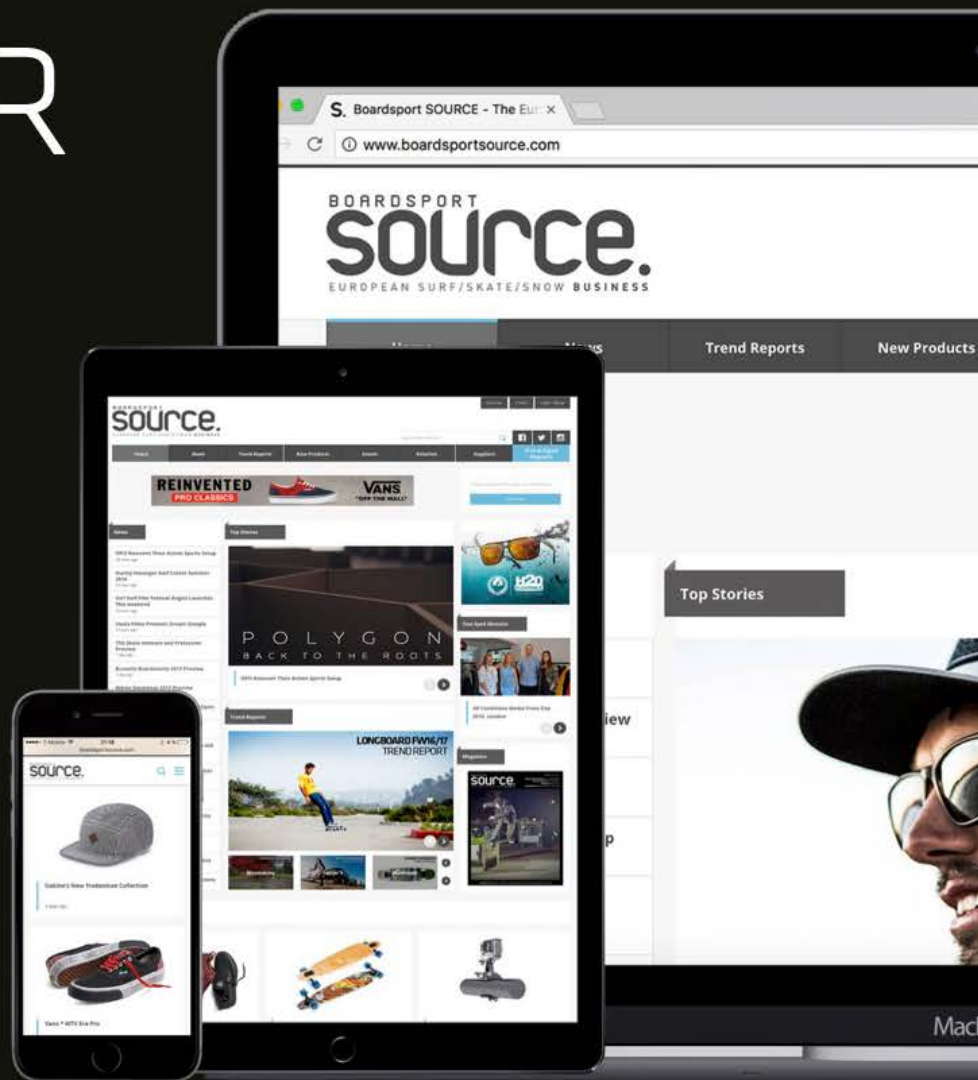
HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Beginner to intermediate big bulk of the market
- 2 Specific designs for intended use
- 3 New materials looking for increased stiffness
- 4 Varied offering in handle design

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F-Putin

No, you are not reading the same article from a month ago although the F-Putin sentiment remains. The war in Ukraine continues, Putin continues to do his

worst and we all end up paying the price – most of us paying with an inconvenience and an increase in the cost of living which pales into insignificance when compared to loss of life, loss of loved ones and loss of homes and livelihoods. F-Putin.

The impact of all this hot on the tails of covid (is it OK to talk about covid in the past tense?) is really beginning to tell. Inflation is now rife and (dare I say it) appears to be out of control and consumers are really, seriously beginning to feel the pinch – new level energy bills are now hitting doormats reducing disposable income.

Yet at the same time, for the first time in history, job vacancies now outstrip the number of unemployed. Nice one Boris - wage inflation will now add to the pressures of business. Could this be the perfect storm? Inflation rising, interest rates rising and, at the same time, UK retail sales fell back unexpectedly in April – the first decline in sales for over a year.

There's always winners and losers. Let's face it BP and Shell are winners – but boardsports are more likely to be amongst the losers. Stay-cations are still in vogue and UK resort bookings are strong – but boardsports participation may well be suffering. Disposable income is on the decline.

Within boardsports there are also going to be winners and losers. One of the winners is Nick Warman, co-owner of online skate and

skate-fashion specialists, Super Eight. Nick went into business with Sam Culshaw – both have a solid history in the boardsports business (skate/footwear) as Sales Agents and in 2015 set up online retailer Super Eight. Poacher turned Game Keepers – they know the business inside out.

Skate is their background, it's in their blood and they are skate through and through. Their new facility (East of Nottingham) boasts a mini ramp. "We only employ skaters so from top to bottom we are a skate company. I'd also say we're a digital-first company and that's how many of our suppliers view us – we're legit and at the same time we're only online."

So how are things? "Good. The Covid bounce is no longer and the huge overstock in the supply chain is not without its issues but we're up 15-20% on our biggest year so we're certainly not complaining."

What's good? "Footwear and clothing is very buoyant, hardware is difficult because of the distressed stock but we're still doing OK and of course, that stock also presents us with opportunities. My biggest concern is the supply chain issue that I reckon will be with us for at least a year... and maybe a lot longer." Other issues? "Honestly my biggest concern is the brand D2C's. I completely understand why a brand needs to do that and I do not have an issue as such apart from when they start discounting. They can deliver a product to us with an RRP of £55 and 2 weeks later they are discounting it to £38 on their own site. Their D2C should be the leading light for a brand but they seem to miss that point. They're becoming the worst discounters and they're undermining their own brand."

What else? "Yeah – UK stockholding." As a Distributor this sounded good to me. "Brands that do not hold stock in the UK are going to

lose out. Once we have received our pre-orders, which are now often late, we immediately move to the position where we do not consider in-season ordering because it just takes too long. Combine this with the dangers of late arrival and the potential erosion in margin ... it's an obvious decision."

As for the future, Nick was really optimistic: "Apart from the cost of living squeeze, the supply chain, and the discounting – I am super optimistic. We're doing well and we are going to continue to grow – because we are skaters through and through."

Cannot disagree with him there!

Surf, and Paul from Zuma Jays in Bude summarised it beautifully: "Same shit different day," he continued to explain. "I think we all forgot what the business was really like. Covid drove customers to our doors and to our tills. We could sell stuff all day long, all season long without thinking about it and we got used to it. Now we are back to the real normality. We're watching the weather and trying to second guess whether the customers will come and, if they do, will the economic squeeze impact their purchase choices."

So, the covid bounce is over? "Yes – for sure. But we will still benefit and we will hold on to some of the new converts. We were all fooled by covid and stupid to think that it would continue. That's why I say same shit, different day. We're back to where we were before - Feast and Famine according to the time of year and the weather."

What are your concerns? "The supply chain is overloaded – we all know that and so that's one to watch. Holiday Let owners have been greedy and they need to be careful – paying £5k or £6k per week for a house in Cornwall is not far off a Caribbean holiday. Let's ensure

we still keep a holiday in the West Country within reach. Don't get me wrong – I have a strong feeling that at the end of the summer it will all be OK – but we all have to expect the current world and UK events to have an impact."

Are the price hikes having an impact on consumer habits? "For sure but we don't shy away from that conversation – we talk about the price rises. Consumers are very understanding and accepting. One thing we need to remember is that when I started here (1999) a good wetsuit was £140. Today it's £150. That's pretty good going."

So, a quick look at snow and Jeremy from TSA was "cautiously optimistic – we know that turnover is going to go up because of the price rises – so that's a given. I also think that unit sales will increase albeit modestly. I've bought for that. I am confident that there's still a lot of people who have not managed to get to the snow and they are going to get back to it. There's only so much time you can spend on Netflix."

"One positive is that with all the crap going on the consumers are very accepting of price rises and really just shrug their shoulders and accept that things are going to cost more – for all the reasons they already know."

In summary – it's not great, it's not bad, there are concerns and Putin is a F-Wit. Did I say that before?

GORDON WAY

Ride Hard, Go Soft.



RETAIL BUYER'S GUIDE

SOFTBOARDS SS23

A bit like a Haribo - brightly coloured, soft but zesty - softboards call upon the child inside us all. But they have now entered adulthood, focussing on performance with more and more elaborate designs and constructions. Serious but not too serious, what will the softboards crop of 2023 look like? Answers to be found in this rundown of the "foamies" market by David Bianic.



I have to admit, very few of us thought that the softboard phenomenon would last more than 2-3 years: "OK, yes it's fun but let's get back to the serious stuff now." And yet "It feels more like everyone wants a soft top board... even in higher price ranges", stated traditional shaper Johnny Cabianca in the Surfboards Buyer's Guide in the last edition of BoardSport SOURCE. This new boon for the surfboard market, triggered by the 100% softboard brands, has forced the "traditional" brands to jump aboard the moving train. What do the softboard pure-players think about this? "It's funny how all those endemic brands used to hate on the softboard brands," smiles Brad Rochfort, Manager for Softech (Surf Hardware) Great Britain. This healthy competition between soft-only brands and traditional shapers only serves to support the former, reckons Joeri Van de Vliet, Founder of Softdogsurf: "I believe that softboards-only brands have a higher intent on not losing focus on all aspects of making a good softboard."

"It's harder than it seems to produce a really good collection of softboards that makes sense"

Andreas Maurmeir, Catchsurf

"It's harder than it seems to produce a really good collection of softboards that makes sense", insists Andreas "Maui" Maurmeir, Commercial Director for Catchsurf Europe, one of the instigators of the foamies' revolution. The constructions have also evolved a lot in just a few years, explains Lionel Franssen, Commercial Director at Napco Global (Medina Softboards/Qraft softboards/Mullet/Softlite), "from 100% soft, now most of the brand have an epoxy structure + EVA on the top". We'll come back to that later...

Now that the softboards market has fleshed out, it's all about brands accurately setting their position on the market from beginners to advanced surfers and everything in between the two ends of the spectrum. It's



mainly newbies in the crosshairs at Gotcha for example with an 8' classic as well as a 9 footer for heavier weights. Ocean Storm, the soft top label from Hurricane Surf, are aiming more at the "shredder" with two twin-fishes (Vampire and Sanchez) and two resolutely performance orientated shortboards (Lil Ninja and Rockstar), soft versions of their hard models.

At Mick Fanning Softboards, we find ourselves in front of a complete collection, from the SuperSoft range (beginners, schools) to the Sugar Glider (single-fin), Twin Town (twin-fin midlength), Beastie (heavyweights), alongside a slew of shortboards like the DHD Twin, Catfish, Little Marley and the latest to date Kuma Fish signed by Mitsunoru Kumagai (winner of the WSL x MF Softboards Global Shaper Challenge). Softdogsurf are also offering clearly defined segments between the Alpha Dogs (high-perf) ranges, Kennel (all-round) and Skooldogs (beginners, schools).

After this little teaser, without further ado let's look at the solid trends on the softs market.

SOFTBOARD TRENDS 2023

1 FUNBOARDS & MINI-MALS, fun for all

The wackiest shapes attract the eye and create buzz but "the funboard shape and longer mid-length sizes are always a safe bet", confides Brad from Softech, backed up by Phil Macdonald, CEO of Ocean and Earth: "Anything from 7'and up is where the volume market is". More surprisingly, these models are not just confined to

novice surfers, assures Mark Brown, Technical Director at Vision Softboards: "We see surfers whether new or experienced opting for models that give them a board that can be used in smaller, fun conditions. A board that gives them the option that their other boards don't".

2 SHORTBOARD REPLICAS, hards softened up

For surfers at an intermediate or advanced level, there is a whole segment of soft board copying "glassed" shortboards line for line. Better still, these boards are quite often collaborations between softboard labels and signature shapers bringing a certain "surf-cred" to boards that are sometimes more considered as just for fun than performance. Here we're thinking of the RoundNoseFish from Catchsurf x LOST (5'5" to 6'5"), the

"But if you think quality + safety they are on the top. Because they are handmade"

Lionel Franssen, Medina Softboards

Flash by Eric Geiselman at Softech or the Black Diamond MF x DHD. This is also the credo of a newcomer to the European market with Napco Global distributing Medina softboards (yes, as in Gabriel Medina). Their 3X model - for the Brazilian surfer's three world titles - ticks this box perfectly which was not easily done, admits Lionel Franssen, "but if you think quality + safety they are on the top. Because they are handmade". Collabs come naturally to JJF by Pyzel who released



BULLET

EPOXY / SOFT SERIES

The Bullet is a collaborative design between Lee Stacey and Dakota Walters. Dakota wanted a board that accumulated all of the speed attributes of a twin fin but packed a tonne of drive and could hold on rail like a performance thruster. The result is a board which balances harmoniously between speed and drive, sensitivity and control.



OCEAN + EARTH

two signature models in 2021 which were big hits, the Ivan Florence Fish and the Nathan Florence Pod Racer: “Ivan Fish presents a skateboarding vibe while Nathan Pod Racer features a super hero look”, highlights Rémi Chaussemiche, European Marketing Consultant.

3 TWIN-FISH

A winning combo for “funformance™” (trademarked by Pyzel) comes guaranteed with twin-fish type softboards which have superseded the micro-shortboards of 5’ and under in the hearts of surfers. The Frankenfish 5’8” from Spooked Kooks is a good example of this with a retro-performance set-up, mounted with Future Fins and hand-finished rails just like the Mason Twin at Softech. Another example comes from one of MF Softboard’s bestsellers, the Catfish, and its hybrid design with “a slightly decreased nose area when compared to a standard keel or quad fish”, for greater versatility. The Catfish can be upgraded by opting for the FCSII Split Keel fins (twin) or Controller (quad) from Future Fins. For more of a classic fish, check out the Red Baron from JS Industries with its flat rocker and further forward wide point or the license for the Mark Richards twins from Ocean & Earth, in a pure soft or epoxy versions.

4 RETRO-MIDLENGTH

Mids are already a huge success on classic constructions, a winning mixture between hype boards and ease of use. If you add a “soft” touch then the potential audience expands further still. One of the best illustrations of this is the soft version of the Big Baron from JS Industries that even replicates the “triple stringer” effect from the “hard” version. A Torren Martyn type board but with a soft 3mm coating of PE. More classic despite its out-there name, the UFO from Spooked Kooks is a tried and tested egg available in 6’7” and 7’6”.

5 SCHOOLERS, out in the playground

Because mini-Malibus mentioned above lend themselves really well to the demands of surf schools, most brands are making specific ranges for this market which is slightly different, especially in terms of the boards’ durability. “Catch Surf has a Surf Camp Edition with fortified rails that handle crashes with more ease”, says Andreas Maurmeir, while at Go Softboards we find two specific ranges for schools, the aptly named Surf School (wide shapes, nose and tail bumper, carry handle and flexible, removable fins) and XTR, standing for “extra wide” aimed at your very first experience in the waves. The models for schools and rentals at Go Softboards are equipped with decks in an ultra durable wood/sandwich construction. This dual range “normal/wide” already existed at Softech with the Roller and Zeppelin (up to 9’ for 135 litres!), but the brand are also announcing new developments in this sector to be revealed next September.

SOFTBOARD CONSTRUCTIONS 2023

From a disposable foam object, softboards have become high-tech boards whose manufacturing is imitating classic hard surfboards more and more. Is this arms race really beneficial to the category? Should we not keep softboards simple? “Many brands come into the market with epoxy glues, glass, harder slicks and the brands that tend to offer this style of softboard are the endemic surfboard producers”, suggests Mark from Vision who prefers more affordable and super durable softboards. One of the challenges resides in making these boards last longer and some models that are at “Very basic levels are made of foam only (no stringer, no supporting materials) and end up in the bin after only a few surfs. This is a massive waste of materials and money”, regrets Tom from Spooked Kooks. Gotcha are therefore aspiring towards the ECOBOARD certification in the medium term and they are already using bamboo stringers to reduce their carbon footprint. Softdogsurf are also making an effort in their fins and plugs made of 100% recycled plastic, slicks that are 60% recycled, a 50% recycled EPS core and a 30% recycled skin.

In the sustainability stakes, it’s hard to match the French brand Notox with their Korko construction: a 25% recycled polystyrene core, certified Oeko Tex flax fibre cloth, 56% plant resin and a locally grown cork leaf skin. Bonus: they are incredible. Talking about constructions, there’s also the finish, i.e. graphics and other deco where the trend for total craziness is phasing out in favour of more refined decor that’s even serious at times with many “clear” options like traditional boards. All black has also seen some success, becoming a best seller at JJF by Pyzel. Phil Macdonald from O&E confirms that: “The softboards these days need to look similar to surfboards”. In fact, the brand is even putting resin effects onto its soft-logs.

By increasing the seriousness (of manufacturing) without losing it’s added “fun” value, the softboard of tomorrow aims to become a permanent fixture on the surfboard market, benefitting from a wave of newbies as well as becoming an essential part of the most experienced surfers’ quivers. Who’d have thought we’d be having a foam party in 2023? ☺

HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Timeless: mini-malibu for all
- 2 Replica shortboards
- 3 Retro-midlengths in soft versions
- 4 “Funformance™”
- 5 Durable constructions

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COSTA BOARD



Berlin-based Costaboard exists to meet the needs of all boardsport lovers and represents the freeing culture of the outdoor sports community. Founder, Costa Paltoglou, talks us through his balance board brand's fun-loving philosophy, his visions of sustainability and the upcoming launch of Costaboard shops across Europe.

Why did you want to bring a new balance board to the market?

As a snowboarder/skateboarder/surfer, I knew how much fun you can have using boards. So, I wanted to transfer the balance board from a supporting “tool” for other sports to a board where you can just have fun all the time. Also, if you have means you are motivated all the time - you are motivated if you can do tricks. That’s why we built the Costaboard and called it a freestyle balance board. It’s made for doing tricks and having fun anywhere! Here is an example with skateboards: the reason you use a skateboard is not because you want to exercise your legs, it’s because you enjoy working on tricks and feel the progress

you develop doing it. When you finally land a trick, the stoked feeling you have is the reason you keep going.

I personally know how much fun you can have with boardsports, so with the Costaboard I wanted to offer another opportunity for fun for everybody everywhere. It’s totally weird when I think back to building the first board in my kitchen in Berlin as this vision has spread the idea of a balance board across the world. Now, 10 years later, we have people using the Costaboard in over 67 Countries globally.

How has the balance board market performed over the last few years?

I would say it has boomed

- 2020 was the big party. So many balance board companies have started, and we are proud to see that a lot of them are trying to be like us! A lot more people know what this product and market is, but I still feel we are creating the market - a space for new ideas.

Please tell us about your line. Are your boards targeted to a certain segment of the market?

Yes. Our boards are about having fun, progressing, sharing, and inspiring others to grow and have fun. We focus on developing our board in a way that you can get the most use out of it, while doing tricks and challenging yourself.



How is the brand distributed in Europe?

We do direct sales online and deliver worldwide directly from our big workshop in Berlin. This year we want to open a bunch of shops in Europe and have just finished our retail project, in which we tested if it makes sense to go into retail – for us it does!

Why is sustainability so core to your brand?

We are in the year 2022, I think almost everybody will know now that whatever we do, we have an impact on this world and it's really time to care. I want to be another example for the industry to show that success, sustainability, and caring for all the humans involved in your business works hand in hand. It would be a great change

if all companies thought like this. What a beautiful world this could be.

We want to have a positive impact and not a bad one. Yes, it makes things harder to do and everything is more expensive, but in the end, we want to be a successful company. Part of this means that we are not just selling products you can have fun with, but that our products don't harm nature or people. With Costaboard we try to live by this and spread this feeling to everyone.

Please tell us about your collab program.

We do different artist collaborations to support artists and good causes. Last year we had a collaboration

with Alex Rosa. We do most things in collaboration with partners that support the idea to care about people and nature. That's why we support as many people or companies, who do the same, as we can. The best thing about collabs is that you make friends and grow the business naturally.

Which European market has been Costaboard's best and why?

The DACH region is the strongest market. In our case it's because we started in Germany and spent years and years to build up a community in this area. ©

RETAIL BUYER'S GUIDE

LIFESTYLE BACKPACKS SS23

Long life cycle is the overall growing trend in lifestyle backpacks. It meets sustainability demands and the more recent concern of careful spending. By Rocio Enriquez.



Backpack users want a pack that will last a lifetime. It also has to meet their needs, wherever these take them. This meets two important current concerns of consumers. One is sustainability. The most sustainable product is the one that is not ditched after a season. Long-lasting backpacks also cut waste dramatically. The other concern is the cost of living. The increasing inflation is creating a mindset of careful spending. “Buy less, buy smarter” is the mantra in the current economic climate. A longer life cycle makes short term trends irrelevant. The DNA of the brand comes to the forefront. The result is timeless designs, durable products, and versatile constructions with high functionality.

“Together with the easily adjusted back length, it is designed to carry heavier loads without back pain”

Claire Sissun, Fjallraven

Brands expect growth in “technical” packs made with performance, sustainable materials. The trend of using technical wear as fashion pieces seems to have extended to backpacks. One of MUB’s bestsellers was the Milady. This is a premium style offering great functionality in a sleek and durable design. Pacsafe did well with their versatile packs and bags that work as well around the

city as on the go. Dakine expects a good performance from their commuting styles. “With the rise of the cost of petrol, commuting will be a huge trend”, says Rémi Chaussemiche.

CONSTRUCTION

Many new SS23 styles respond to this demand for “technical lifestyle”. Eastpak is dropping a bike compatible range. A modular system at the back of the bag attaches it to your bike. Dakine will launch the new Motive line built for daily bike commuters. Fjallraven appeals to hiking and trekking lovers. Their Kajka 35 is an advanced trekking day pack with wooden frame construction. “Together with the easily adjusted back length, it is designed to carry heavier loads without back pain”, says Claire Sissun. Their Abisko Hike 35 adds to the back length system a venting mesh on back panel, shoulder straps and hip belt. The Abisko Hike Foldsack has a fold-over, zipped closure secured with a plastic release buckle. Sandqvist is releasing the 65 litre Trail Hike backpack that covers the needs for a long and heavy hike in the mountains.

Picture focuses exclusively on sustainability. “To be the best, we focus on the end of product life cycle”, says Maxime Lemaitre. MUB promises functionality. They feature expandable styles with water resistance and reflective details for safety. Pacsafe’s mission is security. “100% anti-theft, with our patented locking systems as well as our patented cut resistant materials”, says Maria Schmieder. Amplifi relies on a combination of high-spec, lightweight fabrics, and plenty of stash pockets. Their super technical straps and back panels have been perfected over years.

Functionality and durability drive material choices. Sustainability follows up closely. MUB uses a 900D coated fabric for all their new styles, with some pieces made of Hypalon®. Eastpak’s materials meet the standards of their 30-year warranty promise. They use a poly/nylon blend for plain colours and a 100% recycled polyester for prints. Fjallraven highlights their G-1000 Eco / HD Eco. They use recycled polyesters and nylons, Vinylon F, organic cotton and FSC certified birch for their wooden frames. Picture uses recycled materials on both shell and lining. This year they introduce two new fabrics. The 150D polyester ripstop with PU coating is used on all outdoor products, for its lightness and durability. The 170D polyester plain with peach effect and TPE coating provides a durable waterproof pack with a very modern look. It is used on all urban packs. Sandqvist uses recycled polyester, recycled Robic®, and organic cotton. If they use a fabric from animal origin, it comes

“To be the best, we focus on the end of product life cycle” Maxime Lemaitre, Picture

from Scandinavian hides. Amplifi is using Mipan® Regen recycled fabrics wherever possible. Dakine focuses on resistant materials, such as 600D recycled polyester and Cordura, to maintain their quality standards. 95% of their collection is made of recycled materials and BlueSign approved.

All brands are heavily committed to sustainability. From SS23, 40% of Eastpak’s materials will come from 100% recycled sources. Their global repair system repairs over 17k bags every year that would otherwise end up in landfills. Picture has a similar system in place to fulfil their lifetime repair warranty. They have now introduced an upcycling programme to give packs a second life. From next September onward, all MUB’s products will use GRS standard fabrics. Sandqvist and Amplifi observe ethical practices that support the welfare of workers and drop their carbon footprint. Amplifi monitors factories to increase the recycling of offcuts, a practice that Fjallraven also has in place. 80% of Pacsafe’s SS23 collection is made from recycled materials. They aim to eliminate virgin plastic in their supply chain by 2025.

LOOKS

The philosophy of making things last influences the looks too. Following short term trends reduces the lifespan of the product, so brands are keeping it simple. Some stay true to their own style. “We focus on our teardrop shape, aligned with our iconic styling”, says Domitille Parent from Eastpak. Sleek and low-key designs are popular. We find them in the collections of Amplifi, Fjallraven, Sandqvist, MUB and Pacsafe. Roll tops are making their way into all collections. Eastpak is introducing it in their Maclo Bike model. Sandqvist is no stranger to roll tops and is now adding more lid and zipped backpacks to their range. MUB also features a roll top in their day pack aimed for bike commuters. They are also pushing smaller volumes with pouches and sling bags. Picture follows their own creative direction to create impactful silhouettes that stand out.

Prints are quite varied, there is something appealing for almost every palate. Amplifi, Pacsafe and MUB chose sobriety to achieve a functional and clean look. MUB uses black with contrasted linings. Amplifi works with tonal prints, adding a touch of embroidery. Pacsafe features classic colours that are multi seasonal, adding some colour blocking. Sandqvist chooses earthy tones inspired by the Nordic landscapes. Fjallraven introduces



FSC certified wooden one. They will also keep pushing their iconic Kanken. This timeless and sustainable style has recently been recognised as a work of art by the Swedish Society of Crafts and Design. MUB relies on versatility and modularity as the key concepts to push their sales. Dakine relies on Sustainability, Rider-driven design and their Trusted standard of quality and functionality to push their packs. Next Summer they will also promote their new commuting Motive collection. Pacsafe will communicate heavily on their new Pacsafe ECO collection. It uses almost 100% recycled materials and components. They will launch the special edition of their bestselling Metrosafe LS, made with Econyl® yarn, on Earth Day. Picture will make a lot of noise about their upcycling programme. They had proved the concept with their Rethink bag which won an ISPO award back in FW14. The backpacks have a dotted line inside. When the consumer stops using the backpack, they can give it a second life by cutting and creating new small accessories. Instructions will be detailed in the hang tags, and they will also produce many videos and DIY tutorials.

All brands have digital packages with visual materials to support retailers' sales online. With the strong comeback of customers to brick and mortar spaces, POS materials will also be available. Eastpak secures their support in an omnichannel environment. Picture will develop a new POS programme focused on their new upcycling story. MUB started as a digitally native vertical brand. However, they are now looking for select specialised stores whom to partner with. Fjallraven has launched a new B2B order tool. They also make sure that any gaps in their assortment are filled.

Certain aspects of the business, like freight costs and production bottlenecks, have been challenging for all. Brands have worked their way through them by strengthening their relationships with suppliers and retailers equally. Understanding has been key on both sides. It has enabled new working practices that can help get the product to the end consumer at the right time. It seems that, when things get difficult, it is the human factor that makes a difference. ☺

some new colours in SS23. We will find a mild yellow, warm coral, a bright light blue, and some earthy greens and browns. Dakine offers solid neutral colours to cater to fans of their well-known sobriety, and balances them with nature inspired floral, tropical and camo prints. On the other end of the colour spectrum, we find Eastpak and Picture. Freshness is part of Eastpak's DNA, and they honour it by offering more than sixty new colours and prints. Picture, as usual, is doing their own thing, creating unique prints that tie in with their active and street wear. Some of them are inspired by the colours of the Arctic, whereas others feature an aerial view of the Alps in relief.

RETAIL SUPPORT

There are marketing stories to support these innovations. Communication is planned both through digital channels and in-store POS. Amplifi focuses on the use of Mipan® Regen fabric. Eastpak continues their "Built to Resist" campaign, focusing on their Active Lifestyle category. They will also push their CNNCT range. Aimed for young professionals, it will highlight female entrepreneurs to support their new female styles. Fjallraven will communicate about their founding Kajka trekking pack. A redesign has replaced the aluminium frame for an

HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Long product life cycle
- 2 Timeless designs
- 3 Added technical features for active lifestyle
- 4 Focus on sustainability



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Economically this first 4 to 5 months were pretty tough. For business owners there was no other chances to raise prices as nearly everything went up in pricing and for households it meant a lot more expenses because

not only unnecessary goods but also necessary goods and gas, electricity etc went up heavily. To say it in a few words: The struggle is real. Everybody tries to spend less and to save more as the fear of how our future will look like is everywhere. The government and the rule of prime minister Draghi is trying to help families and companies with cheques for low earners and cheaper gas prices for companies, but honestly it's only a drop in the ocean.

This unfortunately made it a very tricky first few months of the year for many boardsport retailers. Luckily we are coming from a very satisfying winter season where hardgoods sold very well, so many had a bit of a buffer. The main problem is less spending power in these first few months and people are now not spending too much on unnecessary goods.

Skate hardgoods slowed down a lot compared to 2021 and especially 2020 where we saw a real boom in hardgood sales. Completes sales are down the most followed by decks. Wheels and trucks are the best selling hardgood items, those 2 categories are led by American brands like Spitfire, Bones, Thunder, Independent and so on while deck sales are balanced between Euro and US brands.

Giorgio from A criminal G skate shop, Arona can only confirm that hardgood sales have dropped but not the hype around skateboarding which is a positive sign. What's positive is that skate events are again being planned and held which gives a bit of an upturn and the CIS, Italian Championship of Skateboarding is again in full swing, something the skate community wants and needs.

Sadly traditional skate shoe brands are not seeing big growth numbers yet and when talking to core skate shop owners we all agree that we have reached the bottom line and that from now we should see growth numbers again, skaters who skate on a daily basis are turning back to traditional skate brands like Lakai, Fallen, Ès, etnies etc, which is a good sign and store owners welcome that as those were the brands they grew up with.

Temperatures are already very high in May, reaching over 30 degrees which leads to good shorts and tshirt sales already early in the season but stock levels are overall very high and there are not many brands who really have a hype going right now.

SUP boards are still a thing and with 80% of Italians (a survey revealed) planning to spend their vacation in Italy is a very positive sign for our economy over the next months and gives us a somewhat positive outlook for the second and third quarter of this year.

The last topic for this issue is for skate and surf apparel. The brand mix nowadays varies a lot and nearly every single store from surf, to skate to streetwear has different brands they carry. It's mostly a mix between skate / streetwear and outdoor brands who are big in demand followed by some local Italian streetwear brands like Propaganda, Octopus, Iuter or Dolly Noire. A brand who constantly stands the test of time is Carhartt which can be found many stores and always delivers good sell through numbers no matter the season or year, a real bank for most retailers nationwide.

Let's hope for a sunny summer season with many tourists from abroad who will fill our country with life and fun. Everybody is welcome in Italy!

FRANZ JOSEF HOLLER



@oscar_burmann

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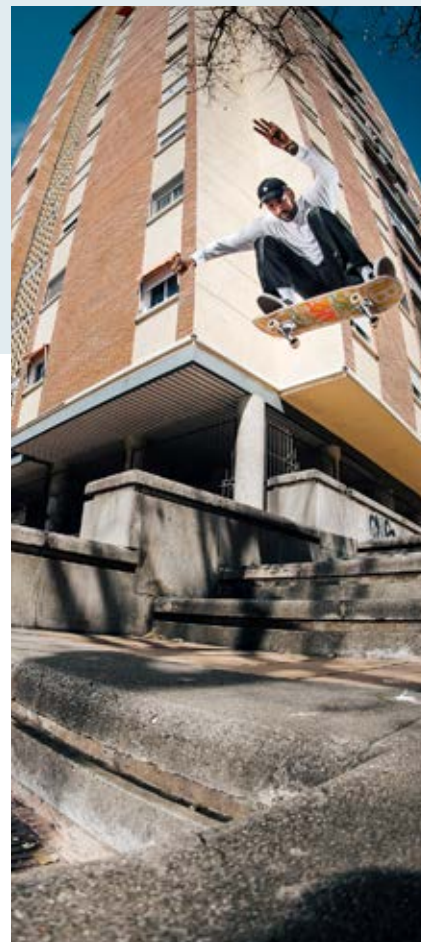
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Reell
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Remaining true to its core for over 20 years, Reell have created products that straddle style, functionality, and comfort. Never losing touch with their brand identity, the company have now expanded across European borders and have diversified in their product range. Global team manager, Tomasz gives us the details on Reell's core USP and how these stand out against the changing trends of modern-day street culture.

Please tell us more about the history of the brand.

Reell or Reelljeans started in 1997 with the idea to produce stylish & comfortable jeans, cargo pants and chinos for the action sports scene - especially for skateboarders. The first baggy jeans were created for the skate scene, artists, musician subculture. After 5 years the brand grew, with an international competition win in 2001! In 2002 I started the skate team with 5 team riders. This has grown

massively as we now have 17 active skateboarders and 3 support team riders around Europe and 4 exclusive riders in BMX and MTB. A solid growth in the past 20 years.

Tell us more about your product and different lines you carry.

The Reflex line is very significant for us. To this day, one of the mainstay features of the Reell Reflex®, apart from the simple sizing XS - XL and the Flex Fabric, is the stretch waistband

with drawstring. This results in a perfect fit and high wearing comfort appropriately made for an alternative and sporty scene. Apart from a few small Scandinavian approaches, Reell was the first brand in Europe with this new type of trousers. We never really stopped producing baggy pants even in the time where skinny jeans & pants were fashionable. There was a time for 2-3 years where we concentrated more on straight cut and skinnies, but wide pants or even



baggy were steady. After a period of time, they have come back into fashion even stronger.

What sets you aside from other brands on the market?

Comfort, style and our handling of relations to different subcultures, especially in skateboarding & with artists. We have a vision to realize and capture the different projects in subculture scenes that I'm personally connected with. You have to live & love it, otherwise you start something without identification and that's fake! You have to be true and correct. That's mostly a difference between brands.

Who is your target customer?

People who love to

wear stylish comfortable clothes. Action sports people. People who love festivals. Subcultures. Musicians, artistic people and common people with a great attitude.

What are your best performing European markets?

Germany, Spain, The Netherlands, Austria, Switzerland.

How do you market your brand in the boardsport space?

With the skate team, advertising in skate print & online media, event / contest sponsoring, support in skate, BMX and MTB. We also support, musicians, artists, Youtubers.

What are the main trends in jeans at the moment?

Trends are coming and

going all the time. But there's definitely a buzz for a sustainably driven product that's comfortable and loose in style.

What can we expect from your upcoming collections?

The Reflex range is coming up, especially the Loose Chino & Meadow collection, which is getting stronger. Baggy pants of course in different washes and colours with 50% organic cotton. Loose fit pants from our Reflex line for women. Chino, cargo, and worker shorts for the summertime of course too. Lots to come!©

RETAIL BUYER'S GUIDE

WOMEN'S SWIMWEAR SS23

Women are active, eco-conscious, body positive and, above all, feminine. Fulfilling all these aspects might be challenging for other categories, but when it comes to swimwear, the ladies can have it all. By **Rocio Enriquez**.



SS23 swimwear offering is diverse. Different trends ensure every swimmer will find the perfect fit for their body type, aesthetic preferences and intended use. There is a demand for sustainable materials and an interest in structured fabrics. In construction, we will see asymmetric designs and a lot more flesh exposed through cut-outs and mesh areas. Sporty styles respond to increased levels of activity observed on every beach. Looks aim to please everyone. Bold prints cater for women who like to stand out. Clean, classic colours appeal to those looking for minimalistic elegance. "The classic, clean style is making a comeback", says Marion Bertrand from Picture. Active swimwear and textured fabrics are the areas that hint to more growth in 2023. Mix and match offers are widespread. They offer the possibility of making the perfect combination of colours and shapes that best meet each consumer's needs.

"We add some contrast colours to complement and emphasise the strong tones"

Marta Campama, Pukas

reconnecting with nature has a balancing effect on our minds. "Our new styles are infused with a feeling of inner peace and chill vibes", says Mariëtte Ide from Barts. Isabelle Weppe from Billabong says, "It's all about slowing down and letting go". Next Spring/Summer collections speak of tropical islands, sunbathing and playful waves. Pukas and Rusty look to the Australian coast surf lifestyle. Roxy uses Caribbean vibes to produce a range that is bold and fun. Rhythm's Sunbather collection uses cut out and backless features to expose the skin. Oxbow looks at the Costa Rican jungle and the African desert for inspiration. The tropical inspiration of Hurley's Aura of Aloha theme spans women's and men's collections.

SS23 collections draw inspiration from the restorative power of nature. After an extended period of restrictions,

LOOKS

Next year's collections scale up from earthy and pastel tones to bright colours. Rusty chooses faded blues and olives for their Spring release, shifting to bright turquoise blues, oranges, and pastel pinks for the Summer. Billabong offers a warm transition palette that combines pastel and bright colours like a rainbow. Barts' palette also varies from organic colours to very bright ones. Pukas goes for powerful colours such as orange, yellow and aqua. "We add some contrast colours to complement and emphasise the strong tones", says Marta Campama from Pukas. Oxbow uses jungle vibrant colours for their first delivery, and desert sand and solarised colours for the second. Picture takes inspiration from the French Dune du Pyla to deliver an abstract movement of pastel colours. O'Neill mixes bright neon with pastel nuances. Hurley ranges from timeless black to statement colours such as pink punch or neon lime.

Florals are quite present in SS23 collections. Along with geometrics, they are Hurley's main focus. O'Neill, Rhythm, and Billabong present their own versions too. Paisley prints make an appearance, as seen in Picture's and Rhythm's offering. Tropical inspiration is executed through the exotic patterns of Oxbow, Billabong's Vacay print, and Hurley's Aura of Aloha range. Pukas features the hand drawn designs of their creative director, Marcos Azpiroz. Hurley also presents a collection inspired by Nascar, which will feature the crosscheck flag pattern. Brands that do apparel or accessories tie the swimwear range to them. Using the same prints and colours they create a total look. O'Neill uses the same prints in their lifestyle sweat packs, for a complete beach cover up. Picture's prints and colours crossover to streetwear and accessories, offering retailers an easy merchandising. Rhythm also crosses over most of their prints to their apparel offering. One of them, the Cairo Paisley, will be found in the men's Spring collection too. Roxy aims for a head-to-toe consistent look. "Our prints, colour palettes and fabrics are designed for all categories to give consistency to our retailers and consumers", says Nelly Pargade. Billabong coordinates swimwear prints with their sportswear collection. Oxbow implements some apparel pieces in the range. "We work on a total universe of beach style to go with our swimwear collection", says Eléonore Courret.

Body inclusivity is a conversation that all brands take part in. There is a lot of variety in shapes. One pieces and bikinis with great coverage share shelves with more revealing designs. However, there is a rising trend to expose more flesh, and skin exposure is not limited to skimpy designs. More covering pieces use mesh and cut-outs, and one pieces become backless. Sporty styles have a strong presence and drive a lot

"We are very excited to launch our Adventure Division swim line engineered for surfing and active water sports" Leila Heydari, Billabong

of growth. Roxy expects their biggest demand from lycras. Billabong's Global Design Director, Leila Heydari, says, "We are very excited to launch our Adventure Division swim line engineered for surfing and active water sports". Boardsports brands always hold in mind the active woman when designing

"We show them how they mix and match according to different body morphologies" Eléonore Courret, Oxbow

their collections. Their savoir faire will be rewarded now that the mainstream trend of wearing activewear has expanded to swimwear. Construction techniques make them supportive and comfortable, while creative design solutions, such as asymmetries, make them feminine. "We are introducing the long sleeve crop top for the younger and more sporty audience", says Mariëtte Ide from Barts.

CONSTRUCTION

Offering a swim piece that enables activity with comfort and support is a priority. "Our swimwear is made for the active surfing girl: durable materials, elasticated elements and ergonomics", says Marion Bertrand from Picture. Fernando Rivero from Hurley says, "Our main inspiration comes from listening to our athletes. We listen to their needs for surfing but also in look and style". Roxy has invited their female surfers to the development of their Ultimate Surf collection. "It features constructions that are adapted for all surfing women and all bodies", says Nelly Pargade. O'Neill offers swimming unitards and shorts, and longer top drawstrings for better adjustability. They avoid stitching against the skin and offer different constructions for intended use and body shape. "We are developing D and E cups", says Ricardo Campo. Rusty also widens the shape and size ranges in tops and bottoms. Their new collection reaches size 16. They focus on tops that fit bigger busts and their bottoms range from small, cheeky ones to surf shorts.

When it comes to materials, textures are all the rage. They offer unique looks and add value. Barts announces lots of different structured fabrics for next Summer. So does Rhythm, who is also continuing their Avoca texture that has proved a customer favourite. Billabong continues their Peach Stretch fabric and their Tanlines rib story. They add innovations such as a wavy stripe, printed ribs, and textured solid colours. Rusty announces ribs and terry ribs. O'Neill uses an Italian rib fabric from Jersey Lomellina. Technical treatments make them resistant to their intended active use. Fabrics offer UPF+50 protection and resistance to chlorine and sun creams or oils. Other treatments include DWR coating and Polygiene anti-odour treatment.

The use of recycled yarns is widespread. O'Neill works with Repreve® for the recycled polyester, and Econyl for the recycled polyamide. They also work with Seawool, a fabric made with shell fibres. Picture works with Mipan® Regen fabrics. Billabong and Roxy feature recycled fabrics in 100% of their collections. Hurley, Oxbow, Rusty, Pukas and Barts have also ramped up the use of recycled polyester. Sustainability is observed in other areas of manufacturing, beyond recycled materials. Pukas manufactures in Portugal or in their own facilities in the Basque Country, and only sources their materials from Europe. Picture focuses on sustainable sourcing of materials too. Rusty and Billabong extend their eco approach to swing tags and hygiene stickers. An interesting initiative in terms of social responsibility is Hurley's support of the "Black Girls Surf" foundation.



BARTS

RETAILER SUPPORT

Many brands have taken to exotic locations to shoot their SS23 stories. Oxbow will follow their female riders on a surf trip. Roxy's "Currents of Cool" campaign depicts the Caribbean Sea. Rusty continues to celebrate the West Australian coast. They have sent their team to the beautiful white sandy beaches of Exmouth. Billabong's "Pipedreams" story is linked to the famous Hawaiian contest, drawing inspiration from the 90s. They also announce a special collaboration with an iconic brand that will feature a good dose of flower power. Pukas and Rhythm have invested in their photoshoots to offer elevated imagery for stores. Visual assets will be plentiful and attractive. Retailers will be well stocked for both digital and physical spaces. Brands are also offering education and advice to help retailers push this category. Barts works with their retailers to help them choose the pieces of the collection that suits them best. Oxbow offers retailers association models. "We show them how they mix and match according to different body morphologies", says Women Product Manager Eléonore Courret. O'Neill provides a bikini fit and style guide. It offers information about support, coverage, and style, helping consumers' choice. Rhythm offers swimwear clinics for retailers who need it. Billabong organises presentations for their key accounts. They explain the details of the collection and give the right arguments to the sales force to push it. Additionally, they offer a gift with purchases to drive the demand for this category. Picture offers their retailers specific hangers with information about the benefits of their swimwear. Pukas has a detailed information pack to assist their retailers with communication and marketing.

Rusty makes sure that their reps are ready to promote new product as it lands. They are also ready to accommodate specific requests from retailers that need something different than their ready-made POS.

Swimwear does not seem as severely impacted by stock and delivery issues as other categories. Many brands manufacture close to their market, such as Pukas in Portugal or Oxbow in Tunisia, which could explain this. Strong relationships with suppliers and retailers allow for adjustments in manufacturing and shipping. Earlier purchase orders allow for longer production lead times. Everything points to a timely delivery for Spring and Summer collections next year. ☺

HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Activewear trend expands to swimwear
- 2 Skin exposing design features
- 3 Structured fabrics
- 4 Bright colours and tropical prints
- 5 Extended sizes and silhouettes for all body shapes

POP SURE
POP SURE
POP SURE



roxy



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The first summer trade shows are approaching, and at the time of writing this article, the warm temperatures are already giving us a taste of summer. The first days of meteorological summer are already behind us, and they

came earlier than ever before. However, it is not only the fluctuations in the weather that seem to affect consumer behaviour. Planning and making prognoses are once again mission impossible. These are by no means the only uncertainties we have to live with. The ongoing Ukraine conflict, the as yet unresolved Covid crisis and the ensuing global challenges in terms of energy crisis, raw material shortages, supply bottlenecks and rising prices in all sectors also have a far more significant impact, not only on the upcoming summer season, but also on the next winter season. Delivery problems and planning uncertainty are a real headache that has been with us for some time now!

Although the Austrian economy recorded robust growth in the first quarter of 2022, this is no clear indication of what lies ahead, given the comparison with the lockdowns in the first half of 2021. Meanwhile, domestic consumer confidence has dropped to its lowest level since the financial and economic crisis of 2008/09, with recent studies indicating that almost one-third of the population intends to buy less. Consumption is once again coming to a halt. The winter season, in contrast, has returned to a very positive course for many, with sports equipment retailers and also the cable car industry drawing a more positive balance of the tourist season. Although pre-Covid figures remain a long way off, the overall sentiment was much better than in the previous season. This is also reflected in the pre-orders for next winter, which are clearly back on an upward trend! It remains to be seen whether Covid will play a greater role in the autumn than it does at present. One particular area where the impact of Covid and of the global political situation continues to be felt is in the global supply chain. Lock-

downs in the world's biggest trading centres, such as Shanghai, have a very big impact on the global economy. So that remains a major source of uncertainty.

Regarding the trade in boardsports and leisure products in Austria, we expect the situation in the supply and demand side to be at least stable. Whether skate, fashion or water sports equipment for foiling, surfing, SUP, wake etc., the supply situation is critical across the board, but there are still products available in all segments and demand can still be met: but here, too, further bottlenecks and an increase in prices are expected due to the above-mentioned supply chain issues. It's difficult to make forecasts and you have to just take things as they come. Udo from Xdouble Shop in Innsbruck reports little footfall. "People have become more cautious in their buying behaviour," he says and adds: "but that's also understandable given the news we're getting every day. I have also become more conscious of prices in my everyday life and I pay more attention to what I spend my money on. It's probably the same for everyone". There is no particular category of goods that he can single out, which is performing well or not. "Shoes, bags and girls' clothing are generating a good turnover. Our traditionally strong skateboard segment has gone almost completely quiet at the moment. You can clearly see that the warehouses of the big online retailers are packed and skate hardware sales are taking place," he says. The smaller retailers can't keep up with that, because that would eat up their entire hardware margin. This shows once again that we should at least try to keep the prices stable so that everyone can make their own economic calculations. The mood out there is rather restrained and once again we have to wait and see what the season will bring. The big hurdle at the moment is no longer the Covid crisis, but the Ukraine conflict, and we all hope that the situation in the region will calm down soon so that we can all find our way back into more tranquil waters. PEACE PLEASE!

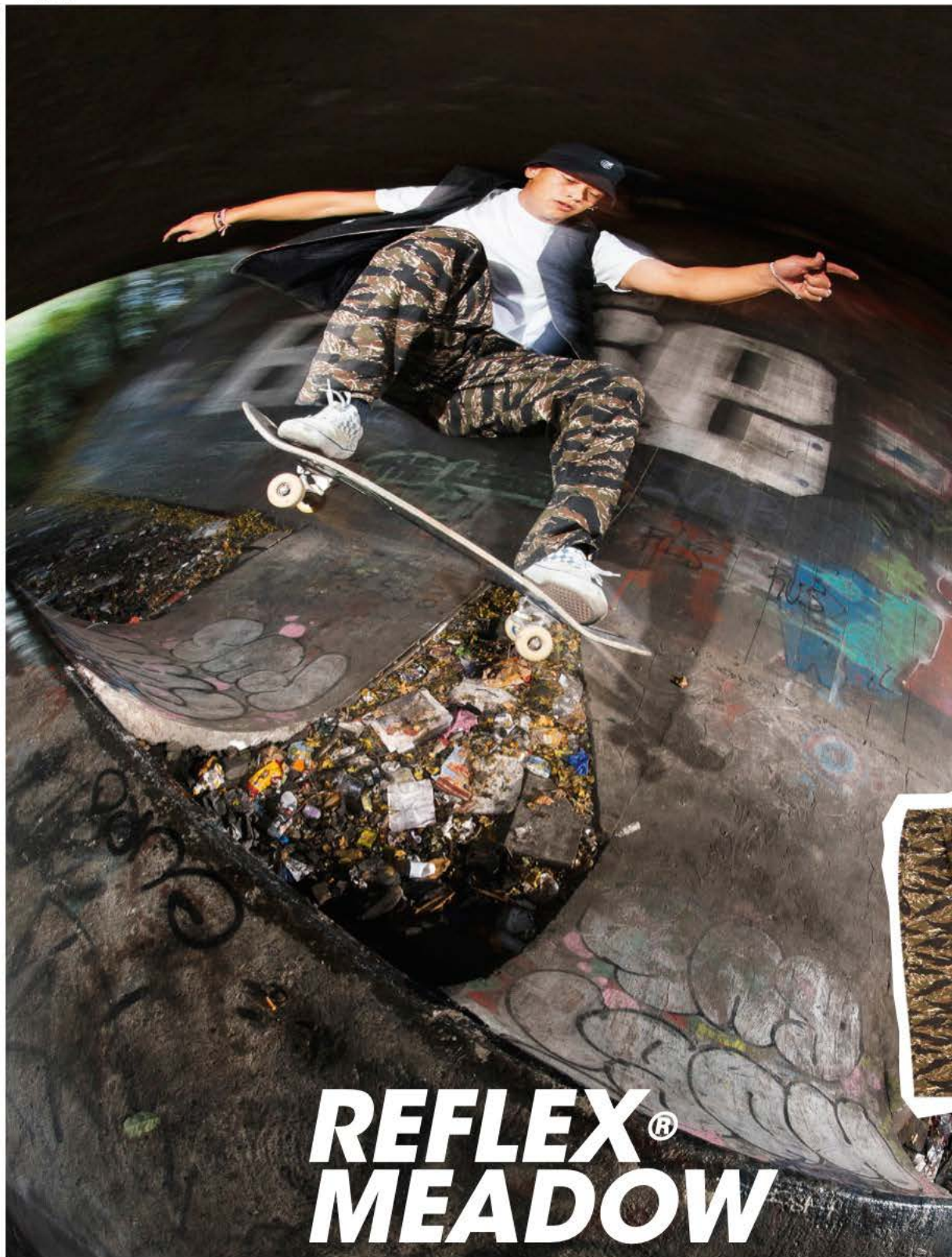
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NEW PRODUCTS

01 / DAKINE MEN'S SNUG FIT LS RASHGUARD HOODIE

The Dakine Snug Fit Long sleeve Rashguard Hoodie is designed to enhance your surfing experience. With a maximum sun protection, sessions in warm countries last longer, its ergonomic panelling reduces rashes and maximize flexibility. The back pocket allows you to carry reef boots or snacks. Every style in the Spring '22 line was created to have lower impact on the places we play and higher impact on how hard we get to play. This product line is designed to keep you fully in the moment. The Dakine moment.

DAKINE.COM

01



02 / PROLIMIT WAIST DRIFT WINGSURF HARNESS

The Drift is a lightweight thermoform moulded wingsurf specific waist harness with huge freedom of movement. The harness is pre-curved and 3D shaped with neoprene softedges and a thermofoam moulded outside construction. The PU outer provides additional elasticity. The harness comes with a single glass fibre reinforced sliding hook and has D-ring attachments for board- and wingleash. Easily slide the hook out of the way when not being used.

PROLIMIT.COM

02



03 / REEF MEN'S FANNING BAJA

The Classic men's Reef Fanning, named after surf legend Mick Fanning, gets cagey this year with the new Fanning Baja. The new design is perfect for any excursion and offers total comfort and stability. And it wouldn't be a Fanning without its iconic built-in bottle opener to make it a party wherever you go.

REEFSANDALS.CO.UK

03



04 / OAKLEY LEFFINGWELL SUNGLASSES

Leffingwell features a full rim, square lens shape infused with design inspiration taken from the craftsmanship and finishes of surfboards and the lifestyle around surfing. The plant-based BiO-Matter™ frame has antique-finished decorative elements and textured temples. Leffingwell comes with Prizm™ Lens Technology designed to enhance color and contrast to see more detail across the water and beyond. **OAKLEY.COM**

04



05



05 / Nixon StapleWatch

Made with tide recycled ocean plastics, the Staple looks as stylish as ever but with an eco-friendly mission. Its razor-thin profile, customizable display, and plush rubber-blend band make it easy to wear, while the chic and modern design makes it easy on the eyes. Available in a range of colours, the unisex Staple Watch is a must have for all.

uk.nixon.com

06



06 / Mizu V5 Flask

The NEW V5 is a small, easy-to-stash container perfect for your everyday adventure and designed with coffee and tea in mind. If you're looking for something a little bigger, the V7 still fits neatly in the car cup holder or the side pocket of a backpack. The V12 is the choice for longer hiking excursions, beach days, or fishing trips.

mizulife.com

07



07 / Reef ladies Santa Ana

This Reef favourite, the Santa Ana ensures all day comfort with a wider design, EVA footbed with arch support and soft pebbled vegan leather straps with a super soft padded jersey lining. Your feet will feel totally held sturdy and supported, thanks to the full-on arch support and heel cupping. A nature-inspired texture and outsole give you feel-good traction.

reefsandals.co.uk

08



08 / Dakine Mission Surf DLX Wetdry Pack

This is the ultimate surf travel pack and comes with roll top wet/dry compartment large enough to hold an X-large 5/4/3 hooded fullsuit & booties. A dedicated laptop compartment with plenty of organizer pockets for surf and electronic accessories. It's your go-to pack for everyday surf commutes to global surf strikes.

dakine.com

NEW PRODUCTS

09 / OAKLEY REEDMACE SUNGLASSES

Oakley® builds on the aesthetics of surf culture with Reedmace, a full rim, round lens sunglass. The plant-based BiO-Matter™ frame is accented with antique-finished decorative elements and a subtle Oakley logo on the temples, designed for those who gravitate toward subtle, elevated branding. Reedmace comes with Prizm™ Lens Technology designed to enhance color and contrast to see more detail across the water and beyond.

OAKLEY.COM

09



10 / EAR PRO WATERPROOF EAR SPRAY

Ear Pro is designed to create a preventative solution to fight water-related ear issues for all water lovers and especially water enthusiasts who have 5X more risks to suffer from ear issues. When you spray Ear Pro into your ears, it creates a water-repellent barrier to dispel water from the ear and to prevent entrapment of water reducing the risk of ear infections. Ear Pro is formulated with only 2 ingredients and doesn't contain any alcohol.

EARPRO.COM

10



11 / DC THE LAST SUPPER PULLOVER HOODIE

Part of the x Andy Warhol collab Collection, this pullover hoodie is made of heavy weight French terry (320g/m2) and comes with Kangaroo pocket. The overall Andy Warhol Last Supper print has DCSHOECO embroidery on chest and Andy Warhol signature embroidery on sleeve brings a fresh perspective to Warhol's ubiquitous works through the lens of DC's authentic skate heritage.

DCSHOES.COM

11





EVENTS #112

surf/kite

snow

street/outdoor

SUP/optics

street	PITTI UOMO	Florence, Italy 14-17 Jun 22	pittimagine.com
surf	TRESTLES	San Clemente, United States 15-22 Jun 22	worldsurfleague.com
snow	WORLD SNOWBOARD FEDERATION GA	Vilnius, Lithuania 15-19 June 22	worldsnowboardfederation.org
skate	COPENHAGEN OPEN	Copenhagen, Denmark 15-19 Jun 22	cphopen.com
kite	GKA BIG AIR WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS	Tarifa, Spain 20 Jun-6 Jul 22	global-kitesports.org
kite	GKA KITE EXPO	Tarifa, Spain 21-25 Jun 22	global-kitesports.org
skate	MYSTIC SK8 CUP	Prague , Czech Republic 24-26 Jun 22	mysticsk8cup.cz
outdoor	NEXT SUMMER	Albertville, France 27-28 Jun 22	next-summer.com
surf	OI RIO PRO	Saquarema, Brazil 27 Jun-4 Jul 22	worldsurfleague.com
street	SEEK/PREMIUM	Berlin, Germany 5-9 Jul	seek.fashion
festival	NASS FESTIVAL	Shepton Mallet, UK 7-10 Jul	nassfestival.com
surf	CORONA OPEN J-BAY	Jeffreys Bay, South Africa 12-21 Jul 22	worldsurfleague.com
kite	GKA KITE WORLD TOUR	Fuerteventura, Spain 22-27 Jul 22	global-kitesports.org
surf	VANS US OPEN OF SURFING	Huntington Beach, USA 30 Jul-7 Aug 22	worldsurfleague.com
surf	MENS DUCT TAPE INVITATIONAL	Huntington Beach, USA 5-8 Aug 22	worldsurfleague.com
surf	BOARDMASTER'S LONGBOARD PRO	Fistral Beach, UK 12-14 Aug 22	worldsurfleague.com
surf	TAHITI PRO	Tahiti, French Polynesia 11-21 Aug 22	worldsurfleague.com
surf	RIP CURL WSL FINALS	Lower Trestles, USA 8-16 Sept 22	worldsurfleague.com
snow	HINTERTUX OPENING	Hintertux, Austria 30 Sept 22	hintertuxergletcher.at
SUP	PADDLE SPORTS SHOW	Lyon, France 28-30 Sep 22	thepaddlesportshow.com
surf	EDP VISSLA PRO	Ericeira, Portugal 1-9 Oct 22	worldsurfleague.com
surf	MEO VISSLA PRO	Ericeira, Portugal 1-9 Oct 22	hintertuxergletcher.at
snow	KAUNTERAL OPENING	Tyrol, Austria 8-10 Oct 22	snowpark-kaunertal.tirol
surf	EUROSIMA SURF SUMMIT	Hossegor, France 13-14 Oct 22	eurosima.com/en/surf-summit
surf	QUIKSILVER PRO FRANCE	Hossegor, France 13-14 Oct 22	outdoortradeshows.com
surf	ROXY PRO FRANCE	Hossegor, France 12-23 Oct 22	worldsurfleague.com
surf	SURF PARK SUMMIT	San Diego, USA 16-18 Oct 22	surfparkcentral.com
optics	SILMO	Paris, France 13-26 Oct 22	m-en.silmoparis.com
snow	THE SNOW SHOW 22	Birmingham, UK 15-16 Oct	telegraph.co.uk/travel/ski
surf	SUNSET PRO 22	Sunset Beach, Hawaii 28 Oct-6 Nov	worldsurfleague.com
snow	SKI PASS	Modena, Italy 29 Oct-1 Nov 22	skipass.it
surf	HALEIWA CHALLENGER	Haleiwa, Hawaii 26 Nov-7 Dec 22	worldsurfleague.com
snow	ISPO	Munich, Germany 28-30 Nov 22	ispo.com
surf	TUDOR NAZARÉ TOW SURFING CHALLENGE	Nazaré, Portugal 1-31 Nov 22	worldsurfleague.com
surf	QUIKSILVER JAWS BIG WAVE CHALLENGE	Maui, Hawaii 1-31 Nov 22	worldsurfleague.com
surf	SURF EXPO	Orlando, USA 4-6 Jan 23	surfexpo.com
snow	WINTER PRO	La Rosiere, France 8-10 Jan 23	actsnowboarding.com
snow	SLIDE & OTS	Telford, UK 10-12 Jan 23	slideotswinter.co.uk
snow	SHOPS 1ST TRY	Alpbachtal, Austria 22-24 Jan 23	shops-1st-try.com
snow	SPORT - ACHAT	Lyon, France 30 Jan-1 Feb 23	sport-achat.com



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FLITE FOIL 1500 | 2000 cm²

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Photo: Johann Mayra - SIC Maui



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