

BOARDSPORT  
**source.**  
EUROPEAN SURF/SKATE/SNOW BUSINESS



**BIG WIGS:** TOWN AND COUNTRY'S WILCO PRIN  
AND Db's ERIC BASCLE

**EURO BOARDSPORT BUSINESS ANALYSIS**

**RETAIL BUYERS GUIDES:**  
SURFBOARDS, SUNGLASSES,  
LONGBOARDS, MENS UNDERWEAR,  
HANGING SHOES, KITEBOARDING,  
SUP, SUN CREAM



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# HELLO SOURCE#116

As winter 22/23 draws to a close, we complete another chapter in the boardsports biz annals. A recent history that's been plagued by one major world or economic crisis followed by another. First Covid and then the outbreak of war in Ukraine has set the tone for business in the past three years with myriad knock-on factors impacting how business is done. We saw a surge in demand, shortage in supply, clogged harbours, meteoric rises in shipping costs and now the word on everyone's lips... overstock.

Wilco Prins sums it up perfectly in this issue's Big Wig, "the combination of pushy sales reps, shops that based their future purchasing on unrealistic Covid sales and the late arrival of outstanding orders created the high levels of inventory in surfboards and wetsuits we see today in a lot of stores." We also speak with new Db CEO Eric Bascle about the company's re-

brand, their rapidly growing staff numbers and how they're using ambassadors and social media to foster a community approach.

This winter was one of the worst for snowfall in recent memory. The Alps saw better coverage than the Pyrenees, but we're working off a low bar there. We've borne the brunt of the cost of living crisis that saw record high fuel and energy prices this winter, which doubled with rampant inflation should have spelt danger. However, the snow industry managed to ride on the crest of the wave created the past two years and reports in – from places like the UK in particular – state that winter business boomed this year.

Across the board retailers are noticing that customers aren't quite so price sensitive around the mid and high-end products. Perhaps showing the average boardsports consumer is in the higher percentile of earners and less affected by the cost-of-living crisis. This definitely tallies in surf, snow, wind, foil etc... perhaps not so much in skate.

Despite the current overstock in surf and skate, brand deliveries have returned to normal for this summer and the price per container has returned to a more tolerable level. We hear in our longboard trend report that despite retailers and distributors being full of stock, brands are still being hit with enquiries for newness and fresh marketing stories, showing the core stores who know how to sell product still serve as a valuable sales channel.

Despite it being a terrible season for snow (that's in general, personally I've scored on all 5 trips!) at the time of writing this, I'm on route to the first Spring Break (UK board test) in four years, held again at Kaunertal. And it's been a winter full of events. After the drought from the past three years, everyone's capitalised this year and the snow events calendar has been full.

Here's to a long, warm summer full of waves.

**Always Sideways**  
**Harry Mitchell Thompson**  
 Ed-in-chief

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## TEAM

<b>Editor Harry Mitchell Thompson</b> harry@boardsportsource.com	<b>German Editor Natalia Maruniak</b> tala@boardsportsource.com	<b>Contributors</b> Rocio Enriquez, Benoit Breccq, Gordon Way, Fabien Grisel, Franz Holler, David Bianic, Nuno Principe, Ruth Cutts, Sydney Bohannon, Laurids Beller, Caroline Koch, Kristiin Häkkinen, Bronte Dufour, Rachel Park	<b>To Subscribe</b> boardsportsource.com subs@boardsportsource.com
<b>Skate Editor Dave Morgan</b> davemorgan@boardsportsource.com	<b>French Editor Marie-Laure Ducos</b> ducos@boardsportsource.com	<b>Advertising &amp; Marketing</b> <b>Clive Ripley</b> clive@boardsportsource.com	<b>Publisher</b> publisher@boardsportsource.com
<b>Surf Editor David Bianic</b> david@boardsportsource.com	<b>Graphic Design Louis White</b> hello@louiswhite.co.uk	<b>Accounts Manager</b> accounts@boardsportsource.com	Published by ESB 22 Friars Street, Sudbury Suffolk, CO10 2AA. UK
<b>Snowboard Contributor</b> <b>Matthieu Perez</b> Matthieu@boardsportsource.com	<b>Proof-readers</b> Natalia Maruniak, Marie-Laure Ducos, Sam Grant		Boardsport SOURCE is published bi-monthly © ESB. All Rights Reserved <b>boardsportsource.com</b>

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**On the cover** Sooruz Team Manager, Vincent Primel - Photo: Sylvain Guionnet



# NSP

# DURABLE PERFORMANCE



1 Paul Jonney 2 Simon Greene 3 Australia

## NEWS #116

### Authentic Brands Group signs definitive agreement to purchase Boardriders

Authentic Brands Group has taken the next step forward in its takeover of Boardriders by signing a definitive agreement to purchase Boardriders. "We are thrilled to have completed the next phase of the Boardriders acquisition process," said Jamie Salter, Founder, Chairman and CEO of Authentic. "The Boardriders brands are at the forefront of a growing consumer demand for authentic brand experiences, and we look forward to working with the management team to further unlock each brand's rich heritage and reinforce their positions as leading consumer brands worldwide." Authentic will leverage its global network of category experts and best-in-class operating partners to convert the Boardriders business into a licensed business model. The company is in discussions with several current and new operators in key regions to manage the manufacturing, physical retail, e-commerce and wholesale operations of the Boardriders business. Authentic sees significant opportunities to accelerate the worldwide expansion of the portfolio's branded shop-in-shops, retail stores, e-commerce and wholesale distribution as well as to establish a Boardriders online marketplace. "We are pleased to find a great home for Boardriders in Authentic, one of the world's premier brand owners and marketing platforms," said Arne Arens, CEO of Boardriders. "Our brands and business have strong equity and an established and profitable organic growth strategy in place. We are confident that Authentic will bring the expertise and resources required to drive the next phase of Boardriders' journey." The acquisition is subject to certain standard closing conditions, including regulatory approval, and is expected to be finalized in Q3 2023

### Rusty Apparel returns to Europe

Rusty Apparel is set to make a comeback in Europe, with a new sales structure being currently set up out of Germany for the European Market. "We are thrilled to bring Rusty Apparel back to Europe," said Matthias Warns, responsible for setting up the new structure. "We believe that the brand's unique blend of style and functionality is perfectly suited for the European surfwear market. The latest collection features innovative designs and timeless basic styles made from high-quality materials. The brand is currently looking for agents and distributors to join their team and re-introduce Rusty Apparel with a fresh approach to the EU market. For sales and distribution inquiries, contact: [sales@rusty.eu](mailto:sales@rusty.eu) and for marketing inquiries, please contact: [nadja.friedrichs@rusty.eu](mailto:nadja.friedrichs@rusty.eu)

### Sample N'Co acquires Rollinstoke and sets up new Hossegor HQ

Sample N'Co has announced the purchase of Rollin'Stoke. Both companies have always shared the same values, vision and enthusiasm for boardsports and outdoor activities. This acquisition will solidify Sample N' Co's as a key player in the Water/Snow/Skate/Outdoor sports universes. Sample N' Co will create its surf and watersports headquarters and showroom in La Zone de Pedebert, Hossegor, France. With one office in Annecy les Glaisins for the outdoor and mountain part of the business and another one in South West of France. Guillaume Marage, Sample N Co's founder and CEO, commented: "I'm really happy to join forces with Rollin'Stoke. In recent

years, with brands like Pyzel Surfboards and After Essentials, Sample N Co's surf business has been growing fast, it was important for us to be present in Hossegor and to surround ourselves with Surfing. We have now an even more solid team and efficient facilities to reinforce our presence in the surf Industry."

### Rip Curl has announced it is now a B Corp Certified Corporation

The B Corp certification is a reflection of Rip Curl's commitment to balancing profit with the organisation's impact on the ocean and beaches that are central to the surfing way of life. The brand has bold ESG targets and the B Corp certification is a stamp of independent approval that Rip Curl is meeting stringent standards for positive social and environmental impact. KMD Brands Managing Director and Group CEO Michael Daly said Rip Curl's certification means the entire KMD business is now globally recognised as a B Corporation. "We're so proud that all three of our brands - Rip Curl, Kathmandu, and Oboz - are now officially B Corp certified.

### New Leadership at VFC's Smartwool, Altra and Dickies

Todd Dalhausser, previously Brand President of Alta, has been appointed to the position of Global Brand President, Dickies. He will report to VF's Interim President & CEO, Benno Dorer, and serve on VF's Executive Leadership Team. Jen McLaren, previously Brand President of Smartwool, has been appointed to the position of Brand President, Altra & General Manager, VF North America Key Accounts. She will continue reporting to Martino Scabbia Guerrini, EVP & President, EMEA, APAC and Emerging Brands. Jan Van Mossevelde, President of icebreaker is assuming additional responsibility for the Smartwool brand. He will continue reporting to Scabbia Guerrini. With responsibility for both brands which while each brand will continue to operate separately, they will collaborate on a cohesive strategy to leverage their respective strengths and capabilities.

### Peak Distribution adds Portugal & Spain to its C-Skins territories

Peak Distribution have been representing C-Skins since 2011 in Benelux and have been taken care of the wider Northern European region since 2014. Peak Distribution will now also take care of Portugal & Spain on top of their current territories: The Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Austria & Switzerland. Following the success of C-Skins Wetsuits in the UK, Europe & Australia, C-Skins & Peak Distribution are very excited to expand the brand further into Portugal and Spain. Peak Distribution will be starting deliveries of C-Skins Summer 2023 pre-ordered product early March 2023. Free-stock C-Skins will be made available on Peak Distribution's B2B portal, after all pre-orders have been distributed.

### Plus Licens licences Californian Surf brand Hang Ten for European Merchandising

Founded in 1960 in Seal Beach, California, by surf legends Duke Boyd and Doris Moore, Hang Ten has since represented the surf lifestyle of the West Coast all around the world. today there are over 880 Hang Ten stores across the Americas and Asia. Plus Licens will represent Hang Ten for merchandising in Europe, offering an extensive licensing program. "Hang Ten's vision is to be a globally diversified brand. We're excited to partner with Plus Licens to help the brand establish a strong European presence across multiple categories," says Marc Setton, CEO of Hang Ten USA. "We're thrilled to enter the lifestyle scene with Hang Ten, a brand with a strong legacy that is ready to expand into Europe. We aim to contribute to further international growth and put the Hang Ten feet on the map," says Maria Örnryd, Brand Director at Plus Licens.



# TRADE EVENTS

REVIEWS

## WINTERPRO

LA ROSIÈRE, FRANCE  
JAN 7-9, 2023

Following its successful launch last year Winterpro returned to La Rosiere with a bigger event. Winterpro is the first on snow demo in the European calendar,

so retailers tested the 2023/24 range of snowboard products for the first time. The resort, which is ideally located in the middle of Haute-Tarentaise, just above Bourg Saint Maurice and offers a 2,000m vertical drop (850m - 2850m). It's part of the San Bernardo area with 170 km of slopes distributed between La Thuile in Italy and La Rosière in France.

Snow fell abundantly for the first two days, followed by a sunny day on Tuesday, ensuring perfect testing conditions. This year 55 brands exhibited, 212 shops visited and 2211 tests were made compared to last year when 45 brands exhibited, 133 shops visited and 1623 tests were made. These significant increases demonstrate the success of Winterpro, as Act Media the organiser, enlarged the scope of the event

## SLIDE OTS

TELFORD, UK  
JAN 10-12, 2023

As in previous years the show was held at Telford, with 2023 proving to be the biggest edition

of the show since it moved there in 2011. The organisers reported an increase of 12.3% in overall visitor attendance when compared to 2022, reflecting the enhanced appeal of the combined show to both traditional snowsports buyers and newer visitors from the outdoor sector. Slide is the one opportunity for UK retailers to see so many brands under one roof, making it the key event in the UK snow industry calendar and a must visit decision for all UK winter sports retailers. Slide remains very much an order writing show, with brands and retailers holding back-to-back meetings. Buyers commented that with such a good balance of brands and suppliers across both snow and outdoor the show continues to be a very efficient use of time.

On Tuesday evening the SIGB invited all exhibitors and visitors to join them in the show café for a relaxed drink and bites. On Wednesday

## THE PILL BASE CAMP

SESTRIERE, ITALY  
JAN 16-17, 2023

This was the second edition of the Italian on snow demo. For this year the event was moved from Pila Resort just above the city of Aosta to Sestriere right on the

French border. The event was also moved 3 weeks earlier to 16th-17th January in line with the other winter events. The big difference between The Pill Base Camp and the rest of the on snow demos is that both ski and snowboard brands are there, so for crossover retailers this is a big attraction. The event is run by Hand Communication, the company behind the pan-European buyer's guides, "The Pill Outdoor Guide" & "The Pill Snowboard Guide". The Pill used the opportunity to test all the products for their next season's Winter Outdoor guide, a 400-page magazine packed full of reviews.

The first day was mostly clear, while day two was snow flurries with poorer visibility. The Italian industry was out in force, with more retailers

Like last year all three event sites were right next to the slopes. The 700 sq metre test village containing all the exhibiting hardgoods brands was located in front of the departure point of the Roches Noires chairlift, 30m from the car park. The test village opened at 8am each day with the Roches Brunes chairlift exclusively for Winterpro participants for the first hour. The adjacent 200 sq metre Salle Jean Arpin reception hall was full of exhibiting textile and accessory brands and was the location of the breakfasts, conferences and reception starting each day at 7.30am. On the slopes testers were out in force whilst Safety Shred Days were run during the event with pro riders invited by Victor Daviet .

After the slopes closed everyone gathered in the Salle Jean Arpin for drinks and a catch up and on Sunday Volcom held a napéro and presented their movie and on Monday Vans also offered an apéro and presented their movie. Later in the evenings the Le Boréal restaurant was the place to be with DJ sets & parties on Sunday and Monday nights.

[ACTSNOWBOARDING.COM](https://www.actsnowboarding.com)

morning there was a record attendance at the Sustainability Breakfast which was sponsored by Rab & Lowe Alpine. On Wednesday evening the SIGB held its annual general meeting, which after the regular business provided an opportunity for the industry say farewell to Lesley and Mike who have successfully organised and managed the show since 1996. At the meeting the presentation of the Slide & OTS Awards took place with each of the winners receiving an award and a round of applause. The Slide & OTS Awards recognise the hottest, most talked-about products at the show.

Additionally one for your calendar, after a near four-year break due to Covid restrictions and resulting complications, Snowboard Spring Break finally returns from the 29 April to 2 May to Kaunertal, Austria for three days of on-snow testing.

[SLIDEOTSWINTER.CO.UK](https://www.slideotswinter.co.uk)

in attendance than the previous year. The 1230 sq metre test village right by the lifts in the middle of the resort was busy all day with 208 shops visiting and carrying out over 1500 tests over the two days. This was a significant growth on the previous year when 107 shops and 260 testers visited. In total 61 brands were spread across the outdoor and indoor exhibition area, with clothing, backpacks, goggles, and accessories brands concentrated in the indoor area. During the event a full program of presentations, previews, talks, clinics, product tests and workshops took place. On Monday evening in the Indoor village from 7 till 11pm brands, agents, retailers and media attended The Pill Dinner, this started with an aperitif, followed by a buffet dinner and then entertainment by Monkey Sound. All in all a good second edition and no doubt the Pill Base camp will continue to be a key date in the Italian winter calendar for the Italian snowboard community to come together to discuss the current market, test products and party hard.

[THEPILLOUTDOOR.COM](https://www.thepilloutdoor.com)

## SHOPS 1ST TRY

ALPBACH, AUSTRIA  
JAN 21-23, 2023

After a 3-year covid enforced break Shops 1st Try was back at its regular location of Alpbachtal-Wildschönau. Due to demand for larger stands the test village at the Pöglbahn Parking

area in Inneralpbach, was expanded with additional space in the car park on the other side of the bridge. This also became the new registration entrance to the village. The slopes were well covered with snow with Shops 1st Try benefiting from a 40cm snowfall just before the start. All 3 days saw good conditions and the brands were kept busy as retailers were spoilt by the large number of brands with products at the show. The full list of the exhibitors was a who's who of snowboard brands. New brands to the event this year were Evoc, Db journey, BeExtreme, Cardiff, doubledeck, Fjell Snowboards, Kemper Snowboards, Kohla, OES, Pallas, Spark R&D, Telos, Transform Gloves, and United Shapes. Whilst in the outdoor Micro Brand Area were Åsmo, Clew, DRIFT, Plum, Pro-Tec and Tempelton.

Dealers made a total of 6555 tests with the event attracting retailers from all over Europe. Of the 248 participating shops 101 were German and 50 were Austrian with the rest coming from across Europe, with a good contingent from Poland, Italy, UK, Netherlands and Switzerland. The event is by far the most international of the on snow demo's with many key industry figures flying over from North America specifically to attend the show. Of the shops, half were independent pro shops but at the same time the bigger players such as Blue Tomato, Sports 2000, Sessions and Intersport brought teams of testers to cover all the brands.

As usual there was a packed evening schedule. Proceedings kicked off with the Shops 1st Try Industry Welcome Dinner supported by Alpbach Tourismus at the Hotel Alphof which was open to all exhibitors. The indoor exhibition area was open from 4.30pm to 10.30pm on the Sunday and

## SPORT ACHAT

LYON, FRANCE  
JAN 30 - 1 FEB, 2023

Sport Achat was held in Hall 2 of Eurexpo in Lyon, where the 20,000 plus m2 of exhibition space was filled by more than 418 brands and over 3,324 visitors attended

from 1,393 companies. This year's 20th anniversary of the show was a symbolic milestone as Sport Achat was the first professional sports trade show in France. The entrance to the exhibition hall was dedicated to showing the change in equipment and clothing over the two decades, with wall mounted displays that turned with today's product on one side and the equivalent 20 year old product on the other size. The show had been brought forward to the end of January from its traditional date in late March, to ensure that it remained relevant when pre-book deadlines are all moving earlier. With its new date Sport Achat was still the final opportunity to see 23/24 products as all the other European on snow demos and trade shows had already taken place.

The exhibition area was 15% larger than in 2022 whilst visitor numbers remained the same despite the new date change «The result is positive and the relevance of the date change is confirmed,» said Mathieu Kurtz, CEO of the Sport-Air group. «Sport Achat has adapted and has become more valuable as it has positioned itself between the end of textile ordering season and at the beginning of the season for equipment and accessories.» The national strike on Tuesday did not have too much impact on attendance, except for retailers from the Pyrenees. For future editions attendance on the last day will be encouraged as traditionally it's

Monday with the Highlight Exhibition dinner starting on both nights at 6pm. As always the dinner was packed after a hard day's testing as everyone took the opportunity to relax and look at the brand displays. The outerwear brands were there in force, as this is the time of day when retailers have the time to talk about this product category.

New in the indoor exhibition this year was the Book-o-rama, a book store organized by Tassilo Hager of Curator that presented the best of snowboard literature. Authors in attendance included Patrick "Brusti" Armbruster with Barely Made It, Peter Radacher with Boards, Carlos Blanchard with Dreams and Tassilo with his own books CURATOR – Vol. 2 & 3 and Snowboarding Makes Me Happy. Other books presented were Club Sandwich by Matt Georges & Perly, Heroes by Jerome Tanon and Hunting for Bluebird by Vincent Skoglund and Jeremy Jones's The Art of Shralpinism: Lessons From The Mountains.

The BoardSport Source Retailer's Choice Board Design award was won by Goodboards with runners up Rome followed by the Bakery, as always the prizegiving was mayhem. For those brave enough, the after show party saw Mortal Kombat Sound and MC Ucee going off in the Jakober Pub whilst Tricky Duke and Oida Leck provided a more chilled out vibe in the ost Alm. On Monday DJ BRX and Laima took over the Jacober Pub for another late nighter.

Next year's event is confirmed for the 21-23 Jan 2024 so with SFT now considered the best networking event for the European snowboard industry, get your accomadation booked before it goes!

[SHOPS-1ST-TRY.COM](https://www.shops-1st-try.com)

quieter and therefore retailers receive better service on the stands. The Fresh Zone near the hall entrance was dedicated to start-ups that are less than 5 years old, giving the opportunity for these new players to present their products cheaply and raise their profiles. Amongst the fourteen brands in the Fresh Zone were Hilx eyewear, Raised Together eyewear, Cardo communication and Black Line. On the left of the show snowboard brands were grouped together so for snowboard buyers it's a very time efficient show.

Over the 3 days the conference area was well utilised with presentations including an introduction to the Fresh Zone brands and their key products, the ins and outs of the Boot fitting business, Circularity: an opportunity for brands and businesses, a presentation of OSV's action plan for the next 3 years and ,the results of the Observatoire's survey and presentation of the French Outdoor Awards by OSV: The event organisers hosted a party in the food truck area to celebrate the show's 20th anniversary on Monday evening with a cocktail and buffet and on the Tuesday the customary booth parties rocked into the evening. As the last show in the European calendar it's also a good bell weather of how the season has been, asking around brands were quite content and happier than they had expected to be, particularly given the state of the snow during the season.

[SPORTAIR.FR](https://www.sportair.fr)



## RETAIL BUYER'S GUIDE

# SURFBOARDS 2023

2023 kicked off with the surf shop racks still stacked full of last year's boards, leaving retailers wondering if they would go bad like sour milk. Spoiler alert: the answer is no. By **David Bianic**



Despite sexy numbers - no less than \$3.8 billion in 2023, nearly double that of 10 years ago - the surfboard market has a hangover: "After the pandemic, the surfboards market went crazy," recalls Rémi Chaussemiche, European Marketing Manager for Pyzel, "So, the whole market purchased a lot of stock for 2022, which appeared way more challenging due to geopolitical / economic instability and a very poor waves season."

But there's no need for doom and gloom, many still have double-digit growth and most of them are keeping their noses to the grindstone, like Nick Uricchio, Shaper and Manager of Semente Surfboards in Portugal: "I think it's just part of the ball game, you can't go too far up without having a drop down once in a while and as board builders we all lived the highest times I can remember during the pandemic." Like many, Germany's Norden Surfboards found themselves overstocked at the end of last season, "But in surfing you don't need to reinvent the wheel every year" reminds Founder Andy Wirtz. He confidently expects to sell out of boards this summer, and then produce a bit less.

But for all the others who work to order, 2022 was another excellent year, like for the legend Simon Anderson: "New models are not a focus but applying improvements to existing models is." One of this market's more odd reactions, as explained by Walden, is that the retailers' great caution on orders has generated excitement among customers who are looking for new boards they could not find in shops, restarting the machine.

Let's leave the final word to Mr Pipeline, the surfing Buddha, aka Gerry Lopez, who has seen it all since his first shapes in 1968: "the business of surfing is much the same as the surf that has allowed us to do what we do...sometimes it's up and sometimes it's down, that is the nature of it."

"The whole market purchased a lot of stock for 2022, which appeared way more challenging due to geopolitical / economic instability and a very poor waves season." Rémi Chaussemiche, Pyzel

### KEY DESIGNS FOR 2023

Unlike fast fashion, it's not about coming up with a new product every three months, and we shouldn't expect a revolution in 2023. This is good news for selling off stock, which is not likely to suddenly become obsolete as soon as new designs arrive. So the top three will remain dominated by midlengths/longboards, perf/groveller twins and high-perf shortboards.

#### 1 - Mids & Longs

Among the most extensive midlength line-ups, Firewire's range stands out: since the early success of Rob Machado's Seaside & Beyond, and now his Sunday model, the range has grown to include Ben Skinner's OVA and Harley Ingleby's newborn, the Mid 6: "The fine, round pin tail, curvy plan shape, smooth rocker, with a bit of nose flip is equally comfortable turning deep in the pocket or long open-face arcs," describes Chris Grow, World Marketing Director.

The midlength craze is also benefitting funboards, which have been stripped of the "beginner" label with elite surfers having been spotted on midlength boards (think "Torren Martyn"). This benefits NSP whose sales mainstay is still their epoxy leisure funboards, confirms Sander Blauw, International Sales Manager, while emphasising the expansion of the longboard. This is not just chance, it's the result of extensive

work carried out by the brand: "Shaking off NSP's stigma as highly durable boards reserved for rentals, schools and first board buyers, NSP has invested considerably in expanding its range with respected industry shapers." As a result, a single-fin log with 50/50 rails, the Sleep Walker (in PU or moulded EPS) from Tully St. John, has become one of the flagship boards in the NSP range, a far cry from the kook image.

This combination of patented technology and top shapers has been a hallmark of Surftech for the past 20 years. So it's no surprise that Surftech x Takayama have had great success with their In The Pink model, the number one longboard from Takayama and timeless noserider. Other models that caught our eye at Surftech x Takayama include the Prince Kuhio glider, a tapered 11' that should work on the slightest ripple.

Another brand that ticks all the boxes in this mid/long movement, Stewart Surfboards, returned to Europe last summer through the distributor Sample N'Co. Their three key boards for 2023 are the Redline 11, a versatile 9 foot longboard, the Ripster, a noserider more modern than it looks, and the 949, a five-fin funboard that smacks of speed!

And to complete your range, you can't go wrong with the two best-sellers from Euroglass, Mark Phipps' One Bad Egg and Phil Grace's Demibu, two magical recipes that age like good wine. Another big name in old-school shaping, Roger Hinds, offers traditional hand-made shapes as well as Surftech technology. His Tomago (egg in Japanese) is no doubt an icon for specialised shops to stock. This "one board quiver" as Hinds calls it, has a 'full' outline while "the rails are laid down just right to provide precision".

For their part, Flowt are adding to their softboards range with hardboards that follow their customers' development, like the Mid Magnet Ecoboard - between funboard and midlength perf with a Polyola and Kinetix bio-resin foam construction.

#### 2 - Twins and Grovellers

The following sentence might shock some people but we agree with Thomas Cardinal from UWL: "The new performance twins are the new performance shortboards." For him, the classic shortboard has become an alternative choice, not the norm, now chosen as a step-up board for bigger waves. As a result, their team riders surf a Cardinal Twin Perf, even in competition, when the waves are just "normal".

Once tagged as "grovellers", a rather pejorative term, twins now inherit more complimentary terms, like at Pyzel, where they talk about "funformance" for their Wild Cat, Happy Twin and Astro Fish models. The latest creation from the Hawaiian magician, in collaboration with John John Florence, is the White Tiger, a hybrid perf board that has set the social networks on fire in a handful of videos. In the same vein, the Hypto Krypto remains Haydenshapes' best selling board since... 2014, according to Hayden Cox. Better still, the model has enjoyed continual growth since then. Torq also has a model that fits into the "one board quiver" category, or more accurately "the board you'll surf 80% of the time in less than stellar waves so it needs to be excellent.", says Designer Phil Bridges. The PG-R has a stubby outline, lots of volume (over 30 litres in 5'6", 45 in 6'4") and a "performance groveller" configuration available in premium ACT or TEC construction at a more contained price.

For the wow factor, you can count on the California Pin, a collab between Mark Richards and Matt "Mayhem" Biolos, all made by Lib-Tech. A board that acts as a bridge between a fast fish and a real performance shortboard, to be used more as a step-up. Also worth mentioning is the new Hydra from Lib-Tech & Lost, an "almost" classic fish in appearance, but combined with a snowboard influenced sidecut. Equally flashy, but with a more old-school vibe, the Sinr and the HRT from Glenn Pang at Town & Country Surf Designs stand out with their 80's sprays, but under the bonnet you'll find the best of

"Shaking off NSP's stigma as highly durable boards reserved for rentals, schools and first board buyers, NSP has invested considerably in expanding its range with respected industry shapers."

Sander Blauw, NSP

"The new performance twins are the new performance shortboards."

Thomas Cardinal, UWL Surfboards

this millennium's design. The kind of boards that attract attention in surf shops... The same Hawaiian vibe is expressed by Duke Aipa, the youngest son of the late Ben Aipa, who continues his legend with the twins that made him famous, but with a modern twist. This is the case with the Dark Twinn, which takes Ben Aipa's Wing Twin template, "used to make Dane Keahola's twins in the late 70's", but updated with a Swing Twin Squash (tail).

#### 3 - Performance shortboard

Forget the newbies, the retro-hip cool kids, the overweight grandpas. There is still a category of surfers who have only one thing in mind: to shred! Fortunately for them, there are still many people providing radical machines. This is the credo of Johnny Cabianca and his eponymous label. Take the DFK 2.0, "The board Gabriel Medina surfs 90% of the time". It's hard to come up with a better selling point. Another pro-model made in Brazil, The Wolf by Pro Ilha, Santiago Muniz's board, a little race car with EPS Carbon Sling construction (carbon reinforcements in the centre and on the bottom at the rails).

It's the same pitch at Firewire and their FRPK+, a classic high-perf shortboard with squash tail, "refined and calibrated over the past three years with Kelly Slater", among others. Also a pure team rider's board, the new Stray from Semente Surfboards in Portugal is made for winning comps and linking top-to-bottom turns.



Similarly, apart from a few throwback collections to the 80's, Simon Anderson is all about high-performance, but not exclusively. Take the Varmit, which successfully hides its extra volume and wider front third for better paddling assistance.

#### 4 - Niche boards

Behind these major trends, there are niche markets that retailers must not neglect, because who else if not them can follow micro-trends? Starting with kids. Nick at Semente admits that he spends a lot of time in the shaping room working on high-performance boards for our youngest surfers. And what better influencers than kids? Cabianca's grommets model, the Muleke, is a version of Medina's DFK, calibrated for under 40 kilos. Clever.

At Walden Surfboards, they are also thinking about Venus, being the first board brand to create a complete range for women, called Walden Wahine, "we didn't just add a token pink surfboard", but have adjusted their specifications, particularly with the less wide Magic Model for example.





“most consumers let their budget decide what they will buy and PU boards are still cheaper and faster to make.” Andy Wirtz, Norden

EPS/epoxy hand finished board utilising flax fibreglass and eco resins that is extraordinarily durable. The slight decrease in weight of the board makes it feel very lively.” Another Surftech signature shaper, Roger Hinds defends their Tuflite construction, taking the example of a 60’s style longboard, “that is very similar to what I learned to surf on”, and “that has all the characteristics you look for in a 1960’s log without being cumbersome through cut out weight.”.

In terms of sourcing, the modest but consistent breakthrough roll out of Polyola and its eco-friendly foam blanks produced in the EU is worth noting, as Thilo and Andreas from Kanoa point out. Johnny from Cabianca Surfboards is also keeping a close eye on BASF’s innovation of BMB foam made from sustainable biomass, which replaces EPS.

**DISTRIBUTION: DOUBLE DOWN**

The cliché of the shaper cut off from the world in his workshop is over. Today’s board labels hold the keys to e-commerce to help supplement their B2C sales. At Firewire, Chris Grow insists on the important leverage of social networks. From their platforms, they have created landing pages that lead to shopping solutions by region and links to physical and online surf shops. Nuno Viegas of Pro Ilha says that many customers come to them via Instagram and order via WhatsApp, but also that 90% of online shoppers are looking for advice.

Hayden Cox explains that DTC is also a way of avoiding putting too much pressure on retailers, not forcing them to take on too much stock. Kanoa work mainly through e-comm, taking care of customer service through interactive chats in particular. However, the cost of logistics to the end customer remains a barrier and NSP offers collection solutions in shops for certain markets. Bryce Frees, Marketing Director at Surftech, explains that DTC sales are also a way of validating new products and finding out whether demand is strong, before sharing this information with retailers to guide them better. In short, B2C and DTC can coexist for a win-win combination. ☺

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**HIGHLIGHTS**

- 1 Non-threatening overstocks
- 2 Winning trio: midlength, longboard, twin
- 3 Niche boards: kids, step-ups and river
- 4 E-comM and social networks for the win



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## RETAILER PROFILE

### WAIMEA SURF AND CULTURE, PORTUGAL

For over 30 years Waimea Surf and Culture has been a mainstay of the Portuguese skate and surf scene. We grabbed a moment with owner Joaquim Oliveria to discuss current trends, the challenges of overstocking and his hopes for the future during this tumultuous time.

**Can you give us a short history of Waimea Surf and Culture and who are the team behind it?**

We first opened Waimea Surf & Culture in 1992 as we were passionate about the surf and skate lifestyle and had the desire to open a store by the sea. At the very beginning we only sold surf and skate clothing, but due to customer demands, we decided to specialise in selling equipment like surfboards and wax as well.

**What's the Portuguese skate and surf scene like right now?**

After the Covid-19 lockdown there was a very big boom in surfing and especially in skateboarding, like never before. But today with overstock issues, promotions on the internet and with too many stores selling everything and anything at low prices, things have slowed down a lot. The brands should have kept production down to a sustainable level so there wouldn't be all this abundance of stock we are now seeing. The brands should be our partners and not our competitors.

**How do you help promote and nurture the local scene and riders in anyway?**

We have a very strong relationship with local riders due to the location of our store. We all surf and skate together, right outside, which has created a great friendship between us and riders.

What brands are super hot right now and what products have been selling well so far this season - especially in terms of surf products? Streetwear and workwear are currently performing very well for us this year. The trend seems to be wearing oversized clothes, so brands from the 90s to 2000s like Carhartt, Dickies, Santa Cruz and Volcom are the top selling brands right now. For us clothes have also overtaken skate shoes in sales.

In terms of surf, the brand that we have sold the most, without a doubt, has been Torq surfboards, due to their quality/price ratio. It's a brand that manages to cover a large part of the market due to their partnerships with big brands such as Rusty, they also come with a fair price compared to the bigger brands that have seen a very significant price increase recently.

**What are the recent trends you have seen in surfboard sales over the last few years and what has been the best-selling surf accessory for you guys?**

In recent years here in Portugal the trend has been to ride smaller boards with more volume and width, which are more manoeuvrable, and above all, more fun to ride.

At Waimea, the surf accessories that we have sold the most have been fins, due to their diversity and versatility, both in sizes and in the shapes themselves, enabling riders to change the behaviour of the boards.

You have a strong online social presence but no website, selling products online through Facebook Marketplace instead, why is that? We prefer to give customers the chance to find products they love physically in our store, rather than through a website, especially brands that are lacking in stock online due to high demand. We find that because we have what they want in store, they are much more satisfied than if they were purchasing online, especially as when they arrive, we always try to make them feel as if they are our friends.

**How are you dealing with the current overstock situation in many of the summer categories?**

Overstock is a very dangerous problem for shops at the moment because everyone wants to get rid of stock in any way they can. The biggest problem though is that the distributors are the first to make promotions on their websites so they no longer seem to respect stores which have been developing their brand.

**Have consumers purchasing habits changed during the current cost of living crisis?**

We have found that customers are buying less but want quality products and are willing to pay more for that quality.

**You guys set up skateboards and service/wax snowboards etc...which service is most popular at the shop?**

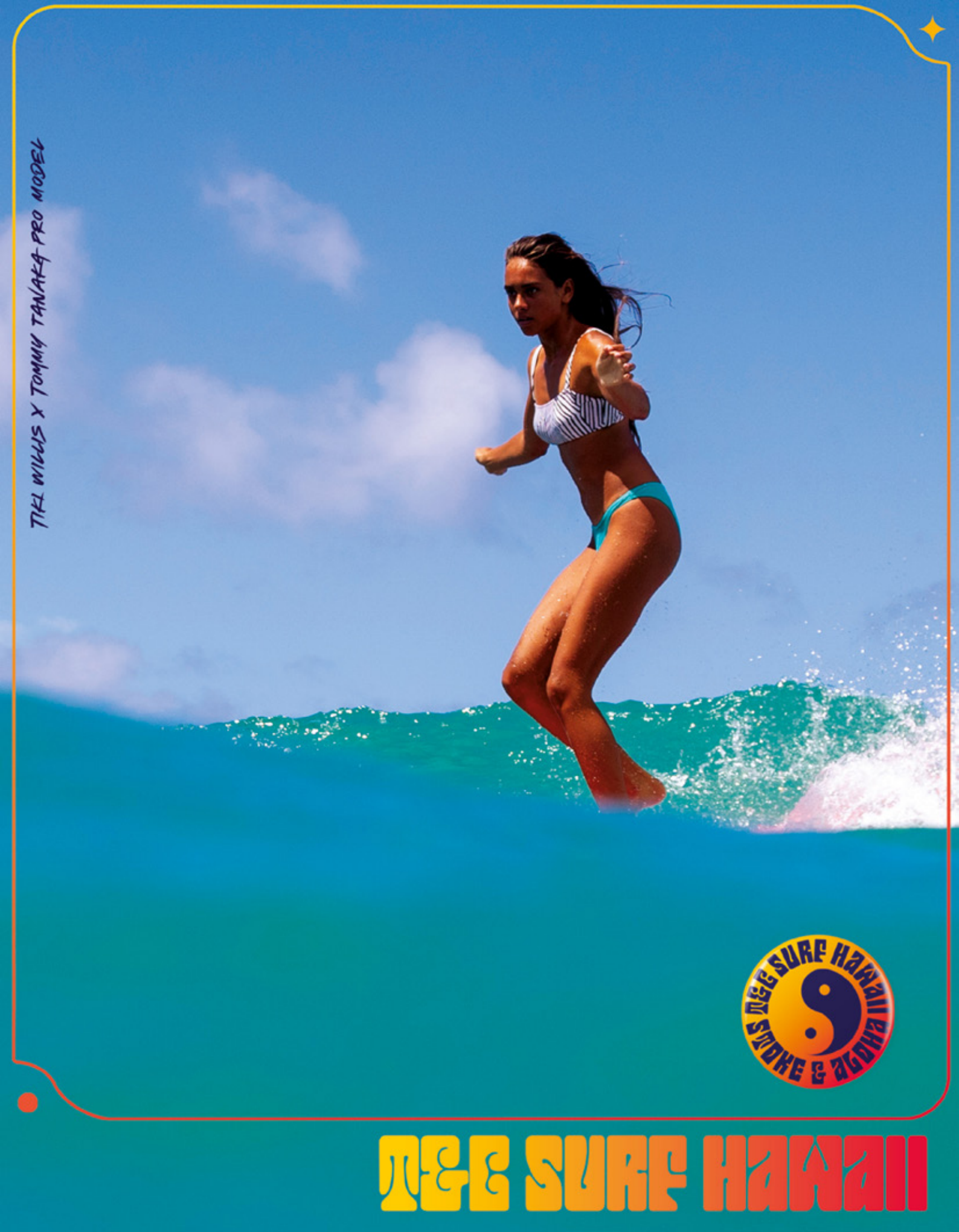
Our snowboard/ski repair and waxing service was very lucrative for us this winter, but due to the very bad weather here in Portugal, our surf and skate rental service didn't perform quite as well.

**What are your hopes for the up-and-coming year?**

It's going to be a tough year, especially in terms of selling technical products, not only because of the significant increase in prices, but also because of the oversupply in terms of online sales.

We hope that everything will return to normal and are staying positive. We go to surf and skate with our friends and customers to forget a little bit about all the problems the world is experiencing at this time, but I hope it will be a positive year with the increase in tourism in Portugal. ☺

INSTAGRAM.COM/WAIMEASURFANDCULTURE





## RETAIL BUYER'S GUIDE

# KITEBOARDING 2023

As new kite powered modalities emerge, kites look back to the roots. The original wish to conquer the skies is driving a huge popularity rise in Big Air. By **Rocio Enriquez**.



After a very popular coming of age, kiteboarding enters maturity with a solid sense of its origins and its future. The constant development of new materials not only enables more time in the water. It is also supporting a return to the roots. The revival of Big Air is the most visible trend at the moment. Jumping high and flying for a while is the primal desire of every rider that first launches a kite. New materials are improving the level of riding, feeding the popularity of this modality. We see old school tricks like board-offs, rotations and grabs taken to the next level. Many brands expect their biggest growth in Big Air specific boards and kites. In this category we find Duotone's Rebel SLS and Jaime SLS, F-One's Trigger, or Gin's Instinct HB. There is also a big demand for new lighter materials that increase performance capabilities. Eleveight expects great sales of their RS+ kite. As for constructions, the market rewards all-rounder products. "As many riders pursue different disciplines in kiteboarding, they now often look for kites that allow them to cover them all with one product", says Konstantin Weier from Gaastra.

### KITES

All-rounder kites have offered the best results in sales. Duotone highlights their Evo SLS, a kite that will perform in any conditions, aimed at progressive kite surfers. Eleveight boosted the sales of their V7 by revising its profile. The aerodynamic design maximises the wind cover and minimises the quiver. F-One's best-selling kite has been the Bandit, a kite that does it all. The all-round characteristics have driven the growth of Gaastra's Pure kite. Gin reports their best sales on their Instinct HB, that can handle a variety of wind conditions, and their Marabou 2. The last one is suitable for beginners and experienced riders, easy to fly and to recover, but powerful. Naish's versatile Pivot is a constant best-seller, but their Triad has scaled up positions because of its large wind range and ease of use. Ocean Rodeo's all-rounder Flite

**"You must have 5 struts to get more big air performance and stability when you are overpowered"** Hugo Badaroux, F-One

remains their best-seller. They have developed a new 5-strut version, with additional sizes, to take it to the next level. Slingshot reports crazy sales of their all-new, three-strut Code v1. Reedin comprises their kite range in the Supermodel, one kite designed to perform in all disciplines.

The main trend the whole industry seems to be focusing on is the development of new materials that offer the perfect balance between weight reduction, performance and durability. Aluula disrupted the market with what many consider a perfect mix. Dacron produced a new version that enables stronger and lighter kites. Material innovations are still mostly focused on the airframe, although we start to see some attention on canopies and bladders. They have enabled advances in construction techniques that result in more efficient kites. This trend creates the opportunity to offer the same product in different configurations, similarly to the bike industry. "Offering three different levels of material options and price, we're quite well-prepared", says Philipp Becker from Duotone. Eleveight follows through with the creation of their Plus range. Reedin mixes it up in their new Hybrid Torsion Frame construction that keeps stiffness in the centre and gives more twist to the wing tip area. In constructions, the popularity of Big Air is driving the comeback of the five-strut kite. "You must have 5 struts to get more big air performance and stability

when you are overpowered", explains Hugo Badaroux from F-One. They offer the Trigger for this purpose, and they are now improving their Bandit with new materials too.

Most new releases will have to wait until late Summer, but there are some recent additions and variations to speak of. Duotone has just released a new version of the Evo SLS and the Evo D/Lab. F-One has redesigned and added new materials to the Breeze v4. Gin Kiteboarding has released the Shaman 3.1, with new stronger and water repellent fabric. Looking ahead, we can expect exciting launches. Ocean Rodeo has great expectations for the new Flite and their Aluula Crave, that incorporates an Aluula airframe to their well proven wave and freestyle kite. "All kites this year will introduce some new Aluula composite materials", says Rich Mundell. They will use Aluula Gold for leading edges and Aluula Aeris for struts and other small areas. RRD is developing new materials mixed with Aluula too. F-One is working on the next iteration of the Trigger and the Bullit, both aimed at Big Air. Eleveight announces many innovations. Their freeride and wave kite will feature completely new materials.

### BOARDS

Twin tips top the best-sellers list, and with the rise in popularity of Big Air it is likely to remain this way. Duotone's best-selling board, the Jaime, got redesigned. The new deep channels and angled fins secure total control and grip on high jumps. Eleveight's Master C+ and Process C+ became very popular in the Big Air community for their lightweight, full carbon construction. Ocean Rodeo saw the sales of their Tumbler boosted by the performance of their Big Air star, Giel Vlugt. Slingshot reports outstanding sales of their Big Air specific Formula board. Gaastra has experienced a great comeback of their Pact board. Strapless freestyle boards have thrown results for Ocean Rodeo's Creep and Slingshot's new Sci-Fly. "The Sci-Fly is a blunt nose strapless freestyle board that is also super fun in waves", says Elliott Tauscer. Freeride kit keeps a steady business. Ocean Rodeo reports strong sales of their Mako after many years on offer. Naish reports good sales of their Motion and their Traverse. The last one has become popular due to a great performance at freeriding and cutting through waves with ease. Eleveight's top seller is their freeride board, the Process. The all-round performance trend seen in kites extends to boards too. Gaastra sold a lot of Watts boards for this reason. Its construction doesn't require too much skill from the user, enabling controlled light wind riding even in choppy conditions, and soft landings after jumps. Reedin got solid sales from their KevPro, that also offers comfort in choppy waters, so the rider can focus on jumping or carving without distractions. Naish has also sold many Hero boards, easy to use in various water conditions by riders with any skill level. This board, along with their Motion and Drive, are having their bottoms re-shaped.

We find the same trend in boards as in kites. "Innovative board designs and construction methods are focused on providing the best performance with as little weight as possible", says Ray Borg from Naish. Brands are experimenting with different mixes of materials and constructions methods to achieve the best result. Naish incorporates

**"Innovative board designs and construction methods are focused on providing the best performance with as little weight as possible"**

Ray Borg, Naish

cross laminates of fibre glass and carbon strips to control flex and rocker. They also implement urethane cut to manage flex control through the tips, as seen in their Motion. This improves the experience of surfing. F-One uses wood, Herex fibre glass and carbon layers. They take pride in their Magnet, which the claim to be unbreakable. The surfboard segment receives attention too. Eleveight's Plus range aims to satisfy the demand for real surf feel that many riders seek. Reedin focuses on weight reduction to secure the best strapless experience. They have been able to reach great standards thanks to their manufacturing in Portugal with EU sourced materials and infusion process. They have redesigned their KevPro to improve its reactivity and have introduced the brand-new Space Agency. This is a full carbon board with lots of 3D contours that improve comfort and feel on the water.

### SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability is in every brand's mind, but executing it remains



challenging in a sport in which performance is key, for enjoyment and for safety. Most efforts are applied to manufacturing processes and packaging. Minimising carbon footprint drives choices of factories to work with. Moving production to Europe decreases the impact of transportation. Reducing plastic in packaging is also a general goal. Brands keep trying to find sustainable alternatives to the materials used to build their products. Duotone is trying Flax and basalt in their boards as part of their Concept Blue initiative. Naish announces they are exploring new renewable materials. Ocean Rodeo has advanced in the recyclability of their kites with Aluula composites.

### RETAILER SUPPORT

Constant innovation brings about the need for training. Educating retail staff is one of the most important forms of support in kiteboarding. Duotone develops B2B product explanation videos and organises dealer meetings. Eleveight takes their training to the shops. Naish organises face to face meetings with retailers to explain the product. They have a tech team available to provide individualised assistance on product related inquiries. Strong relationships with retailers are crucial in this environment. The ability to offer tailor made solutions and provide real-time information makes a difference. Educating the end consumer is important too. Demo days are a great tool for this. Eleveight, Ocean Rodeo and Reedin allocate many resources to this. A great team of ambassadors also helps. Duotone and Slingshot drive a lot of business to their retailers through the widespread presence of their team riders.

Stock levels seem healthy. Most brands took measures to minimise the impact of the bull whip effect that many boardsports suffered. New products were produced in limited quantities, avoiding competition with current products on offer. This prolonged the life of their products and avoided the need of close-out deals. Moving to factories closer to their markets helped too. With production lead-times and shipping issues mostly resolved, brands feel in a good position to support their customers. ☺

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### HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Rising popularity of Big Air.
- 2 Increasing demand for all-rounder products.
- 3 Innovations aim for lighter yet stronger products.
- 4 Different materials with different price points.
- 5 Healthy stocks and production/delivery times.





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## RETAIL BUYER'S GUIDE SUNGLASSES 2023

Vintage looks with modern technology have contributed to the comeback of sunglasses as an all-year round, all-purpose accessory. By Rocio Enriquez.

TANNER WEARING  
RUFIO IN RECYCLED BLACK



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Sunglasses are no longer just for Summer or during downtime. Like in decades past, active people are choosing performance sunnies over goggles to protect themselves during sports, all-year round. This retro attitude brings retro designs and colours with it. There's a comeback of wrapped, oval and rectangular shapes, with oversized and butterfly styles for women. Shields remain popular. Colours go bright, and we find vintage patterns and milky treatments. Consumer demands have not stayed in the past, though. "There is a tech-savvy rider that wants the latest tech", says Joey Santley from I-Sea. Users seek the latest lens technology and sustainable materials available.

### FRAMES

Performance drives a lot of business and shields keep a steady demand. Cébé offers the S'Track Vision, a mono shield featuring their exclusive S'Tech™ technology. Its rubberised nosepiece and temple tips prevent slipping. Smith highlights their cylindrical shield styles Wildcat and Bobcat. They combine a multi-sport purpose with a lifestyle crossover appeal. Oakley's semi-rimless Hydra draws on their surfing heritage. Anon increased the appeal of their Winderness shield by giving them polarised lenses. Spektrum gets more business from their performance shields than any other style. They introduce two new ones, the Enan, and the Fröa for smaller faces. Other interesting styles are the Lom, that comes with a foam protector for comfort and perspiration management, and the sustainable Blank Raw. Bajio keeps pushing their award-winning Las Rocas launched last summer. Red Bull Spect fuses their Action and Leisure categories with their Fusion range of shields that include the Tain, Till, Tuan, and Tusk. There are some hints to cyclists. Bollé has launched the Micro Edge, a half-rim frame with narrow shield and sharp lines that enhances horizontal and peripheral vision. Apex has released a couple of retro cycling inspired models too. "A great alternative to goggles on sunny days", says Tom Howells. Oakley's

"The Conquer have been hugely popular, which is why we are releasing a similar retro style in the Spring" Panda Optics, Oliver Heath

Sutro is a versatile style that can be worn on or off the bike. Hilx adds a frameless design to their range with the Savage. CHPO's offer for bikers is the semi-rimless and super lightweight Luca. Cébé's Stamina is a sleek cycling design with a ventilated frame and adjustable nosepads.

Wraparound styles are key in the active scene. Bollé's 8-base Cerber is the brand's rendition of their original wrap DNA. Dragon highlights their Box, a sleek design that sits close to the face. Hilx has fined tuned their Youngblood style to give it more wrap, producing the Newblood. It eliminates unnecessary reflection, improving the overall fit and enhancing sightlines. Their Revok style is a high wrap frame with a snug fit that reduces interference with headwear. Adidas pushes their Competition range made of lightweight, half-frame, wraparound styles. Quiksilver's Ellipse is a 90s inspired wrapped style adapted for snowboarding, but equally suitable for cruising the beach or the city. Smith's Embark is a glacier glass design. It features a lightweight, impact-resistant frame and a 6-base curvature for a modest wraparound fit. Panda announces two new wraparound styles for 2023. "The Conquer has been hugely popular, which is why we are releasing a similar retro style in the Spring", says Oliver Heath. Melon expects their biggest growth in wraps, especially the ones with late nineties and early noughties influences.





“A bit of retro with modern touches makes for a good mix” Carsten Raphael, Wave Hawaii

offer true colour contrast and glare reduction. Bajio’s Lapis technology blocks up to 95% of blue light. Bollé developed the Volt+ technology for contrast and the Phantom technology for photochromic lenses. Dragon works with their Lumalens technology that enhances clarity and depth, filtering out light that produces glare. Smith’s ChromaPop™ technology uses dye to selectively filter light in the confusion areas on the visible light spectrum. It can be paired with photochromic lenses. Zeal developed their own plant based Ellume Pola lenses. Oakley’s Prizm lenses fine-tune vision for specific environments by emphasising colours where the eye is most sensitive to detail. Hilx has patented their XViZ™ lens that uses colour spectrum manipulation to emphasise the terrain that matters.

We find other well proven technologies across all ranges. Zeal partners with Auto Sun to combine photochromic technology with polarised protection in a single lens. Spektrum works mainly with Impacto lenses by Zeiss and are introducing the new Zeiss technology LightPro. This new lens reduces glare, offering up to 80% more contrast and high definition. Quiksilver, Roxy and Melon also work with Zeiss. Red Bull Spect pairs their seamless lens construction with Polar Z lenses. Hobie uses Sightmaster™ Plus, especially designed to cut glare and enhance contrast of water surface in low light. They use Hydroclean™ lenses comprised of 100% polarised injected polycarbonate, shatterproof and scratch resistant. Most other brands all use polarised and photochromic lenses too.

**MATERIALS**

Sustainability is largely driving the choice of materials. Constant R&D allows to keep performance and quality standards in more environmentally friendly products. Adidas uses RPA12 for their Active product segment. This material is composed of 99.7% recycled plastics. All CHPO frames, and some of I-Sea ones, are made of recycled plastic. Dragon uses recycled PET bottles for their Upcycled collection, and so does Quiksilver for their injected frames. Wave is working with recycled fishing nets. Zeal has developed See Grass that combines recycled plastics and grass fibres. Raen is updating their black styles to recycled acetate. “With this initiative we’ll begin to transition all our black SKUs to Recycled Black”, says Lara-Joy Balzer. Proof works with recycled aluminium. The accessory brand gogglesoc is launching an adjustable eyewear retainer made of recycled plastic bottles. “One plastic bottle makes two sunnystrings!”, says Daisy Adamson.

Aphex and Bajio produce their entire collections with bio-based frames. Bollé’s new Micro Edge has a 100% bio-based frame, and their Arcadia and Cerber feature a 45% of this material. Dragon and Spektrum offer plant-based resin sunglasses, made from castor oil beans. Smith, Zeal and Oakley have developed their own castor oil-based resin called Evolve, Z-Resin, and BiO Matter respectively. Melon is moving to Bio Grilamid. Proof uses biodegradable cotton-based acetates. Quiksilver and Red Bull Spect choose Rilsan G850. Raen and I-Sea also introduce bio-acetates to their range. Wave and Proof work with different types of wood. Bajio offers glass lenses, a material that is 100% recyclable and hence has an unlimited life.

**RETAILER SUPPORT**

Such a technologically rich category requires constant training of sales professionals. Adidas makes sure their sales reps have all the detailed information about their technical attributes. Quiksilver also organises clinics for their dedicated sales force. Raen trains their sales rep on every new material they incorporate to the range. Smith places a lot of importance on shop staff training. They use ENDVR to incentivise and educate store employees. Bajio also uses this sales tool.

POP materials are important. Aphex offers custom-made graphics for their POP units. Bajio is producing new POP displays. Raen has a combined POP counter card and bullet point selling tool for staff. Wave’s POP display shows the USP of the recycled fishing net sunglasses. They also offer counter displays made of bamboo. Zeal has a very robust POP programme. Smith has added significant resources to this division to support POP opportunities. Most other brands offer POP fixtures too. Online presence is important to support stores in their own communities, through websites and social media. Hobie and Red Bull Spect save some budget for trade shows. No brands report stock or logistic issues. Stores can expect timely deliveries and enough at-once inventory to keep satisfying their customers’ needs without interruption. 📍

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**HIGHLIGHTS**

- 1 Sunglasses worn all year round.
- 2 Shields and wraparound fits popular.
- 3 Traditional styles get technical attributes.
- 4 Proprietary lens technologies.
- 5 Widespread use of sustainable materials.

Traditional styles remain strong. Dirty Dog updates their Vendetta wayfarer and Raccoon round styles with a rubber lining in the nose and inside the arms. They have a very lightweight aviator shape called Maverick. Hobie’s Woody Sport is a Cali classic design but sportier. It has co-moulded rubber temples and nose pad and a lightweight smaller round frame. They also offer the best-selling aviator styles Broad and Loma. Quiksilver offers their vintage Slash with various technologies. Roxy proposes the Mia, a classic and urban rounded shape with keyhole. Raen offers the Remmy retro round shape in two sizes, an oversized 52 for women and a 49 more suitable for men. Smith’s Lowdown2 is a simple, sophisticated, and timeless frame. Zeal adds performance attributes such as Z-Lite ultralight frames and ProFlex rubber to their classic shapes. Wave reworks traditional shapes with modern details. “A bit of retro with modern touches makes for a good mix”, says Carsten Raphael. Their aviator Cotillo has a distinctive laminated frame made of ebony, white ice, and maple birch. The temples come with rose gold metal and amber acetate endings. Oakley has resurrected their 80s iconic Frogskins.

“With this initiative we’ll begin to transition all our black SKUs to Recycled Black”

Lara-Joy Balzer, Raen

Proof offers the Rainer, a bold oversized frame with minimalist design and laser-etched interior nose bridge detail. CHPO’s interpretation of oversized is the Henrik, a very lightweight frame perfect for outdoor activity. Bollé counts two oversized styles in their recent releases, the Arcadia and the Euphoria. The Arcadia is a square navigator equipped with Thermogrip® temple tops and nose pads, and snap hinges.

There are other interesting shapes outside the above categories. Dragon follows the success of the Waverly adding options to their female range. The Tarran is a vintage inspired geometric shape and the Tempest is a flat top that could be unisex. Roxy introduced the Faye, a 4-base rectangular acetate style. Quiksilver’s flat styles are the best-selling Eliminator and Ferris. Their Warlock square shape with a low bridge and inside rubber pads is also strong. Hilx is launching a new 2-in-1 sunglasses + goggles called Samurai. Proof offers a wooden interpretation of the trapezoidal silhouette, the Ontario, with variations of wood grain and steel spring-loaded hinges. Their Grove model combines wood with a double bar metal bridge. Raen’s Rune has distinctive angles and sculptural touches around the keyhole bridge and temples. Wave’s Aik is their unisex bestseller, made with walnut burl laminated.

**LENSES**

Lenses concentrate the big bulk of technological innovation. The main goal is to enhance contrast and adaptability to light conditions. Many brands develop their own proprietary technology. Anon’s Perceive Polarised lenses



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Adidas - 05L



Adidas - 21Z



Adidas - 91Z



Anon - Opportunist



Anon - Strategist



Anon - Promoter



Aphex - XTR 2



Aphex - Konka



Aphex - Dunk



Bolle - Arcadia



Bolle - Cerber



Bolle - Phantom



Dirty Dog - Maverick



Dirty Dog - Rackateer



Dirty Dog - Shadow



Dragon - The Box



Dragon - Tarran



Dragon - Tempest



Hilx - New Blood



Hilx - Revok



Hilx - Savage



I-Sea - Carly Hunter



I-Sea - El Morro



I-Sea - Greyson



Johnny Fly - Apache



Johnny Fly - Fortune



Johnny Fly - JLA Forge



Oakley - Sutro



Oakley - Holbrook



Oakley - Hydra





Panda - Conquer



Panda - Fixed Sport



Panda - Multi Sport



Proof - Grove



Proof - Ontario



Proof - Rainier



Quiksilver - eqyey03195



Quiksilver - eqyey03205



Quiksilver - eqyey03208



Raen - Nikol



Raen - Remmy



Raen - Rune



Red Bull Spect - Tain 001



Red Bull Spect - Tain 002



Red Bull Spect - Till 002



Roxy - erjey03120



Roxy - erjey03129



Roxy - erjey03134



Spektrum - Kali



Spektrum - Lom



Spektrum - Raw



Spy - Cedros



Spy - Cyrus



Spy - Saxony



Von Zipper - Juke



Von Zipper - Morse



Von Zipper - Stax



Von Zipper - Juke



Von Zipper - Morse



Von Zipper - Stax



Zeal - Northwind



Zeal - Paonia



Zeal - Fillmore



Gogglesoc - Aurora Sunnystring



Gogglesoc - Lemons Sunnystring



Gogglesoc - Tie Dye Sunnystring

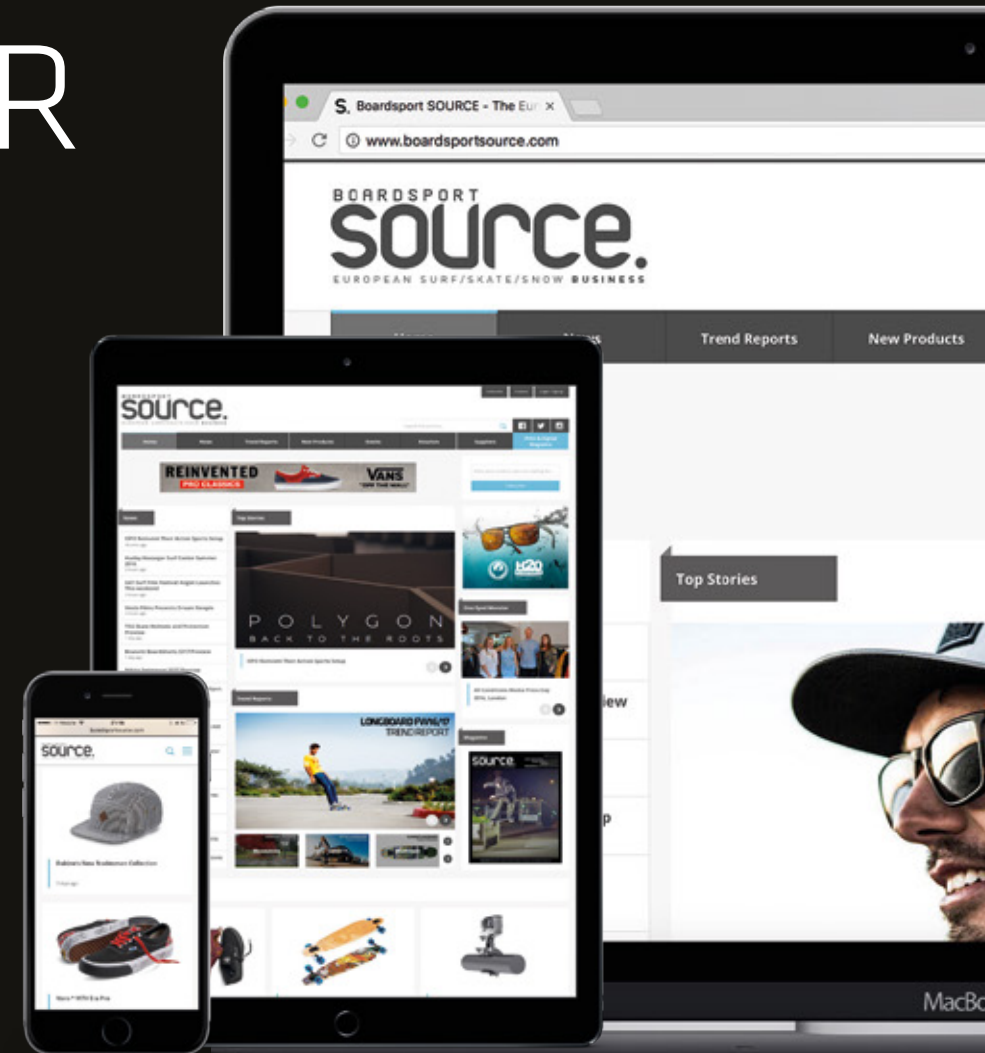
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## RETAIL BUYER'S GUIDE

## LONGBOARDS 2023

Longboarding seems to be thriving this year, with many opting for skating as an alternative mode of transport. Eco-Consciousness is gaining pace and with it, the longboard uptake is growing.

We take a look at what endemic brands are doing throughout 2023 with the Source Longboard Retail Buyer's Guide with **Dave Morgan**.



## MARKET

Whilst trying my hardest to write any of these articles without still mentioning the dreaded pandemic of yesteryear, it's easier said than done. The knock-on effects of Covid are still affecting brands and businesses across the globe, be it through saturation or overstocking issues. There does seem to be, however, a light at the end of the tunnel. Mario Sanson - VP at Sector 9 said: "The market is a little challenging at the moment. However we take solace in the fact that with 30 years of business we have seen these lulls and know that the business rebounds."

Benjamin Edwards - Global Marketing Manager at Arbor said "Even with last year's market & economic changes we are confident skateboarding will bounce back. We've only scratched the surface & we look forward to seeing our industry and community reach new heights." Pablo Castro - International Sales Director at Loaded said "We are clearly seeing continued growth in longboard participation in general - purchasing may be down but engagement is strong." The uptake of any physical social activity is so important, and this is something that longboards and skating in general cater to very well. Tim Mackey - General Manager at DB & Rayne Longboards said: "We have seen an increase in demand for our longboards, particularly among younger generations who are looking for ways to stay active and engaged with their communities. We want to show people the best way to connect to your community is by skating through it."

"We are clearly seeing continues growth in longboard participation in general - purchasing may be down but engagement is strong."

Pablo Castro, Loaded

In regards to the aforementioned overstock situation - it's clearly still a pressing matter, however not necessarily with longboards themselves. Pablo from Loaded said "Most brands, distributors and shops seem to have an excess of product, especially traditional skate, which is slowing down general purchasing, however, high quality existing product and new innovative product are still driving sales." Like with all hard goods after the pandemic, the over-saturation of stock was initially thought to be a godsend, however the newfound demand dropped and the supply seemed to continue, so there is now a backlog of completes and hardware that just won't shift. Dave Price - Sales Manager at Landyachtz added that "Inflation and fears of recession seem to be dissipating as things stabilise, but that hasn't yet turned into boards going out the door." Dave Gitlin - Creative Director of Hardgoods at Globe said positively however that "What's encouraging is that despite the magnitude of clearance stock that needs to be waded through out in the market, we're still being asked

to see what's new and are getting pre-book orders for our more interesting product to come."

## THEMES AND FOCUS

On a lighter note, brands are going to be putting out some really great stuff in the coming year. Dave from Landyachtz said their main goal for 2023 is "Events, Events and Events. With over two years of no real events, the desire for people to skate in groups with others, wither it be a casual cruise by the beach or a downhill race, is strong." Madrid Skateboards will be putting their main focus on local manufacturing, as CEO Alex Breton said "we will be mainly focusing everything being made here in the U.S.A. in our Huntington Beach factory." Loaded & Orangatang Wheels will be innovating as ever, "launching a few new products that will hopefully help expand skateboarding as fun and functional transportation vehicles" as Pablo explained. The use of longboards for transportation has introduced a completely new bracket for brands. Tim from Rayne said "With the rise of alternative transportation options, such as electric scooters and bikes, many individuals are turning to longboards as a fun, eco-friendly way to get around." Mindless are keeping true to their original products and instead "spending the time rebuilding our website and exploring new sales avenues" as Mindless' CEO Andy King explained.

Globe will be proudly rolling out a special collaboration with the Eames Office, extending the legacy of Charles and Ray Eames. Dave from Globe said "This specialty project we've undertaken celebrates the incredible influence that the pioneers of "Mid-Century American Modern" style continues to have over art, décor, furnishings, product and design. We're releasing boards that tell the story of their various achievements and relevance to our audience through design details." Collaborations of this ilk provide a refreshing approach to board graphics and details, that's for sure. Miller Division's Product Manager Ivan Garcia Arozamena explained their focus for the year was having a little bit of everything in focus: "We like variety in both design and shapes, as long as it does not affect the functionality of the skate. It is very important to us that all aspects of functionality and quality are right for each model."

## SHAPES, SIZES AND NEW TECHNOLOGY

Shapes and sizes are ever changing in the boardsport world, and it seems like the smaller shapes are favoured this year. Tim from DB & Rayne said "we are seeing a trend towards more compact, lightweight longboards that are easy to carry and manoeuvre in urban environments."

The practicality of a shorter board opens up more doorways, especially for commuters and that quick roll to the shop. Dave from Globe noticed "a natural customer progression from simpler boards like everyday cruisers and pintail longboards to fuller shapes with a little more concave and usable features." Dancers and downhill shapes are still happening, as Pablo of Loaded noted:

"With the rise of alternative transportation options, such as electric scooters and bikes, many individuals are turning to longboards as a fun, eco-friendly way to get around." Tim Mackey, Rayne

"We see Downhill and Long Distance Pumping having a resurgence. We also see Dancing continue to thrive." Alex from Madrid did notice however that "downhill and freeride decks are getting narrower and shorter." Ivan from Miller Division disagrees with the downhill and dancer resurgence however, saying "Undoubtedly the trend is very clear towards surfskate. The longboard has taken a back seat and its modalities such as dancing or freeride/ downhill are practiced by a minority."

Technology within longboarding is forever evolving, and with it comes new hardware. With an increase in electric skateboards, we were curious to find out what traditional longboard brands thought of the new commuting craze. Alex from Madrid said "It's definitely a positive - It's giving awareness to the transportation aspect of skateboarding" Andy from Mindless agreed, saying "it brings more people into the the joy of riding boards." Whilst some brands are introducing new engineering styles for their parts,



"More than in technology (how little you can change the materials of the components ... wood, aluminium, urethane...) we introduce important details like extra soft bushings for experienced riders or lightweight riders and this year also extra flat washers for the bushings."

## SUSTAINABILITY

Arbor are proud of their strong environmental approach and support riders and artists who share this view. Benjamin from Arbor said "This mindful, more collective style ensures the brand stays true to its values and functions as a cohesive ecosystem." Tim from DB & Rayne noted that "Sustainability is a core focus for DB Longboards, both this year and in the years to come." Brands are constantly implementing measures to reduce their environmental impact. DB for example, will be "reducing waste in our manufacturing processes, and partnering with organisations that promote sustainability and environmental stewardship" as Tim explained. Sector 9 "have a sustainable resin with one of our sister brands and would love to use that in the future as well - Super Sap" as Mario at Sector 9 said. Globe have always had a primary focus on their sustainable approach to production and this year is no different. Dave at Globe proudly said "As one of the world's largest manufacturers of premium skateboards, we use a significant amount of wood in our production. In order to off-set the timber we use, we plant 3 trees through our partnership with the National Forest Foundation for every one used at our factory."

2023 is already looking like one for the books as we continue the comeback to reality after the pandemic. Yes, there are still offset issues regarding stock and such, but it sounds like brands and distributions are really striving to rectify these and focus on returning functionality and flow. ☺

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## HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Events are back 110%
- 2 Shorter, more compact boards
- 3 The overstock issues are being resolved.
- 4 Replanting operations are the way forward.
- 5 Longboard demand is up amongst the youth!





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RETAIL BUYER'S GUIDE

**SUP 2023**

Summer is coming, do you have any 2022's SUPs left in the shop? We explain how this is both good and bad news. Core brands have anticipated this situation and offer solutions to help you get back on track. By David Bianic

retail buyer's guide



JOBE

I start with an 's' and everyone is talking about me. Who can I be? "SUP"? Close, I am "stock". And yes, everyone in the boardsports sector has this word on their lips in 2023 after a stratospheric rise in 2020-2022 followed by a sudden stop. So should we be sounding the alarm and throwing the life rafts overboard? "Similar to the rest of the industry, SIC is experiencing overstock from late factory deliveries due to lagging production caused by COVID," says Casi Rynkowski, Global Brand Manager, adding that "market saturation in specific categories like inflatables has caused stock levels to be higher than normal." At NSP, International Sales Manager Sander Blauw recalls that 2022 started off as a strong year, before the war in Ukraine and inflation took their toll: "By May things have definitely started to cool down into the new reality with slower sell through and warehouses remaining quiet and well stocked when they are traditionally emptying out." He also says that he is pleased to see rigid boards back on the up, more so than in 2018 and 2019, which suggests people are looking to make sportier investments. Similarly, lower-end models suffered more, says Seb Thursby, from Aquaglide's Customer Service Department, while "high end boats above £1000 RRP are selling better in 2022 than even 2021".

Affected like everyone else, Spinera are keeping a philosophical outlook: Sven Josten assures us that with their surplus stock level, they are in a position to meet any orders that come their way in 2023. The same positive attitude can be found at Starboard, whose 2024 Board Meeting has just finished up in Lanzarote, where

"High end boats above £1000 RRP are selling better in 2022 than even 2021"

Seb Thursby, Aquaglide

distribution partners appeared optimistic about the upcoming 2023 season.

Before moving on to the products, here's a quick look at prices. At Glory Boards, the situation is clear, forced to increase prices by 8%, while Triptix are talking about +5%, as are Tahe.

Many say they have reduced their margins to keep prices down, helped by container prices returning to normal, says Pleuni Holthausen of Moai Boards. For a premium brand like SIPA Boards, the rise in public prices is not seen as a threat, says Miha Raušl, Marketing Manager, because their customers are in "the top 5% earners". This increase is not totally consistent though, reminds Sven Josten from Spinera, while some models have seen their price increase, others are actually lower than last year. It's the same principle at Starboard, highlighting rigid composite models, where the cost of carbon fibre, for example, has increased.





INDIANA

“Composite boards are a fixture and not only reserved for the experienced rider.” Michi Schweiger, Naish

twin-fin, sold with a five-piece carbon paddle and a premium Titan II pump.

Finally, a trend towards high-end graphics is reemerging and brands like Anomy are spearheading this, working with Fresco Tech, a high-pressure heat transfer process: “It enables high-resolution prints with an endless range of colours and textures and ensures the intensity of colours to withstand over time.” explains Mariona Ruz.

**ISUP '23: TOURING**

From a pure leisure activity, SUP becomes a real sport when a rider opts for a touring model. This is an interesting segment because the importance of price fades as technical properties take centre stage. The most popular size is still 12'6", like the Roam from Aquaglide, made to go fast and long due to its Universal Mounts and Molle Plates (attachment points), which allow you to attach anything and everything. Less racy but more versatile, the Okeanos Air 12'6" from SIC Maui has an advantage for the wanna-be waterman, namely a pretty straight outline and a wide tail that allow for easy downwinds, which is one of the unique sensations that SUP provides as a sport. Just as sporty, the 12'6" Alpha Fusion from Sroka is relatively narrow (28") and very light (8 kg), providing good speed. Light doesn't mean fragile though, this model is made in Fusion construction with three layers of PVC on the rails, a Sroka exclusive.

For smaller riders, however, these “big boards” can be intimidating and some brands are offering a “light” version of their touring iSUP, such as the 12" Voyager MSL from Red Paddle Co, which is only 4.7" (120mm) thick, thanks to a Rocker Stiffening System that stiffens the board. The same idea is used by Jobe with the new 11' Sena, which is 4.75" thick. “The Sena belongs to our Aero Series which gives you a premium SUP experience for a friendly price.”, explains Martijn van Gool. And indeed, apart from the stringer, it's the same technologies as their Premium and Elite ranges. And for lighter riders, the kids, Vast offers an Astro 8'6" at a super attractive price, but the construction does not compromise on safety, guarantees Tom Lazarus. RRD are also taking care of our little ones through their Air Evo KID Convertible, an 8'7" x 30" for 110 litres, which can be transformed into a SUP windsurf (mast base and extra centre fin), as well as having a safety kit (15l float) to reassure mum and dad.

On the other side, stronger riders are not forgotten about with



STARBOARD

Price is not the only criterion of choice for retailers though, there's also sales conditions and Indiana's Commercial Director Niki Dietrich confirms that these will not change in 2023, i.e. volume discounts, transportation costs and payment terms.

Finally, we asked whether the brands would be able to deliver their 2023 ranges on time this spring, even though many retailers are still struggling to sell 2022 models. The short answer is yes. All brands have received their stock and are ready to deliver, if they haven't already.

**ISUP '23: ALL-ROUND**

Whether you're a beginner, a weekend warrior or looking to rent, you'll find that this simple, accessible design is still top of the pops. It is also the most fiercely-fought price category and for the retailer relying on a (real) SUP brand, it's all about stressing the added value on the basic looking models. Construction is therefore a key argument for specialised shops, take Jobe Sports for example who employ X-Dropstitch on their all-round models (Yarra, Yama, Mira, Loa), with a stringer on top- an assurance of quality and light weight. STX are also banking on their FXL technology, a fusion type construction in woven, double-layer dropstitch. Lighter and stiffer, this provides nothing but benefits.

Dual chamber inflatables also have convincing sales arguments, for both safety and increased rigidity. Starboard's iGO range lives up to this design brief, on both their Zen and Deluxe constructions. The brand are also proud of their welded rail technology (anti-leak) and can boast about their record product return rate: two boards out of a thousand sold. All-rounders don't necessarily have to be low-end, as is the case for Tripstix's 10' Minke. At almost 1700 euros, this iSUP offers unique technology in its field, TX VaccuAir, which is a multi-chamber construction (two chambers for eight tubes in total) with granules, which means the shape of the board can be highly refined on its extremities, like on a rigid board.

Having become a sub-category amongst the all-rounders, the so-called compact models are growing in popularity after Red Paddle Co launched them in 2018. To celebrate fifteen years of existence, the English brand are launching a Compact 8'10" in 2023 with solid advantages: their proven MSL PACT construction to start with, as well as its highly tapered, really surfy outline with a pintail and a

“The Sena belongs to our Aero Series which gives you a premium SUP experience for a friendly price.”

Martijn van Gool, Jobe Sports

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NAISH

“Yes it is worth stocking them [hardboards] for retailers” Jacques Freydrich, Tahe

JWing and JFoil, you will experience the thrilling feeling of floating above the level of water”, boasts Sales Manager Federico. STX are also launching iFoil models for beginners to wing and foil. In 5’10” or 6’4”, they are offering a very compact package that is very appealing for lugging around your gear. For those who prefer sailing to wings, their iWindsurf comes in four sizes (250 to 285 cm) and offers a wide range of products, whether for newbies or salty sea dogs. Although identified as a premium brand in the foil world, Slingshot are playing the popularity card with their Wing Raiders XL (100, 120 and 150 l.), “great for SUP Foiling and winging with their mid-board foil placement and short nose that minimises swing weight and maximises pumping performance.”, explains Wyatt Miller, Wind/Wing Brand Manager. The conviction that foil and wing-SUP should be accessible is also a driving force at Mistral, assures Steve West: “there needs to be a transitory solution whereby the skills of using a wing can be learnt without needing a foil”. And this is the exact concept behind their Sunburst 10’5”, an interdisciplinary board, which allows you to experience the sensation of the wind, wing in hand, and of course wingsurfing thanks to two small lateral fins, but it remains an SUP accessible to the whole family for classic use.

One of the widest line-ups of inflatable foilboards comes from Indiana, with a plethora of models from 4’1” to 6’4”, completed by one of their best-sellers, the 10’6” Wind & Wing, with its two extra lateral fins in the middle of the board for wingsurfing, says Niki Dietrich. As for Tripstix, the brand are announcing the development of a foilboard with ClustAir construction, very promising. In this category, Starboard have a strong case with their Air Foil: the patented foil attachment system is not located under the board but on the deck, only 1.5 cm from the feet, providing unequalled responsiveness. A real plus.

As is often the case in the foil segment, and especially with inflatables, it’s all about packages. Sroka have put forward two packages, Air 6’4” and Sky Rider 5’4”, both sold with the Classic foil and its 1750 front wing.

**RIGID SUP ‘23: UNDEAD, BUT ALIVE!**  
Like zombies, you should not write off rigid SUPs too soon. The

“beefed up” boards like the Stowaway XL 10’10” from Tiki Surf, a big 350-litre baby. To inflate such a volume, we recommend investing in an electric pump like the new GE 22 Capri from Scoprega (Bravo), whose strong point is its silence, less than 75 dB, without compromising on inflation capacity: 170 l/min, up to 1.25 bar (18.1 psi). Powered by a lithium battery, this Capri can inflate three 265-litre SUPs on a single charge.

**ISUP ‘23: KAYAKING AND FISHING**

A number of all-round and touring models allow you to attach a seat using D-rings, like the Trend T1 (in hot pink!) from JBay.Zone, or the 11’ Alpaka from Swiss newcomers Mint Lama. Tahe’s SUP-Yak is also proving to be a real hit, maybe because it has the option of attaching two (elevated) seats onto a single 10’6”, carrying up to 135kg. Other brands are going deeper into this SUP/Kayak hybridisation. This is the case for BOTE with their 12’4” Rackham Aero, which can be transformed into... an SUP pedalo! This removable APEX Pedal Drive system frees up your arms for fishing, while their Magnepod magnetic attachment system keeps lots of different items close to hand and secure.

Aquaglide are also big believers in the potential of SUP fishing, highlighting the Blackfoot Angler, an 11-foot, 36-inch wide board with a really rectangular outline that inspires stability at first glance. The brand have their own Molle mounting system, mentioned earlier, and (separately) sells a real raised seat with aluminium frame.

**ISUP ‘23: WIND & WING & FOIL**

These two-in-one inflatables (and more if needed) are enjoying a real spike in interest, sparked off first by rigid multipurpose models. JBay.Zone are making moves with their WJ Comet: “Together with

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RED PADDLE

market has shrunk to a trickle, but there are still enthusiasts, and not just among the elite. The HIT Cruiser from NSP might not be new but it's a safe bet. Inexpensive and rock solid, this board was originally designed for hotels, resorts, schools and rentals, says Sander Blauw, before it became popular with families and "private" use! Among its hidden treasures, an M8 connector that allows you to mount a mast base for recreational windsurfing and a hole in the nose so that renters can put an anti-theft chain through it. It's the same deal for the Tahe Beach Cross (10' or 11') in Tough-Tec

Almost 75% of the stands are already booked for the Paddle Sports Show 2023 in Strasbourg, despite the area being 15% larger than in Lyon.

construction with its ultra solid polyethylene cover for withstanding impacts.

Naish are also still enjoying great success with their rigids in 2023: "Composite boards are a fixture and not only reserved for the experienced rider" says Product Manager Michi Schweiger, "I would call them essential for any SUP rider who has the means to store them/get them around". Their Nalu 10'9" GTW, a classic longboard with an iconic wood veneer, and the Mana GS 10", an all-around cruiser, remain popular boards and affordable alternatives to inflatables. The same wood effect can be found at FatStick, whose Bamboo Bullet hasn't aged a day over the years and is now available in a high-performance carbon version.

Among the micro-trends in rigids, downwind Foil SUP is taking off, confirms Andy Wirtz from Norden- a 100% composite brand who are working on a design of this kind, alongside their existing Foil SUP. Others have already done so, like Indiana with their Downwind SUP Foil in 8'4" and 7'6", a very interesting design with a longboard, surf-like outline, but a 100% downwind hull.

While it's true that rigids tend to specialise in specific uses, there are still some "Swiss Army knife" models like the Hover SUP from Naish, a four-in-one crossover board: SUP/Foil SUP/Wind Foil/Wing-Surf.

And if your shop lacks the space for rigid boards, brands like Indiana offer drop-shipping solutions, "which is reducing the warehouse/capital risk for the shops and helps us all to sell more hardboards," says Niki Dietrich. On the other hand, their size is also an indirect advantage for shops, says Jacques Freydrich of Tahe, because transporting them individually is still tricky and expensive, compared to good old-fashioned shop pick-up. So "Yes it is worth stocking them [hardboards] for retailers" concludes Jacques.

**STRASBOURG 2023**

After two editions, goodbye Lyon, hello Strasbourg. This new location for the Paddle Sports Show (P2S) in 2023 will be a live opportunity to get a gauge on the market at the end of the summer season and the dates are the same, from 27 to 29 September. Why Alsace? First of all, its proximity to the northern European markets, including Germany, attracts more stallholders - nearly 75% of the spaces are already booked - and the surface area is 15% larger than in Lyon. This more central position on the continent also means smaller journeys for both exhibitors and visitors alike. New, but all the better for it, P2S is opening up to foil sports, while retaining a strong focus on kayaking. In short, a show more in line with current trends in the sector. Will you be there? ☺

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**HIGHLIGHTS**

- 1 Overstocks
- 2 Prices frozen or slightly up
- 3 Premium constructions even in all-around iSUP
- 4 Kayaking & fishing
- 5 Foil/wing iSUP
- 6 Bulletproof Rigids



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WILCO ON THE RIGHT

## BIG WIG INTERVIEW WILCO PRINS, TOWN & COUNTRY SURF DESIGNS

Wilco Prins has been one of the key faces in the European surf industry for the past couple of decades. Since departing his roles as Rip Curl Europe's President CEO & President of EuroSIMA, Wilco has now (re)started Town & Country Surf Designs in Europe and they've hit the ground running. Securing the European license from global and with boards made by legendary European shapers Mikel Agote and Johnny Cabianca, T&C has three stores in SW France and is on a great upward trajectory. Big Wig Interview by SOURCE Editor Harry Mitchell Thompson.

### Wilco, tell us about your background in the surf industry and what led you to your current position with Town & Country.

I started working in the surf industry in 1996 and after finishing my studies I spent a great number of years at Rip Curl throughout several marketing, product, sales, and management positions. I had the great opportunity to work with the wetsuit product manager and to set up what we called the Core Division which focused on the brand's technical products and the position of the brand in core surf shops. From there, I was asked to lead the brand as their President CEO. During this time, we managed to strengthen the brand as the number 1 wetsuit brand and take the company from losing money in Europe to a nice level of profitability. It was a great mission we had, basically to keep the brand as clean as possible for a potential sale. In 2016, Fred Basse proposed me to succeed him as the president of EuroSIMA, which I accepted and did for three years.

In 2019, I was made redundant at Rip Curl and a few months later Rip Curl was sold. Over the years I noted several ideas, and it was the right time to action them. I partnered up with my good friend, Stephan Moretti and we decided to contact T&C. From the beginning there was a mutual good feeling between the T&C management team and us.

### Explain the details behind starting T&C in Europe.

The crew at T&C was confident with the experience we brought to the table. Stephan Moretti's experience in product and design and my experience were completed with the arrival of Arnaud Touix, who has a strong background in the sales of hardgoods.

We came to a licensee agreement with T&C for all products and started from there. We developed our own product range, as we wanted a strong focus on quality and sustainability. We work with the best materials and factories for all products. For example, all

Some people are excited to see the brand back in Europe, others are stoked to discover the brand. The kids, who discover T&C are attracted by a mix between a brand with real story, strong heritage and a fresh cool look on quality products.

our cotton is made of 100% non-brushed GOTS compact cotton. We believe sustainability goes through durability and therefore making qualitative products is key.

We were very privileged that Mikel Agote and Johnny Cabianca agreed to make our surfboards in Europe. Surfboards are bit of an addiction to me, so seeing the Glenn Pang and Tommy Tanaka boards come through with such an amazing shape and finish is very satisfying.

### How has the launch / re-launch been received in Europe? Can you explain key milestones and highlights.

The positive reaction to the return of T&C in Europe is beyond our expectations. There are two groups of people. Some people are excited to see the brand back in Europe, others are stoked to discover the brand. The kids, who discover T&C are attracted by a mix between a brand with real story, strong heritage and a fresh cool look on quality products.

A great job was done by the brothers Lacomare and their team on building up the brand throughout the years. From the outside, it feels like that the brand disappeared in Europe from one day to another and the legacy stayed alive in the people's minds.

The combination of pushy sales reps, shops that based their future purchasing on unrealistic Covid sales and the late arrival of outstanding orders created the high levels of inventory in surfboards and wetsuits we see today in a lot of stores.

Our first milestone was being able to open a first store in Hossegor and have product arrive with all the doom and gloom of Covid in 2020. Seeing the first people come in and buy the product was incredible. We had the opportunity to open a smaller store in the centre of Hossegor and from the beginning it was the highest turnover per m2, I have seen for a store in our space.

On a wholesale level, we tested with a few stores in 2021 and in 2022. The brand performed well in all countries and areas. We had similar results in France, Spain, the Canary Islands and in the UK. Going forward, we believe that we can be at a certain size, without chasing growth at any price.

### How successful has the Hossegor shop been in your relaunch? Is there a plan for more T&C retail in Europe?

The best way to showcase the positioning of T&C, as a premium core Hawaiian surf brand, was to open a flagship store. In 2020, we opened a tech store in Hossegor, in 2021 a seasonal store in the centre of Hossegor and in 2022 we opened the Biarritz store. These stores helped us to showcase the brand both on a DTC and on a B2B level. They are doing great on a business level, and they opened the door to several business opportunities.

We do not have any specific plans to open any other stores in areas where we can work properly with existing core surf shops. We look at a certain area and we prefer to work with established stores that have a core legacy in that area.

### How are you working across Europe with distributors and agents?

For the moment, we handle France and a part of Spain direct. Our most successful territory outside of France are the Canary Islands where we work with Seis, who owns Inprocess, as an agent. In the

The nomad working or home office model that became a norm during Covid is obviously very well adapted for surfing. As a surfer myself, you obviously hope that some of them will move onto activities such as fishing, but on a business level, it is good.

UK, we work with Cool by the Pool as our agents. Our distributor in Italy is Holy Sport and we started working with Boardtech in Greece this year as well.

We are currently looking for agents and distributors for other parts in Europe.

### How does today's surf market compare with the market before covid?

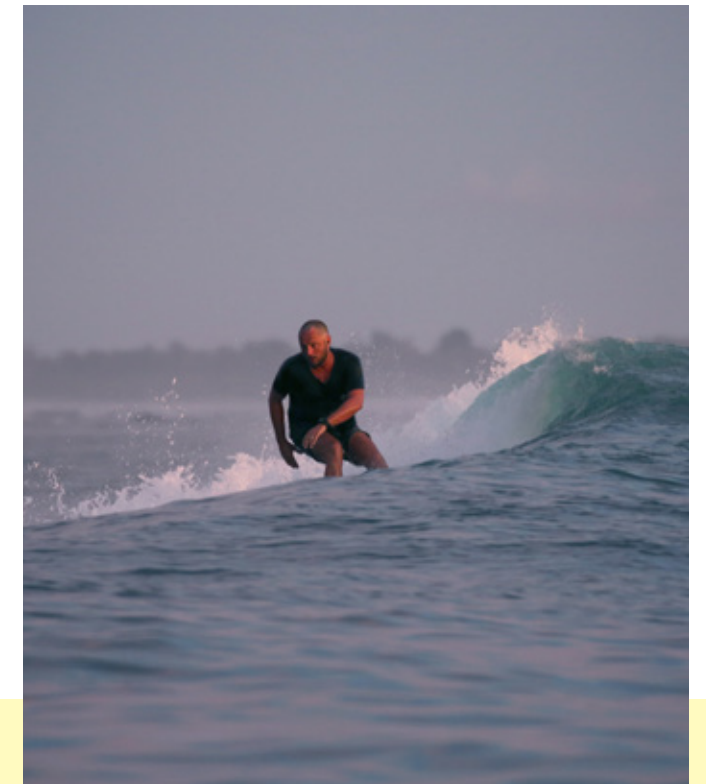
There are similarities and differences. People have a lot more surfboards in their shed now than before Covid. Stores are full of technical products. The combination of pushy sales reps, shops that based their future purchasing on unrealistic Covid sales and the late arrival of outstanding orders created the high levels of inventory in surfboards and wetsuits we see today in a lot of stores.

It is a fact that there are more people surfing. The nomad working or home office model that became a norm during Covid is obviously very well adapted for surfing. As a surfer myself, you obviously hope that some of them will move onto activities such as fishing, but on a business level, it is good.

As an overall trend, I believe people are happy to go back into store now they can, instead of buying things just online. Our online sales are great, but we see that most of our online sales come from areas where the brand has no physical presence yet.

### Which have been the best-selling product categories to date and what trends to do you foresee for this summer?

Boards are doing great, but we limit ourselves on the number of boards we want to bring to the market. Our key categories are tees,



fleece and boardshorts. We are sticking to our game plan, which is to bring back fun to surf wear through colours and graphics. We work with different artists such as Tortuga, Jon Horner or Kentaro Yoshida.

### What opportunities are on the market right now?

There is room for a premium brand with great heritage and strong USP's. In today's world of Instagram influencers and TikTok dancers it is a lot easier to create something that looks real, but without any real foundation or content. There are a lot of brands out there that benefit from the image of surfing, without contributing to the growth of surfing as a lifestyle and as a sport. T&C Surf Designs has invested in surfing since its creation in 1971.

T&C has a great legacy in surfing, but also in skateboarding since the Dogtown days. We believe we can have our spot on the map in both skateboarding and surfing.

We are currently in a market that faces a lot of uncertainties. Both on a macro level, but also within the industry itself. These uncertainties possibly weaken the industry, but at the same time they create opportunities for T&C Surf Designs.





# RIDICULOUSLY COMFORTABLE



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## RETAIL BUYER'S GUIDE HANGING SHOES 2023

Hanging shoes have earned their spot in the outfit of boardsports fans. Brands deliver styles that are meant to stay on our feet all day, wherever the day takes us. By Rocio Enriquez.

retail buyer's guide



FOAMLIFE

Flip-flops were an additional sole for your feet in transit from the parking lot to the break and back. That has changed; they are now part of our outfit. We like wearing them beyond the beach, and we need them to be as comfortable and good-looking as any other shoe. Brands have picked up on this demand. They propose attractive and versatile styles that you can wear from beach to bar to city and back. Women are offered sophisticated sandals with interesting colour stories. We find carefully selected, easy to wear colours for men. All this is delivered in constructions and materials that offer good levels of support and comfort. Sustainability is in demand too, and brands are keen to experiment with recycled and new bio-based materials.

### NEW FOR 2023

Women's collections get a lot of attention from designers. Flojos is introducing more hooded styles and expanding on their Mexican heritage look. This year, they introduce their Grace slider with Aztec inspired details. Havaianas releases the Square, an evolution of the Slim, in a variety of colours and prints. We'll find basic colour blocks, animal prints and sparkling glitter touches that make this style suitable for both city and beach. Reef adds some height to their Elevated range for women with 2.5" platforms. We'll see them on styles like the double strap Cushion Vista Hi, the cross over strap Cushion Bloom Hi, and the three-point strap Cushion Shea Hi. They are comfortable enough for all day wearing and stylish enough to wear them into the night. Foam Life releases some new colourways for their women's best-sellers Lixi-SC and Zikat-SC.

"The moulded range is water-friendly and versatile, but also offers all-day comfort"

Jenny Cooper, Reef

Many new releases focus on comfort and support. Foam Life has launched the men's Sully. It features a hemp canvas upper strap and RPET toe post and lining. It is also available as a slider. Indosole releases a collaboration with Hi Jack sandals in their Adventurer series. This comfortable and supportive double strap sandal can withstand the action from trail hiking, bike riding and other summer activities. Olukai's lightweight, versatile, and modern Ulele offers everything you love about your favourite sneakers, but in a sandal. Their Hula promises floating-on-air levels of comfort. Havaianas is introducing their new slide Stradi that features four horizontal straps for firm steps. The Reloaded is an ergonomic slider with a different shape. Its two adjustable fabric horizontal straps offer a better foot grip. Flojos is expanding on their closed cell Memex memory foam and yoga mat footbed offering. Their Grace model provides great support with an arch cookie and sturdy footbed. The TPR tread provides superior grip and traction on wet or dry surfaces. Their Waverunner for men also features a non-slip surface on the insole and outsole.





REEF

“By collecting defective sneaker parts from bigger brands, we are then able to process those down into a granule and add any colour” Kyle Parsons, Indosole

women’s footbeds. Men’s styles feature a textured footbed for non-slip grip, and a supportive anatomic contour for both in and out of the water.

**COLOURS AND PRINTS**

Most brands present a range of core solid colours and their own interpretation of bold and vibrant colours and prints. Havaianas varies from a mix of natural and calming tones to more vibrant ones that energise the user’s outfit. Indosole is adding some pop colours to their palette this season, like orange, red, lime green or indigo blue. “By collecting defective sneaker parts from bigger brands, we are then able to process those down into a granule and add any colour”, explains Kyle Parsons. Foam Life offers black, sand and latte brown for women, and black, stone grey, tan and olive for men, as core colours. They are introducing a darker Slate grey which they combine with tan and retro stripes in their men’s collection. For women, they offer some pastel colours like sage green, powder blue and dusty pink. They keep pushing their best-selling leopard print, but also introduce a marble print and a monochrome tropical print with pink apricot highlights. Flojos draws on their Mexican heritage to play with patterned uppers and serape prints. Reef highlights their vintage sunset and mushroom colours for men. For women, they propose subtle solid colours with pops of brighter ones. They also offer summery prints in their ladies’ range, such as smoothie stripe, hibiscus coral and palm fronds.

**RETAILER SUPPORT**

Appealing POP displays with ease of use and effective communication are crucial in this category. Reef commits to update their fixtures and layouts as needed. Flojos invests in best of class displays, custom slat wall shelving and hooks. Havaianas offers different types of displays to support small beach shops and bigger retailers equally. Indosole makes sure that their POP print materials and window placements tell their recycling story. They communicate on the recycled soles, their waterproof feature, the natural fibres they use and their contributions to BCorp and 1% for the Planet. Olukai is supplying new hangers and tags this year. The goal is to enable customers to self-serve and slip on the product easily. Foam Life offers a free-standing unit to any retailer that wants to stock them. The stand is clearly branded and shows key product features and sustainability aspects. This year, the stand is slightly slimmer, taking less floor space. It is designed so that all panels can be flat packed, to be transported to stores without risk of damage. It is also modular, allowing two standard stands to be joined together with a wider branded header, for those retailers who want to stock more options. Relationship with the clients is also key. Flojos has partnered with Elastic B2B to smooth the service process. Havaianas adopts an individual approach to create with each client the best in-store experience.

Stocks seem at good levels and brands are ready to deliver smoothly. Flojos reports 100% stock of Spring 2023 line, and a timely shipping of all pre-book orders. They also have plenty of at-once inventory. Reef has a healthy on-hand inventory and is delivering earlier than last year. Indosole ended 2022 with solid stock on their carry-on core colours and are ready to deliver new colours from March. Foam Life has secured an EU distribution centre to secure their customers in this region. They are now ready to ship from it, with carry over lines already available and new 2023 styles ready to be delivered for the Easter break. Havaianas is in a good position too, thanks to having anticipated their growth and buying cycle, and prioritising deliveries to key partners. ☺

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

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**HIGHLIGHTS**

- 1 Beach to bar versatility.
- 2 Focus on all-day comfort.
- 3 Supportive constructions for active lifestyles.
- 4 Recycled and bio-based materials.
- 5 Strong POP displays programmes.

Versatility offers added value. Olukai’s Tuahine and Puawe aim at all-day wearing, no matter the occasion. Indosole’s collaboration with Pable results in a super soft and stylish sandal that has the appearance of a high-end boutique piece. Reef expands on their moulded styles. “The moulded range is water-friendly and versatile, but also offers all-day comfort”, says Jenny Cooper. For men, they have the new Oasis Double Up. For women, they add the Water Vista Slide, the Court and the X Slide.

**MATERIALS AND CONSTRUCTION**

Sustainability is widespread. For Indosole, it is in their DNA. They use recycled tire soles, recycled sneaker soles, natural rubber, and recycled EVA footbeds. For straps, they choose ENVRO fibre straps or the new Pable 100% recycled textile straps. Foam Life’s full range is PVC free. They have now introduced RPET, hemp canvas and a vegan plant-based bio-leather into their collection. They have also

“All styles in our range feature a raised arch support, in flip flops and sliders” Karl Read, Foam Life

increased the use of natural cork and sugarcane EVA. We can find it now in their Lixi-SC and Zikat-SC for women, and their Mully Cork, Traa-SC, Rullen-SC and Sully for men. Reef also uses sugarcane EVA in the men’s and women’s styles. All their webbing straps, toe posts and liners are made of 100% recycled polyester. Their leather is from tanneries with certified good ratings for their low impact on the environment. Havaianas’ flip-flops are made from at least 40% reused material that gets reincorporated into the mix. They use their “Take Back” programme to collect old and broken flip-flops and turn them into reusable items. Great part of their production is done manually, with a zero-waste mentality.

Comfort guides construction. “All styles in our range feature a raised arch support, in flip-flops and sliders”, says Karl Read from Foam Life. Olukai gives their Hila style puffy rolled straps that hug your feet. Flojos gives a soft inner mesh lining to the faux leather strap of the Waverunner. The TPR outsole has a custom tread pattern that disperses water out from the bottom of the sandal. Reef aims for a blend of cushion and durability with espadrille inspired details for

L I V E L E S S O R D I N A R Y



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# RETAIL BUYER'S GUIDE

## MENS UNDERWEAR 2023

A revised concept of masculinity is driving demands for high quality, functional, and good-looking underwear. By Rocio Enriquez.



extremely durable”, says Thomas ten Broek. They also work with cotton modal, microfibre and bamboo. Most brands implement sustainable options. Bn3th and Icebreaker use Tencel™, made from sustainably sourced wood. Bn3th uses EcoDry fabric, made from 100% recycled materials. Icebreaker offers Merino wool, avoiding petro-chemical yarns. Saxx uses recycled polyester and Lenzing™ EcoVero™ certified viscose. American Socks opts for a soft blend of organic cotton. Sustainable practices transcend to production processes. Many brands cooperate with platforms that protect the environment. The elimination of plastic in packaging is widespread.

### LOOKS

Underwear is a canvas for artistic expression. No trends regulate what can be told through a boxer short. American Socks has summer prints with flowers, surfboards and pineapples, but also graphics inspired in the tattoo culture and urban art from the 90s. Bn3th presents new Hex patterns and bandana inspired prints. Stance offers wild florals, heritage stripes and geo motifs. Icebreaker combines their more playful prints with traditional ones, like stripes. Ethika elaborates them with depth; it takes some time looking at the illustration to decipher it. Muchacho Malo's runs two main themes. "Myths of Culture" has a strong artistic component, and "It's a man's world" features male animal prints.

Collaborations are widespread. Saxx features artists Geo Law and Rob Flowers. They have partnered with Testicular Cancer Foundation to create a special pair. It includes a graphic that shows individuals how to perform self-exams. Moskova collaborates with "Keep a Breast" foundation and Bugarski Surfobards. Ethika has a signature series with Valentino Rossi. They are also launching new styles designed by musicians Russ Millions, Rick Ross, and French Montana. Bn3th has a colourful collection with artist Madsteez and some surprises ready for the Jason Momoa collection. American Socks announces capsule collections in collaboration with artists.

### RETAILER SUPPORT

Good in-store presentation is the most helpful form of support. American Socks has a cardboard box that fits their displays and comes along with custom hangers. Bn3th has readily available POP and packaging. Ethika offers a mannequin with insert images to display the length of the product. Muchacho Malo supplies promotional cardboards and banners to tell the story behind the print. Moskova believes in impeccable service, fast turnaround on orders and at-once inventory availability. Bn3th improves their B2B user experience through their NuOrder platform.

Inflation, scarcity and logistics have been a challenge. Nevertheless, brands have secured timely pre-order deliveries and good levels of replenishing stock. ☺

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

- 1 Rising demand of quality and functional underwear
- 2 Plenty of construction technology
- 4 Statement graphics
- 5 Sustainable materials

Ishod Wair  
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# PROTECTING ATHLETES FOR FOUR DECADES



**ALOE UP**  
SUN AND SKIN CARE PRODUCTS

[www.aloeup.co.uk](http://www.aloeup.co.uk)

## RETAIL BUYER'S GUIDE **SUN CREAM 2023**

Sun screen is one of the most hype product categories in the boardsports industry today. All bands are pushing the envelope with their sustainability approach, doing their very best to deliver a product that harms the environment as little as possible, all while keeping the user shielded from the sun's harmful UV rays. Report by Anna Langer.



High performing and long-lasting protection is the pivotal feature you want in sunscreen for action sports and the main focus point of all brands presented here. "We want our customers to apply sunscreen and not have to think about it afterwards, that way they are enjoying their sport or activity," states Kjell Ellefson, Director of Marketing at Aloe Up Sun & Skin Care. Himaya are deeply rooted in action sports through their founder Stuart Knowles: "We get involved in the sports ourselves and help to promote them. With my own participation background from Olympics to instructing and guiding this provides a good background on how to target this market."

Suntribe team up with surf instructors to fine tune their products, SeventyOne Percent is created by surfers and Sun Bum "have an incredible team of distributors and reps throughout Europe that run local events, or partner with retailers on activations and engage with their local communities the same way Sun Bum has been doing it since the beginning. By bringing the fun, creating a brand presence, and educating on sun safety, we are able to drive sales at our local shops," says Jamie Shohat, Director of International Business.

### INGREDIENTS

When it comes to their ingredients, Aloe Up Sun & Skin Care "walk the fine line of natural and effective. Our products have what is called a non-water soluble emulsifier. This means that after the product is fully absorbed (15-20mins), if you sweat or get wet, the product isn't going to 'un-absorb' and run into your eyes," explains Kjell. Himaya's products are also especially easy to apply, as they use a water phase to create a

"By bringing the fun, creating a brand presence, and educating on sun safety, we are able to drive sales at our local shops" Jamie Shohat, SunBum

cream instead of a lotion: "This is why with non-nano zinc it rubs in transparent when correctly applied. We believe this is the best way to protect the user as 99% never apply enough sunscreen anyway and a lotion will exacerbate this behavioural issue even more," says Stuart.

With the knowledge in dermatological formulation acquired during four generations of pharmacists and following their philosophy "there are only two places you can't leave: your body and the planet", Nuura offer a high quality product that guarantees the highest levels of sun protection even in the most extreme conditions, while being completely respectful towards our health and the planet and is certified by the European Certification Bodies of Eco and Organic products.

Greenbush pair mineral filters that have a minimal impact on the environment with ingredients from organic agriculture and sport the "Bio Cosmos" certification by Ecocert. Sett Surf use 100% mineral UV filters (zinc oxide and titanium dioxide), Sun Bum's products are Vegan, Cruelty Free, Gluten Free, Paraben Free, Oxybenzone & Octinoxate free,



Oil Free, PABA Free and offer Broad Spectrum Protection. “Consumers today are looking for purpose driven brands that are intentional, clean and trustworthy which is what we embody as a brand. It is a top priority for us that we support our local independent shops, and we have been doing this since the beginning: showing up, educating on sun safety, supporting the community that is closest to them, and helping protect people from the harmful rays of the sun,” says Jamie.

**SUSTAINABILITY**

Since the hazards sun cream poses for reefs and other ocean habitants are widely and commonly known, environmentally friendly ingredients are already a staple in the action sports oriented producers. But of course there is a lot more a brand can do to lessen its impact. “Sustainability is at the core of everything we do. This starts with the ingredients - we exclusively use ingredients that are reef-safe and completely natural to make sure that our sunscreens don’t pollute the environment. In addition the majority of our packaging is completely plastic-free. And the sugar cane tubes we use have a positive carbon footprint!” says Karl Roos, Co-Founder of SunTribe.

“All of our products are made with organically grown Aloe Vera, are never tested on animals, are reef safe, biodegradable, and have recyclable packaging. We also offer a carbon offset program that allows our customers to offset their shipping emissions for a small fee, and we are currently redesigning our shipping materials and boxes to be 100% recyclable,” Kjell sums up Aloe’s efforts. Nuura conceive end-to-end sustainability/eco friendliness in their products, including all the ingredients, the manufacturing process, packaging materials and POS materials. “For packaging we use cardboard, aluminium and ‘I’m green-bioplastic’ which is made of renewable organic sugarcane; meaning that our packaging is biodegradable, reusable and/or recycled and recyclable.”

Sett Surf focus on recycling by partnering with Enval to fully recycle their pouches and tubes. Himaya don’t use tubes for packaging but HDPE, which is recycled everywhere in the world locally and uses less energy than aluminium. And since it’s a refillable system, the impact of their packaging is almost zero. “But we also offset our packaging by removing a bottle from the ocean for every bottle we sell. We then change this bottle back into diesel and give it to the fishermen who collect the plastic for use, so a circle offset system,” says Stuart. “We have also had social policies and CO2 offsetting for years, planting mangrove trees in Kenya (where I grew up) to protect the shoreline and fish and help sustainable fishing and biodiversity by employing locals.” SeventyOne donate 1% of their annual turnover to approved associations to preserve the future of our planet.

**ADDITIONAL BENEFITS**

By using organic sun cream, you won’t only protect yourself and your environment, but also nourish your largest organ, as almost all products offer additional skin care effects. Aloe Up Sun & Skin Care obviously use aloe vera, at least 35% or more. “This means our products are moisturizing your skin while protecting it. Also, aloe molecules are smaller than your skin pores, so our product absorbs quickly, is very sheer, light, and comfortable, and is hypoallergenic,” says Kjell. Also SunTribe advocate that their sunscreens not only protect you from the sun, but also gently moisturise and nourish your skin - without causing any irritation since they’re completely natural and free from allergens.

“We have also had social policies and CO2 offsetting for years, planting mangrove trees in Kenya (where I grew up) to protect the shoreline and fish and help sustainable fishing and biodiversity by employing locals.” Stuart Knowles, Himaya

Himaya enrich their products with seaweed and high alpine flower oils which help to retain moisture in the skin, especially when exposed to harsh environments for long periods. “Apart from sun protection, our formulas are enriched with a good amount of active ingredients that provide a good dose of skin care, such as: vitamin F, vitamin E, for additional sun protection while also having an antioxidant effect and helping to regenerate the skin. Shea butter, Carnauba wax and Sunflower oil, Aloe vera, which all come from organic farming, provide an anti-inflammatory, hydrating and protective effect” explain Nuura.

“There are only two places you can’t leave: your body and the planet.” Nuura



SunBum offer a moisturizing Glow SPF 30 Sunscreen Face Lotion that is made to provide daily hydration and UV protection from the sun while giving you a dewy, radiant glow all year-round. Made with antioxidant rich Kakadu Plume, a super fruit containing high levels of Vitamin C, to help combat free radicals and boost our skin’s natural luminosity. Their ultra-moisturizing SPF 15 Browning Lotion with Organic Coconut Oil, Kona Coffee extract and Aloe Vera is designed to optimize tanning results with Broad Spectrum protection during sun exposure. In addition to that, they also produce lip balm, after sun lotion and spray, and hair care products in the range that carry the same scent story as their original sunscreens and are very popular with repeat Sun Bum customers. Hence they offer a consumable product that everyone needs, can be sold year-round, and will drive sales through repeat customers that need a refill on sunscreen or that want to try the other categories we sell.

Greenbush also have a range of after-sun care products, including a nourishing oil, a moisturizing lotion, and a vegan solid soap. And they will launch a lip solar stick, which is a highly requested product, especially in the mountains.

“If you have sensitive skin, our mineral sunscreen won’t cause skin irritation which is common with chemical sunscreens,” says Sett Surf Managing Director Jane Belcher. “It won’t sink into the deeper layers of your skin and get into the blood stream like chemical UV filters can. We use nano so the sunscreen stays on top of your skin.” They also have an Anti-chafe rash cream called ACTIVE that not only prevents painful chafing for surfers, runners and cyclists (or anyone who suffers from chafing) but is soothing to the skin and promotes rapid skin repair if skin does chafe. ☺

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

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**HIGHLIGHTS**

- 1 recycled / plastic free packaging
- 2 moisturising
- 3 refillable

Trust The Bum®







## BIG WIG INTERVIEW ERIC BASCLE, Db

Db initially made a name for itself in the action sports luggage world when it launched in 2011 with innovative designs, allowing for easy of use and storage for those who carry a large board on the regular. Now in 2023 they've been through a re-brand and have continued their reputation as market leaders in design and function. We sat down with new CEO Eric Bascle to talk about their approach to brand, marketing and sales. Interview by Harry Mitchell Thompson, SOURCE Editor.

### Please tell us about your background and what lead you to your role at the company.

I have 25 something years experience in the FMCG industry, with half of it spent in the sport/outdoor business. After decades in very large corporations, I turned to more local-rooted ventures. Just before Db, I was with Black Crows - a Chamonix based ski-culture brand that went from local to global fame. I met Db in 2020 when I joined their Board of Directors; however, I already knew of them as both Db and Black Crows had been evolving in the same "ecosystem" for a while and shared a lot of the same ambassadors. Then, at the end of 2021, I was offered the CEO role and took it.

### From the outside looking in, DB has had quite a marketing revamp over the past couple of years, can you tell us about this please.

Well, it's not only marketing, the whole company has changed. On the brand side, yes, we've made significant changes and investment so we can grow globally whilst becoming relevant in key locales around the world. There's been a tangible shift of brand name - a big change that's been driven by the people behind the scenes pushing the brand forward. We've also tried to shift from a brand digitally broadcasting from one person's channels to more of a community approach.

The event we just held in Shoreditch, London with Chris Burkard, was the perfect example of the 'new' Db. In partnership with a trusted friend of the brand, Matt Barr from Looking Sideways, we had retailers and media in attendance from snow, travel and outdoors and it felt like a leap in the direction of travel we're taking. On the product side we've gone from starting in snow travel in 2011 to, in 2021, debuting the new standard in surf luggage. Then, in 2022, we launched a new range of award-winning travel luggage; the Ramverk. Behind the scenes we've also ramped up our sales teams with many significant hires to ensure we have the right people who

We pride ourselves on the quality of people we're hiring, the unique workplace we're providing and the trust and empowerment we give all our teams. We have to do it this way as we've gone from around 20 people to over 75 within 3 years!

understand the brand we're building. Operationally, we had to get a handle on the distribution. It's one thing to build a cool brand and create desire, it's quite another to fulfill it and handle this side professionally.

### What is the brand's USP?

Db is a Scandinavian outdoor brand enabling meaningful journeys through award-winning design. Ultimately we believe that if people go out into the world they'll come back better people. This encourages empathy, understanding and curiosity and we're here for those journeys. It's more than just a USP, we are talking about strong beliefs and deep values here.

### Where is the company headquartered and how are your products distributed around the globe?

We have two main hubs. Oslo is where the Product and Operations teams sit, then Stockholm is where many of the Creative and Commercial teams are based. We do have a fairly fluid working structure though with smaller hubs in Chamonix, Ericeira, Innsbruck & Denver. These are smaller teams but they are essential labs to maintain a deep understanding of what the local communities do and need. Distribution-wise we also have agents in many key European markets and distributors in the US, Japan and China. We pride ourselves on the quality of people we're hiring, the unique

The application of our broad principles might differ between Oslo, Paris, London and say Denver, but the common thread is that it always starts with a strong wholesale platform. To put it more simply; we love working with wholesale partners.

workplace we're providing and the trust and empowerment we give all our teams. We have to do it this way as we've gone from around 20 people to over 75 within 3 years!

### You have a busy product launch schedule ahead, please could we have some details?

Well, first of all we're working around the clock to meet the demand of the Ramverk Pro Luggage line so that's priority number 1, then we will introduce a segmented travel offer including more luggage with a funkier, poppier touch. We will also launch a new Duffel line to help us meet the market where it is, with essential pieces that truly do the job as journey bags, not turning our consumers into brand reps carrying a giant logo on their shoulder. As we look at the sports segments, we just dropped a Mid-Length Surfboard bag after 2 years of having customers ask for one. Looking at our Snow sector this fall we have a couple of new pieces including a Vest we've been working on with Sage Kotsenburg. One community that has long been underserved in terms of travel has been Skate, and so with a couple of key hires in place this summer and fall we will be entering the market.

Quite busy indeed...

### Tell us how you are working with wholesale versus your own e-commerce platform to achieve harmony.

I like the way you phrase your question: "finding harmony". This is exactly as we see it here at Db. I have always been suspicious of theories which say that DTC is the future of B2B. I don't see the point in antagonizing complementary channels. Our future is in a good balance. Each brand has their own equilibrium and ours is in some sort of 50/50 combination however, this isn't just to do with an arithmetic average for the number of units sold, it has to do with

In terms of numbers, until 2020 we were stronger in DTC sales but with the various changes in both customer acquisition and supply chain we see that a good combination is the best way forward.

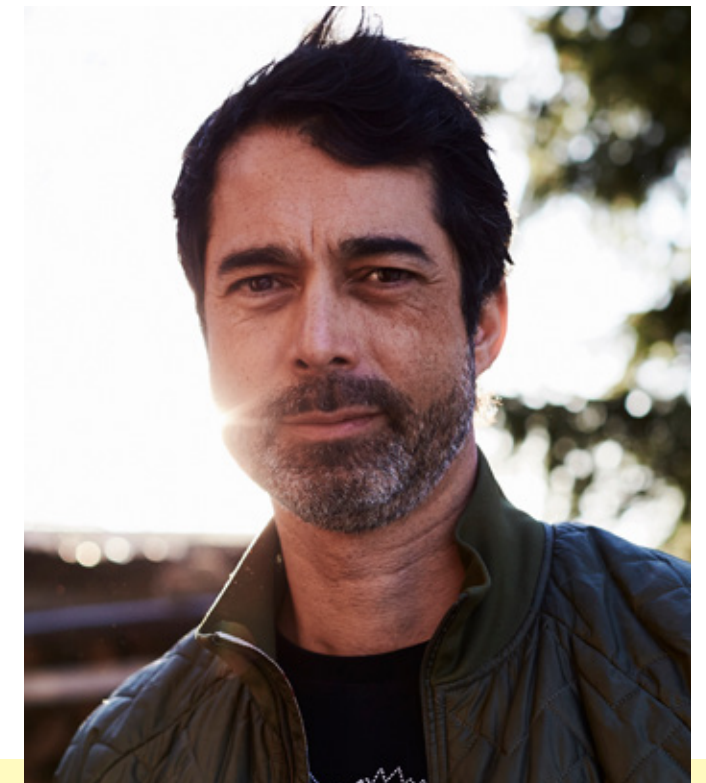
defining which category, which segment and even which style-colour best fit each channel.

Our teams work out very refined strategies - granular enough to go as far as defining by region or "flagship cities". The application of our broad principles might differ between Oslo, Paris, London and say Denver, but the common thread is that it always starts with a strong wholesale platform. To put it more simply; we love working with wholesale partners. It's the best way to grow, it helps authenticate our brand and has given rise to some of the best two-way relationships so far including events with Saturdays NYC, L'Exception in Paris, Backcountry in the US, and Wasted Talent in France. These are the people helping us build the Db name.

In terms of numbers, until 2020 we were stronger in DTC sales but with the various changes in both customer acquisition and supply chain we see that a good combination is the best way forward. The next step is to ensure synergies across digital sales from wholesale partners.

### What are your key marketing stories over the coming months?

From a brand standpoint Pack Heavy, Chase Light season 2 will be what underpins it all. Directed by Sam Moody this season will include a wide cast including Craig Anderson, Hannah Bailey, Kevin Backstrom, Hannah De Silva, Lucas Beaufort and Guillaume Salmon. In terms of products, we will be launching new Luggage, duffels and Surf through summer with Skate and then Snow drops coming in the fall.



### What are the biggest lessons you have learnt in business over the past five years?

Well, the past five years have been quite challenging in terms of business convictions. Who could seriously hold that their business paradigm stayed untouched throughout the incredibly challenging times of a global pandemic, supply chain disruption, return of inflation, global warming and populist upsurge on a global scale? Being with Db - a journey brand - and having been around in the industry for long enough now, this has been quite a humbling moment for me and also an exciting one to have to reinvent our value chain and reaffirm our business values!

As a consequence, business-wise, lesson #1 for me is that this reinvention I am talking about cannot be done without our client communities. Not only as consumers but as a society. No brand can dictate their consumers what to believe or what to do. I am glad that this notion of a larger stakeholder base is starting to take root in an increasing number of corporations, not only trying hard at being better in the world, but being better for the world. Lesson #2 for me is that in this journey of being a better brand, there is no greater asset than our people. To this, I must say I feel blessed to spend my day with our great team: more than 15 nationalities, 70 people both young and older eager to make a difference and build a good brand.



# SLEKTION

## SLEKTION

Slektion helps brands to create unusual creative product collaborations, limited editions and unusual art projects with some of the most celebrated and respected artists of our time. We caught up with them to learn about their holistic approach to creative collaboration with contemporary artists and brands.

### From a brand perspective – what is the ideal approach to product-based collaborations?

Regardless of the type of collaboration, starting with an open mind to develop something new is crucial. Remember, you are working with someone who is established in another field, so collaboration should not be approached as a design project, but rather as a creative journey that requires a lot of trust. Acknowledging that collaboration involves a certain level of “letting loose” as an important step. Once you have taken that step, building trust and coming up with the right ideas and approaches will help move the project forward – that is where we come in.

### What is Slektion and how did you create an agency based on creative collaborations?

Slektion was founded in 2020 by Philippe Takama and Lukas Urbaum. We always had a deep affiliation with urban art, but the final push to make this a company was based on a need we came across during our work in the past. We both held various jobs in snowboarding, skateboarding and “Urban Culture” if you will – and had been collaborating frequently

with other brands and artists. Despite the challenges we faced in collaborating with other brands and artists, the results were often brilliant. Determined to find solutions to these challenges, we created a company that has since produced numerous innovative products for outstanding brands, offered creative input and project management to many remarkable teams, and sold beautiful prints and original art on the side.

### What’s in it for brands who work with you?

Brand collaborations have been popularized, especially since Supreme took it to the next level by creating a whole section of their brand that could work on any “vessel” they used, from sneakers to bricks. While some benefits like shared audiences and increased sales are measurable, others like open-mindedness and building a deeply creative and adventurous brand perception may not be as tangible. Collaborating with artists, who are essentially brands themselves, offers similar benefits in terms of visibility and reference to large audiences, which are often built up over years. In addition, you gain access to the lifelong work of a super-talented person, an “open-to-listen” target audience, and creative design work. We view it as offering your brand as a canvas for artists to create something significant yet entirely new. This is the sustainable version of a brand collaboration.

### Tell us about your approach – how do you work?

As both agents and managers providing creative agency services, we have a unique responsibility to protect both our clients and the creative talent we represent. Our network consists of hundreds of creative individuals who have built brands around their names, and we must juggle multiple interests to achieve success. It all starts with a clear understanding of our client’s brand and company vision. From there, we carefully curate potential artist partners, always striving for authenticity in our collaborations. We believe in creating win-win situations that benefit all involved parties. The challenge lies in managing these interests while ensuring that the creative process runs smoothly, resulting in high-quality content that satisfies everyone. It’s a delicate balance that we take seriously and constantly strive to improve upon. After that, its managing the creative process, crafting high-quality content and keeping everyone happy. The simple stuff, haha!☺





# FOAMLIFE®

## FOAM LIFE

Started in COVID 2020 lockdown by some surf industry vets, FoamLife are disrupting the flip flop market with exciting designs, decent margins, hot marketing and a sustainable approach. Co-Founder & Sales Director Timo Mullen talks to us about how an English-based brand is ensuring their longevity within the EU and beyond.

### Please give us a brief history of FoamLife to present day.

We officially started FoamLife during Covid Lockdown in 2020, but I think if we look back on our lives both professionally and in the sports we enjoy FoamLife probably started over 40 years ago! Myself and my Co-Founder Karl Read have always been very conscious of the ocean and the environment, the ocean after all is our playground that we need to look after for not only our children but the generations following. We decided to start a brand that is focussed on sustainability, comfort and a look that resonates with consumer like ourselves who live and breathe a beach lifestyle. There was nothing on the market that ticked all those boxes and we believed there was demand and a gap in the market for such a brand. We are now in our 3rd year and growing rapidly from our Head Office on the South Coast of England. We are now stocked right across Europe from Norway to Greece as well as North America and soon to be South Africa.

### What is your thinking behind the expansion into Europe?

Obviously, Europe is potentially a massive market for us, from the outset FoamLife was created to be a global brand, we don't mess about! Going into our third year we have great partners now in Portugal, Spain, Canary Islands and Greece. In France we supply the Stokehouse stores in Hossegor (Vissla, Sisstrevolution).



We now have a great EU Distribution partner in Northern Ireland. This has been a fantastic move for our future in the EU, Northern Ireland as well as being part of the UK also retained a special privilege to still trade seamlessly with the EU as was normal pre Brexit, I am Northern Irish, so it seemed a perfect match and so far everything is running smoothly with deliveries being shipped out from March onwards. We are keen to speak to any distributors or agents across Europe and the world to join the FoamLife movement. Some of our highest traffic to our website comes from France, Germany, Holland and Scandinavia so the demand is there.

### Any plans for distribution in North America?

Yes, North America has the potential to end up being our biggest market, we are about to start our first season stocked in all the Vissla/Sisstrevolution stores in the US and Hawaii. We have massive respect for Vissla, they are probably the most successful brand in a lot of the independent stores in the US and Hawaii, they are authentic like ourselves and live and breathe a healthy attitude to the ocean and the world. In September we exhibited at the Surf Expo show in Orlando, our stand was right beside industry giants such as Yeti and Sun Bum, we had a great show, the reaction to FoamLife from retailers was fantastic, it would be great to have distribution in the US, but for the moment we will work with our current stores to provide the best possible service to all our US customers.

### Why should retailers' stock FoamLife and what are your marketing stories for this season.

FoamLife was created to bring something new and fresh to the footwear industry with a clear focus on sustainability and comfort mixed with simple styling for a

modern consumer that lives and breathes a beach lifestyle. FoamLife offers great margins and price points, proving that sustainability and style does not have to cost the earth! Our price points range between €30-50 so we are right on the sweet spot to turn around some great numbers. FoamLife are the most comfortable flip flops and sliders you will ever put on. All our packaging is 100% plastic free from factory to end consumer. We offer the full package, from product, customer service right through to our stunning stands and POS material.

One of our key marketing stories for 2023 will be our 'Earth Series' line, each season we strive to increase our sustainability credentials as best we can. We have added a plant based vegan Bio-Leather material to the range as well as increasing our Hemp options further, the Bio Leather styles will form part of our 'Earth Series'. All our 'Earth Series' also use RPET webbing on the toe posts and use recycled polyester and thread in the lining of the padded strap.

For all Retail and Distribution enquiries please contact Timo Mullen FoamLife at [info@thefoamlife.com](mailto:info@thefoamlife.com) ☺



## TAHE

TAHE manufacture surfboards and fins domestically in France and are doing so with a keen eye on their impact on the environment. Brand Manager Jacques Freydrich talks us through their proposition, including their R&D facility and 40+ years of experience.

### Please give us an overview of the TAHE R&D and manufacturing set up in France.

At TAHE, we have our own R&D office. The R&D team work closely with our production team and the product manager. Our speciality as a manufacturer is that we can test our ideas/innovations directly without going through an intermediary. This also allows us to continuously improve our processes. This is a real advantage. We can go direct from the idea to the product. We also rely on more than 40 years of know-how.

### France is the location of your new Skin-Tec construction technology unit. What is Skin-Tec and how does it improve a board's quality?

TAHE's design and R&D teams have produced a new surfboard made with high-density cellular foam. Thanks to our state-of-the-art production machines, our hybrid foam is fusion-formed, and the slabs are moulded on-site. The foam slabs come out of the mould in a fully-finished shape, generating no waste during production, and ensuring unmatched shape accuracy. Quality control, fitting the deck pad and accessories, and the final finishing touches are all handled by our skilled workforce at our factory in Vannes, France. The Skin-Tec technology is recyclable, durable, light weight and water-resistant.

The first product to be launched with Skin-Tec is the Meteor, please tell us about the board and what rider type it is aimed at. Our ground-breaking Skin-Tec construction



technology has enabled us to create a lightweight yet durable board in the METEOR. It's the very first Skin-Tec softboard produced in France and the whole of Europe.

The Integral factory-finished wooden stringers inside the hybrid foam slab give extra rigidity whilst retaining flex. The brushed EVA foam deck-pad offers stability and a strong grip. No more need for wax. The METEOR offers all-round performance, great glide, and effortless take-off, making it an ideal choice for riders of all levels, from beginners to intermediates. Through meticulous shaping, the METEOR boasts a well-proportioned volume that is perfectly balanced. Its Vee-shaped hull provides excellent manoeuvrability, while a squash tail and subtle "spoon" front section ensure effortless paddling out. Lively and made for the glide at full blast, it will become your go-to board for all conditions. Whether you're looking to advance your skills or simply seeking maximum fun, you'll find the METEOR to be a perfect fit. Put on your wetsuit, grab your board, and go surfing!

### The board also features Stellar Fins which earned the 'eco-design' award at the Eco-Sports Awards in 2022 – please tell us about them.

Stellar fins are the result of a partnership between our research & development teams in Vannes (France), the Brest-based firm Fil & Fab\*, and our injection factory located in Merpins, (France). Without sacrificing performance, these fins lower our impact by approximately 80% compared to fins traditionally produced in Asia. Eco-designed, Stellar fins are 100% made in France, from harvesting to the finished product. Fishing nets are collected and recycled in Brest (France). They are crushed and then transformed into nylon pellets: Nylo®. This material is then turned into fins at our production site in Merpins



(Cognac - France). The mould specifically created by our teams is a technological and high-precision masterpiece. These fins are entirely recyclable at the end of their life.

### How does manufacturing in France benefit the consumer?

It's in our DNA. We have maintained our production in Vannes, while all our competitors have outsourced their production to Asia. Producing high quality boards that are accessible and affordable is a challenge that we face every day. The METEOR is a real breakthrough. In Europe, foam boards come exclusively from Asia. Producing in France reduces our impact on transport and raw materials used. This technology is also recyclable. It is all positive.

### What trends are you seeing or predicting in the water sports industry for 2023?

I do not have a crystal ball but we are convinced that people will refocus on the essentials. Affordable, accessible products that are made to last. Consumers are paying more and more attention to product sourcing. So, for us, TAHE's value proposition has never been more relevant than today. ☺





## WAVE HAWAII

WAVE HAWAII started nearly six years ago as a poncho brand made using bamboo, thanks to the materials many desirable qualities. Now in 2023 they are also offering sunglasses, made to suit their mission of Life Is Great and made with sustainability in mind. CEO and Founder Carsten Raphael gives us all the details.

### How did Wave Hawaii start and what's the ethos behind the brand?

In the fall of 2017, we started with our first 3 bamboo ponchos, because we couldn't find ponchos anywhere that we thought looked chic, were sustainable, and felt nice and fluffy at the same time. We quickly realized that we weren't the only ones who felt the same way. So we had to make more poncho models. That's where it started. Other products like towels and bathrobes followed. But above all, polarized sunglasses, which we also developed under the premise of sustainability. The glasses are now our second strongest product group and are made from wood, acetate and brand new for us: recycled fishing nets. We want to offer feel-good products that people enjoy. True to our motto: Life is great!

### Tell us about your product range, what have been the two best performing products over the last year?

Our product range consists roughly of ponchos, bath and beach towels, sunglasses and accessories. The most important product group is our ponchos, which are available in different designs. Made of bamboo, cotton, AirLite (- more on that later -), small pack size (travel ponchos), zippered, long sleeved and storm ponchos for the cold. Our best-selling poncho is model Air - with a teeny lead over some other models.



When it comes to sunglasses, the wooden ones are ahead of the acetate ones, as the selection of wooden models is also much larger. The unbreakable sunglasses made from recycled fishing nets are already experiencing a lot of demand, but we have these new in the program, so we are not yet meaningful here. Our bestseller overall is the model Aik.

### The environment and sustainability seem important to the brand by the fact you offer customers a free pair of wooden grippers and a recycled garbage bag in order to encourage waste collection - how else is the company promoting sustainability?

Exactly, that's worth a lot to us, to also encourage our customers to perhaps achieve great things with small actions. The response to this has been very positive throughout. What else do we do? Our products are usually shipped in sustainable packaging. For example, the ponchos currently come to the customer in reusable paper bags. However, we are currently working on an even more sensible and compostable solution. In addition, we send our parcels CO2-neutral and always pay attention to energy-saving measures. Since we have been developing our company without external financial support since the beginning, we always pay attention to cost-conscious working and acting, which also benefits the environment. This attitude is part of our brand DNA.

### How do you distribute Wave Hawaii products across Europe?

In Germany, we take care of sales and marketing ourselves. In addition, we usually work with distributors who fly the flag for us in the now more than 30 countries. In the last five years we have

built up a great distribution network with dedicated and ambitious partners in the different countries. This has given us a market leading position in our niche. Last year, we established a distribution company in the USA to serve the market there. For some countries, such as Spain, Portugal and Italy, we are currently looking for distributors who want to join a growing brand with a lot of upward potential. We have big plans - and our journey has just begun.

### What can we expect for the future from Wave Hawaii?

We will of course remain true to our roots, but will always be open to new markets - both geographically and in terms of products. In the foreseeable future, the focus will still be on our ponchos and sunglasses. And with good margins for our dealers and distributors, who are after all the backbone of our brand. Plans for completely new products have not only been made, but are already being implemented. We are looking forward to sharing our WAVE HAWAII world with many people. ☺



## SECTOR 9

Sector 9 are one of the industry's most iconic longboard skate brands and we caught up with the team to see what's new. As well as product development they are laser focusing their European distribution strategy and they fill us in on their current marketing pushes.

### Please tell us about the brand from when it was founded to today.

The Sector 9'ers, Nineballs or Niners as they've been referred to over the years, got their start in a suburb north of San Diego. With some popular surf spots out front, hills to their backs and a house full of fun, a skate ramp, pool table, ping pong table and a board shaper, it should be no surprise that a legendary longboard and cruiser brand was born. The young group of surfer/ college students quickly turned their passion for flowing lines in the water or on the pavement into a thriving business through the local shops up and down the California coast.

With thirty years of rich heritage of not only building some of the best products this industry has seen, they continue to build a culture and vibe that people love and gravitate to. From the collaborative art projects to their involvement in building the community with events and their continual push on innovating products to create the next best skateboard for this riding style. Sector 9 is synonymous with longboard skateboarding.

### What is currently the best market for the brand in Europe and why?

We've been very strong in France, Spain, Switzerland and Germany with our single distributor model. While that has done well for us, we think it's time to grow our distribution by opening it up to individual countries across Europe and get more people out enjoying our great products and spreading the good vibes.



### How are you planning to make the brand more environmentally friendly?

Being part of Highline Industries give us access to the technologies that our sister brands like Almost, enjoi and Madness skateboards have. One of which is a waste stream resin glue called Super Sap. We are looking to utilize it more in our line as well as reduce the overall use of single use poly bags. Hoping to eliminate or reduce micro plastics ending up in our environment.

### Please give us a resumé of your current line.

The current line is built on our 30 years of history in the category. Over the years we identified what does well for us. We have a great collection of maple and bamboo cruisers in 31-42 inches in length and various widths and constructions. Our roots of Southern California surf lifestyle vibes that we're known for continue to ring through in our graphics. Add in Pro boards from notable personalities like Ben Gravy, Downhill ripper, Jimmy Riha and surf legend Mason Ho.

### What is your most popular style of board for Sector 9 right now?

Our 36 inch Bamboo drop through, "Fractal Floral" is one of our top sellers. It comes with our Gullwing Sidewinder 2 trucks that has an amazing turning radius. Giving you the surf style vibes for carving the hills or cruising to the store. The "Bambino Bivy" is another great bamboo board. Cruising in at 26 x 7.5 inches with our Gullwing Mission trucks and some soft 78a, 61mm Nineball wheels. This is a great short cruiser.

Our Pintails continue to do well. One stand-out, the "Ledger Fiesta" 7 play Maple 40 inch by 9.25 inches wide with our Super Sap environmentally friendly resin. Gullwing Charger trucks and some 65mm soft 78a Nineball wheels. Great colour scheme with raised inks.



### Can you tell us more about Sector 9's daily mantra 'smash it'?

'smash it' is a motto we've been using to represent the Sector 9 lifestyle. Living life to its fullest. Whether it's bombing a hill, rolling to the skate park, cruising a wave, or dealing with whatever life throws at you. Smash it! Do it to the best of your ability and find the fun in doing it.

### You guys sponsor a lot of riders - what do you look for in a rider when choosing them to represent Sector 9?

We look for riders that fit the overall Sector 9 lifestyle and culture. Someone that is open for fun, happy lifestyle that's similar to how we started in that house in La Jolla as a group of college students searching for adventures with their buddies.

### What are your hopes for the brand in the European market in the coming years?

We've already started working with a couple of new distributors and we're looking to add more to the mix. We've had a great distribution partner over the years, but are looking to add individual partners in each country to have more of a laser focus in each territory. It's our hope to spread the Sector 9 vibe to more people and we think this is the best way. ☺





## DOUBLE DECK

It's not every year we find a snowboard company reinventing the wheel. But this past winter, there was no more talked about product than doubledeck. Fronted by snowboarding royalty, Terje Haakonsen and featuring a unique 'motherboard' and 'bridging bow', which elevates the rider's feet above the board, the brand is targeting both the beginner and advanced snowboard market. Read on for details on the R&D they've conducted this winter.

### What was the thinking behind the development of doubledeck?

Doubledeck snowboards was brought to life in order to ease the way of learning snowboarding for beginners in general but also to improve riding abilities for advanced riders as well as for pro riders by using different bow constructions for certain terrain and confidence. Having said that, doubledeck snowboards consists of a "motherboard" plus a bridging bow whilst these two components work together by transferring power to the effective edge points of the board. This effect leads to an easy turning of the board and falling becomes almost impossible. Also riders experience a better carving acceleration and shock absorption while using doubledeck snowboards.

### Tell us about the people behind project.

Doubledeck snowboards is managed by enthusiastic snowboarders with strong backgrounds in the snowboard industry. Terje Haakonsen from Norway is a partner of doubledeck Snowboards and is involved in product development of the boards. As far as manufacturing is concerned all boards are exclusively being made in the Austrian Burton Factory whilst the development team of doubledeck snowboards also consists of several engineers and marketing specialists.



**Since your test launch in January you have further developed the product. Please explain the latest updates and why you made them.**

Doubledeck snowboards was launched at ISPO November 2022 and then during Shops 1st Try in January 2023 we gave out a first bunch of test boards in order to understand the development position. We have collected a lot of opinions from retailers and riders during Shops 1st Try and have since then worked on gathering all the input we were able to. This was especially in regards to overall weight of the boards and the final determination of flex tuning which is the most essential point with doubledeck snowboards. As a result, from Shops 1st Try we have made more than 100 additional test boards whilst adding all input we received so far. The conclusion is that we have in return finally develop now a perfectly functional board which now will be produced in series for winter 23/24.

**At the same time you are launching a revolutionary rental program, give us the lowdown. And how does all this tie in with making the life of each rental board more sustainable?**

Doubledeck snowboards will be offering the "let to rent" program. This means that rental does not need to buy the boards from us but rental will receive the boards without purchasing the boards and only grant doubledeck a certain rental fee per rent. At the end of season we take back the boards from rental, rework the boards in the factory and start the process again with the same reworked boards. So the lifetime circle of a doubledeck snowboard will be longer than only one season. If a board cannot be reworked due to enormous usage during a season we can then recycle the material from this board - up to even 75% - and produce new boards from this material. Thus the environmental thought is being taken care of.

**Beginners are top priority target for doubledeck - why is that?**

Doubledeck snowboards focuses on beginners due to the fact that with the



construction, it is way easier for beginners to learn snowboarding in comparison to using regular snowboards. For beginners it is easier to initiate turns on a doubledeck snowboard due to the higher stand and due to the flex of the bow which helps to turn the boards easier even when riding very slow. This altogether will provides beginners much more riding fun and creates huge learning progress without falling that often as turning the board is way easier in comparison to using regular snowboards.

**How will doubledeck be distributed across Europe?**

Doubledeck snowboards will be distributed across Europe by retailers and distributors - so the classic way. However, we also offer doubledeck snowboards through our own online shop whilst offering retailers with a kickback margin when retailers being partnering with us. Also online we will be offering "click and collect" so the consumer can buy a board online but collect it at their favourite retailer, taking part in this system. The retailer then upsell to the consumer collecting the board at the shop. There will also be a huge B2C campaign starting early September 2023 so that everyone will know about doubledeck snowboards and request the product at the retailers. ☺



## SICOMIN

France-based Sicomin supply advanced epoxy systems to the surf and snow industries and have over 40 years experience in doing so. With a new 1500m2 facility in Brittany, we caught up with the team there to hear more on how they've forever working on their eco consciousness to keep up with market demands.

**Give us an introduction to Sicomin.**

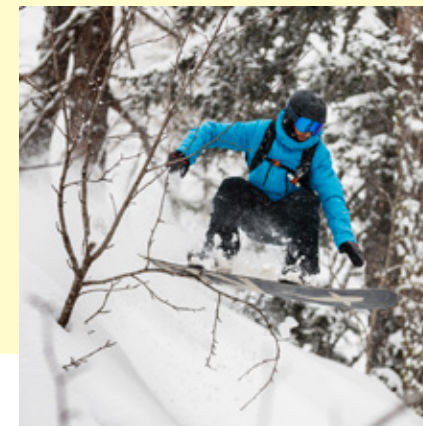
Sicomin specialize in high performance, advanced epoxy systems including the market leading GreenPoxy® range of bio-based resins. The group was founded 40 years ago and is a key supplier for composite manufacturers in the Marine, Automotive and Civil Engineering markets throughout Europe, the US and Asia. Sicomin is also a key player in the winter sports market, supplying manufacturers globally and developing new formulations from our production facility and R&D centre in Southern France. We keep our production flexible to match the demand fluctuations of the winter sports market, and now we're finding that the short supply chain and reduced footprint of our European produced materials is a great fit with the re-shoring that's taking place in the industry.

**What have you got planned for the 40th anniversary?**

The plan is to celebrate with a series of events running throughout the 2023 trade shows that we will attend including JEC World and ISPO. At JEC, we will launch two new high-performance products to extend our GreenPoxy® range. These products - a bio-based infusion and bio-based laminating option - have been developed for boards that need top-end mechanical properties. We've also expanded our operations in France with a new 1500m2 facility in Brittany. The new premises include a large warehouse, product showroom, materials test lab and extended office space for the team that look after clients throughout Northern and Western France.

**In terms of market areas and end products that use Sicomin materials, how diverse is the mix?**

It's almost infinite! From pioneering marine



applications for epoxy composites to the latest in bio-based and fire-retardant epoxies for civil engineering, our customers never stop surprising us with new challenges. We have materials for all the different manufacturing processes used to make a part, and we supply products for mould making at the start of the process, as well as coatings and surface finishes for the finished part.

**Is winter sports as big for you as water sports?**

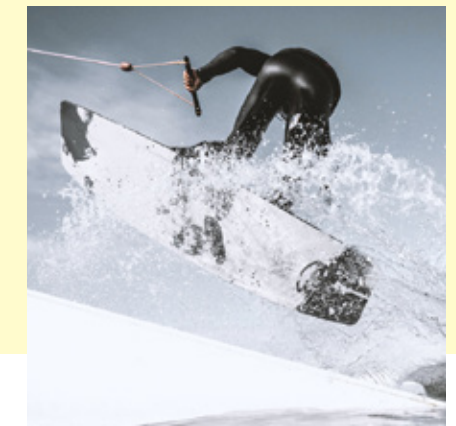
It is yes, we have just the same desire to help ski and snowboard manufacturers evolve their products and build lighter, more responsive products that are more fun on the mountains. We supply epoxy systems for the manufacturers that demand the best performance and most sustainable epoxy systems available. We work with a wide variety of brands including leading names such as Burton, Salomon, Decathlon, Zag, Nidecker and Borealis.

**In snow do you just work with large companies or do you also work with smaller custom builders too?**

High-volume production is a big driver, and we work with many of the larger manufacturers to ensure cycle times are kept to the minimum whilst also ensuring quality and consistency in our materials. The smaller manufacturers are just as important though. We love to work with builders and artisans such as Deneriaz Ski, La Fabrique du Ski and Skis Lagriffe, creating custom and small series production boards.

**How important is sustainability and user-friendly materials in this sector?**

It's a massive focus point for us. More and more, the brands and their end-customers are thinking about the impact their products have on the wider environment. Today's challenge for everyone is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and our GreenPoxy® range is a great way to help our customers limit their own CO2 equivalent emissions. The GreenPoxy range of bio-based epoxy systems is not only the most complete range of sustainable epoxy products on the market today, but it also gives greener options with no compromise on performance. Yes, they want to use raw materials with a lighter environmental touch, but the skis and boards must still perform.



It's also important that our materials are easy to use and integrate into existing production processes, particularly when we're helping support a builder with a move to bio-based systems. We've worked hard to remove many harmful chemicals from our formulations which goes a long way to improving health and safety for the technicians on the shop floor too.

The winter sports sector has always challenged its material suppliers, demanding constant innovation and efficient processing.

**Do you see the same push from your customers?**

Skis and boards are very challenging applications! With so many different base, rail, core and top sheet materials involved, the epoxy resins used have to provide excellent long-term adhesion as well as rapid and consistent processing. We would probably say that the big trend we see is the push for more bio-based materials that we mentioned earlier. In the past it was a bit of a novelty or a nice feature to have, but very soon it will be the norm, with certified bio-content being a must-have part of being a long-term material supplier. Manufacturers always want to go faster and be more adaptable but for now we seem to have a product range that works well for the high-volume producers as well as for the smaller builders. That said, winter sports will also be a hot bed of innovation and we thrive on that! ☺



## MARKET INSIGHT

### GERMANY

Hello, servus, moin,

UK  
FRANCE  
ITALY  
SWISS  
SPAIN  
PORTUGAL

In this market insight we report on the very tough winter we have just had. Firstly there was sun and no snow at Christmas, so the smaller ski resorts could not open at all or had to close again in the second week of Christmas. While the pre-Christmas business was still very good, it then dropped

off very sharply. In Germany a north/south trend could be observed: In the north, sales and the joy of winter holidays in the mountains was still very high. In the south, on the other hand, retailers had to struggle much more with the poor snow conditions with winter sports enthusiasts cancelling or rebooking. In the last third of the winter season, the situation changed and the snow finally arrived. As a result, sales volumes increased at most of the retailers I talked to, even if it was unfortunately only when the products were on end of season discounts. In the textile segment, however, sales remained constantly way below expectations, as it was simply too warm.

A positive trend could nevertheless be observed, especially in snowboard boots. Dale Tayler from Thirtytwo explained to us when asked why Thirtytwo had double-digit growth: “Customers who went snowboarding wanted comfortable and, above all, their own boots. They didn’t want to rent boots that had already had other people’s feet in them. In addition, boot fit is getting more and more important in the snow business, it simply brings customers back into the shops as well.”

Freerider in Hamburg will focus on this even more in the next few years. As Managing Director Christian told me, he sees significantly more potential in boot fitting than in the outerwear category. Freerider will reduce its sales area in winter 23/24 and offer more on the service side of the business “That’s why people come to us! They just want a boot that fits!”

There are also positive things to report from Ulm. Jens Kramer’s Fifty-Eight store is moving back into the city centre to work in a more targeted way. He will also focus on smaller brands that are not available in the bigger shops and service-oriented offers including both boot fitting and board servicing. In conclusion of this winter season, it is fair to say that almost everyone made it through pretty well despite the bad winter and everyone is now looking forward either to holidays or to summer.

But this summer has been a long time coming, with one rainy day after the next. The basic mood in Germany is not good. This feeling is also increasingly noticeable in the retail sector, where one horror story follows the next. Karstadt, which is not

in Boardsports but is a bell weather for the whole retail sector, has filed for a new protective financial shield and is closing several of its shops. P+C is in insolvency, as is Schuh Reno - all larger players struggling with the current market situation. These closures, together with the bad weather, are also having an impact on boardsports retail. Everyone I spoke to last week confirmed this, from wakeboard cable operators who haven’t even opened yet to fashion shops that simply don’t have enough customers or people who want to buy.

In addition, the market is extremely overloaded with wetsuits, skate hardware, surfboards, SUPs, mountain bikes etc... and the list is constantly growing. Many brands are already lowering their retail prices in order to sell goods from their already full warehouses to generate cash flow. But will that bring people into the shops or onto the websites? Hopefully both. In any case, the fact is that there is no shortage of goods at the moment and we need summer as soon as possible, otherwise things could get tighter and tighter.

The first warm summer days on the long 1st of May weekend have at least seen NW Sports, distributor of Hyperlite Wakeboards, Ronix and Follow get their first reorders. Rico Hogeveen says nevertheless: “The warehouse is fuller than ever. We actually have everything ready except for a few small things and are looking forward to the season.”

There are positive things to report from the surf camps, however. Here I had Jens Höper on the phone: “A large part of our camps are already fully booked, the preparations for the season are in full swing. You can tell that people want to start the summer. We are looking forward to the season.”

Nuno Amado of Surfcloud reports that Surf Travel is very strong at the moment. “We have delivered more travel bags than ever with Ocean and Earth to prebook and to reorder.” Again, you can see that people are booking holidays and have an appetite for surfing.

In any case, the mood in Germany has to change: People have been lacking a zest for life for too long. The sun will encourage them to linger in the cities and bring back the desire to shop. Kai Fuhrer from the shop of the same name, Fuhrer Sport, sees it the same way, so, he will continue to expand his shop as planned and then renovate it at the end of the summer.

With this positive new I close the Market Insight Germany - with the hope for sun, good mood, shopping desire, hang loose, good waves and relaxed skate sessions.

Ride on

**TOBI HAMMER**

### UK

FRANCE  
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Keep your head down and carry on!

It’s late March and the winter sport tills are still ringing. Stock is looking thin on the ground, and is still being called in where it’s available. Shelves are about as empty as they have ever been. Nobody is panicking and, until very recently, there had really been very little discounting. It seems that for the first time in a long time, we have not only had a great winter but retailers have held their nerve. Could this be a pattern for future years? Could it? Only time will tell.

Whilst many other sectors are massively overstocked and discounting is rife, winter sports is unusually a shining example. Fantastic. I cannot recall having said anything like that before – ever! Interesting this!

And all this is at a time when inflation is running over 10%, strikes have been rife (but now appear to be coming to an end), and the economic outlook for the UK (IMF) is way behind other leading countries – it’s even behind Russia (F Putin).

On first reading a UK Retail Sector report from Tokio Marine HCC it shows that year-on-year retail sales grew 3.1% but digging deeper into the numbers and taking inflation out of the figures it reveals that Q4 sales dropped almost 6% - that’s a big chunk of lost business. Will it be recovered in 2023 – will the UK bounce back? Once again only time will tell but for sure inflation will certainly not help.

‘Revenge Travel’ (following covid lockdown) appears to be helping the travel industry. This is good and bad – good in that some form of normality is returning and consumers are hopefully being exposed to new experiences. Bad because we are fighting for that same discretionary spend.

So winter sports retailers are generally happy – what about others?

Today [late March] Matt from H2O in Bournemouth celebrates his 19th year at the helm of the business. “I prefer to say that we are now entering our 20th year – it sounds better.” He’s right of course. Matt has been involved in the business for a lot longer than he’s saying - having started as a windsurfing instructor when he was just 14 years old and then working for another retailer for 17 years before setting up H2O. So, the one thing that you can say about Matt is that he knows his shit and he has staying power. A quality that he has needed over the years – especially recently. “It’s been a tough winter,” said Matt “Really tough. Of course, we were expecting a downturn, but the Autumn and winter months took us by surprise. There was a massive downturn – consumer confidence eroded rapidly with inflation and energy costs and their nerves got the better of them. They hunkered down and who can blame them?”

Any better now? “I’m optimistic. The first quarter of the year, when compared to a non-covid year, has been pretty good – I feel there has been more interaction with customers. They’ve now got used to the other costs in life and are accepting of the situation and realise that they do have some disposable income left over. After all, our customer base is not exactly poor. They’ll always find some money if they really need their fix”.

“SUP has been the most impacted. Covid brought in a new group of customers who were perhaps not so well healed - but

## MARKET INSIGHT

even here we are seeing some movement. So, I am really optimistic for the coming summer – given a fair wind and good weather of course.”

H2O took a strategic decision to move away from fashion and to focus on Neoprene and Hardgoods. “I’m glad we did. Our expertise is in the kit you need to do the sport and that’s going to remain our focus”.

On the other hand, Shore Watersports are maintaining a focus on both fashion and hardware. “For us, the spread is one of our strengths – from the ‘bucket and spade’ brigade which will remain strong in the summer, to high-end solid fashion brands and to our hardware. Having that spread is important to us”. This is Henry from Shore: “The winter has been pretty crap although our shop sales matched last year. Online was down. Yet February beat last year. Why? Who knows?”

How did last summer end? “We anticipated the downturn in business, but we did not anticipate it well enough – it was faster, harder and more brutal than we thought. We forecast appropriately for the winter and our Christmas numbers were bang on the forecast – no growth but we hit our numbers and, as I say, it was pretty solid in store”.

And for the coming summer? “It’s going to be hard, particularly with iSUP and wetsuits. Fashion I think we will be OK although some brands really need to sort out their D2C’s which should not simply be a way to discount and clear out stock. They should be a part of the brand and not a closeout store”.

Without naming names, Henry told me about the new MD of a large EU fashion brand who asked his team how many weeks of the year had their own D2C NOT had an off-price offer. The answer came back – none! That is surely a bit frightening if you are a retailer ordering all those months in advance – I am sure that buyers like Henry will be taking this kind of thing into account.

And skate? Paul at Black Sheep Manchester was his usual self. There’s something great about speaking to Paul – almost no matter what, there is a smile in his voice – even if the conversational subject may not be the happiest. Is that a Mancunian thing? (It is that Mancunian rain – it makes you smile.) Paul did start with a predictable comment when I asked him how was it? “All right”. He’s a man of few words but he did go on “there seems to be a consensus that it’s rubbish but we’re actually doing all right – we’re OK. You have to find what works for your individual business and, I suppose, for your individual customers. I think we get it right. So, it works for us.”

How was the winter? “Well – we got through it so that’s a start. February was good – strangely good – no idea why. I lifted me head and it was March. Weird. Now March looks a little flat so who knows where we will be in April? Depends on the weather really”.

What about the overstock situation? “Yeah – that’s hard but we simply have to work through it. New pricing and stock clearance means that we have decks from £25 right up to £100 – this can make it confusing, but it also means we have opportunities and we just have to make the most of these. The great thing is, as I’ve said before, the sport is more accepted and it is growing. Covid helped the growth, female participation is now normal. It all helps and if you keep your head down it works”.

‘Keep your head down’ – wise words.

**GORDON WAY**



## MARKET INSIGHT

### FRANCE

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Banque de France has doubled its growth forecast for 2023, now expecting gross domestic product to grow by 0.6%, compared with 0.3% in its previous forecasts published in December.

For 2023, the central bank is justifying doubling its growth forecasts because inflation, particularly energy inflation, is lower than expected and worldwide demand for French exports is higher. However, these nice surprises are offset by the country's financial landscape, with exchange rates and borrowing rates in worse shape than in December. The recovery phase is expected to start up again properly in 2024 as household consumption picks up. The Harmonised

Index of Consumer Prices (HICP) - the inflation barometer which is the reference point for Europe and which the Banque de France uses for its projections - is expected to reach an annual average of 5.4% in 2023, compared with the 6% expected until now. The HICP should then fall to 2.4% in 2024 and 1.9% in 2025, below the 2% mark which is the European Central Bank's inflation target. On a social level, the pension reforms implemented by Emmanuel Macron and his government are also causing a fair amount of tension in France. Strikes, clashes between demonstrators and police, stone throwing etc... The tension is palpable in France after the government employed article 49.3 to force its law through. Clashes with the police take place regularly in Paris and thousands of people marched throughout the whole of France this March 2023. The spring of 2023 has started off quite turbulently in France and it also marks the launch of a new season so what is the impact on the world of boardsports?

At the end of the winter, just before the summer season begins, the reports are pretty unanimous. As Adrien Louis, Manager of the La Clinique de la Planche shop in Caen, explains: "The winter of 2022/2023 was not great, especially if you compare it to the last two years, which were exceptionally good," he explains: "We have felt a real drop since February, with turnover down 5% compared to the normal 10-20% growth." He adds: "We have to drastically reduce our orders for the spring because we have quite a lot of stock and so do the suppliers, which causes significant price contrasts with all the increases and the destocking that's going on!"

The situation is more or less the same at Extrem in Les Sables d'Olonne where shop managers Laurent and Sonia Favreau tell us: "For coastal shops like ours, we are waiting for the Easter holidays to really kick start the season." They add: "We are quite overstocked with surf and skate gear, but given the increases, it's pretty healthy stock. To summarise the winter, it was decent but we are really getting back to a pre-COVID rhythm." Sonia says: "I'm quite worried about purchasing power and general inflation in France, but we'll see how the season goes. That's why we've been very careful with our pre-season purchases, we've ordered less and we hope to restock during the season to clear out the excess stock."

At the O'Rider Shop in Saint Briec and Lannion, Shop Manager Nicolas Radenac says: "The winter was not very cold, so we have seen a big drop in our neoprene sales. We can add inflation and general pessimism to this so we have seen a sharp drop in sales with a 24% decline on last year." He adds: "Stocks are high in both shops and it's the same with most suppliers! The price increases are not helping to keep momentum going."

In Nantes, Thomas Martin, Manager of the shop Neway, makes a similar observation: "Winter 22/23 was fairly decent, it could have been much better but given the snow conditions, with only 4 to 5 snowfalls over the whole winter, it wasn't great." Thomas adds: "the number of visitors is much more uncertain than before, the current economic situation is obviously a factor and it is much more difficult to predict than a few years ago." He adds: "Our stock level is high, and our order levels reflect this, although we have an obligation to

offer our customers brands and products..."

At Surf Avenue in Renne and Dnard, Brittany, Martin Letourneur, Deputy Manager in charge of marketing and innovation notes: "We are back to normal after the COVID years. The winter of 22/23 was quieter, but business started to pick up in March, so we're hoping for a good season! Martin explains: "Turnover is down, although only slightly, but sales are harder to make with consumers buying less spontaneously and most retailers are overstocking, which pushes the consumer to hunt down the best deal." He adds: "The volume of orders has greatly reduced. 2023 has to be a year of caution, with very closely monitored stock, and we'll have to count on restocking during the season to try to re-establish a normal stock level. In addition, prices have changed a lot, which is all the more reason to remain very cautious."

In Bordeaux, at Quai 34, Sales Advisor in charge of communication, Maxime Laboul, makes the same observation: "The winter has been pretty quiet overall, with a drop in turnover since the end of summer 2022. We can sense a lack of desire and purchasing power when it comes to customers treating themselves to equipment for leisure activities which are not a necessity." Maxime explains: "We therefore have an overload of equipment in shop and we have to go for targeted discounts to boost sales. We have equipped a lot of people over the last two years and customers now feel less need to change their equipment."

Laure Collin, Manager of the Ocean Gate shop in Saint Pierre de Quiberon says: "we are gradually preparing for the season to launch on Easter weekend after a fairly quiet winter with a drop in traffic compared to previous years", she adds: "the number of sales is down and as a result so is the turnover, with abnormally high stocks for winter".

At Palmyre Wind & Surf Shop, Thibault Guilbert makes the same assessment again: "Although closed in the middle of winter, the month of March was bad with almost no business. We're down around 20%, our stock is very high and there's also inflation of 5-10% on everything."

On the Web, it's the same story, Clément Le Ray, Manager of the website LAB Boardstore tells us: "the winter situation has been complicated for the sale of surfboards, it is difficult to imagine a recovery for the summer season. The drop in purchasing power is being felt and customers can no longer afford pleasure purchases as they could before." He adds, "Even though we offer innovative solutions with easy payment options through our surfboard leasing and instalment payments, people are thinking more before indulging themselves." Just like his peers, he confirms: "Our stock levels are high at the end of winter and we have little need to go full steam into the new season. As a result, our volume of pre-orders is very low."

In the Mediterranean, the mild winter has probably been a little more beneficial. At Chinook in Leucate, Arnaud Gardais, Shop Manager, says: "After a sluggish period in October, our figures in the end are identical to those of last winter. Our turnover is stable thanks to an increased average basket, despite the drop in sales on the Web". He adds: "Our pre-orders however are down by 20% because we have fairly high stock at the beginning of the season. Prices are up overall but some suppliers have managed to revise their initial prices downwards by passing on the decrease of container prices at the start of 2023."

Winter 22/23 was therefore overall quite weak in terms of footfall and sales in shops. The current climate of uncertainty and overall inflation is forcing shops and customers to be cautious. Like every year, the real launch of the season will take place on Easter weekend; here's hoping that the weather will be kind and that the 2023 summer season can be as good as it can be.

**BENOIT BRECQ**

### ITALY

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The economic update is better than expected with Italy calculating a +0.8% growth for 2023, still low but better than expected as a few months back talk of a recession in 2023 was a big topic.

For 2024, the outlook looks even better, but it's too far to judge and will, and can still, change. But as the GDP growth is slow and energy costs are still high, it's not an easy time for many companies and businesses. The +0.8%

growth is in line with the Eurozone growth which right now sits at +0.9% for 2023. Declining electricity and gas prices certainly help keep our state more stable and our new Prime Minister Mrs. Meloni also plans a Flat Tax for incomes over the next years which should get a clearer overview of the current income tax situations and hopefully help lower incomes to be able to have more money remaining into their pockets. The higher interest rates for borrowing money does slow down a lot of company investments, and purchasing power is still pretty low as people tend to save money in these still unclear and unstable times.

Tourism is still going strong and hotels from North to South are sure that 2023 will again be a very good season, this makes it clear that people are not saving money on traveling and holidays but rather on clothing as many clothing stores, online stores and especially skate shops are struggling. Over the last 6 months many retailers decided to close their doors or are in the process of closing their businesses for many different reasons.

A store owner from the Milan area who wants to stay anonymous and who is in the process of closing his board store with a history of 15+ years in the game names a few reasons: Raising energy costs, higher interest rates, shop assistants are harder to find and motivate, purchasing power from customers is reduced

### SWISS

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At the end of this winter with the lowest snowfall since the 1963-1964 season, it is difficult to draw a positive conclusion. This season has been a real battle for the Swiss winter sports industry. Indeed, the records show that Central Europe has not known a worse snowfall year for almost 60 years, a shortage that was accompanied by several waves of warm spells that made you feel like you were in spring at the beginning of February. The unpleasant

feeling that you haven't even had a winter... Many people took out their bikes rather than their snowboards during the Christmas and even February holidays. The photos of closed ski lifts or slopes surrounded by green pastures filled social networks and other media. The least we can say is that nature did nothing to help out in this economically difficult year, with consumption down and budgets much tighter than before.

Most of the winter sports equipment retailers are unanimous, the season was bad. Very little snow, mild temperatures, customers concerned about the energy and geopolitical situation and a big post-covid effect that was bound to happen sooner or later. Not one but three reasons to end up in the red this time. Apart from a few (privileged) high-altitude resorts, such as Zermatt, Verbier or Saas Fee, which due to their location and their clientele have been able to pull through, the reality for the others is very different. Most of them tell us that they were able to hold on thanks to the money they put aside over the last two seasons, now known as "covid seasons", but they can't afford another one like this next year. The famous "covid effect" has really made itself felt. The ex-

## MARKET INSIGHT

and our suppliers make it harder to stay in business as the desired goods we want to buy are harder to get than ever. These factors combined, mean I will close permanently in the near future.

Many retailers struggle with low profits and have a hard time to stay in business. Specializing is now key for our boardsports retailers and research for new brands is a new key element, also knowledge about what you sell is crucial.

As skate hardgood stock levels are high, so are surf good stock levels in both wetsuits and boards as the last 6 to 12 months saw turnover declining. Starting boardsports this year will give beginners a chance to buy good material at a very reasonable price so boardsports technical gear will not suffer inflation but will see good discounts on the shelves during this 2023 season.

Polar Skate Co. still performs very well on the shelves of many stores and so does Last Resort Lab for skate shoes, just to name a few. Younger brands are in general doing quite well in skate shops, compared to their older much more consolidated competitors. Vans is still solid in the boardsports world but has lost some ground over the last year.

Overall, the younger generation seems very hungry for new brands such as Wasted Paris which is a skate brand from Paris inspired from 90's skateboarding with a dark twist. Brands that turn heads and bring back the early stages of skateboarding. A must is oversize cuts, baggy pants and heavier cottons, some key elements to be successful right now. The online pace of growing adjusted a lot and online stores are reducing their budget quite a lot during this 2023, a year still full of surprises, new beginnings but also the end of an era for some retailers and brands.

**FRANZ JOSEF HOLLER**

trema craze for outdoor activities that we have experienced since the appearance of covid- the need to get out, rethinking leisure activities and a craving for the great outdoors - has enabled us to register two record years in terms of outdoor equipment sales and rentals. The touring sector experienced a huge boom and suddenly everyone wanted to get kitted out. In snowboarding this translated to a rise in splitboard sales and associated equipment of over 100% in two years. What was bound to happen, and did, was that pre-orders for splitboards for 22-23 were high due to the record sales and low stock levels but this did not take into account the effects mentioned above and the fact that many people had already bought their equipment. Result: a huge drop in the sales of splits, some shops say they have not sold anything at all, not even a single one. Obviously this remains a niche product but for those who had the same problem with ski touring and an overall drop in shop traffic, the pill is especially hard to swallow. Another post-covid effect was that this season coincided with normal travel starting up again and a lot of people allocated their leisure budget to a short trip to a warm country rather than to winter sports equipment, which was also always going to happen eventually...

So, we can say that the season was mediocre to say the least, bad even, which inevitably resulted in a drop in pre-order volumes for brands. In Switzerland, for 23-24, we estimate a drop of about 15% compared to 22-23. And this almost seems to be a lesser evil if we look back at the season that has just ended.

**FABIEN GRISEL**



**SPAIN**

- PORTUGAL
- FRANCE
- UK
- GERMANY
- ITALY
- SWISS

The Spanish economic outlook is on the up, with Spain leading the European growth charts. Even though it has not yet reached pre-pandemic levels, it is the country that grew the most in 2022. A 5.5% GDP growth rate places Spain at the top of the list of the five biggest European economies. This is due to the steady increase in tourism and a new surge in growth in exports.

Forecasts point to a further 1.5% growth in Spain's economy in 2023, but the bad news is that inflation will grow too. Lower energy prices has offered a respite thanks largely to the price reduction negotiated by the Spanish government with the EU. However, the cost of groceries will keep rising. This is enough to keep Spanish consumers on the cautious side. They spend, but they are careful

In the board sports market there are some wealthy consumers that prefer to purchase high quality products. Miguel Requena from Dreisog in Fuengirola explains: "We specialise in top of the range gear, so our target customers can afford it". However, the great majority of people have considerably lower purchasing power. This requires offers and discounts to seal the deal, especially in the skate and surf segments, where there is a general excess of stock. These two sports maintain a steady business, as they continue to be the two most popular board sports. Even though the surge in newcomers has stabilised now, there are still newbies every year. Wing foiling is picking up but Snowboarding is having a difficult moment. An unusually warm winter has cut down numbers of practitioners. Winter sales have not been very

**PORTUGAL**

- FRANCE
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- ITALY
- SWISS
- SPAIN

The Portuguese market is currently in a period of struggle with increasing difficulties due to high inflation and loss of purchasing power. Despite the fact that inflation has fallen for four consecutive months and is now at 8.2%, mainly due to the decrease in energy prices, essential food prices however, continue to rise, which has created serious problems for the livelihood of thousands of families. This scenario of uncertainty, distrust and pessimism is having a negative effect on the consumer market. The consecutive rise in interest rates by the European Central Bank, now at 3.5%,

has asphyxiated Portuguese families who currently have mortgages. The Government has launched a support program for families to minimize the impact of rising interest rates by providing up to 200 euros/month on rents and up to 60 euros/month on mortgage payments on loans of up to 250,000 euros. The European Commission's forecast for the Portuguese economy indicates a 1% growth in 2023 with inflation of 5.4%.

Portugal saw a drop in tourism during the winter season which had serious consequences for stores and retailers across the country, with the National Institute of Statistics reporting that between November 2022 and January 2023, an average of 18 stores were closed per day in the country. Spring is around the corner, but boardsport retailers have mixed feelings towards the season. Christmas wasn't what they expected, not even last-minute shopping saved the holiday season for many. Due to inflation and consequent loss of purchasing power, consumers chose to spend as little as possible and wait for sales campaigns in the following months.

Stores are struggling with surf and skate hardgoods overstocking, opting to run big promotions to sell off product. Apparel and footwear had better results during 'sales season' and the few retailers in Portugal who stock snow equipment said that sales went well as well.

**MARKET INSIGHT**

strong, and shops hope for a better Spring, but are expecting a difficult one. They rely mostly on hard goods sales for the bulk of their business, as apparel and shoes are not selling well. Most shops have snow up their online business, although this is proving to be a marketing support operation more than a sales one. Compared to their brick-and-mortar spaces, online sales are small. The sites do a good job as a place for potential customers to research the products they want. This enables them to get to the physical store with the purchase decision almost made. Schools however are more efficient at driving business. Not only do they secure new sports fans and customers, but they also offer them an experience with lots of expert advice that they all want when they buy new kit. "Some months we offer personal free skate lessons, and people seem very happy", says Óscar Ramos from Tactic in Barcelona. Surf schools depend on the waves, so activity levels go up and down, but they generally do well. The most welcome form of support for stores concerns product pricing. On one hand, there has been a steady increase over the last year. "Brands are charging delivery fees in pre-orders, something that didn't happen before", says Miguel. They'd welcome a regulation of prices to avoid surprises. On the other hand, the dramatic price drops that some brands offer online make it difficult for specialised stores to maintain their business. "I'd ask brands to maintain the same price in their online stores as they fix for us, so we can keep working as we have always done, with stores promoting the brand in our social media", says Óscar. There is definitely something to be said for the community work that specialised stores do to support their brands.

**ROCIO ENRIQUEZ**

Kate Skate Shop is a core skate shop that was founded in 2006 by partners Nuno Gaia and Rita Garizo. With a "do-it-yourself" spirit, they've created a solid structure based on a skate team with a family vibe and is one of the most influential skate shops in the North of Portugal.

For them the Christmas period and first quarter of 2023 was much more complicated than previous years. "Instead of buying over Christmas people preferred to wait for sales season, they bought more online and looked for products on second-hand websites", explained Nuno Gaia. "Also, tourism fell, making a difficult January/February but was just enough to pay our bills. We had a sales drop of around 30% compared to the previous year. Now in March with the improved weather conditions the store movement has already increased", he added.

Kate Skate Shop ran clothing and footwear sales campaigns at the start of the year. "Most retailers are hugely overstocked. And they're selling product off with discounts of up to 50% that we can't compete with. This ends up spoiling and unbalancing the market because customers get used to these prices and it becomes difficult to convince them to go back to normal prices. The same skateboards that used to cost 60/70 euros now cost 37 euros. The profit margins are minimal", he warned. The store even stopped working with certain brands since shoes that previously cost 75 euros have risen to 95 euros per pair. "In footwear the trend points towards greater demand for products resulting from collabs between brands with special releases in addition to pro-model shoes."

Nuno Gaia maintains a positive outlook though for the future as tourism should begin to increase from now on until the end of summer, and with prices in Portugal cheaper than in most countries, consumption by foreigners should be high. It's clear that in Portugal the Spring and Easter season is going to be a very important period for retailers in order to recover from a difficult Winter and get rid of overstock. Let's hope everybody can make it through these hard times we're living.

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## FIDLOCK®

**WE ARE LOOKING FOR INDEPENDENT SALES PARTNERS FOR OUR OUTDOOR AND WATER SPORTS BRAND HERMETIC.**

Magnetic force has always been our passion at FIDLOCK. The HERMETIC products are a great addition to our B2C business. The patented Gooper technology is an innovative product with must-have potential. Whether for beachboys or girls, bike or backpackers, smartphone junkies, or outdoor activists - through the automatic, hermetic, self-sealing closure of the bag all important things are kept safe. The HERMETIC dry bags won't even stay open accidentally. "Just let go!"

**[fidlock.com/consumer](http://fidlock.com/consumer)**

E-mail: [e.helfrich@fidlock.com](mailto:e.helfrich@fidlock.com)  
FIDLOCK GmbH | Kirchhorster Straße 39 | 30659 Hannover | Germany



# JOIN THE TEAM



## APHEX

LOVE THE LIGHT

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High Performance Sports Optics

**CUSTOMIZE**  
Fully Integrated Personalization



**X SEASON**  
Products for Summer & Winter

We are looking for sales reps and distributors in:

Slovenia  
Czech Republic  
Poland  
Switzerland  
Norway  
Sweden  
Denmark  
Finland

Contact Maarten at [contact@aphexgear.com](mailto:contact@aphexgear.com)






Distributors wanted for ES, IT, PT and more countries.

Come and join our growing team with the focus on sustainable style products.

For more info we are happy to receive your message.

[carsten@wave-hawaii.com](mailto:carsten@wave-hawaii.com)

[www.wave-hawaii.com/en](http://www.wave-hawaii.com/en)

## Distributor (UK)

🇬🇧 UK

MPG GmbH, with its registered office in Graz/Austria and international branch offices, has been committed to the design, production and distribution of optical goods for precisely 70 years now. Although the group has gained an international reputation, serving a wide range of business areas, it is still in a position to act in a fully independent and flexible manner.

As a growing company, MPG is constantly looking for reinforcements. We are always searching for new partners that will help to foster the growth of the group. Red Bull SPECT Eyewear is a 10-year license between MPG and Red Bull, one of the most famous global brands recognized for its strong presence in action sports.

After several years, managing the UK market directly with our agents, we have decided to reorganize ourselves by searching for a distributor, in order to take our distribution in UK to the next level.

**YOUR COMPANY**

- is based in UK
- has an experienced sales team, with strong connections to the on- and offline sporting goods channel
- has a local warehouse to stock our products and deliver directly to clients
- will invest in marketing to promote the brand across the territory
- has a B2B website and a customer service to ensure operational excellence

**WHAT WE OFFER**


- a well-balanced range of sunglasses and goggles
- products featuring one of the most recognized brand logos in the world
- a very strong equation between image, price and quality
- a solid trade term model to ensure a sustainable go-to-market approach
- access to the world of Red Bull

Are you interested?

**SEND US YOUR COMPANY PROFILE!**

Nicolas Melin  
[nicolas.melin@mpg-eyewear.com](mailto:nicolas.melin@mpg-eyewear.com)

MPG GmbH  
Liebenauer Tangente 4  
8041 Graz, Austria  
[mpg-eyewear.com](http://mpg-eyewear.com)

  
huruu²

creating perspectives



# AGENTS & RETAILERS WANTED

**Join the Rusty Apparel Team!  
We're seeking sales agents and retailers across Europe.**

[sales@rusty.eu](mailto:sales@rusty.eu)  
[www.rusty.eu](http://www.rusty.eu)

R U S T Y 



# EVENTS #116

surf/kite skate/bike snow street/outdoor SUP/wake

kite	GKA BIG AIR	Tarifa, Spain   21 May-11 Jun 23	gkakiteworldtour.com
surf	SURF RANCH PRO	California, USA   27-28 May 23	worldsurfleague.com
outdoor	OUTDOOR BY ISPO	Munich, Germany   4-6 Jun 23	ispo.com/en/outdoor
skate	NASS FESTIVAL	Shepton Mallet, UK   6-9 Jun 23	nassfestival.com
surf	SURF CITY EL SALVADOR PRO	El Salvador   9-18 Jun 23	worldsurfleague.com
outdoor	BASECAMP	Courmayeur, Italy   12-13 Jun 23	thepilloutdoor.com
outdoor	OTS	Exhibition Centre, Liverpool   13-15 Jun 23	outdoortradeshows.com
street	PITTI UOMO	Florence, Italy   14-17 Jun 23	pittimagine.com
snow	WSF GENERAL ASSEMBLY	Innsbruck, Austria   15-16 Jun 23	worldsnowboardfederation.org
outdoor	NEXT SUMMER	Chambery, France   19-20 Jun 23	sportair.fr
outdoor	OUTDOOR RETAILER SUMMER	Salt Lake City, USA   19-21 Jun 23	outdoorretailer.com
bike	EUROBIKE	Frankfurt, Germany   21-25 Jun 23	eurobike.com
surf	VIVO RIO PRO	Rio de Janeiro, Brazil   23 Jun-1 Jul 23	worldsurfleague.com
kite	GKA HYDROFOIL FREESTYLE	Crossroads, Maldives   23-30 Jun 23	gkakiteworldtour.com
skate	MYSTIC SK8 CUP	Prague, Czech Republic   30 Jun-2 Jul 23	mystic8cup.cz
street	PREMIUM	Berlin, Germany   11-12 Jul 23	premium.fashion
street	SEEK	Berlin, Germany   11-12 Jul 23	seek.fashion
surf	CORONA OPEN J-BAY	J-Bay, South Africa   13-22 Jul 23	worldsurfleague.com
sup	VIANA SUP OPEN	Viana, Portugal   14-16 Jul 23	appworldtour.com
surf	US OPEN OF SURFING	Huntingdon beach, USA   29 Jul-6 Aug	worldsurfleague.com
kite	GKA KITE SURF	Rio de Janeiro, Brazil   1-9 Aug 23	gkakiteworldtour.com
surf	BOARDMASTERS LONGBOARD PRO	Fistral Beach, UK   9-13 Aug 23	worldsurfleague.com
surf	SHISESIDO TAHITI PRO	Tahiti, French Polynesia   11-22 Aug 23	worldsurfleague.com
kite	GKA FREESTYLE	Dunkirk, France   16-20 Aug 23	gkakiteworldtour.com
skate	LONDON CALLING	London, UK   18-20 Aug 23	-
kite	GKA KITE SURF	Sylt, Germany   22-27 Aug 23	gkakiteworldtour.com
sup	ALICANTE SUP OPEN	Alicante, Spain   30 Aug 23	appworldtour.com
wake	WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS	Ferreira do Zezere, Portugal   30 Aug-3 Sep 23	thewwa.com
skate	COPENHAGEN OPEN	Copenhagen, Denmark   Date TBC	cphopen.com
street	WHOS NEXT	Paris, France   2-5 Sep 23	whosnext.com
surf	RIP CURL WSL FINALS	Lower Trestles, USA   7-15 Sep 23	worldsurfleague.com
surf	SURF PARK SUMMIT	Scripps Seaside Forum, San Diego   19-29 Sep 23	surfparkcentral.com
kite	GKA KITE SURF	Dakhla, Morocco   26 Sep-1 Oct 23	gkakiteworldtour.com
sup	SUP PADDLE SPORTS SHOW	Strasbourg, France   27-29 Sep 23	thepaddlesportshow.com
optics	SILOMO	Paris, France   29 Sep-2 Oct 23	silmoparis.com
surf	EDP VISSLA PRO ERICERIA	Ericeria, Portugal   1-8 Oct 23	worldsurfleague.com
surf	THE BOARDROOM SHOW	Del Mar, California   7-8 Oct 23	boardroomshow.com
surf	CORONA SAQUAREMA PRO	Rio de Janeiro, Brazil   14-21 Oct 23	worldsurfleague.com
surf	TAGHAZOUT SURF EXPO	Taghazout, Morocco   26-29 Oct 23	taghazoutsurfexpo.com
sup	GRAN CANARIA PRO-AM	Gran Canaria, Spain   11-18 Nov 23	appworldtour.com
outdoor	ISPO	Munich, Germany   28-30 Nov 23	ispo.com

# The Paddle Sports Show



**STRASBOURG,  
FRANCE,  
SEPTEMBER 27-29<sup>TH</sup>  
2023**

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# DAKINE

## A HISTORY OF INNOVATION

Founded in Hawaii in 1979 and located at the base of Mount Hood in Hood River, Oregon, Dakine manufactures backpacks, travel bags, accessories and apparel. Whether it's for everyday life or more technical gear for those who love to surf, kiteboard, windsurf, snowboard, ski, mountain bike, skateboard...

LIVE IT, BUILD IT, TRY IT, IMPROVE IT, DO IT AGAIN.



JACK ROBINSON

CYCLONE HYDROSEAL  
36L BACKPACK

MISSION  
SURFBOARD BAG - HYBRID

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