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“A bathing ape”, better known as Bape, is a Japanese streetwear brand founded by Tomoaki Nagao, in 1993. Tomoaki Nagao was obsessed with American pop culture. Born and raised in Maebashi, Gunma, Japan, he left his hometown to travel to Tokyo where he enrolled in Bunka Fashion College of Tokyo. While attending university, he met another student named Jun Takahashi. The two teamed up based on their love for streetwear fashion and started their rise together in the streetwear community.

Tomoaki Nagao spent a lot of his time immersing himself in the hip-hop and fashion culture taking over Japan. With his love for western Hip-Hop, a large part of Nigo's style was inspired by the grungy street style of rappers. With his love of hip hop, Tomoaki Nagao would often go to clubs and explore the nightlife scene, where he began to build a career as a DJ. With his popularity as a DJ growing, and a unique style, Nagao grabbed the attention of his fashion idol, Hiroshi Fujiwara. Making an instant connection, Tomoaki Nagao teamed up with his idol as his personal assistant and helped him with his upcoming projects. While working together, Tomoaki Nagao would often be confused as Hiroshi Fujiwara and would be called “Hiroshi Fujiwara Nigo”, Nigo meaning 2. Tomoaki Nagao appreciated the comparisons to his idol and adopted the nickname “Nigo”. Working with his idol has made him more ambitious than ever and Nigo pursued his dreams further and decided to open his own clothing store. Partnering with his mentor Fujiwara, and his college friend, Jun Takahashi, they opened up a store in the backstreets of Tokyo, called NOWHERE.

The two divided up the space and sold their own preferred styles. Jun Takahashi launched his brand with the launch of the store and his side was becoming more popular than Nigo's. Nigo decided it was time to launch his own label and went on to create one of the most

popular brands in pop culture. Being one of Hiroshi Fujiwara's proteges, he was introduced to another designer that Fujiwara had taken under his wing, Shinichiro Nakamura. Shinichiro Nakamura, or otherwise known as "Sk8thing", sat down to watch the original Planet of the ape movies and after finishing the films he went to Nigo with the idea of a brand of apes and the two partnered up to launch their brand. Being a graphic designer, Sk8thing designed the brand's ape head logo.



Now that his brand had a face to it Nigo needed a name for it. With his logo being an ape he decided the name of his brand should be related to it and chose a popular phrase in Japan to be his logo's companion, "A bathing ape in lukewarm water". The saying refers to the young living a carefree lavish lifestyle.

## **A Bathing Ape**

Sk8thing produced the iconic ape head logo and Nigo knew how to make the brand's ape head logo famous. His experience had taught him that exclusivity was key to their success and sold it in very limited quantities, only supplying 10% for the amount that's demanded, only making them available at his store. Nigo's marketing strategy allowed his brand to take over faster than ever, within just 6 years, Bape was being sold at over 40 retailers. Nigo was not a fan of how fast his brand was growing and in a crazy turn of events, he decided to pull his product off the shelves and open a Bape store, where his shirts will be exclusively sold there. This move should have killed off the momentum of the brand but instead it boosted the brand's popularity.

The departure.....

Bape's success came with a cost. The brand had amassed 50 million dollars worth of debt due to its rapid expansion, Nigo's ambitions had led to a far departure from its clothing line as he decided to open Bape hair salons, Bape Cafes, and etc. With nowhere else to turn, Nigo was forced to step down as the president and C.E.O. of Bape in 2009. He sold a 90% stake of the company to Hong Kong based I.T. group for 3 million dollars. The contract forced Nigo to remain as the brand's creative director for four years. As soon as the contract expired, Nigo decided to leave and invested his time into a new venture.



Bape cafe

Epilogue....

After Bape, Nigo teamed up with Sk8thing once again to launch a new brand called, Human Made. learning from his mistakes at Bape, Nigo has decided to take his time building his new brand , straying away from street fashion and playing with the silhouettes of 1950s Americana workwear style. Although Nigo has long left the brand, its succes is still eminent thanks to the original design and vision created by Nigo and Sk8thing.



Since its birth, A bathing Ape has gone through little to no changes, style wise. Its classic logo has remained the staple of the brand. There have been multiple iterations of the brands accompanying font. Its most popular products are usually in a Futura Typeface and a classic College font. The brand is not only known for its ape logo but also its accompanying use of camo.



Since its birth, A Bathing Ape has been a juggernaut in the streetwear community. Its iconic logo and camo print can be seen on the shirts of people worldwide and on your favorite brands. Since its birth, Bape's influence has stretched beyond clothing. Its list of collaborators are endless. The Bape logo has teamed up with Coca Cola, Pepsi, Adidas, Marvel, Star Wars, Amazon, Playboy, Spongebob, Puma, Jaws, Transformers, and etcetera multiplied by etc.



Imaged by Heritage Auctions, HA.com





Sources;

bape website

<https://us.bape.com>

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Article 2

<https://medium.com/@contact.underline/the-complete-history-of-a-bathing-ape-59e07f4ab44b>

Youtube documentary

<https://youtu.be/4xZ6XbXgb9Q>

List OG bape collaborations

<https://topfloorgallery.com/blogs/news/every-single-bape-collaboration-full-list-of-bape-collabs>

Article 3 ( nigo departure)

<https://www.highsnobiety.com/p/nigo-announces-his-definitive-departure-from-bape/>



[project search](#)

*Ape shall never kill ape*



