

Tanner Jules Gordon, Gerard Allison , Thomson Li

Dr. Alyssa Dana Adomaitis

BUF 3100

09 June 2022

Historical Decades of Sneaker

At the beginning of history, the needs for sneakers were just mainly for sport use. However, it has evolved into a large factor for civilization over time. Looking at periods with amazing garments and designs we can see all of the great achievements that led to sneakers becoming such an influential piece in the fashion world. The decade we are going to be discussing is when Michael Jordan signed with Nike as a rookie in the 1970s. The brand evolved through time as a result of Michael Jordan because more and more people wanted to be like him. Therefore, they went to great lengths to obtain his shoes, which kicked off the sneaker culture. In that period of time, Micheal Jordan was wearing his most iconic sneaker, which was the Air Jordan 1, in one of his games to advertise it causing many to fall in love with it.

So, many people started to wear it for basketball because they wanted to be able to be like Michael and shoot like Michael, and even skateboarders were starting to wear it, which kicked off the Nike dunks (GOAT, 2022). During the 1980s, Adidas had a significant impact on sneaker culture as well. When Run DMC's song My Adidas was released, Adidas was beginning to gain popularity; however, the song was neither sponsored nor endorsed. The artists were only interested in the shoes because they liked them. Adidas quickly signed them as their first non-sport endorsement deal (irishexaminer, 2021). Many people are unaware that Vans played a major role in sneaker culture during this period as well. Mostly because of the skateboard craze, many people on the West Coast were drawn to Vans which was also the start of streetwear (irishexaminer, 2021). Their Checkerboard slip-on which is now the most iconic design for Vans.

This was one of the most influential decades in terms of influencing the majority of individuals engaged in sports and artists. This was the zeitgeist of the 1970s-1980s.

Moving on to the next decade we can see that the 90s was a period of time that showcased a lot of different fashion trends that have been seen to come back around today. This is no exception for sneakers as they were also a trend staple in the 90s. There were many different sneakers trends going on at the same time so this gave consumers options. There were many styles for people to choose from to fit their individual aesthetic and personality. One of the most popular and versatile sneakers was the converse all-stars. This sneaker was versatile because a wide range of people were wearing them. Skater kids, people in grunge bands, kids and adults of all ages were all sporting this sneaker and everyone loved it (Flanagan, 2020). The converse all-stars were paired with many different types of outfits since these were seen as the “key ingredient” to help up the style of any outfit the person wears. Many would catch people sporting these sneakers with mini dresses made from denim, tights, pencil dress, blazers, and even just a plain white tee (Flanagan, 2020). Kurt Cobain, who is a famous musician, was seen wearing a pair of converse all-stars and this only helped make the sneaker even more popular and helped it become the zeitgeist of the time. (MeTV, 2022).

Another sneaker that was the spirit of the times in the 90s was the classic Adidas Superstar. This shoe became an instant icon with the help of the legendary hip-hop group Run-DMC. In some of their music videos, they can see the Adidas superstar sneaker featured on their feet and this helped boost the popularity of the shoe (MeTV, 2022). Everybody at this time had to have a pair because it was seen as a wardrobe must-have. These sneakers were usually paired with a tracksuit or even sometimes a cowl neck satin top for a night out (Flanagan, 2020).

With the 90s era coming to an end we can now further analyze what the spirit of the times were in the 20th century. - **(Tanner Jules Gordon)**

With the 20th century bringing so much innovation and change to the world it can be seen why the last 10-20 years of sneakers have changed so much when it comes to width, height, fabrics being used, graphics printed on sneakers, and every other way brands try to give a sneaker a unique look. One of the most prominent sneakers released in the early 2000s was the Nike Dunk designed by Peter More in 2002 (Danforth, 2022). This sneaker has become one of the most collectible sneakers today in 2021 and 2022 and that can be credited to the versatility that was shown by Nike in the early 2000s. Nike released the “Nike Dunk High” in 1985 primarily as a basketball sneaker, with basketball players like the famous Micheal Jordan in mind. Nike designed this sneaker for the basketball courts at first; using the same traction from the soles of the “Air force 1” and then characteristics from Micheal Jordan's first sneaker, “AJ1” made this show perfect for doing moves such as spinning and blocking while playing basketball (Mukhametzyanov, 2021). For years to follow this sneaker would dominate basketball courts from colleges to the pros gaining popularity and becoming the “go-to” sneaker for basketball players, this popularity can be credited to the way Nike advertised these sneakers and use many big name college basketball players as sponsors such as The University of Iowa, The University of Kentucky, Georgetown, Syracuse and many more to follow, the Nike Dunk became their official school sneakers gaining popularity on the courts and campuses of these schools (Mukhametzyanov, 2021).

This all changed no more than 15 years after the release of the original Nike Dunk thanks to skateboarders worldwide. In the early 2000s the Nike Dunk began to decline in

popularity and was seen as a “cheap” sneakers, Dunks were even spotted in discount stores (Danforth, 2022). As these sneakers began to become less popular in basketball due to Nike's collaboration with Micheal Jordan and his signature sneakers, the Nike Dunk began to become popular in another sport, skateboarding. Skate Culture loved these sneakers because in the years of 2000-2002 it was primarily a low-priced sneaker, easy to find, durable due to the leather used, had a cup-shaped sole with simple construction and they were also easy to style (Mukhametzyanov, 2021). Sadly at the time Nike did not recognize the popularity that the Nike Dunk had in skateboard culture, Nike tried to reach them through ads but they were seen as “immature” and in a way mocked the skate community. Nike retracted this attempt and started Nike SB which was run by Sandy Bodecker. Sandy would redesign the shoe to have a fatter tongue, improved sock lines, a poron foam bed, and a zoom air unit in the heel for support when doing skateboarding tricks (Mukhametzyanov, 2021). This was definitely something you didn't see from other skateboard brands at the time, this also made the sneaker catch the eye of Nike’s non-skateboarding customers due to the comfortability of the Sneaker. For the next few years, the Nike SB Dunk would be the primary sneaker for skateboarders offered in a high top and low style, this shoe would mostly stay the same until 2005 when a few changes came to the SB Dunk.

Nike released its third constructional version of the SB Dunk now being offered in a mid version, prior years only offered low and high versions. 2005 would also begin to broaden the audience of the Nike SB dunk when Nike started collaborating with other skate brands. Collaborations with Futura, Supreme, Chocolate, Zoo York, Slam City Skates, Levi’s, Stussy, MF Doom, Jeff Staple, Diamond Supply, Concepts, and many others allowed Nike to reach more of the skate community and began to trend of “camping out” outside of a retailer to purchase

sneakers released as stores open; the most chaotic sneaker release of the Nike SB was the “Pigeon” sneaker which caused chaos and police intervention in New York streets in 2005 (Mukhametzyanov, 2021). For years to follow the Nike SB would be seen as a classic sneaker within different subcultures of sneakers, 2015 brought back some original designs of the SB dunk and revealed some new colorways since it was the sneaker's 30th anniversary. 2015 and 2016 was the year the SB Dunk reached the “luxury” level. Thanks to Rei Kawakubo, founder of CDG, the Nike SB Dunk appeared on the runway for the first time in a black, white, and teal colorway attracting customers very far from skateboarding (Mukhametzyanov, 2021). - **(Gerard Allison)**

References

- Danforth, C. (n.d.). *Goat timeline: 10 years that defined Sneaker History*. GOAT. Retrieved June 10, 2022, from <https://www.goat.com/editorial/most-important-years-sneaker-history>
- Tue, 18 M. (2021, May 18). *How did sneakers become such a global phenomenon?* Irish Examiner. Retrieved June 10, 2022, from <https://www.irishexaminer.com/lifestyle/fashionandbeauty/arid-40292138.html#:~:text=People%20came%20in%20droves%20to,a%20style%E2%80%9D%2C%20suggests%20Salazar.>
- Flanagan-, B. J., By, -, Joe Flanagan<https://90sfashion.com> Joe grew up in the 90s, Flanagan, J., & Joe grew up in the 90s. (2022, May 13). *Nostalgia alert: 90s shoes trends that were da' bomb!* 90s Fashion World. Retrieved June 10, 2022, from <https://www.90sfashion.com/90s-shoes-trends/>
- MeTV. (n.d.). *10 shoe brands everyone had and wanted in the 1990s*. Me. Retrieved June 10, 2022, from <https://www.metv.com/lists/10-shoe-brands-everyone-had-and-wanted-in-the-1990s>

Mukhametzyanova, Marianna. "The History of the Nike Dunk and the Nike SB Dunk."

HYPEBEAST, HYPEBEAST, 16 June 2021,

<https://hypebeast.com/2021/6/nike-sb-dunk-history-sneakers-skateboarding-basketball>

all.