

What is shaping culture? Sneaker life

By  Brett Rogers

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Sneakers are big news! Wow, well done ... really insightful. We all know sneakers have come a long way, but what is interesting is the culture surrounding sneakers, the tremendous resonance this has within the communities that welcome them, their broad appeal - all classes, races and ages - and the story of how sneakers, well, sneaked their way into our hearts.



Although not the first sneaker, the Converse All-Stars created in 1924 were the first basketball-specific shoe, and are the origin story for sneaker culture. Somehow managing to be immune to the cult of innovation and 'newness', the All-Star is, still to this day, All-Star material.

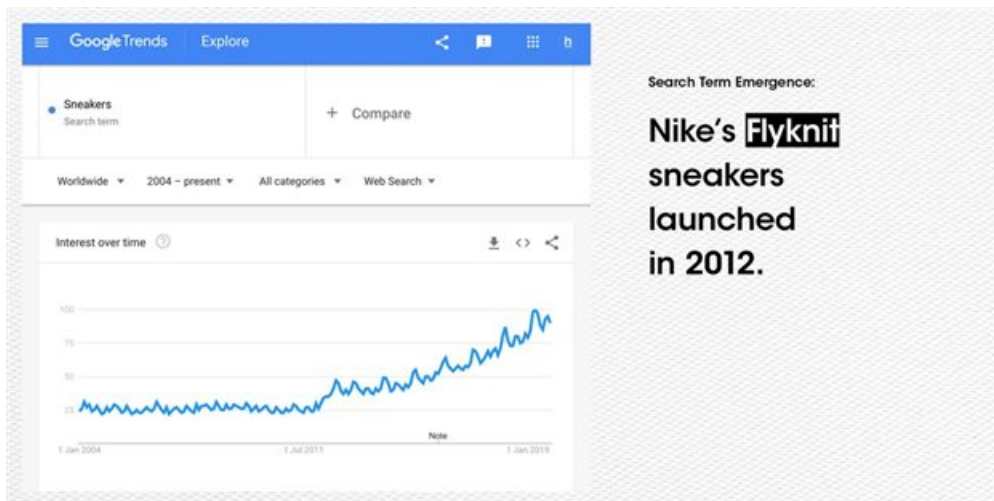


Staying with the realm of basketball, the sport which provided the foundation for the early years of sneaker culture, the shoe to really change more than just 'the shoe' but the entire game were the Air Jordans.

Fined \$5000 every time he stepped onto the court wearing the Air Jordan 1s, Michael Jordan and Nike completely transformed sports and marketing. Over a single season, Jordan was fined \$410 000 (Nike paid the fines) but the endorsement was worth \$7 000 000 over five years. After this deal, sports stars were paid exponentially more for their endorsements, and sneakers became a statement piece of those agreements. Michael was more than just the GOAT, he was a folk hero for his rebelliousness and for not succumbing to league pressure.

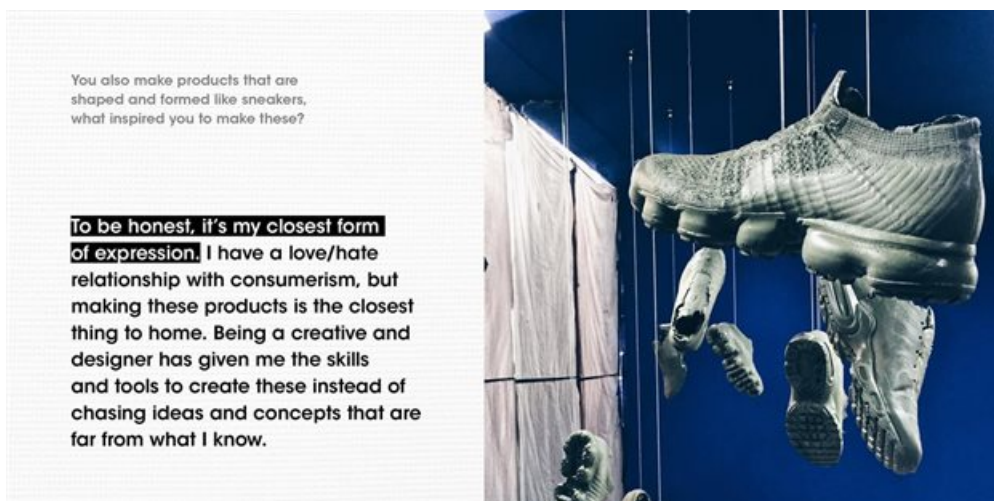


As you can see below in this Google trend, the 2012 release of the Nike Flyknit coincided with the ramping up of interest in sneaker culture. This marque had a direct, positive, massive impact on the interest in sneakers, on a global scale. The Flyknit technology also allowed for cheaper and quicker production, not that that saving landed in the consumer's pocket!



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Sneakerhead Lazi, also known as 'Greiispaces' or "Bombisa", is an award-winning illustrator and independent designer. He finds inspiration in all places and perhaps most of all from sneakers. This has resulted in multiple sneaker-related products and artwork, most effectively showcased with this concrete installation.



Sneakers are truly the great democratiser, whether worn on the manicured feet of Ms Mountbatten-Windsor, the kids kicking a soccer ball in the streets or the guy selling 'amatek' (that are definitely legal), they are all unified by a love for

sneakers.



Why? Sneakers are an open canvas waiting for you to step into them and explore. The globe is awash with ‘craft sneaker’ designers creating artworks for your feet using some of the most staggering materials that the world of science has to offer. Or you know you can just slip on a pair of canvas All-Stars and you’ll still be cool.

What you wear on your feet tells people so much about you. Sneakers are not functional items, they are communicators, they represent culture, art, rebellion, achievement, fashion, politics, sport, music and more.



ABOUT BRETT ROGERS

Brett Rogers, culture lead at Cape Town advertising agency HaveYouHeard and content curator for In_, a channel of content, which showcases cultural forces that are changing the world. It aims to inform, inspire and entertain the viewer and does so with multimedia posts, including podcasts, videos, google trends, mini Q+A's and more. in_ talks to those

interested in in-depth cultural exploration and those curious about the world we live in.

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