

Three Marks Left

Rose [REDACTED] [REDACTED]



Tons of dents, bashes, and marks have been left in the face of surf culture. After an extensive amount of research I have decided to choose three surfers that have changed the face of surf culture. Tom Curren, Jack Johnson, and Lisa Anderson have each changed the history of this sport in many different ways, each of which has helped me draw inspiration for my design. Whether it was art or extreme dedication, surf culture has never been the same. They are masters of a form of magic: walking on water, floating on the ocean's frivolous and unpredictable arms.

The history of surfing is a long and complicated thing even though it is not very old in the USA. No one really knows where or how surfing started. Some say that it originated in Polynesia, then migrated into Samoa and New Guinea, then traveled to Tahiti and lastly Hawaii. By 'surfing' I mean standing on a wooden board; there were probably multiple origins of body surfing and boogie boarding or knee boarding.¹

The earliest U.S record of surfing is by Lieutenant James King. James King was Lieutenant under Captain James Cook. They voyaged out in the Pacific to make the first-ever European appearance in Hawaii during 1778. Lieutenant James King was able to fill two full pages full about Hawaiian surfing in his ship's log. On one of his pages he wrote, "The greatest number are generally overtaken by the break of the swell, the force of which they avoid, diving and swimming under the water out of its impulse. By such like exercises, these men may be said to be almost amphibious." This was the first European account of surfing. Soon after he recorded this he left Hawaii on his ship The Discovery and sailed home.²

Surfing was in a large part incorporated into every aspect of the ancient Hawaiian culture. From myths to religion, surfing was a high honor. Chiefs or Kings were the most likely to be out surfing, showing of their skills. Common men who were good at surfing were made famous for how they handled the ocean. These men were gifted with the name Kahuna. To be a Kahuna is to be a spiritual leader like a shaman, or just a wise man. Since mostly only people of high class surfed, it was called the "The Sport of Kings."³

In ancient Hawaii they used only wooden surfboards. At this time they used heavier woods to make their boards, making the average board 10 to 11 feet long and easily over 100 pounds. Ancient surfing was largely dominated by men, making it rare for something like the legend of Kelea. A beautiful Hawaiian local girl was captured by chief Lolale and made his wife all because of her outstanding surf skills. Seeing how Kelea begged to be back in the ocean, he let her leave after she provided him with some children. Soon after leaving him for the coast Kelea married Kalamakua and gave him one child. This legend is unique because the girl was good at surfing and respected for it.⁴

Women played a big role in the development of surf culture, but tend to be overshadowed by the many male surfers. The first place to recognize women as professional surfers was Hawaii. During the 1955 Makaha International Surfing Championship, the first women's division was instituted. Unfortunately not many women participated which resulted in poor media. Margo Godfrey is one girl who helped to pioneer women's surfing. She won many heats, including one in Puerto Rico, which

¹ "SURFING FOR LIFE -- History of Surfing." SURFING FOR LIFE -- History of Surfing. N.p., n.d. Web. 30 Apr. 2014.

² Ibid

³ Ibid

⁴ "Legends - Hawaii History - Surfing." Legends - Hawaii History - Surfing. N.p., n.d. Web. 01 May 2014.

helped to gain women more publicity.⁵ By 1975 the Lancers World Cup in Hawaii was rewarding both women and men with the same amount of prize money. This left some upset men in the crowd and some happy women. Still to this day women struggle with getting recognition, but it is better than the 20th century. Now women have to deal with a stereotype that is very sexualizing. Surf culture often makes women into sex symbols. For example, Alana Blanchard is among the world's top ten best surfers, but is most famous for her body and the fact she looks great in her teeny bikinis. One magazine article actually called Alana Blanchard the "sex symbol of surfing." I wish that she could say no to articles like that because she is not known for her surfing but for her body, and is a part of the reason that girl surfers are sexualized.⁶ Men somehow just fail to see the fact that she is an amazing surfer and a very talented young lady; they would rather look at her butt instead.⁷

Another example is Bethany Hamilton, who is famous for the fact that she lost her arm to a shark and survived. I did not even know she existed until a movie was made about her journey as a one-armed surfer. I do have a lot of respect for her and her unwavering spirituality, but why wasn't she recognized for her skill until she became known for only having one arm? She was just as good a surfer with two arms.⁸

I believe the biggest pioneers for women's surfing were Joyce Hoffman, Marge Calhoun, and my personal favorite, Lisa Anderson. Anderson is a four-time world champion, and helped to give women's surfing a name. If there was ever a girl that surfed like a man it was she, and she knew it. The reason I say that is because she surfed with all the power and strength of a man, *and* with the finesse of a woman. She is an inspiration for women all over the world—this is her biggest impact on surf culture. She gave women the incentive to get out there and do what they want, showing them that age and gender meant nothing in this situation. Anderson had two kids while she was still competing and dominating. She may not be the best surfer in the world but she was one of many more great women to come.⁹

Kelly Slater is hands-down one of the best surfers in the world. He is not just some surf star—he is more (well at least he makes a lot more money). Before Slater, surfers were not respected or looked at as professional athletes. Now they are highly paid professionals with uncontrollable prowess, ripping and shredding like the athletes that they are. They have been introduced to limitless possibilities full of blue crystal clear waves all over the globe. Slater was like a channel to extreme stardom and as long as there are waves to be surfed the pipe master will be out there. Oh, and did I mention that he's won 9 pipe masters and 11 world championships? Yes—and I do not think he is stopping there.¹⁰

Personally, my favorite surfer is Tom Curren. It's really hard to say who's the best surfer in the world but I know that even the people considered the best in the world, like Slater, wish that they could surf like Curren. He is best known for having a special relationship with the waves. What amazes me is that he is probably the best surfer in the

⁵ "Surfing A to Z." Margo Oberg Biography and Photos. N.p., n.d. Web. 01 May 2014.

⁶ "Alana Blanchard | SURFER Magazine." SURFER Magazine Alana Blanchard Comments. N.p., n.d. Web. 02 May 2014.

⁷ Kampion, Drew. *The Way of the Surfer*. New York: Harry N. Abram, 2003. Print.

⁸ Dir. Bethany Hamilton, Sheryl Berk, and Rick Bundschuh. N.d.

⁹ Kampion

¹⁰ "Surfing A to Z."

world yet so little people know of his existence. Curren was often referred to as a “soul surfer” because he would show up here and there and somehow always catch the best wave of the day. He kept to himself with his nonchalant glance and his cool temper, while he was swiftly redefining surfers in the 1980s. I think it would be really hard to know you are the best, and have everyone else know it, yet still remain as humble as he did. He has my respect for everything from his attitude in a heat to his everyday life. Even though Slater and Curren have won many pro titles there are so many other surfers out there that are really good and do it just for the pure joy of feeling the salty ocean’s crest. They deserve respect as well.¹¹

One thing I do not think deserves respect is the media. In surfing especially you will find that they are really focused on men, and they only throw in some things here and there about women. Not only is that bad enough, but I find that most of the time the women who are featured are usually beautiful and are portrayed more like models than athletes. They are so many girls that I want to read about for their surfing accomplishments, not for their bikini bodies. Believe it or not there are actually more things to a girl than that. I think that pro women athletes should be given more respect by the media, and we should decide for ourselves if we think they have “hot bods.” I know that when I look at a surfing magazine I look at it for surfing. Right now if you were to Google search Alana Blanchard you would find tons of pictures of her in bikinis and you would probably wonder if she was not just a bikini model; you would probably have never been able to tell she was a surfer at all. Now on the other hand when you Google John Florence or Jay Moriarity (RIP Jay) you can definitely tell that they are surfers. It’s ok that the media recognizes good bodies; I just wish that whole articles or photo shoots were not about that.

When you think of a typical surfer girl, what is a song that comes to mind? Is it “Surfer Girl” by the Beach Boys? This song is great and I am a huge fan of the whole surf music genre. Actually, surfing is one of the only sports to have a specific genre and art type. This all started when the Beach Boys invented California Rock; they rocked the 20th century with their beachy tunes.¹² A more modern surf artist is Jack Johnson. Born in Hawaii and raised in Southern California, how could he not surf? His dad, Jeff Johnson, was a legendary surfer, so Jack was practically raised on a surfboard. One thing I really like about his music is his meaningful lyrics and carefree vibe. Jack was discovered when he made a song or two for a surfing movie. Then people started asking for his music so he made an album. I do not think he has made the *most* impact on surf music, but he definitely set a different tone for surf music: it’s like an acoustic folk music that has the same free spirit that surfing has.¹³

Surf has been recognized not only as a sport but also as an art form. One man in particular had an impact on surf art. John Severson was a surfer, artist, and a filmmaker. He is best known for his multiple surf movies and the unique posters that came with them. Severson changed people's view of surfers and made them realize that there’s more to it than being a beach bum. He is most famous for “Surfer” magazine, which he and some buddies created.¹⁴

¹¹ Kampion

¹² "The Beach Boys Biography | Rolling Stone." Rolling Stone. N.p., n.d. Web. 02 May 2014.

¹³ Bio.com. A&E Networks Television, n.d. Web. 02 May 2014.

¹⁴ Kampion

Art Brewer and Jeff Divine are photographers that also like to give you unique perspectives on surfing. Whether they are shooting from underneath the wave's curl or out on the shore, they know how to capture the perfect moment. I believe that Brewer shoots portraits really well and Divine shoots surfing in action better. If you go on both of their web pages there are multiple surf photo sections. I realized, however, when I was scrolling through these photos, that there were scarcely any photos of women athletes.¹⁵

I believe most surfers strive for good vibes and chill smiles. Unfortunately not all surfers are like this and for the past couple decades some top beaches have been very dangerous for surfers. It makes me really sad to know that young teens are going to the beach to get some rad waves might be at high risk of being assaulted by a surf gang. Surf gangs like WolfPak claim ownership of famous surf spots, like the Banzai pipeline, and keep strict rules; if you do not follow their gang rules, punishments are given accordingly. There are also surf gangs such as the Bra Boys that are hardly worthy of the title "gang;" some of them are troublemakers, but for the most part its just a large group of guys who like to hang out on the beach and enjoy each other's company. This gang especially is a large part of the surf culture in Australia. A couple pro surfers have come out of gangs like these.¹⁶

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Could you imagine spending your whole life on a beach, becoming like a piece of sand or a part of the ocean? My friend and I joke around all the time that we are still not fully convinced that mermaids do not exist. When I am out in the ocean I see people, like myself, who just want to spend every minute frolicking with the waves or whispering to the starfish. For me to imagine that there was a sport out there that involved the ocean was really cool. To actually walk on water just sounds amazing. I was thirteen when I first experienced this feeling. My friend had invited me down to see the ocean's roaring face; of course I could not decline an invitation to go explore a new beach. She mentioned that her dad was bringing his surfboards and I responded with, "Whoa! Do you think he could teach me how?" We got there and hopped out with all our gear. As we walked down to the beach, I could smell the ocean and feel the spray as the ocean spit in my face. Never looking back, my friend and I approached what seemed to have been our destiny. I was so ready, but as soon as I thought I could run into the mouth of the monster, her dad stopped me. He said, "Slow down, you do not even know how to stand." This comment made me question what he was talking about. He laid out his board and took a look at me then back at the board. He said, "Alright here's what you got to do. Lay down right now and see if you can pop up into the correct stance." I was a little confused as to why we were still on land but I did what he said.

Beginner mistake number one: do not go from lying down, to your knees, and then onto your feet. This is a really bad habit to get into, and it makes the getting up harder and can throw you off balance. We grabbed the boards and ran out into the ocean.

¹⁵ "Art Brewer | Photographer." Art Brewer | Photographer. N.p., n.d. Web. 02 May 2014.

¹⁶ "Bra Boys 2007 Full Movie." YouTube. YouTube, 28 Feb. 2014. Web. 02 May 2014.

“So now,” her dad said, “try to feel the waves, how the ocean pulls and pushes you.” The best thing to do at this point was to keep paddling. I had to get used to lying on this board and paddling, which is a lot harder than it sounds.

Beginner mistake number two: do not over do it. Understand when your body says ‘enough’ even if it is addicting or you're a try-hard. It was time my first wave had come, and my friend's dad was holding onto my board to make sure I took off at the right time. I was not nervous I was merely numb from suspense. “1, 2, 3 GO!” It was time. I felt the wave rush under me and swallow me with its energy. Quickly I went from lying to squatting, and stood up on my first wave ever. After that I had become addicted; like a meth addict I needed more waves to get my high. Hours and hours went by and I had only stood up twice. Finally it was time to come in. After many hours I really did forget how to stand, on shore at least. We got out of the water and my hips started hurting. I pulled up my rash guard to find long black bruises aligning my hipbone.

Beginner mistake number three: do not use wax sparingly. I never waxed my board enough. Besides the point that I was a newborn beginner, I probably could have stood up more if my feet had more to grip. It was all too often that I found myself doing splits over the board because my feet were slipping off of the side. This was also a new phenomenon for me.

My friend's dad was extremely helpful and I never would have had that experience without him and for that I am eternally grateful. Although he helped me tremendously with technique, he never said anything to me where I was like, “Wow I will never forget that.” There was this one time though that I was surfing with the same family and her cousin was there this time. He was quite experienced, and I was...well...too obviously a beginner. I guess out of pity he approached me and said, “When I was younger and my dad was teaching me how to surf he would always say, don't forget to stand!” Again, something so simple that even infants can do it. When he said this to me I was thinking in my head, “Real helpful, Patrick.” Never mind the fact that I was hoping he did not notice how awful I was. The next wave came and that was when it struck me: his advice was so helpful! I really did forget that I needed to stand because I was so caught up trying to feel out the right time to stand. That advice is something I will never forget.

Surfing has given me a place in life. I don't know how to explain it but I think that doing surf art or board shaping has helped to give my life meaning. I hope that one day, women will be able to be recognized for their surfing and not their bodies, or at least be recognized for both. The good part of this is that women athletes can use the lack of media attention as a motive to do something so great that the media can't help but acknowledge them as pro athletes. I wonder if the world will ever get to a point where women might actually rule over men. Does that thought scare you?

Additional Resources

"Jack Johnson's Hawaiian Fairytale." Billboard. N.p., n.d. Web. 02 May 2014.

"Jeff Divine Surf Photography." Jeff Divine Surf Photography. N.p., n.d. Web. 02 May 2014.

"The Surfers Journal Biographies - Tom Curren & Kelly Slater." YouTube. YouTube, 19 Feb. 2014. Web. 01 May 2014.

"The World's Notorious Surf Gangs." IndoSurfLife.com. N.p., n.d. Web. 02 May 2014.