

new balance

997

997 new balance

SNEAKER
EVENTS



MADE IN USA
M997GY

001/997



MAIZO



new balance 997

In the 1970s, as the fledgling athletic goods industry found its feet, sneakers were considered utilitarian equipment for specific sporting purposes. But as the 1980s rolled around, fuelled by the jogging phenomenon and a booming American economy, the idea of athletic footwear as high-tech luxury items with pricing to match began to coalesce. Brands invested heavily in their research and design departments, using razor-sharp marketing hyperbole to enhance their claims of innovation and technical superiority. In response, savvy consumers demanded more from their footwear and were happy to pay the price.



Whether you were a baby-faced Ivy League grad entering the workforce or a long-distance runner pounding the pavement in solitude, one brand featured prominently in upmarket rotations. New Balance might be a low-key operator with a humble disposition, but their signature combination of straightforward style and peak performance has always appealed to discerning athletes and weekend warriors alike. With a product development strategy based on the ancient art of incremental evolution – and with basic navy and grey as their corporate livery – the brand has always excelled at playing the long game.

At the apex of the New Balance line-up is the 99x series. And standing at the summit of that numerically erratic sneaker monolith – at least in the eyes of hardcore brand loyalists – is the 997. Designed by Steven Smith in 1990, the 997's crisp midsole, jacked-up heel

height and elegantly raked proportions are a sublime combination that has more than stood the test of time. Long considered a modern masterpiece by vintage sneaker aficionados,

the 997 also shouldered a mysterious aura of legendary proportions.

In 2019, Steven Smith's magnum opus is more relevant than ever. The 997's sharp-toed profile predated today's Instagram fixation with nose-down 'wedge' toeboxes by close to 30 years. On the eve of the model's third wave, as the classic OG design mutates into a stunning pair of modern iterations, this is the official story of how the 997 arrived in a blaze of glory before disappearing off the face of the earth for two decades.

Woody
Sneaker Freaker

1990
M997 box

8

NEW BALANCE 997
CULT CLASSIC
MADE IN USA

40

THE ORIGINATOR
STEVEN SMITH
997 DESIGNER

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HAT-DOWN & SNEAKERS-UP
POGGY
UNITED ARROWS & SONS

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THE LEGACY OF TRUST
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THE THRILL OF THE HUNT
COLLECTORS
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RUNNER'S WORLD

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MADE WITH PRIDE
DEON POINT
CONCEPTS

124

MADE WITH PRIDE
BRYAN CALVERO
PERIOD CORRECT



1990

Team New Balance run crew

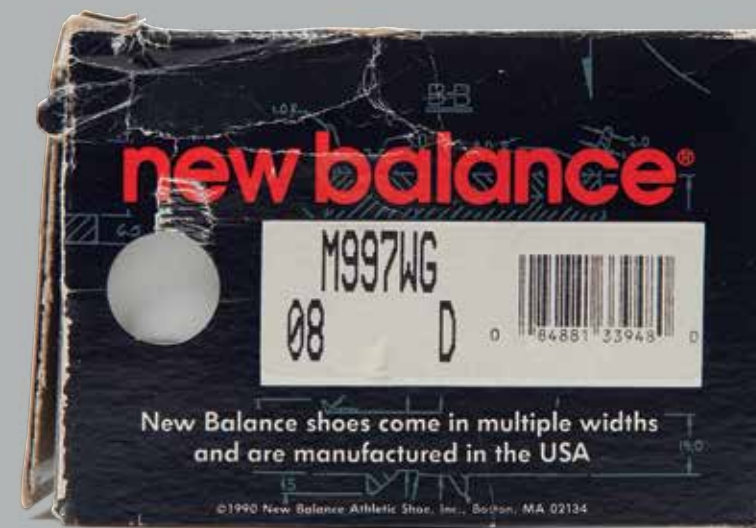


Words
TS Fox & Woody

NEW BALANCE 997

CULT CLASSIC

MADE IN USA



Photography

Dan Purnell, Jason Paparoulas, Jene Conrad, Manuel Dominguez, Shunhang Li & Tomás Arriegas

99X LINEAGE

Throughout the 1980s, New Balance established a reputation as the go-to brand for defiant purists. While the multi-faceted '5 series' of footwear took off-road joggers to 'a land that pavement forgot', the 99x range was all about top-shelf urban performance. Flaunting the latest and greatest engineering and cushioning technology available, the 99x promised road runners the best of everything.

In 1982, New Balance released the 990. From the Motion Control Device in the heel to dual-density midsoles, Vibram 'Superflex' outsoles and reflective 3M highlights – a world-first in footwear – the 990 design was packed full of cutting-edge components. Pair all that with luxurious pig suede and you had the first running shoe to smash the \$100 price point.

Thankfully, runners didn't trip on the triple-figure ask. Ponying up a 'Benjamin' proved no obstacle and the 990 flew off shelves. The fact that they were made in New Balance factories on American soil definitely added to the homegrown mystique – and the sense of value for money! As New Balance's provocative press advertisements from the era promised, 'We've always found quality control is a lot easier when the factory is in the next room, not the next continent'. Now that's the kind of ballsy marketing statement you'll never read in today's risk-averse corporate climate.

Despite the popularity of the 990, New Balance was in no rush to introduce a successor, waiting until 1986 to release the 995. Note: the 99x numbering system is clearly not based on logic – even Alan Turing couldn't crack the code! The sophomore design was more of a subtle 2.0 upgrade than another breakthrough bonanza, but the 995 added a few important tweaks to the 990's winning formula. Replacing the die-cut Superflex sole with a size-specific design, New Balance designers introduced pre-moulded ENCAP cushioning that allowed the dual-density EVA to sit lower in the heel for better flex.



1998

'We don't live by fashion'
M998 advertisement



1987

M996 advertisement



1990

OG M997

99X SERIES TIMELINE

Thanks to Jason Paparoulas and the Up There crew for their help with this timeline.



M997

The elevated heel pad was the 997's defining visual feature. With a rugged Polyurethane midsole structure that housed both ENCAP and C-CAP inserts, the 997 tech-sheet was fully loaded. XAR-1000 carbon rubber heel pads and the Hytel thermoplastic 'collar lockdown strap' were other innovations introduced by designer Steven Smith.



M999

The M999 was an evolutionary update. One minor performance improvement was the relocation of ABZORB closer to the point of impact in the foot.

1982



M990

'The original 990 was designed as a city running shoe. Grey suede allowed fashion-forward runners to log their miles without getting their shoes dirty. The 990 also had the hybrid appeal of a casual, lifestyle shoe. The concept stuck and the grey colour scheme became synonymous with New Balance.'

CHRIS DAVIS (NEW BALANCE)

1986



M996

The M996 was a ground-up rebuild, with a central pod of softer rubber added for enhanced cushioning, as well as a carbon crash pad in the heel.

1988



M995

The M995 was finally introduced in 1986 with subtle, yet significant, changes. The outsole was updated to a size-specific piece, while dual density EVA refined the cushioning distribution.

1990



M998

In 1993, New Balance struck up a partnership with Dupont and Bridgestone to develop ENCAP II. The 998 was the first in the 99x series to utilise the new cushioning concept, which was renamed ABZORB.

1993



M990v2 GR

1998 heralded a new 'tech design' formula that would strongly influence the future direction of the 99x series. The moulded midfoot bubble denoted the use of ABZORB.

1996

1998

2001



M991

2001 marked a change in 99x naming conventions, with updated models filling in the missing numerals between 990 and 995 (except the 994!) The M991 highlighted the use of ABZORB with a midsole window.

2006

2008

M990v3

The M990v3 arrived in 2012. The striking silhouette once again featured premium pigskin, mesh and ENCAP cushioning, proving just how perfect the combination of materials is. The 990 has attracted a cult following in Washington DC, Baltimore and Philadelphia that endures to this day.

2009



M990v4 GL4

With chunked-out styling and a perfect combination of cushioning and stability, the 990v4 is the quintessential 'dad shoe'.

2012



997H

Like the 997S, the 997H is a new-gen model. Accessible, lightweight and easy on the eye, the 997 heritage-based design evokes classic New Balance design principles. The midsole branding is definitely prominent!

2016

2018

SINCE THE 990'S INTRODUCTION BACK IN 1982, NEW BALANCE'S 99X SERIES HAS SIGNIFIED THE RELENTLESS QUEST FOR INNOVATION. TESTING CONSUMER DEMAND WITH AN AVALANCHE OF TECH CREDENTIALS AND SUITABLY SKY-HIGH PRICE POINTS, NEW BALANCE DESIGNERS ENGAGED A SLEEK GREY-ON-GREY PALETTE TO UNIFY THE PROGRESSIVE AESTHETIC. FROM THE ORIGINAL 990 ALL THE WAY UP TO THE NEW-GEN 997S AND 997H, HERE'S HOW THE SERIES HAS EVOLVED OVER THE PAST FOUR DECADES.

M992

New Balance introduced ABZORB Stability Insock technology to improve the fit and feel of the M992. Made in the USA, the model was offered in a staggering 78 different size and width combinations.



M995GR



M993

The M993 refined naming conventions by implementing a 'version' naming structure. This was another classic 99x release.

CM997.5

Fusing the sole of the 998 with the 997 upper, the 997.5 was the first official hybrid in the 99x family. The model was first released as a collaboration with Japanese retailer United Arrows & Sons.

997S

The 997S was a radical departure for the 997 series. The design directly references New Balance heritage, but brings the aesthetic into the 21st Century with an outrageous heel concept and sock construction.

We go to any width to build the perfect shoe.

Athletic shoe companies make a dazzling variety of claims about their shoes these days.

In fact, there's probably only one claim you won't hear: that their shoes fit.

Happily for the feet of America, though, there's an exception. New Balance, the shoe company that offers a full range of widths from 2A to 4E.

It means if you're a serious runner who wants an equally serious shoe, you can choose the M997. It cushions your feet with some of the most sophisticated technology available: ENCAP,® an EVA core for cushioning, surrounded by polyurethane for stability.

But just as importantly, you'll enjoy a shoe that won't punish you if your feet happen to be a little wider or narrower than others.

After all, New Balance might offer all the technology in the world.

But all the technology in the world won't help if your shoes don't fit.

new balance 
A more intelligent approach to building shoes.

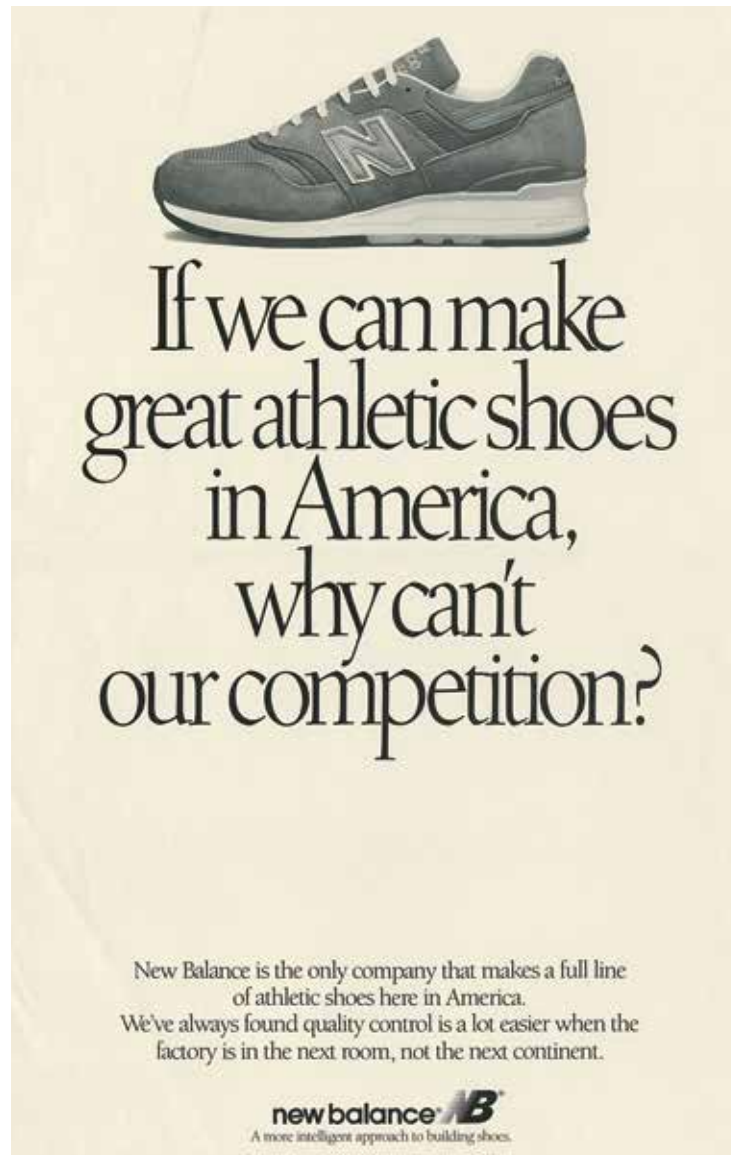
WIDTH SIZING CHART						
	MEN	2A	B	D	2E	4E
RUNNING	M1500					
	M997					
	M900					
	M850					
	M840					
	M740					
	M677					
	M577					
	M510					
	M495					



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For more information call 1-800-253-SHOE.

‘WHILE THE 995 AND 996 REPRESENTED SMALL STEPS, THE 997 WAS A FAR MORE AMBITIOUS UNDERTAKING’



1988 delivered a more drastic ground-up overhaul for the 99x series. Designer Steven Smith was handed the reins and instructed to modernise the 996 at all costs. Slimmer logos gave the branding a more refined edge, while a fresh visual language saw the overlaying suede panels at the rear follow the diagonal line of the redesigned heel cup. Soft rubber pods were inserted into the outsole for enhanced comfort and cushioning. Overall, the suite of changes gave the series a more souped-up vibe. The natural evolution of the 99x series was starting to take shape.

1992
M997 advertisement

with their most progressive statement yet. Steven Smith once again steered the project, working alongside a compact development team to bring the clean-sheet design to life. While the 995 and 996 represented small steps, the 997 was a far more ambitious undertaking.

Like a sleek racecar tested in a wind tunnel, the slippery 997 looked fast even while standing still. The elevated heel pad was the 997's defining visual

ENTER THE 997

As the madcap 80s wound down, New Balance kicked off the 90s

‘KILLER LOOKS MADE THE 997 A PRIME TARGET FOR A RENEWED FOCUS ON AMERICAN-MADE QUALITY’



motif, but Smith's design was more significant for what it didn't include. The 99x family had previously exploited exposed die-cut EVA midsoles, but the 997 ditched the traditional foam cushioning in favour of a radical Polyurethane shell that housed dual-density ENCAP inserts. A chunk of pliable C-CAP ran from the toe through to the medial midfoot, with removeable arch supports completing the cushioning quartet.

The detailing was also richly nuanced. Resplendent in grey-on-grey suede, the dimpled 'basketball-style' leather juxtaposed with the minimalist sig-

1992
M997 advertisement

nature scheme added texture to the 997's smooth composition. Experimental tri-density outsoles, including an XAR-1000 carbon rubber heel pad, increased long-range durability and added grip. The Hytrell thermoplastic 'collar lockdown strap' was another innovation that added a dose of vis-tech to the mix. The strap was designed to work like a sway bar that connected the top eyelets to the heel counter for added stability. As Steven Smith recalls, 'Sometimes the features designed for performance end up becoming the iconic part people remember the most!'

‘THE 997 WAS DEFINITELY A BIG STEP FORWARD TECHNOLOGY-WISE. MOULDED UPPER COMPONENTS, MULTIPLE DENSITY MIDSOLES AND THAT SUPER-THICK, BLOWN-RUBBER SOLE MADE IT A STANDOUT’

Steven Smith – 997 Designer

LADIES FIRST

The 997 was also the first 99x runner produced by New Balance specifically for female runners. Easily spotted thanks to the application of unique ‘mini NB’ logos, these Newbies for ladies are highly coveted by collectors. Hopefully we’ll see this quirky design feature restored to the New Balance roster in the near future.

Highly technical and supremely versatile, the 997 may have been a top performer on the running track, but one of its key selling points was the sheer variety of sizes offered by New Balance. Available in widths 2A through 4E, New Balance produced a 997 for every pair of feet, something the brand trumpeted loudly in running magazines. In a *Runner’s World* advertisement from 1991, New Balance issued an ominous warning: ‘All the technology in the world won’t help if your shoes don’t fit!’

Killer looks and unparalleled comfort made the 997 a prime target for a renewed focus on American-made quality and there was no better spokesman than the POTUS himself. Google that juicy titbit for an insight into 997 history that we simply can’t reprint here for legal reasons!

THE RETIREMENT

The 997’s original trio of releases – light grey, white with royal blue, and a dark charcoal edition – remained in New Balance’s pro-rotation for three or four years. Like many of the finer things in life, you don’t know what you’ve got until it’s gone and by 1994, the 997 was officially retired from active duty. According to sneakerhead conjecture, New Balance’s 997 factory was relocated at some point and the all-important templates and moulds required to reproduce the shoe disappeared in the transition. Since the cost of refabricating the tooling would have been prohibitive, the 997 was quietly pensioned off. Or so the urban myth goes.

Steven Smith moved on from his job at New Balance shortly after the release of the 997. Aside from a few obscure Korean-made models released in the mid- to late-90s, the 997 was AWOL from New Balance catalogues for more than two decades.



1990
997 (Prototype)



1991
W997 (Women)



1991
M997WT (Prototype)

TRAINING

衝撃吸収+安定性 優先

アキレスティップ

スコッチライト

ヒールのカウンター

(M.C.D)モーションコントロールデバイス

XAR-1000+Mカーボンラバーヒール

ハイトレイル=ストラップ

一体成型ミッドソール(ENCAP+ウェッジ+2デンシティC-CAP+ミッドソール)

MODEL: M997

UPPER

- フレックステンデッドサドル/エクステンデッドサドルの機能をさらに発展。最前部に切りを入れ、屈曲性を一層高めています。
- フレックスティップ/踏付部の屈曲性を高め横ブレを防ぎます。
- トゥウィグル/縦指によるアッパーの破損を防ぐ独自の爪先デザイン。
- スウェイパー/屈曲部で爪先補強材とサドルを一体化し、横ブレを防いで安定性を高めます。
- ハイトレイル=ストラップ/走行時の安定性をより強化するために甲部をしっかりとホールドする新機構。(M997, M577)
- アキレスティップ/踵はアキレス腱の自然な動きを可能にし、疲労や傷害からアキレス腱を守ります。

OUTSOLE

- XAR-1000+Mカーボンラバーヒールパッド/新配合により耐摩耗性を飛躍的に向上させた画期的な新素材。
- コントラバランス構造/安定性とグリップ性に優れたアウトソール構造。アウトソール全体にかかる体重を中心方向へと集めるトラクション効果を生み出します。

INSOLE

- 立体成型カップインソール/軽く屈曲性に富む多層式構造など、立体成型によるカップインソールが、理想的なフィッティングと適度なクッション性を実現。表面は吸水性や耐摩耗性に優れた素材を使用。高い放熱・発汗効果により足まめがでるのを防止します。
- ヒールクレイドル構造/安定性をより高めるために、踵部をしっかりと包み込むような構造にしたインソール。(M1500)

LASTING

- フラットラスタイング/ラストにアッパーを縫せ、アッパーとフラットボードを接着する方式。高い走行安定性が特長です。
- スリッパラスタイング/筒靴の製法による方式で、軽くフレキシビリティに優れ、包み込むようなフィット感をもたらします。
- コンビネーションラスタイング/爪先踏付部はスリッパラスタイング、踵部はフラットラスタイングと両者の長所を組み合わせた方式。フレキシビリティは安定性、優れたフィット感を実現します。

MIDSOLE

- 一体成型ミッドソール(ENCAP+ウェッジ+2デンシティC-CAP+ミッドソール)/ミッドソールの基本フレームは、2デンシティ(C-CAP)を採用。さらにウェッジ部分には、E.V.A.を衝撃吸収・分散性に高むポリウレタンで包みこんだENCAP。踵部の周りには、安定性を高めるM.C.D.を備えて一体成型したミッドソール。オーバープロモーション+サビネーションを防ぐ優れた安定性とともに、卓越したクッション性を実現します。(M997)

- アクセルパッド/硬度の異なる素材を踏付部に組み合わせた構造。軟らかい部分が走行時の屈曲性を高めるとともに、硬い部分がキック力を向上。推進力を大幅にアップします。(M840, M1500, COMP601)

- リバウンドウェッジ/踵部後端に軟らかい素材(C-CAP)をクオビ状に配置し、着地時に踵が受ける衝撃を吸収します。(M840, M482, M530)

- モーションコントロールデバイス(M.C.D.)/踵部の安定性を向上させ、オーバープロモーション(過回内)、オーバーサビネーション(過回外)を防ぎます。(M997, M577, M1500, M458, W458, M530)

- カウンターリインフォース(C.R.)/踵部の安定性を一段と高め、足首をしっかり保護。捻挫から足首を守ります。(M495, M840, M640, K1500, M470, M445, W445)



3デンシティスポンジラバーアウトソール

トゥウィグル

バリアブルレーシング

フレックステンデッドサドル

スウェイパー

スコッチライト

フレックスティップ

M997

衝撃吸収性、走行安定性、耐久性に優れた先進の一体成型ミッドソールを搭載した高級トレーニングモデル。

'90NEW

■WIDTH: EE
■LENGTH: 25.5cm - 27.5cm
■COLOR: グレー
■WEIGHT: 370g
■PRICE: ¥24,000 MADE IN USA



- UPPER — ●デュオ/ビークスピン ●フレックステンデッドサドル
●ハイトレイル=ストラップ ●フレックスティップ ●スウェイパー ●トゥウィグル
●バリアブルレーシング ●スコッチライト ●アキレスティップ ●スコッチライト
- MIDSOLE — ●一体成型ミッドソール(ENCAP+ウェッジ+2デンシティC-CAP+ミッドソール) ●モーションコントロールデバイス(M.C.D.)
- OUTSOLE — ●3デンシティスポンジラバー ●XAR-1000+Mカーボンラバーヒール
- INSOLE — ●3層構造クッションカップインソール(Recessed)
- LASTING — ●スリッパラスタイング

W997

優れたクッション性と安定性を実現する一体成型ミッドソール搭載の女性アスリート向け高級トレーニングモデル。

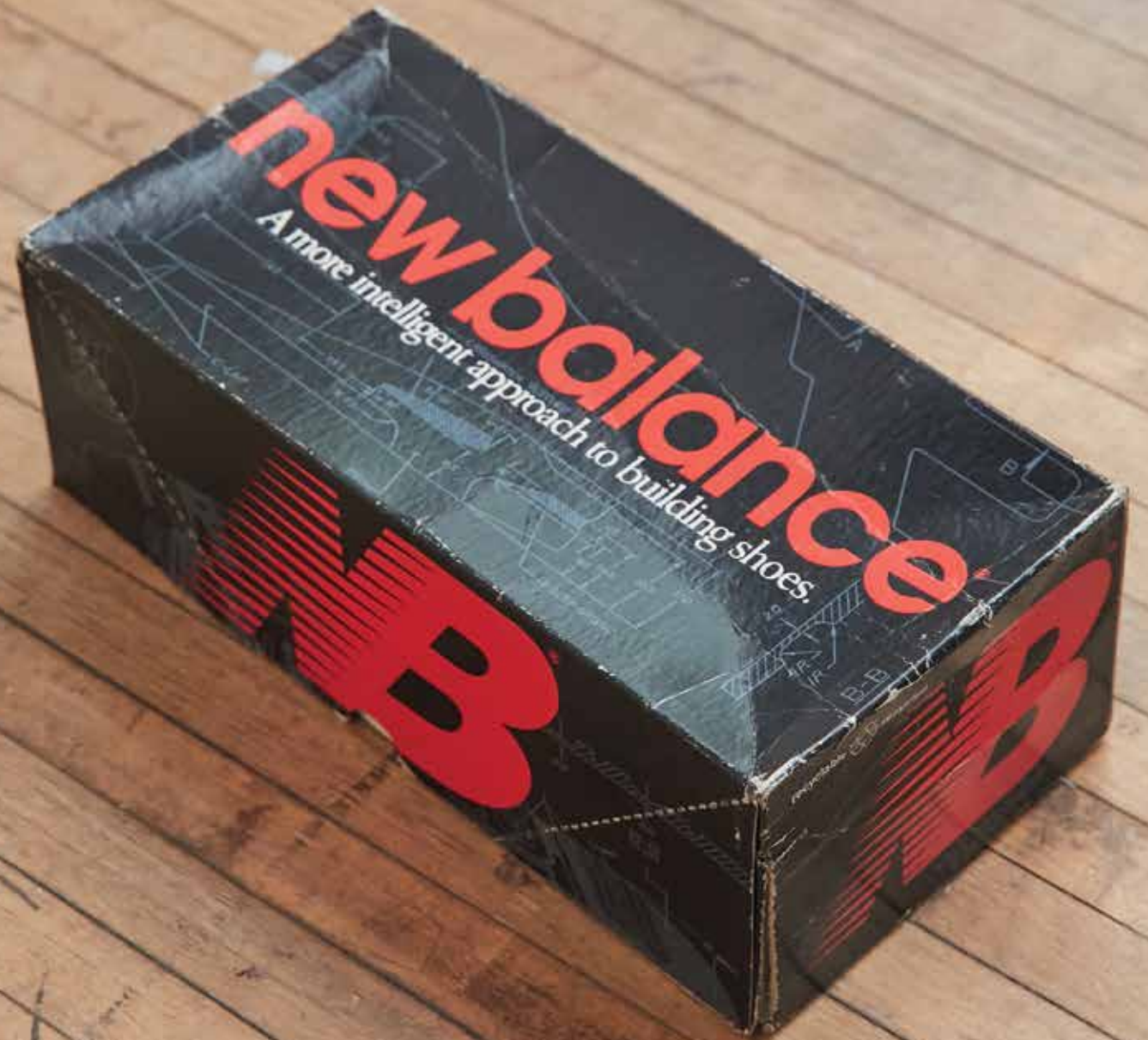
'90NEW

■WIDTH: D
■LENGTH: 21.5cm - 23.5cm
■COLOR: グレー
■WEIGHT: 270g
■PRICE: ¥22,000 MADE IN USA



- UPPER — ●デュオ/ビークスピン ●フレックステンデッドサドル
●フレックスティップ ●スウェイパー ●トゥウィグル ●バリアブルレーシング
●スコッチライト ●アキレスティップ ●スコッチライト
- MIDSOLE — ●一体成型ミッドソール(ENCAP+ウェッジ+2デンシティC-CAP+ミッドソール) ●モーションコントロールデバイス(M.C.D.) ●ホースシュー
- OUTSOLE — ●3デンシティスポンジラバー ●XAR-1000+Mカーボンラバーヒール
- INSOLE — ●3層構造クッションカップインソール(Recessed)
- LASTING — ●スリッパラスタイング

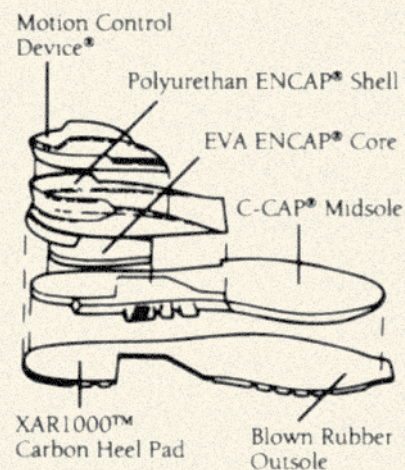
‘WITH SO FEW OG PAIRS LEFT IN THE WILD – MOST OF WHICH ARE BEDEVILLED BY DECOMPOSING MIDSOLES DUE TO LONG-TERM EXPOSURE TO OXYGEN AND HUMIDITY – THE 997 WAS AN EXCEEDINGLY RARE SPECIMEN BY THE TIME THE NEW MILLENNIUM ARRIVED’



THE MODERN MILLENNIUM

With so few OG pairs left in the wild – most of which are bedevilled by decomposing midsoles due to long-term exposure to oxygen and humidity – the 997 was an exceedingly rare specimen by the time the new millennium arrived. Vintage pairs were jealously hoarded by hardcore collectors and dusted off for ultimate bragging rights in online forums. While other celebrated New Balance models, such as the 1500, hogged the limelight with global collaborations and Made in UK hype, the 997 was strictly an underground delicacy.

As noted by collector Matt Kyte on page 72, a notorious Crooked Tongues thread circa 2008 contained a claim that the 997 had once been made in New



1990
997 cushioning
diagram

Balance's UK factory. For many New Balance nerds, discovery of a one-off that rewrites the history books is a joyous occasion, but the inconclusive photos tendered as evidence meant the news was rightly greeted with scepticism. Since there are many legit examples of New Balance shoes that shouldn't 'technically' exist, the safest motto in this instance is 'never say never', but after enquiring with the folks at the Flimby factory, we can safely confirm that this myth is well and truly busted.

While the 'Made in UK 997' will go down in history as a false flag, internet chatter continued to bubble away. Fans demanded to know why the 997 had never been retroed and what New Balance was going to do about it. The pressure was starting to build.

1990
997WG box

1991

W997 (Women)

‘EASILY SPOTTED THANKS TO THE APPLICATION OF UNIQUE ‘MINI NB’ LOGOS, THESE NEWBIES FOR LADIES ARE HIGHLY COVETED BY COLLECTORS’



‘COMPARED TO THE CURRENT TREND OF AUTOMATION AND GLOBAL PRODUCTION, NEW BALANCE IS STICKING WITH ITS ‘MADE IN USA’ RANGE OF SNEAKERS, WHICH IS APPRECIATED BY JAPANESE PEOPLE’

Poggy – United Arrows & Sons



TWO BIRDS, ONE STONE

In late 2008, the 997 nameplate was unexpectedly refreshed, albeit in circumstances that would add another ambiguous chapter to the narrative. Japan's United Arrows & Sons approached New Balance with a request to bring the 997 back from hibernation as a collaborative project. After some robust discussions around the cost of recreating sole units and the definition of amortisation, New Balance agreed to an unconventional compromise. They would take the 997 upper and Frankenstein it to the ABZORB-enhanced 998 sole unit, creating an all-new model known as the 997.5.

Apparently inspired by a heritage colour scheme seen on the NBX M900 runner from 1991, United Arrows & Sons licked the 997.5 in a coat of light grey suede with hot pink and purple pops. Sold exclusively at their own retail outlets in Japan, the hybrid model's dynamite looks and extreme exclusivity ensured it sold out and disappeared in a nanosecond.

1991
NBX M900
advertisement

While production numbers have never been officially revealed, it seems likely that just a few hundred pairs of this iconic Chimera exist. Adding an extra layer of bananas hype, paparazzi images of rap royalty rocking the 997.5 added an unlikely seal of approval. As Ronnie Fieg details on page 63, even he was forced to dig seriously deep to add a deadstock pair of the 'Beauty&Youth' 997.5 to his own rotation.

Despite the global frothability, the 997 trail went cold once again. In 2011, Japanese brand Nonnative released the 'Dune' 997.5. With cool sandy tones and fresh blue pops, this was another successful addition to the growing family, but the OG 997 was still nowhere to be seen.



2008
United Arrows & Sons x New Balance
997.5 'Beauty & Youth'



BACK IN THE GAME!

THE TRIUMPHANT RETURN

Despite an impressive reaction to the 997.5, it seemed the 997 story would not have a happy ending. However, thanks to a public lobbying campaign from diehards and sneaker boutique owners, and an infamous 'Bring it back!' petition started on Crooked Tongues, the pressure continued to mount. The rumour mill went into overdrive.

In January 2014, New Balance finally announced the 997 would make its long-awaited and triumphant return. After being a no-show for a total of 20 years straight, the OG 'Made in USA' 997 was back in the game.

In addition to the inaugural grey-on-grey OG editions, New Balance put their long-lost classic to work. In Boston, Deon Point from Concepts was pivotal in the revival, releasing a trio of elegant 997s that brought a sense of class to the occasion. The beautiful blushing 'Rosé' edition arrived in 2014, followed by the orange-swathed 'Luxury Goods' in 2015, and the minty-fresh 'City Rivalry' concept in 2016. As Deon notes on page 120, the timing was impeccable.



2018
M997 Re-Engineered

Released from 'Unicorn' status, the 997's mainstream profile soared.

In 2016, the 997.5 made a surprise return, with a select group of collaborators invited to work on the in-between design. Kith contributed the Greek-themed 'Mykonos' and 'Archipelago' make-ups, while Concepts hit back with an

'Esplanade' edition. Taiwanese store PHANTACi released a pink-white-black version as an Asia-exclusive. As a follow-up to the 'Tassie Devil' 998, Sneaker Freaker's antipodean-flavoured 'Tassie Tiger' 997.5 was a suitably aggressive beast.

The following year, New Balance delivered the 997 Re-Engineered. Capitalising on the popularity of sock-style sneaker design, the contemporary spin deconstructed 997 heritage by adding a neoprene bootie and lightweight REVlite soles to the ensemble. A series of well-considered general releases, including the 'Duck Camo', 'Coral Snake', 'Home Plate' and 'Coumarin' kept the 997 high-vis in hype circles. Highly regarded collaborations with Stance, J.Crew and Horween added a further layer of premium pizzazz.

TEMPLE OF GREY



2014
M997GY
(unreleased sample)



2014
M997GY



2015
M997GY2



997.5 COLLABORATIONS



2016
PHANTACi x New Balance
ML997HPH

997 COLLABORATIONS



2016
Horween x New Balance
M997BEXP



2012
Nonnative x New Balance
CM997 'Dune'



2017
Stance x New Balance
M997ST 'Made in USA'



2016
Sneaker Freaker x
New Balance ML997HSF
'Tassie Tiger'



2016
Concepts x
New Balance M997NSY
'NYC' City Rivalry

‘THE 997S IS BEAUTIFUL. I’VE SEEN A LOT IN MY 23 YEARS OF WORKING IN FOOTWEAR AND I KNOW GOOD TOOLING WHEN I SEE IT. THE MATERIALS ARE SUPER NICE AND THE SHOES ARE LIGHT, BUT NOT TOO LIGHT. WHEN YOU TOUCH AND FEEL AND WEAR THE 997S, THERE’S AN INSTANT RESPECT BECAUSE OF ITS QUALITY’

Ronnie Fieg – Kith



ZERO TO HERO

With a stack of fresh releases set to drop in 2018/19, including the ultra premium MADE 997 ‘Bison’ triple pack, Steven Smith’s classic design will definitely entertain its biggest audience yet. Modern-day makeovers in the form of the new-gen 997S and the 997H have expanded the line-up to four variations, qualifying the 997 for the first time as a franchise player.

Inspired by his beloved pair of the ‘Beauty&Youth’ 997.5, Ronnie Fieg tapped Poggy, creative director at United Arrows & Sons, for his approval to remix

2018

Ronnie Fieg’s 997S
Instagram post

the world famous pink-n-purple gem. The timing was once again perfect. As part of a six-strong sneaker range that also includes apparel and nods to the Nonnative ‘Dune’ release, Kith’s capsule collaboration set the bar to record heights for cultural relevance and desirability.



As we polish our crystal ball until it shines like a diamond, it’s time to ponder the past, present and future of this reluctant sneaker legend. Enjoy the Sneaker Freaker tribute to the New Balance 997!



2018
997S

INTRODUCING THE MADE 997 'BISON'



2018
M997BSN

The MADE 997 'Bison' triple pack is set to take the OG version of the 997 into the upper echelon of premium raw materials. American Bison hide is softer, yet more durable, than traditional leathers. With full leather lining and reflective details on the vamp, collar and 'N' logo underlay, this is one of the highest-spec 997s ever released.

Manufactured in the USA for over 75 years and representing a limited portion of US sales, New Balance MADE is a premium collection that contains a domestic value of 70% or greater.



2018
M997BSO



2018
M997BIS

INTRODUCING THE 997H



2018
CM997HAH



2018
CM997HAI



2018
CM997HAG

Inspired by the OG 997, the 997H is an all-new silhouette that has been streamlined for contemporary comfort and modern looks. Utilising GCEVA construction and lightweight outsoles, the 997H also features high-grade synth-leather, and an edge deboss and collar inspired by Steven Smith's original design. Oversize New Balance midsole branding is another bold statement.



2018
CM997HAJ

Interview
Woody

Photography
Micah Fischer

THE ORIGINATOR

STEVEN SMITH



1990
OG M997

After landing his first design job at New Balance in 1986, Steven Smith went on to play a pivotal role in the evolution of the entire 99x series. Given the task of refining the 995, then designing the 996 from scratch, Smith's valedictory contribution to the series was the 997. With ENCAP and C-CAP cushioning, XAR-1000 carbon rubber outsoles and the Hytrel Thermoplastic lockdown strap, the 997 was a huge leap forward.



How did you get yourself into footwear design?

As far back as I can remember, I wanted to be a designer. I spent a lot of time repairing things and was always really interested in how stuff was put together. Automotive design definitely appealed, but I didn't like the idea of working on only one small component within a huge project.

Since I ran track back in high school and wore New Balance running shoes, I was already familiar with the company. When I graduated from college, I heard they might be hiring a new design group, so I interviewed and joined the firm in 1986. My running experience definitely helped open the door at New Balance.



1982
M990

What was the company like when you arrived?

New Balance was a much smaller company back in the 1980s. Aside from me, Kevin Brown was the only other designer. I started working on some perforation designs for the 99x series, then graduated to working on basketball shoes. The first big model I worked on was the 995. At that point it was pretty much baked, but I added some finishing details. The 990 was my favourite shoe at the time, so I couldn't believe I was working on its successor!

I loved designing footwear at New Balance. It was great being the sample size because I could put on the prototypes and know immediately what the next steps were to make each shoe better.



1986
M995

Did you keep many of your old prototypes?

At one time I had about 150 pairs. When I left the company, I gave them away by the bag to friends in my hometown that couldn't afford to buy nice sneakers. Some of those were one-of-a-kind samples that would be holy grails for collectors today, but I don't regret giving them away. My collection right now is pretty small as I donated most of my personal samples to New Balance for their archive.



1988
M996





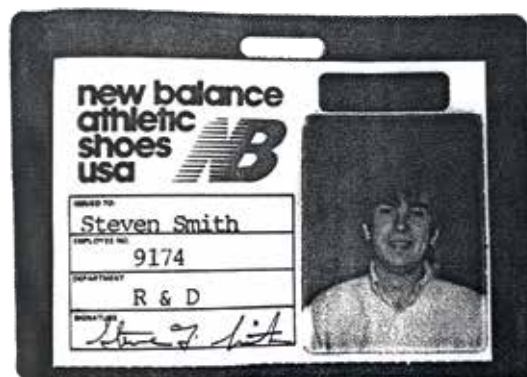
991 *[Signature]*

'MOULDED UPPER COMPONENTS, MULTIPLE DENSITY MIDSOLES AND THAT SUPER-THICK, BLOWN-RUBBER SOLE MADE IT A STANDOUT IN THE RUNNING SHOE ENVIRONMENT. AND THE 997 WAS REALLY TOUGH, THEY LASTED FOREVER!'

There must be some really crazy Steven Smith designs that never made the cut?

There was one far-out project we called New Balance X. I did a whole range of shoes but the concept never really took off. It was supposed to be the ultimate 'Made In America' collection as it would have been totally made to order.

I also made up a pair of white and red 995s with a 996 prototype sole unit that looked amazing. It's in New Balance's archive collection but I would love to get my hands on a new pair. They were so pure and clean. Maybe they should actually release it now as the 'Steven Smith 99x pro-model'? [Laughs]



1980s
Steven Smith's
New Balance I.D. card

The 997 was really fun project. I remember working with Steve Burris and we looked at the 997 as a blank slate to really push forward with innovation. Our brief was to create a runner that was way more technically advanced than previous 99x models. Steve was a big support, especially with developing the ENCAP cushioning process. Jean Briggs was the materials manager and she always found cool stuff to help offset the simplicity of the grey tones. She must have added the dimpled leather to the mix at some point. But yeah, I left the company shortly after the 997 launched, so I lost track of how things developed after that.

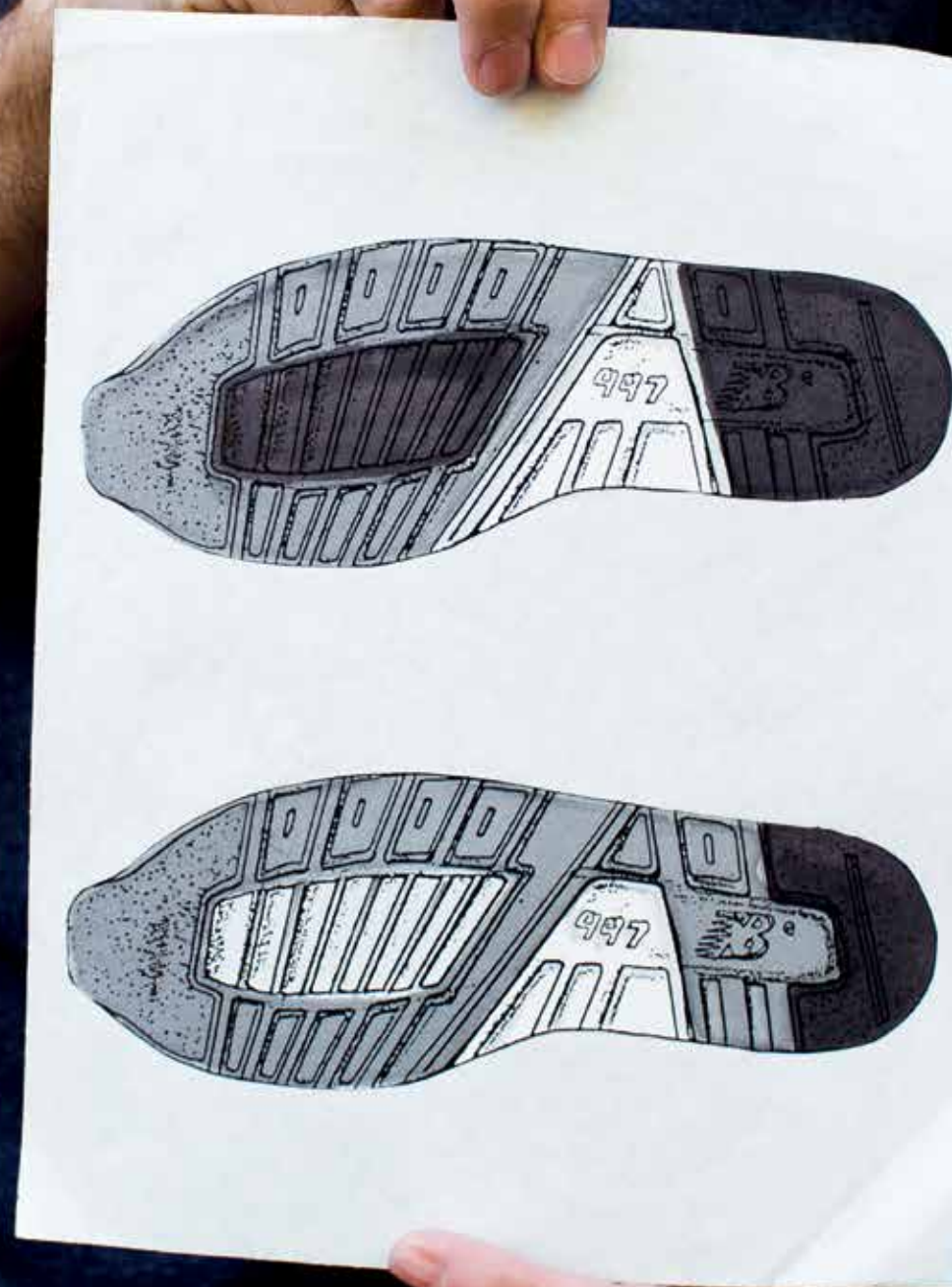
The grey and navy colour combo is classic New Balance. Did you view that conservatism as a restriction or creative freedom?

I don't really think about colours in those terms. Grey and navy are just a classic combination that appeals to the New Balance consumer. It is conservative I guess, but they also let you appreciate the design contours of the shoe more than some crazy combination. We definitely saved a stack of money on how many different coloured markers we needed in the design department though!

What was the inspiration behind the plastic side panel? It's funny how it evolved over time and was produced in different materials.

The 99x series was designed to provide the best all-round trainers for comfort and support, so we were always looking for extra ways to enhance the user experience. The idea behind that panel was

simply to add extra functionality. The collar lockdown strap was almost like an anti-sway feature that locked the top eyelet into the heel counter for added stability. Sometimes the features that are all about enhancing performance end up becoming the iconic design element that people remember the most. I'm always surprised and rather pleased that there are hardcore fans of these shoes that really sweat over the minuscule details.



The 997 was, in fact, your swansong at New Balance. What are your memories of designing the shoe?

The 997 seems to have a really unique profile at New Balance. Do you agree?

The shoe was definitely a big step forward technology-wise. Moulded upper components, multiple density midsoles and that super-thick, blown-rubber sole made it a stand-out in the running shoe environment. And the 997 was really tough, they lasted forever!

We were always driven to make the best possible shoe at the moment in time we were working on it. The 997's look is definitely driven by the fit and the design lines. As a team, we had a collective knowledge of what needed to go into the shoes from a runner's perspective, and that helped the design process immensely.



1990
Hytrel thermoplastic collar lockdown strap sketch

I've always wondered why the model was iced for two decades. The rumour is that the moulds and patterns were lost. What are your thoughts?

I'm not sure about that, but it could be because the factory shifted and things were lost during the move. Regardless, it definitely made the 997's comeback in 2014 a lot more mysterious and compelling.



1990
Motion Control Device concept sketches

You lived and worked through the 'dad shoe' era. What does that term mean to you and how do you feel about it?

I think the concept of 'dad shoes' is pretty cool. They're big and chunky and super comfortable. There was always a certain association of old-money and wealth that went along with New Balance products, and the idea of 'dads' kind of added that aura of financial stability to the brand.



1990
997 cushioning diagram

One more nerd question. The 994 is missing from the 99x series. What happened there?

Honestly, I have no idea. The 99x numbering was originally based on the \$100 price point of the shoe, which was a pretty big deal at the time. I know we went from the 990 to the 995, then to the 996 and the 997. The numbers started to run out, so then they went back to the 991 after that. Maybe New Balance will get around to the 994 one day, who knows?



Interview
Woody

Photography
Shin Hamada

HAT-DOWN & SNEAKERS-UP

POGGY

UNITED ARROWS & SONS – TOKYO



2008

United Arrows & Sons x New Balance 997.5 'Beauty&Youth'

With his wide-brimmed hats and unique take on sartorial streetwear, Motofumi 'Poggy' Kogi is renowned as one of the dappet dressers in the game. Enscoced as creative director of the Japanese retail powerhouse United Arrows & Sons, Poggy's cultural influence is profound. Back in 2008, Beauty&Youth (a division of United Arrows) released a hybrid 997.5 collaboration with New Balance. The mythical nature and latent influence of that moment has conspired to perplex the internet ever since.



You grew up in Sapporo, in the far north of Japan. How did the local environment influence you?

Growing up in Sapporo had a huge impact on my personality and sense of style. As a child I loved making igloos and snowmen. Although I feel my imagination has declined since then, when I would make anything and everything with snow, it's thanks to the snow that I can be creative now. [laughs]

It's funny, I don't remember what I wanted to be when I grew up. I stopped trying to play music and sports, and I wasn't particularly bright either, so when I discovered fashion in high school, I finally found something I could really focus on. I used to think I was stylish and different from others in my hometown, but once I moved to Tokyo, I was shocked that there were so many people who were more stylish and stranger than me.



2018

Kith x United Arrows & Sons New Balance 997S

How did you adapt to your new life in the big city?

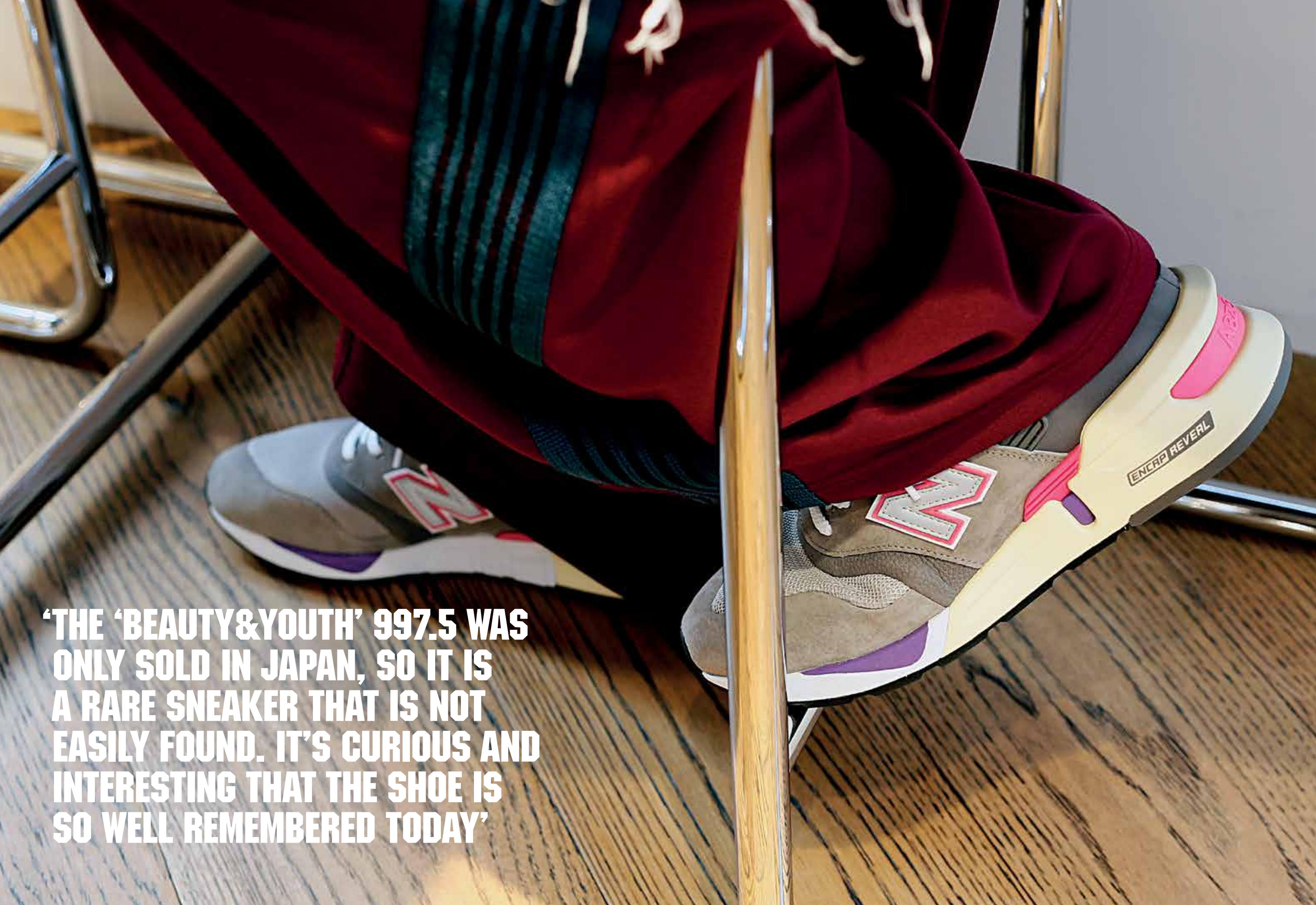
At first I tried to act like I was a high-spirited and slightly weird person, but I think the people in Tokyo saw right through that facade. Back then I admired people who were different from the crowd and I longed to be like them, which is why I went to Tokyo in the first place. But then I realised how cool the so-called normal and hard-working people in my hometown were. It made me think a lot about who I really am, and once I understood that, I stopped trying so hard to be someone else.



You started out working the retail floor. Has that experience stayed with you now you're the creative director?

It's the sales staff who actually explain the appeal of the brand and products to customers at the store. I also think it's imperative to try and understand the feeling of selling something. That experience is still valuable in my work as the creative director now. It's important to always remember the lessons I learned from talking to customers.





‘THE ‘BEAUTY&YOUTH’ 997.5 WAS ONLY SOLD IN JAPAN, SO IT IS A RARE SNEAKER THAT IS NOT EASILY FOUND. IT’S CURIOUS AND INTERESTING THAT THE SHOE IS SO WELL REMEMBERED TODAY’

'I USED TO THINK I WAS STYLISH AND DIFFERENT FROM OTHERS IN MY HOMETOWN, BUT ONCE I MOVED TO TOKYO, I WAS SHOCKED THAT THERE WERE SO MANY PEOPLE WHO WERE MORE STYLISH AND STRANGER THAN ME'

What does your average working week look like?

Are you hands-on creatively?

Actually, I spend a lot of time in business meetings talking with brands and creative people about what we can do together. It's that constant communication that makes it possible to create unique merchandise. Creativity and communication are often regarded as being separate things, but I believe communication equals creativity.

You've obviously been studying Japanese street style for a long time. How does the style of 2018 compare to previous eras?

On a global level, there are some aspects of contemporary Japanese style that are interesting, but unfortunately, there are also areas that are lagging behind.

Americana has long been embraced in Tokyo. Does that explain the appeal of New Balance as a brand?

Compared to the current trend of automation and global production, New Balance is sticking with its



'Made in USA' range of sneakers, which is appreciated by Japanese people. But we also understand that New Balance is an authentic brand and that the company's aesthetic sense is unique.

The Beauty&Youth colab with New Balance was famously adopted by one of the biggest hip hop stars back in 2014. What do you recall about the shoe and that time?

Yes, that big-name star used to wear Japanese street brands like Original Fake and PHENOMENON, so we were happy and surprised when he chose items from our in-house line. The 'Beauty&Youth' 997.5 was only sold in Japan, so it is a rare sneaker that is not easily found. It's curious and interesting that the shoe is so well remembered today.

And now the colourway has been refreshed with the Kith collaboration on the 997S. Do you dig the new hybrid designs?

This is not just a reissue of the old shoe, it's a new hybrid 997S style that I really like! I met with Ronnie Fieg a few years ago and he asked me if we still had any of the United Arrows & Sons sneakers in stock.

Our conversation made me also think of the 997.5. Then, last year, some people suggested that we officially relaunch the shoe, so I checked with my staff and we started the collaboration with Kith.

You're very highly regarded for your sartorial standards. Do you put on your sneakers or your hat first?

It's not a case of choosing one way or the other. It's more like I check my schedule for the day and what I have planned and who I need to meet. Then I decide if it's hat-down or sneakers-up!

Must be hard work getting dressed every day.

Yeah, it's tough being Poggy, but it's also so much fun.





Interview
Woody

Photography
Josh Sobel

THE LEGACY OF TRUST

RONNIE

KITH – NEW YORK CITY



2018

*Kith x United Arrows & Sons x New Balance 997S
(production sample)*

With more than two decades in the footwear game, there isn't much Ronnie Fieg hasn't already accomplished. At the helm of his sprawling Kith empire, Ronnie's ambitious collaborations with everyone from Coca-Cola to Tommy Hilfiger and Versace have continually upped the ante. Fresh from his recent New Balance 997 collaboration – that also tapped icon 997.5 releases by Nonnative and United Arrows & Sons – Ronnie's unbridled enthusiasm for the 99x series is evident. Packed with intimate design details and a few personal memories, this six-strong project was all about the love!

As a 13-year-old, you worked in your uncle's shoe store. Given your personal influence in the industry, and the scale of Kith's operations now, do you ever reflect on the fact that you've made your dreams into a reality?

A lot less than I would like to! [laughs] I think there will be a time when things calm down and I'll be able to reflect on my success, but being a leader for a team this size means you always need to live in the future. We have over 300 staff at Kith, so it takes a lot of teamwork to run the business. Without my team, it would be impossible to do what we do.



Do you even have a job title, or have you gone past that? You're listed on Wikipedia as a designer.

I don't like titles very much, but I am the CEO, and the creative director. I actually am very, very, heavily involved in design. That's where I spend a good portion of my time, but I make all the business decisions as well.

Does that mean you're a control freak – in the best possible way?

A little bit. Yeah, I would say I am, but as time goes by, I've become less and less of a control freak.

My team has been with me for quite a while now, so I'm better at delegating and knowing that things can be accomplished without me having to be there every step of the way.



You take a prominent role on social media as the face of the company. Why is that personal connection to your customers so important?

The only reason I stay on social media is because I care about the emotional connection that people have to Kith and me. It's important for people to understand where things come from and why things are done the way they are. It's also important to give people more than what they paid for when they buy products, and the best way to do that is by giving them my personal perspective.

You've done more than a dozen shoes with New Balance. What are your observations of the company?

New Balance have always stayed true to who they are, and I respect that immensely.

2016
Kith x New Balance 997.5
'Archipelago'

2016
Kith x New Balance 997.5
'Cyclades'



'FOR UNITED ARROWS & SONS TO TRUST ME IS A BIG THING. I SPENT A LONG TIME MAKING SURE THE SHOES WERE DONE RIGHT BECAUSE MESSING WITH A LEGACY IS SOMETHING I DON'T OFTEN DO. THIS IS FAR AND AWAY THE BEST NEW BALANCE PROJECT THAT I'VE WORKED ON'



How do you stack the 997 up against the rest of the 99x line-up?

The 99x series in general is New Balance's key strength but I love the 997. It's a sleek and timeless silhouette, and totally representative of what New Balance is currently doing. The shoe was so ahead of its time! Looking at the past, present and future at New Balance, the evolution from the 996 to the 997 and the 998 is incredible. I just feel like the 997 really stands out as being the sleekest and most modern looking of those three models. Do you agree?

2018

997S Motion Control Device

Absolutely. It's all about that chunky midsole.

Yeah. By the way, I'm a huge fan of all of them, right? Let me just say that because it's important. The truth is I really love all of them and I still can't pick my favourite. The upgrade from the 996 to the 997 is substantial. The midsole is perfection. The 997 also helped perfect New Balance's design language, and it informed how people would come to view the 99x series in general. When you look back at the 99x shoes that have come out since the 997, they all have a little DNA from that shoe.

Did the memory of the Beauty&Youth 997.5 from 2014 always stick with you? Those things are beyond unobtainium.

I have a full pair and they're still deadstock! They were easily the hardest shoe in my entire collection to track down. They have been a Grail since I first saw those pictures and I had to trade a lot to get them. The larger sizes are very, very rare. I might have the only deadstock pair in size 10.5 in the world.

When you say traded, are we talking greenbacks or shoes?

I traded some shoes and had to put up some serious money as well. I think I might have one of only 12 pairs in my size in the world. I'm sure the others were worn to death so, who knows, maybe they're the only deadstock pair left in the world?

I have to say, I didn't dream of bringing the shoe back, I just dreamed of owning a pair one day. I was thinking about the 997 and New Balance's plans this year, and everything just clicked into place. For United Arrows & Sons to trust me is a big thing. I spent a long time making sure the shoes were done right because messing with a legacy is something I don't often do. This is far and away the best New Balance project that I've worked on.





2018
*Kith x United Arrows & Sons
x New Balance 997*



2018
*Kith x Nonnative
x New Balance 997 'Dune'*



2018
*Kith x United Arrows
& Sons x New Balance
997S Hybrid*



2018
*Kith x Nonnative
x New Balance 997S
Hybrid 'Dune'*



2018
*Kith x United Arrows & Sons
x New Balance 997S*



2018
*Kith x Nonnative
x New Balance 997S 'Dune'*

‘THEY WERE EASILY THE HARDEST SHOE IN MY ENTIRE COLLECTION TO TRACK DOWN. THEY HAVE BEEN A GRAIL SINCE I FIRST SAW THOSE PICTURES AND I HAD TO GIVE UP A LOT TO GET THEM. I MIGHT HAVE THE ONLY DEADSTOCK PAIR IN SIZE 10.5 IN THE WORLD’

The 997 branding on the midsole has been removed and I can see a few other interesting design details have been added.

Yeah we did. We also put a black tongue on them because they dropped on Black Friday. And if you look closely, you'll also see that the logo has three different layers. The triple stack logo makes it more dimensional, with the layers of white, pink and silver 3M. These little design nuances are so important. Throw in the fact that the 997 is made in the USA and I'm super psyched.



2018

Ronnie Fieg at the Kith office, NYC

You've also embraced the hybrid lifestyle designs that aren't based on sports heritage. What's your take on the 997S?

I'm definitely a purist when it comes to archive product, but the idea to take those OG silhouettes and modernise them is exactly what New Balance needs to be

doing. I'm 36 years old, so I have an affinity for shoes from the 90s because I grew up in that decade, but today's kids deserve a design language that speaks directly to them. I see the 997S as an opportunity for New Balance to dig into their archive, not only to reproduce shoes as one-to-ones, but to evolve. Every brand needs to adapt or they'll die. The difference between New Balance and a lot of other brands is they definitely don't forget where they came from, and they keep their focus on their heritage just as much as they do on the future.

That's a good way to put it. The reaction has been super positive.

The 997S is beautiful. The tooling is amazing. I've seen a lot in my 23 years of working in footwear and I know good tooling when I see it. I don't want anyone to think we're forced to work on specific shoes by brands. The materials are super nice and the shoes are light, but not too light. When you touch and feel and wear the 997S, there's an instant respect because of its quality.

The 997 was a very technical shoe when it was released so it was important for New Balance to keep that in mind when they built the 997S. It's such a well-built and engineered shoe. I am passionate about the 997S because I believe it's the future of the 997 model. Both versions can live side-by-side, they just speak to two different consumers.

One final question. Given you've accomplished so much, where do you think you'll be in five years time?

That's a good question. I don't know where I'll be, because everything that's happened until now has been an organic journey. Different doors open along the way and opportunities present themselves all the time. I'm just gonna continue working hard and try to expand Kith globally. I do have other goals that I want to achieve outside of the current business, and I'm inching toward those things slowly. Hopefully I'll get there soon!



THE COLLECTORS

SCOURING ALL FOUR CORNERS OF THE GLOBE, WE MANAGED TO TRACK DOWN THE MOST DEDICATED NEW BALANCE 997 NUTS IN EXISTENCE. OUR QUEST STARTED IN BRISBANE, AUSTRALIA, WHERE MATT KYTE TAKES NERDING-OUT TO THE NEXT LEVEL. FROM NEVER-SEEN-BEFORE VINTAGE PAIRS TO CUSTOM CREATIONS, ENJOY THE ULTIMATE 997 RETROSPECTIVE!



MATT KYTE

THE THRILL IS IN THE HUNT



997GRY

Pre-production sample

With a double-degree in New Balance nerdery, and a post-grad in advanced internet sleuthing, Matt Kyte just might be the ultimate 997 fanboy. One of the original cabal of diehards who lobbied to bring back the shoe in its original 'Made in USA' form, Matt has since researched and documented every single 997 release. The results have been collated in the A1 poster included with this book. Time for a history lesson, shot straight from the hip!



Take us back to 2014. I know you were super hyped when the 997 was announced.

I had definitely been campaigning for years to bring it back and I'm pretty sure plenty of other people within the industry were doing the same. This would have been late 2012. Needless to say, I was ecstatic at the prospect of the 997's return. By that time, most of the 'Holy Grail' sneakers had all made a retro reappearance, but the 997 remained a glorious unicorn. The Crooked Tongues forums had an on-going thread dedicated to bringing the model back as a members-only special.

I'd argue the 1500 is the greatest New Balance shoe of all time, but the 997 had mythology. The 997 was largely undocumented outside of a few pairs in the hands of OG collectors and random sightings on Yahoo Japan. The lack of info was excruciating. It's hard to know what New Balance produced because these shoes were truly handmade, which means that strange variances are common. The 997 wasn't exactly scarce in its day, but vintage pairs are still one of the hardest New Balances to track down.

It's a shoe that we all agree is cherished by every NB nerd, yet finding a legit collector has been a challenge.

Yeah, when you think about it logically, it's a shoe that came out in 1991 and then disappeared. Compared to its 99x family members, the 997 was the only model that was never revived. Except for some unusual multi-coloured Asia-made CO.JPs in the 1990s, there was nothing! With such a huge gap in production we're



getting to a point where there simply aren't any pairs anywhere. If they don't exist, how can anyone even think about owning one pair, let alone a collection?

To be clear, there are three original 997s. There is light grey, charcoal, and a white edition. I've only seen a couple of pairs in white ever, and I've never even seen the charcoal except as a catalogue image.

So when I say there's really only one true OG 997, you can see why. The others are beyond rare.

The 997 looks different to every other Newbie. The sharp profile kills me. The heel elevation is perfect.

Aside from the 996, the 99x series has always packed junk in the trunk! But, with the 997, you get a really good balance and perfect proportions. Steven Smith managed to incorporate a good amount of wedge, while keeping the profile sleek.

The 997 moved the 99x series away from stacked foam soles and introduced ENCAP by exposing the



**'MOST OF THE 'HOLY GRAIL' SNEAKERS
HAD ALL MADE A RETRO REAPPEARANCE,
BUT THE 997 REMAINED A GLORIOUS
UNICORN. THE CROOKED TONGUES
FORUMS DEFINITELY HAD AN
ONGOING THREAD DEDICATED
TO BRINGING THE MODEL BACK
AS A MEMBERS-ONLY SPECIAL'**



internal foam on the medial side and incorporating Hytre! Thermoplastic. I've always been quite fond of that gummy piece of XAR-1000 rubber tacked onto the heel, as it gives them a notable rake, which reminds me of an old hot rod.

I'm really into the toe angle of the 997 and how the OGs are really snub-nosed. The toe rubber gets really chunky and then the thick cut suede sits really prominently over the delicate mesh. It's the nerdiest thing in the world but there's something about that which gets me every time.

How do you stack it up against the rest of the 99x series, including the 998 and 999.

I'll be honest and say I never really got behind those models. I know they're more comfortable thanks to the ABZORB foam, but there's something a bit over-complicated about the designs. The 998 and 999 just aren't as refined as the 997. To run with the automotive metaphors, the 997 is like a sleek Lamborghini Miura from the 70s, while the 998 is the crazy 80s Countach with huge spoilers and a brick car phone.

My favourite 998 is that odd hybrid that had the white and green upper fused with a 997 sole. That made me look at the 998 in a completely different light.

The 999 is another step in that direction, as the toe gets rounder and the midsole chunk goes to another level. I was never attracted to the 999, as it seemed a bit of an awkward transition.

The best of the 99x series are the 990, 997, 991 and 990v.4. The 99x series has always been the best representation of the brand since its inception, and I think those models really nailed the subtle 'NB tech' look cohesively.

In your mind, what does the perfect 997 look like? Is the original grey-on-grey scheme the one and only?

I mean, yeah of course, I love the shoe for what it was the first time I saw it, and that's the original production version in tonal greys. If I want to be a total shoe nerd and go super obscure, then the white leather versions are the low-key fave. I'm just a sucker for white sneakers. Of course, I also have my own 'what if' versions



Made in UK
The contentious 997 that NB doesn't even know exists

drawn-up and ready for the day New Balance sends me an email!

The first sample of the 997 retro was controversial. The 1990 catalogue shows the midsole as light grey but several inconsistencies challenged the notion of a 1:1 reproduction.

I don't know how deeply I should go into this, but basically the retro was definitely wrong, although it was much better than the first samples. As you said, the correct colour was a really light grey. On the OGs, this faded to a yellowed beige as most foam compounds do over time. Needless to say, there was a feisty email written by myself sent to NB at the time of the first retro outlining my position.

The toe box mesh was different as well. The retros have it in a charcoal grey that is visibly darker than the suede, but the OGs were much more closely colour matched, which I feel throws off the overall balance totally. To this day it still irks me!

Funnily enough, I own all three of the retro 997 in the OG grey.

Well you can definitely care too much, that's for sure. It's bound to lead to tears. The early catalogue images didn't always have '997' written on the midsole either.

Yeah, I think that can be put down as a promo sample oddity. I can't say I've ever seen a pair in the real world that lacked the model name and number on the midsole. Even the NB Japan archive models have it. There was a single pair shared by NB around the time the 990v3 came out which didn't have the midsole branding, but again, who knows.

Random stuff in catalogues isn't uncommon, especially with New Balance. The test is finding the real-world example as proof. Often it's the opposite case with NB. There are things that officially don't exist but then people turn up with pairs to prove all the theories wrong!

Speaking of which, you once told me the 997 was made in the UK at some point. The Flimby factory have no recollection. Now's the time to back it up, or we'll have to call BS!

I have images saved from the Crooked Tongues forum, but they don't explicitly show the 'Made in England' logo on the tongue. Unfortunately the owner's preference was to lace his shoes a bit too high, which hid the stitching. To give this context, the images popped up on the 'TIA' forum threads in 2008 or 2009.

The owner wasn't exactly gushing with amazement over them, and we all assumed more info would come to light at some point.

Alas, those images are still the only evidence the 997 was made in the UK factory. But who knows? They certainly look nothing like 997s from the USA factory. There's no thermoplastic panels and they sport shiny 'N' logos in 3M that are very similar to the 576s that came out of Flimby in the 1990s.

Since I have definitive evidence of both the 998 and 999 being produced in the UK, the plot thickens. I'm not sure if New Balance is able to confirm they even exist, so it's highly likely this will stay a mystery. The lack of documentation is the cause of much excitement and frustration for New Balance nerds!

I'm definitely feeling the mini-NB logos they put on the women's 997s. Not sure we'll ever see them again.

I think footwear has got to a point where there's not much else to do except bring back weird stuff, so I wouldn't rule it out. I can't say I love them, but given that the 997 was the first time there was a women's specific style in the 99x lineage, I think it's cool from a historical perspective.

Purists typically struggle with new-gen designs like the 997s. Given you aren't even old enough to remember the OG, is that stance a bit hard to justify?

I think I could just remember the OG if my family had the money to buy them back in 1991! I get your point though. Hybrids are not intended for the OG purist anyway, so it's no biggie. I think the point of the hybrid is to take some of the proven design principles of a classic, and then repackage them for a contemporary customer. If brands are drawing up hybrids in the hope of a cosign from guys debating the correct shade of a midsole colour, they're setting themselves up for disappointment.



997C
Original Japanese catalogue image



997WT
Early prototype with some weird details



1993
Japanese catalogue

Now, tell me about your 997 illustrations. What made you start? Attention deficit? Boredom? Pure nerding-out?

The purest form of adoration is to painstakingly replicate something. It might sound super wanky, but drawing every model gave me a much deeper appreciation for the 997 design. There's definitely part of me that was simply excited by the prospect of researching and documenting such a mythical model.

What level of research are we talking?

Realistically, my archive is a result of probably a decade of learned information acquired through my own research and with the help of many of my peers back in the days when sneaker forums were popular. Most of the information came from examining genuine pairs, catalogue snippets, tiny random images from Japanese blogs, and deep YahooJP auction listings with no semblance of English in the titles.

Now that you've finished, how do you feel?

I'd feel better if they stopped making 997s! I had a similar problem when I did the same thing for New Balance's 1500 archive. I started that project when Flimby announced that production of that shoe would halt, but they kept producing them.

I ended up bailing on the 1500 project as it started to feel like it would never end. By this point I had started on the 997 archive, which was vastly more detailed and containable. When you're simply documenting a shoe that came out last week it loses any sense of intrigue. Much like collecting sneakers, the thrill is in the hunt.

Now that I can step back and look at things objectively, what I'm most proud of is that the archive was the result of a massive group effort. At a time when the footwear scene seems more segmented and diluted than ever, it's nice to have something pure that speaks strongly to a very dedicated audience.









'I STARTED COLLECTING NEW BALANCE BACK IN 1994. BY THEN THE 997 WAS ALREADY REPLACED BY THE 998. VINTAGE PAIRS ARE SCARCE! EVEN THOUGH I HAVE SEARCHED FOR CLOSE TO 20 YEARS, I STILL DON'T HAVE AN OG USA-MADE PAIR IN GREY! THIS ORANGEY LEATHER ASIA-MADE 997 HAS THE PLASTICY 'N' LOGO AND THE AWESOME TRIANGLE PERFORATION PATTERN ON THE TOE'

Richie Roxas - 997 Collector





Mid-90s
997LF



Mid-90s
997LV





‘NEW BALANCE IS THE ONLY SPORTS BRAND THAT KEEPS THE HANDMADE PROCESS OF MAKING SHOES ALIVE. WHEN IT COMES TO THE 997, I’M CRAZY ABOUT THE ASIA-MADE 997 IN SUEDE WITH THE NEON PLASTIC ‘N’ LOGO FROM THE LATE-90s. IN FACT, ALL OF THE CM997 VERSIONS ARE SUPER RARE!’

Tiago Ramos – 997 Collector



*Mid-90s
CM997LG*

2014
Concepts x New Balance
M997CPT 'Rosé'



2016

PHANTACi x
New Balance 997.5
Jay Chou - 'The Orcs'
(one of 10 pairs)



2016

Sneaker Freaker
x New Balance 997.5
'Tassie Tiger'
(unreleased sample)



2016

PHANTACi x
New Balance 997.5
Jay Chou - 'Chaplin'
(one of 10 pairs)





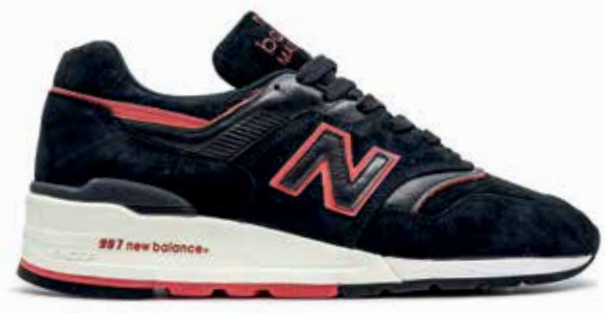


‘MY ALL-TIME FAVOURITE IS THE OG IN GREY WITH THE REFLECTIVE ‘N’ LOGO. THAT DIESEL MIDSOLE AND PIGSKIN SUEDE MIXED WITH MESH IS PURE PERFECTION. THE 997 IS GOOD IN ANY CLIMATE. IT’S INDESTRUCTIBLE. THROWING THAT BROLOGIC WEDGE MIDSOLE WITH THE ILL ENCAP UNIT ONTO A PERFECTLY REVAMPED UPPER IS DOPE. WHEN THE USA-MADE REISSUE RUMOURS HIT THE FORUMS I WAS VERKLEMP. I COPPED MULTIPLES!’

Mike ‘Crispy’ Coyle



1990
M997



‘BACK IN 1998, I WAS AT THE NB OUTLET IN BOSTON. THEY HAD THE 997.5 FOR \$20 BUT I SKIPPED BECAUSE I WAS BROKE. MY BEST FRIEND COPPED AND HIS DAD ENDED UP USING THEM TO MOW THE LAWN! I STILL BUG HIM BUT THEY’RE LONG GONE. WOULD’VE TRIPLED UP IF I KNEW WHAT I KNOW NOW. THEY ARE BEYOND RARE!’

Richie Roxas – 997 Collector

‘I HAVE ABOUT 30 PAIRS OF DIFFERENT 997s IN MY HANDS. THE MOST SPECIAL PAIR IS ACTUALLY A 997.5, WHICH HAS THE 997 SOLE AND THE 998 UPPER. YES, YOU ARE NOT MISTAKEN! I STILL CAN’T FIND ANY INFORMATION ABOUT THIS SHOE AND I’VE ONLY SEEN TWO PAIRS EVER. I DON’T KNOW IF IT WAS A PRODUCTION ERROR OR JUST A STRANGE ONE-OFF SAMPLE. HOPEFULLY WE WILL FIND OUT THE STORY AT SOME POINT!’

Shunhang Li – 997 Collector



1990s
Reverse 997.5 (998 upper with 997 sole)



1990s
CM997BR



1994
M997WG



‘THIS WHITE LEATHER 997 WITH THE BLUE ACCENTS IS THE RAREST OF THE THREE OG RELEASES. AMONG NEW BALANCE AFICIONADOS, THIS IS THE HOLY GRAIL OF HOLY GRAILS! JENE CONRAD PICKED THEM UP AROUND 2010 WHEN A WELL KNOWN SNEAKER COLLECTOR LIQUIDATED THEIR ENTIRE STOCK. THEY ARE REMARKABLY WELL PRESERVED FOR THEIR AGE, ESPECIALLY THE POLYURETHANE MIDSOLE, WHICH IS PRONE TO CRUMBLING. THIS IS QUITE POSSIBLY THE ONLY DEADSTOCK VINTAGE PAIR LEFT IN THE WORLD’

Woody – Sneaker Freaker founder



2018
M997NM 'Duck Camo'



2018
M997CDG 'Coumarin'



2018
M997NSB 'Home Plate'





‘I WAS TOO YOUNG WHEN THE 997 WAS ORIGINALLY RELEASED AND I HAD TO WAIT A VERY LONG TIME FOR THE REISSUE, SO THE PRESSURE WAS IMMENSE, ESPECIALLY SINCE I’M A SIZE 13! THANKFULLY NEW BALANCE GOT IT 100% RIGHT. THE 997 IS NOW A WARDROBE STAPLE, WHICH SPEAKS VOLUMES FOR THE BRAND’S ABILITY TO MAINTAIN RELEVANCE. I LOVE THAT NEW BALANCE ALWAYS STAYS TRUE TO THEMSELVES’

Jason Paparoulas



2018
M997 Horween
(Unreleased sample)

MADE WITH PRIDE

WHETHER IT'S MAGAZINE PUBLISHING, BOUTIQUE RETAIL OR MOTORSPORTS-INSPIRED STREET WEAR, IT TAKES IMAGINATION AND GRIT TO BUILD A BUSINESS FROM THE GROUND UP. BOB ANDERSON, DEON POINT AND BRYAN CALVERO ARE ALL MAVERICKS IN THEIR OWN IDIOSYNCRATIC WAY, BUT THERE IS ONE THING THEY SHARE IN COMMON – EVERYTHING THEY DO IS MADE WITH PRIDE.



Interview
Woody

Photography
Scott Goulet & Dan Purnell

MADE WITH PRIDE

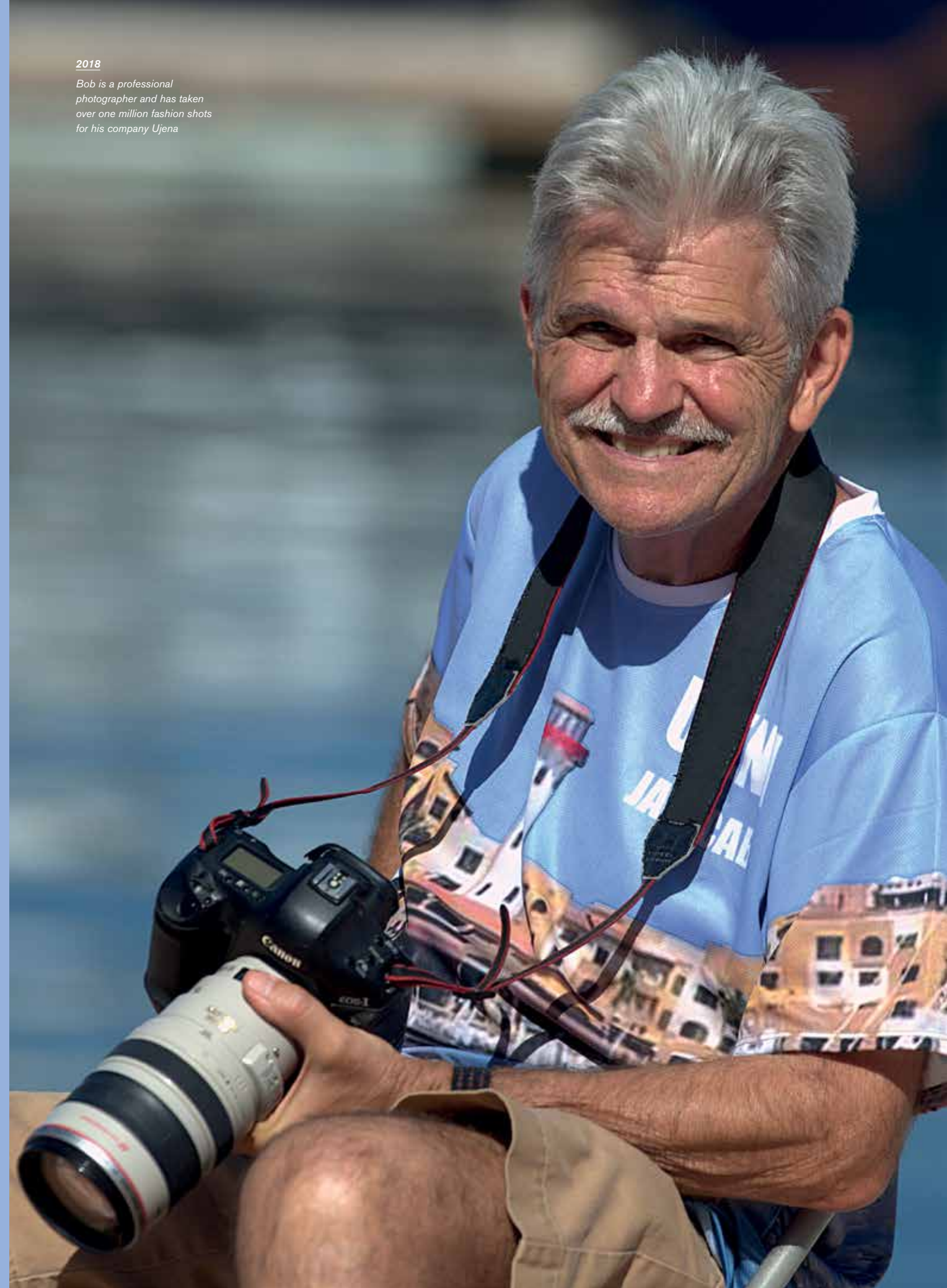
RUNNER'S WORLD BOB ANDERSON

LOS ALTOS, CALIFORNIA

Inspired by his dream of competing in the Boston Marathon, Bob Anderson started *Distance Running News* in 1966, while still a high school student. Retitled *Runner's World* in 1970, the magazine and the network that grew up around it played a pivotal role in establishing running's credentials as a legitimate sport. Feature articles on training, diet, race tactics, and hotly contested reviews of sneakers delivered a devoted audience in the millions before the company was sold in the mid-80s. More than 40 years later, Bob is still an exercise evangelist and a serial entrepreneur. Just don't call him a jogger, he was only ever interested in racing!

2018

Bob is a professional
photographer and has taken
over one million fashion shots
for his company Ujena





Why do you love running so much?

I love running simply because it gives me a lot of self-confidence. Plus you can run anyplace, anywhere, anytime – all you need is a good pair of shoes! It's just you and your body in the fresh air. I also love that feeling when your heart's pumping, things are clicking and you're running as fast as you can. It's an adrenaline rush. I'm 70 years old and I still run about 35 miles a week.

That is an amazing effort. Back in the early 70s, running wasn't considered a proper sport like football or baseball was it? How would you describe running in that era?

Well, my dad, when he was in his 40s, wouldn't have been caught dead in a pair of running shorts outside, it was just way too weird! I grew up in Kansas and ran cross-country and track in high school. But once the season ended, there was nothing, and college running was really only for superstars. People just didn't run for fun and fitness. There were a few pockets of hardcore runners, and the Boston Marathon was around, but only a few hundred people entered in those early years.

A lot of things conspired to create the jogging boom in the late 70s. How did the marathon become a phenomenon?

I have to say one thing about jogging – I've never jogged a mile in my life! I run and I run races! Anyway, what really helped put running on the map was when Dr. Kenneth Cooper came out with the book *Aerobics*. A few years earlier, President John F. Kennedy started the 50-mile hike challenge. Those two events really jumpstarted the running scene in America.

Did you have a grand plan for the business?

Not really. I was still in high school at the time! I was interested in running the Boston Marathon but had no idea how to train or go about it. I was reading every single word I could find about running, which wasn't much. On the way to a cross-country meet one day I said to my friend, 'I want to start a magazine about running. We'll call it *Distance Running News*!'



1981
Getting ready for the press conference announcing the top shoe in *Runner's World*

In January 1966, I published the first issue. Even though I only printed a thousand copies, lots of people wanted to read it. The next thing I knew, people started sending in subscription money. New Balance was one of my first advertisers. I think they paid \$10 for a little ad.

Bargain! [laughs]

It started with two issues a year, then we went from four to six, then monthly. We went from black-and-white photos to colour. I started with a hundred bucks

and by the time I sold the magazine in 1984, we had 2,500,000 readers! We changed the name to *Runner's World* in 1970 and the magazine became the Bible of running.

It sounds like the magazine fostered a great sense of community.

Absolutely. You're right, it was all about bringing people together which is exactly what social media does for people today. A kid living in Cheyenne, Wyoming, who absolutely loved running, but was into it by himself, was suddenly able to find out what was happening in the world of running by reading the magazine.

We covered all sorts of topics, including articles on how to break through the pain barrier when you hit the wall at 20 miles, training information, dietary advice, running after 40, and women's running. When I started *Runner's World*, a woman was not allowed to run more than a half-mile.

Whoa! I have never heard that before.

I mean, it's hard to believe that was the case, but a lot of people thought the female body was just

not made to run beyond a half-mile. As far as I was concerned, people are people and it didn't matter if you were a man or a woman. I didn't care if you were 10 years old or 75 – or even 100 years old! – the fact of the matter is running should be for everyone. I remember Kathy Switzer was thrown out of the Boston Marathon in 1967. It was crazy, but women were not allowed to run 26 miles at that time. That rule didn't change until 1972. Anyway, those are the sorts of things we were dealing with in those early days, and we covered it all.

The athletic brands were also in their infancy during this period. Did you have any inkling how big brands like New Balance would become?

I wish I could say I did. [laughs] At the time, the sneaker companies were really small firms. New Balance was based up in the North East of the USA and other brands were dotted around America. To put things into perspective, back in those days, a best-selling running shoe maybe sold a thousand pairs. That's how small the business of running was.

Before I started the magazine, I asked some experienced runners if 10,000 subscribers was possible. They told me that figure was just unbelievable and that I'd never reach it. Those people thought I was just a kid with crazy dreams, but I didn't start *Runner's World* to make money – I just wanted to help the sport! In my mind that was a much bigger goal.

Well, I'd say you had the last laugh. Do you remember when the first sneaker edition was printed?

Oh yeah, our first shoe issue came out in 1967 and we reported on all the brands. As the years went on we did it annually and it became the biggest issue of the year by far, with close to four million readers. We hired Peter Kavanaugh at Penn State University – who we paid \$25,000 for equipment – and sent him all the shoes to test. We included feedback from readers in the results too. We would end up ranking the shoes, starting with the number one running shoe of that year.

Sounds like a recipe for drama and intrigue.

Yeah, it was. [laughs] Because we rated a shoe number one, the controversy was never far away. Some brands felt we had too much power and... actually one company thought that we were being 'influenced' and, thinking that their second place ranking should have been higher, decided to pull out of the shoe issue. Funnily enough, we sold more copies of that October shoe issue than we ever had because the controversy made the national news. We were fully investigated and cleared of course, because we were doing nothing wrong. We just presented the facts as we saw them.



1981

Bob has competed in close to 1000 races

The New Balance 990 was the first shoe to hit the \$100 price point. Do you remember anything about that?

I really don't remember too much, other than the fact that New Balance offered their shoes in different widths, and I believe the 990 offered that option as well. I don't have the details in my mind but I remember the 990 cost a lot. Was it the most expensive running shoe to that point?

Absolutely. New Balance were never afraid to push things to the limit.

Right, actually, I was just bringing the 990 up on the computer screen here. It looks like there are now four different versions of that shoe?

Yeah, there are four versions and they keep getting chunkier. Have you heard about the 'dad shoe' thing at the moment? The New Balance 990v4 is a classic of that style. Big and bulky, but that's the fashion. People love them because they're sturdy and beautifully made.

Well, looking at the 990 here on the screen, yeah I definitely remember this shoe. It's a lot of shoe, but people like a lot of shoe!

For me, it's probably too heavy because I'm just a little guy and I like training and racing in a light shoe. I wonder what the original one weighed?

I'm not sure. The original 990 was pretty slim. It was all about EVA

foam and the Motion Control Device in the heel. At the time, the 990 was considered pretty high tech. Yeah, I definitely remember that very well.

What are your memories of working with Jim Davis?

First of all, Jim was very personable and he didn't need to be in the limelight. He seemed like a really hard-working guy who really cared about running shoes and making the very best product that he could. I was very impressed, and you just got the feeling he was gonna make his brand work. He made and sold shoes in different width sizes and he was willing to roll the dice on that. And here we are today, New Balance is a huge company. It's a very impressive story.

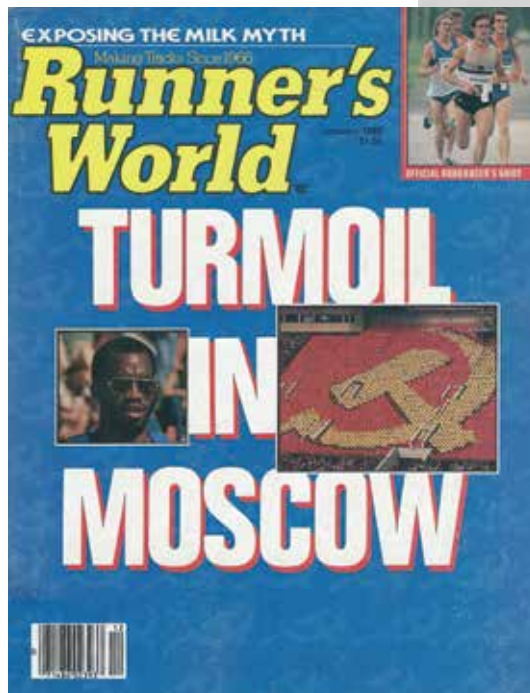


You sold *Runner's World* in the mid 80s, by which time you had 300 employees...

We had 350 employees actually. [laughs] I was going through a divorce at that time and needed to sell the company. It's funny, I started the magazine because I wanted to run the Boston Marathon, but I literally became a weekend runner only because my day was pretty full from six in the morning until eight at night. However, I was still able to run sub-six-minute miles in races on the weekend.

That's quite ironic, isn't it?

Yeah, it is. I wish I had followed my own advice. As I've gotten older, when I look back, my whole life was *Runner's World* before the age of 35. Instead of taking off for an afternoon run, I just worked really hard. Luckily I'm still running 30 to 35 miles every week. I finally ran the Boston Marathon in 2013. It only took me 45 years to get there!



1980

January issue

And was it as amazing as you thought it would be?

Oh my gosh, I've run close to a thousand races in my life but the Boston Marathon is number one. It was just an incredible experience and I was thrilled my wife and son were with me that day. At the same time, that was also the year of the terrible bombing. Luckily I finished about a half hour before that happened. I ran 3:32:17 that day at age 65.

I didn't connect that tragic year with the Boston race. That should have been a great day for you and a lot of other people.

Yeah, it was great, right up until the point the bomb went off. The experience of finally running 26 miles through Boston and seeing the crowds was just beyond words. That doesn't overshadow the victims and all the other people whose lives were destroyed that day, but the Boston Marathon is still an incredible race. What a tragic contrast to the joy that running brings.



1979

December issue

SB

SNEAKER FREAKER



1981

Bob approved the images and layout of *Runner's World* for 18 years

Interview
Woody

Photography
Tak Sakamoto

MADE WITH PRIDE

CONCEPTS DEON POINT

BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

Born and bred in Boston, Concepts originally opened their doors with a focus on skateboarding, before diversifying into global retail with stores in Dubai, New York and Shanghai. From intricate packaging concepts to epic events that flip the script on traditional sneaker launches, Concepts is one of the few retailers that continually push the boundaries. At the helm is Deon Point, a New England-native that spent his formative years hassling store clerks for hook-ups long before he became the creative director. As the industry continues to expand exponentially, Deon's blue-collar attitude and flair for bold design has kept Concepts at the forefront of the game.



Your career started on the shop floor at Concepts. Is that the best place to learn the footwear business?

I started in the stockroom to be exact. Personally, I wanted to know everything there was to know about the business. I didn't mind at the time what my job at Concepts would entail, I just knew I wanted to be part of it. It wasn't glamorous, but I saw what was coming in, what styles and brands were selling and what wasn't. If you don't know who your customer is, what they gravitate towards, and how their purchase behaviour evolves, catering to them is impossible. Being at the bottom of the totem pole is good for anyone to experience, and you have to understand that everyone plays a vital role in a successful business, stock boy included. A humble beginning will always keep you grounded.



2018

Deon at the Concepts store in Boston

Fast forward quite a few years and you're the creative director. What does your position involve?

My day-to-day role shifts quite a bit. I'm responsible for applying the Concepts vision on all the colabs, choosing the products we sell and the way they are presented in the shops. I have the final say, and I am a perfectionist by nature, so it's my job to take the blame, not the credit. It's 24/7. Some days I'm working on collaborations that aren't due out until 2020, but some days my job is simply making sure all the stores are burning the same incense.

Convention says that 'print is dead' and that bricks-and-mortar retail will go the same way. What have you been doing at Concepts to counteract the shift?

As with anything, you have to be prepared to evolve. Print largely went away because the advertising business saw the growth in online ads and that there was a faster and easier way to obtain news and information. That shift in the business model also applies to the traditional bricks-and-mortar retail shop. We are constantly evolving with what's happening around us and foreseeing what a future Concepts shop will look like. Is there an easier and faster way to buy shoes and apparel? Yes, but we will actually be expanding our locations with the mindset of creating a unique experience and engaging with our customers in a way that you simply can't online.



Concepts and New Balance have now worked together many times, what makes the relationship so cozy? Is it hometown pride?

I think there is a synergy there, and the Boston narrative is certainly a plus. It's easy to work with people that live and work in the same neighbourhood. While some think Concepts put New Balance on the map, we were more appreciative of the faith they had in us. They let us put a spin on product that was already working well, so there is a certain comfort level there that has allowed us to challenge one another. We have always held our partnership in the highest regard. However, in true Boston fashion, they have no problem whatsoever telling me NO!



2014
Concepts 'Rosé'
M997CPT

After all this time, do you have a guiding philosophy when it comes to designing collaborations?

While we certainly rely on instinct, there is no set formula to guide our approach. We are usually working at least 18 months out, so there has to be a bit of faith when you're orchestrating plans. We love to take risks, so if it feels questionable, we're happy to proceed. It's no secret that we love to push the boundaries. It usually pays off!



2016
Concepts 'NYC'
City Rivalry M997NSY

The Concepts x New Balance 997 colabs set the bar very high back in 2014. What do you remember about that time?

Hands-down, the 997 is our favourite New Balance of all time. Aside from pure aesthetics, they are one of the most comfortable sneakers ever made. I think a lot of outside factors contributed to the success of those three shoes. The timing was impeccable. The 997s were Made in USA and consumers were looking for something different at that time, which makes sense because the 997 hadn't been released for a few decades.



2015
Concepts 'Luxury Goods'
M997TNY

Whether it's the brand matrix we offer, or the collaborations we design and release, Concepts has always remained committed to the idea of luxury, so the conceptual thread between all those 997s was powerful.

'WE LOVE TO TAKE RISKS, SO IF IT FEELS QUESTIONABLE, WE'RE HAPPY TO PROCEED. IT'S NO SECRET THAT WE LOVE TO PUSH THE BOUNDARIES. IT USUALLY PAYS OFF!'





‘THE MINT 997 WAS THE PREQUEL TO OUR ‘C-NOTE’ NEW BALANCE RELEASE. IT WAS ALSO THE FIRST TIME WE STRETCHED A STORY OVER TWO DIFFERENT SNEAKERS. I THINK A LOT OF PEOPLE MISSED THE FACT IT DROPPED THE SAME MONTH AS THE NEW HUNDRED-DOLLAR BILL’

How do you assess whether a collaboration was a success?

In my early years at Concepts, I was very conscious of the sell-through speed, traffic on the website, and even the reseller prices.

These days, I'm more about seeing people wear the actual shoes. If someone is willing to forego the resale value to wear a Concepts colab, then my job is done.

I'm sure kids would love to know how a sneaker collaboration comes together. Take us through the entire process from start to finish.

Yeah, I think most people wouldn't understand how it all happens. The first thing we start with is a discussion around the model we'll work on. We take that away and come up with a concept that we think gels with the shoe itself. The last part of the process is figuring out the colourway and documenting the materials.

It generally takes about three months after the design is submitted before the first sample arrives.



Depending on how many revisions are required, it's another 12 months at least before the finished pairs hit the stock room. So, all up, it can easily take 18 months for a project to come together, which makes the process quite speculative.

You've been doing this for such a long time, how do you stay inspired and avoid becoming jaded?

I approach every opportunity as a chance to grow, with the fear of a chance to fail in the back of my mind. Our confidence is always ap-

parent; however, this plays back to our willingness to push the envelope. We are always contributing to a larger body of work that we remain conscious of at all times.

Any final words of wisdom? What is the best advice you were ever given?

Always play the long game!



Interview
Woody

Photography
Gage Bantiles

MADE WITH PRIDE

**PERIOD
CORRECT**

**BRYAN
CALVERO**

COSTA MESA, CALIFORNIA

Bryan Calvero loves classic cars, mid-century architecture and vintage furniture, so it's no surprise his Period Correct label is a tasteful melange of all three. Based in Costa Mesa, California – in what used to be an old Porsche spare parts business – the brand's flagship store is a shrine to motorsports heritage, with just enough floorspace to showcase Calvero's ever-evolving roster of Porsches, Ferraris and BMWs. Proudly designed and manufactured in the USA, Period Correct is redefining what it means to be a modern classic.





2018
 Period Correct Flagship Store,
 Costa Mesa, California

'IF YOU LOVE CLASSIC SPORTS CARS AND MID-CENTURY DESIGN, PERIOD CORRECT IS A BRAND YOU'LL INTUITIVELY UNDERSTAND'

Cars and sneakers do seem to go together.

Sneaker designers have long been inspired by automobile details, so the two do seem to be very compatible. Back when I was four years old, I remember being enthusiastic about race cars. As for sneakers, I've always followed basketball and been into the shoes as well. My earliest sneaker memory is actually my father running marathons. There's a photo in my childhood home of him winning a race in his New Balance runners!

At what point did you start to think about combining all the things you love into one new brand?

Aside from cars, mid-century architecture and furniture are my passions, but visiting Japan on work trips definitely inspired me to start Period Correct. Half my time was spent visiting dealerships and parts stores to research European cars, while the rest was spent in shops researching brands that weren't carried in North America. I was amazed at the retail build-outs and how the marriage of good design and product was so seamless. I have always wanted to combine both lifestyles by merging fashion with motorsports heritage.



2018
 Team Racing tote



2018
 Pre-A crewneck

Does the name 'Period Correct' imply a love of retro nostalgia, or is it more about doing things the right way?

In the context of the brand, 'Period Correct' is meant more in lifestyle terms rather than the strict definition of the phrase. If you love classic sports cars, vintage Rolex watches and mid-century design, Period Correct is a brand you'll intuitively understand because it was developed with the pure passion of a true enthusiast. I love cars that are 'period correct' in every aspect but I also appreciate hot rodded engines that aren't original to the car. Increasing performance and functionality is always a positive. I'm never one to judge, and if you ever visit the Period Correct 'Pit Stop' event you will witness the huge diversity in cars we attract.

The Period Correct store in Costa Mesa defines the brand perfectly. It must have felt like the universe aligned when you found the building.

Indeed, the space couldn't have been any better. The building was previously owned by Rod Emory's family, who ran the Porsche Parts Obsolete store here for decades. I always heard stories from the old guys about the famous store as far back as the 1970s.

'EVER SINCE I SAW THE PORSCHE 997 GT3RS IN THAT CLASSIC ORANGE LIVERY I WAS HOOKED!'

Getting this space forced me to move a bit faster on my dream than I would have liked, but what can you do? It was quite an organic process, but I'd like to say it was a blessing from God!

The word 'classic' is often associated with sports cars, but it also applies to New Balance. What makes something a proper classic in your eyes?

I think using the term 'classic' denotes longevity, simplicity, quality and purity. All those things have to be right. Classic means a design is timeless and should look just as modern now as when it was first designed.

Has that mindset led you to working with brands like Modernica?

Correct. I have collaborated with brands like Modernica, Native Sons, Yuketen and Stand 21 because I admire their ethos and because they're like family. But it just so happens that they share the same aesthetic when it comes to designing and producing quality goods. The other thing is that those brands are owned and operated by genuine people.

With fast fashion and ephemeral forms of media, nothing seems to last long these days. How much of today's music, fashion and culture will become classic in a few decades?

That is a very good question. Without having a crystal ball, I would have to say not much.



2018
Overland Jacket



2018
Emory Crewneck

Millennials are very difficult to judge. They do seem to value goods, music and fashion differently than the era I grew up in. They are more impressed by marketing than quality and good design. Millennials want to know who's wearing it, whether it's hard to get and if they can resell for a profit! Today's kids don't know what selvedge denim is, or care about Gore-Tex jackets with taped seams. My assumption is that no one will remember this current era because contemporary goods just don't last like they used to.

So-Cal is the home of hot rod car culture. How does the love of Euro exotics from BMW, Ferrari and Porsche mesh with your location?

So-Cal has the biggest car culture anywhere. Hot rods and muscle cars are pure Americana for sure, but if you drew a 30-mile radius around our store you would find the most amazing collections full of vintage Porsches and even Ferraris that raced in the Mille Miglia. This area

also has amazing race history, with tracks like Riverside Raceway and Laguna Seca to name a few, so the link to motorsports is really strong as well.

Well, at least Period Correct is proudly made in the USA! Was that decision part of the brand's positioning or simply a pragmatic choice?

A bit of both actually. I want to make Period Correct's goods here in the USA because it's what I know and love, and because I want to keep everything as local and affordable as possible.





The numerology of car models and New Balance sneakers is another curious crossover. I know you've owned several Porsches. What does the number '997' mean to you?

The Porsche 997 means a tremendous amount to me. When I was a child, owning one was my dream, and I'm lucky that a 997 was my first modern Porsche. Ever since I saw the Porsche 997 GT3 RS in that classic orange livery I was hooked!

Ralph Lauren has a 997, and since I adored him growing up, I always said that I would get one of my own. The 997 is truly one of

the most timeless models that Porsche has ever produced. It's a very raw and aggressive beast, yet has that traditional 911 shape that I love so much.



I always seem to catch myself looking at clocks that correspond to cubic inches. 3:27 and 3:50 are Chevy V8s, 4:26 and 4:40 are Mopar big blocks, then it's Buick time at 4:55. I'm starting to think there's a higher power at work. Or maybe I'm just easily distracted in the afternoons?

I have the exact same knack of looking at clocks as they display European car models and makes. 3:56, 9:11, 3:55, 4:56, 4:58... I'm glad I'm not the only one! [laughs]

Finally, what's more important – going fast or looking good?

I have to love the shape and design of the car, as well as the performance. The styling and design of race cars with those huge arched flares and slick tyres has always excited me. I have a 1963 Abarth 850 that has only 70 horsepower and a Ferrari 458 that is pushing over 650 horsepower, but both those cars are fun in their own unique way. The 458 might get you there quicker, but the Abarth still gets

plenty of attention and makes me smile. They are stunning cars that serve the old adage about form and function.



2018
New Balance 997
(Bison Pack)



For those who hate to say goodbye.

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Design
Tim Daws

Photography
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Cover Photo
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