

Sneaker Freaker



It's funny how life plays out. Imagine you're daydreaming and an idea pops into your head. It could be the wackiest scheme in the world or total genius – who knows? Do you give up before you even get started or do you... just do it? Let's say you opt for the latter. Then bam!, a decade and a half flies past and you're wondering what the hell happened. Obsessions will do that to you. This book is all about mine.

Back in 2002, after working in advertising, film design and fashion, I was gripped by the urge to start a magazine. My motivation was pretty simple. I wanted Nike and adidas to send me free shoes. Loads of free shoes. Enough to fill a FedEx truck! And I wanted that truck to come back every month with more boxes to add to my stash.

One week later I was the proud owner of *Sneaker Freaker*, the world's first magazine dedicated to the cult of sneakers. I had no grand plan – *still don't!* – but that wasn't important because I was now a publishing magnate. What I didn't know was that my new gig would take over my life and send me around the world hundreds of times like some globetrotting sneaker gigolo.

My dream came true, that's for sure. And I know what you're thinking right now. How

many? In all honesty, I don't know the exact number, but let's just say I have enough to get me through the next decade and a half without wearing the same pair twice. The thrill of a freebie never gets old, but I still buy plenty of sneakers simply because one can *never* have too many, though storage does become an issue when you hit four figures. Besides, it's my job.

The 2000s

At the start of the millennium, the internet was a primitive frontier. Dial-up was standard, e-commerce was limited and social media was still a twinkle in Zuckerberg's brown eyes. Basic blogs kinda existed, but digital photography was a pipedream. If you really wanted to shop for cool shoes, you had to jump on a plane to Tokyo, London or



Photo: Virginia Wood

**SNEAKER
BEVKE**

PRESENTS

AIR MAX

**THE
COMPLETE*
RETROSPECTIVE**



PALMOST

From the wild red streak that is the original Air Max 87 to the 'Infrared' 90, the bombastic bubbles of the 93 and the modern masterpiece known as the 95, Nike's Air Max line is a multipronged weapon of mass distinction.

As we pondered these modern marvels, we got to thinking about the past three decades and how Air Max had somehow floated off into late-90s obscurity. The more we thought about it – and the more research we did – the more we were confronted with a paralyzing question: what is an Air Max? Sure, everyone knows about the big-time players, but somewhere in this evolutionary tale the category mutates and definitions skew.

Questions kept stacking up. Can you actually run in Air Max? Is the Air 180 part of the fam? How about other big-window models such as the Structure, Tailwind and the Stab? What exactly does Air Max² mean and how do Triax and Tuned Air fit into the puzzle? And most crucially, whatever happened to the big-bubble version of the OG Air Max 1? As you can appreciate, the original premise for this feature expanded exponentially until it became a labyrinthine mountain of Max. This was one sneaker summit that simply had to be conquered.

We headed immediately to Nike's HQ in Portland, where we recorded an extraordinarily candid interview with Tinker Hatfield, designer of the original Air Max. We were also supremely fortunate to be granted entrance to the official Nike archive where we unearthed some long-lost Max gems. Thanks to friends across the globe, we also tracked down every known version of the 'Infrared' 90 and the 'Persian' BW. You'll also get a comprehensive look at every obscure Mad Max delicacy – and believe us, there's plenty of spicy humdingers in the closet. Piece by piece, bubble by bubble, this retrospective slowly came together. Behold the epic Airmaxstravaganza!

Written by **WOODY** and **OLIVER GEORGIU**

Thanks to Tinker Hatfield for his entertaining company and the extraordinary design of the OG Air Max, Mark Tomashow, Nelson Farniss & David Forland @ Nike, Demetria and Chester @ Nike PR, David Wasserman @ Nike JP, everyone at the Nike Archive, the late Frank Rudy for his inspiration, all the collectors including Charica, Dirty Soles, Iceberg, BeeDubs and Kun-san from Mita, Brendan Evans, Busy P, Matt Stevens, Dr. Google, Marc from Overkill, Air Max Chronicles, Dennis Branko and Jonathan House for photos, and everyone else who wrangled shoes for us including The Big Guy, Sebby, Robbo & Alex C. And of course... thanks to Nike for being Nike. Here's to the Max!

STABILITY/STRUCTURE



AIR MAX ST
1992

While the premise of Air Max was to deliver unparalleled comfort and cushioning, it was never intended to be suitable for all types of athlete. For over-pronators (those whose feet roll inwards when running), Nike modified Max technology to enhance support by helping the foot stay balanced through its natural gait. In 1992, the Air Max ST (an abbreviation of Structure) featured an adapted Max unit in the heel, and extra support was delivered through the medial side's cleverly designed teardrop window.



AIR STAB
1988

Nike's Air Stab (an abbreviation of Stability) was the first model to offer pronation support in tandem with Max cushioning. A saw-toothed TPU footbridge 'stability' unit was strategically inserted in the midsole, while the jagged 'window frames' propped up the shoe's sidewalls when under load.



AIR STRUCTURE
1991

A precursor to the Air Max ST, the Air Structure filled a niche – a design for those who wanted the cushioned Max experience, but needed additional support. A broader-fitting shoe than the average Air Max, the Air Structure featured a downsized medial side window and was boxed with a set of optional anatomical arch supports.



AIR MAX TRIAX
1997

The Triax legacy began in 1994 as a multi-sport/cross-training package. With stabilised Max cushioning, the Triax never quite made it to elite franchise status, but it lives on today as the Structure Triax line. Classic models to release under the Triax banner include 1996's Atlanta Olympic edition.

1994

169

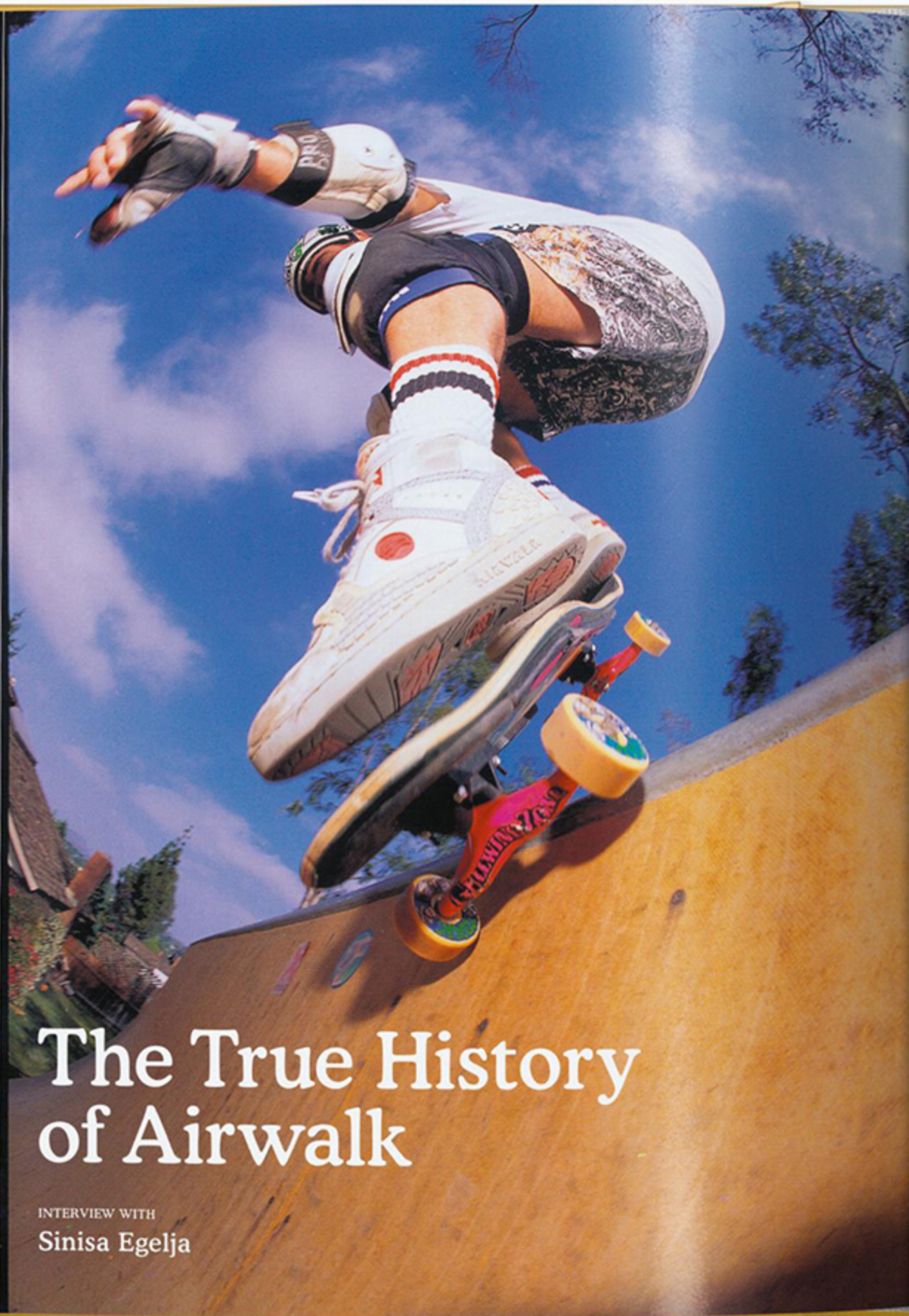


Air Max² prototype with visible forefoot Air pre dating the AM95.



AIR MAX²

Nike ramped up the Max range by adding a dual-pressure, multi-chamber airbag to the heel of the Air Max². The flanking outer chambers came loaded with a pressure rating of 25 psi for enhanced stability while – for the ultimate blend of custom cushioning – the central and rear bags harnessed just five psi. Up above, the meshular-neoprene, Huarache-like bootie continued where the AM93 left off, and came wrapped with a wavy, layered exterior of straight-up 90s funk. The Air Max² heel unit was used in the AM95, adapted slightly for the AM96, and eventually made its way across to basketball and cross-training categories.



The True History of Airwalk

INTERVIEW WITH
Sinisa Egelja



Sinisa Egelja

From its origins as an upstart startup in 1985, Airwalk evolved rapidly into a \$200 million beast that sponsored skaters, surfers, BMX riders, base jumpers, boogie boarders and a young Tony Hawk. Epitomising the mid-80s vibes, Airwalk's early shoes favoured vulcanised construction and heavy-duty graphic prints, before the high-top roster expanded under the Prototype banner. Category diversification may have been the key to the brand's supersonic growth, but ventures into casual shoes, snowboots and daggy brown loafers alienated their hardcore skate audience. The once white-hot behemoth – and at one point third-largest sneaker brand in the US behind Nike and adidas – entered a downward spiral that it couldn't snap, before eventually being sold for a song. Sinisa Egelja was the first and virtually last employee of the original Airwalk company. This is his story.

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