

STREET STYLE

NIKE

A VISUAL HISTORY OF THE ICONIC BRAND

GERALD
FLORES





'Well, I don't love it,' Knight was heard saying upon the first review. 'But it will grow on me.'

The Swoosh definitely grew on Knight as the shape also bore a resemblance to the wings on the Greek goddess that Nike was named after. It would go on to become one of the most well-known logos in the world.

While Davidson was initially paid just \$35 for her design, Knight saw her as one of the original minds behind the brand and wanted to acknowledge this. In 1983, the founder rewarded Davidson with 500 shares of Nike, as well as a golden ring



with a Swoosh-shaped diamond, which is possibly the biggest remuneration for any logo design in history.

The marking is such a part of Nike culture that every new athlete that signs with the brand is tasked to draw their own version of the Swoosh. There have been different evolutions of the Swoosh and you can see the various iterations if you look through Nike's back-catalogue of products. Designer and Nike collaborator Virgil Abloh nodded to Davidson's original Swoosh design on the cover of his book *Something's Off* and the marking has been reversed on signature product for eccentric players, like Dennis Rodman's Air Darwin sneaker. But the essence of the Swoosh remains in its simplicity, its elegance and the way it represents movement.

OPPOSITE: Giannis Antetokounmpo's first signature sneaker implemented its performance features in the midsole in the shape of a reverse Nike Swoosh.

ABOVE: A lightning bolt effect on the Nike Swoosh printed on a pair of track spikes.



Nike's terms included \$500,000 in cash for five years, an endorsement figure that was unprecedented in that era. The highest sneaker endorsement before 1984 was New Balance's deal with the Los Angeles Lakers James Worthy for \$150,000 a year for eight years. Other perks offered to Jordan included stock options and a custom-built shoe for the basketballer to play in.

There were some stipulations, however. Nike wrote a clause in the initial contract that required Jordan to accomplish one of three things - win NBA Rookie of the Year, to become an All-Star, or to average 20 points per game within his first three years. If Jordan didn't, Nike reserved the right to end the deal two years early.

By the time Jordan's first year in the NBA ended, he averaged 28 points per game after playing every game of the season. Not only did he win Rookie of the Year honours during the 1984-85 season, but the rising star became the darling of the League with his acrobatic style of play that made the name of his signature Nike shoe apropos: Air Jordan.

Nike made over \$100 million in revenue thanks to the sale of Air Jordans by the end of that first year - a new industry standard for how brands would market, design and storytell through signature products was set.

Mars Blackmon's marketing campaign exit made way for new icons to step in to advertise the Air Jordan 7: Bugs Bunny and the Looney Tunes. Assuming the moniker 'Hare Jordan', Bugs joined Jordan for a series of memorable commercials and print ads promoting the Air Jordan 7. One notable iteration of the shoe was a white-based colourway nicknamed 'Hare', paying homage to Bugs' involvement.

The Air Jordan 7 gained even more mainstream exposure when Jordan showcased the 'Bordeaux' colourway in Michael Jackson's music video for 'Jam'. This collaboration between the two biggest cultural icons of their time further solidified the Air Jordan 7's place in sneaker and pop culture history.



ABOVE: The 'Hare' Air Jordan 7, sometimes playfully referred to as 'Hare Jordan', takes its nickname from cartoon character Bugs Bunny who appeared in an original commercial for the shoe in an animated pair.

OPPOSITE: Michael Jordan wearing the 'Olympic' version of the Air Jordan 7 as a member of the 1992 Dream Team, which many regard as the greatest basketball team of all time.





Nike Air Max 180

The Nike Air Max 180 was a collaborative effort between two giants in the footwear design industry: Tinker Hatfield and Bruce Kilgore. At the time of its creation in 1991, Hatfield was renowned for his groundbreaking work on previous Air Max models, pushing the boundaries of sneaker design and technology. Meanwhile, Kilgore had achieved legendary status for his iconic creation, the Air Force 1. Together, they set out to make Air Max bigger and better than it had ever been.

The duo's goal for the shoe was to once again make Nike's patented Air technology larger and more visible than it had ever been. To achieve this, they honed in on a horseshoe concept for the Air unit, which allowed for increased visibility along the sides and underfoot of the shoe. They utilised a blow moulding process to create a version of the bag that provided maximum visibility and impact absorption. Moreover, the Air 180 was the first shoe to feature a urethane outsole moulded

directly to the Air unit, further enhancing its visibility and performance capabilities. The heightened visibility of the Air technology directly inspired the name Air 180.

During a period when Michael Jordan's endorsement could significantly impact any product, he was photographed wearing a pair of Nike Air 180s in the 'Concord' colourway for a photo shoot preceding the 1992 Olympics. This high-profile shoot provided the Air 180 model with exposure to a wider audience and bolstered its mainstream appeal.

While the Nike Air 180 didn't initially receive the same level of fanfare as its contemporaries, its significance and appreciation have grown considerably over the years. As time has passed, the Air 180 has emerged as a standout and essential release within the Nike Air Max series.



OPPOSITE: The Nike Air Max 180 in an original colourway of white, ultramarine and solar red.

LEFT: Designer and former Nike collaborator Sean Wotherspoon with the Nike Air Max 180 in 2017.