



photo:Dragon



WHAT'S HOT IN SUNGLASSES

The original - and most crucial - task of the sunglass has always been to protect our eyes from the much needed, yet harmful sunlight. But their function has evolved over the years to also protect the user's eye from dazzling moonlight (fashion statement) and are even 'must-have' accessories or centre-pieces to an entire look. And so the 2014 generation combines the hottest style trends with cutting edge technology for premium performance on all levels. A report by Anna Langer.

STYLE VS PERFORMANCE

Brands concur that style is super important these days, "especially with sunglasses" note Dragon, "they're one of the first things you see on a person, so they have to look good." And even though style is often the main reason a customer is drawn to a product in the first place, the product can't compromise in functionality. Especially when it comes to lenses, which have to fulfil highest standards when it comes to safety, since "consumers are more educated than in the past and understand that healthy eyes are important. All brands need to offer good quality in all lenses," Arnette says. That said there are almost as many technical innovations as there are stylish ones.

TECHNICAL INNOVATIONS

A lot of brands are experimenting with new materials and are developing more eco-friendly options such as the 100% biodegradable

Plantate™ polysaccharide from Spy or the bio based Rilsan Clear material from Smith (over 53% bio-based). Zeal produce their whole collection from plant based materials (using castor beans and cotton), while US newcomers from Proof Eyewear only work with wood for their frames - sometimes from old skateboard decks.

Acetate is also a popular choice utilised in all sorts of variations by the likes of Oakley, Shred(cellulose - plant based and most readily available renewable material on the planet), Spy, VonZipper, O'Neill (with wood effects), Dirty Dog, D'Blanc (from cotton fibres), Otis and Melon Optics (both handmade). Dragon expand their H2O Floatable Collection with new lens and frame options to customise your favourite pair. There will also be more choices available for Smith's revolutionary Chroma Pop technology, that allows for a better perception of light and contrast, as well as Spy's Happy Lens,

"For use in active sports, Dragon, Spy and O'Neill are also introducing rubber pads for better grip on nose and temples, even in sweaty conditions."

Nectar
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*“So knock yourself out with as many flashy, classic or understated styles as you like!
This summer, anything goes.”*

that “maximises the transmission of the sun’s ‘good’ rays while still blocking out the ‘bad’ UV rays” and enhances contrast as well. IS Eyewear, POC, Shred and Melon Optics on the other hand use Zeiss lenses for premium visibility and quality.

Another site of innovation in 2014 is the joint between frame and arms. Often the weakest and most breakable part of a pair of glasses, Zeal and Carve are arming it with 5 barrel hinges made of stainless steel, with Shred going an extra step further adding their 7 barrel hinge, while Oakley is trying to eliminate this chink altogether with a screwless hinge construction.

Dragon, Spy and O’Neill are introducing rubber pads for better grip on nose and temples, even in sweaty conditions.

STYLE

With a nod to their roots, Oakley and Smith are re-launching some of their heritage pieces (Oakley the Razorblades & Eyeshade and Smith the Archive collection) from the 80s and 90s; Zeal and Quiksilver introduce “wrap” and “shield” models and POC have come up with an old-school glacier model for Jeremy Jones. There is a strong retro vibe in general, including all kinds of round shapes (small at Dragon, for women’s at O’Neill, oversized at D’Blanc and circles at VonZipper, Proof Eyewear and Roxy) and cat eye variations (Vans, adidas, Spy, Roxy and in a square version at VonZipper). The Wayfarer isn’t going anywhere anytime soon either, with an update in pastel colours from Vans. And the Aviator, is making a strong comeback too (adidas, Animal, gloryfy), and adds valuable details such as a Wood Bar across the brow (Proof Eyewear).

But despite all this vintage love, there’s also a big trend for more modern shapes, that are angular (O’Neill, POC, Roxy, Dirty Dog and D’Blanc), sculptural (Oakley) and in general more bold (Proof Eyewear). And modern materials too, with many brands implementing metal frames in their collection (Oakley, VonZipper, O’Neill, Vans). Some add details with wooden accents (Zeal), while others aim for durability with stainless steal (IS Eyewear). Shred are providing durable sunglasses driven by pure performance but don’t compromise on style with wooden temple options, and unique multilayer acetates throughout their line.

2014 sees even more variations and some new additions from almost everyone. There will be a lot of coloured mirrors as well (from Arnette, Carve, Dirty Dog, Dragon, IS, Nectar, Oakley, Quiksilver, Roxy, Spy, Vans) as well as an array of new shades such as Proof’s lush “Kush Green”, Dragon’s pastel “Sky Blue” and “Plasma Ion”, “galactic and lunar chrome” from VonZipper or Roxy’s “sweet soft pinks”. And even some gold (Arnette and Carve) and orange (IS Eyewear), completing the metal trend. The biggest news is surely polarized mirrors from Smith, Carve and Zeal. And Oakley put it all together by adding coloured polarized lenses to their line.

There is also a new flashback to “classic, timeless lenses” from Oakley, Smith, Melon Optics, POC and IS Eyewear in black and grey, as well as some anthracite from gloryfy and a “super classic green G15 lens” tint from Dragon and IS. We see what trend hounds call the new “instagram look”: copper, rose and vintage grey, from D’Blanc, Otis and IS Eyewear. And Vans have a gradient lens for especially subtle transitions, too.

FRAMES

For everyone living on the bright side of life, there are all the colours of the rainbow available. Spy add some neon, while adidas and Quiksilver play with colour-blocking and Dirty Dog with “contrast veneered inlays”. Still colourful but not quite as flashy are translucent models by Dirty Dog and gloryfy, or even the bleached options from adidas, Roxy and Quiksilver offer some clear frames as well.

Vans, IS Eyewear and O’Neill soften their pallet with some pastels, while surf born brands Roxy and Quiksilver are all about “ocean colours” this year, with lots of blue and navy for the guys and turquoise or teal for the ladies. Tortoise is still a heavy hitter for a lot of brands.

Many different colour stories and combinations can also be found in various patterned styles, that include everything from flowers (Roxy) or “mini-florals” (Animal) to palm trees, hula girls and photo prints (Dragon). Gloryfy on the other hand focus on more subtle prints, while Vans and Quiksilver match up prints with their apparel and boardshorts collections.

Another big trend in 2014 will be matt finishes. Dirty Dog, Vans, Dragon, Animal, POC and IS pair this new look with colour, while Spy, gloryfy, IS, Melon Optics and O’Neill stick with classic black, the latter offering a grey version as well (and POC offer various black ones with different lens colours). Quiksilver are jumping on the bandwagon as well, introducing a “rubber soft touch”.

PRESCRIPTION

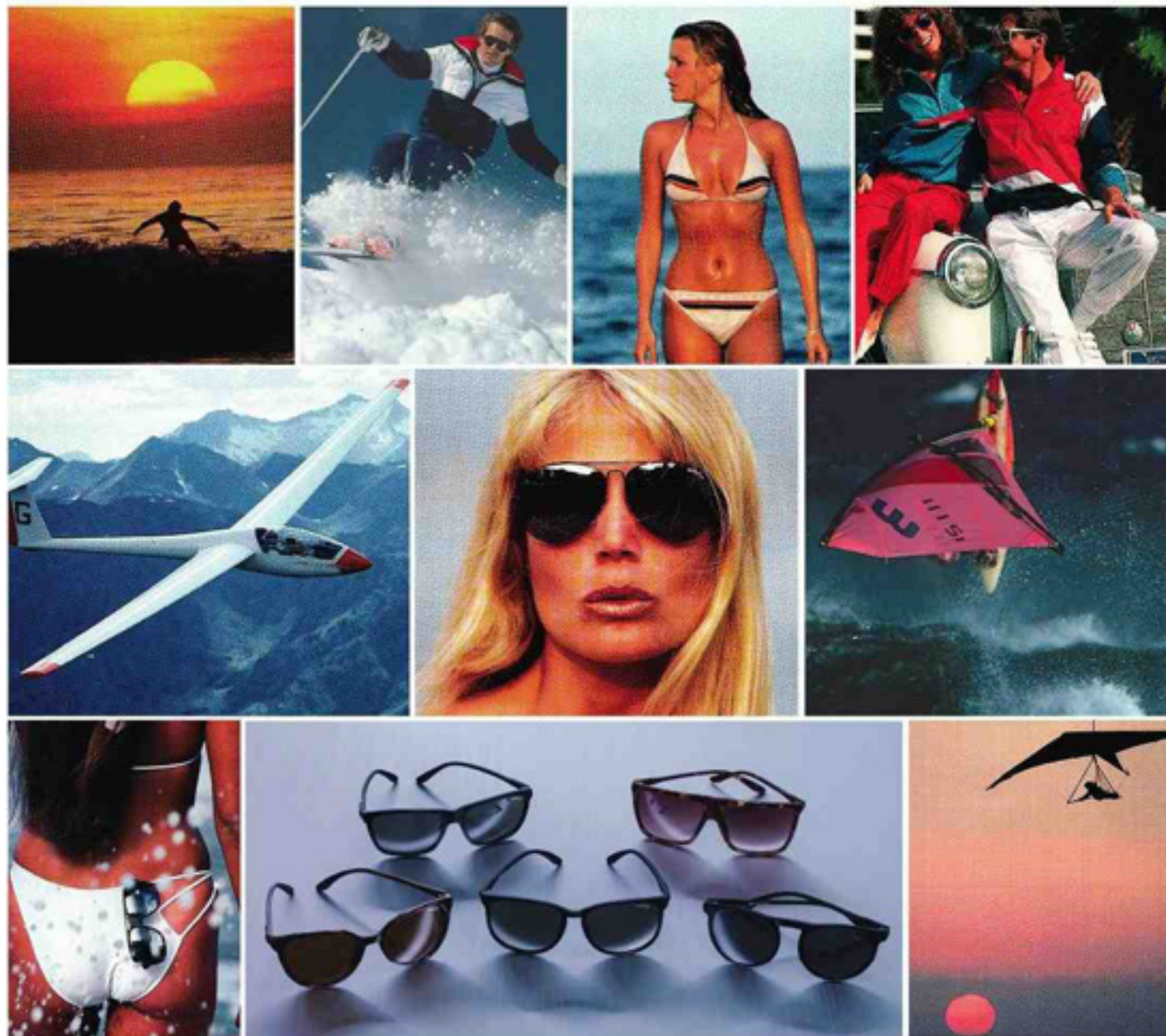
Sunglasses for prescriptions are becoming more and more important for many boardsports brands, but are met with different approaches. Some have separate lines (Oakley, Spy, Smith, VonZipper, Dragon, gloryfy, Roxy and Quiksilver), that are sold in optical stores only, as “sport shops don’t have the knowledge to provide the lenses” Smith Optics explain. “It’s two different jobs really”, with which Dragon and VonZipper agree. Adidas, D’Blanc, Zeal, IS and Oakley have all or at least the bigger part of their collections ready to be fitted with prescription glasses at the optician of choice, while Dirty Dog and Proof Eyewear already sell part of their prescription models through boardsports retailers and feel there will be more coming.

And they might be right. “The importance of sunglasses is growing especially for sports retailers, who consider eyewear as part of their core range and not just as an accessory,” adidas state. Especially since there aren’t any real “trends” anymore, as Dragon explains: “With the incessant spread and importance of social media, everyone can see what everyone is wearing, doing, making, etc. So ‘trends’ in the traditional sense of the word really don’t exist anymore.” This summer, anything goes.

TRENDS

- METAL - look, materials & lens tints
- MATT FINISH - classic black & bright colours
- RETRO SHAPES - circles, cat eyes, shields & wraps
- MIRROR MIRROR - in all colours, combinations & styles
- GREEN - eco-friendly, plant based materials

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