

Instinct founder relaunches iconic surf brand in South Africa

Instinct, the South African-born surf brand that was wildly popular in the 80s and 90s, is relaunching in its native country after being dormant here for decades.



Source: Instinct

In 1979, world champion surfer Shaun Tomson founded Instinct in Durban in partnership with a local family. The brand grew quickly and eventually was sold in 13 countries employing people across the globe.

Instinct relocated to California in 1982, and was the number three brand in the US behind Quiksilver and Gotcha. The brand featured an accomplished surf team and sponsored prominent surfers including Mike Burness, Dave Parmenter and Greg Anderson. It also sponsored Barton Lynch to his world title in 1988 and Tom Carroll to his two titles in 1984 and 1985.

Instinct's ad campaign 'Surfing is life...The rest is details' was created by Rod Dyer and David Lees and brought the brand significant additional exposure in the 80s.



Source: Instinct

In 1990, Tomson sold off his share of Instinct to his business partners when he retired from competitive surfing, and the Instinct brand faded.

A charitable gesture from TFG

In the 2000s, Tomson reacquired the brand's trademarks everywhere except South Africa where the Instinct intellectual property rights had been sold many years prior to The Foschini Group (TFG).

Tomson approached TFG recently about acquiring Instinct and says the fashion retail group was happy to return the brand to its original founder. All TFG has asked in return is that a contribution in perpetuity from every product sale goes to the 9Miles Project in Cape Town, an NGO focused on empowering underprivileged youth through surfing. "I personally experienced an incredibly warm gesture from Foschini," said Tomson.

In 2021, Tomson and his apparel designer wife Carla relaunched Instinct in Australia and will relaunch it in South Africa this April through a licensing agreement. The relaunch in SA is being carried out in partnership with Oh Two Clothing, a local manufacturer that cuts, sews, prints and produces apparel in Tomson's home town of Durban. "Homegrown and home-sewn" is said to be the ethos of the relaunched surf brand.

"Relaunching Instinct in my hometown where I started it and incorporating revenue from every sale to empower underprivileged students is a dream come true. Business can solve big social problems but if I can just help with one small problem, the life trajectory of a student, then my mission will be fulfilled.

"I'm excited to be partnering with Oh Two Clothing and the 9Miles Project to improve the lives of kids through the life lessons of surfing. Over the last 17 years, I have dedicated my life to helping uplift organisations, schools and universities through inspirational programmes and I'm excited to be incorporating Instinct into my programme of self-empowerment," says Tomson.



Instinct in 2023. Source: Instinct

Simon de Robillard, director Oh Two Clothing, comments, "The entire team at Oh Two is stoked to partner up with Shaun and Carla to relaunch one of South Africa's most iconic homegrown and heritage brands and we will be making the product in our factory in South Africa – made by South African hands for South Africans – homegrown and home-sewn.

"We have created a unique collection of surfwear with inspiration from the past, present and future and we are really excited to support Shaun's worldwide mission of youth transformation by contributing a portion of every sale to the 9Miles Project to empower underprivileged youth through surfing."

Tomson has added 'author' and 'leadership speaker' to his job title, and is currently in the middle of a world speaking tour following the launch of his number one Amazon best-selling book *The Surfer and the Sage: A Guide to Survive and Ride*

Life's Waves.

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