

# Research paper on pacific islander surfing: origins and influence

[Technology](#), [Development](#)



Surfing, which originated from pacific islands, had a significant and lasting impact on American Culture.

*“ It's all about where your mind's at.”*

*~ Kelly Slater*

It is definitely an incontestable fact that surfing has a significant and lasting influence upon the American culture in all its manifestations. Surfing was initially an integral part of the Polynesian culture, and later was adopted by the European settlers, who arrived to the Pacific Islands. Hawaii, Florida and California are considered to be the most vivid representatives of the surf culture and true examples of how surfing has influenced the American culture. Mark Twain, one of the most prominent American writers of the nineteenth century wrote the following when he visited the Hawaiian Islands in 1866: " In one place we came upon a large company of naked natives, of both sexes and all ages, amusing themselves with the national pastime of surf-bathing." (Twain, M., 2007) When Captain James Cook observed how the native Hawaiians mastered the surfboard, he "... could not help concluding this man had the most supreme pleasure while he was driven so fast and so smoothly by the sea".

The surf culture in the United States aroused in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with the culmination points during the 1950s and 1960s, and yet it continues to flourish. Initially ancient Hawaiians believed that Kahunas (Hawaiian priests) can influence the gods in terms of catching good waves. There ritual songs and dances were supposed to please the gods of the sea

and sent native Hawaiians surfable waves. For quite some time Caucasians assumed that only native inhabitants of the Pacific Islands possess the skills to surf. The first large-scale surf competition was held in 1928. Up till now the number of professional surfers is rather small as it is considered to be a difficult sport. (History of surfing. Surf culture., 2010)

As a result of such swift development from just a hobby into a full-fledge sport, surfing has become one of the major American exports, similar to Hollywood and rock'n'roll. The surf culture has touched upon all spheres of life starting from music, fashion, cinematography, language and much more. The first wetsuit was manufactured from parts of neoprene by Jack O'Neil in the beginning of the 1950s in California. The wetsuit played a significant role as it preserved the surfers from the cold waters. The wetsuit gave the sportsmen the possibility to practice throughout the year. The surf style comes in and out of fashion every five to ten years. The surf culture has given birth to numerous clothing brands and the entire subclass of the media industry. Dale Gribben in turn is responsible for popularization of surfing. He was the first sponsor of the surf competitions. By giving new modernized surfboards to local surfers he earned their support and collaboration. In the United States Gribben disclosed surfing to the public. (History of surfing. Surf culture., 2010)

When it comes to film making, " Gidget" (1959) and " The Endless Summer" (1966) are recognized as the crown jewels of surf cinematography. These movies lightened up the spark of interest towards surfing and surf culture. These masterpieces revealed the surf world to the American population. In

addition, John Severson established a photo book called “ The Surfer”, which gradually evolved into a full-scale magazine. It is also considered to be the first publication in the world disclosing the development of surfing. Many youngsters chose famous surfers who ride mind-blowing waves as their idols. Andy Irons (three time World Champion – 2002, 2003, 2004; holder of three Quiksilver Pro France titles – 2003, 2004, 2005; two Rip Curl Pro Search titles – 2006 and 2007 and 20 elite tour victories including the Vans Triple Crown of Surfing four times from 2002-2006), Duke Paoa Kahanamoku (August 24, 1890 - January 22, 1968, the Father of Modern Surfing) and Rell Sunn (Female World Surfing champion, known as the " Queen of Makaha") are among the most famous American surfers. (Warshaw, M., 2005)

Surf music was most popular in the 1960s. It is divided into two significant forms – instrumental surf rock (main melody is lead by an electric guitar or saxophone) and vocal surf pop presented by ballads and dance music. One of the most famous surf bands of the 1960s is considered to be “ The Beach Boys”. (Warshaw, M., 2005) Jason Mraz and Colbie Caillat are among the most popular contemporary surf singers. The surf culture has also created its own language style. In general this language is slang, which is only understandable to close members of the surf society. For example, a cut-back is “ a surf maneuver; its a 180° turn that's done on either of the two rails of the surfboard, basically reversing the direction that you are surfing in” or mushy identifies slow and slapdash waves giving little force not enough for great surfing. (Surf speak, 2010)

Surfing has become not only a lifestyle, but a swiftly developing industry, a flourishing culture and for many is an integral part of the American dream. Surfers from all over the world come to the coasts of the Hawaiian Islands and California in the hunt for enormous waves with the aspiration to catch the ultimate ride and experience the magnificence of the ocean.

## Reference

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