

# Shine Brighter 2<sup>de</sup>

## Shortfile 10 Sneaker culture

Video p. 96 – Extrait de la video “The Origins of Sneakers”, @pbsvoices, 2024.

**Voice-over:** I am a sneakerhead, and you might be too, but do you know the origins of sneakers? The earliest sneakers date back to the 19th century when rubber soles were combined with canvas uppers to create sand shoes for Victorian beach goers. The early 20th century saw an expansion of innovative shoes for a variety of sports, including shoes made specifically for running as well as boxing. Now, sneakers really became a true fashion statement in the 70s and 80s, with the influence of hip hop and sports like basketball and skateboarding. In fact, sneakers really took hold of the spotlight and did not let go when athletes started putting their stamp on shoes, like Michael Jordan.

Sneakers were meant for sole support, now they create a soul support to a community. With each step, they tell a story of innovation, creativity and individuality, solidifying their place in history as more than just shoes.

Video p. 98 – Extrait de la video “The full history of Air Jordan Sneakers”, *NachoAverageFinds*, 2023.

**Voice-over:** This is the Air Jordan 1, it's an iconic shoe made by Nike for basketball legend Michael Jordan, it's a piece of Footwear history. If you're into sneakers at all then you've probably either owned or wanted a pair of these, maybe they're even your girls, but did you know that the Air Jordan 1 was once banned by the NBA or was it really?

The original black and red colorway was groundbreaking. Before, the Air Jordan 1, basketball shoes were white silhouettes with minimal color. If there was any color at all, it was used in subtle ways to represent a player's uniform or a player's team. The majority of basketball shoes had a white base so when the Air Jordan 1 came out, it was bold and loud and probably pissed a lot of people off.

The shoe was so different that you had to love it. Fans of the sport finally had a basketball player they loved and could actually dress like off the court. Back in those days, basketball players like Dr J. dressed in suits and high-end designer clothes and all of a sudden here's this young basketball player Michael Jordan, rocking Air Jordan 1 and jeans off the court. It was fresh and new, something no one had ever seen before. It was bigger than basketball and everybody knew it. Everything was going according to planned, until the unthinkable happened: the NBA sent a letter to Nike stating that the shoes colorway did not comply with the National Basketball Association's uniform, rules and procedures. This brought huge attention to Michael Jordan and Nike but more importantly it brought tons of attention to the shoe. What happened next was one of the most brilliant marketing moves in history.

Nike decided that they would ignore the letter from the NBA and Michael Jordan would still play in the shoe but it would come at the cost of a \$5,000 fine per game. Nike was not only willing to pay the fine they turned it into the opportunity of a lifetime.

Video p. 99 – Extrait de la video “How Hip Hop and Basketball created sneaker culture”, *wearepushblack*, 2022.

**Voice-over:** Michael Jordan walked onto the court and defied gravity every time. Everybody wanted to be like Mike—and Jordans became the hottest shoes ever, but there was a dark side to this newfound “sneaker culture”. In 1970s New York City, two things were going fast in black neighborhoods, hip hop and basketball.

These two subcultures were popping off, and soon, they’d come together to spur another movement that would change America: sneaker culture. Black folks playing basketball and in the hip hop world took sneakers from sports equipment to a tool of cultural expression, and in the 80s, black sneakerheads shook things up by birthing the start of modern sneaker culture. But it wasn’t all good. In 84, Michael Jordan walked onto the court in his signature Air Jordans, despite the NBA’s ban on his sneakers. Nike capitalized off of the controversy, so everybody wanted to be Mike! And it was then that the trend of using black athletes to sell expensive shoes to our youth was born.

The pressure to have the latest sneakers on our feet, however, created an unfortunate reality. A string of sneaker killings in the 90s showed how coveted and valuable they became. And white supremacists have spent decades criminalizing black sneakerheads. Nike and many other companies continue to use Blackness for profit. The truth is, they’ll never be more “invested” in our communities than us.

Video p. 100 – Extrait de la video "Women sneakerheads", *Complex*, 2017.

**Joe La Puma:** Tinashe, what do you think it is about Jordans that everyone loves so much?

**Tinashe:** First of all, there's just a huge variety, which is so cool, like you can get stuff that feels really bright and you know really out there, you can get stuff that's a little bit more toned down. I think also just Michael Jordan as a brand, it's just so iconic, I don't know how you can top that. Other than that, I mean, the whole collectors' fascination with Js, it adds to the hype when other people are hyped.

**Joe La Puma:** Absolutely, absolutely!

**Tinashe:** I definitely wear most everything. The ones that I have a double pair of, which are a few, that I have a double pair. I'll collect one of them.

**Joe La Puma:** You know which ones offhand that you would get two pairs of?

**Tinashe:** Definitely these ones, definitely these guys. I think I have a two pair of these, of the grapes.

**Joe La Puma:** Great, I wanted to talk about Rihanna and Puma. Puma, just last quarter, they gained like 975 million dollars. How do you feel about females getting into sneaker culture and making a big impact?

**Tinashe:** Yeah, I mean it's such an important thing, because, you know, women, we wear sneakers. I think, obviously historically, they've been a men's shoe but that's so not the case anymore and hasn't been for a number of years, so I think it's super important for women to get even more behind, you know sneaker culture, and having Rihanna as, someone like her, designing sneakers, I think is just a huge step in that direction. In fact, I think more brands should link up with females just in the same way that you know there's like Adidas clubs and like Drake or, all these basketball players, they all, you know, have their sneaker collabs, I think it would be great for more female artists to be able to, you know, kind of put their spin on things.

## Évaluation de la compréhension de l'oral – Guide pédagogique

Vidéo – Extrait de la vidéo "How Michael Jordan Changed Sneaker Culture in Chicago", *Sole Origins*, 2019.

**Karim Wazani:** The Air Jordan line made sneaker culture popular culture. I don't know if there's ever been anybody in history that has ever inspired that many people to buy product than Michael Jordan.

**Dave Jeff:** When the first Air Jordans dropped, the impact of the Chicago culture was like a nuclear bomb.

**Diego Ross:** Prior to Michael Jordan everyone wore Ditas, you saw little spots of Fila and other brands, but it was an Adidas town. When Michael came into Chicago and started playing for the Bulls, the rest, you know, is his history. Prior to that, we didn't know anything about winning, we were a big sports town but no one had really won anything.

**Dreezy:** You gotta think about it, you come from nothing when you're in Chicago besides being one of the greatest basketball players of all time, he represented the city and then he stepped into the fashion industry and made his own shoe and I feel like every kid they put on a pair of Jordans felt like that magic that Jordan gave them.

**Karim Wazani:** Without Michael Jordan, I probably wouldn't have cared about shoes, nobody wanted to be Charles Barkley, everybody wanted to be like Michael Jordan.

**Diego Ross:** People just looked at it as 'oh it's a cool shoe that Michael Jordan's wearing but it's a dump'. It wasn't until the NBA banned the black red colorway that people kind of went crazy over that one.

**Vic Lloyd:** Air Jordans changed the style of the city especially with the red and black colorways they kind of created the go-to color for fashion in Chicago.

**Joe La Puma:** Black and red is the toughest you could get it fits so well with Jordans on-court persona cutthroat.

**Karim Wazani:** I can't think of a black red shoe that doesn't seem like Chicago to me. The entire black red color palette is known as one city, you cannot attribute that color palette to any other city but Chicago.