

By now, it's no surprise that being a hippie is back to being cool. Akin to our 1960's cultural counterparts, it seems as though the alternative thinkers have taken a stand and are making their presence known...again. Perhaps this is seen nowhere more clearly than in our sport of wave riding. And perhaps that is because of its close spiritual ties to a being far greater than us. Whatever the reason, the peace promoting, nature loving, creative, off-the-beaten path demographic holds a prominent space in our community and they cannot be ignored.

So the question is, what spawned this generation's freedom fighters? I argue that the new counter culture has risen for the same reasons any society goes through a revolution: being fed up with the existing paradigm and searching for a better alternative. The economic focus of our species and the desire to amass wealth has, for some, become thievery of the soul and a race in which they are all too tired of running. Surfers like Dave Rastovich, Chris Del Moro, and The Goodwins, have shown that there exists paths beyond the luxuries of societal norms, clean-cut personas, store bought groceries, and indoor plumbing. They have brought validity back to the argument that more does not mean happier. And they are not the only ones.

Over recent years, our community has seen an influx of this new genre of "free surfer." Those who have chosen to disengage the path of competitive surfing in efforts to simply exist as one who surfs freely. For these individuals, the lack of competitive nature has been replaced with passions that are often in-tune with a creative existence. Many have a love for artistic mediums such as painting, photography, writing, or music. Their general vibe is an obvious disinterest in the aggressive nature that requires one to be successful in a competitive arena. Their lifestyle shows that surfing may be the core of their existence, but it is not all that drives them. Further observing how these influences trickle down to the general surf population, one can easily see that more and more young surfers are trying to think outside the box. Many are shirking obligations of a 9-5 in exchange for roaming the open road in their nifty van conversions. Lots are moving beyond the conventional thruster in favor of progressive and highly functional board designs. Most are allowing personal style to be reflective of their lifestyle choices. They are challenging the industry norms that placed so much emphasis on the idea that we must be competitive in order to succeed in the surf world. Some hate it. Some love it. But regardless of one's viewpoint, there is no arguing that there's a new group of cool kids in the school cafeteria.

But be very weary. As with anything else that has mass appeal, so will come the desire to make money from it. The same way the fabled Satan disguised himself as a snake in the Garden of Eden, you can rest assured that profit seekers will aim to subtly market this image as a means of making us feel like we can buy our freedom with a t-shirt or crusher hat. Wait...or has that happened already?