

BEHIND THE BRAND · DECKS · NOV 27, 2018

Behind the Brand: Loaded Boards

by Daniel Fedkenheuer



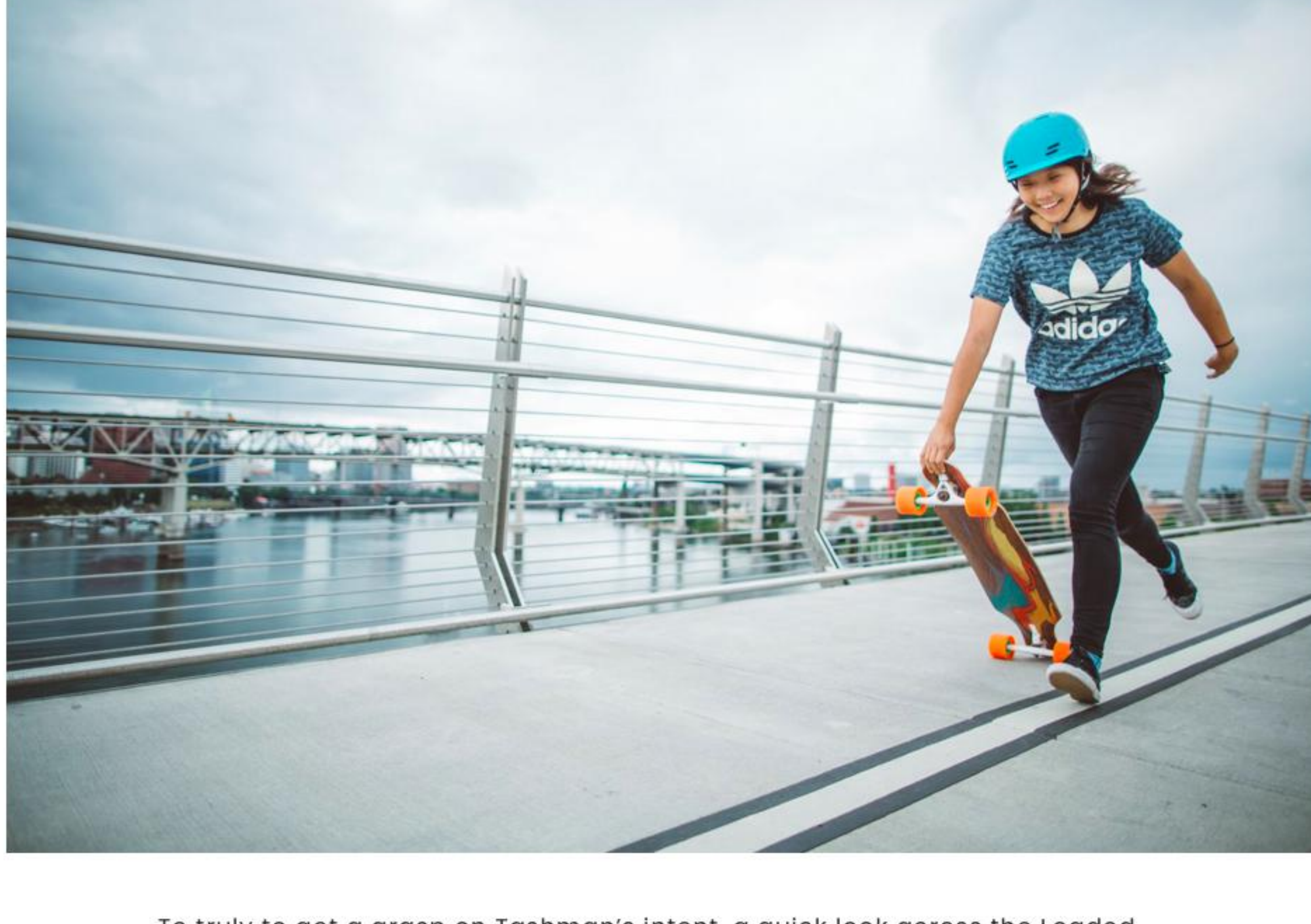
Founded	2002
Founders	Don Tashman
Based	Culver City, CA
Disciplines	Carving/Pumping, Freestyle/Dance, Downhill/Freeride
Website	loadedboards.com

The birth of one of longboarding's most active brands is rooted in the similarly active mentality of Don Tashman. Leading to the inception of Loaded Boards, the founder carried his steadfast interests in surfing and snowboarding through the 90's and into the 00's by experimenting with whatever trucks and wheels came his way. Looking back, his goal was akin to that of the original Z-Boys: to replicate the sensation of riding the waves on land. However, Tashman put his own spin on the age old story by chopping and experimenting primarily with snowboards as his baseplate. After a thorough period of tinkering with the available materials, Tashman resolved to form the business at the turn of the century and arrived at his first release of The Vanguard in 2002.

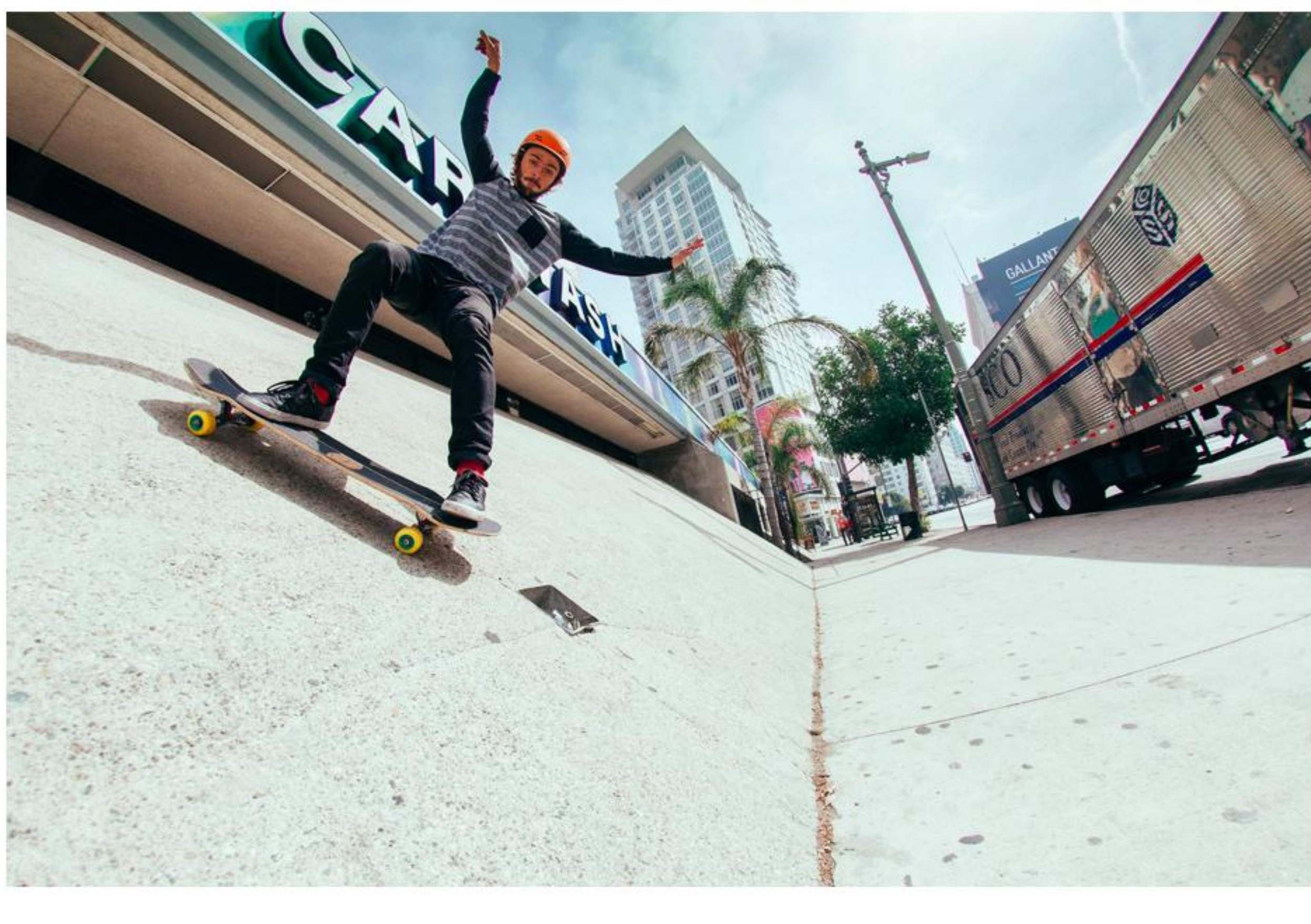


Loaded Vanguard

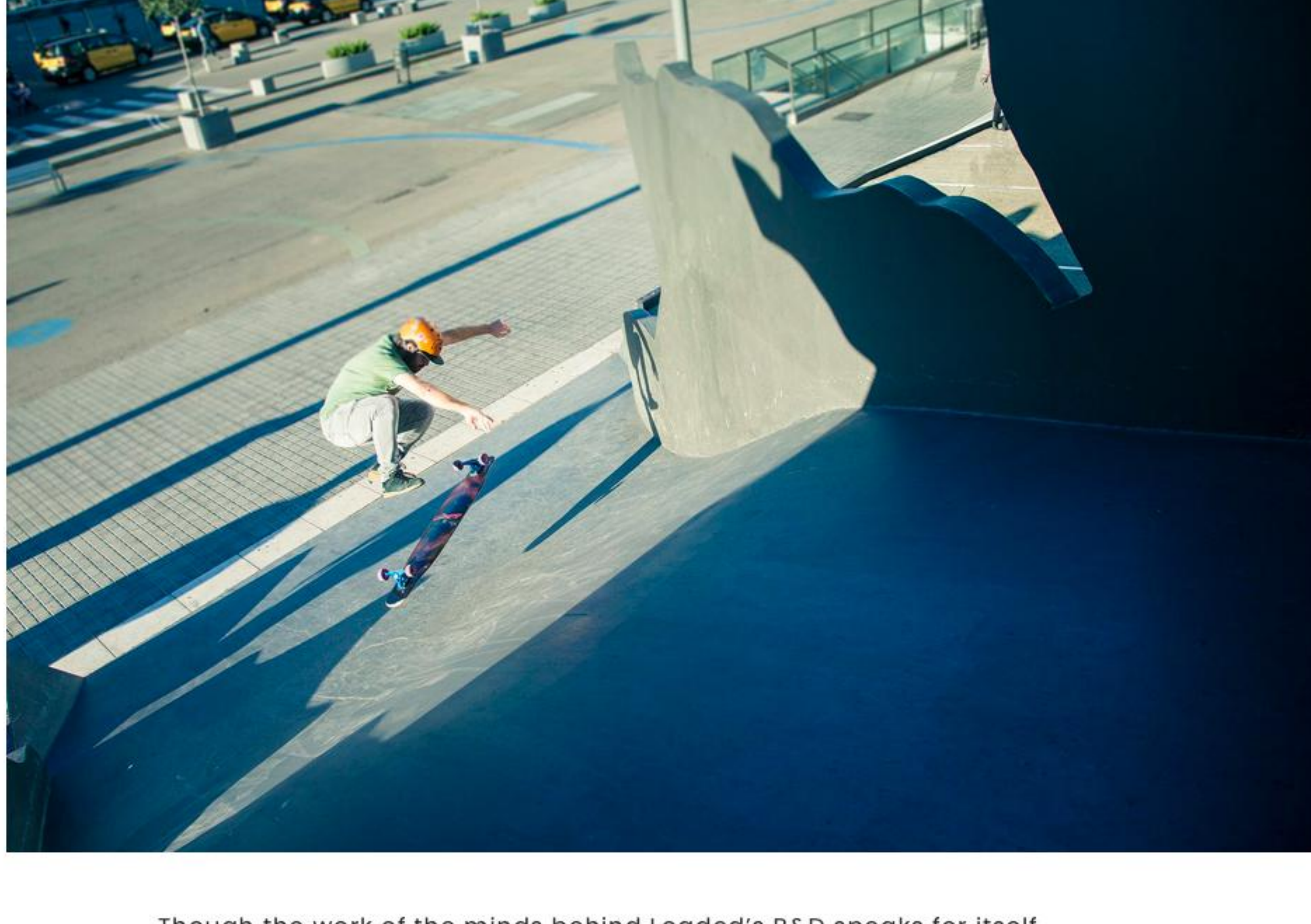
What the release of this primitive model spawned was a lifetime of continued experimentation with an overarching focus in mind. Concurrent with the rest of a newfound longboarding industry that was discovering the possibilities that existed beyond the standard 7-ply popsicle deck, the progression of Loaded Boards has been centered more around measures of performance than superfluous effort in the art department. Speaking on this unique stance, Tashman told us, "Performance has been the driving force behind Loaded's designs since day one. As we have a strong appreciation for the beauty of the materials we use to make our decks we've opted to showcase their physical form and construction by keeping our graphics minimalist. Skateboards have always been a canvas for art and we've taken a much more subtle approach to focus on function as well as the natural aesthetics of the materials"



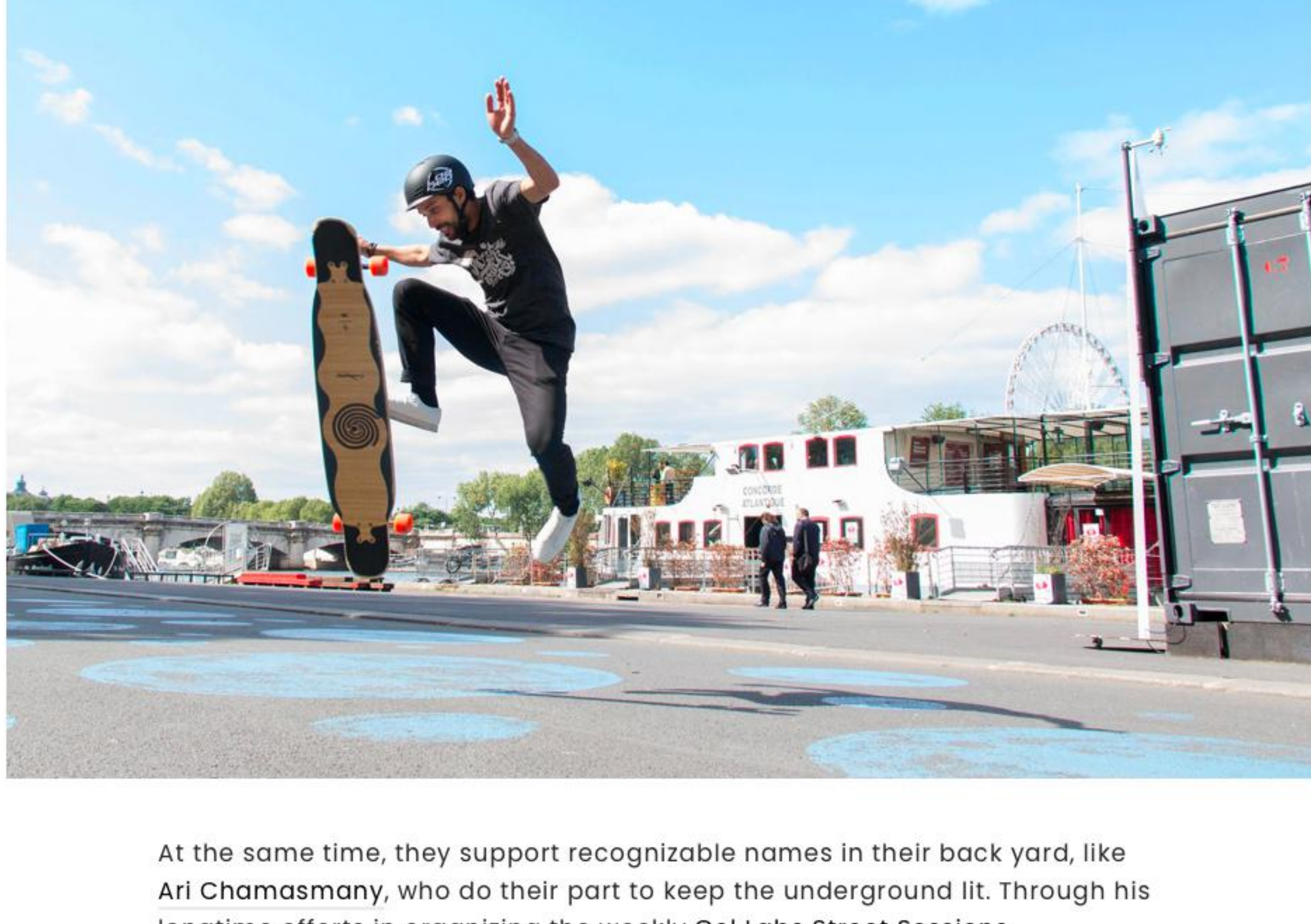
To truly get a grasp on Tashman's intent, a quick look across the Loaded Boards lineup echoes the company's claim, "we build what we want to ride." In specific example, there are boards like the Loaded Icarus that stand out as marvels of innovation in their specific discipline. Aimed at the soul of pumping and carving, this board combines the mindfulness of proper material selection with the sensibility of functional shaping to curate a distinctive riding experience. At the same time, there are boards like the Bassalt Tessaract, designed with cross-disciplinary riders in mind. Drawing on the competencies of older models and carefully choosing which features to adapt, this board provides a solid replacement for an entire quiver for modern all terrain skaters. As if this weren't enough, Loaded has continues to maintain their ingenuity the release of new models like the Kut-Thaka. Created in during the phase-out of an older model, this chopped cruiser reclaims tried and true wood and reinvigorates it as a pint-sized plaything. As this glimpse of the lineup would suggest, embracing diversity is an undeniably key concept for the Loaded camp.



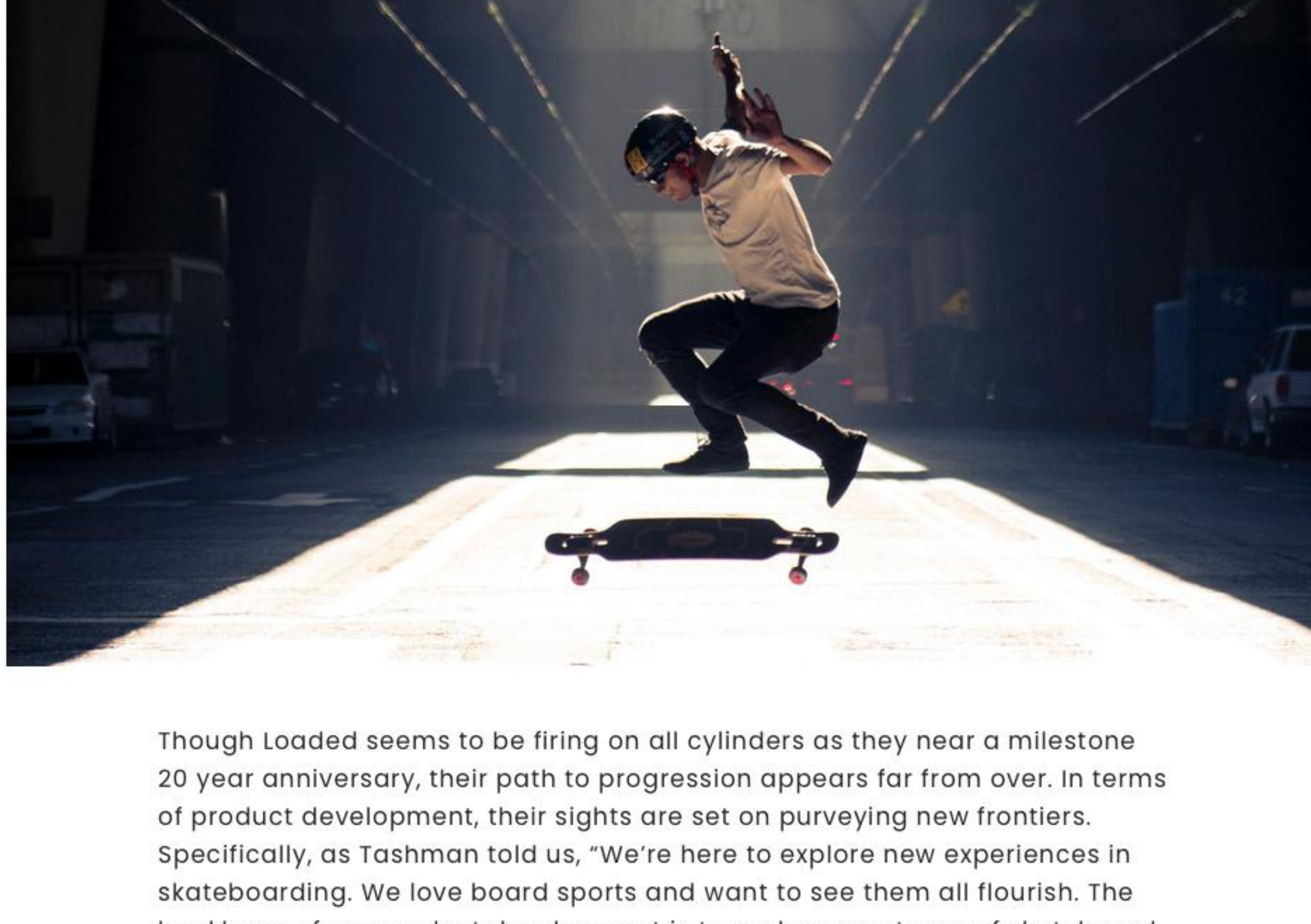
Of course, to keep up with such wide variety of riding styles and boards to match, the crew behind Tashman need to be equally well versed in product development and curiosity. Luckily, the founder has a pair of key players to thank for that. As Tashman reflects, "Ernie Delost and Chuck Barfoot are two legends in the snowboard world and have had a huge impact on how we manufacture our boards. We're very honored to have built such a close relationship with Ernie and Chuck over the years. Everything comes down to people in the end and we believe we work with the best people in the world." In prioritizing those who contribute to the manufacturing process, Tashman's prioritization of outside input has proven to be the backbone the brand's creative endeavors.



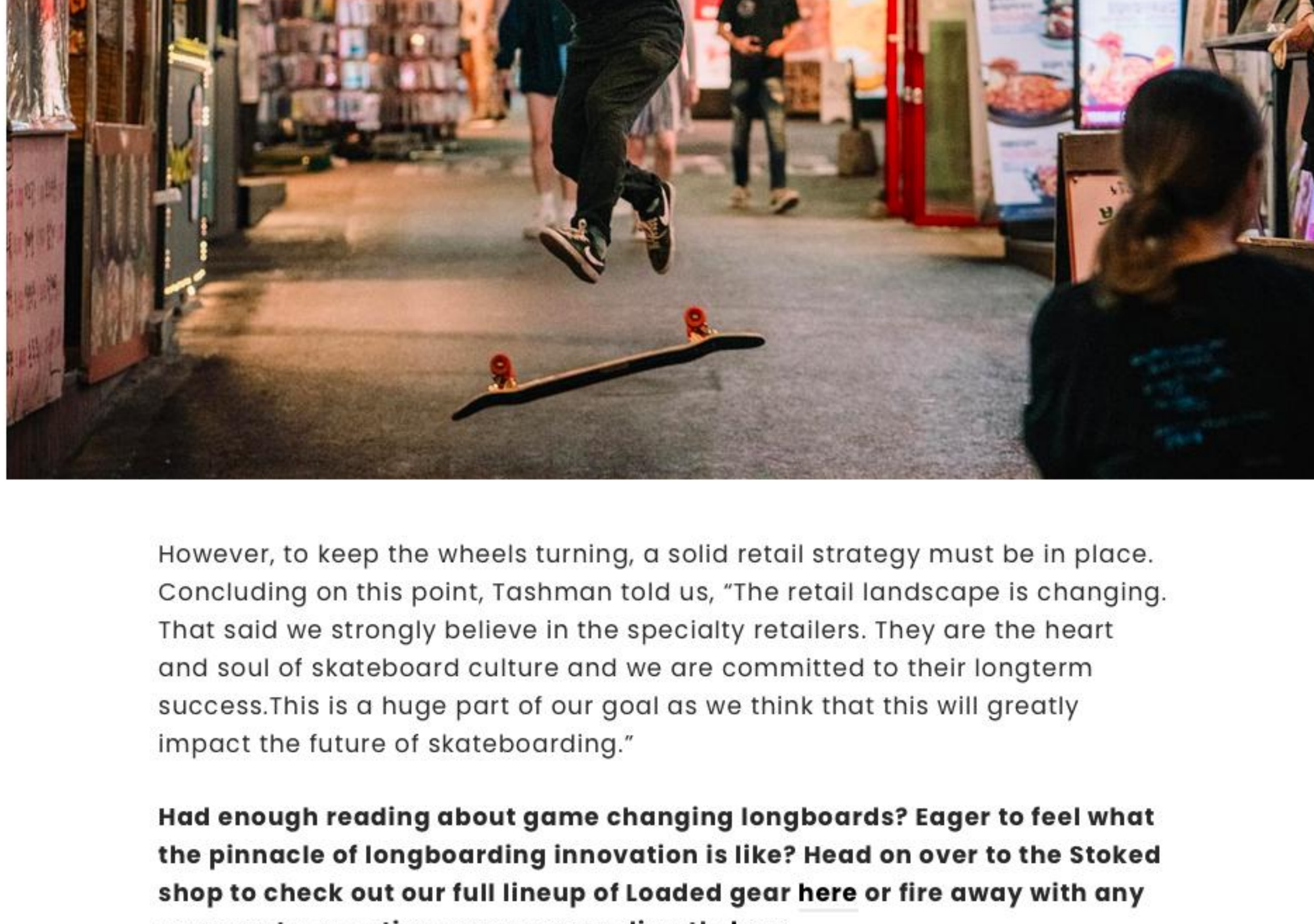
Though the work of the minds behind Loaded's R&D speaks for itself, supporting an international posse of Igniters adds to a special voice that shapes the Loaded ethos. Through the Loaded Ambassador program, the brand has enabled dozens of talented individuals across the globe to take care of the street testing, content generating and stoke spreading ends of the operation. Abroad, Loaded has some of the most iconic faces in longboarding, like Lotfi Lamaali behind their cause. Through his massive efforts in forming the renowned Dock Sessions events, Lamaali has been able to not only scale the influence of Loaded but also of freestyle longboarding as a whole.



At the same time, they support recognizable names in their back yard, like Ari Chamasmany, who do their part to keep the underground lit. Through his longtime efforts in organizing the weekly Gel Labs Street Sessions, Chamasmany has established a midnight community that Los Angeles locals have grown to love and stay awake to be a part of. In either case, both scene supporters work tirelessly to live up to Loaded's efforts to instill a constant sense of challenge in the community. What they intend for this to generate is a means to keep riders pushing one another to the edge in an unending pursuit of growth and learning.



Though Loaded seems to be firing on all cylinders as they near a milestone 20 year anniversary, their path to progression appears far from over. In terms of product development, their sights are set on purveying new frontiers. Specifically, as Tashman told us, "We're here to explore new experiences in skateboarding. We love board and want to see them all flourish. The backbone of our product development is to explore new types of skateboard designs that will hopefully resonate with people and will help grow the sport."



However, to keep the wheels turning, a solid retail strategy must be in place. Concluding on this point, Tashman told us, "The retail landscape is changing. That said we strongly believe in the specialty retailers. They are the heart and soul of skateboard culture and we are committed to their longterm success. This is a huge part of our goal as we think that this will greatly impact the future of skateboarding."

Had enough reading about game changing longboards? Eager to feel what the pinnacle of longboarding innovation is like? Head on over to the Stoked shop to check out our full lineup of Loaded gear here or fire away with any comments, questions or concerns directly here.