



KICKIN' IT WITH VANGUARD!

The demise of Nike

Maxime DeVico and Anna Petrova, CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

As Nike stocks plummet, the long-time global leader in athletic footwear seems to not be taking its own advice when it comes to “just doing it.” Since its founding in 1962, Nike’s popularity has been propelled by marketing campaigns and sponsorships of athletes who would later attain worldwide fame. The brand’s shoes are not only a staple on tracks, courts, and fields, but also an emblem of style and popular culture. While they will remain in every sneakerhead’s collection for years, the brand’s popularity, particularly its appeal to athletes, has noticeably decreased with an upsurge in more sport-specific shoes.

Many brands market their products for a specific sport, while Nike’s shoes are solely advertised as everyday sneakers or basketball shoes. For example, many runners have switched to On Clouds or HOKAs, volleyball players have switched to Avoli, and non-athletes have switched to more comfortable or “better-looking” shoes, such as Vans, Uggs, Converse, or Adidas.

“For volleyball, you need a lot of ankle support and [Avoli has] good insoles for jumping, and they look cool as well,” said girls volleyball Captain Pearl Agel ’25, who is one of many players who transferred to Avoli.

A budding new company created only last year, specifically catered to the needs of female volleyball players, Avoli shoes are made to support and cushion a player’s feet after powerful and repetitive jumps. Nike shoes, on the other hand, aren’t made with that in mind. In fact, basketball athletes jump four times less than volleyball players do, making basketball shoes — Nike’s forte — less viable in a competitive field.

Another competitor taking sales away from Nike is HOKA. HOKA One One, known simply as HOKA, is an athletic company geared towards runners. Their shoes have a lot of cushioning, making propulsion easier and bracing the foot’s impact when it hits the ground. Their high breathability is another reason so many athletes have made the switch to HOKA.

“I wear [HOKA shoes] because they work better for me as training shoes,” said cross country runner Mila Trkov ’27.

A problem that Nike seems to fall into is that their new models seem too similar to older models, or are just plain recolors. Seeing that aesthetics is a primary reason why people wear the shoes they do, Nike has become less desirable in the long run.

“I personally think [Converse shoes] are comfortable and look cooler,” said Eve Kavookjian ’27.

Although many people have switched from Nike to other brands that are more preferable to them, it is nowhere near gone or unpopular. Their shoes are still flooding the hallways of many schools, and customers of all ages are sure to be sporting the distinctive swoosh for years to come.

photos: Syra Bhatt

Vanguard interviews: Fleet Feet

Which pop culture shoe are you?

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Adventure or comfort?

Comfort

Help a classmate or rest while you can?

Lie for a friend or tell the truth?

Tell the truth

Help immediately

Give your friends the answers or guide them through it?

Give them the answers

Guide them

You are the bouncy shoes from Subway Surfers! You are risk-averse and have big dreams.

You are Hermes' winged shoe! Not only are you a great communicator, you also love to travel.

If you and your friend teamed up on a project, would you create a scrapbook of memories or design a fun board game?

Board game

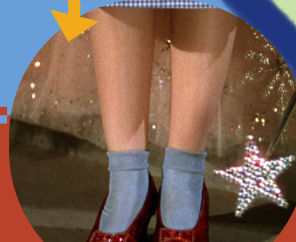
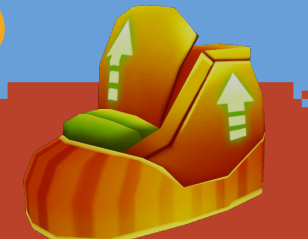
You are Dorothy's ruby heels! You are optimistic and enjoy the comfort of home.

You are Woody's cowboy boot! You are loyal and have a strong connection with your friends.

You are Flint's spray on shoes! You love creativity, innovation, and will always help a friend in need.



You are Cinderella's glass slipper! You have a pure heart and you stay true to your identity.



What's the hype with Crocs?

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In the crowded hallways of PHS, Crocs stand out. Neon orange, pastel blue, or covered in unique Jibbitz charms, these shoes have become as much a fashion statement as they are a choice for comfort. From athletes to artists, it seems everyone has embraced the hype of Crocs. But what's driving this trend?

The rise of Crocs from quirky clogs to an iconic fashion statement owes much to celebrity influence and creative collaborations. Over the years, big names like Post Malone, Justin Bieber, and even high-end brands like Balenciaga have partnered with Crocs, creating exclusive, limited-edition Crocs that instantly sell out. When celebrities started wearing Crocs — not just casually, but on red carpets and in music videos — the brand gained a new level of prestige. These partnerships made Crocs “cool,” transforming them from practical shoes to symbols of self-exploration and comfort.

The enduring popularity of Crocs captures the spirit of our ever-changing culture. As society continues to embrace self-expression, individuality, and comfort, Crocs are a prime example of how our views on style have evolved. No longer bound to hold onto the traditional ideas of style, what may have once been seen as “ugly” is now reshaping the pop culture landscape. So whether you rock Crocs with a single standout Jibbitz charm, prefer them in sports mode, or just straight-up hate them, there's no question: Crocs will be here to stay.

Beyond the “coolness” factor, Crocs also owe their popularity to their unique Croslite material, a closed cell resin foam, which makes them both versatile and easy on the feet. With the busy lives of PHS students, it's no wonder that Crocs have become a top choice for the student body. Whether hurrying between classes, heading to sports practice, or relaxing with friends, these shoes offer unparalleled comfort and versatility to match any pace.

The COVID-19 pandemic was another major turning point for Crocs and the “ugly fashion” trend as a whole. With everyone stuck at home, fashion priorities shifted almost overnight; comfort and ease took center stage, and suddenly the unconventional appeal of Crocs made perfect sense. As people traded formalwear for loungewear and comfy shoes, Crocs became an obvious choice — they are practical, easy to slip on, and surprisingly fun to customize. With the added influence of social media and celebrities who embraced their quirky appeal, Crocs became a symbol of pandemic fashion, reflecting both the need for comfort and a playful approach that helped people cope with challenging times. Emily Brayshaw describes this in her 2023 article “Gen Z grew up in a world filled with ugly fashion — no wonder they love their Crocs,” noting that “Crocs are wearable memes for Gen Z,” capturing the humor and authenticity that online culture celebrates.

Beyond their association with pandemic fashion, Crocs have evolved into a powerful way for people to express their style and personality. With Jibbitz charms, each pair tells a story — whether it's bright colors, symbols of favorite bands, or quirky charms that hint at inside jokes. At PHS, Crocs aren't just footwear; they're a small, fun way to show what you're into without saying a word. In a world of similar styles, Crocs lets students stand out, and that's what makes them so popular.



Photo credits: Harper & Row, Pixar Animation Studios, Sony Animation Pictures, Universal Pictures, S7RO Games, Warner Bros. Pictures, Walt Disney Studios, Wikipedia

With its walls lined with compression socks, athleticwear, and sneakers of every color, Fleet Feet Princeton has served the local community as both a running store and fitness group. Located on Nassau Street, they offer personalized shoe fittings for customers that range from experienced marathon runners to nurses who are constantly on their feet. Although Fleet Feet has almost 40 brands in store, they encourage personal well-being over anything else.

“I think [a] common mistake is when people kind of get themselves boxed into ... having that brand per se, when in reality, it's about comfort more than anything else,” said Connor McCraney, Fleet Feet's Retail Experience Manager.

Using a 3D foot scanner combined with a pressure plate, Fleet Feet helps customers find their best running shoe fit.

“[The scanner] gives us that 3D image of a person's foot so we can see exactly what someone's true foot size is all the way down [to the] decimal points,” said McCraney. “We also have what's called a pressure plate, which lets us ... see how people distribute pressure.”

Taking precautions to accurately measure people's feet and choosing the right fit can help prevent injury. Much of the job, however, is the runner's responsibility, as they evaluate the condition of their footwear. A shoe's durability is one of the most important factors in both ensuring a runner's comfort and minimizing injuries.

“All shoes are made with foam that's made to ... compress, absorb impact, and ... spring you back up. We always tell people

... [if you take] care of your shoes, they'll last for 300 to 500 miles,” said McCraney. [If] you're taking your running shoes and wearing them [to school] or [just] out and about, that shoe is going to wear down a lot quicker.”

Beyond protection and support, shoes can serve as a way to express yourself. Maintaining shoes is maintaining the comfort to get through each day. Finding the right fit can be a hassle, but ultimately, the feeling of accomplishment that comes with the perfect shoe is unmatched.

“Something as simple as [footwear can] really help people feel comfortable for all their lifestyle goals and needs,” said McCraney. “We always try to tell people [that] even though it may seem like a running story, we're more concerned about helping people [in achieving their] goals.”

Cultural shoes

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Indigenous moccasins

The term “moccasin” comes from the Algonquian language Powhatan, and was first used to describe any kind of Native-sewn footwear. Now, the term encompasses just about any shoe that has an Indigenous design or was worn by Indigenous people. Most Native Americans wore moccasins made from deer-hide, with a U-shaped toe. However, Native Americans who inhabited areas with extreme climates, like deserts and plains, often wore moccasins with hard soles that were made from pieces of rawhide or soft leather, with a turned-up toe. For tribes who lived in colder climates, moccasins referred to heavy-duty boots that were lined with fur. In the 19th century, moccasins became a popular footwear choice in Europe, due to their ability to protect the feet from plants and landscapes.



Dutch wooden clogs

Dutch wooden clogs are a well-known symbol of the Netherlands. It is believed that the oldest pair of these shoes were made around 1230. They were first crafted by hand, taking a day to create two pairs. Now, factories produce more than 2,000 of these shoes a day. These clogs were made out of necessity rather than for fashion. They are naturally water resistant to protect feet from the Dutch climate, and provide the needed support to move on land comfortably and easily. They symbolize practicality, craftsmanship, and resilience. Farmers, garden enthusiasts, and tourists in rural areas of the Netherlands still wear them.



Manchu platform shoes

Manchu platform shoes became a fashion staple for the Manchu people during the late Qing dynasty (1644–1911). Platform shoes, found in various cultures globally, are typically characterized by thick soles resulting in an elevated style. The Manchu platforms, nicknamed horse hoof shoes, emphasized maintaining “natural feet.” This



was largely in contrast to another group under the Qing dynasty, the Han Chinese, who practiced foot binding to create smaller feet to fit far smaller shoes. The platforms included detailed fabric upper sections and had a slightly curved, stilt-like wooden heel, hence the nickname “horse shoe.” Not many people are aware of the Manchu people and their culture due to the rapid modernization of the areas they inhabited, along with their decreased cultural presence. However, the Manchu people's platform shoes were an important component of dress among Manchu women for centuries.