

Unlikely Pairing

Rob Machado is hand-shaping his own line of surfboards and he's selling them in the last place you'd expect.

By Brendon Thomas

It would be easy to mistake Rob Machado for a slacker, what with the unkempt hair, the half-tempo delivery of his speech, the sporadic drifting. In reality, Machado is one of the hardest working pros out there. Between celebrity appearances, sponsor obligations, his clothing line, his philanthropy, his family, and well, surfing, he's somehow found time to launch his own line of surfboards too. Which basically means that he's spending what precious free minutes he has covered in foam dust.

"I've been in shaping bays since I was 14," Machado brags. "Working closely with Al Merrick, I got the best education there is. I've always tinkered with my boards. I shaped my first board way back in 2001."

Machado's shaping acumen may not come as a surprise to those who have followed his career, but the fact that he's selling his boards in, of all places, a *golf shop* might.

What do surfboards and golf clubs have in common you ask? Well on a practical level, nothing. But they do share certain utilitarian similarities. Machado's collaborator and master putter-maker, Scotty Cameron makes the case:

"Apart from the craft and skill involved in building them there's no denying that once you find the right board or the right putter, the confidence and the enjoyment you get from them elevates the experience. In that way they're very similar."

It's on this common ground that Machado and Cameron have come to forge this unlikely alliance in Cameron's high-end retail space, "The Scotty Cameron Gallery," in Encinitas, CA. For those who don't know, Cameron is golf industry royalty and makes some of the finest milled putters

in the world. His clubs are in the bags of major championship winners (including surf-stoked Masters champion Adam Scott). Not only are they the most technically advanced putters available, many golf aficionados consider some of Cameron's higher-end creations works of art.

"I've been golfing forever," Machado explains. "And I obviously knew about Scotty because his putters are the most sought after. He made me a putter after I won the Pipe Masters in 2001 with a 'Pipe Master' engraving on it. We've been friends since then."

Last summer Machado and Cameron ran into each other at a local Mexican restaurant. "Scotty told me about his Gallery and that he wanted to put some high-quality locally made surfboards in there," says Machado. "And I said, 'I make surfboards.'"

The fact that Machado makes his own line of surfboards was news to Cameron.

"I'm not trying to be the next Channel Islands, or even compete with CI," Machado says. "I'm still a CI team rider. This is just a little side project that I'm doing to generate some revenue and raise funds for my charity, The Rob Machado Foundation."

Despite the unlikely setting, Machado's elegant retro shapes hardly seem out of place among state-of-the-art putters that can retail for as much as \$14,000. The boards, like the golf equipment being sold there, are aimed at the enthusiast who has an enviable surplus in personal capital. As for the boards themselves, they retail for \$1,900 and the buying experience is befitting the price tag—something more akin to a fine art purchase than your average corner store wax acquisition.

Interested parties get taken into a separate room where the board is laid on a blanket for inspection.

Assuming everything checks out, the board will be ceremoniously slipped into a handmade patchwork board bag (made specifically for that individual board) and then, well, the proud new owner is ready to shred. They could even grab a new putter on their way out the door.

"The boards we made for Scotty's gallery are higher end," says Machado. "There's more attention to detail. They're all resin-tinted with pin lines and custom fins. The way Scotty does things, I felt like I had to step it up." 🏄



Rob Machado and master putter-maker Scotty Cameron, at "The Scotty Cameron Gallery" in Encinitas, CA. Photos by Ellis

