



MADE FOR SKATE SHOE REVIEW

FROM OUTER SPACE - DER NIKE SB SALAZAR

By Clemens Dyckmans

When Nike SB entered the skate shoe market in 2002 they broke new ground in various aspects. One of them was: No pro models! This policy has slowly softened over the years though; in 2005, Paul Rodriguez got a shoe with his name on the tongue, becoming the first skateboarder with a Nike pro model. In 2009, Stefan Janoski followed him into the elite circle of Nike „athletes“, like Kobe Bryant or LeBron James, with their own shoe.

Since March 2010, Omar Salazar has also been in that circle. This might be surprising at first – the Nike team consists of a who’s who of skateboarding today, and many members would have (and did have) their own model for another company by now. But the surprise is only at first sight: Omar Salazar is one of the most refreshing discoveries of the past decade. He had to work harder than most to enter the pro ranks and waited waited patiently until Alien Workshop decided that it was time to give him a deck with his name on it.

His creative, uncomplicated, but also gnarly, style, combined with a constant smile, make him very likeable, so a pro model for Nike is more than justified. As with his skating, Omar didn’t accept any compromises with his shoe. He worked very closely with Nike SB designer James Arizumi, giving him pages of sketches, lists of demands and pictures to communicate exactly what he wanted and needed, and then what changes had to be made to the prototypes so that they fit his vision.

All this resulted in more than one weekend shift for Arizumi. In the following review of the Nike Zoom Omar Salazar SB, you’ll find out whether all that overtime paid off or not.

Because of the innovative heel construction, the Salazar runs a half size bigger than most other Nike SB models, especially for people with narrow feet. As always, it’s best to buy the shoes from your local shop, where you can try on different sizes and compare the fit.

DURABILITY

One of the main reasons for the outstanding durability of the Salazar is the wide and thick-sided cupsole. The abrasion-resistant rubber compound and threadless attachment combine to make the sole very durable and very skateable. The large one-piece toebox, which spreads widely towards the heel area along the sides, is equally important for the durability of the Salazar. Since the white stitching in the forefoot area is just a design element, and doesn’t hold together any pieces of material, the toebox doesn’t have many points of attack where a tear-apart process could start.

Additionally, a thick and heavy suede ensures that, even after 20 hours of skating, it doesn’t even show the slightest hint of developing holes. Below the upper material, in the area of the decorative stitching, there is a layer of TPU-plastic. This assures that, even if the upper does wear through, the shoe remains skateable until that plastic is ripped through as well. This obviously extends the life span of a skate shoe a great deal.

A small weakness of the Salazar is the sole pattern. It features many small pimples with relatively big gaps between them. This contributes to the grip because the single elements can bend freely but, because of the shallowness of the pattern, the sole wears flat faster than others.

The durability of the laces is relatively good, although the Salazar doesn’t feature hidden lace loops or flaps. The overlapping material of the toebox around the first 2 lace holes keeps the laces protected from contact with griptape by the higher material surrounding the holes.

The same idea is used to protect the upper two lace holes, which are protected by the layer that comes from the heel and spreads along the shaft of the shoe. from the heel and spreads along the shaft of the shoe.

Because it’s not stitched at the bottom, it sticks out a little, again protecting the laces from contact with the griptape. Unfortunately, the middle section of the laces is too exposed, which can cause the laces to rip through there. But, the problem of ripped laces has been largely addressed with the Salazar.

Another positive aspect of the toebox piece spreading along the sides of the shoe is that, in combination with the swoosh and eye stay, the sensitive mesh material is protected. Similar to the laces, the mesh is not as exposed, with the surrounding materials being more prominent, which keeps the griptape away from it. This stops it fraying or developing holes. Another nice detail is the glued-on swoosh, which ensures that it stays in place even when the stitching is almost entirely ripped through, unlike most other models.

CUSHION

As you can see in the cross-section picture of the shoe, the Salazar features a cupsole construction with a layer of foam between bottom sole and insole. That layer provides a base cushion that, for example, vulcanised soles mostly can’t provide. Beyond that, as with all Nike SB shoes, the Salazar features a Zoom Air element in the heel. However, in this case, it differs in two ways. First, it is twice as thick as the elements used in most other models at 10mm instead of 5mm. Second, it is actually built into the cupsole, instead of glued to the underside of the insole. If you take out the insole and place the Saturn logo on the heel towards a light source, you can see the element. This construction has the advantage of retaining the Zoom Air unit if you decide or need to put in a different insole.

BREATHABILITY

Based on the large mesh panels on the sides and around the heel, the breathability of the Nike SB Salazar is above average compared to most other models on the market. Although parts of the mesh are covered by the Flywire material and don’t allow air exchange, the breathable panels are still larger than those of most other skate shoes. Additionally, like more and more models these days, the Salazar features a tongue that has a mesh section in the area covered by the laces. This allows moisture exchange in the critical instep area of the foot, where a lot of heat develops while skating.

SHAPE

The toebox area of the Salazar is rather wide compared with most other models. The shape might be described as a dull arrow shape that tapers increasingly towards the peak. As always, the pictures give a good indication of the shape. All in all, it’s an all-round design that most skaters should be able to get on with.

BOARDFEEL

Due to the solid cupsole construction and the foam core, the boardfeel of the Salazar can’t compete with most vulcanised soles. However, it is completely sufficient. As you can see in the cross section, the forefoot area is quite thin, so the boardfeel is good at exactly the point where you need it most – from the toes to the middle foot. Additionally, the foam has small grooves in that area, which makes it more flexible and also contributes positively to the feel. Straight out of the box, the boardfeel is a bit disappointing. The more the shoe is skated and worn, though, the better the boardfeel gets. After around five hours, it is really good and improves with every session. Because of the long life span of the Salazar, due to its great durability, such a wear-in time is totally justified.

A tip is to not skate the Salazar right out of the box. It’s better to break them in by walking around in them for about a week and, if necessary, bend the sole in all possible directions to speed up the process. This way, the boardfeel is there from the moment you step onto your board in them for the first time.

GRIP

As already mentioned, the sole pattern of the Salazar consists of relatively short pimples, that can move freely and which combine to build a grippy sole. After some time, and with abrasion, they turn into small stars – which fits with the Saturn logo in the heel area and the whole „Outer Space“ theme of the model. With reduced pimple length, though, the grip of them unfortunately decreases over time. Similar to the boardfeel though, other elements the sole’s grip develops with time. Right out of the box, the inflexible sole doesn’t adopt to the concave of the deck properly, which reduces the contact zone to the edges of the deck. After they are worn in, the grip turns out to be above average for a cupsole. The flick of the sidewalls needs some time to get used to as well. The highly durable cupsole has naturally less flick than a vulc sole, so, especially if you switch to these from vulc shoe, some adaption time is needed.

COMFORT

The Salazar also features a few fresh ideas when it comes to comfortability. For example, the bottom edge of the collar panel isn’t stitched to the rest of the shoe. This means you can use it as a heel pull to make it easier to get your foot into the mid-top shoe. Beyond that, there’s a zipper along the top of the tongue, which makes it possible to remove a cushioning pad and adapt the thickness of the tongue to your personal taste.

Due to the use of the Flywire material along the heel area, it was possible to reduce the c-shaped plastic reinforcement that every other shoe has in the heel to a minimum. This way you can put your foot into the shoe without getting stuck at the edge of this piece. It also means that the whole bootleg is softer and doesn’t cut as much into the ankle as other mid-tops do, while being as stable as a regular construction. The big collar opening of the Salazar also contributes to the easy access, compared, for example, to the Nike SB Blazer, which has to be unlaced in order to get your foot into the shoe. This was one of Omar’s demands for his pro model.

Like almost all Nike SB models, the Salazar also features an inner lining that has been constructed using the “stitch and turn” method, which means that no stitching or material edges are inside the shoe that could cause so-called “hot spots” – areas or threads that could rub on the foot.

STABILITY AND SUPPORT

The Salazar features excellent stability due to its mid-top construction and solid cupsole. Despite the wide collar, the ribbed structure of the thin padding assures that the foot can’t slip out of the shoe and is fixed in the one position at all times. The mid-top design is also high enough to reduce the freedom of ankle movement to a certain degree, which is positive if you want to reduce the danger of a twisted ankle.

Probably, the most obvious new feature of the Nike Zoom Omar Salazar SB is the Flywire material in the heel area. Flywire is a recent technology originally developed by Nike for use in running and comparable performance footwear. It consists of single inductile threads that are fused with a matrix material, a flexible plastic layer, to keep them in place.

The function of Flywire in the case of the Salazar is to replace the plastic reinforcement that normally is used to stiffen the heel area and keeps the foot in place. The advantage is that Flywire is lighter and thinner than the regular construction, while providing the same stability and support, which actually works quite well. You feel as secure as in a conventional mid-top skate shoe, but the heel is softer, adopts better to the foot shape and is more comfortable to wear.

The use of more Flywire threads towards the sidewalls of the model, not just keeping it to the heel area, would have been better. This would have made it possible to connect the threads with the top three lace holes, which would allow the shoe to bend more around the shape of the middle of the foot shape as well. The way it is now, this is only really possible if the shoe is laced all the way to the top hole, which is connected with the heel by the Flywire threads, and people rarely lace their skate shoes right to the top.

SUMMARY

The Nike SB Salazar has been developed specifically as an all-rounder shoe. It features excellent durability, comfort and stability, while providing a good boardfeel and grip. This makes it suitable for almost any kind of skating. People who skate a lot, and accordingly expose their shoes to a lot of abrasion, will get a lot of shoe for their money.

