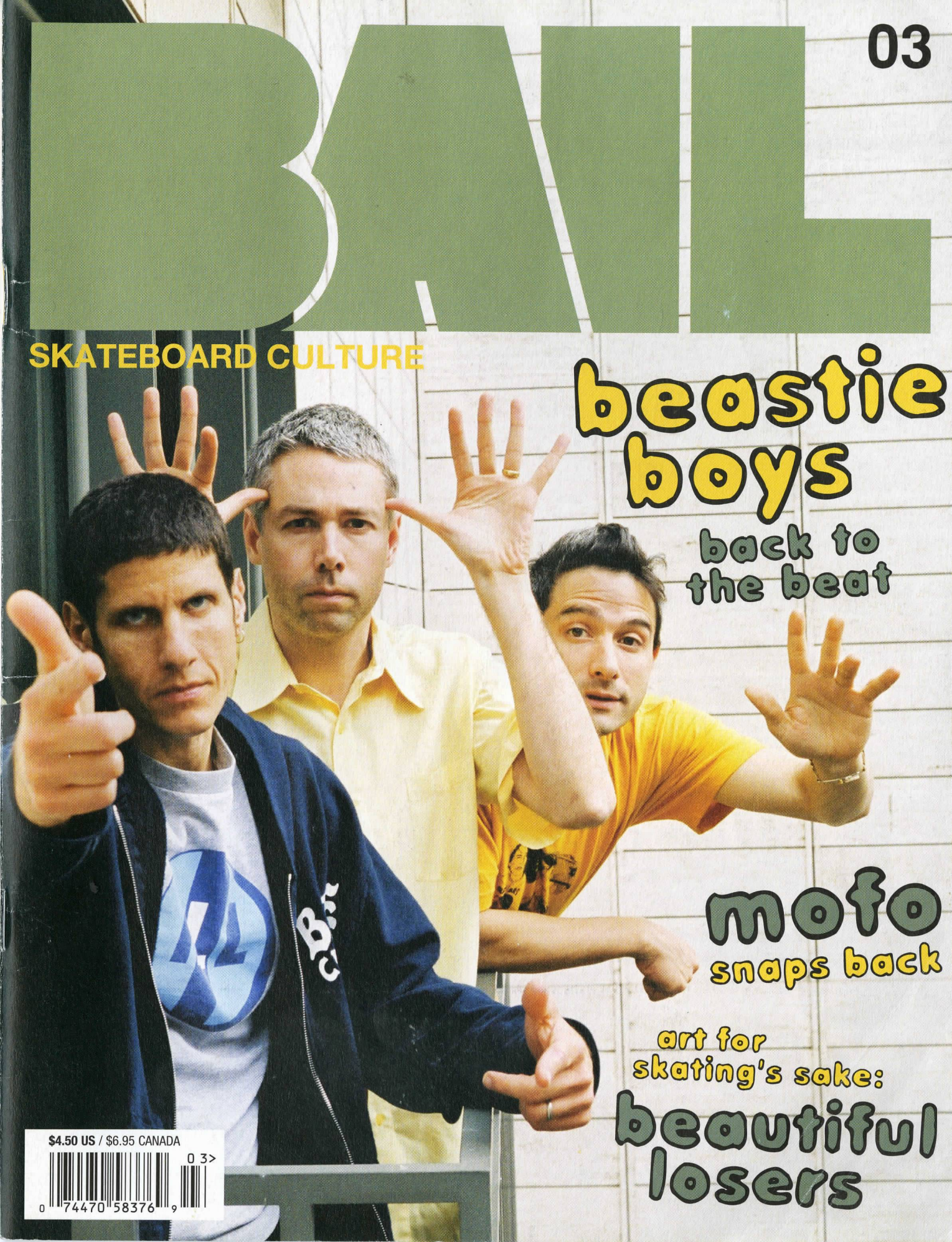
BAIL

03

SKATEBOARD CULTURE



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back to the beat

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snaps back

art for skating's sake:
beautiful losers

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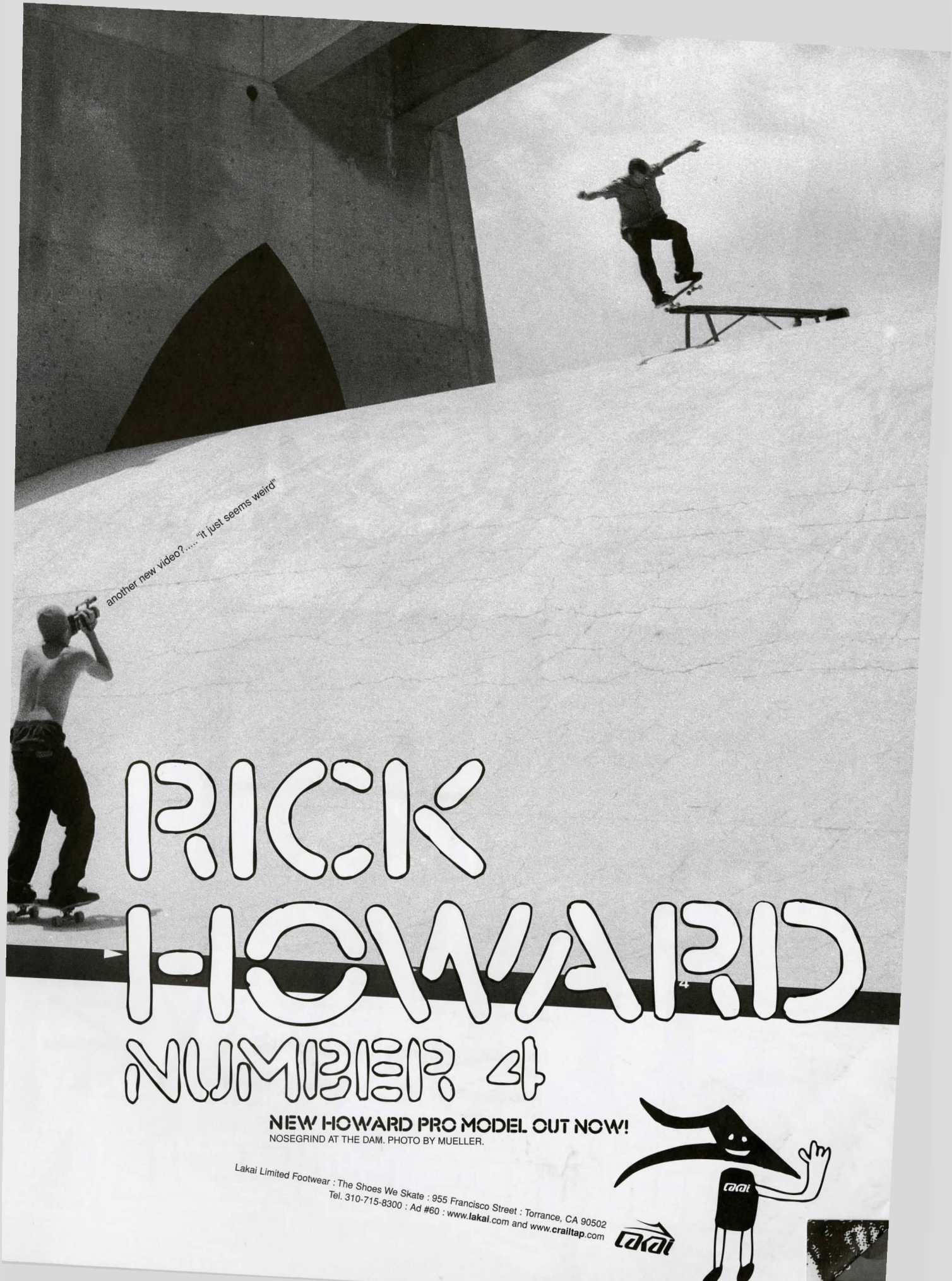
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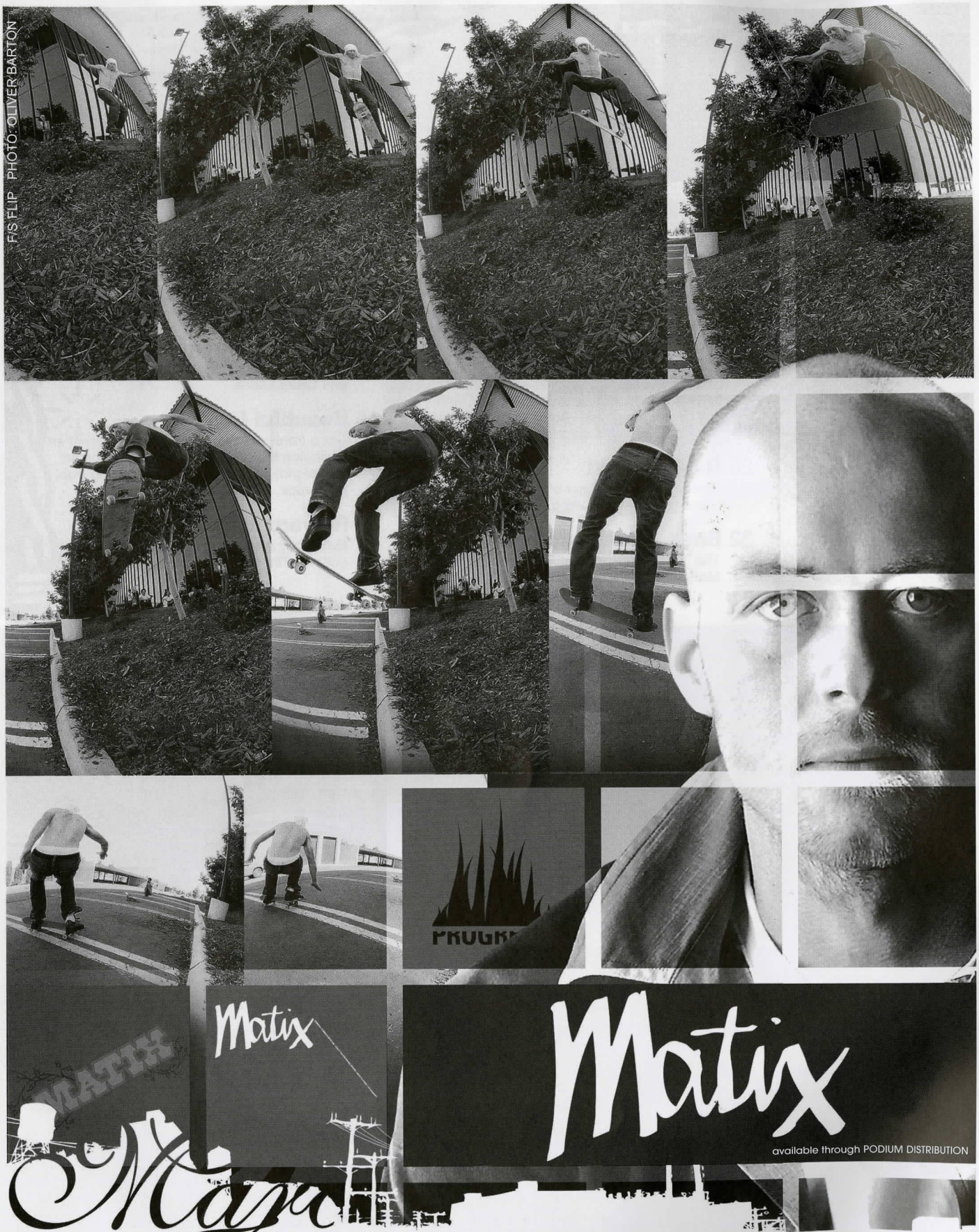
BAIL 03

DEPARTMENTS

features

LOSING, BEAUTIFULLY. PAGE 46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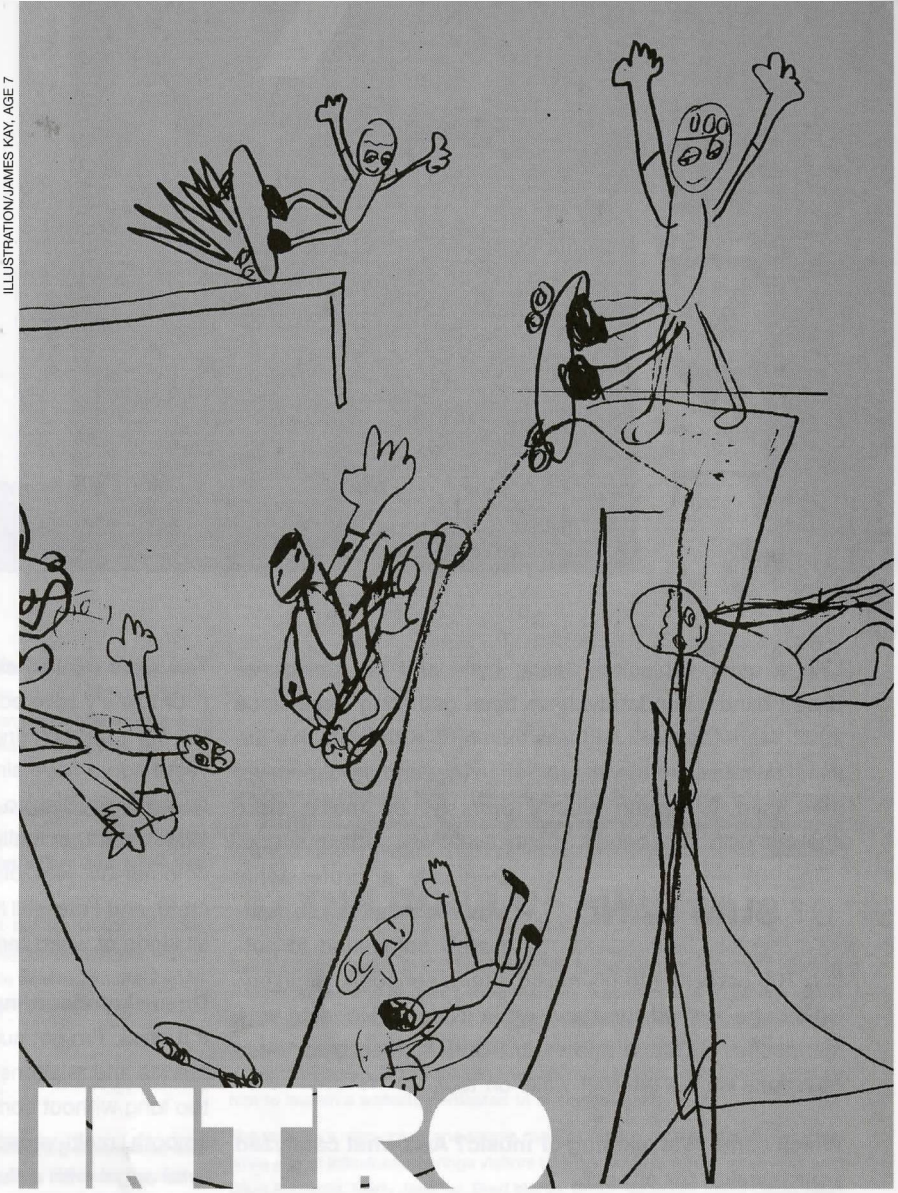


ILLUSTRATION/JAMES KAY, AGE 7

INTRO

On our own, we are only OK; surrounded by the right people, we can do anything. Our third issue of BAIL reflects this powerful oath. From our cover story featuring the reemergence of the Beastie Boys as one of the most unstoppable, original, and important collaborations of our time, to the complex call-and-response of the many different generations of artists involved in the Beautiful Losers exhibition, to our studio visit with Michael and Laura Leone, the husband and wife founders of design upstart Commonwealth Stacks, this issue makes one thing fairly obvious: Amazing progress is made when we travel in the company of like-minded, dynamic people. Looking at introspective interviews from photo guru MoFo, documentarian of skateboarding's communal history, to the spirited reminiscences of punk icon Tim Kerr, to a talk with skate legend Jay Adams about survival, this issue of BAIL is dedicated to the importance of being part of something that will always be bigger than just you.

In that same spirit, this issue welcomes editor and designer Jon Resh to the BAIL masthead. In a true spirit of collaboration, Jon's relentless energy, vibrant writing, and keen design eye have helped raise both of our sense of demand and possibility.

In the end, like Barry Hannah says, "Heaven is pals."

Like a quiet explosion, Jason Lytle and his California-based band, Grandaddy, have been gathering force since 1992. More than lo-fi and less than hi-fi, with lyrics that are simultaneously sorrowful, self-affirming, and introspective, their third full-length album, *Sumday*, hit music store shelves with the band's distinctive West Coast sound.

01 SUM BAND

Originally a professional skateboarder, Lytle ultimately committed to putting 100 percent into his music after a serious knee injury. Lytle, who formed the band while living in Modesto with friends Kevin Garcia and Aaron Burtch, answered these questions via the Internet while on tour.

Which came first: skating or music? And what catalyzed your passion for either?
I dabbled in music ever since I can remember. I was four years old at my grandmother's house playing arpeggios on her piano while she did yard work. At five years old, my siblings pitched in at Christmas and bought me my first skateboard, which I adored. It was a blue GT spoiler made of plastic with blue wheels. I think I liked being alone and working on patterns. I was able to do this with both activities.

Did skating change anything for you?
It shaped me into being independent, resistant, rebellious, and made fun of. In the end, it made me sturdy and tougher than your average "sensitive, songwriter guy."

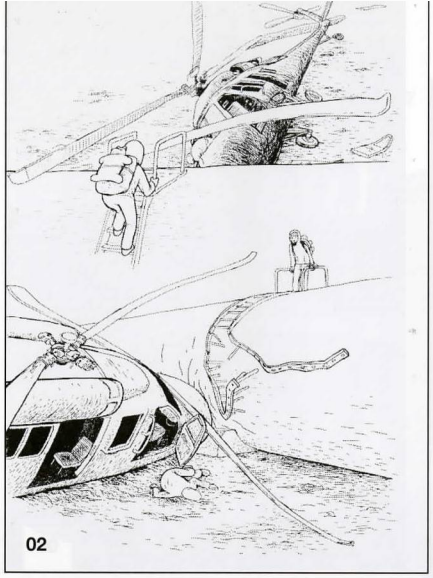
You met your bandmates—at least some of them—skating in Modesto. How has skating itself had an impact on your career as a musician?
I learned an immeasurable amount of info about the music world from my experience in the skateboard world: grace under pressure and the traveling circus-like lifestyle. The world of collective outcast exists in both activities.

You were injured skateboarding. Do you still skate?
I completely severed my ACL ligament and tore a majority of the other surrounding parts in my right knee. That was many years ago. I have since had few surgeries for the injury. I'm an avid bicyclist so my legs are strong, and yes, I do still skate—a lot, actually. More so than most of my old friends or other 35 year olds. I skate transitions, preferably concrete, and I can still hold my own in pools, on mini-ramps, or all kinds of weird terrain.

Does skateboarding have any effect on your music now?
If it does, I'm not sure. It is still very therapeutic for me. My friends and relations know what a dick I turn into when I go too long without some quality skating. Two hours at a good, smooth, multi-varied concrete park and I'm good to go, a total angel with a fluffy halo. This in turn might allow me to approach my music with a clear head.

This new album, *Sumday*, is different than previous Grandaddy records—it's mellower. You said that writing it resurrected your love for music. How did that come about?
All the reviews, articles, haggling with labels, attorney, tours, and lots of other bullshit had me doubting all of the band and the music. I changed my phone number, moved to a different location, and made myself listen to everything I recorded for the last 15 years. Like revisiting your old keepsake box, the results were very gratifying and I realized there was a reason, and continuity, and goodness. I soaked up old Grandaddy music and made new Grandaddy music.

SCENARIO: The members of The Verve Pipe have challenged you to a bar brawl. Would Grandaddy mop the floor?
We can beat up most bands, but why even bother? Most of them are just a bunch of fragile musicians with easily hurt feelings. LL Cool J on the other hand . . . — JOE TOWER



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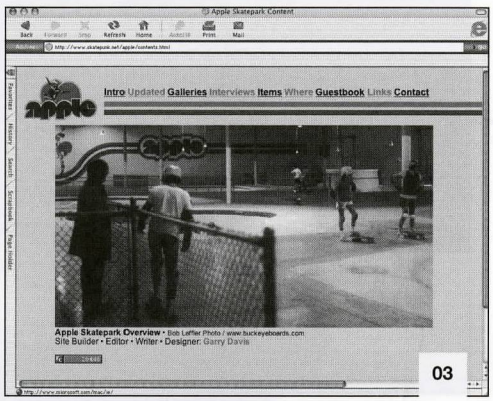

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Like no one else I know, Anders Nilsen is not afraid of being quiet—at least not in his work in comics. The author of *Big Questions*, a nominee for an Ignatz Award for new talent and outstanding comic, Nilsen's new book, *Dogs and Water*, quietly depicts the struggle of one young man and his dog, lost in a strangely lovely, but eternally apocalyptic, world.

Your drawings are full of white space and your narrative pacing is uniquely patient. It's very graceful in a way—similar to how you skate. What's the connection between your work as an artist/writer and what you learned skating?

Comics are hard work. I guess skating is hard too, but the feeling of finally wiring a trick that you've been struggling with all day just leaves you happy. As far as skating influencing my work, definitely the eclecticism and unpretentiousness of skateboard culture, the DIY-ness and snotty anti-authoritarianism of it, all that's pretty important to me.

02 THE BIG HUSH

Your new book, *Dogs and Water*, features a guy wandering around lost with his dog after a helicopter crash. Is there any connection between the use of the "crash" as a narrative device and your life as a skateboarder?

Two things. First: Everyone loves to see stuff crash. The slam sections of skate videos are always the most interesting for the non-skater; it's the most basic representation of violence and drama you can get. Second: A couple of months ago I was trying to get started on a story about Icarus, and as I got into it, I realized that *all* my stories are basically Icarus stories: people who get a little too big for their britches and then crash. The story is about humility and arrogance and just not respecting your limits. — JOE MENO

SEE MORE OF ANDERS' WORK AT WWW.DRAWNANDQUARTERLY.COM

In the early 1980s, skateboarding entered a state of disarray. Kids kicked their boards to the curb and turned to video arcades, Rubik's cubes, and hair metal for entertainment. Many of the most amazing concrete skateparks ever built shut their doors during these hard times, as skateboarding faded from the public eye.

03 THE CORE OF APPLE

Skaters who rolled into Columbus, Ohio's Apple Skatepark in 1979 enjoyed a short 21 months of bliss before the park was forced to close due to the dreary skate economy. During its short existence, a lasting impression was left on many of its visitors. Garry Scott Davis (better known as GSD) only rode Apple three times, but its smooth lines and near perfect construction inspired him to launch a website dedicated to all things Apple.

The website's retro colors and simple design create a vintage '70s look and feel while a brief introduction brings visitors into the world of Apple. Interviews with Dave Andrecht, Marty Jimenez, Brett Martin, Bryan Ridgeway, Steve Olson, Allen Losi, and other various Apple locals and pros present a comprehensive overview of the park. Old flyers, key chains, T-shirts, stickers, membership cards and other memorabilia are well documented, but the hidden treasure of the site lies in the guestbook. Here you really get a feel for what it was like to ride and begin to understand why the park meant so much to its loyal disciples. Ohio may not be considered a hotbed for early skate culture, but this site proves that Apple rolled with the best. — JOE MALONE

IF YOU'RE AT ALL INTERESTED IN SKATEBOARDING HISTORY TAKE A BITE OUT OF APPLE AT: HTTP://WWW.SKATEPUNK.NET/APPLE/APPFRONT.HTML.

Malachi Ritscher made his first deck around 1967 by taking apart his sister's rollerskates and attaching them to a piece of plywood cut by his grandfather. Almost 40 years later, this self-proclaimed "geezer" is making decks again, this time a limited edition run of boards for the Empty Bottle, the esteemed rock club in Chicago. The boards, built and printed by California Skateboard Printing, feature some autobiographical artwork: a man with a reel-to-reel tape deck inside a bottle with microphone stands protruding from the top.

Ritscher is a familiar face at the Bottle, where he often records jazz shows for his company, Savage Sound. After such shows, you'll often find Ritscher skating the empty streets of his neighborhood.

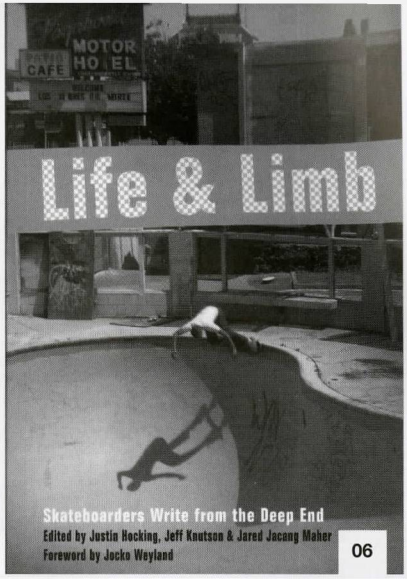
04 SPIN THE BOTTLE

"When I come home from shows or working the night shift, I can't necessarily get to sleep right away, so I skate the streets out by me," Ritscher says. "They're pretty deserted—there are no hotshot kids to make fun of me. It's a way to cool off."

The Bottle decks are currently in their second edition. Some are being skated and some are hanging as art on people's walls. Ritscher skates one himself and says he recently replaced one for a kid who busted his at Chicago's Wilson Street skatepark. "It's always nice that somebody comes up and says to you 'I'm skating on your decks,'" Ritscher says. — KYLE RYAN

THE EMPTY BOTTLE DECKS MEASURE 7.75 INCHES WIDE AND 31 INCHES LONG. THEY'RE AVAILABLE AT WWW.SAVAGESOUND.COM OR AT THE EMPTY BOTTLE (WWW.EMPTYBOTTLE.COM) FOR $35. QUANTITIES ARE LIMITED TO 50.

05



06

05 THE WRITING ON THE WALL

In the introduction to the book *Life and Limb: Skateboarders Write from the Deep End*, Jocko Weyland attests that "writing can rarely compete with photography or film, but there are nuances, gray areas, and stories where language trumps what the eyes see." This collection of writing from Soft Skull Press, featuring work by pros like Mark Gonzales and Ed Templeton and lesser-known names like Justin Hockling and Patrick Walsh, affirms an idea that most of us have had at some point: The drama of skating is more than just the risk involved in executing precise, physical movements; it is the stories skating creates, the turning points that riding on a board always seems to bring.

Like skateboarding, the less obvious choices in this collection are also the most interesting. Though there are a fair number of pieces about skatepark tragedies, many pieces in the book are deftly-written, thoughtful, and completely surprising. Lori Damiano's fictional "Placerita Canyon" tells the spooky tale of a young woman who tweaks her ankle and decides to haunt the wooded California highway. Niall Neeson's superb "The Lost Boys" is an essay concerned with the staged, artificial simulations of both professionally-produced skate videos and pornography. Jeff Knutson's "The Trip" is a tight, dramatic prose album of a cross-country trip on a desolate Greyhound bus, exactly one month after the events of September 11.

The jewel of the book is Jared Jacang Maher's "The U.L.F. Does Not Exist!" a novelistic explosion that follows an eager reporter into the difficult underworld of an anti-corporate revolutionary group whose methods are soon transformed into marketing tactics. It's a sharp story which stands as an unequivocal allegory concerning all that is wrong in the world of skating.

In addition to the well-written prose, the book includes photography and artwork from Mark Gonzales, Andy Jenkins, Ed Templeton, Michael Burnett, and Krista Trujillo. — JOE MENO

GET IT FROM SOFT SKULL AT WWW.SOFTSKULLPRESS.COM

06 OLLIEWOOD

It seems you can't ask for more mainstream acceptance of skateboarding than the word "Ollie" being included in the latest edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary*:

ollie, n. Also with capital initial. [The name of Alan "Ollie" Gelfand (b. 1963), U.S. skateboarder, who invented the jump in 1976.] In skateboarding: a jump executed by pressing the foot down on the tail of the board to rebound the deck off the ground. Also: a similar jump in snowboarding.

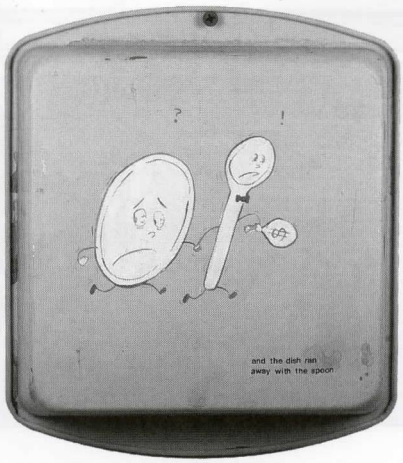
In celebration of this grand achievement, I decided it was about time I learned how to do it right. But what's the best way to learn?

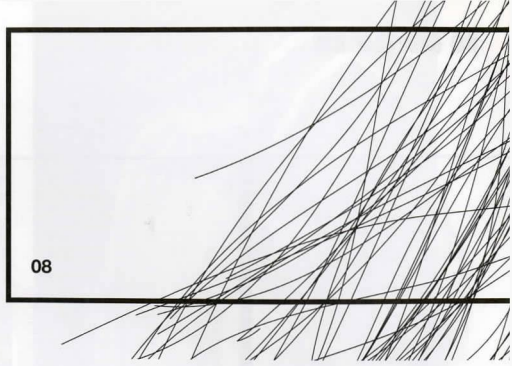
How about Softrucks? Available from Garage Manufacturing, these are stationary urethane trucks that "eliminate the rolling action of your wheels, allowing for practice, staying in one place." Sold for about $45 retail, you fit these fellahs on your deck and "help develop balance, proper footing, and muscle memory." But do they work? About as good as attacking a curb with a regular deck, I suppose. Though the way they "stick" the landing doesn't translate to wheels particularly well.

In the end, gimmick or not, there's absolutely no substitute for practice. If you're looking to learn and bruise easily, these practice trucks might be a way to avoid minor cuts or scrapes, but it's hard not to stand on a deck with them attached and feel like a wussy. Other than that, if you live in the tundra and it is snowing 10 months of the year, these might actually help you avoid becoming rusty during the long winter months, but once it gets warmer, I have a feeling you'd probably rather be riding your real deck outside in the sunlight. — BOXY MENENDEZ

FOR MORE ON SOFTRUCKS GO TO GARAGE.COM

07





08

The best thing about watching cartoons is this: the impossible is always possible. When you turn the channel and stop watching—when the animals in clothes disappear, refuse to talk, and stop chasing each other with giant saws and hammers—you start seeing the world as it is and not as what it can be, which is a terrible shame really. With his work, cartoonist and visual artist Matthew Rodriguez gives us

07 **TWENTY BUCKS WILL GET YOU**

a glimpse into the strangely familiar world of characters we seem to remember from old cartoons we've never quite seen. Rodriguez's use of '50s-style drawings painted on materials such as baking pans introduces us to his characters, each with their own story: slow dancing dogs, gambling crows, singing money trees. Each piece seems to be a memory of some better time, when animals and people were inhabitants of the same wonderful dream. Matt seemed like the perfect artist to pose a simple question to: What kind of art can you make for twenty-bucks?

You have a group of '50s-style characters that you frequently paint: TonyBologna, Raccoon de Goon, Mr. Lungs. Who came first?

When I was three, I used to draw a lot of bugs and trees. There was Rolly Polly McBolly, Stink Bug the Thug, Sweet Tooth Ricky the Worm, and this cockroach I would chase out of my room at night. Every time I finally had him cornered, he would leap off the dresser and fly out of my room. Flying cockroaches can put a little fear into a three-year-old. One night, I built a luxury doll house out of a shoe box and filled it with my sister's doll house furniture. I was hoping to trick the cockroach into it so I could trap him and draw his face better. He never fell for the trick, but I did get in trouble for messing with my sister's doll house furniture.

In Austin, you have recently started renovating a 100-year-old train station, with dreams of turning it into a new art gallery/community space. How's that going?

We cleaned up this old building, painted the walls, put in lighting, and gave it a name. For the opening, we did a lot of performance art. We had a guy dressed in jail stripes run in with a crow bar and steal one of my paintings off the wall, then he ran out in an angry manner and pushed down this guy on the way out. I also made these DJ puppets—animal DJs similar to the Muppets. As soon as the puppets dropped the records, these break dancers walked in and started breaking. It was very funny.

Matthew Rodriguez, what is your Twenty Dollar Art Project?

Get a long sleeve hoodie, a pair of pants, some old shoes, and a pair of gloves. Put it all together like you're making a scarecrow. Go down to the local hay store and buy a little hay. If you want to use old clothes instead of hay, that's fine. Fill up the scarecrow with the stuffing. Make him or her a face out of foil or an old monster mask. Once he's all put together, go climb up onto a roof top where one of your friends has painted some graffiti and nail the scarecrow beside it. Make it look like the scarecrow is painting the graffiti. Nail him into the wall real good so when you leave it stays up. Later when you pass by it, you will laugh even if you're all by yourself. — WAYNE MEANY III

TO CHECK OUT MATT'S WORK, HEAD TO WWW.FOUNDATION-GALLERY.ORG

Here's something you ought to know: Locks of Love, a cancer-support organization, accepts donations of human hair. Your hair. Your friend's hair. Nate Ward, a skater and filmmaker in Chicago, talked about his reasons behind making his simple but important donation.

08 **JUST 'DO IT**

So Nate, why'd you cut your hair?

I'd been growing it out for about eight or nine months, long enough to get some big-ass Viking braids—which, it goes without saying, would have been awesome. But every girl I knew did not agree and said I looked better with short hair, so I decided to take the plunge. My boss told me about Locks of Love, which accepts donations of hair, assuming it's long enough and is not gross or anything. The basic situation is this: you wash, cut, and bind your hair, send it to them in a bag inside a padded envelope, and they make a wig out of it for kid with cancer. For those of you who have the hair but refuse to give it away, I'm talking to you: There are these kids who got totally shafted by this sick joke of nature and, to top it off, they can't even grow hair. It was really the least I could do.

Who has the better 'do: David Hasslehoff or Henry Winkler as the Fonz?

I have to go with Hasselhoff on this one. The Fonz clearly used tubes and tubes of pomade and I think that's putting too much effort into one's appearance for my tastes. Hasselhoff, on the other hand—the early Hasselhoff, anyway—was more natural. You don't fuck with Michael Knight, my friend, and your first clue is his hair, because you look at him and you know, "Oh shit, this guy just don't give a fuuuuuuck." — BRIAN OSWALD

TO DONATE YOUR 'DO, GO TO:
WWW.LOCKSOFLOVE.ORG

09 FROM THE FILES OF RAUL MONTESSARIAN

Raul Montessarian, world-renowned adventurer and author of An Important Question of Witchcraft *and* The UFOs Are Now Probably Watching, *provides answers to our readers' most puzzling questions.*

Dear Raul Montessarian,

I've been dating the same girl now for like three years and she keeps talking about marriage, but I don't know if I'm ready. I want to start a band and get serious about my music, but right now I'm just the night manager at a Domino's Pizza. I mean, I love this girl and I don't want to lose her, but is there some way to know if we're ready?

Thanks, Hold The Cheese

HTC, my dear fellow! Your question is about love: love, the greatest, most unknowable mystery. I myself have ventured into love and have been transmogrified and likewise destroyed by it, the first such incident occurring on a trek through the Himalayas some 40-odd years ago, in search of evidence of the ghost Yeti of Gama-Go, the blood-thirsty abominable snowman of Asia Minor. Ably assisted by Dr. Marcia Underwood, a comely, raven-haired researcher from Cornwall University, we drew ever closer to the creature's lair, enormous footprint by enormous footprint. One morning, the lady doctor and I awoke in our tent, discovered we had been abandoned by our Sherpa guides and, pressing on alone, together, through the ghoulish haze of the craggy mountains, we soon found ourselves snowbound, a terrible, guttural howl issuing from the dark caves and crevices all around. The creature was there—we could hear it. All that was left for us was to bind ourselves together, the lovely doctor and me, our heat the only heat in the world that evening, hoping that that most evil night would pass. Miraculously, we awoke in the morning to find ourselves still alive in each other's arms. Do not fool yourself, HTC: there is no laboratory test which can confirm it and yet, love, love is the only proof you will ever need. — RAUL MONTESSARIAN

10 SUICIDE GIRLS FOR PRESIDENT

The Suicide Girls, pin-up gals of the popular website SuicideGirls.com, are definitely more than just a pretty face. With the presidential election coming up and the fate of the country in the balance, we asked a few of the Suicide Girls to imagine a date with each of the presidential candidates:

"Going on a date with George W. Bush would be like having a bad flashback to being 13 years old, when my mother forced me to baby-sit lame kids around the neighborhood," says Texas Suicide.

Scylla Suicide says: "A date with George Bush would have to be somewhere with pictures on the menu, just in case he couldn't understand the more difficult concepts presented."

For site founder Missy Suicide, a date with W. might begin with him "praying for my soul, but after a few drinks, I'd take him to a rock show like the Mooney Suzuki and leave him passed-out backstage."

The Suicide Girls we talked to thought John Kerry might fare a little better on his date:

"I actually think he'd be a gentleman with a bit of fire in his eyes behind the suit and tie," says Lily Suicide. "He *did* throw his war trophies over the White House gate during an anti-war protest. I could roll with that."

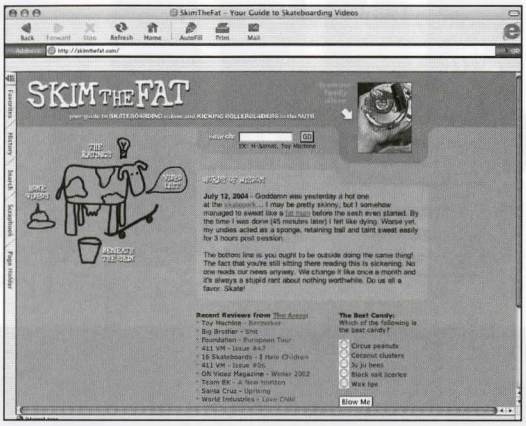
For Scylla, her date might lead to the board room, not the bedroom. "He wouldn't want to get into my pants, he would just want to get into my demographic."

"For John Kerry, I would definitely be better behaved because he's our only hope for the country," says Missy. "We'd go to a fine dining establishment like TGIFridays and have some Jalapeño Poppers and talk about women's rights and foreign policy, then check out some old-school hip-hop like the Fugees. Then I'd give him a kiss goodnight."

Why? "Because he deserves it."

— JESSICA DISOBEDIENCE AND JOE MENO

THE NEW SUICIDE GIRLS BOOK IS AVAILABLE FROM WWW.SUICIDEGIRLS.COM



11

12

For every 35,000 websites in the world that suck ass, a few come along that really seem to fulfill the promise and potential of the Internet. They're the kind of online endeavors that offer real benefits to humanity and make the world a more worthwhile, enlightened place. SkimTheFat.com is one such site, and it's not even porn.

The mission behind SkimTheFat.com is to review every skate video ever made. While not quite there yet, they're closer than anyone else: the site presently boasts hundreds of reviews by a brigade of intrepid online reviewers nationwide, along with inspired retardo drawings, satirical banners, and genuinely hilarious trivia contests. Started in 2001 by computer nerds Pete Horvath and Jerry Tran, both 27, the site is an impressive storehouse helmed by two committed—some would say obsessed—skate video aficionados, as Horvath attests below.

11 **VIDEO SCHMIDEO**

How did SkimTheFat.com start?

Over beers, of course. Jerry and I conspired about making a website based on skateboarding, using an idea that hadn't been done before. The bottom line was us wanting to give something back to skateboarding by providing a free service, Robin Hood style.

Was this your first website?

No, we've both had personal websites in the past, and Jer has designed a shitload of sites for friends, bands, and random companies. If we could sustain all of our habits from running SkimTheFat, we'd do it for a living in a heartbeat. It's something we both love and work on unconditionally, but the fact is our site is a money pit versus a money maker.

What are your favorite videos?

G&S, *Footage*; Black Label, *Label Kills*; Blind, *Video Days*; And Powell/Peralta's *Animal Chin*. The Laban Pheidias profile in 411 #15 is off the hook too.

What are five things essential to a good skate video?

1: Who's skating. 2: Filming and editing. 3: Variety in terrain. 4: Creative non-skating filler. 5: Choice of music.

Any forthcoming skate video trends we should be forewarned about?

Spandex and dirtboarding pretty much sum up skateboarding's future. Actually, I think that technology and creativity are tag-teaming the progression of tomorrow's videos. The low cost and high quality of digital footage, along with the innovation of today's skaters, is a winning combination.

Do you have any sentimentality for VHS tapes?

We've had no choice but to amass the bulk of our videos on VHS. They're easy to record, relatively cheap, and are in every damn household. Are they functional? Fuck no. They're big, clunky, and dubs look like shit. DVDs are great in that they're smaller, much better quality, and often have extra footage, but some are not re-recordable, can have glitches, and are often more expensive. I guess we'll be no different than the losers who couldn't part with their 8-track collections.

Old-school video grudgematch: *Bones Brigade Show* vs. *Skatevisions*?

I'd have to go with *Skatevisions*. It was one of the first videos I ever got and it didn't get much better than Jeff Phillips, Lester, and Gator killing pools and ramps to the ass rock of Agent Orange.

Has watching so many skate videos made you a better person?

Let's just say look out for Tran & Horvath in Election 2008. — JON RESH

"Snow Job was a major Olympic Biathalon contender," reads the G.I. Joe Filecard from 1983. "He enlisted initially for the special training and support privileges that the army gives to Olympic champions. However, to the consternation of army PR flacks, Snow Job volunteered and was accepted into the G.I. Joe team." Since retiring from that illustrious freedom-fighting corps, I think it's a safe bet that Snow Job has gone on to a position designing high-tech skate accessories for DC shoes.

12 **BAG MAN**

Snow Job's first designs for public consumption (one can only imagine the top-secret baggage that led up to this) are the frost-camo DC/Incase Skatebag and matching iPod cases. Built with enough pockets to carry even the most accessories-laden Joe to battle against COBRA, the bag's true calling is to carry your deck and your laptop safely to victory.

The Skatebag's easy-access deck sleeve (complete with padded, texturized plastic lining so the bag doesn't get scuffed by your grip-tape) and padded, removable laptop pocket (designed to fit widescreen PowerBooks along with mere mortal-shaped laptops) are the features of this backpack. But it's the bag's details that really display Snow Job's flair for fashion. From the florescent orange interior that works so well to contrast the winter-camo shell, to the smartly-placed holes to thread your earbud cables into the iPod pocket, Snow Job knows how to make a bag that's as good looking up close as it is speeding away on the back of a Polar Battle Bear.

As for the question of whether you need both your laptop and skateboard while fighting COBRA in the Arctic, well, I'm no Olympic champion who got special army training, so I'm going to leave that answer up to the expert. Yo, Joe! — DAN SINKER

THE DC/INCASE SKATEBAG AND IPOD HOLDERS ARE AVAILABLE EXCLUSIVELY AT THE APPLE STORE: WWW.APPLE.COM.

DROP IN

HOME EC

Like some kind of pitiless hostage, as a kid, you are the victim of your mom and pop's own terrible fashion sense. If they decide to shop at K-mart, you are shopping at K-mart. If they decide to wear clothes bought on vacation and at truckstops, you'll be sporting your "I went to Mt. Rushmore and all I got was this lousy T-shirt" for your third grade class pictures. Think how different your life

01 DRESS UP

might have been if you hadn't been forced to wear those kind of clothes as a kid. Well, gratefully, those days are over, pal.

Infantile, a new brand of clothing for babies and toddlers, has produced seven shirts featuring graphics by an amazing selection of artists: Evan Hecox, well-known sketch-man whose works have been featured on skate decks and VW ads, has done up a slick, red-and-yellow graphic featuring a talking baby carriage; Jason Gnewikow, designer and member of the band the Promise Ring, created a very modern green-and-white number entitled "Ready, Set, Grow"; and San Fran artist Jeremy Fish contributed the "Super Diaper" T-shirt, a bright white-and-yellow piece featuring a rad-looking diaper outfitted with wings. Each artist's work is a custom, one-of-a-kind design, specifically created for the line's first season.

Launched in March 2004, Infantile was devised by co-founder Craig Melchiano, who became angry with the clothing choices for his niece. According to Melchiano, "Everything seemed to be too cookie-cutter or made the kids look like miniature adults." Melchiano worked with co-founder Robert Kissinger to create a brand that borrowed the very best of the older generation's visual world to bring to the culture of kids. It seems like it's time to ditch those crummy Sears brand slacks and tattered Underoos from the past and give your kids the chance you maybe never had. — JOE MENO

FOR MORE INFO, GO TO INFANTILE.COM

It's tough to estimate how 30 years of ingesting Cheetos, Funyuns, and Doritos has affected my physiology, but I doubt it's helped any. I figure I should subtract a day off my life per every bag eaten—which means I'll be in a coffin in about two weeks.

To avoid such an early demise, I began exploring alternatives—what my mom would refer to as "healthy snacks," a phrase that still sends shudders down my spine—whereupon I stumbled on the king of all un-chips: Skinny Soy Chips.

02 WHEN THE CHIPS ARE DOWN

Already I can see you rolling your eyes, expecting some hippy-ass, tofu-and-granola "chip-like" concoction with all the flavor of a wet sawdust patty. To the contrary: this delectable, surprisingly filling chip offers a hearty, rich, almost peanuty taste—think the yummy soy flavor of edamame—matched with a powerful crunch that'll gratify your molars. The texture is rough and natural, with none of those fluorescent "flavor particles" that, though undeniably tasty, have a toxicity level rivaling a vat of plutonium. They also go great with complimentary foodstuffs: cheese (since they're somewhat cracker-like), dip (since they're sturdier than most potato chips), and white truffle oil (a weird personal preference).

The real kicker is the nutritive value: with zero saturated fat and no cholestrol, these chips pack a bundle of protein—a nutrient altogether unknown in most snacks—and a shitload of fiber, so a bag of these will keep your muscles primed, your fat in check, and your pipes regular (gotta keep those bowels in motion as the years pile on, shredder).

If aliens from some intergalactic utopia descend upon Earth to bring humanity the perfect snack—healthy, tasty, and easy to pop in one's mouth while watching The Simpsons—they'll be hard-pressed to invent something better than the Skinny Soy Chip. Unless, I guess, their snack gets you drunk. — JON RESH

CHOW DOWN AT WWW.NSPIREDFOODS.COM

Here's a dish so good the Beastie Boys named an EP after it. Though one of the most simple, quick, and easy meals in all of Italian cooking, Aglio e Olio is also among the most delicious, adaptable, and authentic. The basic recipe can be served as is, or expanded upon with more ingredients.

1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil (add more if needed)
3 to 6 garlic cloves, chopped (depending on how much you dig garlic)
Grated parmesan cheese to taste (fresh if available)
A few red pepper flakes (optional)
1 teaspoon dried oregano (optional)

03 NOODLING AROUND

Handful of fresh parsley, chopped (optional)
Salt and pepper to taste
1 lb. Pasta (linguine is preferable)

Boil water in a pot; dump pasta in, cook until al dente (usually 7-9 minutes), drain. In a frying pan/skillet over medium heat, add olive oil, then chopped garlic; it should start sizzling. Add red pepper flakes, then oregano. Once the garlic is golden (not brown—don't overcook), remove from heat. Mix oil and garlic with pasta in the pan (or, if easier, a separate bowl), adding salt, pepper, and parsley (and extra oil if necessary) to taste, topping with parmesan cheese; serve hot. Fuck yeah!

To make the dish fancier and more varied, any number of ingredients can be added to the oil with the garlic, either alone or in combination: sliced tomatoes, red peppers, onions, peas, zucchini, carrots, chopped green beans, broccoli, clams (canned is fine) or shrimp. — JOSEPH CELLI

DROP IN 7 PLY

The creation of one's own skate company is a dream shared by just about anyone who's ridden seriously for an extended length of time—particularly when that span lasts a quarter-century. But years after he first jumped on a skateboard in 1977, Alan Butella, who emerged from the same heady Michigan skate scene that produced talents like Bill Danforth and O.P. Moore during the 1980s, finally achieved his lifelong aspiration of starting his own company, launching Character Skateboards in 2002.

Based out of Chicago, Butella, 39, created Character as a natural extension of his vocational passion: graphic design. The distinctive board graphics and shapes (such as the wavy-railed Node model)—and the very concept of Character itself—are informed and dictated by a combination of his discerning eye for functional design, color experimentation, and typographic inventiveness, among other factors. The decks obviously ride well too, as evidenced by the skills of his creative, up-and-coming sponsored roster.

With two eventful years under Character's belt, Butella's studio for his design firm, Circle C, is now as much the working space of its sister company Character, with sundry skate paraphernalia lying around and sponsored riders stopping by. "It makes it a little harder in dealing with clients for my graphics company," he confides, "because now all I wanna do is skate."

How did Character start?

We started a couple of years ago, with my design studio covering most of the overhead for Character. I wanted to be able to incorporate my graphic design work into skating, and I've always wanted to have a skateboard company. The timing was right, we kinda launched and winged it, and things have snowballed from there.

Why choose "Character" for the company name and theme?

The initial graphics were driven off of the word "character" as a typographical element. I self-published a book called *Lost and Found Characters*, and I've always been fascinated with typography and its exploration. And the Character Skateboards logo itself is actually the head of the body of one of those typography guys.

The new line of boards goes into the other element of Character, the more human aspect, the abstraction of the word "character." The graphics include these dump trucks that are all over Chicago, along with some art of mine with abstract characters and smokestacks. We're looking at individual things around that could be described as "having character." Like, for example, somebody with an old wrinkly face; somebody who's lived a long life.

Plus, all the riders on my team are kids with a lot of character. That's actually a really important element that I look for. I'm as interested in that as them being good skaters.

So I guess you'd say it's a unifying philosophy. The graphics, which are pretty important to me, convey that. And while we're trying to retain certain elements of our company, I'm open to pushing things in new directions as well.

What's the Build Character Fund?

I wanted to give something back to skateboarding in any way that I could, so we have some resources to help kids in skate-related ways. We only actually contributed to a few things so far—paying entry fees, giving out prize money, that sort of thing. It's based solely upon how much money we're bringing in. The idea is there, and I hope it expands. I just wanted to plant the seed, and we'll see where it goes.

Have there been any direct inspirations for Character?

A lot of the new graphics are directly inspired by Chicago. Everything around Chicago is inspirational to me. Skating Chicago, seeing it, living here—the city's always giving me ideas.

What challenges have you come across?

Pretty much just surviving—paying the bills, inventory, dealing with shops directly. We've gotten a lot of local support. There are things you do when starting a company that are a gamble—giving stuff away, sponsoring events. But it's been great.

Character's self-proclaimed goal is to "make quality products, promote skateboarding, have fun and hopefully raise a few eyebrows along the way." Has your experience lived up to your mission?

Yeah, definitely. I'm having fun and staying busy, and I feel blessed to have the opportunity. I didn't start the company to make money. We're just trying to stay true to what the roots of the sport are. — JON RESH

FIND CHARACTER ONLINE AT: WWW.CHARACTER-SKATEBOARDS.COM

what doesn't kill you...

THE INCOMPARABLE JAY ADAMS REFLECTS ON WAVES, CONCRETE, HARD DRUGS, PUNK ROCK, AND THE POISON OF EGO.

Jay Adams is many things. From one perspective, he's a legendary and innovative skateboarder and surfer who goes to church on Sundays and sends money to his 10-year-old son each month. From another point of view, he's an ex-convict struggling with drug addiction and scarred with "white pride" tattoos. One thing he certainly is not, however, is washed-up. Even at 43, an age at which the fire has long faded for most, Adams carries the deep tan and thick shoulders of a man who has surfed the tropics for decades and still pulls in and out of howling barrels as much as possible. On a skateboard, he wields the gracefully aggressive reflex and distinctive style of nearly 40 years of riding.

Although the Hawaiian skate scene isn't as ideal as the milk-and-honey bounty of his native Southern California, Adams can still be found carving concrete at Oahu skateparks and sneaking secret missions when a backyard bowl opens up. But nowadays his main thing is surfing; after all, he lives on the North Shore. Having spent much of his life riding some of the finest waves on the planet—Waimea, Pipeline, Sunset, among others—Haole Jay routinely shares waves with the heaviest islanders. And when the swell is down, he'll go skating, just like when he was a boy growing up on Venice Beach.

BY KEITH DAVID HAMM
PHOTOS BY GLEN E. FRIEDMAN, KEVIN SOARES & DAVID BJORN

The following is an excerpt with Adams from a series of interviews conducted by Keith David Hamm in his first book about skateboarders, *Scarred for Life*, to be published by Chronicle Books this fall.

Tell me about heroin. Is it a demon?
Super demon. Super possessive, evil demon.

Is that what's good about it or what's bad about it?
Well, the bad far outweighs the good. Then again, the good is really good if you let it be. But it all turns bad, you know? It's something that will grab you harder than fucking anything else ever. *Anything*. Even pussy.

Did it make you do things you didn't think you were capable of?
Well, I didn't have to steal, 'cause I had money. But it did make me rearrange my lifestyle and reverse my priorities. My life always revolved around surfing and skateboarding, and I let it revolve around heroin and drugs. But I didn't have to rip off my friends or go burglarize houses or fucking suck cock for rock.

When did you get into it?
The first time I tried it was a long time ago and I didn't really like it. Then on my 30th birthday I tried it. I smoked some that day. Didn't really like it. Then, after my brother got killed and my mom was dying of cancer, I was in charge of her pills. They were opiates, and I was taking them.

JAY ADAMS, VENICE BEACH, CIRCA 1989. PHOTO: KEVIN SOARES

Then I started smoking it and not really thinking much of it. It's like, I smoked weed my whole life, so smoking that shit was like smoking weed to me. It didn't seem that bad, just a little stronger. But it gets to a point where you don't want to do anything until you have it. You'll lay around in bed. You cannot have a good day without having it first. It's like some people with coffee, but probably like 20,000 times stronger.

It's all good until you don't have any. Then it just turns really ugly and bad. It was a nightmare all the time. I would wake up, drive to town—*boom*—to get stuff. Then I'd come back. By that time, I'd be so high I wouldn't want to surf or skate. I'd just want to cruise.

In the late '90s you went through a rough time and hit the drugs pretty hard.

Yeah, it wasn't the best time. There were four deaths in my family: brother got murdered, grandma died, dad died, and then my mom found out she had cancer. She came to live with me in Hawaii and she died about 10 months later. I was her caretaker and watched her wither away from cancer. And then, six months later, the chick I was living with for a year and a half, I caught her in bed with some guy.

Let me guess: the broken heart was the worst of them all?

That was the straw that broke the camel's back.

FOR A WHILE THERE, I THOUGHT IT WAS COOL TO HAVE PEOPLE FEAR ME. I THOUGHT IT WAS A SIGN OF RESPECT. SO I DID A LOT OF THINGS I SHOULDN'T HAVE DONE.

BARRELING AT BACKDOOR PIPELINE, NORTH SHORE, HAWAII, LATE WINTER 2003. PHOTO: DAVE BJORN

How is a day in your life different from what it was like in 1975?
Not much different at all, to tell you the truth. Well, in '75, I wasn't driving—my friends were driving me around. Back then, it was pretty much all about surfing in the morning, then going skateboarding.

At what age did your life become sex, drugs, and rock'n'roll?
14 or 15. It was all skateboarding. All of a sudden, we were fucking famous skateboarders and getting treated like rockstars, in a way.

How was your home life? Were your parents supportive?
Totally supportive. I had the best family upbringing. My stepdad [Kent Sherwood] was a surfer born here in Hawaii, and my mom was the coolest. They never fought. They didn't beat me. No molestation. No weird shit at all. My mom used to drive me all over for surf contests and skate contests. My mom was like the Dogtown den mom. We had the Z-Flex team and the Zephyr team and all the boys would come over to our house.

My stepdad worked for Dave Sweet Surfboards and in the summer he had a beach rental stand underneath POP [Pacific Ocean Park] Pier. I was kinda brought up there—all my babysitters were surfers like Dale Grant, this guy Peewee, Jeff Ho, Skip Engblom, the list goes on.

Where were your early skate spots?
My stepdad used to drive me to Pali High [Palisades High School] in the early days. That's where the Hobie skate team used to go. Back then you used to zigzag down the hill. It was just a big, long, beautiful parking lot that you could go back and forth on. Skateboarding back then was copying surfing, so when you're going down hill back and forth on clay wheels, you're just pretending you're surfing.

Pali High was a real famous spot. Then we started going to Paul Revere [schoolyard]. But there was a whole generation of guys that skated those spots before us, like the Hobie skateboard team guys.

The *Dogtown* movie tries to come off like we were the first guys, and we weren't. We weren't the first to skate pools. We definitely took it to a new level, with the new equipment and stuff, but there were guys skating pools in the '60s, too, and there were other guys, like from Playa del Rey, that were skating pools after they tore down all those houses over there.

Any other beefs with the *Dogtown and Z-Boys* movie?
The movie was cool, but it fucking definitely represented me wrong. It made it look like I fucking did this and that, and then burned out and fucking didn't do anything after that, just went to jail and wound up on drugs, which is totally untrue. Out of everybody in the movie, I'm still surfing and skating.

Stacy made it seem like I just dropped off the face of the earth and haven't done anything since then and threw it all away, which totally isn't true. My whole life has always been about surfing and skateboarding, and they always came first, until I let drugs take over.

How did your surfing influence your skating and vice versa?
When skateboarding starting making its own moves, we started trying it in surfing. I started doing rail grabs in the water, which I did skateboarding first. I was probably one of the first surfers who started doing rail-grab cutbacks, which was directly skateboard influenced. When I used to skate, I used to surf to skate and skate to surf.

So when did your soundtrack change from Jimi Hendrix and Ted Nugent to punk rock?
As soon as I heard the Germs and Dead Kennedys and Sid. I think it was in '79 or '80. Before, I thought punk rock was Devo and Talking Heads, and I thought it was totally gay. I didn't know what real punk was. I didn't know what Black Flag was. I went to that concert and the cops stormed and rioted in the street. From that moment on, I was *completely* hooked on punk rock. Brainwashed completely. I wouldn't listen to anything else. One hundred percent punk.

Why was punk appealing?
It was aggro. It was different. It was mean. It was violent, and I was into violence. Punk rock to me back then was about going out and

beating people up. I had to fuck someone's night up for me to have a good night. I used to like to go out and ruin people's nights. I was a kid; I had things to prove. I was small and I had my boys behind me and I used to like to get people beat up. I thought it was funny. When you're young, some guys go through stages like that. For a while there, I thought it was cool to have people fear me. I thought it was a sign of respect because I was always a young kid and small and always mellow. So when punk came around, there was a time when I was a crazy guy. "Watch out! This guy's fucking crazy!" I used to like people to think that, so I did a lot of things I shouldn't have done.

What else was going on with you during that time? Skating's popularity dropped more or less around 1980. Did that matter to you?

Those were fine times for me. I just fucking sold weed and still skated and surfed every day. Nothing really changed. But for a while skateboarding wasn't that fun. Like when I turned pro, it just got kinda gay. There were too many rules. Like when skateparks came in, they kind of ruined it a bit. I was young and out of control and didn't want to be told what to do or how to do it.

I think rollerskating kind of killed it a little bit too. Rollerskating kind of took over for a while in the parks. The kids got really into rollerskating and disco shit. It's kind of like with roller-bladers now. There was an epidemic of them back then. Rollerskating tried to kill skateboarding with disco, but then fucking punk rock just came in and fucking killed that shit. Punk was very good for skateboarding because skateboarding was getting really soft and fucking too organized and controlled. And when punk came around, it was like, "Fuck the rules. Fuck authority. Fuck whatever."

You mentioned earlier that egos were getting out of hand.

Yeah, people got power trips. It got ugly. It wasn't hard-core anymore. After we all became pretty popular in the magazines and all that shit, a lot of guys I was hanging out with, their egos just got out of control and it looked fucking stupid to me. I always thought ego was the fucking biggest poison.

So what kind of skaters do you respect most?

ADOLPH'S POOL, LOS ANGELES, 1977. PHOTO: GLEN E. FRIEDMAN, COURTESY OF JAY ADAMS

Just someone who has fun and does it for the fun of it; does it out of love and doesn't care if he's getting paid or having his picture taken.

And I like guys that are all-around skaters, like Omar and John Cardiel. And guys like Duane Peters, who have been doing it forever. Alva. Salba. Guys that are in it because they love to do it, not because they're getting paid. Guys that are in it for *life*.

Some guys just seem a little bit fake. I've seen just too many guys come and go. Fucking pro for a year or two then just fucking roller-blading the next year, or mountain biking or something. And there are so many people in it for the wrong reasons.

I just kind of like the fact that I've been doing this since I was four years old and still do it. I still go and surf Backdoor Pipeline with all the boys, or I'll go skate a pool with the guys. That's what I've done my whole life. That's what I'm gonna keep doing until I can't do it anymore. ■

PHOTO/THOMAS RABSCH

no sleep 'til...

AFTER SIX ALBUMS, TWENTY YEARS, AND A MILLION RHYMES, ADROCK AND MCA LOOK BACK AT A LIFE OF ILL COMMUNICATION.

Imagine a firecracker that's missing its label; holding it in your hand, finding the fuse, you light it, only to find it's not a firecracker at all—it's a fucking missile.

With a brilliant explosion of sound and phosphorescence, its unknown trajectory rises fiercely into the sky, a blooming flower of sparks, followed by another, just as wonderful, and then another, just as amazing. Here is the dictionary definition of the word "surprising." In the end, like the firecracker, it's next to impossible to predict the shape your own life will take. And in the end, it's almost always surprising.

More so than almost any other musical group around today, the Beastie Boys are proof of this unpredictable nature of living, of simply being alive on this planet at this particular time. From what at first only seemed a joke, these three former NYC hardcore punks have risen past the goof-off party anthems of 1986's *Licensed to Ill* to something all their own. Their latest, *To the Five Boroughs*, is a love letter to modern music, combining hip-hop, funk, rock, and an impeccable sense of humor. Most importantly, this ongoing musical collaboration—some 20 years and six full-length records in the making—shows that perhaps their greatest achievement won't be something as temporary as a new record or award-winning video. What the Beastie Boys have done is given a whole generation of artists, musicians, filmmakers, and writers permission to dream: to experiment; to step outside previously defined demarcations of race, cultural heritage and style; to search for something surprising and new, ignoring the way it is, in favor for the way it might be.

INTERVIEW BY DAN SINKER
INTRO BY JOE MENO
PHOTOS BY THOMAS RABSCH
AND DANNY CLINCH

Also surprising, perhaps, is how well these three former beer-chugging, raise-your-fist-in-the-air and party-like-you-just-don't-care smart-asses have become full-fledged, conscientious, culturally-significant adults. From marriage, to children, to global and political consciousness, what seems truly mystifying is the way this band has grown, transforming themselves and their music each step of the way, traveling farther and farther from the self-centered, simple "I like sex, um, let's have some sex," chants of pre-adolescence towards true musicianship, creativity, and subtlety, leaving most of the current troop of MCs—in terms of imaginative content and craft—somewhere back in the '80s.

In a way, it seems perfect that bandmember Mike D. was unable to participate in this interview because he was at home spending time with wife and his newborn child (his second, no less). Compare that to the now-notorious teenage fantasy "Girls," where Mike hollers towards the end of the keyboard-driven romp, "Two at a time I want girls."

Through fatherhood and adulthood, and while other back-in-the-day contemporaries like Run-DMC and Public Enemy have become silent cornerstones of that particular musical form, the B-Boys have refused to quit, continuing to experiment and develop, building on their own uniquely powerful relationship. Though they might now own their own studio and produce their own records, what hasn't changed is the love of the thing, something to which all of us can certainly relate: sitting in our bedroom with our high school friends, listening to record after record, wondering what might really happen if we decided to start our own band.

adam horowitz

The thing that I keep stopping on when I think about the Beastie Boys is that, ultimately, the band started on a whim. You guys were just kids . . .

I always thought that's how *all* bands started, but I guess it's not true.

Well, I think it can be true, but it usually doesn't end up the way it did for you—that 20 years later, the band is huge. There had to have been a moment where you rolled out of bed and realized "*this* is what I do."

That would probably be around the *Licensed to Ill* days.

How old were you at that point?

20, maybe. I was actually being paid money; I realized that this could actually be my job.

But there's a difference between "this *could* actually be my job" and "this *is* my job."

This *could* be my job was around Licensed to Ill. When we went on the Lollapalooza tour, that's when I realized this *is* my job.

Was it your intention from the beginning to do that?

No, not at all. I would have liked to have been a professional basketball player, but I kinda figured out early on that that wasn't gonna happen. Music was just something to do. I mean, you just hung out

with your friends. In Manhattan, everybody was in a band, so of course you'd start a band too. I figured that's what everybody did.

At that age, that *is* what everybody does. But it's fascinating to me that it actually worked.
Fascinating to *you*? Think how I feel about it! It's fucking crazy.

Does that feeling ever wear off? Is there a point where you think, "Well yeah, of course it worked."
There are songs that got played on the radio that are kinda like, "OK, that makes sense that people would listen to that one." But overall? No, not really. Some days it's not as crazy, and some days it's just nuts.

So how do you square that?
How do you make sense of anything that's crazy? It just is what it is.

How has everything that has come over the decades changed the way you approach the band itself?
Definitely money is the main difference. Being able to afford to have your own studio. Being able to afford to just take as much time as you want to record and make music. Being able to afford to be like, "You know what? I'm going to go on vacation for a week." But in terms of the actual music? I don't know, I just love music. It goes in and out of phases, of course—I don't listen to any new music right now, and last year, I was; next year I will be again, but right now I'm not, I just listen to old records. I was doing the same thing when I was 14. [*laughs*]

That's what you did when you were 14 and that's what you do now—does that thought ever freak you out?
I'm into music, so I'm still making music, but I'm not the same person I was when I was 14. A lot of things are similar, but it's *sad* if you're the same person you were 10 or 20 years ago.

So then as the band gets older and as new records come out, does the past and the legacy of the band ever become constraining, or is it really liberating?
It's great. It's great to be able to know that you can do whatever you want. I can go and smoke a ton of pot and jam out and that's my record; or I can go and read the newspaper all day non-stop and write some crazy shit about George Bush. You don't have to be this certain thing. It worked for the Ramones and AC/DC, but it doesn't work for us.

That makes me think back to *Licensed to Ill* and the controversy that erupted around it. I remember very distinctly being told by my mom that I couldn't own that album—so of course the next thing I did was go and buy the cassette and hide it in my sock drawer. I think of all of the bands of that time, you guys were probably the least expected to succeed.
[*laughs*] It's very true. We were definitely "Where's the Beef?" It was funny at that time, but it wasn't part of your "real" music collection.

Was there ever a point where you were like, "*That's* who we are? Fuck you, just watch us." Like when you made *Paul's Boutique*, was the thought "fuck party rap, let's make art"?
It's easy to say that now, but really we were just getting fucked up and making stupid shit. [*laughs*] And that's fine. We should have been really nervous about follow-up success to our record and trying to hit the charts and trying to do this, that, and the other, but maybe because we weren't thinking about it, that's why we're in the position we are in now.

There's no real way to explain it. I can come up with ideas of why people might like our band, or why we've been around for so long, but really it's 'cause we just got fucking *lucky*. You can't say we're a better band than other bands—half my friends are *way* better, smarter, and more talented musicians than I am.

I was trying to think today about contemporaries of yours from back then that are still around, and I came up short.
It's definitely weird. All those bands that we were part of a whole thing with aren't around anymore. I wish they were still around. I wish Public Enemy were still making records. Why aren't *they* the most important band around anymore?

Do you feel like the band still has contemporaries?
We have friends that are musicians, but we're not part of a community anymore. It definitely felt like that before—in the '80s in the hardcore scene and in the hip-hop scene. But now it's different. Who would we hang out with, the Strokes? I mean, honestly. And I like them.

So then who do you hang out with?
I hang out with Adam and Mike. [*laughs*]

Could you ever have imagine that things would have ended up like this?
[*long pause*] No.

But at various times, you had to think, "OK this trajectory will lead us here . . ."
No, because all of these weird, amazing things kept happening to us, so I just gave up trying to guess. [laughs] They're showing pictures of us in *People* magazine. What does that mean? It's bizarre.

Do you shield yourself from that? Or do you just go, "well, this is just a strange path."
It's very strange. I guess you try to not get caught up in it. Try not to think that you're something special. Everybody's special. [*laughs*]

But I mean . . . I feel like I've said "but I mean" about 7,000 times . . .
No, no. It's fucking *crazy*. I don't know how to explain that feeling any better. It's so bizarre. We played in Madison Square Gardens in 1986 opening for Run DMC, and we had *every last one* of our friends up on stage with us. It was like that was it. That was the highest point. And then seven, eight years later we're headlining there! We sold it out in *hours*. How are you supposed to explain that?

Getting to where you guys have gotten—by luck, as you say—are there moments where you would want to take it back? Is there a point where because of the entity of fame, you lose control over who you are?

PHOTO/DANNY CLINCH

"THERE'S NO REAL WAY TO EXPLAIN IT, I CAN COME UP WITH IDEAS OF WHY PEOPLE MIGHT LIKE OUR BAND, OR WHY WE'VE BEEN AROUND FOR SO LONG , BUT REALLY IT'S 'CAUSE WE'RE FUCKING *LUCKY*." —ADAM HOROWITZ

I don't get stopped on the street—rarely, rarely does that happen—so I guess I'm lucky in that way. But taking shit back? *Licensed to Ill* had so much stupid shit on there that yeah, I would love to take back some of that. I would love to have not said some of the *really* stupid shit that's on that record, but it's out there. I put it out there, there's nothing I can do about it except live with it and deal with it and learn from it. But there's also funny shit on there that makes people happy.

Is there stuff on other albums that you have that same reaction to?
The first couple albums said some really stupid shit and it would be nice to take some of that back, but you can't. You've got to think about what you put out there in the world, whether it's art or music or just what you're saying to people on the street or your friends or whatever.

With so much time—and especially with the non-commercial way you approach releasing albums—do you see a way this band could end, other than death?
I can't imagine it because we just get along so well and we have so much fun when we do it. I can't imagine not making records with them, you know? I can't imagine if it would end or how or why. So much crazy shit has happened in the past, that I can't imagine what crazier could happen. ■

adam yauch

I talked with the other Adam earlier today . . .
That's what my daughter calls him: Other Adam—like as if that's his name.

. . . and one thing we talked about was how so much has changed for you guys over the last couple decades. In a way, it's like *everything* has changed, except for this one constant of the three of you. How do you think you three have made it through all of this with your friendship and working relationship intact?
I guess when things get the most hectic is when the album is out and we have to deal with a lot of different people and a lot of different situations and all kinds of things—if there's any tension, that's when it builds up. But when the dust settles and it's just the three of us starting to work on music, then we just kinda have fun.

It's interesting to think about that you were in high school when you started this. The high school band has lasted this long and gone through so many changes . . .
You think it's kinda wrong, huh?

No, I don't think it's wrong. I just think it's so surprising that it worked. Is it surprising to you?

I guess . . . But I don't know anything else. We definitely did not intend on that when we started the thing. We really only thought it would last a couple of weeks; it was something fun to do for a minute.

When was the moment when you realized, "OK, this is real"?
I think the most jarring period of time was when *Licensed to Ill* rocketed to the top of the charts. That was definitely out of nowhere. We went from opening up for people and playing in clubs to playing in big arenas. It was a rapid jump. But we had already been together for a long time when that happened. The band had been together as a punk band in '81 and we got together with Adam Horowitz in like '83.

But that level of success couldn't have even been on the radar for you, could it?
Naw, I don't think anybody could have expected that record to do as well as it did as fast as it did. That was sort of bizarre.

Another thing I talked with Adam about was the idea that if back then, anyone asked who would be around in 20 years, probably the last name mentioned would be the Beastie Boys. Adam said, "Yeah, we were 'Where's the Beef.'"
[*laughs*] You know, the thing to keep in mind when you talk with Adam Horowitz is that he's a liar and a thief.

Well, regardless of his thieving ways . . .
He's a bank sneak!

. . . do you feel that way about the band back then?
Yeah, I guess in a way. It's weird. That record was definitely a goof, and it's funny that the goofiest parts are what jumped off the most.

So then, looking back on that and taking into account everything that has transpired since, does it make sense to you? Does it look like a linear path?
Yeah, somehow. Maybe not a straight line, [*laughs*] but some kind of a line.

The band's sound hasn't been a straight line either. Do you ever feel pressure to sound like the past?
Naw, what we've always done is just go in the studio and make something that just sounds good, or is funny, or whatever. If it feels right to us, then we'll put it out and let the chips fall as they may.

How much of creating is saying, "We never did this, let's try it."
Sometimes, yeah. But a lot of times we'll just start making something as a goof or just 'cause we're in the moment. Like when we started playing hardcore again on *Check Your Head*, we just picked up instruments and started playing some old hardcore songs. A lot of it is pretty spontaneous and then we end up trying to refine whatever it is we've done.

When you're doing that "refining," are you thinking thematically?
I think there's probably two different phases to what we do. There's a part where we just throw things at the wall and see what we can come up with, and then there's a second part where we refine things. On this last album, we had all worked on beats on our own—at least roughing out ideas—and then we'd come in and throw some stuff up. We'd throw up a bunch of different beats and maybe pick one of 'em and say, "OK, let's grab that one and try throwing some lyrics on it." We'd loop part of that beat up so it would just keep playing for a half hour and all three of us would just sit there and write down a bunch of stuff. Then we'd set that thing aside and do the same thing the next day until we had 20 or 30 different sorts of things. Then we put those on our iPods or drive around listening to them, and you get a sense of what's working or not.

How does the distribution of labor break down between you guys when you're in the studio? Is one person the "Let's get this done" guy and someone else is the guy that says, "Naw, let's try this instead"?
Not really. Maybe one reason the band has lasted this long is that we manage to make enough room for everybody to do what they want to do. If somebody really wants to try an idea, then they get to try that idea. I think we all probably bounce in and out of the roles of saying "we should really move on" or "let's focus on this some more." I don't think there's any one person that's the whip-cracker.

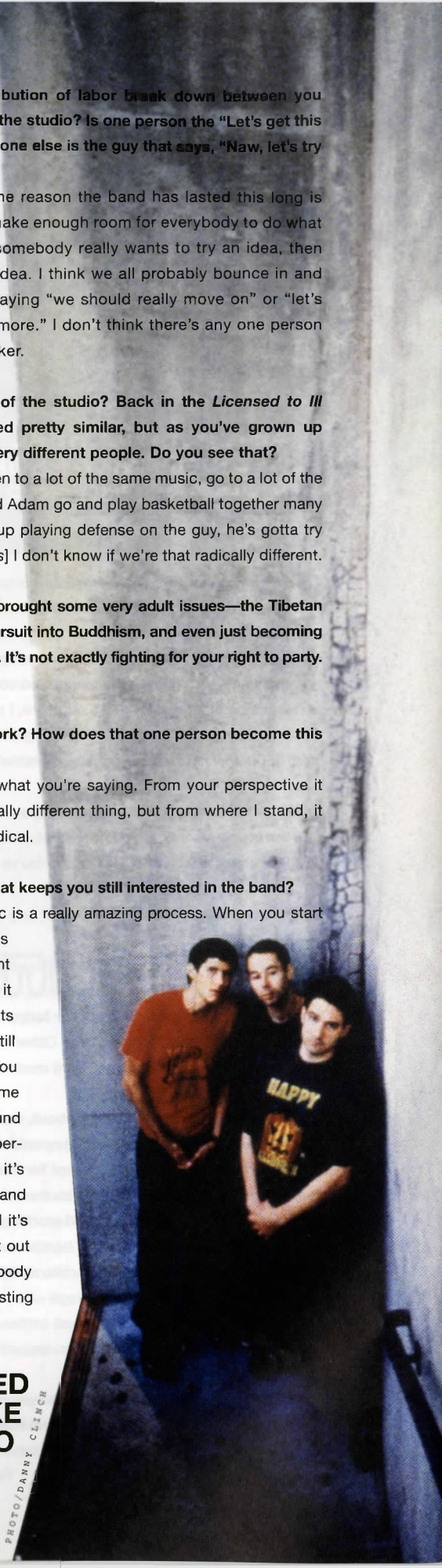
How about outside of the studio? Back in the *Licensed to Ill* days, you all seemed pretty similar, but as you've grown up you've turned into very different people. Do you see that?
Not so much. We listen to a lot of the same music, go to a lot of the same movies. Me and Adam go and play basketball together many days a week—I end up playing defense on the guy, he's gotta try and cover me. [*laughs*] I don't know if we're that radically different.

But certainly you've brought some very adult issues—the Tibetan concerts and your pursuit into Buddhism, and even just becoming a father—to the band. It's not exactly fighting for your right to party.
Yeah. [*laughs*].

So how does that work? How does that one person become this person?
I don't know. I hear what you're saying. From your perspective it seems like this radically different thing, but from where I stand, it doesn't seem that radical.

After all this time, what keeps you still interested in the band?
It's fun. Making music is a really amazing process. When you start putting different sounds together and different words and ideas and it takes on a life of its own, the process is still pretty amazing. You have this period of time where you play around with the thing and experiment with it and it's yours for a while, and then you finish it and it's sealed and you put it out there and it's somebody else's—it's an interesting process, still. ■

"MAYBE ONE REASON THE BAND HAS LASTED THIS LONG IS THAT WE MANAGE TO MAKE ENOUGH ROOM FOR EVERYBODY TO DO WHAT THEY WANT TO DO." —ADAM YAUCH



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WITH NOTHING MORE THAN A SMUGGLED SKATE MAGAZINE, SKATEBOARDING INVADED SOVIET-OCCUPIED LATVIA IN THE 1980S. A TRUE STORY

It all began with a skate magazine smuggled in behind the Iron Curtain and an inquisitive and creative eye. It's uncertain which skate magazine it was exactly, maybe *TransWorld*, maybe *Monster*, but somehow this unknown mag made its way into the hands of Arguts Skudrens, a young man then working in a moped factory in Riga, Latvia. It was 1983; the country of Latvia was still under Soviet occupation and officially considered part of the USSR. Long ago, in 1918, it had been an independent country, but by the 1980s it had been occupied by the communist superpower for more than 40 years.

BY DAIRA RUTA MORUSS
ILLUSTRATION BY BRIAN WOOD

Although skateboarding had existed in North America for more than a decade, life under Russian occupation forbid any substantive information regarding life outside the USSR, including magazines, music, books, and literature. All information under the occupation available to the people had to be examined and approved by the Socialist Republic, and generally it simply embodied Soviet propaganda used to contain and restrain the masses.

Arguts Skudrens was not only a worker in a factory, but also a husband on his way to becoming a father of three. In the end, with his ingenuity, he would become the recognized parent of skateboarding in Latvia. Inspired by that first smuggled skate magazine, he decided to make himself one of those boards "with which it seemed some people could fly." By looking at the pictures, he guessed how tall the skaters themselves might be, and compared that intuitive measurement with the sight of the board beneath their feet. Examining all the pictures in the magazine, taking finer notice of the details and configurations as best he could make out, he began to go to work.

After deciding on the most probable measurements, Arguts had to find the appopriate materials to make such a machine. Times under the occupation were financially hard in Latvia everywhere, and building materials were quite scarce. As equality was a purported philosophical aim of the Soviet occupation, a kind of equal deficiency became the result. In the end, this left only chance and coincidence.

Stolen veneer or plywood became the only available and obvious source for the board itself. In order to make the tail of the board concave, Arguts utilized the steam from a boiling teapot, allowing it to soak into and dampen the veneer. He then fit the board under a door and slightly tugged on it until he heard the first sound of a gentle *crack*.

As for the wheels, Arguts first tried nylon then plastic. Neither seemed to be material conducive to rolling nor movement, period. Next he tried rubber, but this too wasn't a very successful choice: if the rubber was too hard, the wheels didn't spin and instead slid across the asphalt; if the rubber was too soft, the wheels only absorbed the uneven pavement. It would be years before anyone finally got ahold of polyurethane, which Americans had already been using for wheels. Still, these pioneering skaters got along as best they could, using whatever material was available.

Determining how to make grip tape was a feat in itself. The initial choice—sandpaper glued on the board—was very primitive. Sandpaper was difficult to come by, and when it got damp or wet, its surface would dissolve and the board quickly became too slippery to stand on. Some skaters tried fastening little balls to the surface of the board, which didn't turn out to be very useful in the least. Arguts, at one point, traveled outside the city in search of coarse gravel, which he then glued to the board. That also was ultimately too slippery and inconvenient.

Finally, through great trial and error, Arguts devised a system: first he found some sandpaper, soaked it immediately in water, allowing the granules of sand to become loose and sink away from the paper. Then he would rinse the sand through a sieve or screen and dry it out until it became dry and sharp. He would then apply epoxy resin to his board and carefully scatter the dried sand over it. After the mixture hardened, he would shake off the excess, remove the unstuck pieces, and *voila*: homemade grip tape. The epoxy resin was fairly translucent, a sticky mixture like honey, and so he could add the pigmentation of his choice for color. He chose auto paint and created art for the body of the board. The name for his first creation? "Floor under the Operation Table," because the texture and color of the resin looked like a bloody mess.

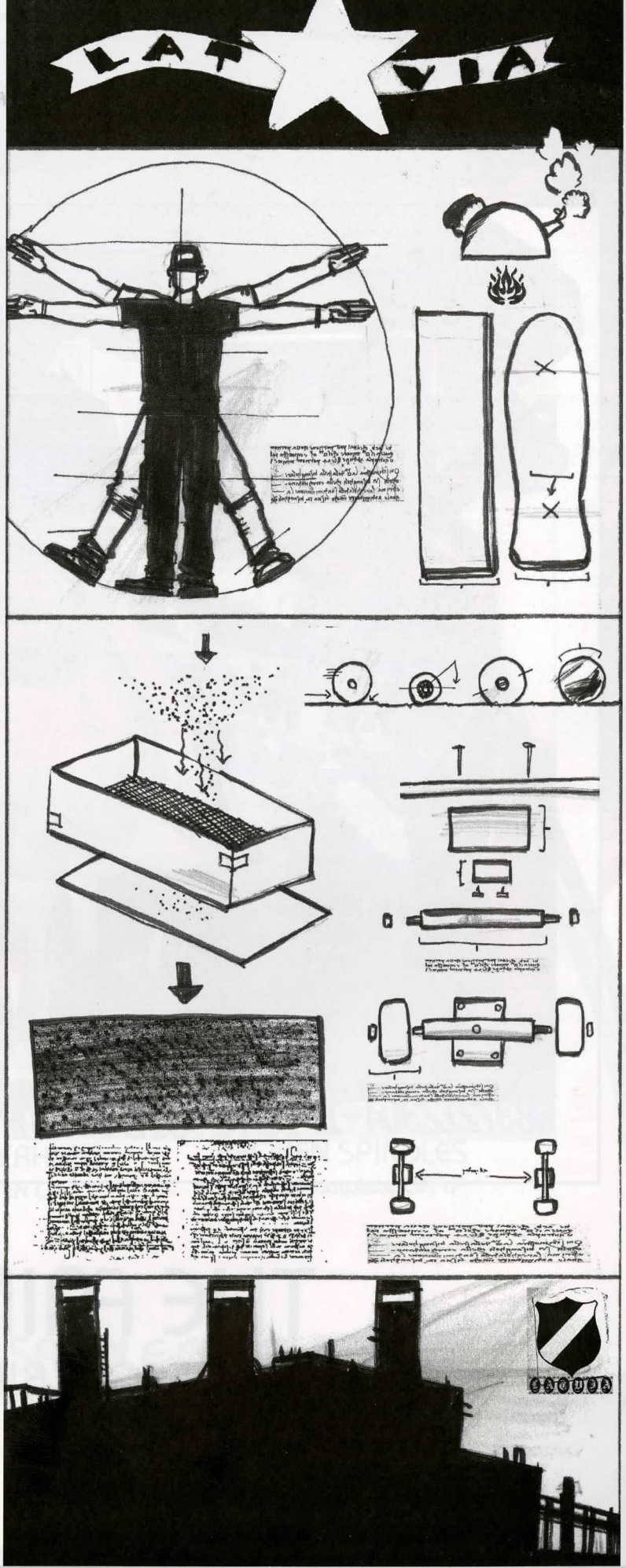
For the trucks, generally some pieces of wood were screwed in under the deck, and next, having access to a machine press at the moped factory, Arguts would carve out the little metal form of the trucks, as he imagined them in the magazine. Then Arguts would attach little pieces of rubber, which he found under the seats of the mopeds, and lastly, he attached his newly-invented wheels.

After creating a completely original Latvian skateboard, devised by sheer creativity and curiosity, it was time to start rolling. No skate surface under the occupation seemed readily available—even finding good asphalt turned out to be a chore. Asphalt under the Communist occupation was limited and relatively poor, but as a typical work expression under the occupation at the time put it, "Somehow it has got to work." Anywhere fresh asphalt was laid, there suddenly would be skaters appearing like night crawlers after a heavy rain. They started skating on stolen boxes, large pieces of plywood, and anything durable they could find, lugging them to the skate sight for jumping. As swimming pools were an even rarer commodity—and still are even today—early Latvian skaters had to create their own skate parks. The few ramps they created were all products of imagination and impulse, just like the boards themselves.

Originally the skating style in Latvia was slalom-style skateboarding. Tournaments began with skaters traveling from other parts of the Soviet Union, back then including Estonia and Ukraine. Their matches weren't typical skate-style showmanship, but more marathons contests of acrobatics. There were hill descents, handstand riding, hurdle jumping—the jumping off and back onto one's skateboard—and riding in pairs. There was also a kilometer marathon, with the objective being to see who could move the fastest, the longest, without pushing off the ground with either foot. "Our boards were different—they moved themselves," Arguts boasts.

As time elapsed, the first skaters in Latvia drifted apart. Politically, the country went through huge transformations with the fall of the Soviet Union, and in 1991, after 50 years of occupation, Latvia finally regained its autonomy. The political climate changed drastically, the economy was totally altered, and everything seemed to fall apart. Latvia today is still struggling to rebuild itself. In many ways, the skateboard movement also went into a transitional phase, taking a backseat to more critical issues concerning necessities for every day life.

Finally, beginning in 2003, four skate parks were created in Latvia, and the second wave of skateboarding is now emerging among a generation who remember the Soviet occupation more like a story. Arguts Skudrens and the original Latvian skaters will forever remain an important part in the transformation of Latvia, and a source of inspiration and awe for new generation of enterprising young skaters. As this new wave of appreciation for skateboarding ripples throughout Latvia and the rest of the former nations occupied under Soviet rule, there are still no rules and no expectations. Looking back now, Arguts wonders where his endeavors might have led, had he been more business-minded with his boards but, like a true visionary, he says "skating was in my heart, not in my reasoning." ■



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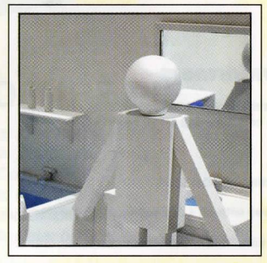

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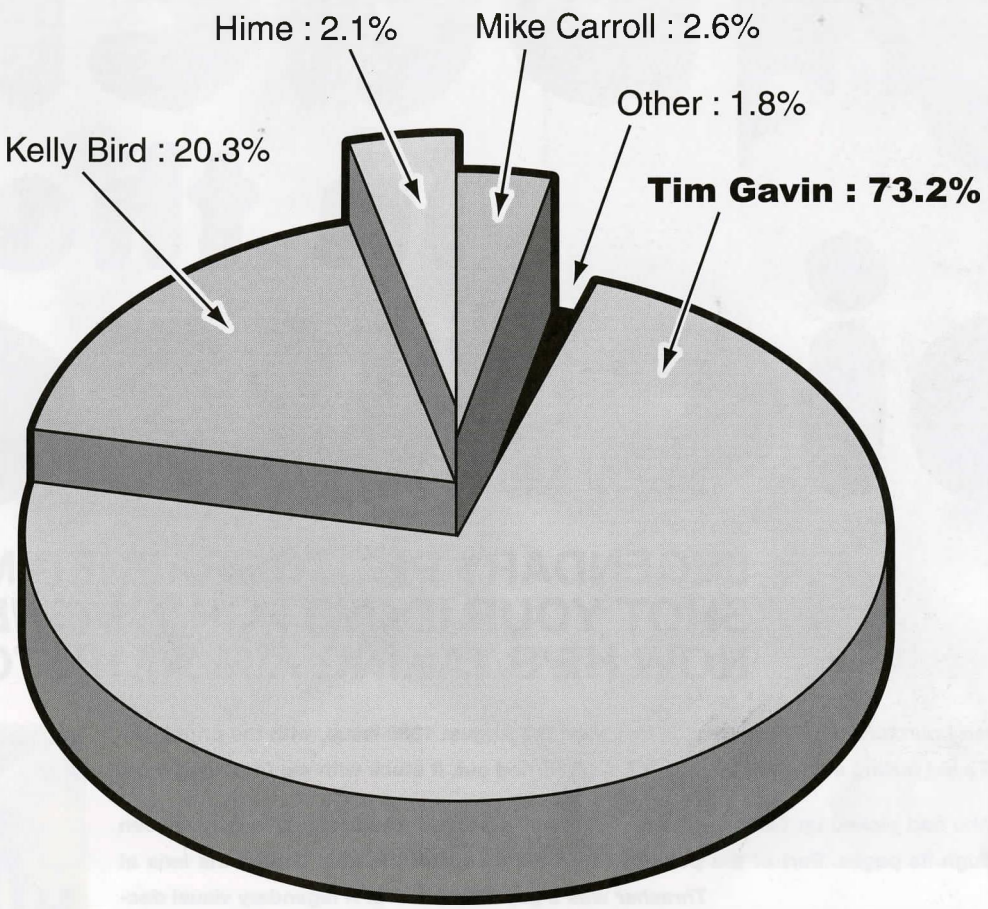

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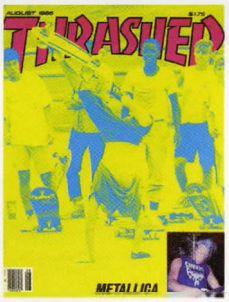


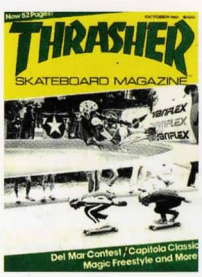
I was 16 when I purchased my first copy of *Thrasher*: the August 1986 issue, with the bright yellow cover of a kid pulling a flawless streetplant. As it turned out, it stuck with me for a long time.

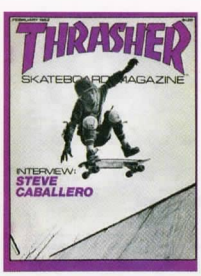
Like many who had picked up *Thrasher* for the first time, I entered a radical and largely unseen lifestyle through its pages. Part of the power was its pictures, and the man behind the lens at *Thrasher* was a guy called MoFo. A legendary visual documentarian of skateboarding at a watershed era in its development, MoFo—the shortened moniker of Morizen Foche—was the preeminent *Thrasher* photographer. It was MoFo who had taken that unforgettable cover shot in '86 (of then-unknown Mike Vallely), along with some of the most memorable and recognized skateboarding pictures in existence.

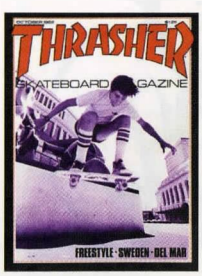
In his role as *Thrasher's* photo editor, MoFo helped shape the way we saw the highest caliber of skateboarding all over the world. Yet MoFo also looked beyond the spinning wheels and flying decks to capture something of the identity, lifestyle, and perspective that skaters were carving for themselves—covering underground music most notably, as well as anything else he thought deserved to be put on a page. For those of us who began our love affair with skateboard culture in those fertile days, MoFo was the guy who quietly shaped what we saw and listened to.

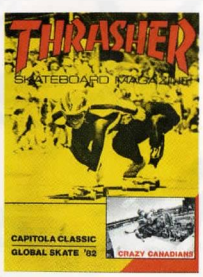
Living in Albuquerque, New Mexico, having walked away from the skate scene more than a decade ago of his own volition, MoFo now observes from afar, giving us his take on how it all happened then and what's going down for him now.

Note: the Thrasher *covers below feature images by Mofo. All other photos in this article: Kelly Ballmar's Memorial Day session, 1999.*









SALBA

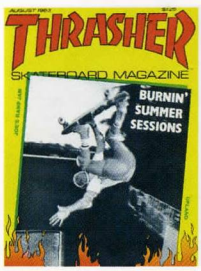
What was your introduction into skateboarding?

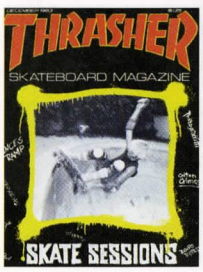
I was born in Northern California in 1960, and spent the first years of my life in San Jose. My dad was in the Navy, and he got stationed to Southern California, in San Diego county. I met some guys there who I was pretty much best friends with for a long, long time, and we'd surf a lot. As times went on, we were picking up skateboards and playing around with them. Then came the advent of the urethane wheel and the fiberglass flexible decks. The first issues of *Skateboarder* magazine were coming out, too.

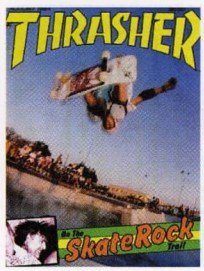
The town that we lived in was called Escondido. There was a lot of skateboarding going on. Guys who surfed a lot used to ride their skateboards around the school grounds of the various schools that we went to. Near my high school was a place called the Reservoir, which was featured in *Skateboarder* magazine. I used to go watch those guys skate there at the time. I had a knee injury; the cartilage was torn and I was recovering from that for several years. I would go and watch guys like Marty Smith, Murray Estes, Gunnar Huago, Ty Page. I used to draw pictures of them skateboarding. I think somewhere I still have some of those sketches.

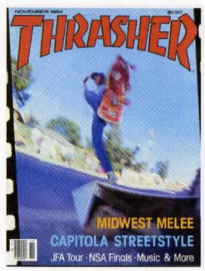
In about 1976, my dad retired from the Navy and moved us back up to San Jose so my mom could be close to my grandparents. I went to a high school on the east side of San Jose. I ran into some skateboarder guys there, who were pretty much the only guys I could relate to. We used to ride all over the San Jose area, and that's where I met up with guys like Kevin Thatcher and Rick Blackhart [who were among the core staff of *Thrasher*].

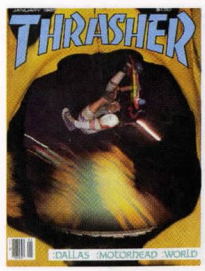
Eventually, precision bearings were coming into effect, and Road Rider wheels were coming around, and everybody was kicking ass, their skating level was picking up. The skate parks started coming around in that area: Campbell and Winchester Skate Park. Things started rocking: Independent Trucks were being developed, and we watched a little Steve Caballero learn skating and progress into a











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STEVE OLSON

champion. Steve Olson would be around a lot, Duane Peters and Salba too.

Did that coincide with your involvement in punk rock?

It kinda did. This guy Tim Lockfeld was pretty much an underground guy, a hardcore skater but also heavily into the new music scene that was happening in San Francisco. He turned us on to a lot of different new music stuff—the Clash, the Dead Kennedys, local bands like the Sleepers, Negative Trend, the Mutants—and we started getting way into listening to it. We'd sit around drinking late at night, banging on pots and pans and on the backs of chairs, strumming guitars and just howling at the moon, singing songs and making our own music.

Eventually some of us started putting together bands in the area. A friend of mine I met while skating at Winchester named Mike Fox used to work at a skateboard shop, and behind the counter he'd have this guitar with this long chord. He'd have the Ramones playing in the background, teaching himself how to play. And he'd say, "Dude, we should start a band." After a long period of that, we eventually did. We called it Los Olvidados. We played a few shows and stuff.

How did you start working for *Thrasher*?

Kevin Thatcher was the guy who was kinda tapped on the shoulder to start *Thrasher* by Fausto Vitello and Eric Swenson. Kevin was one of the guys we used to skate, hang out, and party with. At some point, he asked me if I could just draw some pictures and run a short story for the magazine. I put something together called "Wild Riders of Boardz," which is a little soap-opera thing about some skate gangs, which kinda expressed my feelings of how I perceived skating. I kinda wrote a lot of my feelings into that whole deal.

I contributed to *Thrasher* a couple of times and after a while one thing lead to another, and I kinda said, "Hey man, I'll move to San Francisco and help you work on this magazine." So I quit the band, went to San Francisco, and didn't know what the hell I was doing. I just started helping them out, doing little things. One thing lead to another and I never left.

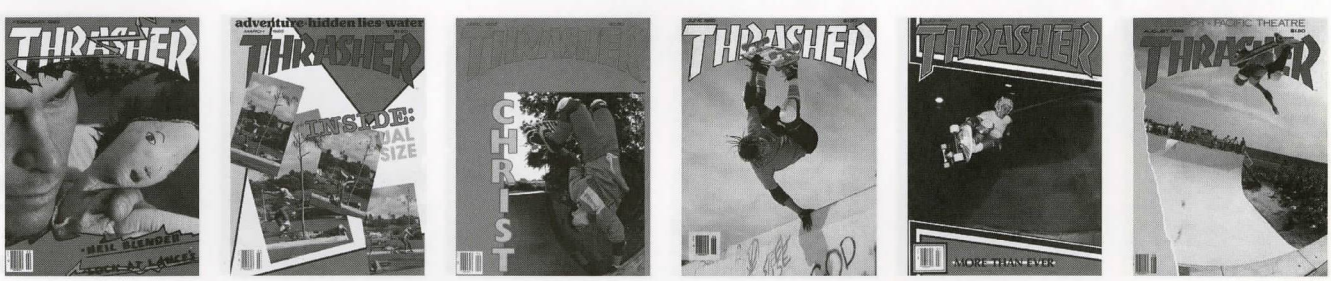
I was developing film, I learned how to do paste-up—this was all before computers—and they sent me off on road trips to take photos. They told me I had to write stories, so I learned to write, I guess. People started responding to that—in positive and negative ways—and I started taking on more things. It just became my life.

When photographing skateboarding at the time, were you creating your own shots, or was it more a case of being in the right place at the right time—or both?

Well, it was both. I was inventing things out of my imagination, and pushing these guys to do things that I thought would look cool. I didn't know what the hell I was doing, so anything was possible. A lot of times I would tell them to do things that they'd say was impossible. I'd say, "Well, this other guy did it. How about if I just shoot this unknown guy, and he gets his picture in the magazine?"

One good example of that is getting Gonz to do a big ollie in Embarcadero. I said: "Dude, why don't you ollie us a big giant gap? It'll be cool, I'll take a sequence." He says: "No man, it can't be done." And I said, "This little fuckin' kid's doing it man, and he does it like every single time. You mean you can't do it? I thought you were pro!" He goes, "Really?" So he tries it a couple times, and finally pulls it off—which, actually, had never been done before. He did it because, well, I said it could be done.

Other times I was just in the right place at the right time, and just documented skate-



TONY ALVA

boarding progressing as it happened with the people around me. I was fortunate enough to be travelling around with these guys who were just testing the limits and doing all kinds of crazy stuff right in front of my lens. Technically, I wasn't a great photographer, but I shot enough film and experimented a lot so some of the stuff turned out. But half the time we were just out of our minds excited, and I just didn't get everything technically done.

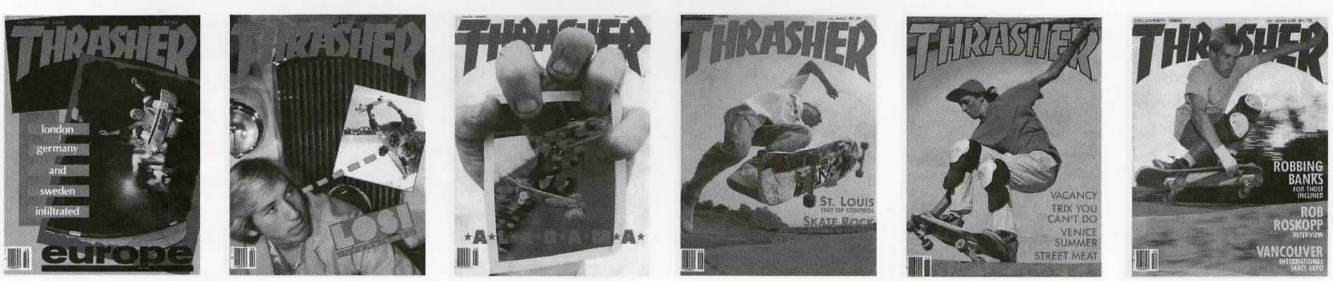
Who are your favorite skaters?

I'd say Tony Alva, just because he embodied the spirit of skateboarding to me from very early on. Caballero, Christian Hosoi, Tony Hawk, Gonz, Tommy Guerrero, Lance Mountain—these are guys who would just skate on demand. You'd find yourselves traveling a lot, just killing time and going out and inventing stuff. Heck, I had the camera with me—I just shot stuff as they pushed each other's limits. It was just like magic. It *was* magic.

I should also mention this: as far as the person I owe the most to, Fausto Vitello taught me more than anybody. I consider him a close friend, more like a favorite uncle. Without him I would have never had this wonderful journey; without him, there wouldn't be me. And quite possibly, without him we wouldn't have skateboarding the way

MOFO TO SHOOTERS: GET CLOSER!

It seems that today's skate mag covers are, for the most part, long-shots. Notice my covers—and a lot of the skate cover shots from the era—where the skater usually filled the frame. It makes me wonder if they still make wide-angle lenses, or if the "newbie skate-tographers" are too afraid to get in close for the shot. Maybe it's because the skaters of today cannot be trusted. Since they bail a lot in making their signature tricks, maybe the photogs would take too much of a beating getting in close. The skaters I used to shoot—from Christ to Cab, Lance to Rodney, Gonz to Tony Alva, Craig Johnson to Jay Adams and more—they had their shit so together, I would consistently shoot them to within three inches away. Sure, I got nicked—Lester Kasai shot the nose of his board straight into my mouth from a foot away while bailing backwards; at Del Mar, Jeff Phillips sent his deck rail-first into the side of my head—I just went into the parking lot and knocked back a few cans of Bud while dealing with a seriously swollen skull. Phillips' deck left a groove in the side of my head that remains to this day. But it didn't change the distance I took photos from. If you didn't look through your camera to shoot, you were a fucking pussy, wasting space at events. I was never afraid to say that. — MOFO



DUANE PETERS

it is now. More people owe him a debt of gratitude than anybody else in skating. He is the Illuminati of skateboarding.

What's your take on the corporate state of the skateboarding business these days?

I'm displeased, I guess, with the opportunist aspect of it, of people I've never even heard of jumping in and making big bucks off it. I put in a lot of my personal energy into this whole activity, just to see other people jump in and make a profit.

I guess there's a certain bitterness there. Here I am with no money in the bank, barely making ends meet day-to-day, and these other people are driving new cars and stuff, and they weren't there for the beginning. They weren't sitting around in the dirt, trying to make something out of nothing. But that's just my personal take on it. I know what I did and what I contributed. I know who I am in this world and the role I played, and the pure feeling that I had about it—and that I still have for it.

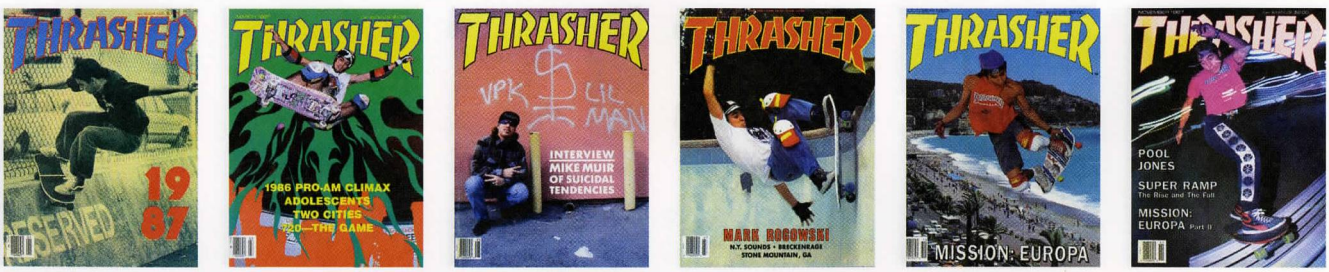
On the other side, a lot of the people who are benefiting from the corporate aspect and making a lot of money are people who actually were there in the beginning. People who had put in a lot of time and effort, who grew up with this activity and still remain in touch with it through all of its ups and downs. Guys like Lance Mountain and Tony Hawk, Chris Miller and Paul Schmitt, Tommy Guerrero and Jim Thiebaud—all of those types. I know where they came from, I know they paid their dues, and I know their heart is true. I'm proud of them and I'm happy for them. I wish them all the best that they can stay connected with this and not have to find some truck-driving job or accounting job or some other job that takes them far away from something they truly love.

How's fatherhood going?

Well, it's not going quite the way I expected. I'm a single dad, and I'm living in Albuquerque. I moved out here from San Francisco, a place I spent many years, a place I really loved. But due to the custody arrangements for my son, I'd only get a three-day weekend per month visitation with him, and that just wasn't OK with me. So I left everything in San Francisco and came here to be close to my son. At the time, he was three years old; he's now six. His name is Diego, and I get to see him frequently—a couple times a week. I wouldn't have this much time with him in these early forming years if I remained in San Francisco.

He's a really well-balanced kid, well-mannered. I try to maintain a father-son relationship with him as best as I can. Whenever I can spend time with my kid—damn, I can't think of anything I'd want to do more.

It hasn't been easy out here. Work is hard to find, and even if you find work, finding something with a decent amount of pay is even harder. I count myself very fortunate—I'm blessed that my son has as wonderful a mom as he does. I have no complaints regarding that. She's really taking care of him, and providing for him in a way that I



STEVE OLSON

SKATEBOARDING IS HARDCORE. IT'S INDIVIDUALISTIC. IT'S NOT A TEAM SPORT. IT'S NOT AN OLYMPIC COMPETITION.

could never have hoped for better. Sometimes it makes me sad that I can't provide more than I am right now, but I hope to. I'm working hard to get there.

Did your contribution to the Independent Trucks 25th anniversary book evoke many memories for you? Were there any photos you'd forgotten, or thought you'd never see again?

The process of that book has taken me back a lot, and I'm kind of exploring memories that I hadn't visited in a long time, which, along with this interview, has made things very difficult. There were photographs I thought I'd never see again, and there were photographs that I didn't see that I wonder where they are. It was just really hard to uncover those things—let me just put it that way.

There's so much that's happened in my life regarding skateboarding. It means so much to me; there's just not enough words. So many stellar moments, so many ups and downs, discoveries and excitement and adventures—things that nobody knows that happened. A lot of it had to do with Independent, which, to me, was my alma mater. It was something that came out of the spirit that we held as skateboarders in the Bay Area, and Indy encapsulated that in its image. We grasped onto it and claimed ownership in our own way in the very beginning.

Skateboarding has been one of the most important things in my life, and I hold it very close to my heart. It still means the same to me as it did in the beginning. I try to keep it pure in my own definition and not have it as a commercial entity. I guess that's why I have no money, because I've stuck to that. I've suffered for it financially, but personally, and in my integrity, I'm happy to have stuck with that feeling, and I remain so to this day.

It's hard-core. It's individualistic. It's not a team sport. It's not an Olympic competition. It's not who won this or that, it's not about points. It's about going out and kicking ass and skating with your bros. You're pushing your level of ability, and if you just push a little bit beyond what you could do the day before, then fuck—that's all that matters. It's how you feel about it yourself. And that's all I have to say about that. ■

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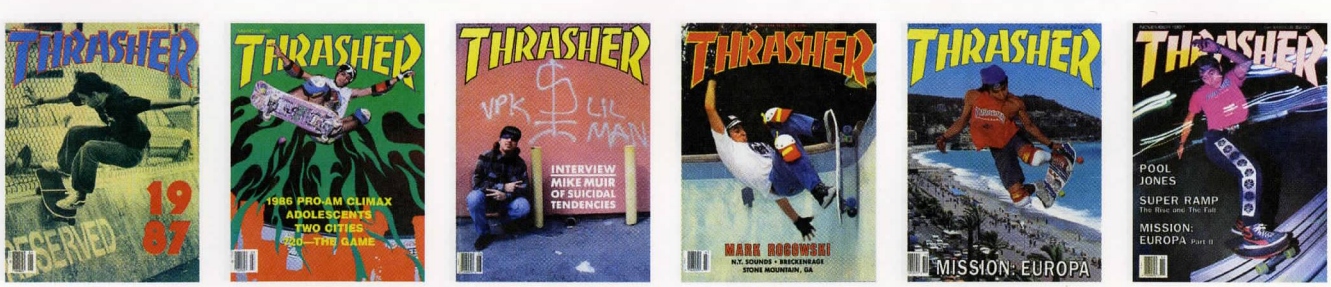

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metal up your ass!

SPINNING RECORDS BACKWARDS WITH SWEET COBRA

For a lot of different reasons, I don't huff cleaning products anymore; I don't hang out with dudes who play Dungeons and Dragons or watch zombie movies for days on end. And in a lot of ways, this is OK. The brain cells up there are damaged enough. But there is one significant drawback: I haven't been listening to any hardcore or metal records lately. The older you get, the harder it seems to be so angry. But hearing Sweet Cobra is a welcome return to those days of loud, propulsive fury.

Drawing on older influences from Black Flag to High on Fire, the music is black, driving, and loud; singer and bassist Botchy Vasquez's voice is the musical equivalent of a 10-ton wrecking ball, while the rest of the band—Matt Arluck (guitar), Jason Gagovski (drums), and Robert "Grumpy" Lanham (guitar)—returns the fury. Also members of The Killer, Suicide Note, the Hope Conspiracy, the Killing Tree, and Challenger, Sweet Cobra recently recorded *Praise*, a nine-song CD on Seventh Rule Recordings, complete with epic, metal titles like "Leviathan" and "River of Crimson"—a reminder of a simpler, angrier time, when you were none too happy about being a high school reject working the counter of the 7-11, even then somehow knowing about the salvational power of metal.

BY JOE MENO
PHOTOS BY NATHAN BAKER

A stand-out track on *Praise* is "Torn Knees," an anthem for a summer of all-out skating if there ever was one. Lines like "Torn knees/praying for a quick end/You hesitated/You should have waited" are perfect to howl after a particularly ugly bail.

The band's drummer, Jason Gagovski, answered some questions about the necessity of growing up while still remembering your rage.

Most of us started listening to metal or hardcore back in high school. Why is metal still necessary the older you get?
I was lucky enough to have an older brother that got me into metal at a very early age. I was listening to Black Sabbath, Led Zeppelin, early Mötley Crüe, Iron Maiden, and Slayer when I was in elementary school. This led to playing music as well. My brother played guitar, so I asked my dad to buy me a drumset so we could jam. As I got older and started skating, I got into thrash, punk, and hardcore and just went from there. I have always been attracted to heavy music. Don't get me wrong, I like all types of music, but metal is where my heart is. I think as I grow older my musical tastes have become very broad, which in turn gives me a wider palette to choose from when playing and writing music. I am influenced by all types of music—everything from Radiohead, to Wilco, to Johnny Cash, to Slayer—and I try to incorporate that into my playing. It keeps things fresh. I think heavy music is important at any age. There is plenty to be mad about, and playing heavy music allows us to vent some frustration in a creative way.

Your record, *Praise*, runs the gamut from straight old-school hardcore to molten, churning metal. In your musical ideas, what sets Sweet Cobra apart from the slew of other hardcore and metal bands?
I think that with Sweet Cobra we have a situation where the four of us have all been in— and still are in—other bands, and

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everyone has been playing music for a long time in some way or another. So when the band began, Botchy hand-picked all of the members to assemble a super-group of sorts. He played in the Killing Tree and Challenger; I play in Suicide Note and Stabbed By Words; Neeraj, our old guitarist, was in the Hope Conspiracy; Grumpy was in Pedal and some other bands; and Matt, the newest Cobra, is in Cooler By The Lake and Deminer. So we all have been playing in bands for a long time and knew what our objective was when we formed: to play loud and heavy. And as I said earlier, all kinds of things go into that, regardless of genre. So once we began writing and playing shows, we realized that it was going to become more than a project.

What's the connection between playing drums and skating? What did you learn skating that you can apply to what you do behind the drums?

Well, one connection that I learned in high school was that if you hyper-extend your knee skateboarding, you can't really play drums for a while. Other than that setback, I would have to say in general that skating gives you coordination, and the ability to gain more control over what your limbs are doing. I also learned that practice is very important. It's easy to get rusty if you don't play. That's why I'm in four bands right now.

Tell me about the song "Torn Knees," the opening track of the album. It seems like the perfect skate track, though somehow I'm pretty sure lyrically it has nothing to do with skating. Or does it? What's the story behind the song?

Botchy writes all of the lyrics, and I think musically it's a good skate song. But one of our newest songs, "Fucking Fertilizer," is total skate-core. "Torn Knees" to me is about revenge, and lashing out at someone who has wronged you over and over again; about being pushed to the breaking point where you have no choice but to strike back.

Are you, or have you ever been, a necromancer? What powers do you as a necromancer possess?

When I was 13, I used to go over to my friends Chad's house and we would try to use a Ouija board to call on spirits. It never worked, so we made our own board out of an old piece of wood and permanent markers. I think we thought it would work. We would get all freaked out because he lived in an "earthhome" that was right next to a Native American burial ground. We would have séances and try to call on ghosts. But mostly I just liked going over there because I had a crush on his mom and she made good Kool-Aid.

I remember going to the record store and looking at a DIO record and seeing that if you held it upside down, it spelled out DEVIL, which seriously frightened me. What is the most terrifying metal record in your record collection and why?

Yeah, I remember that too. That was scary the first time you saw it! For me as a kid, when I played "Stairway to Heaven" backwards on my record player and heard that twisted voice saying "sweet satan" over and over again, it really flipped me out. Also, the cover of Black Sabbath's *Sabbath Bloody Sabbath* scared the hell out of me. I had nightmares because of it, but I loved it at the same time. Those bands invented metal.

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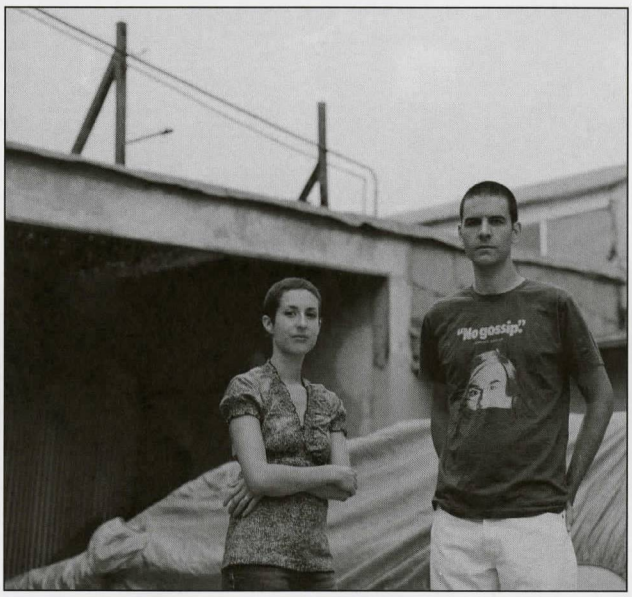


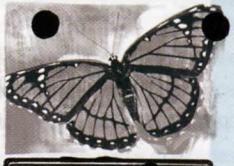
studio visit
commonwealth stacks

Fellow artists who work in the skateboard industry should be terrified of Michael and Laura Leon. As individual artists, they each possess a dizzying combination of style, intelligence, originality, and purity. Any medium is at their mercy: painting, graphic design, music, photography, video, clothing, and even furniture design. Though they've always worked together—from their beginnings as students at Cal Arts in California, through post graduation and beyond—in recent years they've completely solidified their union through marriage and the development of their professional design team, Commonwealth Stacks.

BY TONY LARSON
PORTRAIT BY ANDY MUELLER
ARTWORK BY LAURA + MICHAEL LEON

Stacks saw its beginning as a side project for Michael in his years as a designer for Girl Skateboards and Fourstar Clothing, eventually evolving into a full fledged clothing company and design factory. A great way to get a feel for Michael and Laura as a design force is to journey through the Stacks website and take in all the kinds of amazing work: T-shirts, jackets, punch-out sandals, messenger bags, guitar picks, prints—it's all there.

Currently, Michael splits his time between working at Stacks and as the design head behind Rasa Libre skateboards, while Laura devotes herself full time to the Stacks studio. At the time this interview was conducted, the couple had just moved into their new digs in L.A. and were preparing for the next phase of the world domination.

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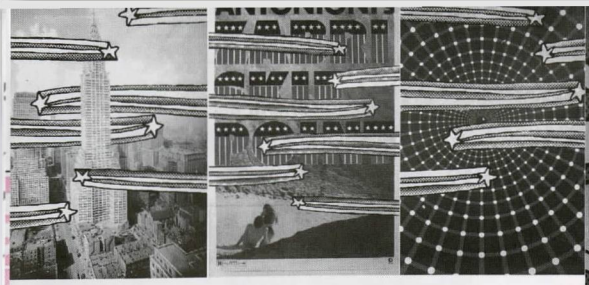
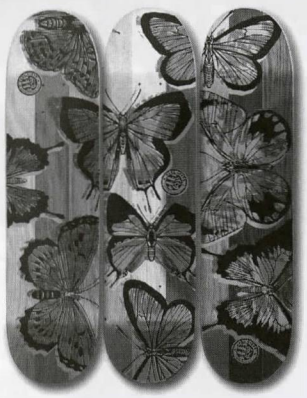
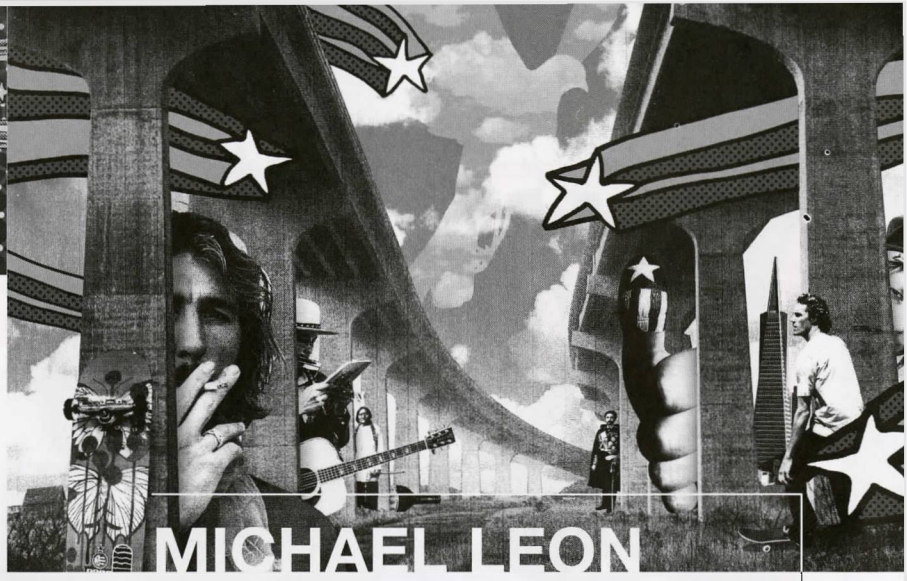






MICHAEL LEON

I REALLY ENJOY SEEING WORK THAT SEEMS OUT OF CONTROL AND RIDICULOUS, AND THAT'S PARTLY BECAUSE I HAVEN'T FELT I'VE ACCOMPLISHED THAT IN MY OWN WORK YET.

I've always felt that the way you blur the line between design and fine art is great. Is there a line between the two in your mind, and if so how are they different?

I think they are very different, but I'm not gonna try to define them because it's too subjective. I've given myself a responsibility to produce meaningful images for Rasa Libre and Stacks. The work I do for these companies is design, no question. I do often use some of the same devices in my artwork, which, like you said, blurs the line. That is an effort on my part to just be myself and build the world I want to live in; to create a way of working where these design or art elements can be used in the same way a writer uses words. I don't know if that makes any sense, but it's better for me to not get bogged down in thinking about it too much and just do my work.

Is there a definite, daily working process that you subscribe to, or is it different every day?

Every day is a little different. I usually kind of assess my "state of being" when I wake up. I can tell before I get out of bed if today is gonna be productive, lazy, or adventurous. By the time I'm in the shower, I have to decide if I'm gonna fight against that initial feeling or just go with it. Lately I've been just going with it, which often means just going back to sleep, but sometimes it means getting excited about whatever I'm working on at the time. At some point I'll end up at the studio and I'll fumble around with something for a little while. I've got the OCD, so I can easily pace back and forth for an hour, no problem.

Do you believe that there is a set of standards for design work, a piece of art, or even a piece of music that you try to bring to the different media you pursue?

I really enjoy seeing work that seems out of control and ridiculous, and that's partly because I haven't felt I've accomplished that in my own work yet. My way of satisfying myself is to jump around genres and make videos, paint, or make songs. Otherwise I would get too critical of myself and freeze up. I'm making it up as I go.

You and your wife, Laura, seem to have a really good balance between your personal and professional lives together. How do you accomplish it?

We try to leave the work stress at work when we go home for the night. It's hard for me to stop working sometimes, so I have to make an effort to quit at least by 6:00 or 7:00 and go home to relax for a while. We are moving to a new studio in a few days and we are both pretty excited that there are separate rooms. It's hard to be together all the time, but I still love it and I try not to take it for granted.

I know you're a huge fan of Laura in general and her art specifically. Here's your chance to gush about her.

She is really talented in ways that don't translate to printed pages. She always surprises me with the stuff she comes up with, and she's never looked for any attention. I think her mindset is more in the moment, so she doesn't plan long-term projects. Her work tends to be this spur-of-the-moment stuff; she'll do a lot, and then not work on anything for a month or two. It's kind of hard for me to get because I'm working on stuff all the time and I tell her, "How can you stop, you're making all this great stuff?" But she doesn't force it. I think that's a great quality. Artists waste a lot of time forcing things when the inspiration isn't there. Her "Cult of Stacks" shirt is one of my favorites. And she kicks my ass at Scrabble.

in terms of Commonwealth Stacks, where do you see it headed?

We change it around all the time, so I never really know where it's headed or what we're gonna make next. It's sort of got one foot in skateboarding and the other in art and design, so it can be any number of things. It feels to me like it's a special-project thing. Sometimes I feel like we should commit to a direction, but at the same time I like it being so ambiguous. In the future I would just like it to grow and compliment my other projects, like Rasa Libre. Hopefully we'll continue to be able to collaborate with other designers to make some interesting stuff. The main thing I want is just to continue to be able to work with Laura so we can be our own bosses. Owning a small business is a challenge and we are lucky that we have been able to create something that we love working on. Anything else that happens is just extra credit. ■

LAURA LEON

FOR ME THERE'S SOMETHING REALLY MEDITATIVE ABOUT CREATING OBJECTS BY HAND RATHER THAN DESIGNING OBJECTS.

In terms of Commonwealth Stacks, where do you see it headed?
Everyday we're thinking of new ideas for Stacks. Currently we're adding more clothing and accessories to the line, for both men and women. I like the idea of adding pieces that compliment the T-shirts and graphic-based items. We'd definitely like to keep collaborating with other artists and designers. We've been fortunate to have really talented people contribute graphics for Stacks.

Outside of your work for Stacks, it seems to me you've always worked more in 3-D than Michael. By that I mean you're more inclined to make *things*, whether it's a painting, or your designer boxes or more recently, the "Soft Rocks" seat cushion collaborations with Casey Lurie. What draws you to more tangible art?
Yes, that's true. The "Soft Rocks" are based on a series of paintings I made a few years ago and I'm so happy that they influenced Casey to come up with the idea for cushions. I really enjoy the process of drawing, painting, sewing, or working in the darkroom as much as conceptualizing an idea. For me there's something really meditative about creating objects by hand rather than designing objects.

You've talked about your art needing meaning for you. How do you balance your work, which is highly conceptual, with this need for meaning?
I actually feel less pressure to make highly conceptual work than I used to. Everything I make has meaning to me, but I just don't feel the pressure to hit someone over the head with an idea. I used to come up with a concept before I would even begin a piece, and lately I'm more inclined to create a piece and then figure out the meaning later.

In a recent interview in *Art Prostitute* magazine, you said you were influenced by "freedom." Tell me more about this.
"What are you influenced by?" is such a hard question. The answer to that question changes every day according to my mood, where I'm at, what I'm reading, or who I'm with. Overall, I'm influenced by the freedom of doing what I enjoy doing and not living my life according to anyone's expectations.

Talk to me about your process a bit.
I've come to realize that I'm a control freak and it often manifests itself in my artwork. I tend to paint in a really systematic way. I usually draw out what I'm going to paint first, sort of in a paint-by-numbers kind of way, then I meticulously paint each section. Working that way is pretty grueling, so I've been taking a different approach to making things lately: more drawing, less painting.

How is it working together with Michael creatively? Do you guys get into fist fights?
Working together can be difficult sometimes, but I've worked with much crazier people than Michael. If we argue, it's usually about things related to Stacks. Sometimes Michael will show me a design that I'll think is brilliant and then he'll decide he doesn't want to use it, or I'll draw something that he'll want to use for a Stacks shirt and I'll think it's a terrible drawing. Michael also paces around the studio a lot and it drives me crazy.

How about a glowing review of Michael as an artist?
I think that Michael's completely open and honest in his artwork and his creativity never seems to stop. He's constantly making things. I think his personality really shows through in everything he does, whether it's music, artwork, or skateboard graphics.

WE ARE BEAUTIFUL LOSERS

INTRODUCTION BY MICHAEL COLEMAN
PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF ICONOCLAST

Like all the things that, in the end, really mean something, the *Beautiful Losers* exhibit is indeed greater than the sum of its parts. Cultivating three decades of art influenced, inspired, and indicative of street culture, Aaron Rose and Christian Strike of Iconoclast have produced an exhibit of both massive and meaningful proportions.

Its parts: Nearly every artist connected to skateboarding, punk rock, graffiti, hip-hop and underground street culture over the past 30 years. Jean-Michel Basquiat and Keith Harring are displayed with the same cultural relevance as Raymond Pettibon, Larry Clark, and Glen E. Friedman. It is their vision that has driven the work of contemporaries like Margaret Kilgallen, Barry McGee, Ed Templeton, Evan Hecox, Spike Jonze, Mark Gonzales, Jo Jackson, Clare Rojas, Thomas Campbell, Shepard Fairey , and Ryan McGinness, among many others on display.

Its sum: A concise collection of the art we have all been under the influence of since that first Black Flag record, first Zorlac deck, first photocopied zine or first graffiti flick encouraged us to buy a guitar, to learn how to ollie, to take photos documenting our own local music scene, to pick up a can of spray paint, to write down the secret order of our secret worlds.

Beautiful Losers opened its four-year international tour on March 13 at the Contemporary Arts Center in Cincinnati, traveled to San Francisco's Yerba Buena Center on July 16, and continues to add additional museums to its sum total through 2008. Together, the transcripted panel discussion from the opening of the exhibit and the interview with Aaron Rose, one half of the show's curatorial team, that follows provide a glimpse into this incredible collection of art, music, and underground spirit.

Important art has always been controversial. It pushes society's boundaries of what is and is not acceptable, what is art and what is not. I had never really considered skateboard graphics important art, I simply recognized it as a company's way of distinguishing itself in the marketplace, a way to define a company's identity. But in this age of bland mass-produced goods, graphic arts have turned from producing corporate identities into a medium of self-expression and political discourse. Skateboard graphics have become an important platform for artists. Skateboard art is important.

PANEL DISCUSSION TRANSCRIBED BY JASON WATKINS

On the opening day of the Beautiful Losers exhibition, a panel discussion was held featuring Glen Friedman, Claire Rojas, Chris Johanson, Geoff McFetridge, Shepard Fairey, Ed Templeton, Stephen Powers, and Cynthia Connelly, artists who were all responsible for designing and documenting an entire generation's culture. The discussion, mediated by Aaron Rose, allowed the public to hear, in the artists' own words, their thoughts on the art and the corresponding exhibit. The following is an excerpt.

Aaron Rose: What is the common thread among this group of artists? Everybody's style is so diverse, what are the defining trends of this group?

Glen Friedman: They're calling me one of the old-timers. I'm only 41. I was first published in *Skateboarder* magazine when I was 14. I started taking pictures when I was 12. I looked at the magazines and thought what I was seeing wasn't as cool as what I could do. I was using an instamatic camera. I think that tells you that you can do something more than what you see. It's not premeditated . . . you want to be punk or independent. There was no punk when I was 14.

Claire Rojas: A lot of the work is intuitive. I'm a person who doesn't see anything in the world that talks to me. I'll make something that I want to hear.

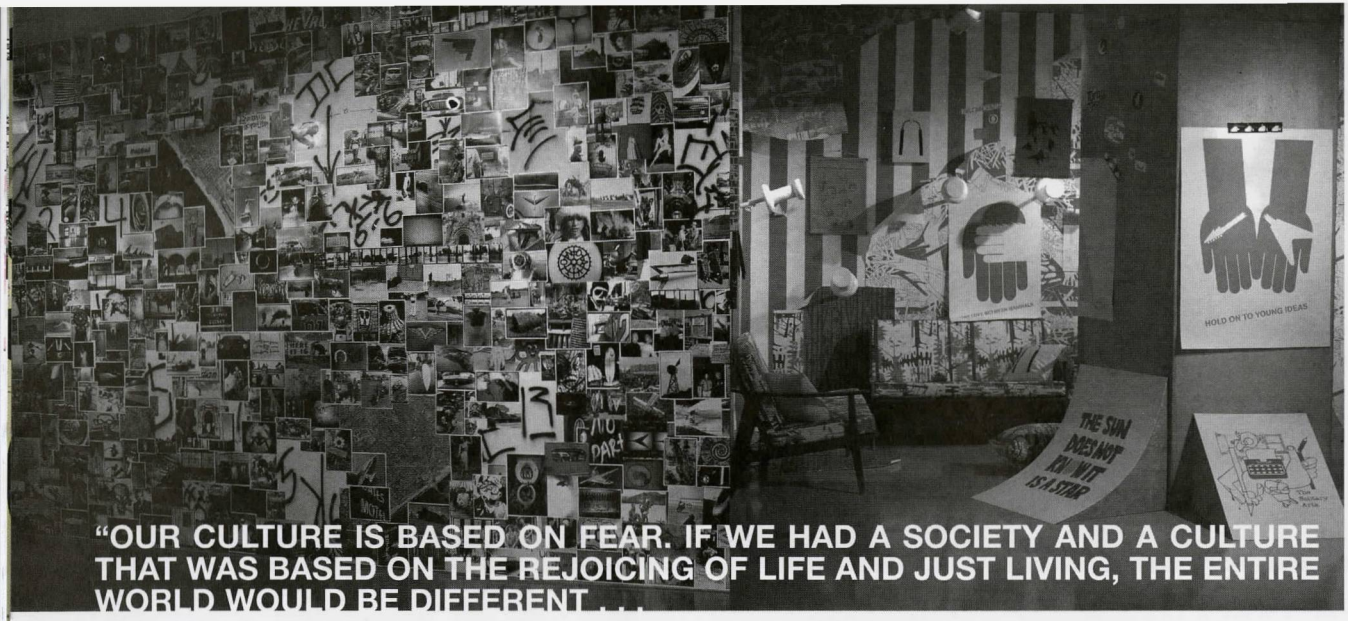
Chris Johanson: I don't know about the styles being different. I'm 35. The common thread for people my age was being a kid under Reagan and watching a trillion hours of television.

Geoff McFetridge: If you grow up being marketed to, that will influence the way people work. Subconsciously our generation has been sold a lot of crap. Some people react to that by wanting to do it themselves. The culture has become the product of corporations who are targeting that group. We're the first generation that has had to deal with it.

Glen Friedman: It really concerns me when some people go out of their way to pay for their art by only selling to those corporations. Even though you're sneaking in ideas, these corporations are using your cool, name, or image to sell their products that are being made by slave labor somewhere. None of us are perfect. Some of us try, and maybe some don't, but I try to do what I can. We have a responsibility as true artists to hold true to what you're doing and being careful where you're selling your stuff. Every bit you give is a mistake.

Shepard Fairey: There are pros and cons to working with corporations. I came up through skateboarding culture and punk rock culture, a lot of which Glen had documented and my connection to it was the stuff he had done. That was a pure level. I learned to question what the government was up to from Dead Kennedys' lyrics or Black Flag or any number of hardcore bands that were anti-Reagan. Through skateboarding and punk rock there was an element of producing materials for this culture yourself. People embraced that. By the end of the '80s, skateboarding got huge and turned into a multimillion dollar industry. People were able to make money off of it and they broke away from the companies they worked for to start their own companies. There's a line between being an entrepreneur, doing things on you own terms, or working blindly for a big company.

A lot of people say, "Anything corporate will contradict my message." I disagree with them. Everything evolves. I went from being public enemy number one in Rhode Island where I started, and now



"OUR CULTURE IS BASED ON FEAR. IF WE HAD A SOCIETY AND A CULTURE THAT WAS BASED ON THE REJOICING OF LIFE AND JUST LIVING, THE ENTIRE WORLD WOULD BE DIFFERENT . . .

10 years later, the board of tourism is offering me a 10-foot space in a show called "Rhode Island Treasures." Not because I changed anything about what I was doing, but because it started being accepted. A lot of responsibility in a capitalist society is on the consumer to discriminate. Just because it's advertised in a cool way doesn't mean you have to buy it.

Glen Friedman: I don't want to participate in that. I want to be as far away from that as I can.

Shepard Fairey: I guess it's everyone's different version of utopia. Sometimes I feel it's possible to have big companies respect the art and do it the right way.

Glen Friedman: Most people will recognize that. You're the real deal man; you're the shit. [To Shepard:] People like you just shouldn't give in to them. Someone came to me and offered me $50,000 for one image. That's a lot of money. That's great. I never made that much for one image. It wasn't even a bad product. I wanted to make sure the people in the photo would be treated fairly. I wanted to make sure the whole thing was cool. I asked them some questions and told them I had to deal with other people and they just went out and recreated the thing.

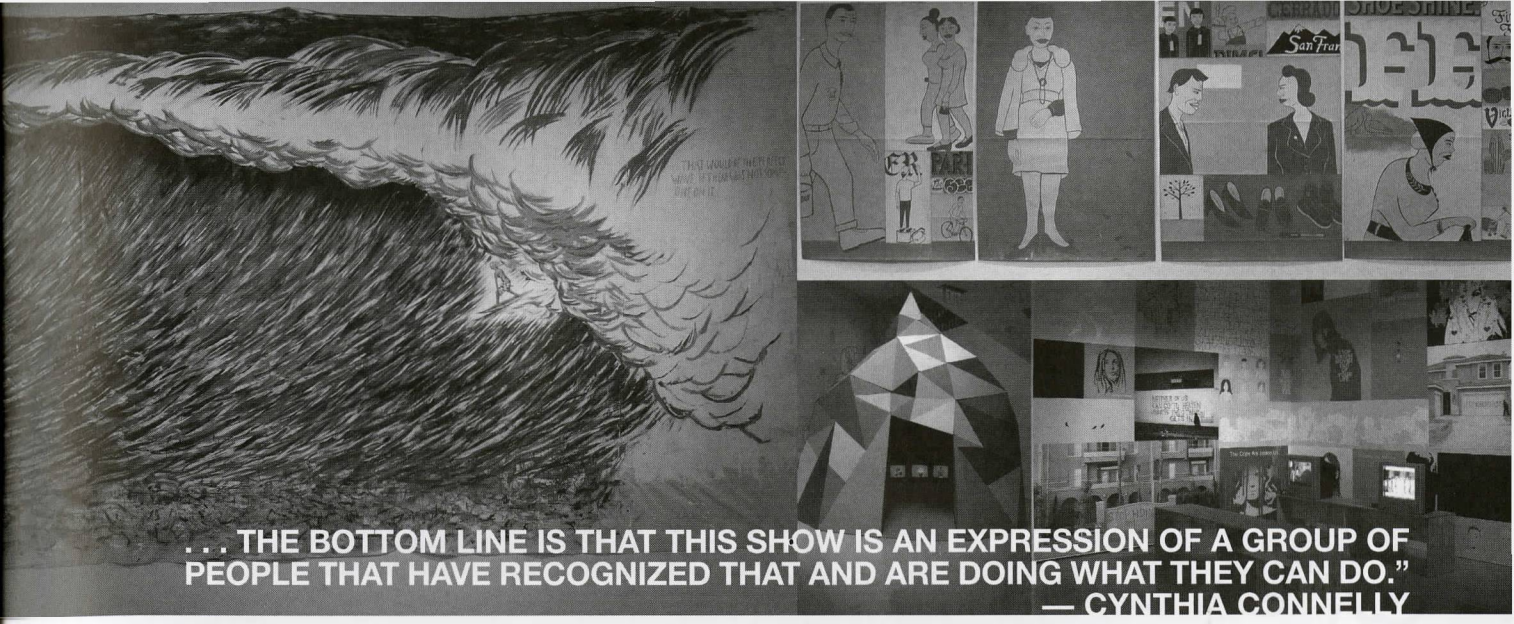
Aaron Rose: I would like to ask the panel about illegality in graffiti and skateboarding, two of the main themes of this exhibit.
Stephen Powers: It's amazing that graffiti creates so much anger. People treat it as a personal attack against them. It's a fairly innocuous expression of self. Artists just say, "Hey, I'm here. I'm taking over this space and I'm doing something with it. There was nothing here before." As a country, we like our people extremely docile and quiet; graffiti is an antidote to that. It provides an antidote to all the things that make us the society we are: uneducated consumers who go to their jobs, drink beers on the weekends, and then do it all over again on Monday. Graffiti is becoming more of a felony. I know a guy who went to prison for four years for that. I think that it's great that it's illegal; it should be a dangerous thing to be an individual. Try to be a fully-realized individual and see what happens to you.

Shepard Fairey: That's the exact reason why they hate it so much. Graffiti is a sign that you can have a voice and do your own thing, whether it's a political message or a form of personal expression. Graffiti avoids bureaucracy. There's always an element in society that doesn't want to get permission. Skateboarding and graffiti are the constructive end of that emotion. I always thought the lunatics are running the asylum: the people that go through these routines every day and do what they're told are like zombies on autopilot. That's why I came up with my OBEY campaign. It's like a snap to people to get out of that mentality.

Aaron Rose: Why is there so much creativity that comes from the culture of skateboarding, and how is that connected to the other subcultures?
Ed Templeton: When I started skateboarding in 1985, it wasn't what you see today. Today, it's all over billboards, we have Tony Hawk who's famous and does milk ads, and we have all these big companies exploiting it. When I started, if you skateboarded, you got beaten up in school. It's the opposite today. If you're in a magazine, you're the king of the school. The skateboarders have taken over from the captain of the football team. But I was a total nerd in school, playing ninjas and stuff. I couldn't afford a surfboard, but I could easily get a skateboard. Instantly, the punk kids who had skateboards accepted me in their group. That was the best feeling I ever had. The minute I had a skateboard people looked over and went, "Hey man, hang out with us."

Glen Friedman: It's an athletic art form. You don't need a team and there's no coach. When I was young, there was no one older than us who did it. The whole thing was set by us. You could do it by yourself and there was no one telling you what to do. It was very rarely competitive.

Ed Templeton: Before I even thought about drawing and painting, I was looking at magazines. The magazines were creative and the



". . . THE BOTTOM LINE IS THAT THIS SHOW IS AN EXPRESSION OF A GROUP OF PEOPLE THAT HAVE RECOGNIZED THAT AND ARE DOING WHAT THEY CAN DO."
— CYNTHIA CONNELLY

people doing them were creative. I was excited every month to open a magazine and see what stuff Mark Gonzales would do. He would have some paint pen art on his grip tape or some art on his board. We knew, as fans, that he did his own graphics. As crappy as they might have been at the time, *he* did them. So for me, as a kid, that was it—that's exactly what I wanted to do. When I had the opportunity to turn pro, I started doing my graphics. At first they were really bad. The kids out there look at Ed Templeton; his company is not just some bullshit company trying to sell boards. It's about something else. It's a community, a way of life, a community of kids doing what they want. That's why I admire these artists and skateboarders and anyone who does their own thing outside the rules.

Claire Rojas: They can't control you and they can't make money off you. It all comes down to money.

Ed Templeton: With skateboarding, it's been taken over by corporations. There's a whole divide. There's Tony Hawk and Bob Burnquist, these famous guys who have taken the money and run with it. I don't blame them. I don't have a problem with it, it's my personal choice.

Glen Friedman: Selling milk to kids. Selling Big Macs to kids. He needed the money, I guess. Fifteen million for those video games, keeping kids in front of their TV sets—it's disgusting. Tony Hawk is a nice guy. I took one of the first of his published photos. He was an incredible skater, he still is. Why the fuck does he have to sell fucking Big Macs?

Aaron Rose: In Tony's defense, that game is fun as hell.
Ed Templeton: He has a foundation, he does a lot of good things too. Glen's an angry vegan. I'm also a vegan, maybe a little nicer though.

Cynthia Connelly: Our society is fear-based. Our culture is based on fear. If we had a society and a culture that was based on the rejoicing of life and just living, the entire world would be different. The bottom line is that this show is an expression of a group of people that have recognized that and are doing what they can do.

Chris Johanson: Our culture has numbed us into non-activity. It's so intense—less then 50 percent of our people vote. It's like people are non-participants in their own society.

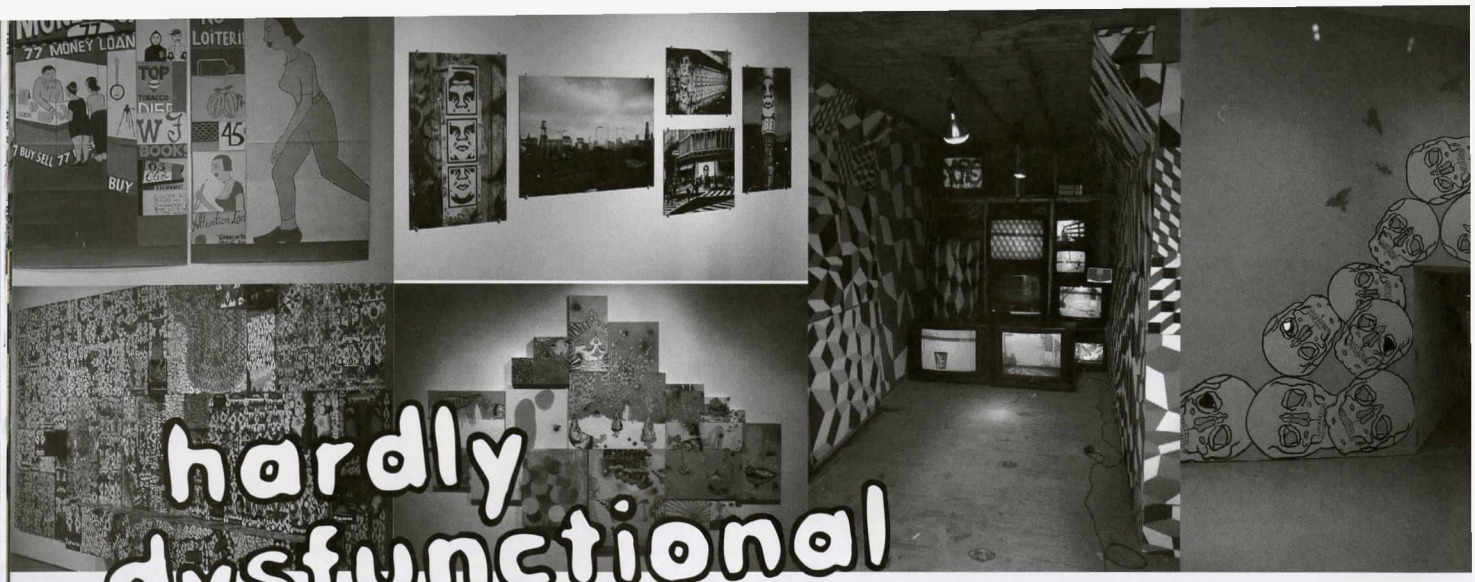
Ed Templeton: I'm totally guilty of that. I'm the product of a suburban life. Me and everyone I knew were completely complacent. We thought there was nothing we could do, the machine's moving and we can't do anything about it. I just recently registered to vote. The first time I actually did it, you couldn't believe the feeling I had. As a pro skateboarder there are millions of kids that read my interviews and that's all I talk about now. The more I learn, the more I realize I have to do my little part. As a whole, each thing you do is what society is. It's so easy to do and you feel good doing it.

Glen Friedman: I realize now that everyone can do something. That's why I come to these shows and do interviews: to inspire rebellion. I think that it's incredible that Ed's voting for the first time.

Shepard Fairey: There's a culture of complacency because people feel they don't have any power over their destiny. No matter what they do, Democrat or Republican, same result. People ask me after I've had my art up in hundreds of cities and been in numerous art shows and magazines, why I continue to put my stuff up on the street? To me it's the most direct route to communicate. One person can do something

Ed Templeton: That's how it started for me. Aaron Rose started this gallery and it was totally ghetto. He gave me a show because I was able to drive the art out. He did that for a bunch of people and created his own scene. You can create your own scene wherever you are.

Claire Rojas: Everyone is welcome in these communities. There's nothing but positivity and love. Anyone can jump in and be a part of it. ■



hardly dysfunctional

"DYSFUNCTIONAL" hardly describes the curatorial achievements of Aaron Rose, yet it is the title of his 1999 book, a 25-year compilation of the art that has defined skateboard culture. Dysfunctional also does no justice to the operations of the infamous Alleged Gallery, founded and operated by Rose, which has slammed a 2x4 into the back of the art world's head, commanding well-deserved attention for the "street art" movement. This movement, fueled by Rose, is now the talk of the international art scene, forcing art critics and institutional directors to lower their designer black-rimmed glasses and take note of this often-criticized "low brow" art. Certainly there has been enough attention that Rose's company, Iconoclast (co-operated by Christian Strike) filled three floors of the Contemporary Arts Center in Cincinnati with *Beautiful Losers*, a massive exhibit documenting 30 years of the art of street culture. BAIL spoke with Rose about his own inspiration for creating this exhibition, combating academic and institutional art, and challenging the cannon of criticism on this particular art movement.

BY MICHAEL COLEMAN
PORTRAIT BY ANDY MUELLER

This exhibition has been three years in the making. When did you and Christian Strike begin the initial planning stages?

"In the beginning . . ." [*laughs*] I had a gallery in New York called Alleged, and I decided to close up there and move to LA. I got a space in LA and was out here for about a year and realized the gallery run was kind of over. The artists that I was working with had all become famous and I didn't want to go back to square one and find a whole new group of artists. At the exact same time, Christian was getting rid of *Strength* magazine. We had collaborated on some projects—*Strength* had sponsored some shows at the gallery. I was stopping my business and wanted to do something different. Christian was stopping his business and wanted to do something different, so we met for coffee one day and he was like "Why don't we start a company and try to work with museums?" We wanted to take it to the next level, in a sense. At the end of 2001, we formed Iconoclast—a production company, for lack of a better word—and began packaging the *Beautiful Losers* show. Very loosely packaging this show—it happened rather organically between two guys whose lives were changing simultaneously and realizing each of us had unique skills that could help one another.

Beautiful Losers documents 30 years of the "street culture" movement, and yet it seems that it's quite difficult for the academic cannon to acknowledge movements in art that resonate around pop culture. They're usually dismissed as "fads."

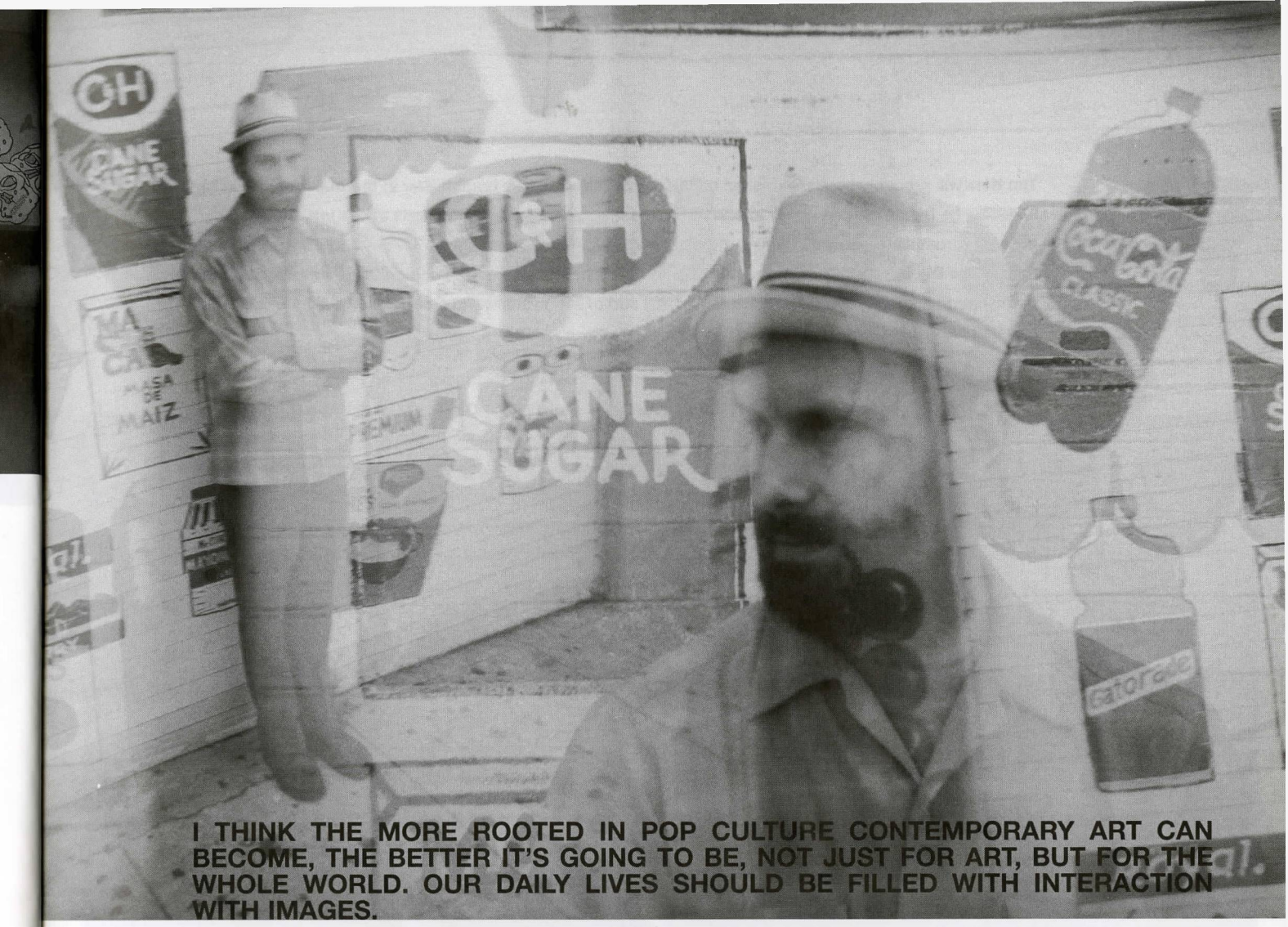
It's funny that people think this is fad-y, like the classic story of that 15-year overnight success. This has been going on under the radar for years.

The movement, for a lot of us, seems very familiar, echoed in underground music, writing, and film. But for a general museum audience, what do you hope they will come to understand from viewing this exhibition?

One of the things that's so interesting about this type of art—art that is coming out of skateboarding or graffiti or punk rock—is that it's pretty much "people's art." Even though it's coming out of a weirdo kid subculture, it's not art that coming from the academic world, so it can be understood by a plumber or a bus driver. It's like Outsider Art, but very informed.

One of my biggest complaints regarding the art world is that it's "inside," meaning that there are a number of amazing things happening in contemporary art, but most of it you don't understand unless you really know and follow contemporary art.

What's ironic is that the art we're showing is coming from "outcast" society, but the



I THINK THE MORE ROOTED IN POP CULTURE CONTEMPORARY ART CAN BECOME, THE BETTER IT'S GOING TO BE, NOT JUST FOR ART, BUT FOR THE WHOLE WORLD. OUR DAILY LIVES SHOULD BE FILLED WITH INTERACTION WITH IMAGES.

appeal is universal. Our agenda is to show work that we love and put it into a historical context for the first time. This is the first time there are essentially two generations of "street artists" showing, revealing a direct generational link. This helps the general audience. It gives them a framework to understand the work. If they don't understand Chris Johansen's work, they can look at the work of Pettibone. They can understand that no matter how different the art may be aesthetically, the creative energy is almost exactly the same.

Where do you suppose the upcoming generation will take it?

As we illustrate in the exhibition, most movements go for a whole generational cycle. There are a large number of young artists five to 10 years younger than those in the exhibition who are making some incredible work—nowhere near the level of the artists in this show, but they will be the ones who get academic approval for the movement. I see them as a bridge in a weird way. Actually, kids that are nine or 10 years old right now are going to be the kids that are going to take it to the next level. It's like some weird sort of physics. It's going to take that long to complete the next phase of the cycle and the current pop cultural consciousness to digest.

Do you think that because this art is gaining wide acceptance, it may lead to overkill, with negative effects on how the coming generation receives this history?

I'm really hoping that we can make a serious departure—that the art world can make a serious departure—and identify that the artists of this movement, the most significant artists of this movement, are artists that have "pop cultural" appeal. I am all for gallery and museum exhibitions to be as exciting, and perhaps as mainstream, as pop music or Hollywood movies. Audiences are eager for this sort of art experience. I think the more rooted in pop culture contemporary art can become, the better it's going to be—not just for art, but for the whole world. Our daily lives should be filled with interaction with images. If you follow all significant popular movements for the times going all the way back to the Impressionists, it always follows a very similar pattern: acceptance and acknowledgement come long after the movement ends. We look at Andy Warhol now like the greatest artist of the 20th century, but when he first came out and was having established shows relatively early in his artistic career, people laughed at him. He was really a joke to the art world. So I'm hoping and trying really hard to make sure that, hopefully, one or two of the artists from the Beautiful Losers exhibit will be identified as the iconic artists of the beginning of the 21st century, and be the defining artist of

Tim Kerr will probably be embarrassed by this introduction. He's a humble lifer in the truest sense. In the late '70s, he began playing guitar in one of the most brazen, non-limiting bands of the era, the Big Boys, pushing, crumpling, and overcoming the roadblocks which would capture and sterilize so many other bands. The Big Boys broke up in the mid-'80s, but Kerr never gave up. He continues to tirelessly promote participation over adoration, actual work over any sort of star system, and face-to-face dialogue over faceless stadium shows.

Yes, he's been a life-long skater and surfer. Sure, he's an indefatigable musician who's played in Bad Mutha Goose, Poison 13, Jack O'Fire, the Lord High Fixers, and is still playing in Monkeywrench and Total Sound Group Direct Action Committee. He's produced leagues of bands, including the Riverboat Gamblers, Throw Rag, and Sugar Shack. He's also recently rediscovered the fun of getting paint out and slinging it all around. Yet, to hammer what he does into these little slots misses the point. Actually, it fractures the whole picture. You've got to take Tim Kerr as a whole. It's all connected. He's nothing less than a total example of what can happen when a human being walks the walk, lives life without pretense, and remains constantly engaged.

BY TODD TAYLOR
PORTRAIT BY DOUG COHENOUR
LIVE PHOTOS BY CALBEE BOOTH

PUNK LUMINARY TIM KERR TALKS ABOUT GETTING OLDER, GETTING WISER, AND GETTING IN THE VAN WITH TONY ALVA

Just to get some scope: you started playing in a band in '79?
It gets debatable, but I'm still sticking to '78. We were at the end of the original punk rock wave. Hardcore hadn't started yet. There wasn't any kind of division between new wave and punk, it was all the same thing and under one big umbrella.

XTC, Clash, Jonathan Richmond . . .
Yeah, all that stuff was a whole bunch of crazy weirdoes in the eyes and ears of the majority of people around you.

You started skating when?
Urethane wheels or steel wheels? I started skating, probably, in the early '60s when skateboards came out. I lived in Texas on the Gulf Coast. I was born in '56, so I was pretty much a kid through that whole "'60s" thing—The Munsters, Outer Limits, and all that kind of stuff. I had a Fifteen Toes wooden skateboard; it had steel wheels, not the roller-skate clay wheels. I pretty much skated up and down the driveway all the time if we weren't going to the beach. I started surfing really heavily in late junior high and all through high school. If the waves were good, we didn't go to school.

In the summer of 1974, I graduated from high school and went with a friend, who everybody called Bear, up and down the West Coast surfing. Localism was pretty bad if you had Texas plates. We surfed a lot at Malibu and Leo Correo State Park. You definitely couldn't go to San Diego. Any further south than that, you definitely got your tires slashed.

We were in Huntington Beach where that pier is, and I saw a sidewalk that came down and a pretty big bank attached to that sidewalk. There were three guys hitting that thing like total waves on skateboards. Urethane wheels just came out and I was pretty mesmerized by that. I was going, "Man, that's great."

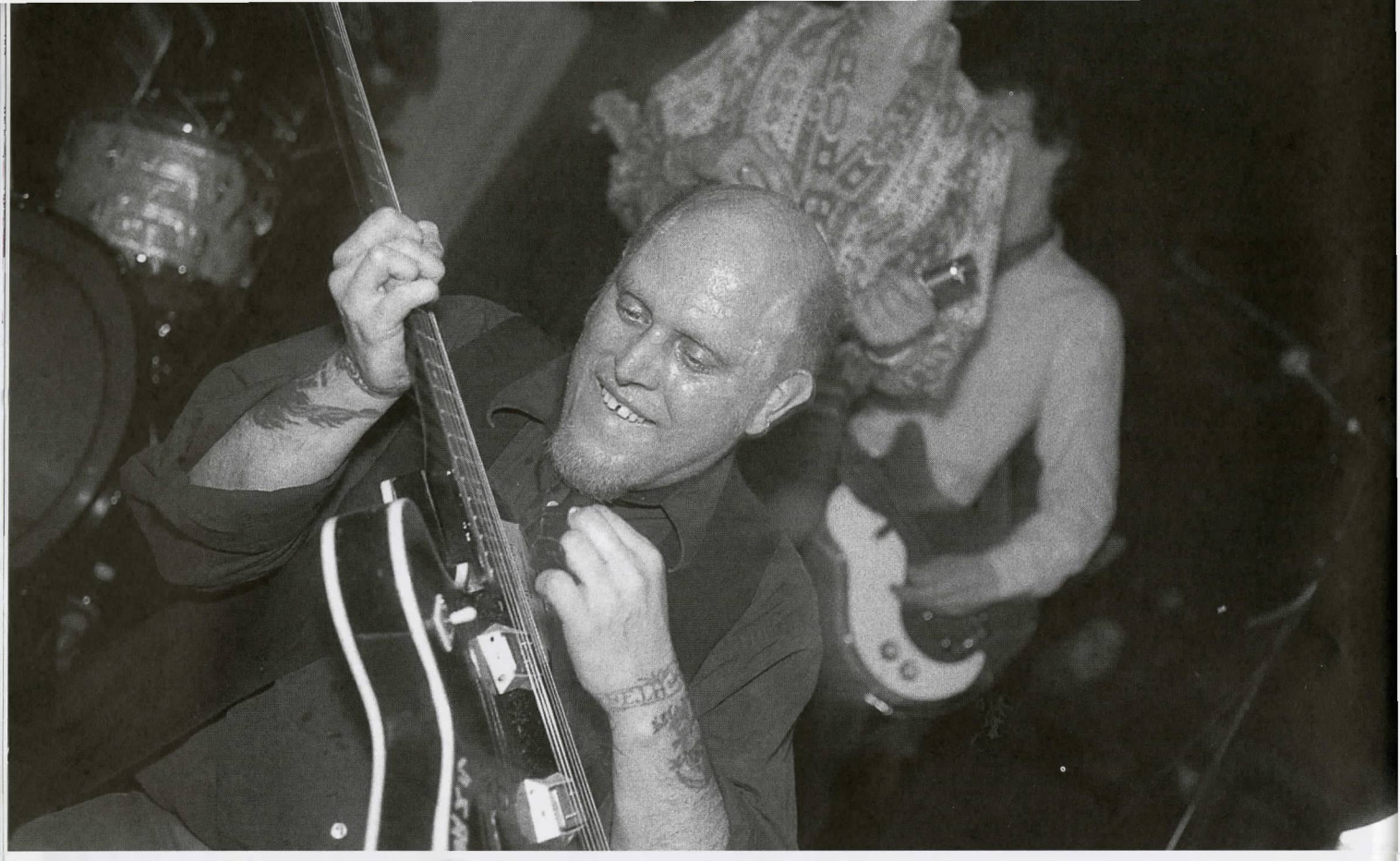
I had looked at surfing magazines, but I just didn't pay that much attention, so I thought, sunny California! I didn't bring a wetsuit; I didn't think the water was cold. We get to Malibu really early in the morning and it's pretty cold. Everybody's in hooded sweatshirts. Victor, the guy who we all called Bear, was like, "Oh, well, I brought my wetsuit. You can wear it." I thought, *cool*. He literally walked out into the water about ankle deep, turned around, came back and put on the whole wetsuit. I'd never, *ever* seen this guy in a wetsuit. Holy shit!

I had brought enough extra money to buy a surfboard, but instead I spent the money on a wetsuit so I could surf while we were there. I only had enough money left over to buy a skateboard with urethane wheels.

I came up to Austin to go to school pretty much at the end of that trip. Austin's about three and half, maybe four hours, to the Gulf Coast where me and Beth [Tim's wife] both grew up. I couldn't surf all the time, so I just skated. There's lots of hills here, so I got pretty heavy into skating as a substitute for not being able to surf.

Looking at the overlap between skaters and punk rock, Tony Alva ended up getting "in the van" with the Big Boys on your first Southern California tour. Did you know who he was before that?

reward is self expression



The first time I met Tony was in Dallas. There was a big contest and we played on the ramp there. I'm pretty inspired by a lot of people—but it's not like an *oh my god* kind of thing; I'm not starstruck with anybody. I think it's great when people are doing stuff, and I definitely want to let them know that, but with Tony Alva, I kinda *was* starstruck. [*smiles*]

So, here he was, Tony Alva, and I'm trying to think of what I can do that's not just exchanging names. So, I finally get up the nerve and I walk up to him, but before I can say anything, he's like, "Oh man, Tim—you're in the Big Boys!" I was completely thrown off course—"I want to talk about Dogtown. I don't want to talk about the Big Boys."

When we went up there on that tour, he pretty much latched on with us and rode with us the whole time. That's when we met Mondo and all these crazy characters. We all just felt real comfortable with each other.

The only brag I'll tell people about happened at that dish in San Francisco that used to be one of the only free community cement skate spots; it was in a really, really bad part of town. We all went up there—the *Thrasher* crew, Mondo and MoFo were there, all these different people. I came around that dish, going really fast and Tony and Mondo were sitting on the edge of it. When I got up to where they were, I just took off and slid, like I was spraying them, like I was surfing, and went around them. When I got off the board, I was just sitting by them and Mondo and Tony were talking—not to me, just talking loud. Mondo goes, "You know, if I didn't know Tim was from Texas, I'd think he's from Santa Monica. He looks just like all the Dogtown guys, he's got that style." Because I grew up surfing. Tony's like, "Yeah, he does. He looks just like all those guys." So I'm sitting there, and on the outside, I'm just sitting there saying, "Oh yeah, that's cool," but I swear to god, inside—and inside for about two or three months—I was like, "Hell yeah!"

The Big Boys were known for being pretty brash. There is a picture of you guys dressed in KKK robes with Izod alligators painted on the fronts on a split with another Texas band, the Dicks. What happened there?

It's really funny that you're even bringing that up. For some reason, everybody who has seen that photo thinks that we were trying to dress up like KKK. Hardly anybody gets that it was Kappa Kappa Kappa—it was a slap at a fraternity for being racist and just a bunch of fucking assholes. That's why the Izod 'gator was painted on the robes.

There was a period when the Big Boys were playing at this place called Raul's. Different fraternities would initiate their freshmen by making them come into the bar for one night. I'm not sure what the initiation was, like were you supposed to pick up a girl or start a fight or whatever. And I remember really vividly that one night when we were playing, all these frat guys came in. At first, they were kinda there and nothing was going on, then you saw one look at another one—an "Oh, wait a minute, we need to start some shit here," kind of thing. Somebody poured beer on one of the members of the Dicks, which is, like, wrong—you don't do *anything*

like that to those guys—and the fight started. I distinctly remember stopping whatever song we were playing and going straight into "Frat Cars." "OK, this song is about you fuckin' assholes," I said. The whole crowd, 50 people maybe, pretty much circled the whole fraternity crew, just singing the words at them. It was really, really amazing and fucking great. We never played that song after that night. It was, like, there it is. That's exactly what we wrote this for.

Beyond your music, you're also a painter. Are there any artists who have deeply affected you?

I can tell you stuff that I remember catching my eye. Van Gogh is really great because the paint is sticking off of the canvas and it doesn't look like something glossy out of a magazine. That really affects me, just to be able to see the paint. Graffiti affects me. Ads affect me. Life in general affects me.

I have a philosophical question . . .

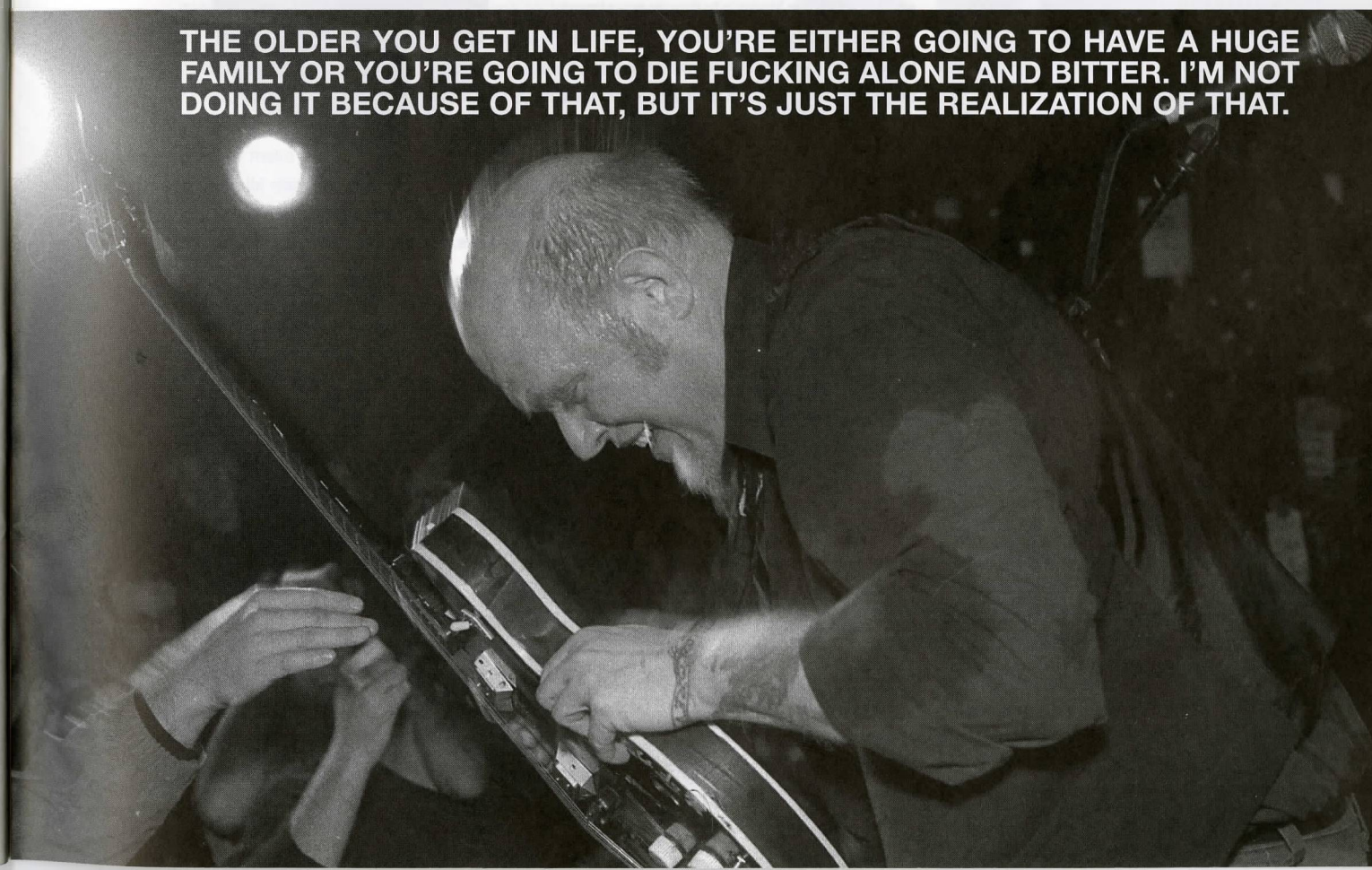
Do something. Participate. *That's* philosophical.

You guessed my question. No, really, why do you keep on doing what you do?

I'm in it for the people you meet, the experiences, the community of it. It's mainly that. It's really funny: you don't make a shitload pile of money doing any of this stuff. I guess you could if you had a different attitude about it, but to me, Beth and I have the biggest extended family all over this world and that's great. I can't even begin to say how honored I am, we are, just from that statement alone. But that's just being a human being and that's *participating*. I'm not saying participate like, "Be political." If that's what you want to do, fine. I'm just saying *live*. Be *aware*. Be aware of your friends. Be aware of things that are going on around you. All of that stuff. I have realized that karma isn't really some weird, mystical thing that's going to happen to us after life. Karma's like if you, Todd, had been an asshole to people, no one would want to talk to you. The same thing with Beth and I. If we hadn't been treating people like we want to be treated, we wouldn't have this huge, extended family. This huge, extended family is basically the karma, if that makes sense. The older you get in life, you're either going to have a huge family or you're going to die fucking alone and bitter. I'm not doing it because of that, but it's just the realization of that.

This hardcore band I really like, Out Cold, said, "You know, most people are just genre fans. They're not music fans. We're not going to limit what we listen to and it's going to come into what we play." That struck a chord with me.

That's a fuckin' great way to put it. ■



FLOW

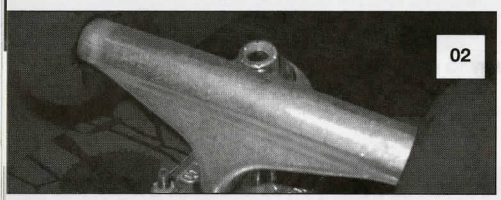
I landed my very first stab at a kickflip on this deck. Never mind that the board was still naked and truck-less or that I was sessioning my lady's yoga mat. I can count every flip trick I've ever landed on full set up with three fingers, so I took it as a good sign. I like the graphic. The nose is quite a bit narrower than I would pay for, but I didn't, so I'll manage. Concave is deep. Wood seems poppy. Good shape for some shreddy shred. I like an up-an-coming skate company. This one is from Seattle, and they like photography, film, and art...so I like them. Thanks, fellas. — JOSH TYSON

01 **AURORA VACATION DECK** MANIK

01

OK, so many of you have seen the last *Lord of the Rings* movie, right? So you know the army of cursed warriors who live in that scary mountain, doomed to be undead until they've redeemed themselves serving the king? You know how they're all face-hanging-off, tattered-skeletons-with-hair, but they still totally kick ass? Well, those were my old trucks . . . minus the whole "kick-ass" part.

02 **139 MM TRUCKS** INDEPENDENT



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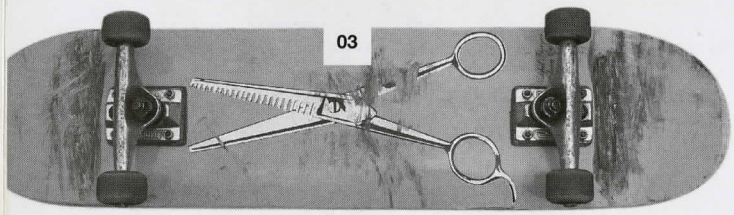
I picked up a set of Independent 139mm's a few weeks ago and have discovered the one thing that I'd forgotten in the last 10 years: New trucks are really hard to get used to, especially when your old ones are, well, let's say "special." For me, these trucks actually perform far *too* well. They're light and they turn really smoothly, which at first made me feel like I was riding someone else's board. I fell repeatedly until I loosened them up enough that the kingpin locknuts are almost off the bolts themselves. Now they feel pretty great, though we still have a little work to do getting to know one another. — MAT DALY



03

I've been riding this Western Edition deck for a few weeks now without any complaints. First of all it's a nice shape, the kind of shape I choose when I'm standing on decks in a shop: narrow but not too short, with the tail, nose, and concave giving just what I need. The deck's kick is not exaggerated.

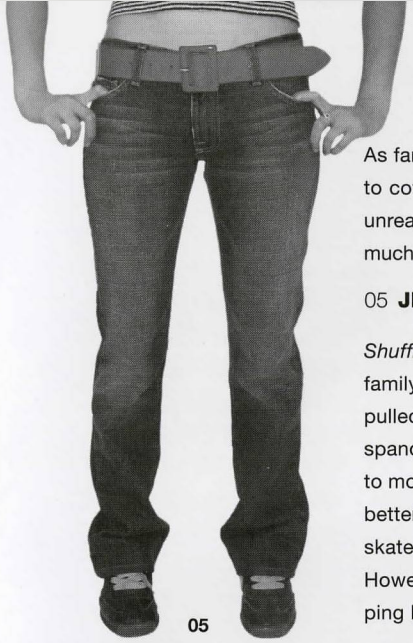
03 **NIKHIL THAYER BARBER** WESTERN EDITION

The trouble with narrow boards, those under 7.5", is that they tend to loose their pop quickly while skating stairs and drops, which I have been skating a lot more often lately. I am pleasantly surprised that the pop has not started to sag. All boards will die young when skated hard, but this Western Edition is not a broke-it-in-three-days kinda product. — RUSS GALUSKA

Mmm: Viagra hard maple, 7 thick plys and a 7.5" girth, *ohhh*.... At 31 inches long, this makes John Holmes look like a baby carrot: the Nate Jones space oddity deck comes from Deluxe's offspring Rasa Libre. Graphically speaking, the lone wolf shit reminds me of a t-shirt you may find promoting South Dakota tourism. The cosmic explosions, starry outer space background and yawning wolf may be tied together somehow, but I'm stumped. — JON DENNISON

04 **NATE JONES DECK** RASA LIBRE

04



05

As far as I'm concerned, pants serve one essential purpose: to cover my entire ass—*no matter what happens*. Lately it's unreasonably hard to find a pair of jeans that a girl can sit in—much less skate in—without giving her rendition of the *Plumber Shuffle*. Fortunately, Ruby Ropa—part of the Girl Skateboard family—is stepping up to the plate. I was skeptical when I pulled on these stretchy-denim babies, but unlike most part-spandex jeans, Ruby Ropa's denim is crazy sturdy, and made to move with you. In fact, the more I run around in them, the better they fit. After a bike ride, a session, and some post-skate yoga they feel like they were custom made to fit me. However, I still need a belt to keep the waistband from dipping below the equator. — CATE LEVINSON

05 **JEANS** RUBY ROPA

06

I wish I could say that I broke this deck in half when I tried to throw a large backside 180 down 14 steps . . . but that would be the hugest lie. The only trick I landed clean was a shove-it on the living room carpet in my bare feet sans trucks & wheels. And it took me a couple tries. And I stubbed my toe. Once wheelbound, it served my meager purposes reasonably well. I spent one morning ollieing a squashed can, and the deck had that snap and freshness that only a new piece of wood has. My determination to create testing "evidence" by marking up the board led me to try some slappy-type things, and the nose gave me some room to stick to the curb (even though I blew it by falling or doing that thing where you sort of run/stumble away). And on days when I practiced skating the bigger, slower bowl at Wilson, my feet stayed on the board when I managed to make it into the vert. All told, the That's Life deck was a good solid ride, just right for curb or bowl sessions or shuffling off to the gas station to get a Diet Coke. — ROB LOMBLAD

06 **THAT'S LIFE DECK** FOUNDATION

07

Receiving this deck for review marked the first time I had heard of Instant Winner, a fairly new skate company out of Brooklyn founded by Es' artist Chris Metzger. The deck is aesthetically very elegant, with crisp contrast and bright colors reminiscent of early 20th century comic novels. The most impressive thing to me is its solid construction; the last few decks I skated literally flaked out on me within the span of a few sessions. The wood on this deck looks rugged enough to withstand several accidental wall impacts and stiff enough (based on pre-truck mounting flex test) to hold up during frontside lipslide sessions. The concave is pretty mellow, with a slightly bigger dip at the nose than at the tail, but still provides impressive pop, even after sitting in my trunk through a few treacherously hot afternoons.Needless to say, I'm very pleased with this deck and would recommend trying one out. — JOSE LOPEZ-LAGO

07 **SERIES 001** INSTANT WINNER

THE DUROMASTER

This time we brought the Jackson 50mm Team Series wheel into the duromasters lab for evaluation. At first glance the wheels appeared to be quite thin, with an approximate riding surface of 9/16 of an inch. The one advantage I noticed about the thinner riding area was that it gave the wheel less surface friction, which in turn helped with sliding ability and roll speed. When put to the physical test the Jackson wheels performed well, with a super smooth roll and a lightweight feel that was nice for flip tricks.

50MM WHEELS JACKSON

The laboratory testing was done using a Rex Gauge Digital DD-3 Type B Durometer and OS-2H Operating Stand (as pictured). When the results came in, the wheels were on the softer side with a durometer reading of 80.7 in the B scale (approximately 99 in the A scale). This characteristic was also evident in the wheels even wear pattern—from my experience, harder wheels will tend to chip or flat-spot quicker than a softer durometer wheel. The overall performance of the wheel was above average; while being on the softer side, it still delivered a quick roll and nice feel. — JC BLUM

BY THE POWER OF GREYSKULL, JC THE DUROMASTER WILL GO SERIOUSLY HE-MAN ON YOUR URETHANE. SEND WHEELS TO: BAIL MAGAZINE, ATTN: JC THE DUROMASTER, 4229 N. HONORE CHICAGO, IL 60613

08 **BERRA 4** DVS

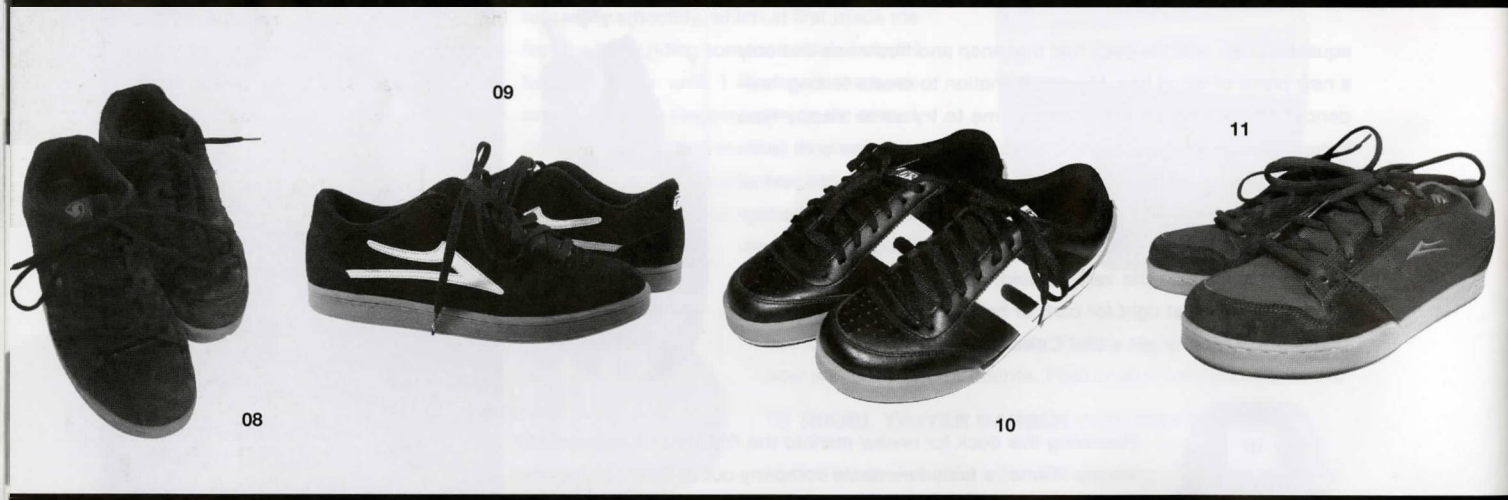
"The future ain't what it used to be," Yogi Berra once said. In the world of skate shoes, Berra's words couldn't be truer. What used to be a low-tech world of Converse knock-offs has become a multi-million dollar industry with high-tech design and development. Oddly, however, for all the money going into it, a lot of skate shoes blow out faster than an old pair of Chucks. A different Berra—skate pro Steve Berra—seems to take his namesake's advice in mind when overseeing his signature shoes. Built sturdily, but remaining flexible enough for quick adjustments, these Berra 4s have lasted me a summer's worth of sessions and still are begging for more. With skate shoes costing more and more, it's nice to know that sometimes you get your money's worth. — DAN SINKER

09 **MANCHESTER** LAKAI

Whether you're skipping from rooftop to rooftop, prowling for villainous samurai in the night, or catching that switch big spin down a set of 15, the kung-fu action grip soles on these LAKAI Manchester's show no mercy to the simple science of keeping feet to board, helping you land tricks that can only be brought forth from your inner sanctum. Perhaps it's a resurrection of an old fighting spirit, some sort of ancient Chinese secret combined with a gum material developed by the Shaolin and simple suede design to keep you stylin' ala Pat Morita. I only wish LAKAI offered a two-toed Ninja boot version—a must for switch 360s to venomous cobra strike. Now go

10 **DRESDEN** DVS

Now here's a nice-looking skate shoe. Opting for the "indoor soccer shoe meets classic Reebok" look, rather than the more typical space-troop boot style, the Dresden has a nice low key design that works on and off the board. The shoe has plenty of padding and arch support and a tongue that's thicker than my neck. The soles grip like they should, and the same sticky material protrudes onto the toe for added board control and response. There's plenty of ventilation in the front and enough wiggle room to keep your digits happy. The rest of the shoe tended to get a little hot though. That could make things swampy, but the added protection and stability that the padding brings with it is well



The Lakai and Chocolate skate concerns teamed up to deliver the Marc Johnson Limited Edition shoe. Two skate companies—who also happen to have common ownership—releasing sneakers/decks/whatever seems like an odd circumstance to this old-school-

11 **MARC JOHNSON** LAKAI

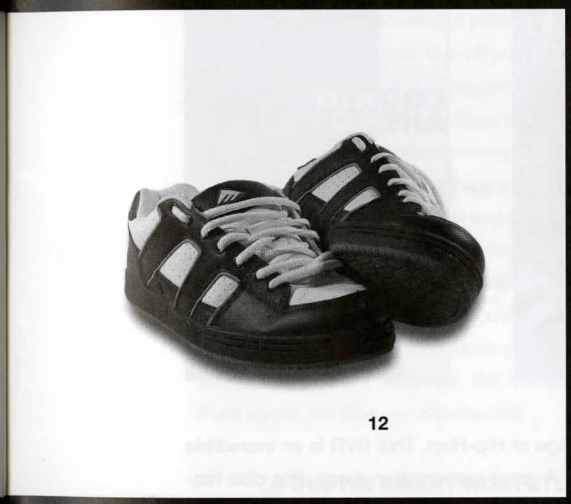
er, but I understand it's pretty common these days. So I guess this shoe, in a way, epitomizes the increasingly complicated (not to mention sophisticated) world of the 21st century skate industry, even among the independents.

Anyway, the shoe doesn't really stray from the standard minimalist Lakai look and feel. I've been riding some pretty chunky shoes over the past few years and was at first suspicious of riding a shoe that looks like an Asics Tiger on steroids. But putting them on changed my mind. The shoes didn't need any time to break in, yet retained their firmness throughout. Heading to the nearest 8 foot capsule I could find, everything in the bag of tricks felt damn good in these shoes. I was also happy to find no weird manufacturing problems—e.g., no gobs of hardened glue in the seams that feels like a bear trap full of acupuncture needles. While I enjoyed skating in these, I've always wondered exactly how much difference a shoe can actually make. Upon digging up a Marc Johnson interview from 2002, I was encouraged to hear his sensible take on this issue: "It's all in the mind. But I feel better, so that, in turn, allows me to skate better." Right on!. — ROB RAY

The Tilt has been a cornerstone in Emerica's line for quite some time, and rightly so. This is one incredibly durable skate shoe designed for one purpose: To take serious punishment.

12 **TILT** EMERICA

The grip on the sole, especially on these black/white/gum versions, is exceptional. The ollie patch on this shoe should definitely be noted: Its double-lace hole construction and ample material (allotted for the ollie abraised surface) is second to none, durable without sacrificing flex at the toe. The leather breathes quite well, and the shoe offers excellent ankle support. My only complaints are the somewhat excessive bulk of the tongue and the length of the laces. I'd recommend taking a scissor to those laces and customizing your tie . . . Points for style anyway. — VINCENT DEGUANO



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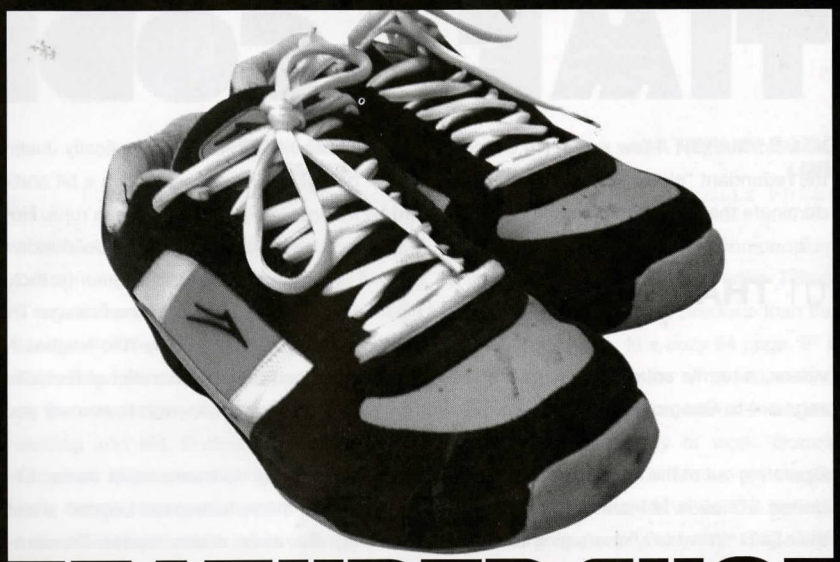


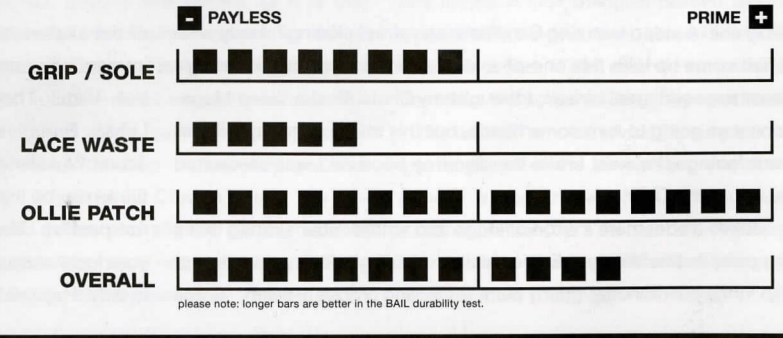
FEATURED SHOE

PIONEER LAKAI

Being a member of the plain-and-simple school of clothes, it was difficult for me to warm up to my first pair of multi-colored shoes in 4 years. Before donning the sneaks, I noticed that the laces have options: the traditional "through the hole," but also these high-tech hidden lace-saver loops. My laces traditionally last as long as the freshness of my pits, so things looked good from the start. The session proved the shoes more worthy than most skate kicks I've had in a while. The Lakais fit snug, with a good supporting heel cup, contoured arch and nice, grippy soles. The space-age material used for the siding barely even scuffed from the beating of my drags, dings and spills. All in all, I'm impressed with the shoes and am ready to put them to the breakdance test tonight. — PETE HORVATH

BAIL DURABILITY TEST

In a fit of punker rage—or metrosexuality—I spray-painted these HUF 3's black. Something about their Jordan color scheme was unsavory. Yet I've discovered I like skating in high-tops. My feet feel a bit lonely inside—isolated under massive tongue-bulk (and now paint)—but they're growing accustomed to the solitude. I cling to the hope that, tossed in the hole with nothing but bread and water, they'll come out more disciplined and skating better. Overall, a tad puffy, and not ventilated enough for summer heat. But, with the makeover, still sexy after all these months. — JOSH TYSON



please note: longer bars are better in the BAIL durability test.

TIME CODE

01 THAT'S LIFE

Viva No Comply! A few sweet No Comply tricks in this Foundation flick (specifically Justin Strubing's in the intro) keep it from falling into the redundant "skate video for skate video's sake" category. The sequencing is a bit static; an overwhelming number of stair/rail set ups dominate the video, which could have benefited by incorporating more seamless runs. However, the overall footage that Josh Beagle and Tod Swank assembled result in a solid video with some outstanding skating. Strubing and Ethan Fowler do provide solid segments, including Stubing skating some weird industrial half pipes and his incredible Barcelona footage. The overall aesthetic of the video is aided by some amazing intro graphic work by Nilo Naghai, Nathan Bell, and Swank. As with all Foundation videos, a terrific soundtrack is guaranteed, particularly when there's a handful of musicians on your team (e.g., Daniel Shimizu rocks his segment to Gang of Four's 'Damaged Goods'). That should be fuel enough to recover your no comply skills. — MICHAEL COLEMAN

02 WHAT IS?

Operating out of the high left corner of these United States is Mannik skateboards with their DVD "What Is?," managing to cram in approximately 100 skaters in a half-hour. The standard video format includes out-of-shape security guards, the slams banging up the middle, and some personalized intros throughout. If my pons and cerebrum didn't tell me differently, while solely judging by this DVD, I'd assume the entire state of Washington has no tranny to its name. Little effort is made to expand beyond street skating: flip, slide, stairs, repeat. Concerning the soundtrack: call me new-fashioned, but it's always great to hear a song on a video you haven't heard before or maybe a rocker from the past. Fifty percent of the songs featured could be heard by putting your FM stereo on scan, while the other half was a collage of various beats, dj's, or man/machine, *nstz-nstz* cuts. "What Is?" also has some of those "special DVD features" presenting more of the same style skating, and an option to change the songs on two sections—not an improvement, just different. — JON DENNISON

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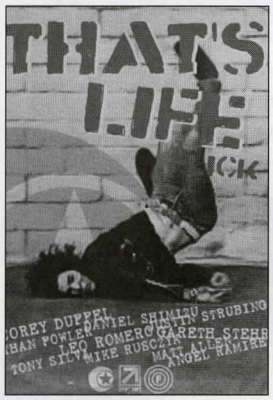

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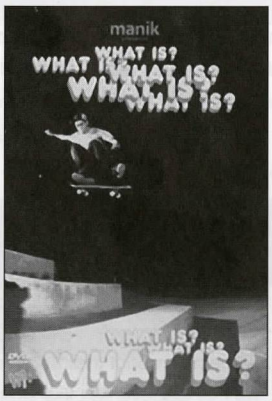

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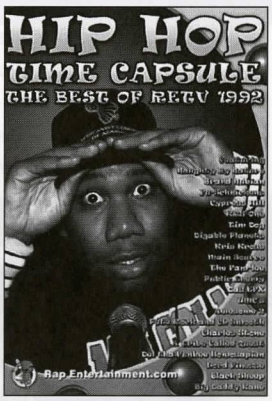

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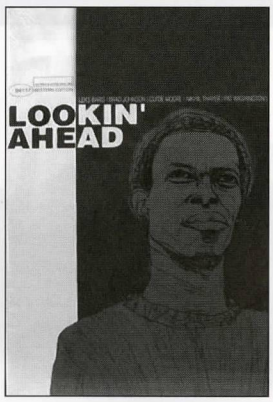


02 HIP-HOP TIME CAPSULE

1992 was the last of roughly five years that made up what is commonly known as the Golden Age of Hip-Hop. This DVD is an incredible reminder of what hip-hop used to be, before it was bogged down with money and controversy. A good preservation piece, this disc features videos, freestyles and interviews from some of my personal favorites, including Digable Planets, Public Enemy, A Tribe Called Quest, and Black Sheep, among about 15 more. Incredible. — DAVE HOFFA

03 LOOKIN' AHEAD

Holy shit! A video featuring San Francisco street skating? I only wish I had come up with this one-of-a-kind approach to skateboarding's least exposed area! I mean, I thought my Skate Alaska Video Magazine was going to turn some heads, but this shit is uncanny. Like all rare footage, I almost broke the disc tray because I was so excited to put in the DVD!

Jokes aside, there's a ton of ledge and smaller stair skating that's on point in this Western Edition video. You'll see every variation of flip in/flip out manuals, gnarly blunt slides and crooks a-plenty. Some of the skaters have interesting names like Nikhil Thayer, Leks Baris and Jason Wussler. There's also this ripper named P.W. Esquire who I think may be the alias of this actor, P.W. Herman, but once again I'm not positive. The bottom line is that you probably can't get this at your local shop, so I recommend buying a burnt copy on eBay, that is only if you've been saving your pesos. — PETE LAROCK

01 **JOSH MacPHEE**
STENCIL PIRATES
SOFT SKULL PRESS

If any form of graffiti is in full effect at present, even attaining some legitimacy in the design world, it's guerrilla stenciling. Its present level of skill and poignancy is excellently documented in MacPhee's *Stencil Pirates*, an extensive, international record of the medium's reach. Photos feature stencils of the highest quality—striking and dramatic, amusing and clever—with a robust selection and array of artistic levels. The text nicely overviews stenciling's history and ethical implications, with an extensive instructional guide detailing the many perils inherent in the stencil endeavor. Awesome. — JON RESH

02 ***CONCRETE WAVE***
MAGAZINE

So you think you're bad-ass because you ride an 8-inch wide board and painted "Fuck You" on the back of your cut-off jeans vest? That's kinda tough (a la the Daggers), but not nearly as gnarly as *Concrete Wave* magazine. Inside you'll find board sizes worthy of Duane Peters—boards that push design limits—manufactured for those left behind during the 1990's small-board, big-pants craze. Recent issues have featured classic photos by Ted Terrebonne (who snapped the cover for Bail 02) and interviews with the Godoy brothers and the legendary NOMAD, Bill Danforth. Pure aggro, no flips. — JOE MALONE

03 **DUSTIN AMERY HOSTETLER**
FAESTHETIC 3

Cribbing from publisher/creator Dustin Amery Hostetler's masthead: "Design is Art. Art is Everything. Everything is Art." Faesthetic includes most everyone in underground art and design, organized into a 192-page, black-and-white annual. Artsists and designers including Cody Hudson, Kozyndan, Giant, Andy Mueller, Derrick Hodgson and countless others are given 1-5 pages of creative license to express just enough ideas to fill an 8.25" x 10.75" page. For info: www.faesthetic.com. — MICHAEL COLEMAN

04 **RUDY BAZORDA**
MANIFESTO
FUN NOT FAME PRODUCTIONS

Manifesto is a self-described tome dedicating itself to "the act of skateboarding," a sort of *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* for the half-pipe junkie. The author, Rudy Bazorda, a skater of 20 years, searches for meaning in the cosmos, paralleling skating and life, finding the greater relationships that exist with the skate subculture. While the book isn't perfect—well-intentioned but less-than-convincing platitudes get tiresome—it's certainly worth a read. But like any book about the best things in life (love, sex, skateboarding, etc.), talking about what you love rarely can compete with doing the real thing. — JOE TOWER

05 **DANIEL CLOWES**
EIGHTBALL #23
FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS

Years before hitting cinematic liquor with *Ghost World*, Dan Clowes had been churning out a body of work as twisted, familiar, inspired, absurd and honest as it is distinctive in his always-fascinating comic *Eightball*. The new issue—a slightly oversized volume—is as engaging as ever, following two misfit guys over the years as their lives develop in severely peculiar ways. If you know Clowes' work, the saturated colors and slightly retro artwork is always welcome; if not, trust me: you'll dig it. Highly recommended. — JOSEPH CELLI

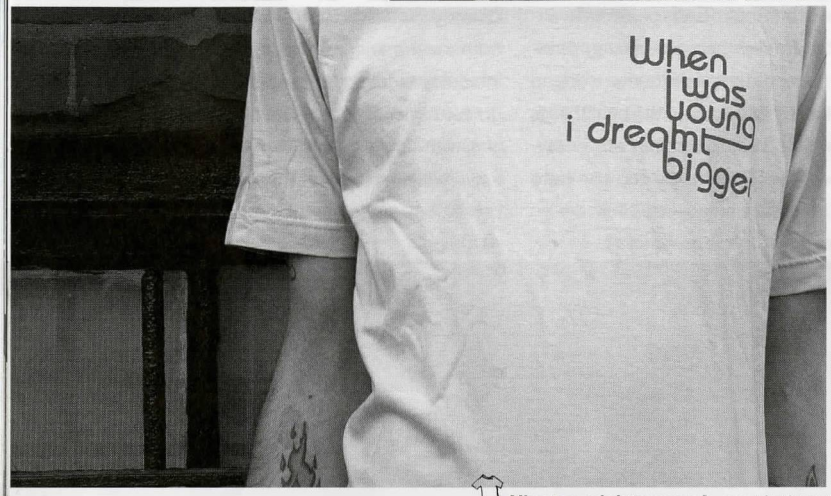
06 **TIFFANY BOZIC**
LINE
SKULLZ PRESS

What's unique about "Line," a compendium of artwork by San Francisco artist Tiffany Bozic, is that it feels more precious than the average artist book. In a cozy 64 page, 6" x 9" format, this collection of sketches and paintings give the viewer an intimate view into the artist's current body of work. Bozic's warm, brown palette saturates the pages, drawing the viewer into her world. The women, both serene and contorted, intermingle with intricate renderings of flora and fauna. Bozic's graceful imagery seems immediate and emotive, with simple and powerful themes that are universally accessible. For info: www.skullz-press.com. — ELIZABETH CLINE

07 **DENE LARSON**
2GETHER 4EVER
CHRONICLE BOOKS

Dene Larson has hard proof he was a middle-school casanova: he received (and sent) lots of *triangunotes*—those loose-leaf love letters folded in little triangles passed around class. Unlike the rest of us, Larson saved his notes (circa mid-1970s) and had the brilliance to collect the actual folded, inky specimens in this book. The notes reveal the simple, crucial language of the devastating put-down ("she's a fag-and-a-half") and crushing romantic defeat ("let's be friends"). A genius, hilarious (and seemingly effortless) piece of work. Prepare to cringe. — JON RESH

Crownfarmer [www.crownfarmer.com]



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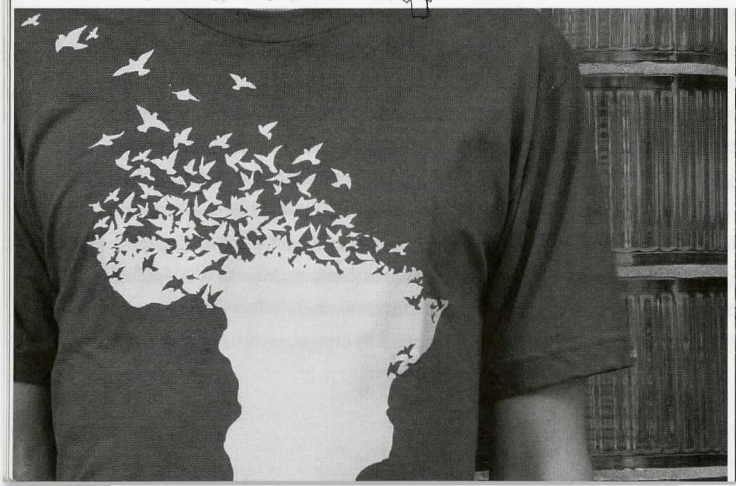

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dEcIBELS

01 AUTOMATO *AUTOMATO*
COUP DE GRACE RECORDS

Skip purist thinking, don't go into average hybrids, and look beyond too-tough individuals in so-called hip-hop "crews." Automato is a *band* (a six-piece at that), with way more to offer than two turntables and a mike. With a dadaist/DefJux-soundalike lead (Jesse Levine) and tons of guitars, drums, moogs, Budweisers, etc., Automato's hip-hop fusion carries the spirit of Fermented Reptile or Cannibal Ox, shifts to the weirdness of André 3000, and sends nods to Al Green, Wu-Tang, Tortoise, Coltrane. In short: it's "Check Your Head," Part Two. — RENKO HEUER

01

02 BURNING BRIDES *LEAVE NO ASHES*
V2 RECORDS

The Burning Brides stole the keys to the fabled Way Back Machine from oldies radio, reset the dials to just before the days punk "broke," "grunge" hit, and we all left the house one morning to find a part of our lives up on blocks. To our post-everything modern world, the Brides bring forth *Leave No Ashes*: never retro or tongue-in-cheek, requiring no thesis statements nor membership cards, they kick out the jams with a sincerity that rings more true than 10,000 emo-band lyric sheets. You'll be surprised how much you've missed rock'n'roll performed without any gimmicks. — B. HOBEN

02

03 DILLINGER ESCAPE PLAN *MISS MACHINE*
RELAPSE RECORDS

"Miss Machine" is a step in the right direction for these New Jersey tech-metal madmen. After a few listens, it's obvious that their time with Mike Patton (who collaborated on the incredible "Irony Is A Dead Scene" EP) left quite an impression. Vocal variation (courtesy of newcomer Greg Puciato) and honest emotion flow through these songs like blood from appendages of a stigmata victim. You can really feel the anger they're trying to convey this time around, not just blindly accepting the fact that they're mad. — DAVE HOFFA

03

04 FARM CREW *SOME OTHER NOW*
NAIVETE RECORDS

Emcees have it hard these days. Hip-hop is over-saturated everywhere, so to rise above it all, let's consult Chicago's Farm Crew for insight. On their new release, Farm Crew's four members come together like the proverbial Voltron, creating an album full of charm, mostly free of filler. Accompanying a production style falling squarely between El-P and Public Enemy's Bomb Squad (with added jazz and boombap elements), rappers Idris and David Paul deliver rhymes with aggressiveness and obvious passion, plus enough lyrical presence to carry even the weaker songs (and yes, a few tracks could've fallen to the wayside). Yet Farm Crew pull through with an effort that's solid and from the heart, pushing to communicate and create something strong and true. — DUSTIN MERTZ

04

05 TORTOISE *IT'S ALL AROUND YOU*
THRILL JOCKEY RECORDS

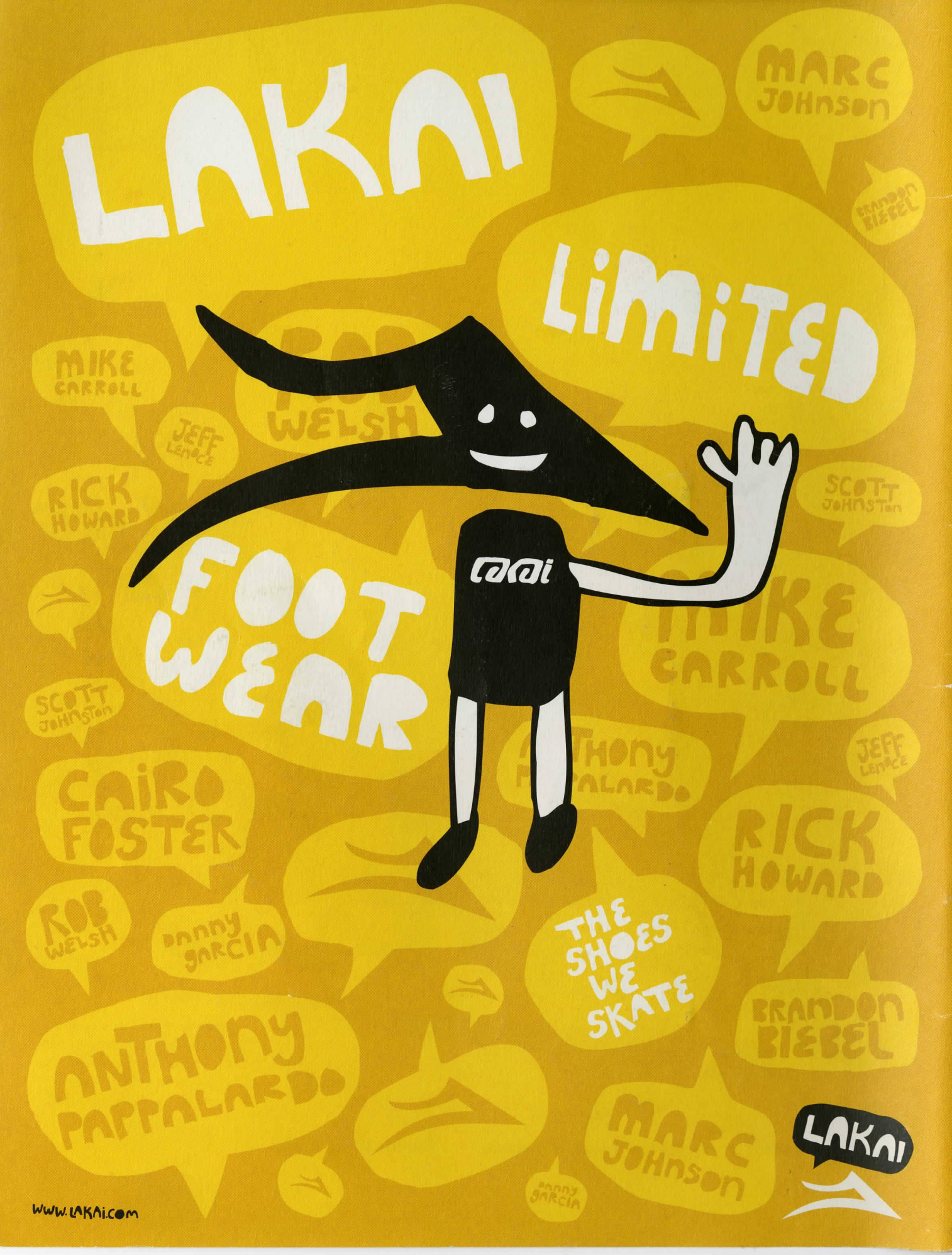
Man, does this sound good stoned. Surrounded by the music with the headphones on, I was able to "get" this record. But put this in your shitty boombox and it's indie rock muzak—uninspiring and safe. Where it once cascaded and crashed, it now flounders and fumbles. And such is the double-edged sword that is Tortoise: meticulously crafted and recorded, there's a lot of talent crammed into this record—and an abundance of subtlety. Musically, it's arguably not so different than the past few Radiohead albums—but, with no vocals or lyrics to identify with, it falls squarely into the background, making even the most dynamic songs sound like smooth jazz at Starbucks. Songs pass each other by with the casual listener barely taking notice. In it's excesses, *It's All Around You* calls to mind early-1970s prog rock (with less obvious egos)—noodling and expansive, quiet and loud, exciting and...boring. It's a shame that when you come back down from the trip, even when it's a really good head trip, this record is just a record, and only an okay one at that. — DUSTIN MERTZ

05

06 WILLIAM ELLIOTT WHITMORE *HYMNS FOR THE HOPELESS*
SOUTHERN RECORDS

If you're searching for an authentic country music artist steeped in punk rock sensibilities, an artist who, in his mid-20s, has a graceful howl and craggy, soulful utterance comparable to, say, Ralph Stanley in his later years—*then you must hear this album*. Dark, tough, poetic bluegrass, it's country music for people like us. — JON RESH

06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03

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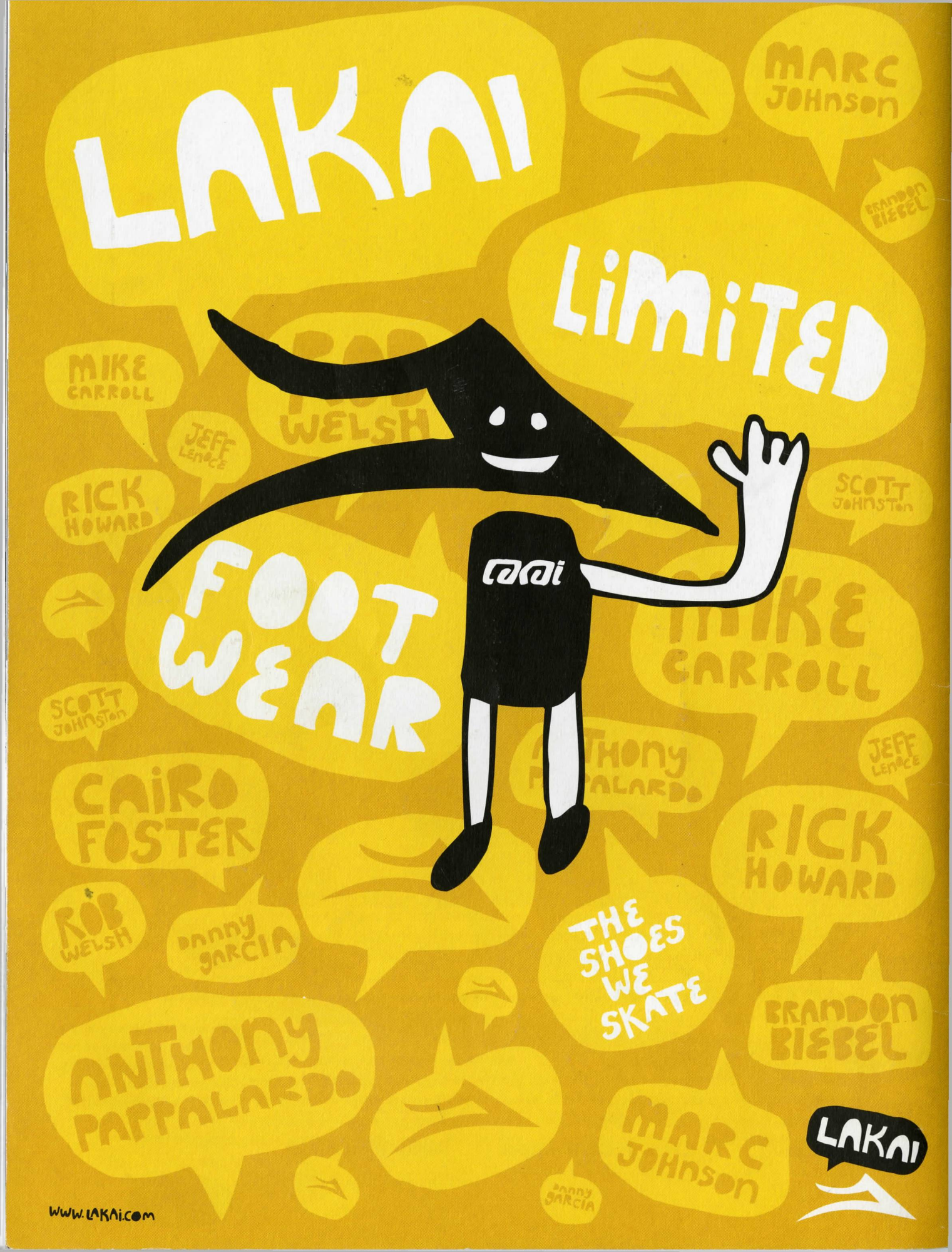
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