

# ONE

DIGITAL



v.1

# \*CONTENTS

## \*SPOTLIGHT

**Brian Weis**  
by Chris Couture

The city of Central Texas made more contributions to skating than I can name right now. It is known for producing some of the recent skaters in the sport, an outcome reflecting the heart of an old industrial world that is the Big D. But among those evocative times, a new leader has risen to represent the city's next chapter through his personality. Effortless and unassuming, Brian Weis has been and will continue to be a great ambassador to the American scene for those and even the classic rock he blasts, the skater in the heart of the city and its history.

This is Brian Weis.

—Chris Couture



## JAMES SHORT MEMORIAL SESSION



## \*CONTEST

**BCSD XIII The Final Act**  
by Andrew Murray

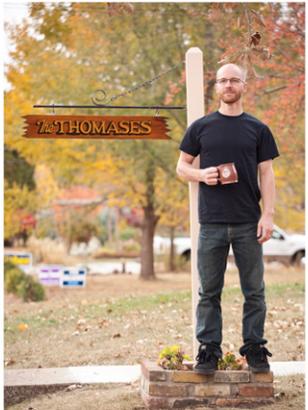
Like every other year, the BCSD XIII was an event of skating going back to Detroit's history. BCSD XIII is a contest that has been around since 1999, and it's one of the most important events in the skate world. The contest is held in the city of Detroit, Michigan, and it's a great way to see some of the best skaters in the world. The contest is held in the city of Detroit, Michigan, and it's a great way to see some of the best skaters in the world.




## \*15MINUTES

by Tom Thomas

I decided that if I was to write an article on Steve Thomas, I would have to return back to his roots. So on a sunny Thursday afternoon I visited my local training grounds to conquer a ledge one more time. It is easy to forget the basic flexibility needed to do most leading tricks until you get into your mid-30s and want to backslide again. Thirty minutes, a blond man, and only a freestyle backslide later, I appreciated the dedication and innovation Thomas gave to his signature trick. Well, at least one of his signature tricks.



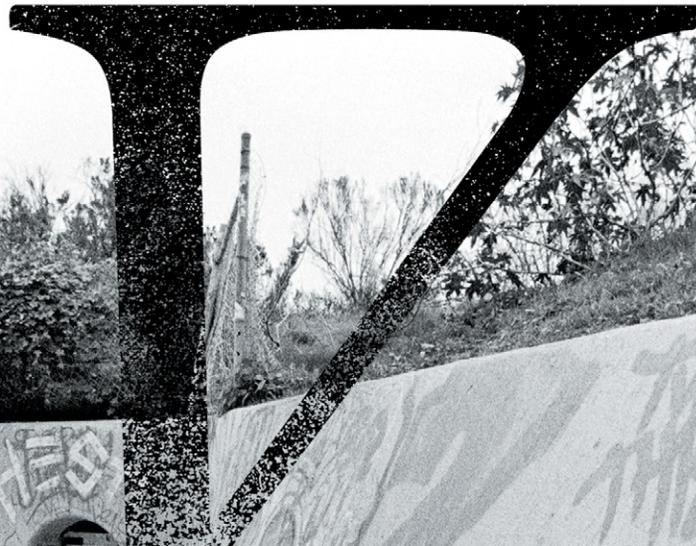
## DIGITAL v.1

- 06 > letter: editor
- 08 > scene: Austin
- 10 > take 5: Brian Freeman
- 13 > sound check
- 14 > visual aid
- 16 > spotlight: Brian Weis
- 24 > event: James Short Memorial Session
- 28 > interview: Omar Wysonq
- 32 > contest: BCSD XIII
- 38 > feature: Andrew Broom
- 48 > contest: Winterclash 2013
- 54 > picks
- 64 > 15 minutes: Steve Thomas



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# \* LETTER



## PRINT IS DEAD; LONG LIVE PRINT

What you're looking at isn't the future — it is NOW. It is this current moment in time, manifested in a shifting of form.

ONE magazine believes in print. We started ONE out of love for print. Making something with your friends and then putting it onto a printed page, where it will sit forever, is vastly rewarding. It is permanent. And throughout much of recorded time it has been the primary means of spreading information. From cave walls to stone tablets to parchment to Charles Dickens to the *New York Times*.

But if you look at the global proliferation of smart phones, you can see that these times have passed.

Now, thanks to technology, you can have the world at your fingertips through one device. One entity. It can carry everything you need to exist in our digital world. And that's really convenient. It's also immediate.

Print is forever and fittingly so it can also be slow. Digital is instant. It's pushing a button and reaching the world. It's something you can share on your favorite social media and that can be accessed anywhere. Digital (specifically the Issuu app for Android) allows instant, in-doc translation. This is NOW and it is powerful.

ONE Digital is about current content and taking risks and featuring a wider cross-section of talent, events and stories. It's about making it easier than ever to spread our content

throughout the world to bladers and non-bladers alike.

It's also about more. More stories, more photos, more marketing about blading to bladers. And to those who discover our world through these digital pages.

But don't count print out. Print will never go away. It's forever. It will only gain in value — because in the coming years less and less will be printed. But the more things go digital, the more we still need print. Something you can hold, enjoy, handle and pass along without wires. Without electricity. That little piece of something that is forever.

And so, going forward, get used to the different forms of ONE. Print, digital, video and maybe more. There's always new horizons to explore. More moments to immortalize in some manner — more reverence to show rollerbladers.

If you're reading this letter or this issue you are part of an exclusive club, a group for which admission is the price of a pair of blades and maybe the shredding of some skin. Within these pages you are among friends. Know that we do this for all of you.

**JE**  
*San Diego*  
*April 2013*

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# \*SCENE



PHOTO BY RANDY EDWARDS

## Austin, TX

You know that scene from *Apocalypse Now* where Martin Sheen's character (Captain Willard) is doing a voiceover talking about the sociopathic Air Cavalry guys who play Wagner while they machine-gun and napalm the shit out of a bunch of North Vietnamese villages? It's a memorable one. Willard explains, "The First of the Ninth was an old cavalry division that traded in their horses for helicopters and went tear-assing around 'Nam looking for the shit."

It's a pretty solid appraisal of some fucked up characters in a fucked up movie about a fucked up war based on an allegory of a fucked up situation that went down in the central African country then-known as the Belgian Congo sometime during the late 19th Century. Shit was intense.

You know what I'm talking about? Well the Austin blading scene isn't anything like that.

We're not intense dudes. And we're not pretentious dudes. A lot of us skate together in huge morning sessions that begin around 8 am. You know what we do when we're done? We go get coffee together. During the summer months when it's hot as shit outside, we meet up and skate for a few hours and then go to one of Austin's bad ass Green Belt spots and sit in the cool water and drink a couple of beers in the shade.

We don't have that jock attitude that has colonized skateboarding and even some parts of rollerblading where dudes are constantly comparing themselves to everybody else and keeping close tabs on "what's hot right now" and what kind of tricks so-and-so has been doing lately.

We don't skate like the world is ending and nobody here is trying to be somebody he's not. About a third of us are in college or grad school, almost all of us have been skating for over a decade, and most of us have full-time jobs, wives, girlfriends, or some other combination of full-time responsibilities.

We rollerblade, quite simply, because we think rollerblading is awesome. Don't get me wrong though—we're not some lackadaisical group of tractable nobodies. Our scene can go head to head with any other in terms of media output, sponsored riders, legacy personalities, skate events, and connections to the wider blading world.

We've got guys like Jay Geurink and Anthony Medina constantly putting out web and video content. We've got writers and bloggers and just as many message board hacks as anybody else. We've got young bad asses like Mason Richard, Cody Sanders, and Andrew Broom tearing shit up in novel and interesting ways. We've got big time OG's like Jan Welch and Micah Yeager still holding it down at any of greater Austin's six area skateparks, and we host organized scene-wide barbecues, camping trips, and blade sessions on an almost bi-weekly basis.

Recently, Austin has also been both home and hub to Texas' own contest series—the TSS—which draws Texas bladers from far and wide to skate, jam, and make connections with our wider regional, national, and international scenes. We view ourselves as part of the global rollerblading couch network and we're always down to welcome in anybody who wants to come roll with us.

Keep it rolling.  
— by Frank Stoner



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# \*TAKE>5

## Brian Freeman

### Kush:

1. Master
2. OG
3. Granddaddy
4. Bubba
5. Platinum

### Hood Oakland Spots:

1. East Side Plaza
2. 53rd & Market
3. Red Rail (R.I.P.)
4. Town Park Mini
5. Westlake Middle School

### Bums at the Corner Store:

1. "Yo, is them shits skates?"
2. "Ay man... can you get me a beer?"
3. "Ay man... can you get me a Swisher?"
4. "Ay man... get me a Swisher and a beer!"
5. "I'll rob this bitch!"

### Blades:

1. B Smith Valo Pro Boot
2. JJ Lights Red & Wine
3. AB.1 Black & Gold
4. AB.1 Coke Whites
5. Valo Louis V Pattern

### I Like:

1. Philly Cheesesteaks
2. Cracker Jack and Raw papers
3. Girls that blaze.
4. Whiskey & Ginger
5. Positive vibes



photography by brandon smith

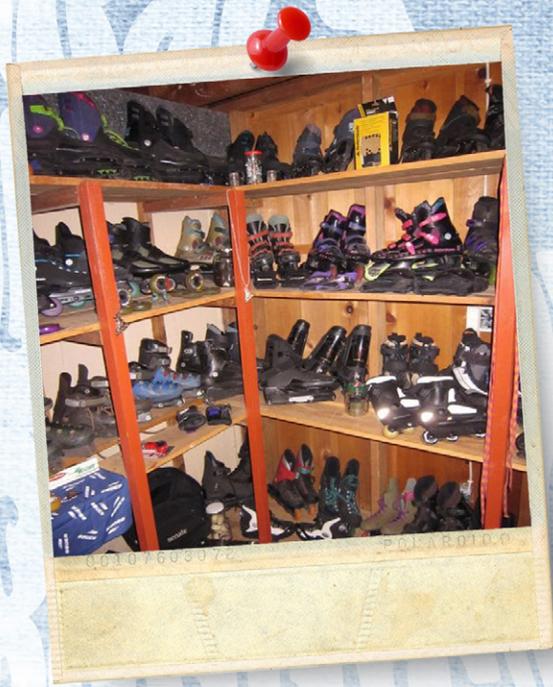


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PHOTO BY GREG KING

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# \*SOUNDS

Reviews by Corey Casey



**Kurt Vile**  
Waking On A Pretty Daze  
2013 Matador

**favorite track:**  
"Goldentone"

As if waking from a mid-afternoon nap to smoke a bitersweet joint from a rusted west-Philly balcony, Kurt Vile's new album enjoys the small things in life and is in no particular rush to judge or take things too seriously. Easily Vile's most freewheeling and earnest record to date, the electric and acoustic shape shifting LP arises with the nearly ten minute title track "Waking on a Pretty Daze." It's almost downright dad-friendly. Polished and dirt-free, the grime of Vile's previous five studio albums seem to be rinsed clean in foul-smelling waters of the Delaware River. However there is some playfulness mixed in amongst the introspective songwriting such as with "Air Bud," which alludes to easily one of my favorite films, *Air Bud*. Encrusted all around are the sonic influences of Neil Young, Tom Petty, Springsteen, and Destroyer's 2011 album "Kaputt." Most tracks push the five-minute threshold, which could be a turn off to some listeners if not for the riffs being so damn dreamy and the continuity so lush. A genuinely in-his-prime artist, Vile's album is complex, reflective and road trip worthy by every measure.



**Bruin**  
Thug Wave  
2012

**favorite track:**  
"Seconds (BRUIN mash-up)"

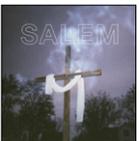
Like any good chef worth his salt will tell you, good food comes firstly from good ingredients. When you're a musician making a mix tape, this becomes just as crucial a formula in the studio as it is in the kitchen. The duo of Dominic Fawcett and Nick McLure, the pair of silver-eared musical freaks that make up Bruin, know this all too well. Although mix tapes are just a supplement to Bruin's real identity as one alternative guitarist meets one talented beat maker, you can hear some of the group's hip-hop, chill wave and sample-driven lo-fi influences inside thug wave which defines their feel and musical technique. Thug Wave is a taster course of the latest and greatest in college radio's favorites maxed and relaxed Bruin style. Featuring artists such as Neon Indian, Danny Brown, Jay Electronia, Toro Y Moi, Wiz Khalifa and others, Thug Wave is a perfect travel-friendly listen, whether you're under the East River on the L train or stuck in traffic on the I-5. Check out their previous album, "Seasons of Us" released in 2011 for original material, and look out for their full length album coming soon in 2013.



**Harry**  
Fairy Tales  
1988 Wop Bop

**favorite track:**  
"Genebra"

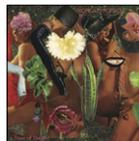
This has been one of my favorite albums for the last several years; Harry is some of the most remarkable and obscure synth-pop/new wave music I've ever heard. Somewhere between bands like Depeche Mode and Salem lies Harry. If you're familiar with the band HEALTH this might be what they're trying to sound like, except Harry is Brazilian and from the '80s. I'm not quite sure how I came across Fairy Tales but it has been one of the best musical happy-accidents I've had. It's a complex and uncompromising experiment that melts synthesizers, badass guitar licks, and some truly frightening vocals. However, things can quickly turn in different directions on tracks. Like, in "You Have Gone Wrong" there's a hopeful misery that marches along without regard for using lyrical metaphor or misdirection. It's an honest electronic/new wave work of art that I believe should have gone down in history along with other seminal albums such as Herbie Hancock's Future Shock and Kraftwerk's Trans-Europe Express.



**Salem**  
King Night  
2010 IAMSOUND Records

**favorite track:**  
"King Night"

Nearly three years old, Salem's debut full-length album is a wild and menacing musical mind-fuck worthy of high praise. Call this music what you want; witch house, southern hip-hop meets gothic dance club, graveyard robbing reverbed hood-rat white-boy shoe-gaze. King Night is unlike anything that came before it and distinct from most creations since. A novel and echo-laden fusion of music that has nearly disappeared from the contemporary music landscape since its unveiling in 2010. Salem's created a chopped and screwed-up musical genre that ultimately begins and ends in less than 45 sadistically-layered minutes. At times it sounds like they're from New York and other times Stockholm, and other times somewhere you've never heard of. And that's exactly true — Traverse City, Michigan. Salem might be the only noteworthy band to hail from Traverse City. Make sure your trunk twelve's are ready for the bass because this album's production wizardry hits HI-FI hard. Lead singer Heather Marlett voice is heard on most tracks throughout while lurking in the rafters floating in and out of a smoke-machine filled altar of attacking beats and synths provided via band mates Jack Donoghue John Holland.



**Tropical Popsicle**  
Dawn of Delight  
2013 Volar Records (US), Talitres (EU)

**favorite track:**  
"Ghost Beacons"

If you'd have accidentally walked into a Tropical Popsicle show one gloomy evening without knowing anything about the band, you might think you've inadvertently crashed an occult séance or a dark, off-Broadway musical. This four-piece out of San Diego manage to layer blurry psychedelic lyrics over echoing guitars, backed by a heart-pounding rhythm section that seem to summon unknown creatures hiding in the shadows of a mysterious beach. There's obvious '60s garage and surf overtones here, as well as The Velvet Underground, Bonniwell Music Machine, and perhaps even The Beach Boys on a fuzzed out LSD-induced trip that lies somewhere between good and evil. Tim Hines' vocals float on the surface of a deep sound produced by band members Kyle Whatley, Chase Elliott and Ryan Hand—all of whom multitask more than one instrument during a live performance. Tropical Popsicle also has a youthful feel to it; anthems such as "The Age of Attraction" pleads, "believe me when I say that we are young." Dawn of Delight feels like a warm fire inside a cold cave, an enormously listenable album with superior continuity.



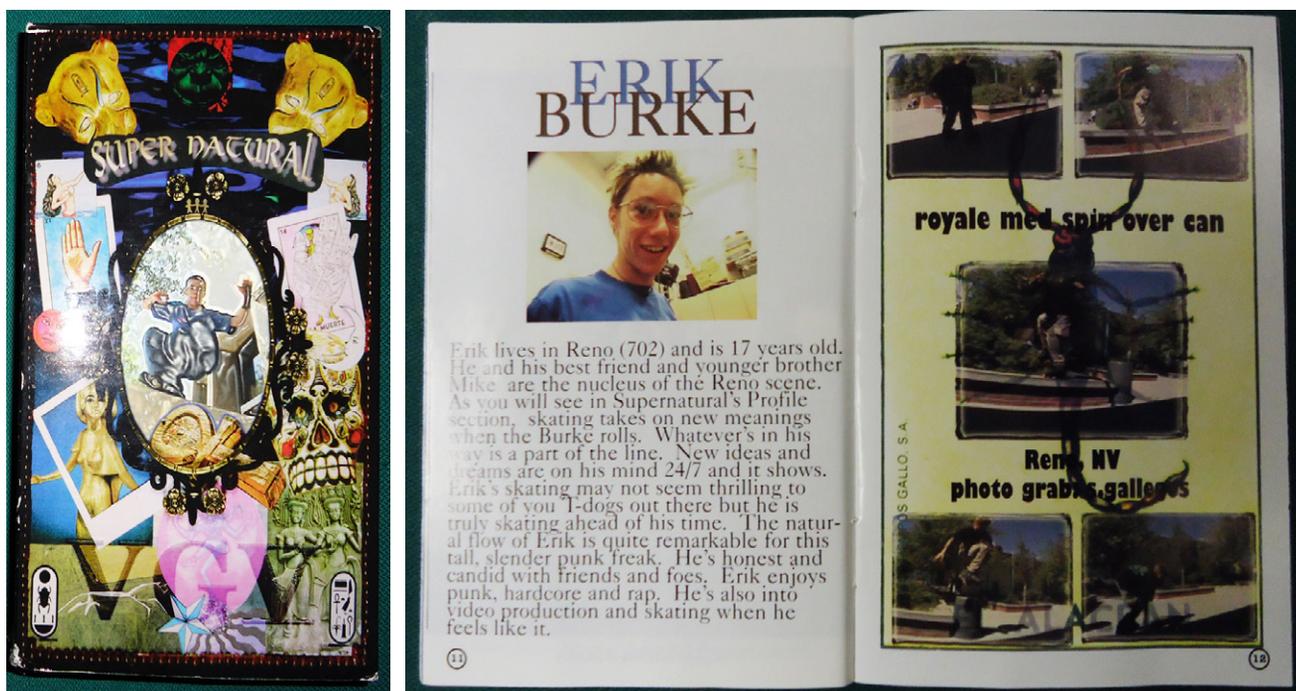
**Lijadu Sisters**  
Horizon Unlimited (Reissue)  
2012 Knitting Factory Records

**favorite track:**  
"Come On Home"

This reissue of the Lijadu Sisters' 1979 album, Horizon Unlimited, came onto my radar when a friend of mine who knew I was fan of West African music suggested I give it a listen. Now these sisters are one of my favorite new finds of 2012. Taiwo and Kehinde, the twin sisters of which the band derives its name, harmonize in English and in Yoruba (a West African language) in a way in which only twins can create, weaving in, out and around a mix of musical genres and styles such as Afrobeat, Memphis soul, Reggae, Jazz and Disco. The funky baselines and pianos on Horizon Unlimited would make a hip-hop producer double take and run for their sampler. The soothingly sweet vocals of the sisters make this album a gem that was begging to be reissued and appreciated all over again. For fans of Fela Kuti, this is a must have. I would suggest all their albums including Danger, which includes my all-time favorite Lijadu track, "Life's Gone Down Low." Give the sisters a go.

# \*VISUAL AID

by Drew Bachrach



## VG5 > Erik Burke

In 1996 Video Groove video magazine dropped a bomb. It exploded in my head, and I am still feeling the effects of it today.

I was still slightly dazed from VG 3 where Randy Spizer had shown us all how to Royale. Then VG 4 had introduced us all to Tribe Called Quest and Jon Julio. After two game-changing videos, the hype surrounding VG 5 was incredible. I remember being so excited for its release that I bladed to the skate shop before school to get a copy.

VG 5 had two main profiles. First up was the world's introduction to Champion Baumstimler. Champion's section was fast and aggro with a heavy blues soundtrack and size XXL Senate jeans. He oozed attitude and style and was instantly added to everyone's favorite skater list. Getting a co-sign from Roadhouse in his intro was the icing on the cake. He became untouchable.

The other profile in the video was on Reno's own Erik Burke.

At this point I was familiar with Erik from watching him skate vert at demos and during the NISS contest series. Since I was a 100% street skater at the point I wasn't really expecting anything other than a few airs and inverters from Erik's part. Boy was I wrong. Erik's section knocked the world of rollerblading off its axis and into an alternate orbit.

At that point in the game, it was all about rails. Sessions usually consisted of a pack of bladers taking turns trying to balance the longest rail we could find. Erik's profile featured everything except rails. He was all about lines, ramps, gaps and mono rolls. He skated faster than anyone we had seen at that time and he did it all in heavy ass Oxygen brand skates.

The whole "mushroom blading" movement that is popular today owes everything to Mr. Burke. His creativity left though the screen and challenged every blader to reevaluate what could be done on skates.

Even though Erik has moved on to become a world-renowned artist, his influence on rollerblading lives on.

# First & LEXINGTON

NATIVE SAVAGES



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# \*SPOTLIGHT

## Brian Weis

by Chris Couture

*The city of Detroit has made more contributions to blading than I can name right now. It's known for producing some of the rawest bladers in the sport, a rawness reflecting the heart of an old industrial world that is the Big D. But among these enduring roots a new blader has risen to represent the city's next chapter through his personality, lifestyle, and work ethic. From the light beer and whiskey he drinks, to the American cars he drives and even the classic rock he blasts, this skater is the heart of his city and its blading.*

*This is Brian Weis.*





LEDGE ROLL TO FISHBRAIN / PHOTO BY AL DOLEGA

**What is your relation to Ben Weis? Ha! Just kidding. How old are you and where are you from?** I'm from Madison Heights, Michigan. I'm 24, and I skate for SSM. That's about it.

**How long have you been blading, and who are your sponsors?** I skate for SSM, I get frames from Create Originals, get hooked up from Lowlife and Haunted Wheels, and I've been blading for about 14 years.

**You recently recovered from a head injury. What was the situation, and how is your recovery coming along?** Uh... I fractured my skull in two places and had some bleeding in my brain. I was gapping to royale on this thing but stuck on the landing then fell back and hit my head. Yeah man, I was only out for a little while. It ended up not as bad as it could have been, so yeah, I've been skating recently. This happened around the end of may, and I started skating again probably around the end of July or beginning of August. But yeah, everything's good, no worries.

**Was gonna say, I noticed that it hadn't seemed to impact your sense of fear -- or at least it didn't seem to in your recent edits. In fact I would say you did bigger stuff in that than ever. How has the injury affected you in that way, and elaborate on your decision not to wear a helmet?** Ah, the fear thing. I don't know... I look at it kinda the opposite way. I'm not gonna let that injury decide what I do, ya know? It was an accident, and I've been doing this so long.

The chance of it happening in the first place is crazy, and the chances of happening another time are crazy too. I'm not saying I go out and skate the same way exactly. I definitely need to pick and choose more, and not rush things like I did before. But I definitely think of the other way -- it's like I almost died. There was a 50% chance of that, so I'm just happy to be blading.

**Is that the same spiel you gave your girlfriend?** Ha ha, oh yeah the old lady didn't like that. I think it scares people. A lot of people get weirded out that I don't wear one, but I don't know man... I don't really think about it.

**How did you get together Shima Skate Manufacturing? How is the relationship with the company/team?** I ended up going to CA a few years ago, right when Nimh was done, and Brian was like gonna start something. I was in Oakland with Nick Norton to hang out and film, 'cause I'd just graduated from school and had some money. I was like "fuck it dude I'm just gonna go skate for a while." So I went out to Oakland a few times and just shredded with all those dudes. But I don't know, man, Jon and Shima liked my skating and wanted me to be a part of it. So that's how that happened. But yeah, the company's fuckin' sick, man. We're homies and it's cool; we all like the same shit, and we all are in it for the same reasons, ya know. We all get each other.

**Everybody has jobs, girlfriends, etc... Due to the daily grind, how often do you get to blade, on average?** I just moved closer to the



MUTE 360 / PHOTO BY MATTHIAS ST. JOHN

city — I'm in Madison Heights right now, 'cause it's on the outskirts of Detroit — and now I skate every day, 'cause there's a lot of parks, like, a lot of free parks and shit, less than three miles from me. I pretty much try to skate every day, but before moving here it was kinda tough 'cause I had a 45-minute+ drive to get anywhere from my parents' house. These days I try to skate every day when I get out of work. Might not be for a section or anything, but yeah, try to get out every day.

**You recently moved back from your "college town" Kalamazoo to your home side of the state, Detroit. How has the relocation impacted your daily routine/blading?** Kalamazoo is kinda hilly and everything is kinda concentrated. In Detroit, there's so many different cities in the metro area, you kinda gotta pick and choose which side of the city you wanna go to; know what I mean? And Detroit is pretty flat compared to Kalamazoo, but I don't think it's affected my blading any. I just want to skate cool, fun shit, so it really hasn't affected that, but it's definitely a little different.

**Who were your biggest influences growing up, and what/who inspires you these days?** Shit, man, back in the day it was Brian Murphy, Jake Rose, Don Bambrick... those three dudes pretty much, as far as local guys. They were definitely the biggest influence on my skating and kinda helped me get to where I am, ya know. But now let's see... biggest inspiration... all the Shima dudes are killin' shit and, uh, I don't know. That's about it, dude.

**Can you name one old school head you were influenced by?** I think Shima and Elliott, pretty much, and I know that's cliché and everybody is gonna think like, 'cause I skate for Shima that's what I'd say, but seriously, Shima was always one of my favorite bladers. I just like his style. Like Bmurph, they both skate so solid and fast, and that's kinda my shit. That's what I like. And it's how I skate, so definitely Shima, for sure, and Elliott.

**There was a point where you were riding for Sixwonsix; what was your favorite part about that time in your blading?** SWS was sweet, dude. My favorite part was Mikey Blair. We skated for 'em, but I lived in Kalamazoo and Mikey lived in Grand Rapids, and Mark's warehouse was in a pretty nearby area, so we were able to be involved and always skating the warehouse, or around to help Mark with stuff. Mikey and I being able to skate for the same company was cool too, so pretty much like that man -- being able to be right there and being involved. We were close enough to be able to do shit together and make shit happen.

**What was it like the first time you ventured out west to California — the promised land — to blade?** It was fuckin' awesome, man. It was pretty short, but it was sweet. Hopefully I'll make my way out there for at least a little while in the future, but I'm kinda stuck here for about a year, though when I get back I want to stay for awhile. There's skate spots everywhere, the weather's perfect... it's perfect dude, no other way to put it.



CAUTION  
COACHES TURN  
LEFT



NO  
STANDING





AO FISHBRAIN / PHOTO BY AL DOLEGA

# "I think style is like a natural thing. I don't think it's something you can visualize how it's gonna go."

**Watching your old profiles, I can honestly say your style hasn't changed dramatically, though you can tell a lot more thought is put into your blading. What are your thoughts on style? Where do you see your style of blading going in the future?** I don't really know man, I think style is like a natural thing. I don't think it's something you can visualize how it's gonna go. It should just happen. It can depend on a lot of things: where you live, what you have to skate around you, who you skate with, but yeah, I think style is very important and one of the most important things. Most people who have natural style, they just do their own thing. Like there's no influences — I mean, there's influences, but they just do it in their own way.

**Being a college graduate and a full-time blader, and full time-worker, what are your thoughts on balancing everything — life in general I guess? Do you have any advice for the youngsters?** As I get older, balance is key. If you have balance, like, for me, going to work makes blading better. I don't know if that makes any sense, but I don't just get to blade all the time, so when I go to work it makes

blading better 'cause I'm enjoying the time I have to do it. Because maybe I can't skate for a couple days because I have to do some shit, so I have to take advantage of it when I can. Keeping things in balance makes everything better, so I always try to be busy and always trying to be doing something.

**Do you have any current projects in the works, or any more trips planned?** Right now, nothing. Just trying to skate as much as I can, film and take any opportunity I can to hang out with cool people that skate and dig the same shit I do.

**Any thanks?**

Thanks to you dude, Shima, Al for shooting photos, Mathias St John, Create Originals, and whoever I mentioned earlier... **ONE**



BS ROYALE TO MUTE 180 / PHOTO BY AL DOLEGA

# JAMES SHORT MEMORIAL SESSION







CHARLIE SPARKS / MUTE TRANSFER

### Photos and Words by Bruce Bales

I was not fortunate enough to meet James Short before he passed away. I was, however, able to see the great influence he had on the people around him. Living in Pittsburgh, where James spent a lot of time, I learned about him from all the Yinzer bladers. People like Stefan Brandow, Shane Conn, and Chris Shields would share amazing stories about James. It became clear to me James was the type of person everyone always wanted to be around.

This year I finally got the chance to attend the James Short Memorial Session in New Philadelphia, Ohio and really got to see the large scope of James' influence. The session on August 25th was a pretty accurate of James' personality, even for someone who never met him. Upon walking towards the New Philadelphia skatepark, I immediately felt welcome, and that I was part of a larger community. There was chai tea, music, and toe rolls. Everyone was happy. I imagine that is just how James would want it.

Once I got settled in I noticed bladers there from Ohio, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Indiana, Texas, California, and South Carolina. James' influence was clear just by the amount of people who were in attendance. Shane Conn introduced me to James' dad, Rod Short, and I quickly knew why everyone spoke of Rod so highly. People like Rod are hard to describe. It was my first time meeting him, but I know it will not be the last. I think once you meet Rod, you're part of the family. No questions asked.

Surprise additions to the session were Louie Zamora, all the way from California, and Tim Taylor, who made the long haul from South Carolina. All the usual crews were represented as well. The Cleveland, Detroit, and Columbus homies were out in force, but everywhere you looked you noticed a group of people from somewhere. The Savor the Flavor guys from around Dayton. Matt Oz and Josh Jones from Grand Rapids. Some Yinzers from Pittsburgh.

All brought together by the spirit of James Short. It's obvious his influence is still around. Pieces of James were felt through the music, the chai, the toe rolls, and everything else that made up the 2012 JSMS.

Rod and Reb Short go a long way to put this event on, and they should be proud of their accomplishments. I've been telling people plainly, "the James Short Memorial Session is the best rollerblading event I've ever been to." **ONE**

#### Results:

Toe Roll: Stefan Brandow  
Cess Slide: Shane Conn  
Best Trick: Travis Rhodes



JIMMY SPETZ / DISASTER AO TOP SOUL



SHANE CONN / CESSSLIDE TO TRUESPIN NEGATIVE ACID



# Omar Wysong

Interview by Chris Couture

Photos by Jeff Linett

**Where are you from?** Guadalajara, Mexico.

**Where do you currently reside?** Calabasas, California.

**Who was your first sponsor?** Ohio Surf and Skate.

**I remember a lot of your early sections were in Razors, why did you decide to leave them?** Yeah, that's right. They were really cool to me, and I am thankful for all they did for me and OSS (Ohio Surf and Skate), but I think at the time, sadly, we were going in different directions.

**What was it like skating for Mindgame? How did that come about; what was your reason for leaving?** I got a call from Shane Coburn one day back in '98, and he asked me if I wanted to ride for Senate or Medium. I chose Medium so I could keep my clothing sponsor, which was Chris Garret at Fiction. If I would've gone with Senate I would've had to drop Fiction. Lucky I chose Medium, because about a year later Shane decided to leave and start Mindgame with some of the Medium cast: Dustin Latimer, Brian Shima and myself. So Mindgame began in

2000, which was probably my greatest time in skating. I got to come out to Cali and meet everybody, travel around—it was a great time in the sport. Unfortunately, nothing lasts forever and the sponsorship and relationship faded. It was strictly business.

**This is your second wheel company, correct? What happened with the first one? Where do you plan on going with the new business venture?** This is actually my fourth involvement in the wheel business, lol. Third time didn't go too well. It goes Mindgame, which was a good experience; Chimera, with Benny Harmanus (I loved those wheels by the way). The third time was Exile, and we'll leave that one alone. And now Circolo. We just wanna have a good wheel, cool graphics and concept, and represent some new and slightly older talent. We hope skaters like it and hopefully keep Circolo involved in the skate market.

**You also skated for the clothing company Monx. What was that experience like?** In a lot of ways Monx was like a family—we skated together, traveled together, roomed together, partied together, and thought out the whole "Monx" philosophy together. It was really





FAR SIDE MISTRAL / LOS ANGELES

great; we not only reached out to the immediate team, but to everyone we knew that we considered a monk. Someone who was down with it. Monx was all about being individual, living out and being a student of your own calling, and it didn't matter what you were—blader, B boy, artist, graffiti artist, dancer, break dancer, boarder, biker, surfer, rapper, whatever. We were all in this together-type mentality, and as far as we were concerned they were all monx.

**Any chance of your new line of shirts expanding as that company did, as far as the depth of the line, sweatpants, video, etc...**

I hope, yeah definitely. We are a lot smaller than Monx. I thought up ramosong maybe ten years ago and wanted to adopt what Monx was all about. We are a small, skater-owned business, so we will be coming out with hats, hoodies, pants... but we'll be going little by little. We're working on a team, we got Walter Sanchez reppin' in Mexico, Paul "Angus" Austin, and hopefully many more. And yes, a video for 2013.

**Who were some of your favorite people to skate with, then and now?** OSS crew, All the MONX, LSTAR, LA crew and ol' Norcal crews and everybody reppin' Los Angeles.

**Do you have any favorites in the game that are still killing it?** Yes, of course, but too many to name.

**Do you have any favorites coming up in it you like to watch?** I am really liking what our team guys have been up to—Yuri, Zamora, Day, Angus, Sanchez, Angus.

**Your style has changed up over the years, progressed into different forms or avenues of doing deals on the blades. Your Mindgame section was classic stylish, progressive skating, then came the introduction of more negatives, and eventually the mushroom blading style of more hand flips. I've noticed you also bringing more classic tricks back as well. Where do you see your skating going in the future?** Lol, thanks for the gracious breakdown of my skating. I don't know, I kinda just go with it; what happens, happens. I like to change it up from just rails and ledges, but if I put too much thought into it, nothing happens. So I just take it day by day, spot by spot.

**What do you do for a day job these days?** I work in the entertainment business and have a small non-skate business.

**I've seen you riding classic Thrones for the past half a decade; are you currently riding for USD, or are you just getting the hook up?** I'm getting the hook up. Matthias and the Conference crew have always been really good to me.

**Also noticed a lot of interesting color ways with the blades. What gives u the inspiration to switch it up?** I guess I get bored sometimes, and if I've got a bundle of skate parts laying around I just throw things together while I'm watching a game or hanging out.

**What emphasis would you put on current style compared to styles of the past?** I think people are just real stylish these days,



NEGATIVE FISHBRAIN / LOS ANGELES

really creative. I think there's more room nowadays for creativity and variety; you've got all kinds of really talented and interesting skaters out there. It's really inspiring to see. The ladies too are especially killing it these days!

**Do you think our current trends are headed in the right direction?**

I think so, and sometimes you just gotta let it be. There's no regulating skaters—they're gonna do what they're gonna do. There are also a lot more skater-owned brands, I think that's a good sign. Skaters taking control of their own sport.

**What advice can you give to kids out there trying to come up in the game? How important is carving out your own style?**

Just keep doing your thing, keep skating hard, know your limits but test them, stay healthy, skate, skate, and skate some more. I think style comes about naturally through experience and confidence. I wouldn't stress it. As long as you do your thing, style will follow.

**I've noticed the obvious increase in your time invested in blading again. Is this a full blast comeback to the blade scene?**

We'll see. I'm pretty busy these days, but I can't stay away from skating too long.

**Saw you hanging around the Blading Cup, but not blading. Why did you decide not to compete?**

Just wanted to stop by and check it out, say "hi" to some people and show some support, and have a good time. As far as competing, I'm just not very competitive right now. Ha ha.

**Is there anything about your new wheels you would like to talk about; manufacturer, compound, cores, sizes etc...?**

Normally I'd defer this to Jeff Linett, but I can say that I've been testing several new formulas and compounds; this project is looking very promising. I went with a strong, hard wheel in blood red. A solid formula for riding freestyle. Of course we can do any possible color, so who knows what is next.

**Any new team announcements coming up?**

As for now, no, but that could all change instantly. We will allow Circolo to define itself over time. I trust it will roll in its own direction.

**Good call on Russell Day...**

A lot of people have been saying that. I'm grateful he's joined the team. Russell is a solid guy who has been around for a while. Louie is the man and still braking new grounds and it's impossible not to respect Yuri.

**What Inspires you?**

My family, life, and knowing we can make change for the better.

**Any shout outs?**

Shout out to all who have supported me throughout the years and everybody supporting us here at Ramosong, Circolo, TheJLC, the entire skate scene and to ONE for all the exposure and support. Thank you, peace.

*"Ramosong Cares If Don't No Body Else Care." ONE*

# \*CONTEST



## BCSD XIII The Final Act

by Justin Eisinger  
Photos by Andrew Murray

Like several folks I know, my trip to Detroit for BCSD XIII included a lot of grumbling about going back to Detroit. Nothing against Detroit, *per se*, but more a belief that the event was dangerously close to overstaying its welcome in that particular skatepark. (Which isn't a swipe at Modern at all — it's an amazing facility to skate. The mini is so, so fun.) And while some companies chose to sit this one out, the Bitter Cold Showdown made good on its namesake by bidding those that missed the event a bitter farewell.

The fat lady had sung.

But there's another story in all this, the success of this year's event. We had our best day at the tradeshow in years. It seemed like others did too. Then there was the inaugural Aggressive Mall Champion Bowl pre-comp, comp. And that was a great addition. It brought focus and excitement to the early moments of the afternoon which is something most BCSDs have lacked.

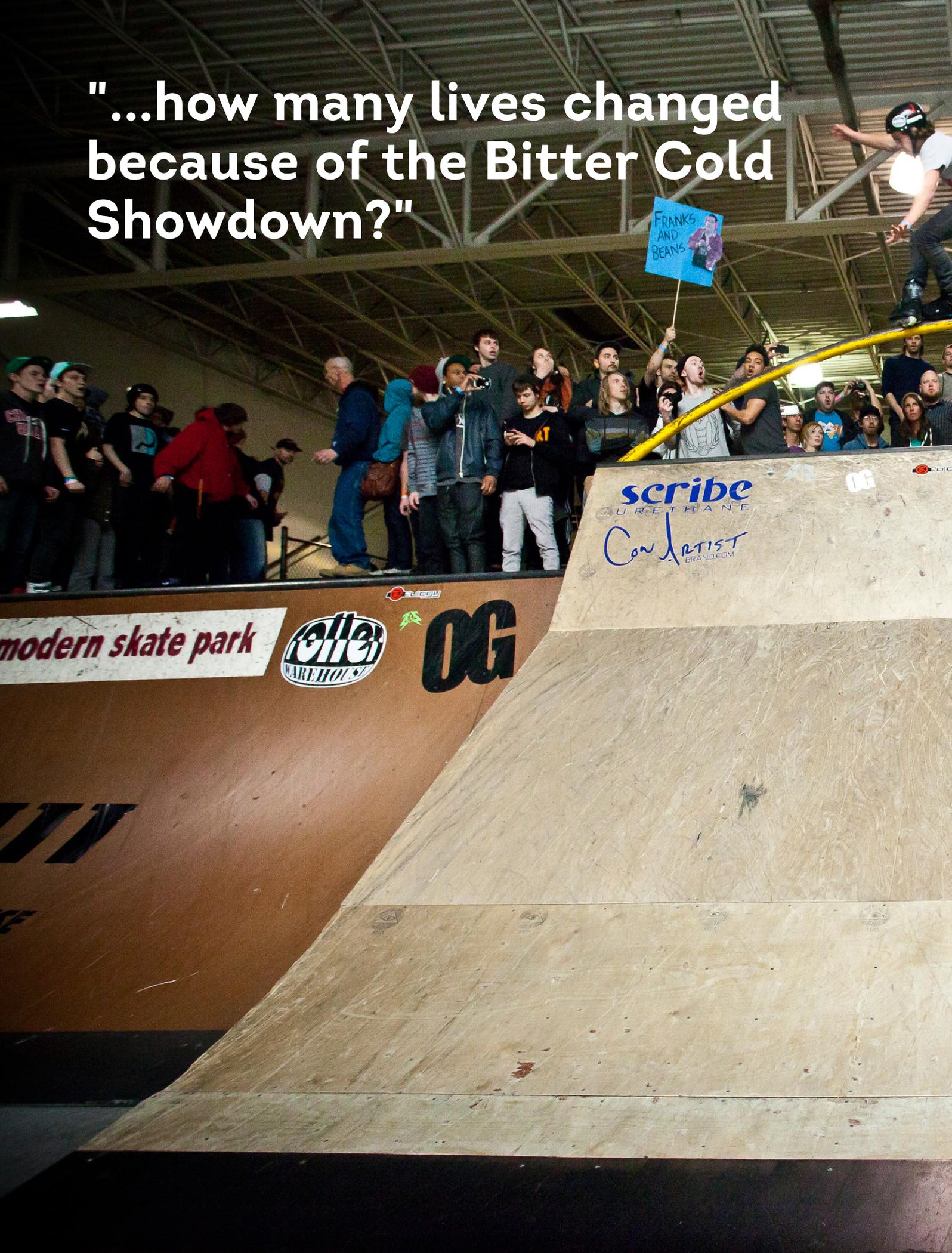
Yes, there were fewer people there. Pros and spectators. And while maybe fewer bodies jammed into the event is a bummer for the front desk take, it no doubt helped the contest by opening up a little breathing room on the ramps. And the crowd made up for its diminished numbers with wild enthusiasm when dudes like Wake, CJ, Montre and Roman brought what Joe Dirt might call "The Good Stuff."



*modern skate park*



"...how many lives changed because of the Bitter Cold Showdown?"





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WAREHOUSE

FUGGY

OG

OG

scribe  
MRETHANE

Con Artist  
ERASER

FUGGY

OG

**Ollie**  
WAREHOUSE

m



MONTRE EYINGSTON / 540 AO X-GRIND



JEPH HOWARD / FASTSLIDE



And there was a lot of it.

There were also more women in attendance, both on blades and with boyfriends/family/friends showing their support. That speaks good for a future of blade babies.

And then there was just the vibe. This year had the vibe of blade brotherhood that we all seem to yearn for, either publicly or privately. From the pre-event sessions to the hotel parties, the run-ins at Coney Island and the late nights at Bar Bar. I dunno — it just felt less divisive than in years past. The cliques were there of course, but it seemed like the great annual blader migration again did its job of mingling ideologies and styles and personalities from all over the world. Like bees spreading pollen from flower to flower, these interactions lead to so much blade enthusiasm. John Adams touched on it in his blog about BCSD ending, and it really can't be overstated or under considered: how many projects were started, how many bonds formed, how many lives changed because of the Bitter Cold Showdown?

It boggles the imagination to consider it. When Daniel Kinney posted the *Life+* 2 BCSD 2 section online recently it was striking to see how far we — the individuals, sport, production capabilities, etc — have come in these past 11 years. And it only grew from there, so for 13 years the BCSD has been a catalyst of progress in the blading community.

And that's why people really got concerned when, after a successful weekend and overall great event, DK announced to the world via Instagram that indeed "Nothing Cold Can Stay." That well-chosen and sort

of confusing composition of words (Why can't nothing cold stay? Don't we freeze food to preserve it for long periods of time?!) signaled the end of an era. And that era was rollerblading's teens. Yeah, the sport is older than that, but culturally we went from 19 to 20 and lost the easy out "just being teenagers" has in the face of authority and the world machine. Our balls have dropped, the voice cracks are gone, and frankly it's time to just get a job and T.C.O.B.

Think I'm wrong? Just look around. Blading has gone blue collar. Where we were once lorded over by American princes of wealth and privilege we've spent years getting the shit kicked out of ourselves by the Greasers and if you can't beat 'em, join 'em — and once again blading shifts itself into another popular cultural norm. But unlike previous shifts that sort of floated between defiant arrogance and unrealistic expectations, this shift represents more than a stylistic shift. There's a whole history of American work ethic that goes into the beards and denim and boots and motor bikes of today's fashionable blader, and that work ethic can do rollerblading a world of good. So like I said, we've grown up and realized it's time to pull ourselves up by the bootstraps.

So here we are. It's March and for the first time in at least 9 years I don't know where I'll be on Feb. 22 next year. One thing's almost certain though, I won't be in Royal Oak, Michigan. There are friends I won't see. Toasts that will go unmade. Hanni sandwiches that will go unordered and eaten. I really feel like an asshole for grumbling so much about not wanting to go back to Detroit. I think a lot of other people do too. **ONE**

# \*FEATURE

## Andrew Broom

by Frank Stoner

photos by Greg King

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*Andrew Broom reminds me of me... his skating and how he approaches it... down to him as a kid. The tricks have gotten more difficult, but I mean the bare bones of it. It's weird that at 17, his skating can encompass every facet of rollerblading that I enjoy. It's never a numbers game and there's never any type of obvious formula—he's just a kid that enjoys controlling his craft. Absolute manipulation. It's rare to see that kind of ownership in someone so young.*

*In the industry, it's always the same thing. Some pro is wearing "\_\_\_\_\_" or doing "\_\_\_\_\_", so some other pro adopts it as if it were his own. With this kind of obvious peer inbreeding going down, growth from an individual is almost non-existent. While "the many" are practicing their style, wearing Disney-tough accessories, and creating cheap facades, Andrew's busy being Andrew. And that's what makes him the necessary breath of fresh air in this present stagnant industry. It's completely his show.*

*Andrew is the next big thing.*

**—Micah Yeager**

---

People can't seem to talk very long about Andrew Broom without talking about 'the Future.' No one really knows what rollerblading's future is going to be or what it's going to look like, but there's a growing consensus that—whatever it's going to be—Andrew will and should play a central role in it.

It might be because he's young. At just 17 he's got a lot of blading ahead of him. He's also extraordinarily talented and ceaselessly original in both style and execution. But it seems that there's something much deeper about Andrew that makes him and his skating so striking.

From where I'm sitting, I'd describe it as balance.

Not balance in the conventional sense of being able to stand on one foot or grind all the way down a long-ass thing; I mean balance in the sense of resting easily between two spaces. See, Andrew exists on the thin boundary between the twin forces of vice and virtue that have co-constructed rollerblading as much as they have co-created Andrew's life. As a predominately male activity, rollerblading thrives in a range of

not-so-savory elements that would make any Italian Futurist grin with satisfaction. I'm talking about things like high technology, hubris, greed, speed, aggression, destruction, courage, the perilous leap, and a feverish enthrallment with the wheel. In a word: our vices.

These things strike me as obvious outcomes of a testosterone-flooded environment. But many of them drive rollerblading forward into the future and guide our trends, establish our goals, and push our limits. But those problematic forces are not without mediation.

There is an entire other (and perhaps opposite) set of elements that help stay the madness that might otherwise consume us all in a violent flash of self-implosion. I'm talking about the virtues that exist within rollerblading. Things like brotherhood, friendship, family, sacrifice, sponsorship, travel, exploration, and the immense satisfaction that comes from mastering your craft.

Andrew Broom is a guy who has experienced the extremes of vice and virtue both in his blading life and in his 'regular' life. Like rollerblading





360 LIU KANG / AUSTIN, TX

itself, he's already had to deal with poverty, instability, and the threat of an uncertain future that comes from abandonment. He's also spent a good portion of his life surrounded by drug and alcohol abuse. He's been in and out of schools and possesses much more in the way of street smarts than in formal education.

Yet despite all of those things, he still seems able to find his balance. Many of the virtues that unify our community also guide Andrew. In that sense, he's seen some of the very best of what the rollerblading experience has to offer. He's a tattooed member of LST—a prominent blade crew from Texas. He's known brotherhood from the close friends who've helped him through rough patches in his life. He's traveled around Texas and recently made his first big trip out of state to skate at BCSD. He's placed highly in several contests, and he holds an honest and refreshing sense of pride that comes from possessing immense talent. But he still earnestly embraces valuable and humble qualities like modesty, gratitude, and humility.

To get some further context on Andrew, I spoke with Anthony Medina, a longtime blade-film maker and OG from Texas. Anthony said that he thinks the term 'the Future' gets thrown around a little too much in rollerblading. "Being around blading for so long," he said, "you'll hear it a lot." But despite the skepticism and experiences that tell him that "talented kids come and go in blading," Anthony still confesses that after a few sessions skating with Andrew: "That kid really IS badass!"

Anthony added that while Andrew has experienced a fairly sudden rise in both praise and attention from the blading community, "...none of [it] has gone to his head. Andrew is as good a PERSON as he is on the blades." He said, "Literally every time we finish blading Andrew will

thank me for driving him around and filming. I certainly don't mind it, [...] but he's still gracious nonetheless." The other thing important to note is Andrew's great attitude about skating. Anthony described him as "motivated," saying "he does everything proper and he'll re-do a trick 20 times (if he has to) to get it just right. Because of this, he's gained respect from the most critical OGs in the Texas scene (myself included), [and] has a lot of big names in the industry taking notice."

In the last twelve months or so, Andrew has gone from being virtually unknown in the wider rollerblading scene to holding a prominent spot on the AM team with the prestigious Adapt Brand. Company co-owner Pieter Wijnant explained that to him, "One of the downsides of skating for over 20 years is that you have to see all your favorite pros and icons fade. [...] Legendary profiles such as Mike Lilly's in 'Road To Nowhere' are starting to become very rare. In a time where the Internet is taking over and more quantity is [being] produced than quality, Andrew Broom managed to catch my attention." Pieter—who originally heard about Andrew from an endorsing push from Micah Yeager—went on to say that "Andrew is rollerblading in its purest form," and that he is our future.

And, it seems, Adapt is putting its money where its mouth is. Pieter went on to call Andrew a "future legend." He wrote, "I have made it my mission to take care of him and support him all the way. [...] If you asked me why we put him on our Adapt Am team I would say he is just in the waiting room to be our next Pro. We need new life and youth into our sport. At only 17 years [old] you could say he is too young to be Pro. But," Pieter remarked, "remember when all your icons and legends were just 16 and their poster was on your bedroom door."



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# ONE

SWEATSTANCE / AUSTIN, TX / PHOTO BY GREG KING



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FRONTSIDE TORQUE / AUSTIN, TX

Pieter Wijnant, the Adapt Brand, and several others, therefore, are pushing to help make Andrew Broom a new icon in rollerblading.

But such a mission isn't without its dangers.

I mentioned vices and virtues before because they represent a series of challenges that both Andrew and the veterans of rollerblading will have to face in the coming years.

Andrew will have to take his abilities and knowledge and invent the future of rollerblading. In a way, we can already see him doing it. His skating is a rare mixture of many different forms in rollerblading, from the super tech to the super scary and from the super difficult to the super creative. He's already giving rollerblading a glimpse at what his influence might be, and it appears that where it's heading is a crafty conglomeration of those four categories just mentioned.

Andrew's skating balances technicality with difficulty in extraordinary feats like fakie 540 heel rolls, and he mixes difficulty with creativity in doing tricks like a pud slides with switch 540s out. Another direction he seems to be leading rollerblading into—and this is one that will surely satisfy the veterans—is full ambidexterity. Not just things like natural and unnatural grinds: things like true spins, full cabs, illusion spins and fakie bowl skating both ways. Andrew may not know it yet, but right now he's at the beginning of raising the level of professional skating to a whole new level and setting the bar quite far above the reach of much of what our community has become accustomed to. And he's doing it all with a unique and authentic style that is cherished most highly among rollerbladers today.

Yet while that all sounds very nice and tidy, there are still the vices to contend with, and they're coming from more than one direction.

Andrew will have to find his own balance and his own path navigating between the perils that a rollerblading life presents: from booze and partying to instability and uncertainty. Given his predisposition toward virtue though, it seems a manageable challenge for someone like him. On the other hand, those of us veterans who would call Andrew 'the Future' need to take a tip from the playbook of the ancient Greeks and realize the danger presented by hubris. If we are to relinquish our holds on the rollerblading present, we should also be prepared to let go of our own greedy desire to steer rollerblading's values and people in ways that suit our own tastes. If Andrew Broom really is 'the Future' of rollerblading, we need to let him make of it what he will. The most virtuous thing we can do to help him is provide him with a rich environment of support without hanging a noose of expectations around his neck that will only stifle and asphyxiate the promise he brings to our community.

The lesson, it appears, is one that Andrew is already teaching us. We need to find our own balance. In order for us to move forward in ways that befit our values, we must walk the line between the vices that drive us and the virtues that keep us together. We must not burden people like Andrew with the nasty habits that have plagued previous generations and stymie him to the point of collapse. Instead, we have to find ways to support him so that he can ascend to his fullest potential—no matter where or what that is. **ONE**

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# DOMINIK WAGNER

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# \*CONTEST



## WINTER CLASH 2013

Text and Photos  
by Kuba Urbanczyk

Winterclash is one of the most unique sporting events I've ever attended. Over 1,000 people come every year from all over the world to skate, chill, watch others skating, and first of all: be part of the Winterclash! Skaters, organizers, audience members, volunteers, bodyguards — everyone is important! As in previous years in Eindhoven, the crowds with iPhones and other iNventions on the skatepark ramps and landings didn't allow skaters to make lines or attempt some tricks, and so the spectators (the ones that wanted skaters to skate ...) had less than ideal conditions to watch the event, but...

Isn't that a Winterclash hallmark? If you don't accept it, you'd better stay home.

As before, the skatepark was prepared really well, the obstacles were balanced perfectly (I mean all obstacles were skated by similar amount of riders), and many fresh tricks were seen. At the trade show you could find a lot of fresh stuff like new Seba CJ skates, Bake frames, also the latest blades from Adapt, the Adapt X Be-Mag collaboration boot. And if you were looking for older, vintage items, you could find real bargains and get crazy deals at Ucon or Conference.

I wouldn't be myself if I didn't mention some downsides. Winterclash seems to be the biggest inline skating competition in Europe.



NICK LOMAX / DISASTER AO TOPSOUL



CJ WELLSMORE / DISASTER KIND GRIND





ROMAN ABRATE / FLATSPIN TO TOPSOUL ATTEMPT



EDWIN WIERINGH / DISASTER AO TOPSOUL

"The atmosphere was the same as every single Winterclash I've been to: amazing!"

The audience comes to see their heroes in action. And if someone expected to see Pros from the USA then they will be disappointed. I was not the only one asking why American skaters aren't coming to the event.

*(Ed's Note: The real reason is probably budgetary and the fact that Bitter Cold Showdown has always (and long before Winterclash) been in late February. The cost and logistics of being at both events is heavy and difficult. As someone who has done both three times, trust me on this.)*

Another thing is the attitude of some (specially of the young ones) skaters during the competition. Guys, it's not a suicide contest. I've heard that Jojo is gonna arrange future events so you'll have a chance to learn tricks the proper (and safer) way, and then you can try to do them during the contest. Not the opposite way. Skating is supposed to give you pleasure and joy, not destruction of your body. Unless that was your goal at the competition...

Anyway the atmosphere was the same as every single Winterclash I've been to: amazing!

Check out some of these pictures, and there's more to come in a album that I'll gonna release together with Dom Wagner right before Summerclash — more details coming soon! **ONE**



NILS JANSONS / DISASTER FAR SIDE AO SOUL



THE FARMERS

# \*PICKS





Brandon **SMITH**

trick: mute air  
location: guadalajara, mexico  
skates: valo  
frames: youth  
photo: narez



Joe **ATKINSON**

trick: stale 360 tree bonk  
location: leeds, uk  
skates: ssm  
frames: create originals  
wheels: eulogy  
photographer: cooper



William **ISSAC**

trick: frontside torque  
location: pearland, tx  
skates: ssm  
frames: ground control  
wheels: fester  
photographer: vogel



Russell **DINEEN**  
trick: royale  
location: poland  
skates: usd  
frames: ground control  
photographer: urbanczyk



Andrew **DIPAOLo**  
trick: ao fishbrain  
location: san diego, ca  
skates: razors  
frames: kizer  
photographer: eisinger





Adam **BRIERLY**

trick: stale 180  
location: san pedro, ca  
skates: valo  
frames: youth  
photographer: smith



Nick **LOMAX**

trick: backside torque  
location: manchester, uk  
skates: usd  
frames: kizer  
wheels: undercover  
photographer: cooper



Chris **COUTURE**

trick: fakie rocket 360  
location: san diego, ca  
skates: usd  
frames: ground control  
wheels: fester  
photographer: steinmetz





Josh **HAYES**

trick: topsoul 360  
location: denver, co  
skates: razors  
frames: ground control  
photographer: hayes

# \*15 MINUTES

by Jon Robinson with Photos by Andrew Murray

I decided that if I was to write an article on Steve Thomas, I would have to re-learn backslides. So on a sunny Thursday afternoon I visited my local training grounds to conquer a ledge one more time. It is easy to forget the basic flexibility needed to do most blading tricks until you get into your mid-30s and want to backslide again. Thirty minutes, a sliced shin, and only a freestyle backslide later, I appreciated the dedication and innovation Thomas gave to his signature trick. Well, at least once of his signature tricks.

It is difficult to underscore just how many times “Steve Thomas” and “rollerblading innovation” intersect. Thomas and his high-school friend, Dan Jensen, took plastic rails from skateboard decks and created plastic grind plates. He went on to, in part, start Scribe Industries, which heavily influenced a generation of bladers from Josh Petty and Eric Schrijn to Robert Guerrero, and Billy O’Neill. The Acid Soul, Unity, and Backslide are all trick names that can essentially be attributed to Steve Thomas. While balancing on a Backslide was B Hardin’s flower, it was Thomas who planted the seed. Doing huge ledges is a Steve Thomas hallmark. Zero-spin shifty airs: Steve Thomas. Thomas was star and part-editor in *Harvesting The Crust*, surely one of the most influential videos in rollerblading history. As well, Thomas mainstreamed duct tape on the bottom of blader’s pants. (I, for one, can’t wait for a 37-year-old Chris Farmer to reminisce on his 2011 wardrobe.)

## Perspective

Rollerblading is beautiful if for no other reason than it’s one of the rare sports where you can interact with your idol and he can even become your friend. My relationship with Steve Thomas goes like that. From idol, to friend, to roommate, to guy who used to be my roommate, and now, to guy I’m reconnecting with to do this article. He was a big name in the Minneapolis rollerblading scene before becoming, in certain circles, an international celebrity. His perspective and influence helped bring Minnesota to a respectable, and must-visit location on the rollerblading map. I had the opportunity to talk with him at length and discuss topics from life and family, to religion and rollerblading, tight pants and duct tape, and style and culture.

## “Where are you Steve Thomas?”

If you want to find Steve Thomas these days you need to pursue him with intensity of a, well, news reporter. “I’ve had the same phone number for 12 years,” he said. However, it was only after his wife gave me his cell phone number that I reached him.

Driving south on Highway 61 out of downtown St. Paul, following the railway tracks and Mississippi River bluffs, there is a small town called Newport. It was the first day of fall when I visited this working-class town, where the newest construction feature seemed to be the

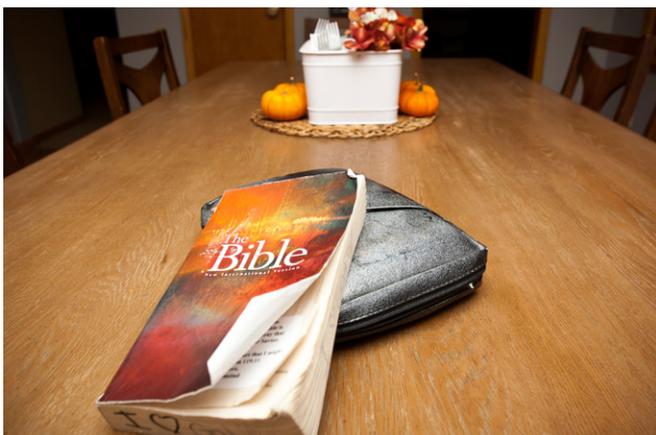
stoplights and turn-lanes on the bridge where I exited the highway. A red shingled strip-mall with a drug store as the central feature sticks out on the east side of the highway. The largest structure around by a factor of at least two, is a waste recycling plant.

Legendary rollerblader Steve Thomas, his wife Sarah, their two daughters, Olivia (11) and Simone (5), and son, Ethan (3), make up five of the 3,435 people in Newport. The first town to the north is St. Paul, population 285,068.

Thomas lives in a quaint house, just a half block off the Mississippi River. Upon greeting me, the first thing he showed me was his river view as well as the lack of neighbors spying on him from any window. Not that he needs to worry; he’s constantly on the go. At 37, Thomas works 11-hour days for a specialty woodworking company, rock climbs on Tuesdays and Saturdays (he prefers to boulder), plays disc golf on Fridays, works with local youth at his church on Wednesdays, and has between ten and 50 kids at his house on Sunday evenings. Monday’s are a loss, he said, because Sarah (his wife) gets together with her friends to watch reality television. In whatever spare time is left, he goes on record-shopping dates with Sarah, plays cribbage with friends, and spends time with his kids.

Thomas showed me around his house with the enthusiasm of a sportscaster. He has a large centralized kitchen, three bedrooms, and two family rooms – one with a flat-screened TV and one with a record player, fireplace, and small piano. The house is succinct, it’s cozy and everything has just enough room. He pointed out minor details that most people don’t miss but would like to have, such as lights in every closet or a closet specifically made for brooms – closets are everywhere in his house. Most of the furniture doesn’t match but is well kept. His TV room, for example, has yellow walls with brown carpet, the couches are green and mid-80s looking, there are orange wooden chairs in one corner, and a desk with a printer in the other. His flat-screen TV is mounted on the wall, but there is no modern entertainment center, just an old TV stand with a tissue box, some Corey Miller Heavy wheels, and a lone white sock, which must have a fascinating history. A clock ticks above one couch and the room feels only half full. On the other side of the house, Ethan and





Olivia have their own rooms, but Simone stays with Thomas and his wife. Thomas's five-year-old daughter, Simone, has special needs. The fluid in her head doesn't naturally drain down her spinal chord; she has a cleft palate, and has high muscle tension, which makes it hard for her to move. "She's just lazy," Thomas joked. Having a special needs child surely changed Thomas and his family's life but they show little sign. He described all of Simone's conditions to me with calmness and acceptance similar to describing the eye and hair color of a newborn. The only frustration he showed was when we spoke about doctors. "They just give you their best guess," he said with an obvious disdain.

Thomas entertains his guests in a way one might imagine happened in the 19th Century when interpersonal visits were rare. He gave me the five-star service qualities of host, waiter, and cook. He offered me an over-hard egg sandwich and coffee. I accepted the coffee and was puzzled by how he made it. From a whistling, off-green colored teakettle he poured boiling water into a glass, modern looking French-press. He pumped it and I was thoroughly confused as to what was going on. After about four minutes, however, he handed me some of the best coffee I've drank in years. We continued outside.

To the soundtrack of shotguns popping in the distance – there is an outdoor shooting range directly across the river – we toured the grounds of his short, single-story brick house which looks more like a house you'd find in a California suburb. The bricks are mostly tan colored, but there are also yellow, brown, and orange accent bricks which stick out enough for children to climb on. The north side of his property is undeveloped and he wants to buy it. To the west what appears to be a small log cabin is actually the garage of an enormous house on the river. Across the street from his front door, his neighbors turn classic cars into racecars. He has a two-tiered garden equipped with a classic white birdbath, and there are two swings

and a giant fire pit in the back corner of his yard. There is a silver disc-golf hole sticking up in the middle of his property, which, from a layman's perspective, would appear to be a birdcage on a stand. He has a detached, two-car garage that is hardly used for storing cars.

### The Man Cave

Thomas' garage is transformed into a "man-cave," complete with old couches that surround a coffee table, a space heater, a work bench with tools scattered all over, the new "Thomas" sign he will put in front of his house (he insists the spelling is grammatically correct), and random storage crates. When I asked him about the dust everywhere he corrected me, it was cigar ash. He has friends over late Wednesday nights and they smoke cigars, play cards, and talk about family, relationships, and whatever else men speak about when women aren't present and a reporter isn't recording.

Thomas used to smoke cigarettes and John Schmit once said that Thomas is responsible for multiple generations of rollerbladers smoking. Thomas laughed when I brought that up and told me how he found a pack of cigarettes near his elementary school when he was 12-years-old and was hooked for years after. No influences, he said. He has a picture in Daily Bread doing a backslide with a lit cigarette in his mouth. When kids asked him to autograph it, he wrote, "Smoking is bad for you – Steve Thomas." He did not want people imitating him, he said, but "I was hooked." As one of the best rollerbladers in the world, nearly every blader is going to imitate you. From John Star's bent wrist, to Jon Julio's slouched style of the late '90s, to Chris Farmer's vest and bandana and Alex Broskow's late head turn from fakie, imitation is a natural and uniform occurrence in all blader's style. Thomas is, however, pleasantly remorseful, "I dragged everyone down with me," he laughed.



In the man-cave I viewed a literal treasure chest. Under some of the cigar ashes lay, on it's side, an old black chest with brass edges, a lock, and splatters of white spray paint from when Thomas helped Angie Walton paint the old Daily Bread offices. Inside the chest are old Scribe shirts, his purple Scribe sweatshirt that he wore in most of his *Harvesting The Crust* clips, and unreleased Scribe shirts that would surely sell for hundreds of dollars on Ebay if the rollerblading industry generated half what the snowboard or biking industry does. A red and white "Poser Tools" shirt Scribe once made, mocking the old Pleasure Tools company, lay folded up, some first-edition Scribe shirts I hadn't seen in years, and one gem on the bottom. Thomas pulled out an off-white t-shirt with an old Scribe print ad screened on the front. It is a picture of a crucifix in a blender with the words "Soul" on top and "Grind" on bottom. I didn't know Thomas had this shirt, much less that it even existed. The ad generated much controversy, but its intention was to demonstrate how personal religion and skating can be mixed. Thomas and I once gave a talk to a church youth group essentially saying that you can be cool and believe in God. Thomas surely gives that same message to his youth groups every week, but I don't think he wears that shirt.

**From Homer to Jesus**

When I asked Thomas about his religion he was very direct, but didn't make as much eye contact with me (most likely because he knows I am now an atheist and he is almost never confrontational). Thomas strictly describes himself as simply a Christian. More details, different sects, are just "reasons to argue," he said. Along with other blading legends like Chris Edwards and Josh Petty, faith is now a central piece in his life. A bible sits at the center of his kitchen table; religious verses and knick-knacks are located in every room in his house and even outside on his fire-pit. He works with local youth and is attempting to get a youth center, complete with a skatepark,

finished in Newport. He essentially works as a carpenter, which invokes a mythical biblical reference of meekness (recent historians argue that a mistranslation of Joseph's job led to generations of people thinking he was a carpenter, when in fact, he was a master craftsman with upper-middle class status.)

Thomas' character, however, has changed to live a more humble life. Serving others instead of serving himself. David Brooks of *The New York Times* spoke on character traits last year regarding what motivates people to do amazing things. He talked about two starkly different philosophies on why people do great things.

The first motivation is an honor code called Homeric Morality, in which people "perform deeds of excellence in order to win the admiration of history." Simply, individuals want others to recognize their excellence. This originates in Greece with the philosopher Homer. Athenian warriors are forever memorialized in history by dying in glory on the battlefield. This timeless cause motivates persons throughout history and up to the present day. Each one of us fights against the fact that we are mere droplets in the tide of history; we fight against the certainty that we are truly only a molecule of that droplet in the vast ocean of time. This definition surely describes most rollerbladers. We fight insignificance by posting edits for people to watch worldwide, making video sections, and going to contests. Bladers surely notice how much the dynamics change in a session once someone starts filming. Courage, assertiveness, skill, and confidence are our defining character traits.

The second philosophy is founded in classic biblical Christian teaching. Jesus taught that the way to "achieve loftiness of spirit (is) by caring for the downtrodden," as Brooks says. In this line of thought, a person is motivated not from public recognition, but

# WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

The original cyborg busting his signature topside acid from bench to bench in downtown Minneapolis.



Ever wonder who invented the backslide or the acid soul? Well that man was Steve Thomas, a man with a plan. If you're curious, a bum made up the name acid soul and Steve randomly came up with "backslide" on the spot when asked by the Hoax II T-Bone crew what the trick was called. Of course others will say, "Johnny hometown hero was doing acid souls and backslides way before Steve Thomas." Well write me a letter and I'll send you 35 cents so you can call someone who f@#king cares!

I want to know if Johnny hometown hero redefined a sport. If Johnny borrowed money from his parents to start a company that forever changed the way plastic grind plates were made, or traveled to compete in the first NISS (with a heart condition I might add) without the funds to do so, I might be writing about him now. But Steve Thomas did do "all of the above." Johnny hometown hero is now Stevey hometown hero, get it straight.

If there is one thing you can depend on, it's Steve's ability to disappear. Random sightings around town have come up,

but seldom confirmed. Rumor has it Steve Thomas is into biking (say what?), claiming he has more friends to bike with than to skate with. I don't think he realizes how many people spunk off to the thought of skating with him. Well maybe I'm going too far, or am I? I also hear Steve is working a real job at some bank making fat cash. He lives by himself in downtown St. Paul, MN, and is known to have separate girlfriends from the same apartment complex just to make things hard.

In addition, there have also been random sightings at places like Circuit City and at local St. Paul bars. In a recent discussion with my friends Nate and Nate, they had this to say about Steve Thomas: "You better recognize...gangsta shit." That means his skating is insane in their language.

I have to conclude from this that Steve must skate on his own, which shows his passion for the sport. Without Steve Thomas, CDS Detroit might dominate this sport and fast-slides would be the hip-hop thing to do. Everybody has a little Steve Thomas in them, whether they like it or not. —Jon Robinson

from his relationship with God and its benefits in the afterlife. You “achieve power by demonstrating meekness and your dependence on God.” This philosophy now drives Thomas. “I’m attempting to live out a life that puts myself as somebody who serves others,” he said. Thomas has moved from Homer to Jesus. He cares for his family, his community, and his friends without asking for recognition or constantly posting uninteresting pictures in order to achieve thumbs-up status. He plans to create a local youth center where kids can have access to mentors, counselors, and other resources they might need. Thomas hopes to eventually work there full-time. “I’m definitely not making a lot of money, but am full of life,” he said.

### Duct Tape and Tight Pants

Wearing tight pants with rips on the butt is a secret blader style, almost a code. Wide, un-tapered pants with the bottoms covered in duct tape used to occupy the same role. Industry pros like Matty Mantz and Randy Spizer, as well as countless other rollerbladers across the world proudly put duct tape on their pants to signify their blader status. Steve Thomas mainstreamed this. The idea, he said, came from Aric Larson, a rollerblader from Minnesota who was primarily into snowboarding. Larson put duct tape on his snowboard pants because the bottom would fray and get soggy while riding. Thomas picked it up and single-handedly changed industry style, helped save on pant costs and, no doubt, thoroughly helped the duct tape industry.

I asked Thomas what he thought about the tight versus baggy jeans discussions that we rollerbladers have wasted countless hours arguing over. “How tight do they have to be to qualify as tight pants?” he asked. He pointed out his “tight pants” to me that most rollerbladers would classify as baggy. “Anything to be different than the last generation,” he reasoned. He then went through a brief fashion history, “they’re not bell-bottoms, they’re not the fat pants, so they make really tight pants and then it’s cool.” Later, when we were talking about blading on a Monday night, Thomas asked me if he’d be let in to the skate park with his pants.

### Style

The chat rooms of today’s rollerbladers are filled with old-schoolers squaring off with new-schoolers on issues of pant size, wheel set-up, hair styles, suspicious outfit compliments – like a neon head band matching a neon buckle – and edits posted with an absence of big tricks. Today, there surely is a loss of Pat Lennon, Rob Thompson, Aaron Feinberg, or Eric Perckett-style sections where life-threatening tricks are the main course instead of the dessert. I asked Thomas what he thought about today’s innovative spot, technical trick style versus going big. “I think that almost all the tricks are big, we’re just desensitized to it,” he said. Thomas is more concerned with style.

Style was and is a major component – if not the only component – in Thomas’ skating perspective. “If it doesn’t look good, it doesn’t count,” Thomas said in *The Hoax II*. His view hasn’t changed today. “The same people can do the same trick, so it’s a way to differentiate,” he said. Control is the defining point of style. At that, I showed him a Brandon Smith section to get his opinion on today’s blading. Over the California surf-style music, Thomas’ silence was interrupted only by the laughter one gives when they see someone performing a feat previously thought impossible. He didn’t watch it but more studied it, intently, noticing the different spins, grabs, and switch-stance tricks throughout the five minutes. At the end, Thomas gave his synopsis, “It’s so nice, you know? Without sarcasm, he’s doing everything.” I also showed him Broskow, Farmer, Julio, and Bolino sections. He was equally impressed, especially with Broskow’s “Rod Stewart hair,” and Farmer’s “’80s heavy-metal” style.

What struck me was the limited amount of criticism Thomas gave to today’s rollerbladers. Growing up blading with Thomas, he always had a critical perspective. We look to professional athletes with a certain awe and I-can-never-do-that mentality. Thomas sees a professional and not only assumes he can do it, but thinks about how he can improve on it. When I saw Arlo doing a curved rail (which I later learned he handed-up to) Steve pointed out how short it was. We saw the guys from Omaha doing rails next to walls and on our first trip to Omaha, Thomas did a kinked rail next to a wall at warp speed, gapping 270 over the last set of stairs. Thomas pushed everyone in the early 1990s rollerblading scene to do, rather than watch. Today, Thomas has not totally lost his critical thinking. When I pointed out a Bolino illusion spin he said, “So they made up a name for just looking over the wrong shoulder?”

### Blade Anyone?

Like me and most other pro rollerbladers of the late '90s, Thomas went other directions and didn’t utilize any advantages his sudden fame and athletic superiority brought him. Meanwhile, with the benefit of hind-sight, a dedicated bunch of pros like Jon Julio, Jeff Stockwell, Alex Broskow, Brian Aaragon, Robert Guerrero, and Chris Haffey have convincingly demonstrated that yes, your body can handle being a professional rollerblader for 15 years, and yes, there is ample opportunity to make money as a rollerblader – but just like all jobs, sometimes you have to do things you don’t like, or take side jobs. When I presented Thomas with this line of thinking, he was happy for the people who stuck with it, “It’s awesome, the way it should be,” he said. Thomas is content with his life decisions. “I’m not sad about it. I don’t feel like I lost out on anything because I’m not doing it,” he said.

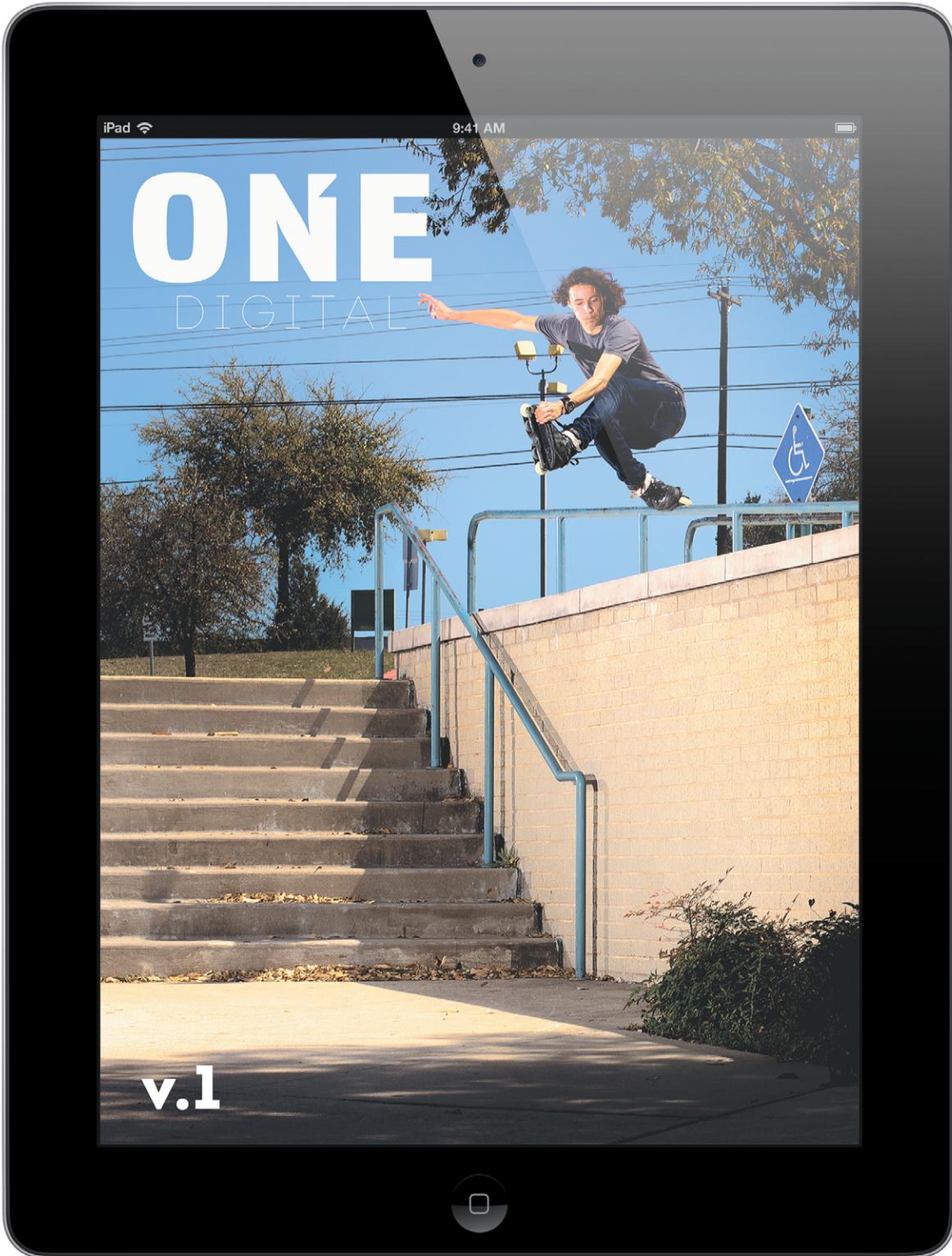
Thomas doesn’t rollerblade these days, but shows interest in starting again. He has an old pair of K2s set up in his garage. Two years ago he showed up to a few sessions and knocked out some solid tricks in the 3rd Lair bowl. When I told him about Monday Night Skate in Minneapolis he was more interested if I’d be there rather than other bladers. Thomas, as is the case in most social endeavors, is plagued with the not-having-anybody-to-blade-with-so-I’m-not-blading (NHATBWSINB) syndrome. (I’ve found the best cure is a good playlist on your music device.)

He also attributes not blading on his selective resistance to technology. Cars, TVs, DVD players, medical devices, and disc-golf innovations are acceptable areas of progress. He does not, however, like aspects of modernity that depersonalize communication. “I prefer talking to people,” he said. “I don’t need to text.” Facebook and smartphones are his top enemies. “The reason why I disappear is because I’m not a computer, Facebooking person,” he said. “Nobody calls anybody anymore.” (When I contacted him for this article, I was honestly surprised to learn he had a cell phone and a DVD player.) Thomas speaks the truth most of us refuse to admit about a cell phone, “Life is better without it.”

Steve Thomas truly loves rollerblading. When I showed him videos, he was excited to watch. When we spoke about today’s industry he was excited and engaged in the conversation. Andrew Murray and I returned to take photos and he had found more old blading stuff to show us, like magazines, products, and even an unused Scribe logo. I had a new pair of Razors in my trunk and he wanted me to give them to him.

I wondered what he thought about the future of blading. “If there’s a product, and there’s a video, and there’s something for people to look at, it’ll have a resurgence. That’s all there is to it,” he said. **ONE**

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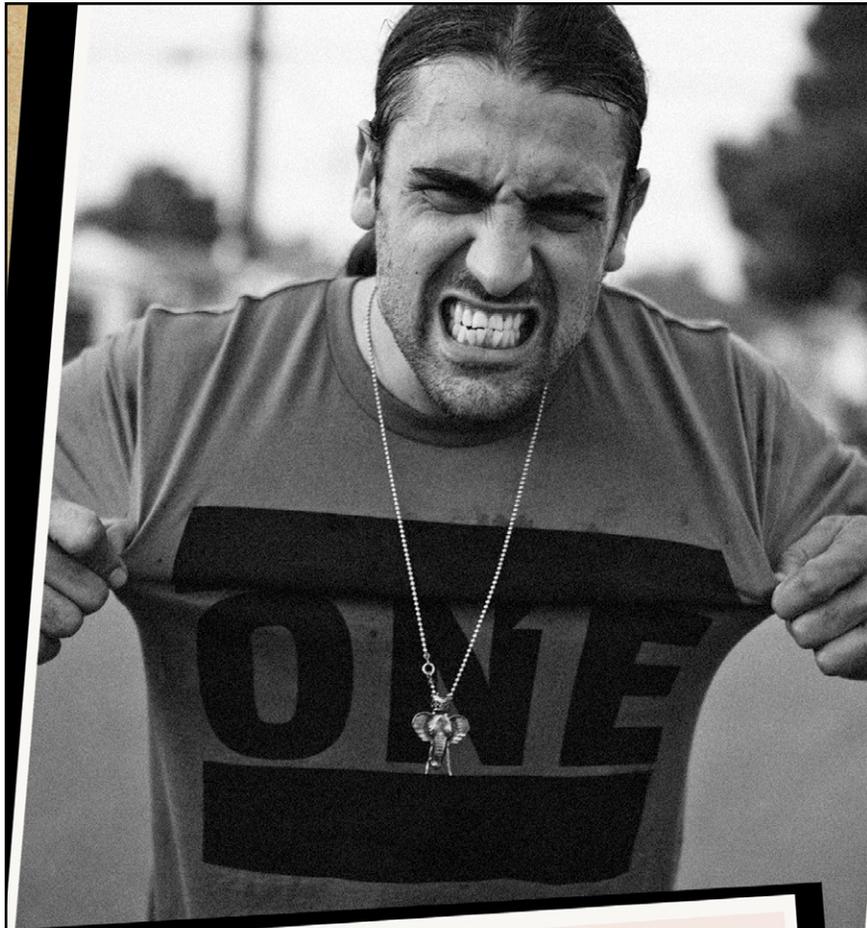


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