

THE SIDE EFFECTS
OF URETHANE.

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Art • Photography • Film • Music • Skateboarding





**THE SIDE EFFECTS
OF URETHANE.**

**MCTWISTING
THE NIGHT
AWAY**

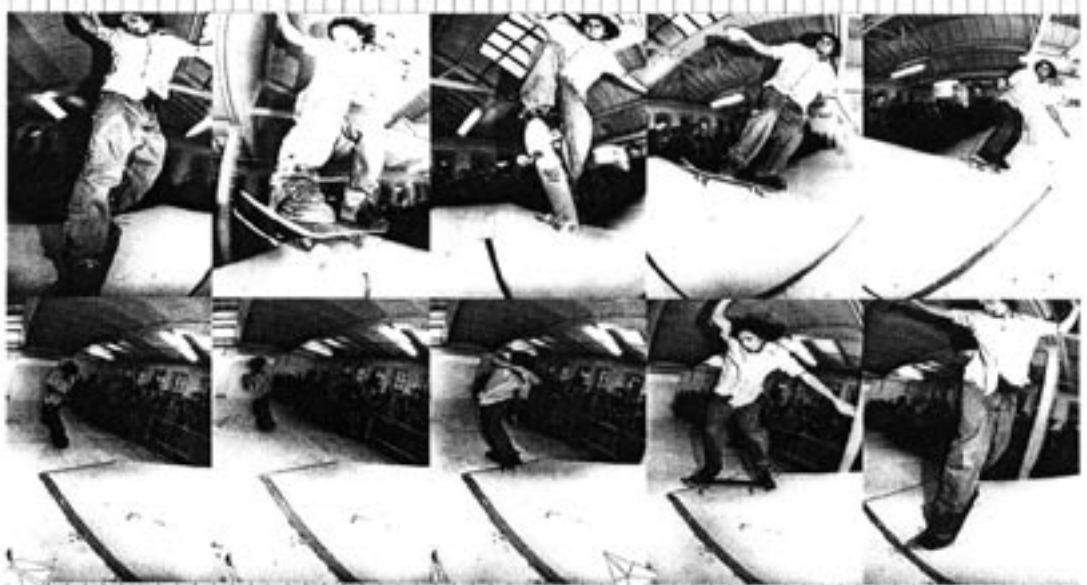
Skate culture has always tied together a singular blend of extreme sports, music, art and, of course, the enormous trousers. The Jam Factory, London's hippest building site (soon to be London's hippest live/work mini-tropolis) is this month playing host to an unprecedented coming-together from all of the above with the Side Effects of Urethane festival. Diverse musical acts including Japanese punk band Doko Dango, The Foxes, Headshoppe (playing live and DJing) and live acoustics from New York's Travis Graves provide the soundtrack to a showcase of art, photography and film from the world's leading skating creatives. A huge constructed street course provides the live action element, and apart from encouraging donations for the Centrepointhomeless charity the two-day event is free. Side Effects of Urethane is at The Jam Factory, London SE1 November 17-18. More info at www.slamcity.com.







IF: Chris Astrom says farewell to England for the winter with a 1's kickflip over the channel at Meanwhile. Photo Antoine
 ID: Rougeour Backflip by Leslie Barletta - ohh this really was an international effort! Photo Sam



SKATE NUACHT - CRAIG AGUS SKATE

THE SIDE EFFECTS OF URETHANE

'T wish it would rain down, down on me' P. Collins

So the winter is finally upon us and she is taking no prisoners. In the past winter inevitably meantibernation for most Irish skaters but not this year. Indoor skate facilities throughout our wet land will allow skateboarding to continue to matter how pissed off God is, as off with the Arrian sweater and on with the session.

New Cork Park

Prime Time skate shop in Cork have opened the most southerly skatepark in the country. I've been informed that it has a street course similar to that in Ramp-a-Rail in Dublin and a 5-ft mini ramp. Some say it's rad, others say it's super rad. My advice is to clean out the Credit Union account and get on the first train headed south. Contact Lou Lou or Neal at Prime Time in Cork for details or just go there and feel it yourself.

Belfast Training Facility

Seemingly in Belfast may not be the easiest skatepark in the world to find, but it is worth a bit of effort. Seemingly and Mike at the park have just completed the new 4-ft mini ramp which alongside the street course can be shredded every night 7-10. It's at 126 Halkdays Road, just off the Antrim, ten minutes from the city centre, five minutes if someone's chasing you.

Coleraine: worth a peak?

Monday night in Coleraine, the youth school on the Balycastle Road hosts a skatepark with sessions 8-10. Furbones, manuals, grind stuff and quarters by McGill and Tobby construction should ensure a good skate there once a week. Details from Tracy 02870 209190.

Ramp n Rail Christmas Bazaar

Get your untweaked ass to Ramp-n-Rail for the Christmas competition on the weekend of the 8/9 December, where the usual skateboarding festivities will take on a more festive feel, with special guest Sente, footing the street and mini ramp comps. Details from Wayne or Claudy Mike 01 8377933.

Project Skatepark, Ballygowan

Await the feel of your new wheels before the Christmas holidays are out. Contact Project shop on 02890 248256 for details and hook ups.

Lutocade and Grapes

Get well-soon cards should be sent immediately to Shurley Anderson in Portrush due to a broken ankle, and Tony Graham, still in south Woodford, for his tubfoot. May our thoughts and prayers be with them in these most frustrating of times...

The Rae Bree

The Parcel Force man is once again cursing the Rae household in Belfast. This time it's Liam's fault as he's just been hooked up by Rukos distribution, Dublin's latest homegrown outfit. Bernard's just back from a week-long trip courtesy of the Unelomber.

Enough that, I'm away with my tropical shovel to dig out the Portuguese bowl, how who's with me?
 --jaybirds@hotmail.com

The Side Effects of Urethane was an event, part exhibition, part gig and (yes) part skatepark, which occurred on the weekend of 17th and 18th of November. It was a concerted effort on the part of a small but expanding group of skateboarders based mainly, but not exclusively in London to claw a bit of skateboarding back from the brink of becoming a full-blown corporate joke sport. Everyone has their own take on this hot topic, but I have neither the space nor the inclination to expound on it here. The happening took place in an empty Harley's Jam factory in Bromptonway and was organised by a loose crowd of skaters who also happen to be artists, filmmakers, musicians, designers, carpenters and borderline nutcases. To name names here would be dangerous because there is no way I can mention everyone who deserves credit.

However, rest assured that people worked 1=king hard, slept rough and made themselves ill all for the love of skateboarding and to satisfy the desire to represent this culture in a genuine and unmediated way. Whilst a little commercial revenue grazed the wheels (i.e. bought the wood for the ramps) there were no corporate banners to be seen, not even skate company ones, which made the whitened-out space easy on the eye, at least until the snow-blindness set in. Unfortunately the demand for invites grossly outstripped the amount of people who could safely be allowed through the door. This was a pity, but I guess it's just another testament to the enormity of skateboarding right now.

So anyway, some bands rocked out, some videos and films were screened and a mind-boggling variety of skaters' artwork was perused. There was a lot of great stuff to see but the highlight was definitely the highly sculptural 'street' course. You've never seen anything like this tight and chaotic construction; it looked un-skateable. Despite this, people came from as far afield as Tokyo and San Jose and quite literally destroyed it. This weekend was pretty special because it really embodied the chaotic spirit of skateboarding in a way all that extreme shit never could...





THE SIDE EFFECTS OF URETHANE.

Words: Marco Colucci / Photos: Dan Crenshaw

Does then I guess you might want to know a little about the side effects of urethane exhibition, if you want then I suppose you will know of about it, but well please read on, so I will try and tell you why, for some reason in November these rollers being a weekend of art and skateboarding in a (Daly and Jack) factory in London. The old too some when Toby first told me about this idea of someone putting skateboarding and art together I can remember Toby telling me that he was a bit grumpy when they switched the lights off at midnight and so he came up with a clear plan for things or something like that, well sort of.

Anyway when Toby told me I happily agreed to help him then start to head and so did some other folks as well. To with other carpenters Poo Weston-Pie and Soutgen

Man at the helm, we first set out in making what was explained as Willy Wonka's skate park, well in a way more like a wonder street in some ways but not really.

It was colder inside than outside, very nice indeed.

It was fun using power tools, Poo sometimes got a little touchy with his tools though, all in all the building went okay but rather awkward. Thankfully there was a good tape place around the corner which saved many of us, but more than three tapes in a day was a very dangerous thing, yeah!

You indeed it took a total of two weeks to build a park that had to last two days, what a good idea! Anyway in the second week I went down to the gallery space, a dark, well more, great for hanging art. Toby decided that I might be the man to get the place out, and so with some helpful advice we got to work. It was decided to leave the walls nice and dry, just like an skateboarder's hair, so, as it looked good like that. To be honest the idea was to



Black straight walls thank this whole skating was like death by the doctor's table parties on the three corners of the hip bank (by Frank Benn and some others). Right: Another in a variety of views on all things skating. The 'Thunder' side and side table on the next quarter page.





got away from the show looking like a clean stuffy artful party place it would've been a real crappy look to post those murky walls.

If you can imagine a roller bag gigawatt and whilst you're just going for a piece into the baggie, it changes its shape into another shape you that would be confusing, well then you know what it was like to curdle the show. Luckily the night before the opening day we were headed. The exhibition looked fine and fairly and the park had been painted white it looked very lively indeed. It was also a real mess of a park, and it was a least that had to be taped.

So then, I will now try to explain what the weekend was like. Well basically on the first day like "for the fun" over the weekend the park had the crop cleared out of it.

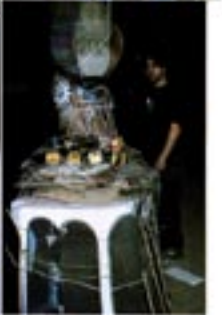
I don't want to comment on what tricks were done so the whole point of the park was about the flow and

movement of riding a skateboard, so I will try and explain to you: Bobby Polka a tall tall man, Matt Jensen a dirty looking man, Green a crapy mad horse. Like like a local merry thing. Barbara a girl rascal in a T-shirt with a big French stick up to ass. Pin a comical girl in a shirt...

Anyway, I think the best was taped indeed. In the evening things got busy with it's 80 Movement James Stewart, girls, Jack and the Honourable Mr. Chavalest the Tom, using their songs and got fullness, and after that was Daley Dango. Pin sang like an angel and she both went crazy. Some people jumped around a bit...and finally to bring the night to its end came James Green playing like a pretty good girl got person. And well that was that.

On Sunday the park was blown to pieces by the people riding around on bits of muddled wood and urethane.

Okay then, I hope that was helpful, sorry for my terrible grammar
 Take it easy









Steve Pitt takes a break from construction that's got a million feet
half from New England and everything! And when he's back on
the wall of the machine. Check!
Right: Ronan's new shop. Steve's new all the way from Japan with
the Power/Trigger to show us how we should be doing. This guy
is a badass.





some kind of bliss

Toby Shuall, a 23-year-old skater, painter-cum-curator and T-shirt maker from Pinner in north London, is keen to point out that Suburban Bliss is not a skate label. "I just did it to make a bit of money so I could carry on doing my art." And then there's his exhibition of skate culture, The Side Effects Of Urethane. He's definitely been there, he's doing it and he's got his own line of T-shirts to prove it.

*The Side Effects... is at the Jam Factory, London SE7 on November 17-18.
More information at www.slancity.com*

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ANYONE FOR JAZZ?

Any of you reading this in the environs of London, England, may be interested in going to **A SURFACE IN BETWEEN**, the next instalment in the **SIDE EFFECTS OF URETHANE** artshow series. Last year they overtook an old jam factory in Denmarksey for an art show which doubled as a demagogic event (debate notwithstanding) alongside with four over 30 international artists whose work is associated with the wonderful world of skateboarding. Now, the factions among you may fulfil the idea of a jazz crossover show, but the first one was excellent and this one looks better. Not only that, but the number of non-skaters and arty types in attendance will make the odds on you getting stinky fingers off a pool bed at the after-party something between 'good' and 'fucky'. Who else promises you that?

'A SURFACE IN BETWEEN'
ARTHOUSE, 16 Pitfield Street, Hoxton, London,
26th May-7th June.

SOUTH CITY STARS

We got a peek at this at a trade-show after party but someone made off with the tape. Munich skate pits can now be watched, skinned and awarded on end thanks to the 'South City Stars' video produced by **Georg Fischer**. Munich rippers like **Roland Oppenheimer**, **Mark Achtnüller** and **Robinson Kullmann** hold it down with a generation of rippers. Munich kingpin **Stefan Lehner** sets the arts with an outstanding combination of technical street-lines and handrail business. South City Stars is out now.
www.southcitystars.com

BOWLING FOR WINTERTHUR

Sometimes watching a 'making of' feature for a Hollywood film makes you appreciate what you see even more. Given the already incredible proportions of the minitrap bowl at the shiny new indoor skatepark in Winterthur, Switzerland, every skater will most likely be amazed and ready to drop in. The video documentary 'Time Pelique' shows the genesis of the wooden wonderland built by **Bowl Skateparks** according to their own patent pending technology. In a matter of minutes, the time-lapse footage shows an army of busy workers completing the bowl before the viewer's eyes. With great precision and efficiency the foundations are laid, the frame is put together and finally the huge overcast corner is layered with plywood. Then the session commences. Impressed? Now get off your computer and head out there to attend, you nerd.
www.bowl skateparks.com



NEWS 20





All aboard: The former Hartleys jam factory provides the festival venue

FESTIVAL the side effects of urethane

Tomorrow and Sun, The Jam Factory, Green Walk SE1, tomorrow 11am to 11pm, Sun 11am to 7pm, free (tickets must be obtained in advance).
Tel: 020 7240 0628.
www.skamcity.com/urethane
Tube: Elephant And Castle/London Bridge

English winters and skateboarding have not previously been considered a sensible combination, for the very good reason that the whole has a tendency to inadvertently turn into ice-skating. Ahem.

Fortunately, an old factory in Bermondsey holds the key – a massive street course is being constructed throughout the old Hartleys Jam factory for this weekend's awesome festival, so skaters can show off their skills and keep warm and dry.

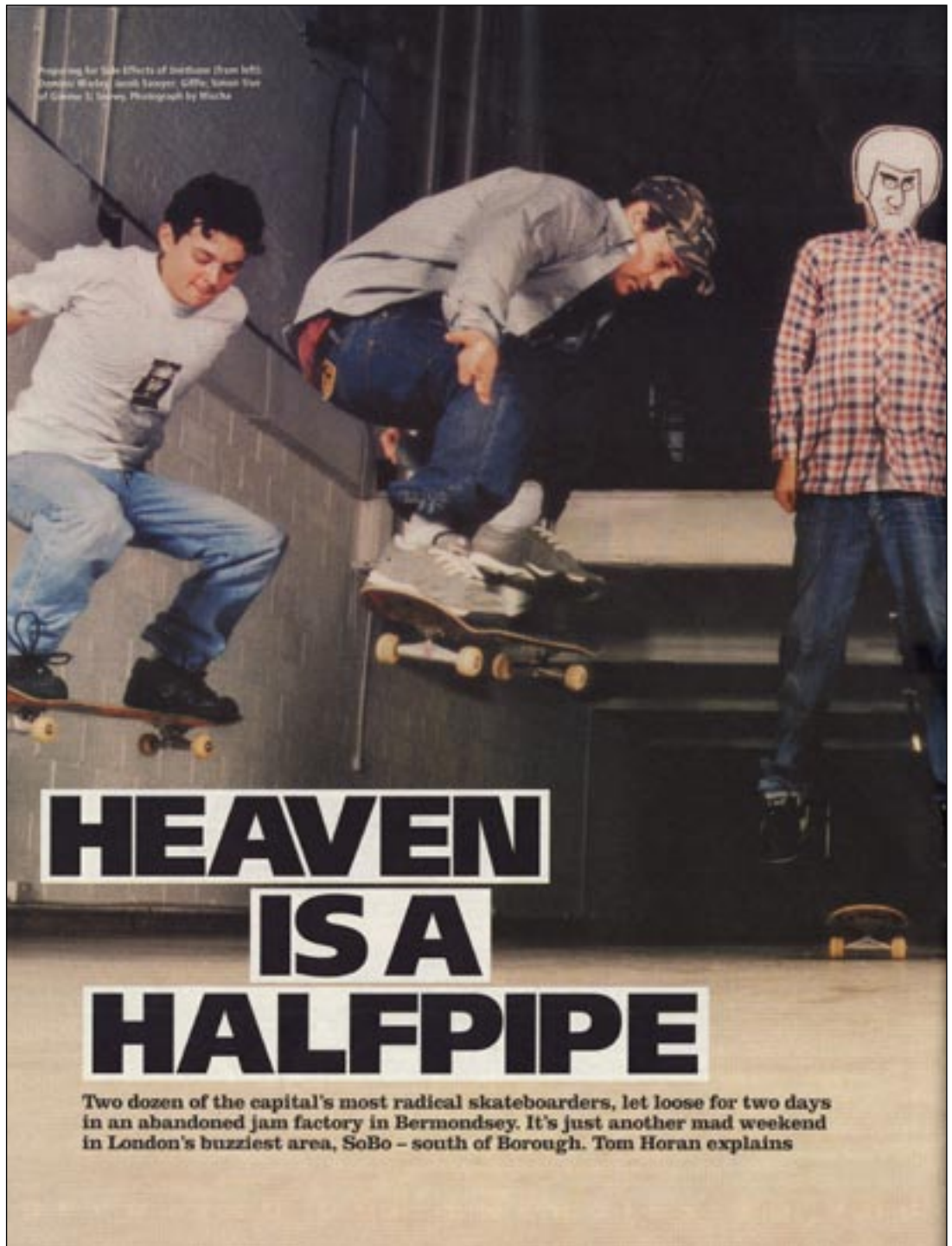
But a true celebration of skate culture needs to encompass so much more – music, art, photography, film – and the organisers (members of the SEU board) have taken this into account.

There will also be a designated area for artists such as illustrator Marcus Oakley, BP Portrait Award winner Mark Newton and Heroin Skateboards's Fos to showcase their work, alongside films and PlayStation 2 pods offering latest game Airblade. Toes, Travis Graves and Doku Dango will provide the music, with Headshoppe chipping in with their ragged low-fi jazz noise.

Such is the interest being generated by this event – the UK's biggest underground skate fest – that US star skaters Louis Barletta, Mark Johnson and Bob Puleo are also planning to fly over. Heaven could indeed be a halfpipe this weekend.

Siobhan Murphy







The street energy is still there
in skateboarding – but it's nice
to be able to take your kids along

When its skateboarders go in winter? With the puddles getting ever deeper on the gloomy old South Bank, the high rollers of the London skate underground will soon be gathering indoors for a celebration of the city's thriving skateboard culture. It should all, as the saying goes, be sweet – the event is to be held in a disused factory that once produced Hartley's jam.

Side Effects of Urethane (urethane is the material skateboard wheels are made of) brings together some of the country's best skateboarding talent for a free two-day bonanza. The setting will be the district between London Bridge, Elephant & Castle and Waterloo, now being christened Boku (Bouk of Borough, of course). After next week's event, the 18,000sq ft factory will be demolished for redevelopment.

While the skating itself will take place on a specially constructed 'street course' on the second floor, the ground level is given over to the various art shows that have gruffed themselves on to the Swastics festival from California that has refused to go away. There will be exhibitions of art and illustration, films and photography, and bands and DJs playing everything from Japanese punk to country and western.

The Jam Factory, which is providing the space free of charge, is a 250,000sq ft development being undertaken by brothers Charles and Spencer Style, who aim to regenerate the site in Boku (by the way, that's Bermondsey to the rest of us) into a 'mini-empire' of residential and business properties, one of the biggest island new sites in the capital.

Spencer Style has a long pedigree in promoting London youth-culture events. In 1979 he opened the highly popular nightclub, London's first roller-disco, on the site of an old Irish dancehall in Hammerwich. In 1981 came the Ace in Britain (now the Fridge), followed by Britain Academy and, in 1987, the Futura on Church Cross Road. Each time, Style has exploited the potential for rejuvenating buildings that have fallen into dereliction.

'Side Effects of Urethane will be great,' says Style. 'There are some brilliant skaters performing and the space itself is extraordinary. I'm 40 now and I've moved on from being a kid. The street energy is still there in skateboarding – but it's nice to be able to do something you can take your kids to.'

Side Effects of Urethane runs from 11am to 11pm on Saturday 17 November and 11am to 7pm on Sunday 18. For free tickets go to www.sideeffects.com/urethane. For information about the Jam Factory call 020 7278 0114



Events



The Side Effects Of Urethane LONDON

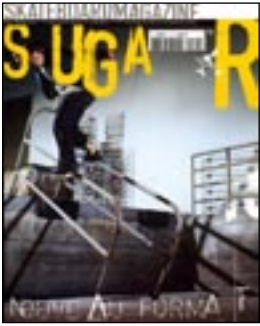
Computer games companies are only too happy to make some cash from skateboarding culture, but original skater haunts like West London's Meanwhile and the South Bank have always

maintained an aspect of scabby-kneed subversion. From the latter comes this free event, based around a bunch of ramps built in an old jam factory in Bermondsey, and featuring music from The Toes,

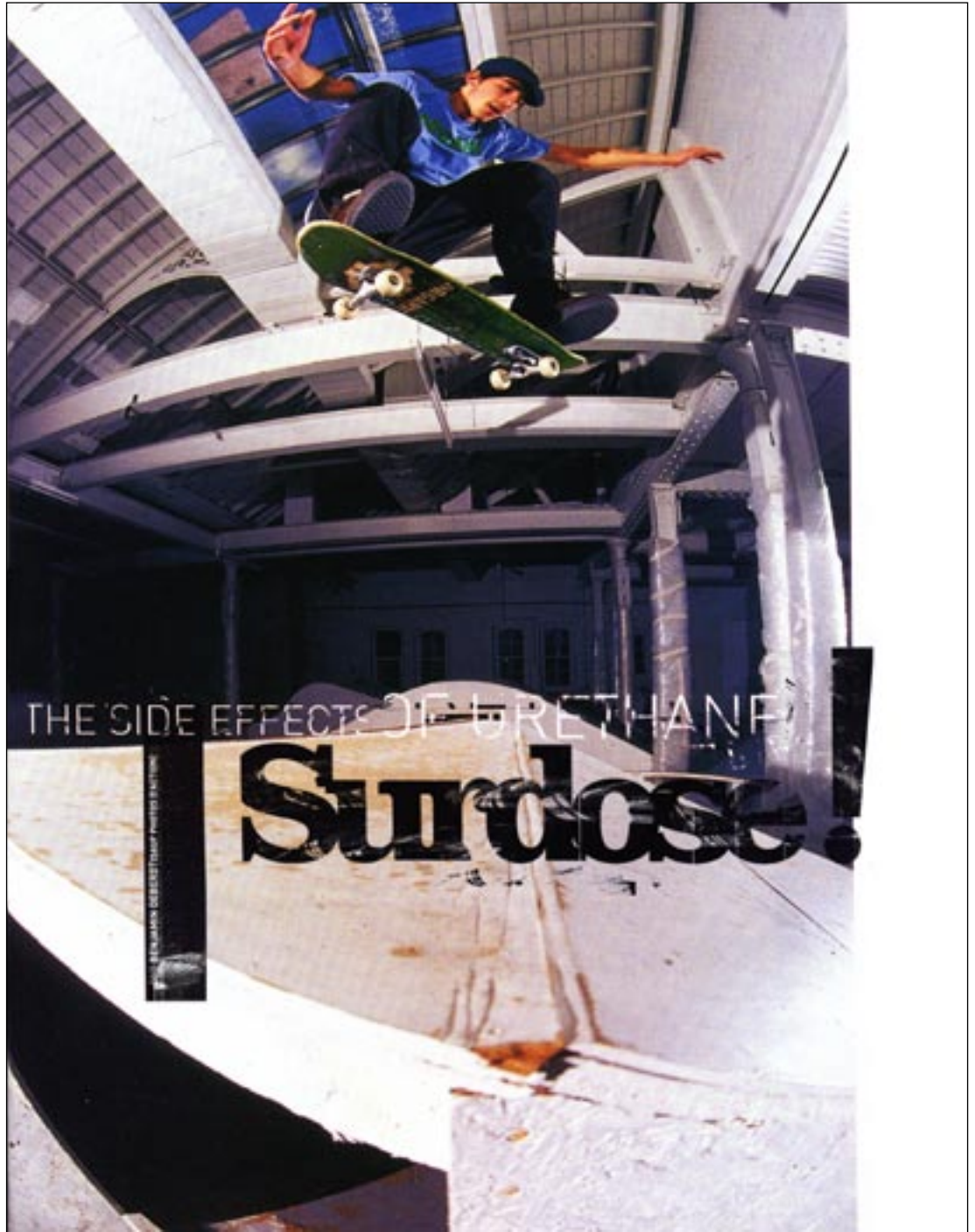
Headshoppe and others, an exhibition of Silas artwork and photography, and a film from Dan McGee.

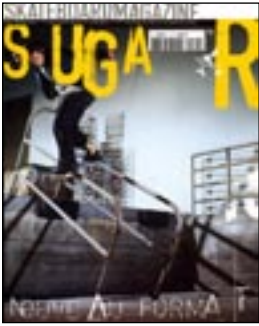
WILL HODGKINSON
Hartley's Jam Factory, Green Walk, SE1, call 020-7240-0928 or visit www.slamcity.com





PRESS THE SIDE EFFECTS OF URETHANE
SUGAR - FEBRUARY - 2002







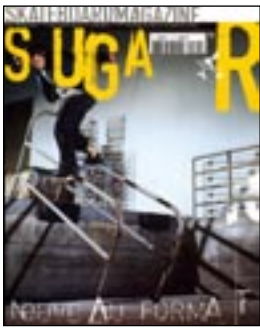

De monde rééclit à vue d'œil. Dans quelques heures, vous pourrez traverser plusieurs frontières et vivre votre petite vie "à l'étranger" en la payant avec la même monnaie. Billets d'avion de plus en plus abordables, trains à grande vitesse vers chaque destination importante, toute l'Europe est à portée de main... Toute ? Non, c'est sans compter avec cette sacrée île qui résiste, encore et toujours, à l'unification sous-culturelle et économique mondiale. Protégée par un temps de chicotte, des accents à couper au couteau et une fierté inébranlable, l'Angleterre semble devoir rester à jamais étrange et lointaine, et ce de bien des façons. Prenez par exemple, au hasard, le skateboard...

C'est vrai ça, que connaissez-vous de nos voisins (trois heures de train depuis Paris) en matière du truc qui nous intéresse ? Geoff Rowley ? Certes, mais de plus en plus américain... Tom Penny ? Compte-pas, désormais français d'adoption, et venu d'une autre planète de toute façon... Ratray est bien originaire du Royaume-Uni, écessais pour être exact ! Oui, Blueprint... Hmm, vous êtes calé quand même, ça fait plaisir ! D'accord, mais ça fait un peu ébour. Alors que les tous skaters d'Europe sont sur vos murs via cette feuille de chêne et quelques autres, que vous connaissez par cœur le centre-ville de Barcelone sans y avoir jamais mis les pieds, comment se fait-il qu'en dehors de quelques stars, et d'un sticker gratté au skate-shop, vous n'en connaissiez pas plus sur la scène anglaise ? Une bonne partie de la faute nous en revient, c'est sûr. Après tout, c'est notre boulot, non, de vous faire voyager ! ? Un mauvais point pour nous, d'accord, mais cela n'explique pas tout... Voyez-vous, ces gens-là vivent sur une île quand même. Et c'est le genre de chose qui laisse des séquelles. Pas forcément négatives, atten-

Bobby Puote ramasse avec amour des objets rectangulaires qu'il trouve partout où il va. Pamphlets religieux, cassettes audio, post-it : après les avoir saisis, il les range par type dans des boîtes de chaussures, avant de les regrouper dans des collages aussi méticuleux qu'obsessifs. Sinon, il fait un jeu de skateboard ! Alors que tout le monde se précipite sur les modèles tout neufs, Bobby a préféré observer le quel et ce qu'en faisait les autres pendant une bonne heure au moins. Il a ensuite attrapé sa planche, strapé et retravaillé toutes les lignes du park fait éventuellement autres en une demi-heure. La classe, comme sur ce wall ride dans le corner Plaza - Big Muzard.



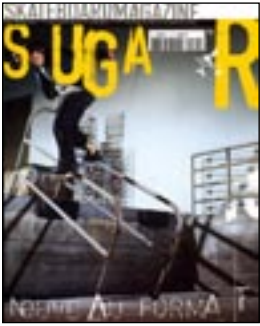




Londonien, French est
parait attrister deux
toutes, puis comme cinq
jours à aider tout ce
qu'il possédait et renvoyer
dans un compte 340 \$
afin de rembourser le
matériel brisé et,
accablement, se
réchauffer.

Lorsqu'il n'est pas
occupé à essayer de
gros 340 \$ sur un
quartier au chantier le
quartier de New York,
Travis Brown aime
visiter du vin rouge.

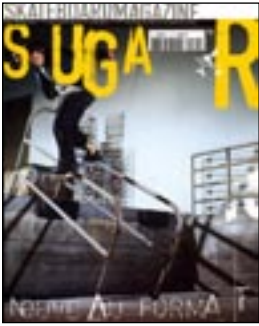




isen... Juste qu'à force de fonctionner en autarcie, on finit par s'habituer. Et c'est exactement ce qui semble caractériser les skaters britanniques : y font leur truc ! Des marques de planches nationales comme Blueprint ou Unabomber se développent depuis le milieu des années 90. Les shops et autres business montés et gérés par des skaters existent depuis toujours. Sidewalk Surfer en est à sa sixième année d'existence... Mais que, par la langue et l'histoire, l'Angleterre est en connexion directe avec les USA, il semble que ses citoyens à roulettes soient les plus indépendants du way of life dicté par la Californie, et ce depuis toujours. Prenez Londres, combien de

d'être skaté tous les jours par une population allant du Flame Boy débülant au père de famille toujours à bloc? Au pays qui a enfanté de tous les gangs (des mods aux travellers), le skateboard est un mode de vie à part entière, qui ne se pratique pas forcément à l'américaine. Exemple type de cette autre façon de voir les choses : "The Side Effects Of Urethane", ou un événement d'art contemporain pas comme les autres. Prenez une des plus vieilles usines de Londres, monument de l'industrie britannique autant que fabrique de confiture à l'abandon. Faites-la fracheter par Robert De Niro, pour la petite histoire... Mettez l'espace à disposition des biens intentionnés en attendant la réhabilitation des lieux. Parlez-en à Toby Shwall (grat-







Je ne vous présenterais pas Marc Johnson. L'accompagnant son nouvel employé Bobby Potts et toujours escorté de Louis Barletta, il était tout à son aise dans l'ambiance anarchique de l'événement. En plus de quelques peintures réalisées sur place, Marc a aussi organisé un freestyle style sur ce « flat ».

Il semble que tous les skaters londoniens aient une compagnie d'origine asiatique. En suivant de solides relations avec les japonais, Premier Maruich Skateboards par exemple, qui compte deux japonais dans son team, et Masamoto Cones envoient un transfert improbable en freestyle grab. Une des locataires du magasin, pour sûr, réalise entre deux sessions de flat avec son alter ego en skate.

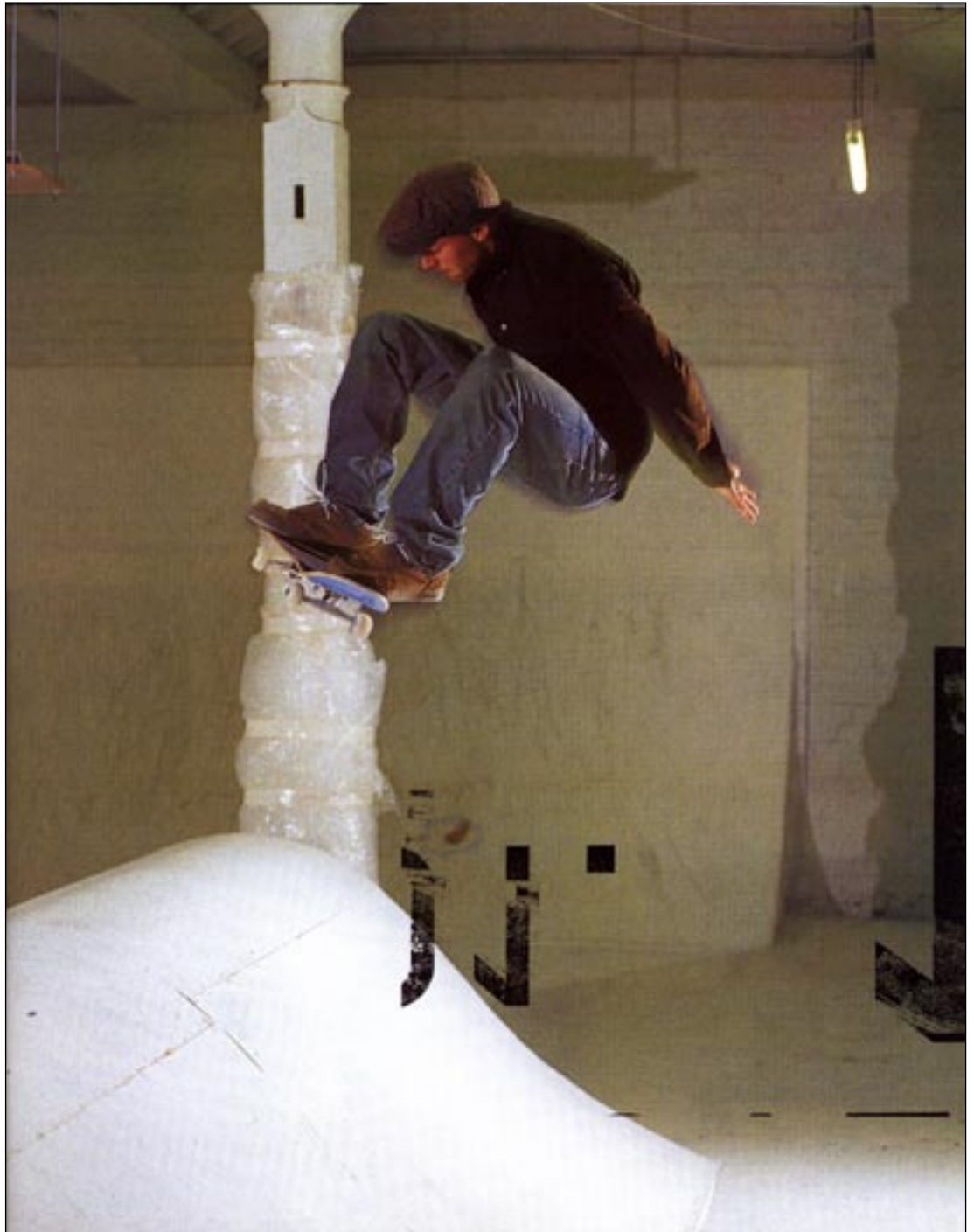
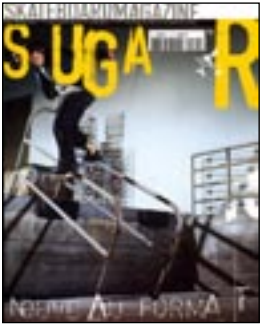


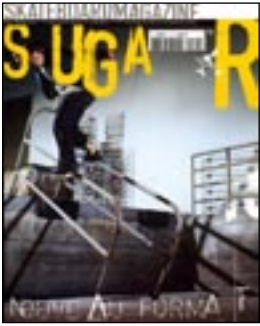
qu'il convainc du claquage de nose, âgé de 22 ans, peintre, et jeune homme ambitieux via Suburban Bliss, une ligne de vêtements et Organic, sa toute récente marque de planche, et deux "anciens" de 28 ans, Nick Taylor (graphiste pour Stam City, Le skateshop londonien) et Marcus Dakley (illustrateur qui, il y a peu encore, travaillait pour Paul Smith). Résultat ? Les trois compères font fonctionner leurs connexions, trouvent des sponsors, rassemblent tous leurs amis...

Leur idée est simple : montrer à tout un chacun que les skaters ont autre chose dans la tête que la destruction systématique du mobilier urbain. Comment ? D'abord, exposer des œuvres de tout type issues des connexions neuronales de leurs collègues. Photos, peinture, collage, poésie, vidéo, installation, musique,





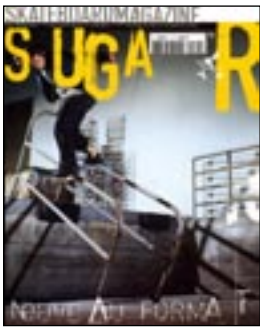




tous les médiums d'expression y passent, via quelques figures déjà reconnues comme Mark Foster (commandant en chef d'Heroin skateboard, qui a autrefois dessiné des planches pour Toy Machine), le désormais parisien Marke Newton (voir Sugar #24) ou Simon True (responsable de plus d'un t-shirt Slam), une foule d'inconnus talentueux et quelques invités de marque tels Marc Johnson ou Bobby Pueto (amis de la famille, et skaters sensibles). Le plus jeune à exposer, et pas le moins doué, n'est autre qu'un autre membre de la famille Newton : Luke, qui du haut de ces 14 ans rougit à chaque compliment sur ses peintures. L'exposition résultant de cet amalgame est aussi touffue que diversifiée, des collages géométriques de Bobby aux heures de marqueurs de Fresh... Une masse d'informations

visuelles et sensorielles impressionnantes. Ce serait déjà beaucoup, mais c'est sans compter avec la deuxième moitié du week-end : un park éphémère et surréaliste construit en une semaine sans sommeil pour l'occasion. Au premier étage du Jam Factory, après une enfilade de pièces sombres et peinturlurées, une embrasure de porte laisse entrevoir un étrange spectacle... Une maquette à l'échelle un d'un paysage lunaire : courbes et plans inclinés, sol et plafond, tout est blanc ! Sur ces modules étranges issus de l'imagination de Pin, grand spécialiste britannique de la scie sauteuse, une foule d'excitables essayent de négocier une surface assez réduite où s'empilent une multitude d'objets plus ou moins faciles d'accès et le pou de plat qui les séparent. Le samedi, alors que la peinture n'est

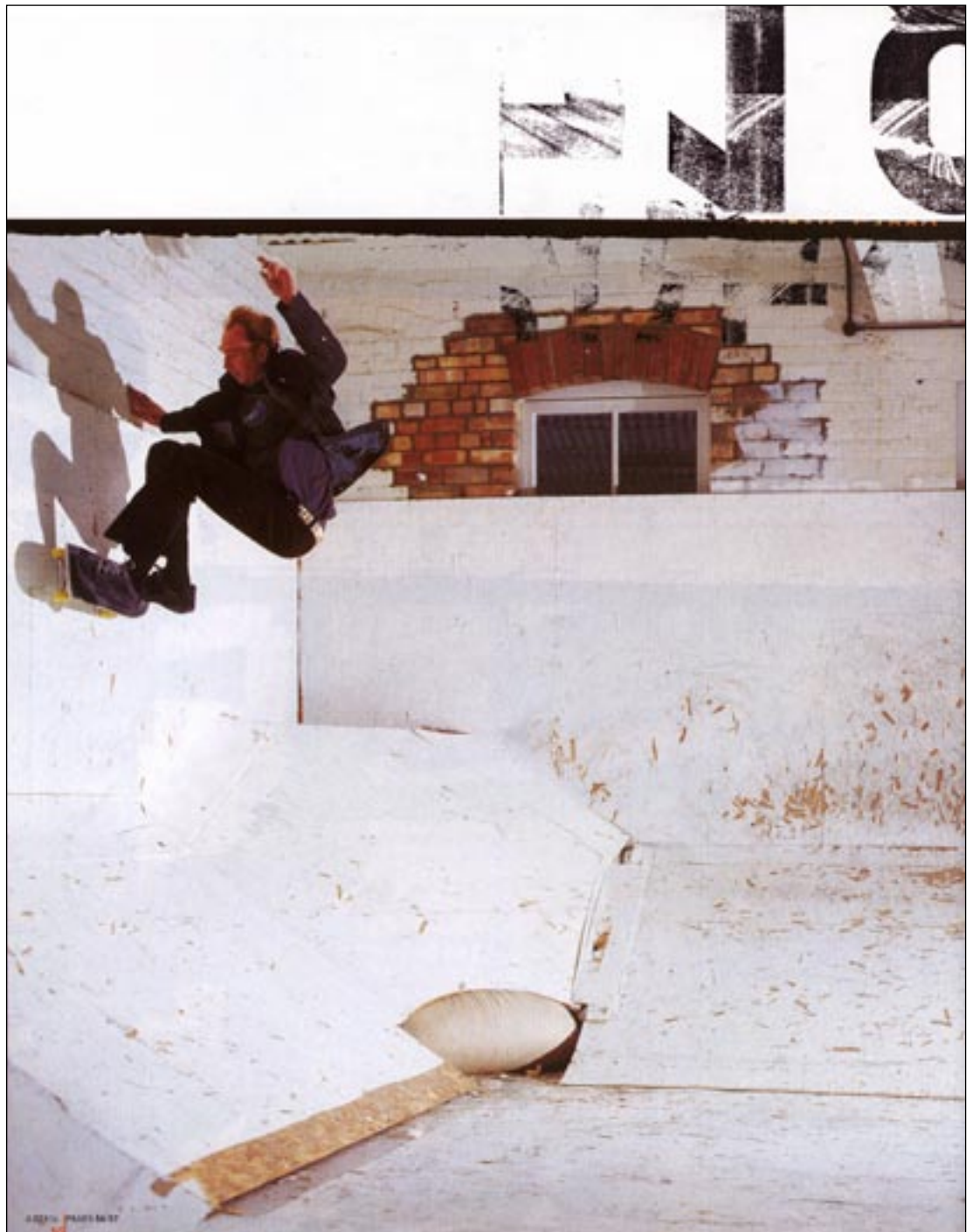
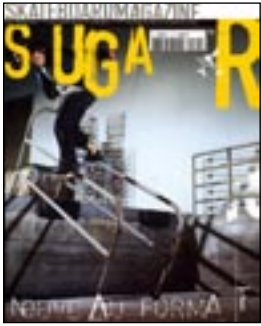




Mattias Ryland n'è arriuvé que
dimanche, mais a rita appliqué
ses connaissances des courbes en
l'éclairant ses conditions en gros ap-
plications. Quel futur très bon dans
l'art? *par Jean-François
Lévesque*

Simon Truë termine son acte au
heavy metal, par un pentagramme,
bien sûr!









NOVEMBER 13-18

SLIDE ON

Underground skate jam

One of the most exciting buildings in Borough is hosting the UK's largest underground skate festival, 'Side Effects of Urethane'. Put together by the SEU board, the event fuses the expertise of British skaters including illustrators Fos (Heroin Skateboards) and Marcus Oakley, BP Portrait Award-winning artist Mark Newton and a few of the Slam City Skates boys. The Jam Factory - a vast, raw, warehouse-like

space - will contain two floors of skate stuff including an indoor street course, exhibitions and films. The musical accompaniment will come from DJs and bands like The Toes and the sublime Headshooper. Tickets are free, with donations going to Centerpoint. It doesn't get cooler than this.

'Side Effects of Urethane' is on Sat and Sun at The Jam Factory, Green Walk, SE1 (tickets via www.slamcity.com)



PRESS THE SIDE EFFECTS OF URETHANE
SLEAZENATION - DECEMBER - 2001

● The Side Effects Of Urethane is a big (and free) celebration of all things skate, with added graf, music (The Toes, Headshoppe), film and photography. Organised by the likes of Slam and Gimme 5, it should thus satisfy all 'realness' criteria. London, Nov 17th & 18th, check www.slamcity.com for 'the lowdown'.

006 SLEAZENATION.COM



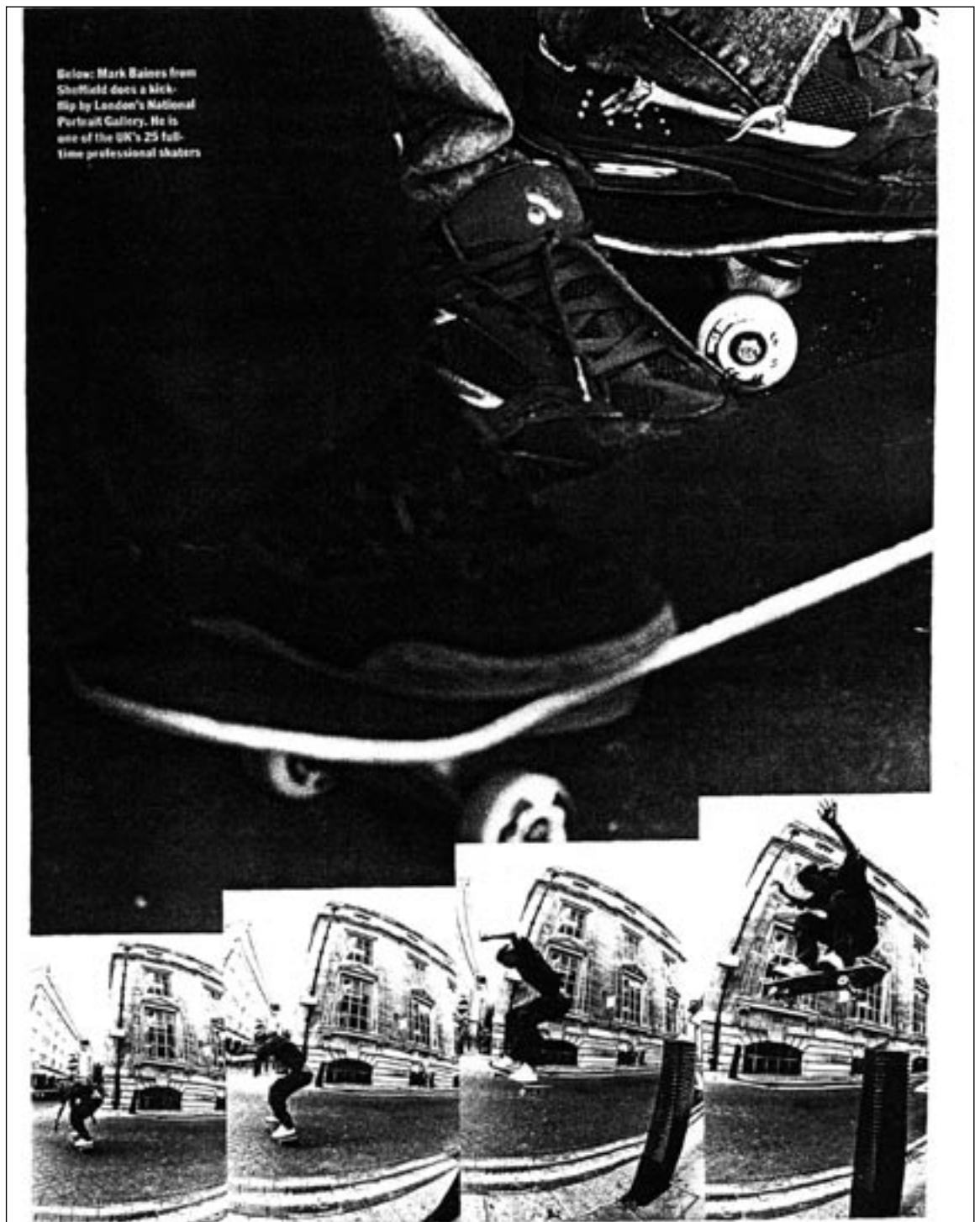
PRESS THE SIDE EFFECTS OF URETHANE
SIDEWALK - NOVEMBER - 2001

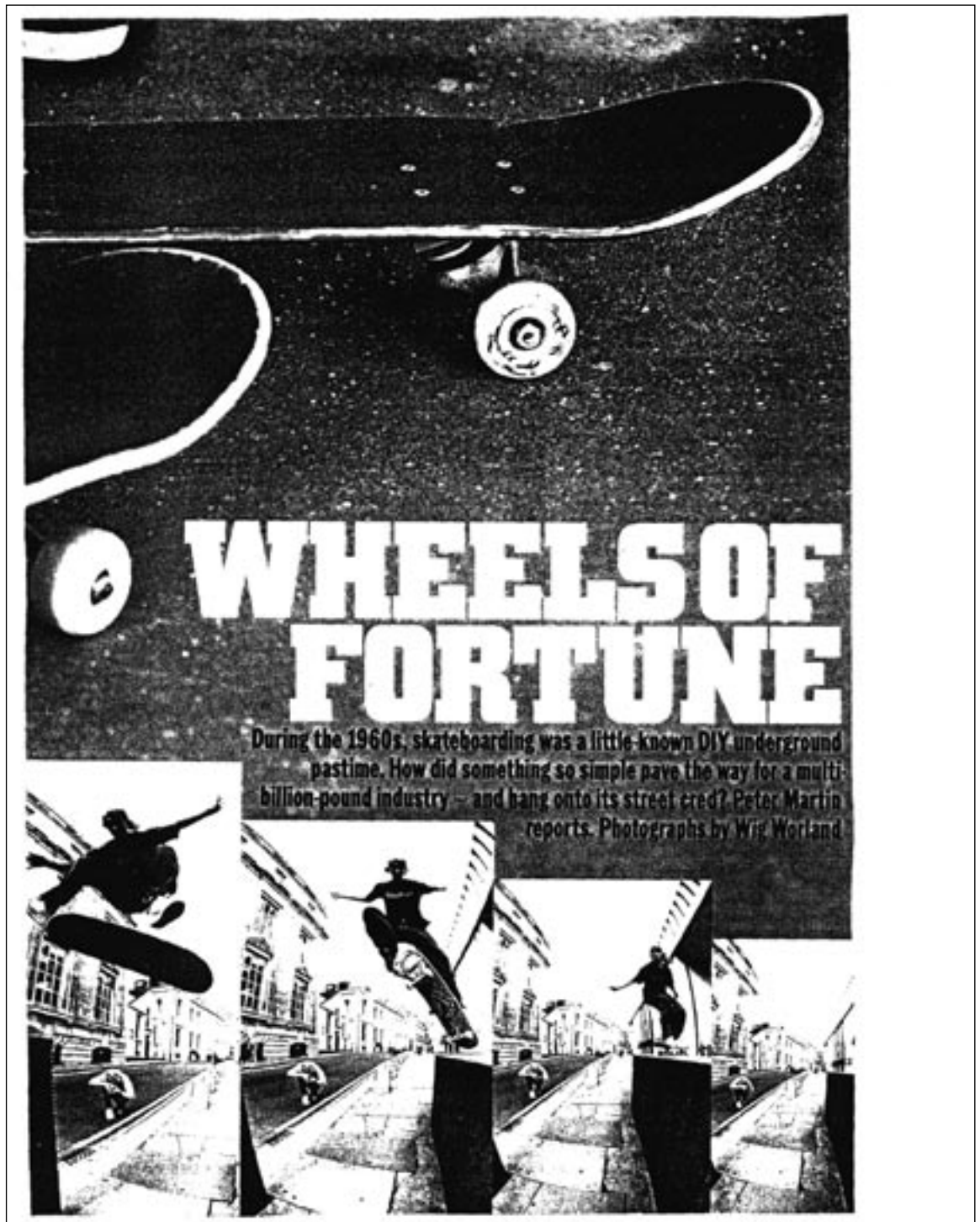
This looks interesting: as briefly alluded to in last months Sidewalk, the Side Effects Of Urethane exhibition has been confirmed as running Saturday 17th Sunday 18th of November at the Jam Factory in Bermondsey, London SE1. The 'weekend festival of skate culture' will take up 2 floors of the old Hartleys building, its 14000 sq ft being divided into three rooms. One room will be a gallery, one for music/ films and one will be a street course built by Pin. Confirmed exhibitors at the time of writing include Toby Shuall, Simon True, Fos, Marcus Dakley, Alex 'Pin' Osborne, Mark Newton, Toby Patterson, Pete Evans, Nik Taylor, Vaughan Baker, Wig Worland and Ollie Barton. Film will include Dan Magee, Fos and Alan Glass; music will be from Headshoppe, Dokudango, The Toes and the estimable Travis Graves. This event will be free, but donations will go to the Centrepoint charity, so be nice. The event is being sponsored by: Playstation2/Airblade, Heroin, Unabomber, Blueprint, Jam Factory, Gimme 5, Olympus, Slam City Skates, Addict, Organic, I-Path, Rough Trade, Suburban Bliss and of course our good selves. For ticket info: www.slamcity.com/urethane



The poster is titled "THE SIDE EFFECTS OF URETHANE" in a bold, sans-serif font at the top. Below the title is a large, solid black silhouette of a bear-like figure with its arms and legs spread out. At the bottom of the poster, there is a small rectangular area containing several logos and text, including what appears to be the Slam City logo and some smaller, less legible text.







Sunday morning at Stockwell skateboard park, south London, and 25 skaters and 10 BMX riders are whanging around all over the place. It looks chaotic, even kamikaze, until you get your eye in. Avoiding crashes can involve clamping a trick in midair - skate, bike and bodies going every which way - but no hard feelings: skaters and BMXers are on a similar wavelength. The odd novice aside, nobody wears helmets or pads.

Whoah, here's Howard - a legend hereabouts - carving around with the grace and pace of a seagull. Once you twig his signature trick, however, you can hardly bear to watch. To launch a standard ollie - that's when skater and board leave the ground together - you kick down on the tail of the board. Screw it up, and you just tumble off the back, feet downwards, no problem. But Howard's thing, a reverse ollie - a noisier, in the lexicon - involves kicking off the front. Eggo, if he screws up, his natural trajectory is chin-first. Here he comes again, pumping for speed, popping the board high, and successfully hammering down another one - this time, just one metre short of a brick wall. "Howard, that's horrible!" someone shouts.

Two other skaters, meanwhile, have been trying to master a gap ollie between two tarmac mounds, shooting 12ft into the air off the first rise, aiming to land on the far, downhill slope. At 40 rumbles, I stop counting. One guy is fast and smooth, the other fiercer still, but so uncoordinated you wonder he can get food into his mouth. Sometimes they wimp out, sometimes they overlook it. But at last, bang, the failing lunatic hammers it down, to applause and whistles all round, including the BMXers. At his very next try, the other skater whacks it down too, to another ovation. He carves by the first guy, and they touch knuckles.

Sundays at Stockwell - the park was built during skateboarding's first incarnation - are a 25-year-old institution, including ritual coffee and curatorial turns at the nearby Portuguese cafe. Two professional skaters are here today, plus three or four sponsored ones. But skaters are a democratic lot: nobody gives a monkey's. Status? Forget it. But respect? Oh yes. Nothing is harder learnt than skateboarding. One trick, and there are hundreds, can take anything from two hours to several years to master. Even the pros refer to what they do as "falling off", and all sorts of judo rolls - hands slapping the ground to protect the knees and elbows - are essential for staying out of hospital. Another protection is their elastic fitness. Some skate here on Sundays for eight hours straight, with Achilles tendons like steel hawsers. Even so, if injuries were medals, skaters would be the world's most decorated.

The younger they start, of course, the less far there is to fall. Here's a girl, aged nine. Come to Stockwell with her dad, she's armoured with helmet and pads, and heroically trying to pop her first static ollie. Every time she falls off, Dad steps forward. Every time she gets up, she moves further away from him. Already, she's got the hard-bitten, leave-me-alone determination to try and try again. Then a sweet thing happens. An accomplished skater parks up next to her and, as if in slow motion, pops four or

five demonstration ollies. Hugely stoked, the girl goes harder at it, popping and falling off for the next hour, while Dad threatens cardiac arrest.

Although it never went away, skateboarding is back as never before. Each fortnight, a skate park opens up somewhere in the UK, if only to contain what civic burghers regard as the nuisance proliferation of local skate punks. Noble the perceived outlaw factor by making it official, is the idea. The concerned burghers are missing the point, however. For, like it or not, the biggest addiction this time around is to street-skating for its own sweet sake. At its gentlest, it's a mode of transport, skating to school, to work, tutorials. But the gruelier end involves trick-skating almost the entire built environment: town squares and plazas, kerbs, steps, ledges, planters, concrete banking, low walls, skate-sliding handrails, ollie-ing over wheelie bins, park benches, pulling bits of plywood or filing cabinets out of skips for makeshift ramps and blocks. More skaters than you realise take to the streets at night, like urban ghosts. But come daylight you can pick up their small-scale, a crumpled wall-top, a jump made out of traffic cones, public benches slick with skater's wax for a smoother slide. (You can buy special wax, but a candle will do.)

The last resurgence before this one was largely triggered by the skateboard sequence in Steven Spielberg's 1985 movie *Back to the Future*. Most skaters over 25 count those few filmic moments as their epiphany. The current explosion, however, dates from the 1997 advent of American "extreme" tele-sports - specifically ESPN's X-Game series - coupled with the 1999 launch of Tony Hawk's

IT'S THE BOHO DUDE LOOK: A POP-FASHION PHENOMENON



globally successful computer game, *Pro Skater*. Hawk is the Michael Jordan of skateboarding, and was the first to crack the awesome 900, skating off the top of a vertical ramp to complete 2½ spins in the air - through 900 degrees - before reconnecting with the ramp. It took him 11 years of sporadic attempts, plus an awful lot of osteopathy. There'd been other such computer games before, but Hawk's was the first to be modelled on genuinely authentic skate moves and tricks. Shortly after its launch, he pulled off the 900, won worldwide coverage, and is credited with quadrupling the number of kids prepared to have a go at falling off. Except the *Pro Skater* generation doesn't fall off

usually so much. Just by playing the computer game, they somehow internalise all the body language of its moves and tricks. "We spent ages learning to skate," complained Marcus Oakley, 28, a Brighton-based illustrator and board graphics designer, "but these kids start popping tricks in no time."

What also sucks the kids in, of course, is that skateboarding represents the coolest, most pervasive pop-fashion phenomenon since rock'n'roll went long-haired. Low-slung baggies, hoodies, beanies, chain wallets, Vans and Etnies skate shoes, long T-shirts, candy-striped boxers (essential, with hanging-off baggies, for hiding skater's bums): the boho-dude look. There's a constant back and flow



20 NEW PHOTOGRAPHY: GUY A. ROBERTS; REPORTAGE BY FRANK RICH; THE PICTURED BY ROBERTS; ILLUSTRATION BY GUY A. ROBERTS





Key rider: Alex Gilwood, who invented the 'ollie' move - wheel the board and skater go airborne, in 1978. Below: Jason Gill, a professional skater, performs a '50-50' grind and an 'ollie out' - just one of hundreds of tricks skaters try to master



between skating, music, fashion, advertising, even art. Hip-hop's dope sounds form the soundtrack to the smooth moves of high-style skating, while the neo-metal punk bands - Blink 182, Slipknot - like to track on that they're the musical soul of the graffiti street acrobats. Have you ever seen a skate punk jump-sliding a metal handrail down the length of 10 or 12 concrete steps? He might fall off 50 times before landing the trick. Alongside such urban apaches, Sid Vicious was a postscript.

The older the skater, however, the more underground their outlook, including a millennial loathing of logoed consumerism. Nike, Adidas and Levi's - for their repeated efforts to cash in on

skateboarding's innocent originality - are cast as the unholy trinity. Once something's considered cool, of course, it's already uncool. Take Levi's own baggy, the "engineered" jeans. Launched in 1999, it is now being ridiculed on TV, having lost out in the iteration to the sort of schwafter-shop superlooms you now see dragging the floor everywhere.

Nike's "Just Do It" campaign, however, came in for some deliberate subversion. Around three years ago, Nike launched a skate shoe with ads featuring runners in handcuffs, with the line: "What if all athletes were treated like skateboarders?" For creepy sycophancy, it set an industry standard. The American skate fraternity, with others, had already responded with their own "Don't Do It" campaign. Next, by way of testing Nike's commitment, a group of skaters went and did their thing outside the company's HQ. Published in a US skate magazine, the resultant photographs, of skaters being arrested, slammed Nike on its backside.

But you can understand corporate desperation to get in on the action. The current boom is reckoned to have been worth £1 billion of profit worldwide in 2001. The UK's two skate magazines, Sidewalk Surfing and Document, are fat with glossy ads, and even the circulation of Document, the less

successful, has increased sevenfold in two years. Harder information on the boom is difficult to come by, however, for any whisper of fat-cat gain is always tried on by skating's underground as evidence of a sellout. Two UK skateboard companies - Unabomber and Heron - have no such problems. As it happens, both have a good street rep. Then again, with brand names like that, how could they ever sell out? As skaters see it, that's exactly as it should be. Keep it real, man.

Skateboarding emerged out of nothing much in the mid-1960s in southern California, a no-nonsense alternative to surfing when the sea was flat. The first boards were planks with half a roller skate screwed to each end, and the earliest skating styles were Beach Boy poetry and tans. But come the big drought of 1973, the punker element found that California's empty swimming pools (made of poured concrete, not tiles) doubled as perfect skating bowls, flat-bottomed with smooth transitions up to the vertical all round. Illicit pool riders - air burglars, if you will - became the new social curse.

Chief outliers were the Z-Boys, a skate crew based around a surf shop in so-called Dogtown, which encompassed the dunes of Venice Beach, Ocean Park and south Santa Monica. Your original macho surfers - shooting between the twisted girders of neglect-wrecked piers was their speciality - the Z-Boys became the Wild Ones of skateboarding, their moves crooked, landing off the pavement into reverse spins, and - aha! - clearing the tops of swimming pools before diving back in. Their board graphics - tattoo art meets custom-car paint fantasies - worked a kind of punk voodoo. In the Del Mar Nationals, the big skate competition of 1975, the Dogtowners stole the show with their fearless tricks, royally disgusting the ex-surfer Adolesces in their pressed dacks and crisp shorts. A year on, the Z-Boys had broken up, most of them earned professional.

By the early 1990s, skateboarding was into its third boom, having twice died back to the hardcore. By the second boom, skate technology had improved no end. Wheels, now made of urethane, had terrific durability and responsiveness. And all boards today - for maximum "pop" off the ground - are crafted from seven-ply Canadian hardrock maple. The late-1970s invention of the ollie is credited to Alan Gelfand of Florida, while the Californian Mark Gonzalez tolerated much disbelief as the early 1990s pioneer of street-skating.

But by 1994, skateboarding looked to be in a terminal state. Even Hawk, several times a world champion, was wondering what to do next for a living. But here, one Joe Burlo - business streetwise and skate fan - determined to fight the trend. For several years, he'd been running the first concrete-sports shop, Paso 7, specialising in BMX bikes and skateboards, despite its unlikely location, Waltham Cross, Hertfordshire, kids travelled to it from all over England. But the sports trade thought Burlo was bonkers when, in 1995, he set up his own UK skateboard company Blueprint, and hired six of the best skaters he could find as the country's first full-time professionals. (Ducibon boards had done a similar thing, but had already fled to the US.)

For Burlo's part, it was the dream job: being paid to attend competitions, but mostly to skate favoured street spots up and down the country. ➤➤➤



A frame from Tony Hawk's Pro Skater. The first computer game to be modelled on genuine moves and tricks, it has been credited with quadrupling the number of novice skaters



gathering disciples. Sidewalk magazine pitched in with lively reporting and spectacular nine-frames-a-second photo sequences of launch-to-landing skate tricks, creating our own skate heroes.

Today, as well as 30 skateboard companies, most of which undercut American brands for price, the UK has 25 full-time professionals and several hundred sponsored skaters. Even the sponsored ones can travel the world, paying their way by selling – to kids en route – the decks, wheels and clothing they get free. The British companies also produce videos of their skaters doing tricks which, again, are quickly internalised by their can't-get-enough apprentices. In turn, young skaters apply to board and clothing distributors with "sponsor-me" videos – and on it goes, an economic synergy that works, more or less, from the pavement up.

But California has lost much of its mecca status. Instead, now skaters look to Europe and beyond. Typically, Sidewalk recently ran a 20-page article on skateboarding in Barcelona, after a bunch of Brits had gone there to skate the city's beautiful squares and plazas. "We got an amazing reception too," recalled Niall Neeson, Sidewalk's assistant editor. "Instead of the usual negative stuff, people were applauding and shouting, 'Bravo, skate!' Even the police were sympathetic. 'Where there's no victim, there's no crime' is the attitude." Another sign of the thrust away from America is Heroin's recent deal with a Japanese skate team, complete with promotional video. Given the Japanese appetite for novelty, Heroin's boss, Mark Foster, is in serious danger of making a fortune. Not that the fraternity would let him get above himself. "Everyone remembers when Fos was just a skate punk with horrible green hair," said Oakley, laughing.

But what is skateboarding? There are enough contrasts in the UK and elsewhere to make you think it might be a sport. And the corporate legions, together with TV companies, would dearly like to homogenise it into the next big thing: respectable, mass-market, a skateboard in every garage, every parent a cheerleader. But skaters, in the main, won't have it. Aside from the prize money, and the excuse to meet up with each other, they refuse to take competitors seriously – and the idea of a world champion is absurd. "How can you say this skater is better than that one?" said Neeson. "One guy may be terrific at tricks, but skaters rate movements and style on the board as highly as technical ability." The world champion Tony Hawk nailed the daftness of

it: "It's like having a paint-off between Van Gogh and Picasso and declaring a winner at the end."

The point is plain to see any weekend at London's favourite skate spot, under the Queen Elizabeth Hall, on the Thames' South Bank. One regular there is a black guy with dyed-blond hair, iridescent baggies, and bling-bling jewellery galore. *Quoi dire*, you might think. Until he starts to skate everything in sight – railings, paved banks, cobbles, jumping up sideways for some smash-on/smash-off wall-riding – with all the aggression of a kung-fu street fighter. Another South Bank regular, a slender wraith with a ribbon-tied ponytail, does no tricks at all but waltz around the banks and curves like a ballet dancer, one hand trailing a cigarette as part of his highly wrought choreography.

If not a sport, then, what is it? According to the street-level consensus, skating is an art form. No other activity reinterprets the urban environment so far beyond what architects and civic planners

LIKE JAZZ, IT'S PLAY AS ART, AND VICE VERSA

intended. Skaters get quite horny, for example, about an especially deep kerbstone, the incline of a paved bank, or the jumpable proximity of wheelie bin to a stone ledge. What's radical, though, is skating's rejection of the value system implicit in built landscapes, public spaces and all the other exchange commodities dedicated to civic pride, corporate grandiosity or the retail speed. It's play as art, and vice versa. The American skate-pro Bobby Paleo, 27, put it nicely: "For me, it was like discovering jazz – kinda boundaryless, with people improvising styles and tricks all over."

"But is skating one of the great art forms of recent times," Sidewalk's Niall Neeson asks, "or evidence of the Erasmification of youth culture, revelling in its brittleness?" Well, both. What's way off the mark, however, is the folk-devil view of skaters as street-corner liggers with easy access to all sorts of illicit commerce, including drugs. Heroin skateboards! Imagine how the judge might direct the jury. In reality, skaters are very wary of iffy urban scenarios chiefly because anyone going about with

£300 worth of board, shoes and mobile phone is a target for robbery. At dusk, the South Bank empties of skaters, and of their baggy-winch groupsies, as the dope-heads and mini-muggers come creeping in.

Skating's constituency is wider than ever, from 10-year-olds clear up to thirty-somethings. It's become a lifestyle choice, especially for those with portable skills. "Skating saved my life," said Brighton's Marcus Oakley, whose board graphics – of yep, for Heroin – is selling well. "In my Norfolk village I was going crazy. A shop there sells computers and line-dancing clothes, Confederate flags, Glen Campbell, all that." He shuddered: "Real cutting edge."

Alex "Pin" Osborne, 29, from Penzance, Cornwall, is a carpenter and itinerant skater. With others, he's travelled through Europe and America. "We'll see a photo of someplace in a magazine and we'll just go there and skate it," he said. "In California, I've slept in plazas and skate parks, but you'll usually hook up with local skaters and get a floor to sleep on." His best mate is Chris Palmer, 27. He has a degree in biology, but his addiction to skating was too strong. As well as managing Slam City Skates, in Covent Garden, he's now a professional with his own signature board.

Although increasing, female skaters are still very few. But it's not because of male chauvinism, says the writer and skater Tamsin Murray-Leach, 29. "Male or female, you get credit if you go far it, if you're obviously into it for the love of skating. But girls are still brought up to care about their appearance, and to avoid competition, danger and injury. It depends on what sort of person you are: there are those who'll happily sit on the ground and those who never would." Murray-Leach, currently in the US writing *The Rough Guide to Skiing and Snowboarding*, has routinely skated to and from work. "But in one large company I freelance for, I keep quiet about skating. It's seen as juvenile and unprofessional. I'd just put my board in my backpack, and get changed in the loo. Going home, I'd maybe stop at PlayStation (skate park) in Notting Hill. You get all ages there. Sometimes you help a younger kid, sometimes they help you. It's hard to imagine myself not skating now."

For all that, skating is undergoing a repressive phase. In the US, street skating has been illegal for some years and, in skate parks, police automatically issue tickets to those not wearing helmets and pads. At root, it's about insurance, liability and the culture of litigiousness. Here, too, skate parks are becoming increasingly expensive to insure. "When Tristan falls off his skateboard and breaks his wrist, Marnery now wants to sue the council," says Niall Neeson. "Whatever happened to the Latin invocation, 'No harm can come to those who are willing'? That is, if you're stupid enough to try something so insanely dangerous, and on hard ground with other skaters around, well, too bad."

Street skating is already illegal in the City of London, and in the centres of Manchester, Birmingham and Cardiff. Given all the falling off, of course, a board can shoot out from under a skater like a missile at shin height. No fun if you're a passing pedestrian. Although reckless with themselves, however, most skaters aren't so stupid as to invite prohibition. Usually they'll skate to their favourite spot and do their tricks there. Skaters are also plausible in their passion. For the special pleasure of night-skating corporate plazas, →

