8-23-2024

Subcultural Textuality: Skateboarding and the Politics of Subcultural Media

Simon Vangel
Syracuse University

Follow this and additional works at: https://surface.syr.edu/etd

ABSTRACT

Subcultural Textuality: Skateboarding and the Politics of Subcultural Media analyzes skateboarding media from the mid-1970s to the present, tracing how different textual strategies, material media formats, and discourses have formed shifting understandings of skateboarding's potential meanings as well as what identity positions are presented as "authentic" within the subculture. Skateboard media rely on what I term a subcultural textuality, a set of narratives and aesthetics which, by engaging with material media form, distribution processes, and historically specific understandings of both genre and mode, present engagement with the text as a subcultural act in and of itself. As a result, such textual engagement is not some ancillary aspect of subcultural participation or networking, but instead crucial for understanding skateboarding's subcultural narrative, its potentially authentic subject positions, and its fantasies of rebellion and domination in relation to a variety of mainstream norms and spaces. This project's chapters revolve around four main concerns and historical eras: magazine writing and photography in the 1970s, skate videos in the 1980s and 1990s, skateboarding's presence on reality television in the early-2000s, and finally contemporary documentaries focused on historicizing skateboarding eras and figures. In tracing this history, I reveal how the skateboarding subculture continuously reaffirms dominant conceptions of white masculinity even as it seeks to identify as resisting mainstream processes and identity politics, while also showing the subcultural potentials of each media format in their unique historical moments as skateboarding mediations constantly shift between different narratives, aesthetics, modes, and genres.

SUBCULTURAL TEXTUALITY: SKATEBOARDING AND THE POLITICS OF
SUBCULTURAL MEDIA

by

Simon Vangel

B.A., Syracuse University, 2016
MPhil, Syracuse University, 2022

Dissertation
Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in English

Syracuse University
August 2024

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

If I'm being perfectly honest, there were many moments in the dissertation process where I simply had no idea whether or not I was actually going to be able to finish the thing. In fact, there were a lot of things I had no idea about. When I came to Syracuse in the first place, twelve years, ago, I had no idea that I was going to get a doctorate, especially not one in English. I had no idea that I would come to call a city that eighteen-year-old me knew only for a bright color and zone defense my home. I had no idea that I would meet scholars, teachers, poets, gamers, and artists whose guidance, friendship, and sense of community would inspire me in ways I didn't think were possible. I had no idea if I could do any of this, but they did. This project doesn't exist without them. So, thanks. I owe you all a beer or maybe twelve.

The first round of acknowledgements goes to my committee, Roger Hallas, Will Scheibel, and Chris Hanson, as well as Theo Cateforis as the chair for my defense. I couldn't have written this dissertation without Roger, whose feedback and encouragement gave me the tools to follow a topic that is both my personal interest and intellectual curiosity. Further, his support and generosity have no doubt shaped my teaching and expanded my fields of knowledge far beyond what I ever imagined. I never expected to know as much about documentary or avant-garde and world cinema, and I'm sure he now knows more about skateboarding that he ever expected he would. Thanks to Will, whose seminars showed me new methodologies, taught me to ask different questions, and helped me see my strengths as a writer. I wouldn't have even applied to graduate school without Chris, who not only let me take his graduate course as an undergraduate, but also gave me the crucial inspiration and practical advice that showed me how to take a big leap of faith and invest in myself. Theo, thank you for agreeing to chair my defense and for your kindness every time we've crossed paths over the past several years. I'll never forget the time you impromptu belted out the chorus to Creed's "Higher" in the middle of an undergraduate class, which is just one example of the energy and enthusiasm from all four of these wonderful teachers that inspired me to take the path I did.

Obviously, some major thanks are due for the English Department overall and the several years of support from so many faculty and staff. Thanks to Crystal Bartolovich, Dorri Beam, Chris Forster, Mike Goode, Susan Edmonds, Patricia Roylance, Harvey Teres, and many others, for the immeasurable amount of feedback, discussions, letters of support, mock interviews (well actually, that is measurable: there were two), and all sorts of guidance over the years. Every seminar I took helped shape my love of the classroom and my belief that it is a space not just for learning, but also profound change and growth. Thank you all for the encouragement and challenges when you felt I needed them. You were right. Of course, I literally wouldn't have finished this degree without Terri Zollo, whose ability to make sense of an otherwise unfathomable university bureaucracy should be studied by future generations. Thanks for making sure no form went unsigned and for always, no matter how busy, pausing to talk about the game last night. That shit kept me sane.

I should ~~probably~~ definitely thank my parents, Shirley and Donald, for their love and support. They never tried to dissuade me from pursuing my goals, even when other paths seemed easier. On the contrary, they could not have encouraged me more enthusiastically every step of the way, patiently discussing every film, book, and minor grammatical detail of literally any piece of writing. In the time it took you to read this, they each already made a list of typos. Growing up, no idea in our house was ever presented without being subject to rigorous examination, which likely played no small role in my interest in and ability to write. If you aren't

iv

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIVE MATERIALS

INTRODUCTION

In July 2021, Meta (at the time still going by Facebook, Inc.) released a new advertising campaign that revolved around skateboarding, which was about to be featured as a competition at the Summer Olympics for the very first time. These advertisements, each promoting a specific Meta platform, emphasize that skateboarding is distinctly subcultural, with participants interested in forming networks with others who are similarly invested in a form of personal expression that differs from what is typically offered by "mass" cultural modes (fig. 0.1).[1] The advertisement for the Instagram platform is titled, "The Evolution of the No Comply," the name of a skateboarding trick that requires one to kick down with their back foot as one would for a typical flat ground jump, also known as an "ollie."[2] However, instead of merely jumping, the skater instead simultaneously places their front foot on the ground, then eventually lands with both feet back on the board.[3] This obviously dramatically changes the aesthetic of a typical ollie, but it also gives the rider more flexibility when navigating on to, off of, or around various objects, such as rails or ledges. Further, it provides the opportunity to perform numerous variations. With one's front foot on the ground, the back foot is free to spin the board in essentially any direction. In the advertisement for Instagram, in between glamorous wide-angle drone shots, slow pans, and GoPro style close-ups of rotating skateboards as riders perform versions of the no comply, skaters from a variety of different identity positions elaborate on the trick's significance. Speaking to the camera testimonial style in different locations, each with most of their body

[1] Kendra Barnett, "Facebook Rides into Tokyo Games with New Skateboarding Campaign," The Drum, July 19, 2021, https://www.thedrum.com/news/2021/07/19/facebook-rides-tokyo-games-with-new-skateboarding-campaign. The Tokyo Games are also referred to as the "2020 Summer Olympics," which took place in 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
[2] The 30-second version of the advertisement is available on the Instagram Facebook page. See: Instagram, "Peep the No Comply skateboarding trick you've probably seen people sharing…," Facebook, video post, July 20, 2021, https://www.facebook.com/instagram/videos/the-evolution-of-the-no-comply/186289690204223/. The extended version of the advertisement is not available on any official Meta account, but has been uploaded by others. For example, see: "'No Comply' – Instagram," Vimeo, July 21, 2021, https://vimeo.com/577665609.
[3] "How-To Skateboarding: No Comply with Tony Hawk & Mike Vallely," YouTube, Apr. 20, 2012, https://youtu.be/dewL9m9SkEw?si=SiRfAsE4buhM077i.

visible in the frame, the skaters emphasize the trick's name and its connection to a broader

subcultural narrative of noncompliance and personal identity.[4] The no comply's flexibility for

navigating a specific environment or performing any number of variations with the board itself

offers the skater an opportunity to create an intimate style in order to express their identity within

the skateboarding subculture. However, what is even more significant is that this advertisement,

for a social platform that relies on visual media, foregrounds mediation of the act of

skateboarding as the key element of one's personal expression. A skater can develop their own

versions of the no comply based on their identity, surroundings, and ability, but it is the

production and circulation of that practice through a media text that is integral for fulfilling

skateboarding's subcultural narratives and actually participating in the subculture.

We change the game when we find each other.

FIGURE 0.1 Meta's tagline for Instagram's "No Comply" advertisement – "We change the game when we find each other." Screen capture from Vimeo.

---

[4] Ken Gelder, *Subcultures: Cultural Histories and Practices* (New York: Routledge, 2007). "Subcultural narrative" refers to the narratives told by and about various subcultures, including from those within and outside of subcultural groups. This term is meant to acknowledge the way subcultural practices and texts can be interpreted, yet also that such interpretations are constructed narratives and should be considered differently from ethnographic approaches that attempt to tell us what subcultural participants themselves think is their significance.

A cynic might attribute this to the fact that this is an advertisement for Instagram, foregrounding media creation and networking in ways that detract from skateboarding as a subcultural act and community on its own. While the narrative in Meta's advertising is obviously shaped to promote their own social media platforms, skateboarding has always been a subculture that is extremely invested in its own mediation. Throughout its history, skateboarding has embraced nearly every possible media format, including fiction and nonfiction literary forms, photography, narrative and documentary film, reality television, video games, numerous analog and digital video formats, and plenty more, including social media platforms such as Instagram. In fact, the more individual nature of Instagram, especially when compared to magazines or older video formats such as videocassettes, has dramatically changed the way media circulates within the skateboarding subculture. Recently, skateboarding outlets like *Jenkem Magazine* have even published pieces debating whether or not Instagram will remain the digital "home" for the subculture in light of new platforms, such as TikTok.[5] Participation in the skateboarding subculture has always fundamentally revolved around the production and distribution of media texts across a wide variety of formats. Further, given skateboarding's long media history dating back to some of the very first boards in the 1950s and potentially even earlier, changing media formats has meant the subculture has, over time, moved through numerous narrative modes, rapidly changing aesthetics, and different reception practices.[6] For each era, mediation has had significant implications for skateboarding's subcultural narrative and the possible identity positions that may claim to be authentic within the subculture.

---

[5] Alexis Castro, "Will TikTok be the New Home for Skateboarding on the Internet," *Jenkem Magazine,* Sept. 13, 2023, https://www.jenkemmag.com/home/2023/09/13/will-tiktok-be-the-new-home-for-skateboarding-on-the-internet/.
[6] Iain Borden, *Skateboarding and the City: A Complete History* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), 5-11.

This project traces skateboarding mediations at different periods in the subculture's history and considers how each period's media texts produce subcultural narratives of fantasy regarding skateboarding's potential meanings and situate certain identity positions as inherently or especially authentic. Over time, the skateboarding subculture shifts between different media forms as it seeks new ways to document itself and its constantly changing narratives and aesthetics. Each media format ultimately produces a different understanding of the subculture's potential and a different fantasy for subcultural readers, viewers, and/or users. In order to consider how different imaginations or documentations function within skateboarding eras, this analysis recognizes such media texts as not merely elements of subcultural networking or otherwise secondary to the physical act of skateboarding. Instead, I argue that mediations and engagement with said mediations are just as integral for the subculture as actual skateboarding. These different historical moments produce shifting understandings of what I term a "subcultural textuality," the strategies that mark textual engagement as itself a subcultural act. In doing so, this form of media textuality garners notions of fantasy, frequently engaging with subculturally specific modes of reception and situating the text as crucial to not only subcultural belonging, but also understandings of subcultural meaning and significance in relation to mainstream discourses. Skateboarding is, to many, a fundamentally disruptive subculture, seeking to use spaces and objects in ways they are not typically used as well as constantly attempting to develop new techniques with the skateboard itself. The subculture's ever-changing ways of documenting itself ultimately reflect both its own fantasies of disruption and progression as well as the broader fantasies of each media format's potential to either challenge media norms or promise users a variety of new affordances.

This project thus requires attention to the formal elements of a text, such as its particular aesthetics, genre, or narrative modes, but also involves broader contexts, including methods of production, materiality, distribution processes, reception practices, transmedia relationships, and more. For subcultural media, these various contexts are often just as crucial as a text's narratives or aesthetics for framing engagement as a uniquely subcultural experience. In terms of skateboarding, different eras and media formats mean dramatically different ways of producing a sense of subcultural textuality for the reader, viewer, user or any potential combination of those categories. Often, this textuality engages with mainstream understandings of how a particular media form typically functions within that historical moment. For example, skate videos, one of key media texts for the skateboarding subculture, not only have unique aesthetics, but also shift between different narrative and generic modes, encouraging reception practices that go beyond passive and linear viewing. In doing so, skate videos engage with both mainstream and subcultural conceptions of what "video"–as either a material format or discursive understanding– has the potential to offer in contrast to other moving image formats, such as traditional film or television. Further, skate video's subcultural textuality is historically specific. While 1980s skate videos, such as *The Search for Animal Chin* (Stacy Peralta, 1987), engage with narrative films (or perhaps more appropriately, "movies,"), the era's notions of televisual "flow," and new modes of reception encouraged by the videocassette format, later eras of skate video embrace different material and cultural understandings of video. A late-1990s skate video has more in common aesthetically with contemporaneous gonzo pornography than it does with a mid-1980s skate video. In each historical moment, skate video's subcultural textuality promises the viewer a historically specific fantasy of what it means to identify as a skateboarder and how engagement with the video text fits into that subcultural narrative. Ultimately, this framing recognizes that

different historical, social, industrial, and material contexts are crucial elements of how subcultures choose to mediate themselves, how such texts form transmedia relationships with the subculture's representation in the mainstream, and how different textual strategies and modes of engagement garner shifting notions of subcultural fantasy.

To many, Meta's "No Comply" Instagram advertisement would not constitute a subcultural text simply because it is just that, an advertisement for a platform run by one of the world's largest media and technological conglomerates. If a text is so blatantly part of a capitalist process, it seems counterintuitive to suggest it could potentially function as an expression of subcultural identity. However, as the tension between subculture and post-subculture scholars shows, nearly all subcultures are entangled with capitalist processes, either because they literally require certain commodities or participants signal their involvement by adopting certain aesthetic objects. Skateboarding is no exception. If anything, it is perhaps especially commoditized. Even at its most basic level, skateboarding requires purchasing particular manufactured products (at least decks, trucks, wheels, and, if one wishes, protective gear such as a helmet and pads). Further, many skateboarding media texts, including nearly all skate videos, *are* advertisements for companies that sell not just skateboard gear, but also apparel and various other merchandise. That such texts are part of capitalist processes and aim to encourage the viewer to purchase certain commodities does not necessarily limit their ability to also function as subcultural experiences. In fact, although one might not initially compare companies that produce skateboard products to a conglomerate like Meta, many, including apparel companies such as Nike or Vans and beverage companies such as Red Bull or Monster Energy, are transnational corporations and either are themselves or parts of massive international conglomerates. Throughout

skateboarding's history, media texts have served to promote or are themselves commodities while still producing a subcultural textual experience.
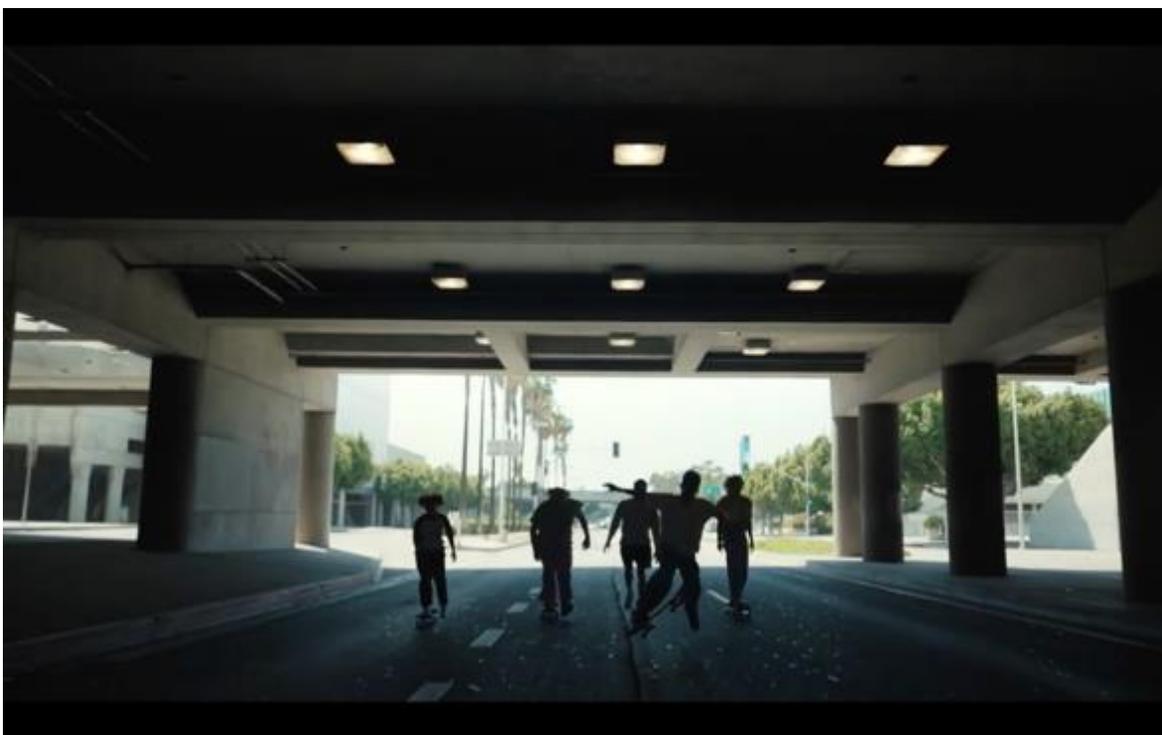
FIGURE 0.2 A group of skaters (the one in front in the midst of performing a no comply) shot from a distance in Meta's "No Comply" advertisement. Screen capture from Vimeo.

It is not that Meta's "No Comply" advertisement is somehow disqualified from being a subcultural text because it promotes Meta and the Instagram platform more specifically, but it does perhaps fail to align with the skateboarding subculture's existing textual strategies and modes of reception. For example, the high definition long-shots of skateboarders with slow and smooth pans, tilts, or dolly movement do not resemble the handheld and often lower-fidelity close-up video shots typically captured for a skate video. Shot from such a distance, individual riders and groups of skateboarders seem oddly disconnected from the environment around them (fig. 0.2). This is in sharp contrast to skate videos, which feature stylized close-ups that pay special attention to the surfaces and objects a skater navigates, especially since certain locations

have important subculture legacies and appear repeatedly in skate media.[7] When "No Comply" does feature close-ups that allow greater attention to the actual skateboarding, it frequently makes use of rapid edits–matching the action of different skaters as they perform the same trick– or GoPro's attached to the board, making the entire frame spin (fig. 0.3). Although rapid cuts, various montage styles, and stylized close-ups are common in skateboarding media, these editing and cinematographic strategies do not allow the viewer to pay careful attention to the technique of each individual skater. In this way, Meta neglects the subcultural use value of audio-visual skate mediations, where close-ups and repetitive montages can be used by the viewer to learn new skate techniques and understand nuances that are less visible to the naked eye. On the other hand, the snippets of dialogue that one hears from the advertisement's testimonials *do* foreground subcultural narratives of rebellion and individuality. This theme of skateboarding as fundamentally about noncompliance does seem to engage with the promise that the subculture allows one various freedoms of expression. However, the way the advertisement foregrounds what it calls a "punk rock ethos" for both skateboarding in general and the no comply in particular seem disconnected from the rest of the aesthetics, which fail to allow the viewer to connect to the trick's nuances, the very reason in enables noncompliance. Thus, "No Comply" may propose a discursive understanding of what skateboarding's subcultural fantasy is, but such fantasy does not seem grounded in actual engagement with the text.

---

[7] Duncan McDuie-Ra, *Skateboard Video: Archiving the City form Below* (Gateway East: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 28-9.

FIGURE 0.3 A GoPro shot from "No Comply," the entire frame spinning and the skater hardly visible. Screen capture from Vimeo.

In foregrounding subcultural textuality and the shifts across skateboarding's different eras, modes, and media formats, this analysis builds from a variety of scholarly disciplines. Firstly, since I consider a wide range of media texts and formats, including written texts, photography, different forms of video, television, film, and more, my conception of textuality comes from film and media scholarship. Given that this approach requires comparing texts across historical moments and considering how material media formats engage with historically specific modes of reception, I prioritize approaches to textuality that allow for consideration of paratexts as well as social and media industrial contexts. Paratexts are always important, but perhaps especially so for skateboarding, a highly mediated subculture that relies on consumption of different media formats, all of which maintain crucial industrial and aesthetic transmedia relationships with one another. Secondly, this requires a unique approach to subcultures, reaching

across subculture and post-subculture studies in order to consider the textual strategies and both political and ideological implications of the skateboarding subculture while also incorporating the broader forms of research, such as media industry history, that post-subcultural approaches encourage. Although my use of "subcultural textuality" does retain "subculture" as a framing device for analyzing how textual strategies form ideological positions and situate certain claims to authenticity, post-subcultural understandings of the intersection of consumerism and subcultural belonging are still key. Lastly, I of course utilize various scholars interested in skateboarding, including many within the still nascent field of skateboarding studies. By combining all of these approaches, this project provides an interdisciplinary understanding of subcultural media. This emphasis on media and textuality builds upon existing approaches to the skateboarding subculture while proposing new understandings that can benefit not only scholars interested in skateboarding, but also other subcultures, independent media, and shifting representations of race, class, and gender across different media forms and historical moments ranging from the mid-1970s to the present.

Media and Textuality

This fairly broad conception of what constitutes "textuality" builds from twenty-first century film and media studies scholarship invested in various forms of media convergence in our contemporary moment. Many of these works utilize Gerard Genette's now famous theorization of "paratexts," the surrounding elements of a text which in various ways enable it to take on both material and discursive forms.[8] Although Genette focuses on literary texts, he has proven useful for a plethora of scholars interested in considering film and media texts in an age

---

[8] Gerard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 1.

where one experiences so many different media forms both constantly and across a variety of different devices. For traditional film scholarship, such approaches have in part sprung from anxieties regarding the "death" of film as a medium in what is now a decisively digital age. Now that films are screened theatrically with digital projectors or downloaded or streamed for private viewing on digital televisions, smartphones, tablets, or computers (and the dividing lines between those technologies are themselves increasingly blurred), the past twenty years has seen scholars increasingly invested in the various media paratexts that surround the traditional film text itself. For example, Jonathan Gray has gone so far as to call this a form of "off-screen studies," so that one may "make sense of the wealth of other entities that saturate the media, and that construct film and television."[9] Many scholars, such as Barbara Klinger, Chuck Tryon, Charles Acland, have used this opportunity to analyze shifting modes of film and media reception in the twenty-first century's rapidly converging digital media landscape.[10] Naturally, attention to the way both media culture and the actual media industry have changed has necessitated looking at how paratexts engage with these new forms of textuality. Just as Gray argues that paratexts are necessary for one to make sense of how texts and textual formats are constructed, this project frequently utilizes paratexts, which often engage with similar aesthetics or serve as explicitly connected promotional material, in order to make sense of the textual implications within different eras of the skateboarding subculture.

Although this project focuses more narrowly on the mediation of the skateboarding subculture, my conception of subcultural textuality is one that reaches across various subcultures and media formats. Therefore, while I do not attempt to theorize media consumption or reception

---

[9] Jonathan Gray, *Show Sold Separately: Promos, Spoilers, and Other Media Paratexts* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 4.

[10] Barbara Klinger *Beyond the Multiplex: Cinema, New Technologies, and the Home* (Berkely: University of California Press, 2006); Chuck Tryon, *Reinventing Cinema: Movies in the Age of Media Convergence* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2009); Charles Acland, *Screen Traffic: Movies, Multiplexes, and Global Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).

across film and media at large as the aforementioned scholars do, a textual model that factors in paratexts, materiality, and modes of reception does ultimately consider media platforms and consumption in a broader context. This focus on textual strategies emphasizes the function of media texts themselves and how they connote specific understandings of skate fantasy and authenticity. Historically, scholars have typically used Hollywood cinema as their way to approach media as fantasy. Such analyses have centered around the studio system and ideology, issues of spectatorship, representation of various societal taboos, the spatial dynamics and economic power of Hollywood, and numerous other concerns.[11] However, at different historical moments, various other modes of filmmaking and other media forms have certainly produced notions of fantasy for readers, viewers, or users, seeking to engage with their desires and politics. Given that such an understanding of fantasy is necessarily historically specific, this project utilizes various forms of historical contexts so as to enlighten the ways these textual strategies engage with subcultural understandings of media formats and their potential to connote historically shifting fantasies. Since mediation of the skateboarding subculture changes dramatically over the past half-century, this is necessarily interdisciplinary. I draw from the historical and industrial analysis of many different media forms, each with their own complex narratives and with scholarship that utilizes a variety of methodologies. In tracing this half-century of skateboarding subcultural media, I identify a gradual shift from an initial embrace of fiction to more frequent adoption of different nonfiction modes. By continuously seeking to

---

[11] Ronald L. Davis, *The Glamour Factory: Inside Hollywood's Big Studio System* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1993); Tim Murray, *Like a Film: Ideological Fantasy on Screen, Camera, and Canvas* (London: Routledge, 1993); Carl Plantinga, *Moving Viewers: American Film and the Spectator's Experience* (Berkely: University of California Press, 2009); Susan Courtney, *Hollywood Fantasies of Miscegenation: Spectacular Narratives of Gender and Race, 1903-1967* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Aida Hozic: *Hollyworld: Space, Power, and Fantasy in the American Economy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001); Leo Braudy, *The Hollywood Sign: Fantasy and Reality of an American Icon* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011); Paul Young, *The Cinema Dreams Its Rivals: Media Fantasy Films from Radio to the Internet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

reflect the desires and politics of subcultural participants, skateboarding media primarily (except at moments of peak mainstream popularity) veers away from modes such as Hollywood filmmaking, and instead to genres and media formats that can produce notions of fantasy more relevant to the lived experiences of those subcultural viewers.

Ultimately, one of the goals of this project is that, by reaching across media scholarship's various modes and methodologies, we may begin to uncover the significance of the skateboarding subculture at various transitional moments in media history. It is not uncommon for scholars to situate independent, subcultural, or otherwise marginal filmmaking or other artistic audiovisual movements at the forefront of drastic changes in media production and reception practices. For example, various scholars have situated classical-era exploitation films, 1960s avant-garde cinema, 1980s low-budget horror, and virtually every period of pornography as filmmaking movements that were prototypical in their use of new production methods and technologies or the way their aesthetics and modes acknowledge shifts in reception.[12] As a result, although these are marginal film modes or genres, their significances often connect to film and media culture at large. Skateboarding, despite being a subculture that has relied on mediation throughout transitional moments in media history, has rarely seen sustained critical attention from media scholars. From the rise of niche consumer magazines in the 1970s, the shift to video culture in the 1980s, the new era of reality television in the end of the cable era in the 2000s, and finally the recent explosion of documentary films and docuseries on streaming platforms,

---

[12] Eric Schaefer, *Bold! Daring! Shocking! True: A History of Exploitation Films, 1919-1959* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999); *Sleaze Artists: Cinema at the Margins of Taste, Style, and Politics,* ed. Jeffrey Sconce (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007); Juan Antonio Suárez, *Bike Boys, Drag Queens, & Superstars: Avant-Garde, Mass Culture, and Gay Identities in the 1960s Underground Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996); David James, *Allegories of Cinema: American Film in the Sixties* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989); Joan Hawkins, *Cutting Edge: Art-Horror and the Horrific Avant-Garde* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000); Caetlin Benson-Allott, *Killer Tapes and Shattered Screens: Video Spectatorship from VHS to File Sharing* (Berkely; University of California Press, 2013); David Church, *Disposable Passions: Vintage Pornography and the Material Legacies of Adult Cinema* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016); Lucas Hildebrand, *Inherent Vice: Bootleg Histories of Videotape and Copyright* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009).

skateboarding's media history is intertwined with more expansive changes in the media industry and related shifts in reception practices. Over the course of these different eras, skateboarding media moves from fictional fantasies of spatial domination to fantasies based in contemporary reality or historical nostalgia. Thus, this project not only shifts conversations of fantasy away from mainstream Hollywood cinema, but also further reveals the subcultural functions of these different media forms and the implications of their various modes of reception.

Subcultures, Post-Subcultures, and Skateboarding

Although this framing prioritizes media studies, skateboarding's profoundly subcultural textual strategies require building from the complex and contradicting fields of both subculture and post-subculture studies. The ideological interrogation of subcultural texts and practices spawns primarily from scholars such as Dick Hebdige and Stuart Hall, whose works are associated with the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS).[13] Hebdige in particular is notable for interpreting various subcultural practices, such as punk fashion bricolage, as exemplifying pockets of ideological resistance to capitalism. Such a claim necessarily relies on textual analysis in order to position subcultures as potentially fruitful forms of ideological critique. Since the CCCS, many scholars have attempted to address what they see as blind spots in both the arguments–which are often too binary in their framings of either subversion or complicity–and methodology, since such analysis is potentially far removed from actual subcultural participants. For example, Sarah Thornton's ethnographic study of British dance club cultures utilizes Pierre Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital by recognizing that subcultures have their own "taste" cultures that cannot be wholly divorced from more

---

[13] Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London: Methuen, 1979); *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain*, eds. Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson (London: Routledge, 1993).

mainstream consumerism.[14] In reframing this as an exploration of "*sub*cultural capital," Thornton states that, in contrast to the CCCS, she attempts "to problematize the notion of authenticity and see various media and businesses as integral to the authentication of cultural practices. Here, commercial culture and popular culture are not only inextricable in practice, but also in theory" (9). Building from Thornton's canonical work, many scholars have suggested that the days of subcultural ideological critique are over, posing instead that ethnographic, historical, or media industry analysis of such practices should adopt a "post-subculture" approach that, as Thornton does, considers how subcultural practices and capitalism are intertwined rather than working against or coopting one another. David Muggleton and Rupert Weinzierl acknowledge Thornton alongside others considered influential for post-subculture studies, including Judith Butler and Michael Maffesoli.[15] Muggleton and Weinzierl state that all of these present different pathways toward doing away with the CCCS' "heroic" framing of subcultures as inherently resistant. Instead, such practices are, in reality, far more fluid. Participants are often engaging in consumerism, whether to earn themselves subcultural capital, to revel in some form of performativity or parody, or simply as a way of identifying as part of a collective "tribe," as Maffesoli posits.[16] These varying theorizations and methodologies all have their uses for different sets of scholars. However, what they share is that they all complicate our notion of what constitutes subcultural practice. Whether to interrogate how subcultures are formed, how they develop notions of authenticity, how they function politically in terms of race, gender, and

---

[14] Sarah Thornton, *Club Cultures: Music, Media, and Subcultural Capital,* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1996).

[15] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London: Routledge, 1990) and Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (London: Routledge, 1993), Michael Maffesoli, *The Time of the Tribes: The Decline of Individualism in Mass Society* (London: Sage, 1996).

[16] David Muggleton and Rupert Weinzierl, "What is 'Post-subcultural studies' Anyway," in *The Post-Subcultures Reader,* eds. David Muggleton and Rupert Weinzierl (New York: Berg, 2003), 9-12.

sexuality, or represent postmodern forms of group identification, all of these framings reject the notion that "subculture" can be equated with "anti-mainstream" or "anti-capitalism."

By retaining a focus on textual analysis while utilizing historical, industrial, and social contexts, this project combines the subculture and post-subculture studies approaches. The textual strategies of skateboarding's mediations are decisively subcultural in that they frame engagement with the text as not just part of subcultural participation, but key to understanding the subculture's narratives, fantasies, and authentic identity positions. To argue that such textual strategies are subcultural is not to say they are necessarily resistant to capitalism or otherwise dominant norms in terms of race, gender, class, or other categories. On the contrary, this analysis will reveal that the skateboarding subculture often relies on dominant norms–white masculinity in particular–in its narrative or aesthetic claims to anti-mainstream status. Within skateboarding magazine articles, videos, television series, or documentaries, formal strategies position the text as maintaining a subcultural use value that in various ways goes beyond the media format's typical functions. Often, this is in fact a resistant stance. However, that does not mean that either the textual strategies or their implications are by default resistant to dominant norms. By combining these two approaches, this analysis attempts to further reveal the layers to such textual claims to resistance and the political implications of the way texts frame certain identity positions as authentic. Of course, doing any proper sort of textual analysis of skateboarding mediations requires building from skateboarding scholarship.

The scholarship on skateboarding comes from a variety of different fields, including not only subculture/post-subculture studies and broader cultural or American studies, but also a

variety of more specific fields such as architectural studies, religion, kinesiology, and more.[17]

Only recently have scholars begun synthesizing these different works and putting forth

"skateboard studies," as its own discipline.[18] Since scholarly approaches to skateboarding vary so

widely, the subculture's ideologies, political implications, and framings of both its history and

contemporary status are still very much up for debate. Iain Borden, whose history of the

skateboarding subculture is the most comprehensive in terms of academic work, was one of the

first to propose an ideological interpretation from his architectural studies perspective. For

Borden, skateboarding represents a Marxist impulse, since it "involves a critique of the process

of exchange and consumption in the modern city, and, above all else, proposes a reassertion of

use values as opposed to exchange values."[19] The act of skateboarding rejects the "exchange"

values associated with capitalist logic and replaces them with "use" values, opening up new

understandings of urban space. Borden argues that city spaces become humanized when

skateboarders wrest them from capitalist development and control. The temporal element of this

claim is also key, as skateboarding is an act relying on discontinuity. Skaters move from place to

place and take turns in one location, starting, stopping, and repeating maneuvers only because

they want to, in contrast to capitalism's purposefully efficient and orderly rhythms intended to

maximize capital growth (260). Borden states:

> The tactics here are both spatial and temporal, seizing specific spaces for small periods of
> time; skateboarding is thus rhythmically out-of-step with the dominant routines of the
> city…, creating a counter-rhythm of moves and runs. Skateboarding shows that the
> temporality of appropriation is different to that of ownership, seeking an active, moving
> time related to the specific needs and actions of urban dwellers. (263)

[17] Konstantin Butz, *Grinding California: Culture and Corporeality in American Skate Punk* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2012); Kyle Kusz, *Revolt of the White Athlete: Race, Media, and the Emergence of Extreme Athletes in America* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007); Paul O'Connor, *Skateboarding and Religion* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020); Sean Brayton, "Back-Lash': Revisiting the 'White Negro' Through Skateboarding," *Sociology of Sport Journal* 22, no. 3 (2005): 356-72; Lorne Platt, "Rhythms of Urban Space: Skateboarding the Canyons, Plains, and Asphalt-Banked Schoolyards of Coastal Los Angeles in the 1970s," *Mobilities* 13 no. 6 (2018), 825-843.
[18] *Skateboard Studies,* eds. Konstantin Butz and Christian Peters, (Cologne: Walther König, 2018).
[19] Iain Borden, "Performing the City" in *The Subcultures Reader,* ed. Ken Gelder (New York: Routledge, 2005), 261.

Thus, skateboarding's radical spatiotemporal logics represent a Marxist impulse and revive the

"dead labour contained in the city's means of production" (260). Since skateboarding celebrates

architectural anomalies or particularities, such a reviving of "dead" labor refuses to let urban

space become valued only for its contribution to capitalist exchange.

However, post-subculture scholars would likely be quick to point out the obvious here:

not every actual skateboarder identifies as a Marxist or sees the act of skateboarding to even have

this potential. As stated previously, many of skateboarding's subcultural mediations are explicitly

commodities and within them promote a variety of additional commodities. Further, the

subculture's complex relationship with capitalism is mirrored in the complexity of its broader

anti-mainstream discursive stance. Just as skateboarding maintains the potential to critique

capitalism while fundamentally being a capitalist business, it is a subculture that claims to reject

the mainstream standards of race and gender while at the same time producing material that

nearly everyone would agree is racist, sexist, or both.[20] For some, this has been a point of

critique.[21] The subculture's insistence that it resists mainstream norms has at best relied on the

dominant white masculine subject position and at worst actively framed nonwhite and nonmale

skateboarders as inauthentic. This project's textual analysis reveals deeper layers to these claims,

considering the textual function of both implicit and explicitly racist or sexist language and

iconography, the changes and revisions as the subculture begins to historicize itself, and what

this all means for skateboarding's subcultural fantasy and authenticity at different historical

moments. Post-subculture scholars have typically relied on ethnographic approaches in order to

---

[20] Chris Nieratko, "Skateboarding's Most Provocative Graphics," *Vice,* Aug. 22, 2014,
https://www.vice.com/en/article/4w77bn/skateboardings-most-provocative-graphics. For the book the article discusses, which is out of print, see: Seb Carayol, *Agents Provocateurs: 100 Subversive Skateboarding Graphics* (Richmond: Gingko Press, 2014).
[21] Becky Beal, "Disqualifying the Official: An Exploration of Social Resistance Through the Subculture of Skateboarding," *Sociology of Sport Journal* 12, no. 3 (1995): 252-267; Matthew Atencio and Becky Beal, "Beautiful Losers: The Symbolic Exhibition and Legitimization of Outsider Masculinity," *Sport in Society* 14, no. 1 (2011): 1-16.

address the complexities of the skateboarding subculture's identity politics and its simultaneously diverse yet restricting notions of subcultural authenticity. For example, Emily Chivers Yochim argues that this particular "discursive flexibility," allows "skateboarding fans to imagine themselves as both inside and outside of dominant culture and consequently as both resistant to and in possession of dominant modes of power."[22] Chivers Yochim's work recognizes that skateboarding's subcultural identity politics are even more complex when attempting to analyze the lived experiences of the subculture's actual participants. For post-subculture scholars, this complexity extends to the discursive function of skateboard mediations. The political implications of such a wide range of texts–from skate videos produced by independent skateboard companies to mass media representations of skateboarding distributed by international conglomerates, such as the *Jackass* franchise's films and television series–become even more complicated as they circulate amongst skaters and over periods of time. Post-subcultural ethnographic analysis attempts to make sense of how these mediations ultimately have dramatically different meanings for different groups of skateboarders. As Chivers Yochim does with "discursive flexibility," ethnography often foregrounds the skateboarding subculture's fluidity. Not only does the subculture shift in and out of dominant cultural norms and modes of power, but ethnographic research reveals that participants read skateboard mediations in contradictory ways, often supporting or resisting various norms based on their own identity positions or reception contexts.

Subcultural Textuality Overview

---

[22] Emily Chivers Yochim, *Skate Life: Re-Imagining White Masculinity* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010), 28.

In the following project, I build from all of these approaches and form a conception of subcultural textuality that synthesizes formal elements, industrial and historical contexts, and modes of reception in order to further unravel the complex and contradictory framings of fantasy and authenticity within the skateboarding subculture. Given that post-subcultural scholars such as Chivers Yochim and others have revealed that the skateboarding subculture's complexities means that participants use the subculture's media texts in different ways, this calls for a return to a textual methodology that considers such contexts and modes of reception. In doing so, I attempt to address the following questions. Firstly, how does textuality engender a subcultural experience? How does that textuality engage with media forms and the associated modes of reception? How do these factors change over time and, combined, how do they shape our understanding of the subcultural fantasies that skateboarding mediations offer? What identity positions are depicted in or assumed by these texts and how does that affect the accessibility or inaccessibility of conceptions of both fantasy and authenticity? By exploring these questions at different historical moments, this analysis reveals shifts in skateboarding's subcultural narrative across time and contextualizes how these media function formally. This project is divided into four sections, each of which explores a particular era of the skateboarding subculture and its associated distinct textuality, fantasy, and conceptions of authenticity. While the first two chapters explore, respectively, the mid-1970s and mid- to late-1980s, the final two chapters look at the twenty-first century, both in terms of how mediations address the subculture's contemporary formations and also how such works begin to reflect on and historicize those previous eras. Ultimately, I identify a slow-moving shift from fiction to nonfiction modes as the subcultural experiments with different modes of fantasy and frameworks for skateboarding's ability to manipulate different spaces and produce meaning for subcultural participants.

To many, the mid-1970s represents the beginning of skateboarding as a subculture, rather than a mainstream leisure activity. As a result, this project's first chapter takes a look at this mid-1970s period and, more specifically, writer and photographer Craig Stecyk's articles about Los Angeles' Venice Beach "Dogtown" skaters in *SkateBoarder Magazine.* Titled, "Skate Nazis and Playgrounds of Unlimited Potential: Craig Stecyk, *SkateBoarder Magazine,* and the Unattainable Fantasy of Dogtown," this chapter proposes that Stecyk's work, though it frequently criticizes skateboarding's commercialization, ultimately presents the Dogtown skaters as dominant figures in an unattainable fictionalized fantasy space that relies on white racial superiority. Stecyk's stylized photography and fictional narratives that resemble works from other New Journalism or "gonzo" writers, such as Tom Wolfe or Hunter S. Thompson, marks the "Dogtown articles"–as they are known within the subculture–as distinct subcultural texts within *Skateboarder.* While the magazine as a whole is a consumer product in an era when niche consumer magazines are on the rise, the distinct textual strategies of Stecyk's Dogtown articles mean that to read them is to consider skateboarding's subcultural narratives and aesthetics, rather than actually learn about skate techniques, products, or results from recent contests. However, Stecyk's complex narratives, layered references, and pseudonym usage position his fantasy of skateboarder's as dominant figures in a wasteland wrecked by capitalism as illegible for the vast majority of readers, and perhaps legible only to those already within Dogtown, a name that Stecyk himself coined. Further, his use of white supremacist language and iconography ultimately restricts the possibly authentic identity positions within the subculture, suggesting Dogtown can only be dominated by white male skaters despite the fact that, in reality, nonwhite and nonmale skaters were major figures in this influential subcultural moment. With these claims, this chapter unravels the political implications and gatekeeping functions of some of the skateboarding

subculture's most canonical mediations and, further, considers how these textual strategies reverberate in later eras.

My second chapter moves ahead to the next and perhaps most significant development in skateboarding's subcultural textuality, the creation of skate videos. Simultaneous with the videocassette recorder's growing ubiquity in American households, skate videos began to appear in the early- to mid-1980s and, by the end of the decade, had ushered in both changes in aesthetics and a newfound mainstream popularity for the skateboarding subculture. This chapter, titled, "The Bones Brigade and *The Search for Animal Chin*: Subcultural Textuality in the Early Skate Video Era," analyzes the earliest skate videos made primarily by former Dogtown skater Stacy Peralta and featuring a group of skaters known as the "Bones Brigade." Peralta's Bones Brigade videos develop new aesthetics and narratives while shifting between a variety of modes and genres, acknowledging the subcultural potentialities of video as a decisively new mode of reception different from existing film and television. This analysis focuses on a well-known Bones Brigade feature that is still considered an iconic skate video, *The Search for Animal Chin. Animal Chin* uses skate montages to connect its plot in a video that shifts jarringly between narrative filmmaking, nonfiction/documentary modes, avant-garde cinema, televisual music videos, and other genres. In order to contextualize *Animal Chin*'s new and, in comparison to *SkateBoarder* and the Dogtown articles, slightly more malleable subcultural fantasy, I analyze framings of video in the skateboard magazine *Thrasher* during the 1980s and trace the history of skate video's formal and industrial roots in both surf film and narrative cinema. *Animal Chin*'s subcultural textuality still centers a white masculine subject position. However, as a commodity on its own, the video presents a more malleable and attainable fantasy for its viewers,

encouraging them to use the text however they please and form their own fantasies and conceptions of authenticity within the skateboarding subculture.

This project's third chapter, "Skate Video to Reality TV: Fantasies of Domestic Domination in *Viva La Bam,*" moves to the twenty-first century, analyzing skateboarder and *Jackass* cast member Bam Margera's popular reality series, *Viva La Bam* (MTV, 2003-2006). *Viva La Bam* is not properly understood without tracing the history of skate video as it shifts from 1980s video aesthetics to newer low-fidelity nonfiction modes, namely reality television and internet or videotape gonzo pornography. As skate video becomes more grounded in nonfiction, *Viva La Bam* represents skateboarding as an all-encompassing, twenty-four hours a day fantasy that now extends beyond public urban spaces and into both rural and suburban environments as well as the private domestic space. The series presents Bam Margera's authenticity as not residing in his skateboarding ability, but instead his desire to treat everyone and everything in his life as a potential prank, contest, skit, or opportunity to skate. Reality television's surveillance apparatus becomes a new way of restricting the subculture's authentic identity positions, and Margera himself becomes a new standard of authenticity that relies on white masculinity. He consistently dominates and mocks female cast members (his mother and girlfriend in particular), other cultures, and nonwhite guest stars. Further, this chapter shifts the scholarly conversation that is typically focused on the *Jackass* franchise*,* instead using *Viva La Bam* to both illuminate the way *Jackass'* cultural moment is formally and industrially inseparable from skateboarding's media history and additionally reveals how *Viva La Bam* makes some of *Jackass'* political implications even more explicit and reductive.

In my final chapter, I identify a contrasting textuality in contemporary skateboarding documentaries. Titled, "A History Lesson': Subcultural Archives and Nostalgic Fantasies in the

Skateboarding Sports Documentary," this chapter analyzes the rhetorical strategies in documentaries that historicize the subculture's previous eras. In it, I return to works by Stacy Peralta, such as the documentaries *Dogtown and Z-Boys* (Stacy Peralta, 2001) and *Bones Brigade: An Autobiography* (Stacy Peralta, 2012), that my first two chapters use for informational context. Additionally, I utilize an episode of the docuseries *Epicly Later'd* (Vice TV, 2017, 2024-) that focuses on Bam Margera and *Viva La Bam.* Returning to documentary films and series that prior chapters use as reference aims to reveal the underlying textual strategies and how these historicizations reframe subcultural fantasy in nostalgic terms. These documentaries utilize subcultural archives, including Craig Stecyk's *SkateBoarder* articles and Peralta's Bones Brigade videos, in ways that mark them as more authentic than contemporary skateboard mediations. In this chapter's conclusion, I identify a set of recent texts, including the acclaimed documentary, *Minding the Gap* (Bing Liu, 2018), that question the nostalgic framing of skateboarding's subcultural archive and suggest new textual strategies that allow for far more diverse identity formations and subcultural narratives. *Minding the Gap*'s shift to a nonfiction mode that embraces self-reflexivity paves the way for the skateboarding subculture to escape the narrow and essentializing "fantasies" and instead begin to consider skateboarding as enabling one to address not only the subculture's flaws, but also interrogate various politics and histories in a broader sense.

What one will no doubt notice is that all of these chapters utilize what are inarguably canonical texts for the skateboarding subculture. In part, this is necessary for this project's scope and for properly considering how subcultural mediations textually engage and differentiate themselves from mainstream modes, discourses, and aesthetics. Recognizing this engagement with the mainstream is crucial for analyzing the skateboarding subculture's supposed flexibility

and especially important for considering notions of authenticity, which often rely on negotiated resistance or disregard of various mainstream norms. These fairly well-known texts straddle the boundaries between depicting a unique subculture with its own set of practices and politics and what others might refer to as a mainstream leisure activity. As a result, such works are also the most useful for a media studies approach, especially one interested in the subcultural potentialities of different platforms or formats and their associated fantasies and modes of reception. Further, utilizing texts with legacies both within the subculture and the mainstream helps one recognize the trends and politics of particular eras, since their lasting influence and recognition imply that they exemplify something about their historical moments. In some ways this runs the risk of continuing to foreground canonical texts that others have deemed deeply problematic.[23] However, this diachronic analysis aims to provide more context and make connections across different eras of the skateboarding subculture, laying bare the textual strategies and political implications that synchronic approaches or general histories have not adequately addressed. This project reveals how media textuality is foundational for skateboarding's subcultural fantasies and notions of authenticity and how that textuality's historical specificity engages with broader changes in our media landscape. Ultimately, the analysis and history in each of these chapters seeks to provide not only a new approach to these texts, but also contexts and connections for other scholars invested in skateboarding and different forms of subcultural media.

---

[23] Butz, *Grinding California,* 65.

1. **SKATE NAZIS AND PLAYGROUNDS OF UNLIMITED POTENTIAL:**

Craig Stecyk, *SkateBoarder Magazine,* and the Unattainable Fantasy of Dogtown

Introduction: The Roots of the Skateboarding Subculture

This chapter analyzes the subcultural media texts associated with the rise of the skateboarding subculture in the 1970s, specifically the magazine publication *SkateBoarder Magazine* and its short-lived predecessor, *The Quarterly SkateBoarder*. Within *SkateBoarder,* I focus on the collection of articles about the famous 1970s Venice Beach, California based "Dogtown" skateboarding scene. While Dogtown's contribution to skate culture and its influence on skateboarding style are widely known, *SkateBoarder*'s textual elements themselves have not received much critical attention. In this analysis, I consider the subcultural textuality of *SkateBoarder*'s articles focusing on Dogtown and how their visual and discursive elements engage with the magazine's broader material commodity status. The mediator behind the Dogtown articles, writer and photographer Craig Stecyk, is often credited with not just Dogtown's legacy in terms of skateboarding as a sport, but also with helping shape skating's subcultural narrative. Despite popular histories acknowledging Stecyk's contributions, scholars have not considered how his articles engage with the magazine's consumer framework and articulate a subcultural relationship with the reader. This relationship has profound implications for skateboarding's identity politics, clearly signifying who belongs and who does not. The Dogtown articles form a subcultural textuality within *SkateBoarder* which, by presenting as resistant to the magazine's broader commodity function, frames engagement with the text as an anti-consumerist act. Overwhelmingly concerned with rejecting skateboarding's capitalist elements, Stecyk's textual strategies are similarly preoccupied with attempts at provocation. These reactionary elements, which include racist iconography, ultimately reserve the subculture's

anti-consumer position as only available for white male skaters. In Stecyk's mediation, Dogtown becomes a fantasy space, where white male skaters are in control of their environment and seemingly free–though also simultaneously able to benefit–from capitalist intrusion.

While the magazine format associated with niche sports or hobbies typically relies on news pieces and product advertisement, Stecyk's writing and photography fit instead within the heavily subjective style of 1960s and 1970s new journalism. Many articles are even presented explicitly as fictional narratives. Likewise, his photographs, though they initially seem similar to others in *SkateBoarder*, cease to function as standard sports photography. Appearing with supporting narratives that blur the line between fiction and nonfiction, the Dogtown articles' visuals are key for understanding subcultural narrative and style. Stecyk foregrounds skateboarding identity, politics, and culture, rather than the commodity elements or techniques associated with skateboarding as a sport. In doing so, he acknowledges that magazines are crucial media objects for subcultural participants. The narratives and visuals from the Dogtown articles position skateboarding as potentially anti-capitalist, able to disrupt its spatiotemporal logics within environments dominated or abandoned by capitalist developments. However, Stecyk's mediations are less about *how* skateboarding is able to challenge capitalism or consumer culture, and more about *who* is able to occupy that subject position. The Dogtown articles frequently utilize racist phrases or iconography as key markers of skateboarding's subcultural ideology and resistance to mainstream forces. As a result, these mediations render resistance to capitalism as a position only available to these primarily white male skaters. Dogtown itself becomes a type of fantasy, a narrative world free to both resist and benefit from capitalism, but only in white-coded physical (i.e. the places they are depicted skating) and textual (the pages of the magazine) spaces. The Dogtown articles' subcultural textuality within

SkateBoarder not only renders other spaces, identity positions, and the rest of the magazine as outside the subculture, but also purposefully mocks them. In doing so, Stecyk's narratives are primarily interested in a narrow understanding of the skateboarding subculture, restricting who belongs and who does not in this fantasy where skateboarders are both underprivileged, yet also supremely powerful.

Thus, Dogtown's representation within *SkateBoarder* in the 1970s reflects two main scholarly claims regarding the skateboarding subculture overall. Firstly, it presents skateboarding as an anti-capitalist activity. As Skip Engblom says in Stacy Peralta's documentary, *Dogtown and Z-Boys* (Stacy Peralta, 2001), Stecyk's writing acknowledges that Dogtown skaters "took the ruins of the twentieth century and made art out of it," directly linking the origin of the subculture to the decline in America's manufacturing economy. This reflects Iain Borden's claims that skateboarding rejects a variety of capitalist norms, since it critiques capitalism's spatiotemporal logics by refusing to let urban environments become only valued for their ability to function as part of an efficient capitalist system. Skateboarding relies on inefficient and discontinuous acts (the rapid starts, stops, and endless repetitions of a skateboarding session) that reject any sense of efficiency and celebrate architectural anomalies, prioritizing "use" value over "exchange" value.[1] However, in depicting Dogtown's skateboarders as simultaneously without privilege yet dominant over the fantasy space of Dogtown, Stecyk also reflects Emily Chivers Yochim's notion of skateboarding's discursively flexible white masculine identity, which allows skaters to "imagine themselves as both inside and outside of dominant culture and consequently as both resistant to and in possession of dominant modes of power."[2] Stecyk's textual strategies attempt to resist the magazine's commodity status, situating the skaters as rebelling against the dominant

---

[1] Iain Borden, "Performing the City" in *The Subcultures Reader,* ed. Ken Gelder (New York: Routledge, 2005), 256-70.
[2] Emily Chivers Yochim, *Skate Life: Re-Imagining White Masculinity* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010), 28.

consumer framework. Yet, simultaneously, this rebellious image is connected to racist iconography and language, situating whiteness as the subculture's default subject identity. Resistance to capitalist systems is thus, in the Dogtown articles, only available to those already in a dominant position, a dynamic that is not acknowledged but instead presented as simply authentic. This narrative presents a subculture that claims to transgress, but Stecyk's texts ultimately contain few actual transgressions, instead depicting the skaters as dominant figures in a fantasy world that revolves around their skating and its potential meanings.

Scholarship regarding Dogtown skateboarding frequently considers the era's legacy, rather than address the constructed nature of its mediation within *SkateBoarder*. For example, Kyle Kusz and David T. Johnson have each addressed Dogtown's politics and aesthetics through *Dogtown and Z-Boys*.[3] Other scholars, such as Konstantin Butz, have even argued against further historical analysis of Dogtown, lest it lead to "mere repetition of its historical development" that "would only add to the already existent variety of retrospectives."[4] However, returning to the Dogtown articles in *SkateBoarder* allows for a greater understanding of the subculture's earliest media texts. This is a moment where skateboarding's subcultural textuality relies on attacking consumerism and establishing who is and is not a member of the subculture. These texts operate very differently compared to later eras of skateboard media, which are explicitly commoditized and, as a result, to varying degrees more malleable in order to be relatable for a wider range of consumers. Stecyk's rejection of skateboarding's commodification is ultimately far more restricting, reliant on racism and mocking anyone who does not fit his narrow definition of the subculture. While to varying degrees the skateboard subculture has always centered whiteness,

---

[3] Kyle Kusz, *Revolt of the White Athlete: Race, Media, and the Emergence of Extreme Athletes in America* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007); David T. Johnson, "Playgrounds of Unlimited Potential: Adaptation, Documentary, and *Dogtown and Z-Boys*." *Adaptation* 2, No. 1 (2009): 1-16.

[4] Konstantin Butz, *Grinding California: Culture and Corporeality in American Skate Punk* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2012), 65.

Stecyk's mediation reveals more explicitly racist roots to how whiteness becomes the subculture's default authentic subject position.

New Journalism, Fiction, and Reality

Stecyk's rhetorical strategies, which go beyond subjectivity and embrace fictionalization, connect his work to 1960s and 1970s American new journalism. John Hellmann, in an analysis of 1960s literature, notes that the decade saw a simultaneous rise in postmodern or metafiction alongside "new" journalists who infused their reporting work with heavily subjective narratives and psychedelic drug use. In light of what he terms the "problematic state of realism" during the politically and culturally turbulent 1960s, Hellmann argues that in both these literary movements, the "writer contracts an agreement with the reader which frees the [writer] from the need to establish the illusion of reality."[5] Describing the era's fiction writers as "fabulators," he goes on to state that, "despite the opposite nature of their author-reader contracts, new journalists share with fabulators the emphasis upon imagination as a transforming power as well as the recognition of artifice as an inherent aspect of that power" (420). Thus, Hellmann argues that the 1960s fiction writers and new journalists ultimately share many literary strategies, including framing devices, episodic structure, satire, "concern with universal ideas as opposed to the interaction of a character with society's manners and morals, and strong use of allegory" (420). These devices are major factors in how the Dogtown articles situate themselves against *SkateBoarder*'s more typical content, such as product advertisements, equipment reviews, contest results, and interviews with professional skateboarders. Stecyk's new journalistic literary

---

[5] John Hellmann, "Fables of Fact: New Journalism Reconsidered," *The Centennial Review* 21, no. 4 (1977): 416. Hellmann cites Tom Wolfe, Michael Herr, Hunter S. Thompson, and Joan Didion as the most prominent and canonical new journalists. In terms of "metafiction," his key examples are John Barth, Thomas Pynchon, and Donald Barthelme. For the heavily subjective and psychedelia-influenced writers, he relies primarily on those within the science-fiction genre, such as Philip K. Dick and Kurt Vonnegut.

strategies are significant for transforming skateboarding from a leisure activity into a symbolic act. Engagement with the Dogtown articles thus means confronting Stecyk's mediation of skateboarding's ideological function, rather than the consumerist framework exemplified by the rest of the magazine.

One can connect Stecyk's visual strategies to new journalism as well. Though photography is not often analyzed in relation to new journalism, some, such as David Eason, have argued that visuals are a key aspect of constructed meaning within new journalist texts.[6] Eason notes the importance of both actual images as well as literary nods to visual technology such as film, television, and photography, in writings by Michael Herr, Joan Didion, and Hunter S. Thompson.[7] For Eason, such works typically evoke images of mass media to represent America's turbulence, disorder, and sensory overload.[8] Thus, within these texts, images cease to function as representations of reality or evidence of the article's primary subject or reported phenomenon. Instead, they work together with the written text to construct a relationship with the reader that encourages them to consider the ramifications of "a society organized around the production and consumption of images" (63). Similarly, Jason Mosser notes that Ralph Steadman, whose cartoons accompany many of Hunter S. Thompson's most famous works, utilizes "expressionistic caricatures" that connect to Thompson's themes of drug use, twisted perspectives, and a fabricated "dark reality."[9] Within Stecyk's Dogtown articles, images work together with fictional and subjective narratives to construct skateboarding as a subcultural act

---

[6] David Eason, "The New Journalism and the Image-World: Two Modes of Organizing Experience," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 1, no. 1 (1984): 51-65.

[7] For more on Hunter S. Thompson and his particular brand of new journalism, often referred to as "gonzo" journalism, see: Jason Mosser. "What's Gonzo about Gonzo Journalism," *Literary Journalism* Studies 4, no. 1 (2012): 85-90; Bill Reynolds, "On the Road to Gonzo: Hunter S. Thompson's Early Literary Journalism (1961-1970)," *Literary Journalism Studies* 4, no. 1 (2012): 51-84; Matthew Winston, "How do You Like America: Hunter S. Thompson and Gonzo Sports Journalism," *Journalism Studies* 16, no. 3 (2015): 403-416.

[8] Eason, 54-5.

[9] Mosser, 87-8.

loaded with significance. His images, which frequently do not explicitly relate to the written

narratives, dominate the articles' pages. The narratives reinforce and provide basis for one's

understanding of the photographs, as opposed to the inverse where visuals are secondary and

merely reenforce the themes of the writing.

While these images do, in a sense, "document" the Dogtown crew's skateboarding style

and their habit of skating empty pools in suburban neighborhoods, Stecyk's photographs do not

function as traditional sports photography.[10] Here, I draw from Markus Stauff's formulation of

sports photography as relying on the "assertive" image.[11] Stauff argues:

> On the one hand, sport harnesses the potential of photography to record real events
> (photography's referentiality) – the image gets scrutinized for the details it renders
> visible. On the other hand, photography is never sufficient to fully understand the athletic
> performance, which means it is almost always paired with other media forms and thus
> directs attention to the specific qualities of each medium involved…As a consequence,
> sport provokes a constant reflection on the marvels and limitations of the still image. (54)

Calling this combination of reflexivity and referentiality the "assertive" image, Stauff

emphasizes that sport photography allows one to scrutinize both the content (the captured

athletic performance) as well as the medium in which it appears. Sports exist in a complex

transmedia environment due to both their visual nature and what Stauff calls their "results-

oriented" culture.[12] As such, since sports photography is only one of many ways to view an

athletic event, Stauff argues that "individual images are often turned into what can be called

assertive images, which are explicitly addressed as images and commented upon in order to

---

[10] For more on sports photography historically, see: Mike O'Mahony, "Through a Glass Darkly: Reflections on Photography and the Visual Representation of Sport," *Historical Social Research* 43, no. 2 (2018): 25-38.

[11] Markus Stauff, "The Assertive Image: Referentiality and Reflexivity in Sports Photography," *Historical Social Research* 43, no. 2, (2018): 53-71.

[12] Stauff notes that, even when a sports image achieves "more symbolic status over the years," they cannot be easily divorced from a contest's results. This is often crucial context for sport photography. It is nearly impossible to marvel at an image of a spectacular sports moment without considering the contest in which it appeared and the results of said contest. Stauff's example is images of Usain Bolt's Olympic sprint performances, where all at once we are considering his raw technique (such as his gait, muscles, and so on) along with the way the still photograph captures his phenomenal speed (through the blurred background). Yet these images usually also feature his time as context, and thus the results of the contests (both world records and medal achievements) are always elements of viewing them. Stauff, 57.

admire performances and understand them" (53). Stecyk's photography does capture what skateboard historians often consider an important development in the sport's technique.[13] However, viewing these photographs in relation to the accompanying narrative reveals them to function quite differently than the assertive sport image. Rather than allowing an observer to scrutinize the details and more fully comprehend the Dogtown skaters' techniques, Stecyk's images combine with the text to construct a uniquely subcultural narrative. These articles encourage readers to identify with skating as a political and ideological formation, instead of as a sport.

New journalist literary and visual strategies are granted further significance when considered in relation to shifts in the news and magazine industries during the 1960s and 1970s. Michael Johnson argues that new journalist techniques not only connect to a period of American social turbulence, but also amount to a critique of "the shortcomings of traditional journalistic practice."[14] He notes many have argued that broadcast news and nationally syndicated newspapers were guilty of "promotion rather than criticism of governmental policy," generally sensationalizing issues such as Vietnam and the civil rights movement (xiii).[15] In this sense, new journalistic literary strategies embrace subjectivity as a way of critiquing traditional journalism's contrasting emphasis on objectivity. This positions subjective writing, which does not shy away from chaos, drug use, and affect, as closer to the reader's reality. For the magazine industry specifically, the 1970s are a substantial shift. David Sumner argues that after the turbulent 1960s

---

[13] Dogtown skating is significant because it took place in mostly backyard pools (which residents were legally required to drain during mid-1970s California draughts). As a result, it introduced a vertical element to skating, which previously took place almost entirely on flat ground. Since contemporary skateboarding contests such as the X Games and the Olympics foreground vert skateboarding (the Olympics do not actually feature a "vert" competition as the X Games do, but their "park" competition contains many vertical ramps), many view the Dogtown skaters as instrumental in developing skateboarding technique and building a foundation for performing the big vertical jumps that remain significant aspects of today's competitions.

[14] Michael Johnson, *New Journalism: The Underground Press, The Artists of Nonfiction, and Changes in the Established Media,* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1971), xiii.

[15] "Broadcast" refers to both the national and local affiliate versions of the traditional television networks, NBC, ABC, and CBS.

led to declining interests in mass media, the 1970s saw a rise in magazines devoted to specific

hobbies. These new publications, such as *American Hunter, Truckin', Backpacker, Low Rider,* or

High Times, sought niche audiences rather than mass ones.[16] Their reporting and advertisements

addressed the specific needs of their readers, instead of attempting to appeal to as many as

possible. Sumner contextualizes this shift as a major aspect of how the magazine industry

connects to what Tom Wolfe calls "The 'Me' Decade," the broader cultural emphasis on personal

fulfilment through hobbies and leisure activities during a period of American economic decline.[17]

With this shift to targeting more niche hobbies, we should pay attention to how writers such as

Stecyk used the magazine format to clearly engage with identity politics and cultural belonging.

Stecyk's work allows one to consider new journalism's literary and visual elements when

transplanted to a subcultural context, in contrast to other canonical pieces of new journalism that

appeared in magazines seeking a mass audience, such *The New Yorker, Rolling Stone,* or *Esquire.*

The only lengthy analysis of Stecyk's Dogtown articles in their context within

SkateBoarder does in fact engage with the 1970s "Me" decade. Michael Nevin Willard focuses

more on Stecyk's photography, arguing that 1970s skate and punk subcultures reflect "forms of

collective activity that have too often been misunderstood as apolitical."[18] Regarding an early

article in the Dogtown series, "Fisheyed Freaks and Long Dogs with Short Tales," Willard

describes how Stecyk foregrounds not only his subject's surf-influenced style–"one-wheeling on

the thin edge…board and feet at the top of the bowl, body extended and heading leaning

down…"–, but also the urban decay that was prevalent in various Venice Beach suburbs, which

---

[16] David Sumner, *The Magazine Century: American Magazines Since 1900,* (New York: Peter Lang, 2010), 157-9.
[17] Tom Wolfe, "The 'Me' Decade and the Third Great Awakening," *New York Magazine,* August 1976. For a recent republication of Wolfe's article, see: "From The Archives," *New York Magazine,* Sept. 15, 2023, https://nymag.com/article/tom-wolfe-me-decade-third-great-awakening.html.
[18] Michael Nevin Willard, "Skate and Punk at the Far End of the American Century," in *America in the Seventies,* eds. Beth Bailey and David Farber, (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 203.

were suffering devastating economic consequences in the mid 1970s.[19] Willard writes, "shot

from above and behind the rim of a steeply sloped reservoir wall, the photo takes the viewer

through the foreground past an angular jumble of cracked and broken asphalt and haphazardly

discarded rubber traffic cones."[20] Stecyk's photographic techniques–shooting from above and

emphasizing the physical environment–places skating within its lived context. For Willard, these

strategies, when combined with depictions of economic decay or graffiti-tagged environments,

situate such images as political, rather than the way some have characterized 1970s subcultures

as selfish and apolitical (203). However, Willard's argument does not consider how Stecyk's

images and writing work together to mark the Dogtown articles as subcultural texts separate

from the rest of *SkateBoarder*. Stecyk's images and textual strategies overwhelmingly reject

SkateBoarder's function as a resource for skateboarding consumers. Given that, they have

always been framed as resistant and authentic subcultural texts. A closer examination of

SkateBoarder's archive reveals a deeper political significance to Stecyk's strategies. While these

articles do make skating a political act that is clearly anti-consumerist and, in some ways, anti-

capitalist in general, Stecyk's strategies reserve those political positions for white skaters.

Dogtown becomes a highly exclusive fantasy where skateboarding holds an unrealistic power

over Los Angeles' physical and cultural landscape. In their rejection of the rest of *SkateBoarder*

as inauthentic, the Dogtown articles also make the skateboarding subculture inaccessible to

readers who could not possibly match their reality with the world depicted in these texts. Further,

Stecyk's restrictive subcultural narrative forces one to be comfortable with racist rhetoric and

iconography if they are to accept his politics. Later eras of skateboard media are, in contrast,

often more malleable. Their function as commodities leads to more flexible narratives that do, to

---

[19] Craig Stecyk (John Smythe), "Fisheyed Freaks and Long Dogs with Short Tales," *SkateBoarder Magazine,* June 1976, 52-7.
[20] Willard, 191.

varying degrees and with different aims, center whiteness, but are decisively less focused on

overtly claiming who does or does not belong in the subculture. *SkateBoarder* and Stecyk's

Dogtown articles reveal the more explicit roots of skateboarding's identity politics and the

subculture's reliance on dominant norms as part of its resistance to the mainstream.

The Quarterly SkateBoarder

SkateBoarder Magazine has a complex history, existing in several different forms and

being owned by multiple entities since its inception. For this chapter, I utilize an archive

compiled by videographers, Coan Nichols and Rich Charnoski, who run the skateboard-centric

independent production company, Six Stair Film + Video. This archive consists of scanned

copies of every issue of *SkateBoarder*, which was published from 1975 to 1980.[21] In 1975 and

1976, *SkateBoarder* appeared bi-monthly, before shifting to a monthly publication in 1977 for

the rest of its run. In 1980, the magazine rebranded as a broader "action sports" magazine called

Action Now, which ran for a year as a monthly before being discontinued.[22] This archive also

features an earlier iteration of *SkateBoarder,* a quarterly publication appropriately titled *The*

Quarterly SkateBoarder, which ran for only four issues from 1964 to 1965. Publication figures,

readership surveys, and ownership transition records for *SkateBoarder* are practically

nonexistent. However, a great deal of information can be gleaned from interviews and news

articles from this historical moment. In some cases, obituaries of key participants such as Warren

Bolster, *SkateBoarder*'s initial editor in 1975, and John Severson, editor of *Quarterly*

---

[21] "SkateBoarder Magazine Archives," Transworld Skateboarding, July 1, 2017,
https://skateboarding.transworld.net/skateboarder-magazine-archives/.
[22] *Action Now* has not been officially archived, though it is of course possible to acquire copies from resellers on sites such as eBay. Scans can be found on various unofficial databases and forums, such as the skateboarding-focused *SLAP* and the more general *Internet Archive*. A collection of *Action Now*'s covers can be viewed here: "Action Now (USA) 1980," Vintage Skateboard Magazines, accessed Jun. 29, 2024, http://vintageskateboardmagazines.com/ActionNowUSA.html.

SkateBoarder in the mid-1960s, also provide some evidence regarding the magazine's publication history. Additionally, I make use of multiple different documentaries focusing on this era, including Stacy Peralta's *Dogtown and Z-Boys* as well as Six Stair's *The Original SkateBoarder* (Coan Nichols and Rick Charnoski, 2018). Though documentary will play a larger role in this project's final chapter, which analyzes skateboarding subcultural textuality and methods of historicization in a twenty-first century context, these texts are still utilized here for their historical information that is not available elsewhere.

Originally, *SkateBoarder* was founded as an independent publication run by John Severson's own company, Surfer Publications, which began with *Surfer Magazine*. At some point during the late-1960s to early-1970s, the company was sold to a larger magazine corporation, For Better Living.[23] *SkateBoarder*'s 1975 revival was run out of an office shared with *Surfer* as well as ski and snowboard magazine *Powder,* with Steve Pezman serving as the head publisher for all three magazines.[24] After the short-lived *Action Now,* multiple attempts to relaunch *SkateBoarder* in both print and digital failed; these editions have not been archived. Today, all of the former Surfer Publications properties (*SkateBoarder, Surfer,* and *Powder*) are owned by the journalism conglomerate, The Arena Group, as part of their "Men's Lifestyle" brands.[25] The *SkateBoarder* archives exist within another Arena Group skateboard publication, *Transworld Skateboarding*, which is still active digitally. To many, *SkateBoarder'*s 1970s run is historically significant for the skateboarding subculture and a moment of major financial success

---

[23] The dates of this sale are recorded differently in different sources. For example, Severson's obituary in the *New York Times* dates the sale as the "early 1970s." However, a *Los Angeles Times* article about the entity's 1990s sale to the conglomerate, a360 Media, states that For Better Living purchased Surfer Publications in the "late 1960s." See: Richard Goldstein, "John Severson, Surfer Who Illustrated Allure of Waves, Dies at 83," *New York Times,* May 28, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/28/sports/john-severson-dead-surfer-magazine-artist.html?smid=url-share; Rose Apodaca Jones*,* "Surfer Magazine Owners Are Considering a Sale," *Los Angeles Times,* July 30, 1998, https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1998-jul-30-fi-8459-story.html.
[24] Sherry Angel, "Surfing, Skateboarding, and Skiing: He's Riding Waves of Reader Interest," *Los Angeles Times,* Jan. 21, 1976. *ProQuest.*
[25] "Our Brands," The Arena Group, accessed June 29, 2024, https://thearenagroup.net/our-brands/.

for both the magazine and the skateboard industry at large. Exact numbers are not available, but interviews in the documentary *The Original SkateBoarder* as well as articles found in the *Los Angeles Times* archive estimate that during the magazine's peak in 1977 and 1978, it had a circulation of over 300,000.[26] Despite how editor Warren Bolster and Craig Stecyk himself have described *SkateBoarder* as being invested in depicting what they term "progressive" skating, the magazine's archive and publication context reveal that it was primarily controlled by commercial interests. Not only does an overview of the archive show that advertisements dominated *SkateBoarder*, but various interviews in *The Original SkateBoarder* state that the magazine was only started due to pressure from the skateboarding industry; manufacturers wanted a better way to advertise their products and distinguish themselves from those that produced roller skating merchandise. Glen Friedman, one of the magazine's contributing photographers and a collaborator with Stecyk and Dogtown, claims in *Dogtown and Z-Boys* that, at its 1978 peak, *SkateBoarder* was the best-selling magazine for the Southland Corporation's chain of gas stations and convenience stores, which at the time included the ubiquitous 7-Eleven. Tony Hawk similarly describes the magazine as so successful that he recalls attempting to purchase it at various locations, including skate parks and convenience stores, only to find it sold out and all that was left were various subpar copycat publications, such as *Skateboard World*.[27] The existence of copycat publications obviously reiterates *SkateBoarder*'s financial success, but it also suggests that the demand for advertising space from skateboard manufacturers and organizations exceeded the space the magazine offered. Although *SkateBoarder*'s issues would

---

[26] Elliott Almond, "Magazine Mirrors Explosive Popularity of Skateboarding," *Los Angeles Times,* Sept. 18, 1977. *ProQuest.* This statistic goes far beyond the circulation estimated for sister publication *Surfer,* which only had a circulation of only about "89,000" in 1978. See: Dennis McLellan, "Making Waves: 25 Years Later, the Surfer is Up," *Los Angeles Times,* Mar. 15, 1985.
[27] "Media Briefs," *Los Angeles Times,* May 1, 1977. *ProQuest. Skateboard World* is described as a brand-new publication with a circulation base "of 165,000."

regularly exceed one-hundred and fifty pages and feature slightly more advertising than copy, they still, in 1977, had advertisers on a three-month waiting list.[28]

SkateBoarder's copy works in tandem with its advertising, supporting skateboarding as a leisure activity and developing sport, rather than a rebellious movement. The sport's development is positioned as reliant on young males who need to both acquire the correct goods and act responsibly in order to become better athletes and prosperous skateboarders. While the 1960s *Quarterly SkateBoarder* and the 1970s iteration certainly have aesthetic differences, each still feature reporting and articles that work harmoniously with their advertising. *Quarterly* leans more heavily on surfing aesthetics and depicts skateboarding as a growing sport. The advertisements come frequently from more general sporting goods manufacturers or surfing companies. For example, advertisements in *Quarterly*'s first issue for "The Landsurfer," Banzai Skateboards, and the "Tuk 'N' Roller," all feature mail-order options that direct sales to surfboard producers or, in the case of the "Tuk 'N' Roller," an automotive parts company.[29] As "Landsurfer" implies, many of these products use surfing aesthetics or terminology as a selling point for readers and new skateboard consumers. The first inside page of this first issue is a full-page announcement for Skee-Skate's new "Sidewalk Surfer" and "Slim Surfer" boards (2). Other brands acknowledge the overlap between surfing and skating commodities by including advertisements for both types of products. In the second issue, Cooley advertises a mixture of what they call "Land n' Sea" products, featuring mail-order options for skateboard decks and equipment as well as skim boards and surf products (fig. 1.1).[30] During this mid-1960s moment, surfing was at its peak as a mainstream leisure activity. Both Hollywood franchises, such as

---

[28] Almond.

[29] *The Quarterly SkateBoarder,* Winter 1964, 6, 33, 43.

[30] "*The Quarterly SkateBoarder*, Spring 1965, 36.

Gidget (Paul Wendkos, 1959), and low-budget independent studios, such as American

International Pictures with its *Beach Party* (William Asher, 1963) series, were attempting to

cash-in on surfing's popularity with teen films and franchises.[31] Though Severson would, over

the course of his career, state that he wanted *Surfer* to "create a truer image of the sport," and

counter depictions seen in mass media texts such as *Gidget*, the prevalence of surfing images in

The Quarterly SkateBoarder shows a reliance on surfing's mainstream leisurely connotations.[32]

There is clear synergy here in both the aesthetics and economic reality, with many advertisers

framing skateboarding as connected to surfing's status as simply appealing and relaxing.

FIGURE 1.1 Cooley's "Land n' Sea" advertisement in *Quarterly SkateBoarder's* second issue.

---

[31] Garry Morris, "Beyond the Beach: Social and Formal Aspects of AIP's 'Beach Party' Movies," *Journal of Popular Film & Television* 21, no. 1 (1993): 1-11.
[32] Goldstein.

Severson's own editorials and *Quarterly*'s other articles also embrace surfing, attempting to frame skateboarding as a sport with analogous values. In his editorials for the first three issues, Severson shifts between proclaiming skateboarding's potential in the world of sport and warning riders to take serious precautions. For example, he cites mainstream news coverage from outlets like *Life Magazine* and predicts "a real future for the sport – a future that could go as far as the Olympics" (fig. 1.2).[33] Rather than focusing on intangible elements such as aesthetics or style, Severson calls skateboarding a "measurable" sport that could surpass surfing if young "pioneers" and "sportsmen" are willing to "make it great." In other issues, he warns riders against riding fast or any other behavior that could be perceived as hooliganism. The second issue's editorial is titled "Why Speed" and features a photograph of a helmetless rider heading down a steep hill with a car coming toward them; it concludes with, "speed only hurts – you."[34] Here, Severson articulates a type of individual responsibility that is also notable for its gendered language, such as "sportsmen." The onus is not on the world to accept skateboarding, but on young "pioneers" to develop the sport themselves and bring it to the mainstream. This discourse around building a respectable sport is prevalent throughout *Quarterly*'s only four issues, with other articles emphasizing the grassroots efforts young skaters can make if they want to support skateboarding within their local community.[35] This again foregrounds personal responsibility not only in terms of individual performance and safety, but also skateboarding's growth and financial success. Focusing on the sport's measurability and encouraging readers to seek out or create contests in their own communities, Severson's editorials imply that skaters should aim for having the best and safest equipment. Although with such varying content, such as advertisements, features,

---

[33] John Severson, "Sidewalk Surfing?" *The Quarterly SkateBoarder,* Winter 1964, 7. For the *Life Magazine* article that Severson likely (despite not stating the title with exact accuracy) refers to, see: "Here Come the Sidewalk Surfers," *Life Magazine,* June 5, 1964, 89-90. *EBSCO.*

[34] John Severson, "Why Speed?" *The Quarterly SkateBoarder*, Spring 1965, 7.

[35] "Clubs and Contests: Run Your Own Skateboard Contest," *The Quarterly SkateBoarder,* Spring 1965, 48-9.

interviews, letters to the editor, and more, magazines often have a conflicting discursive nature, editorials such as Severson's demonstrate important ideological positions.[36] His gendered language and repeated pleas for responsible behavior uphold obviously capitalistic and patriarchal norms. These editorials frame the skaters as young men who are in sole control of their own success, not unlike the way hegemonic norms situate young men of any occupation as future breadwinners and responsible providers for their families. Though *SkateBoarder,* coming a decade later, will of course utilize different aesthetics and shift away from Severson's notion of skateboarding "sportsmen," both magazines position themselves as essential tools for skaters who want to make the correct individual consumer decisions to succeed.

EDITORIAL

SIDEWALK SURFING?

Whenever a new sport comes into existence or an existing sport suddenly gains popularity, its thrills are often compared to other sports. People compare the thrills of surfing to skydiving, bull fighting, skiing, and other exciting individual participation sports. These same comparisons will be made and are being made in the sport of skateboarding. It's similar in many ways to surfing and to skiing, not only in maneuvers and techniques, but in many cases, in terms as well. Many of the same surfing positions are used in skateboarding, as evidenced in our SURF/SKI/SKATE article in this issue. Several months ago LIFE Magazine ran an article entitled "Sidewalk Surfing." Sure, that's what it is, but we predict a lot more for skateboarding. We predict a real future for the sport — a future that could go as far as the Olympics. It's a much more "measurable" sport than surfing and therefore lends itself more to competition. In the slalom there's no question about who the winner is — the fastest time through the gates. Flatland stunts and performance will be a matter of judgment, but at least the asphalt isn't moving — everyone gets an equal opportunity. Competition should be big in skateboarding, but it's going to take organization and support from the participants.

Today's skateboarders are founders in this sport — they're pioneers — they are first. There is no history in skateboarding — it's being made now — by you. The sport is being molded and we feel that doing the right thing now will lead to a bright future for the sport. Already there are storm clouds on the horizon with opponents of the sport talking ban and restriction. Skateboarding is not a sport of speed: it's a sport of skill. It's not a sport of destruction — of others or yourself. It's a sport of control. It's up to you to see that skateboarding does not become a sport of rebels and radicals. It's a sport for young sportsmen. We look forward to a great future in skateboarding and we ask you, the pioneers, to make it great.

FIGURE 1.2 John Severson's first editorial in the first issue of *Quarterly SkateBoarder.*

---

[36] Belinda Wheaton, "Lifestyle Sport Magazines and the Discourses of Sporting Masculinity," *The Sociological Review* 51, no. 1 (2003): 193-221.

SkateBoarder Magazine

Despite all of this, *Quarterly* only lasted for those first four issues as skateboarding's

poor publicity would ruin the very market that the magazine attempted to create.[37]

Skateboarding's mid-1970s revival was similarly led by manufacturer developments, including

notably larger–and thus safer–boards and the grippier polyurethane wheel.[38] A June 1975 *Los*

Angeles Times article, "Skateboard: Personal Rapid Transit, Southern California Style,"

emphasizes the revived manufacturer interests.[39] Subtitled, "new products give lift to sidewalk

surfing," the article describes a new and overwhelming market for skateboarding commodities,

noting wheel manufacturers making "20,000 a day" and board producers selling as many as

3,000 per day. Corroborating the claims made in *The Original SkateBoarder* that *SkateBoarder*'s

revival was due to advertiser interest, the *Times* piece also cites fierce competition amongst

manufacturers and bidding wars for magazine advertisements that spilled over into *Surfer*. From

1975 to the last issue in July of 1980, *SkateBoarder Magazine* would publish forty-eight issues,

initially as a bimonthly and then as a regularly monthly publication starting in August 1977. The

size of these issues varies; the first few issues were roughly eighty pages before ramping up to

well over one hundred pages.[40] By the middle of volume five in January 1979, *SkateBoarder* had

cut back significantly, reaching barely one hundred pages. In July of 1980, *SkateBoarder*

announced that it would rebrand as *Action Now* in order to appeal to a broader audience. That

---

[37] Jerry Doernberg, "Skateboarders Near Thin Ice: Valley Cities Ready to Outlaw Them or to Stop Winking at Violations of Laws," *Los Angeles Times,* May 24, 1965. *ProQuest.*
[38] "Introducing the All-New Cadillac Wheels," *SkateBoarder Magazine,* Summer 1975, 19. In *Dogtown and Z-Boys,* the polyurethane wheel is framed as a key development for skateboarding, since it allows far more grip than previous compositions. This makes it not only easier to skate on any surface, but especially easier to perform the maneuvers, especially in banked asphalt playgrounds or backyard pools, that the Dogtown skaters were known for. Bahne Skateboarding's "Cadillac Wheels" is an example of one of these products and its advertisements can be found in many issues of *SkateBoarder*.
[39] Celeste Durant, "Skateboard: Personal Rapid Transit, Southern California Style," *Los Angeles Times,* June 2, 1975. *ProQuest*
[40] In *The Original SkateBoarder*, the magazine is jokingly referred to as "phonebook"-sized.

final issue was again just over eighty pages.[41] Despite these shifts, including more diverse action

sport content in the last six issues seemingly in preparation for the rebrand, the content is fairly

homogenous throughout. *SkateBoarder* is broken up into thirds: feature stories and interviews, a

section specifically for photography, and a "departments," section at the end with recurring

columns. The "departments" section is the most obvious example of working seamlessly with

manufacturer advertisements. It consists of reader mail ("Skate Post"), skating technique and

safety tips, contests results or summaries, short pieces introducing up and coming skaters (titled

"Who's Hot?!"), and finally, "equipment updates," highlighting and reviewing new skateboard

gear. All of these sections function–as the copy in *Quarterly* does–clearly in tandem with the

magazine's advertisements, foregrounding skating's technical and commercial development

alongside new products that promise increased safety and capability.

 SkateBoarder's copy also frames skateboarding as a sport dominated by young white

males. Coming a decade later, its aesthetics obviously differ from *Quarterly,* yet the magazine

retains the emphasis that correct consumer decisions are key elements of participating in the

sport. In turn, *SkateBoarder* presents the successful skaters, who are almost always white males,

as the ones that readers should be attempting to emulate both through technique and acquiring

the same equipment. Also similar to *Quarterly,* the magazine's focus on skateboarding's

competitive scene and its development as a sport implies a logical progression for readers who

should aspire to be as technically capable as the professionals. Given that *SkateBoarder* was, in

this moment, one of the very few ways readers could even learn of contest results, this function

is crucial. Surrounded by advertisements and equipment reviews, competition news and results

situate a skater's personal achievements as based on their ability to make the correct decisions as

---

[41] David Morin and Brian Gillogly, "An Open Letter to Our Readers," *SkateBoarder Magazine,* July 1980, 19.

a consumer. This makes the magazine's positioning of successful skaters ideologically

significant. *SkateBoarder'*s interviews and fan mail work to center young white males as the

figures to whom readers should aspire, marginalizing skaters of other identities. Even when

interviews do feature female skaters, they are frequently considered either exceptions to the norm

or otherwise treated dismissively. In the magazine's first major interview with a female skater,

Laura Thornhill is repeatedly asked if she has a boyfriend and what "types" of boys she is

interested in (fig. 1.3).[42] While the subjects are often asked casual questions in *SkateBoarder*'s

feature interviews, Thornhill is marginalized as a professional skater by being asked to address

her interest in male skaters not exclusively due to their talent. In contrast, in the immediately

prior issue, Bruce Logan is only asked who the top female skaters are and is not asked about his

dating life.[43] *SkateBoarder*'s reader mail in "Skate Post" occasionally addresses the magazine's

shortcomings with nonwhite and nonmale skaters. One Black reader writes that the magazine's

practically exclusive focus on young white males from Southern California feels like a "slap in

the face."[44] However, such complaints are often framed as regional rivalries, especially in

California.[45] As such, a reader's seemingly earnest criticism about the magazine's

representational issues is able to instead function as indicative of the healthy competition

between different skateboarding scenes. By featuring mail that appears to critique the magazine,

SkateBoarder asserts that skateboarding's overwhelming popularity simply means it cannot

feature everyone. However, this in turn situates the white male skaters who dominate the

---

[42] Warren Bolster, "SkateBoarder Interview: Laura Thornhill," *SkateBoarder Magazine*, June 1977, 50-7. For more on Laura Thornhill, who was one of the most successful female skaters in the 1970s and one of the few to secure professional sponsorship, see her "Who's Hot" in a previous issue: Cindy Berriman, "Who's Hot? Laura Thornhill," *SkateBoarder Magazine*, April 1976, 82-3.

[43] Warren Bolster, "SkateBoarder Interview: Bruce Logan," *SkateBoarder Magazine*, April 1977, 46-51.

[44] David McDonald, "Another Gripe (More or Less)," *SkateBoarder Magazine*, August 1977, 18.

[45] Skate Post, *SkateBoarder Magazine,* June 1977, 15-20. This section is also famous for promoting a public rivalry between Los Angeles skaters (frequently those associated with Dogtown) and those from San Diego (referred to as "down south" or "southers"). In this issue, one of the letters states that there is no "radical energy" down south, and that any interested skaters should contact Craig Stecyk if they want to compete against Dogtown.

magazine as even more deserving, since they are positioned as the best of a rapidly expanding sport.
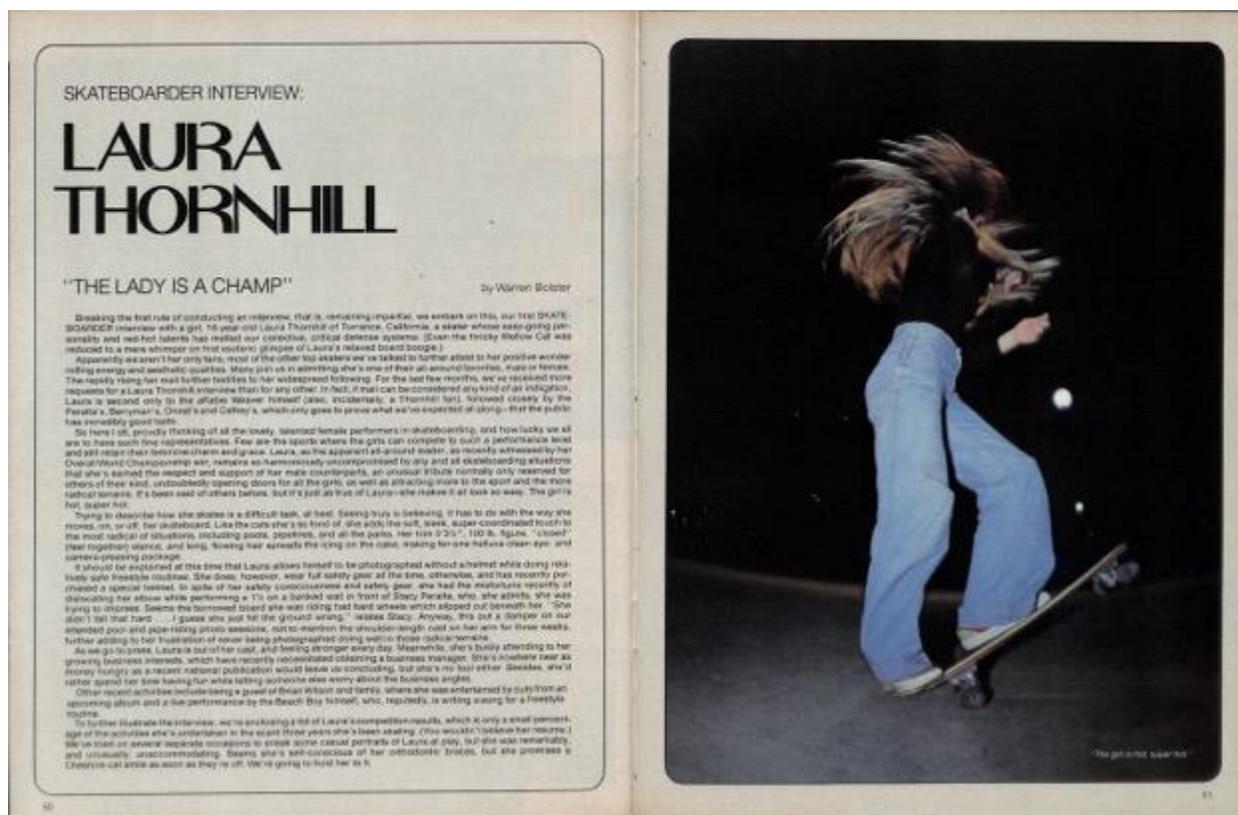
FIGURE 1.3 Warren Bolster's interview with Laura Thornhill in *SkateBoarder Magazine,* June 1977.

 SkateBoarder's other features still largely support the magazine's broader commercial aims and reinforce the magazine as a tool for the individual skater's success. For example, a common feature was Brian Gillogly's column on new skate parks, which appeared nineteen times in *SkateBoarder*'s forty-eight issues. Gillogly's writing tracks new skate park development and again bolsters the idea that skateboarding is continuing to become more popular and commercially viable. Rather than emphasize skating as a guerilla activity, where skaters take momentary control over a space, *SkateBoarder* directs skaters to commercial enterprises that, as Tony Hawk alludes to in *The Original SkateBoarder*, often had magazines such as *SkateBoarder* for sale. Given that these were also the same sites that hosted the contests the magazine reported

on, this means a mutually beneficial commercial interest. Some of Gillogly's "Skate Parks" features, such as "Part VII: Current Directions in Skating Environments," also include a phonebook-style directory, featuring more skate parks than could possibly fit in the article itself (fig. 1.4).[46] Not only do such pieces explicitly discuss skateboarding's commercial expansion, but they also present as tools for skaters who want to improve and participate in locally held contests. While not exactly the "run your own contest" rhetoric of *Quarterly, SkateBoarder*'s 1970s iteration still situates success in skating as something one achieves through individual effort, with the magazine functioning as a guide for making informed consumer choices. This then reframes the publication's lack of diversity as a result of nonwhite and nonmale skaters own personal failings; such skaters have simply not been using the magazine effectively. In Craig Stecyk's "Dogtown" articles, these implicit identity politics become instead explicit. While his subcultural textuality in many ways works against this consumer framework, he more overtly situates that resistance as only authentic for white skaters and within spaces coded as white. Dogtown becomes a fantasy where skaters have the power to resist and control capitalism's intrusion. However, Stecyk also makes this very specific dominant subject position unattainable and ultimately more about who does not, to him, belong in the subculture. Nonwhite skaters and really anyone outside his narrow mediatization of Dogtown are too naïve or simply not welcomed.

---

[46] Brian Gillogly, "Skate Parks, Part VII: Current Directions in Skating Environments," *SkateBoarder Magazine,* April 1977, 36-45.
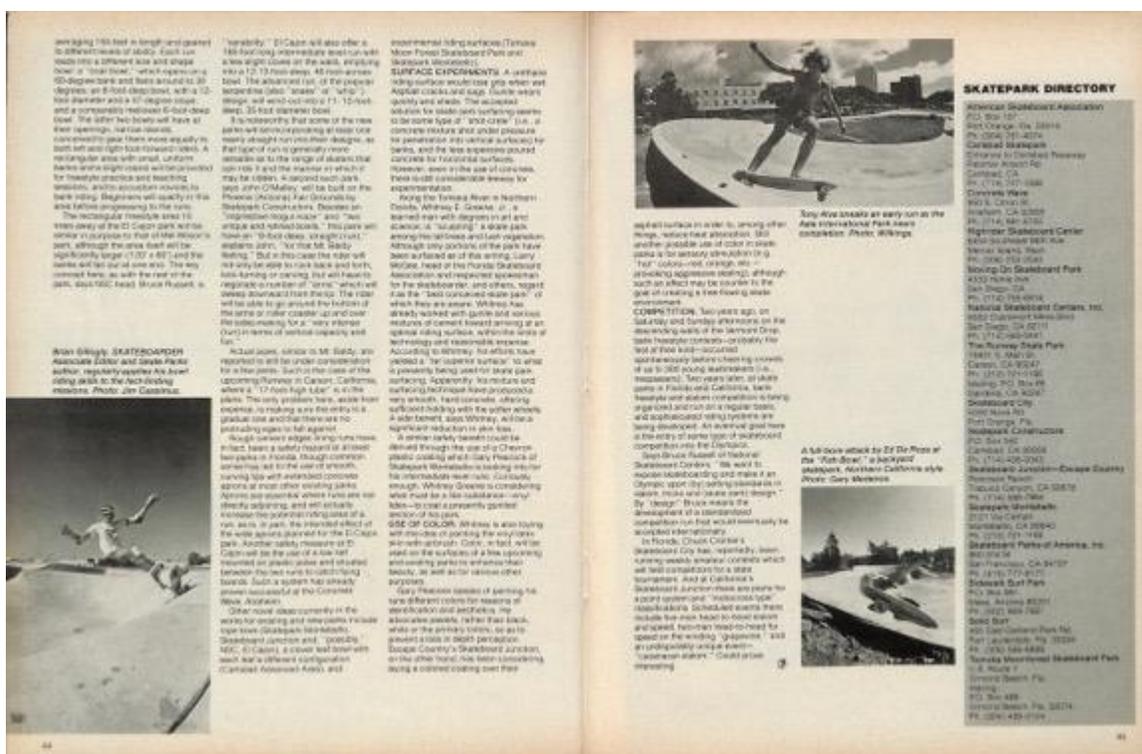
FIGURE 1.4 Brian Gillogly's "Skate Parks" series, featuring a directory containing skate park addresses and phone numbers. *SkateBoarder Magazine,* April 1977.

Craig Stecyk's Dogtown Articles

The "Dogtown" articles, chronicling the rise of various Venice-based skateboarders, appear mostly in *SkateBoarder*'s "features" section and primarily take the form of short narrative pieces that blur the line between fiction and non-fiction. In addition, Stecyk is also credited with a few traditional longer-format feature interviews (sometimes called "The *SkateBoarder* Interview"), as well as some notable "Who's Hot" segments focusing on Dogtown skateboarders. Many popular skateboarding histories situate these articles as central to the skateboarding subculture.[47] A complicating factor of using the archives to analyze these works is that, though

---

[47] This includes documentaries such as *Dogtown and Z-Boys* and *The Original SkateBoarder,* which are both somewhat obviously invested in *SkateBoarder*'s legacy. However, this also includes a variety of autobiographies and memoirs. See: Sean Mortimer, *Stalefish: Skateboard Culture from the Rejects Who Made It* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2008); Heckler Magazine, *Declaration of Independents* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2001) Jocko Weyland, *The Answer is Never* (New York: Grove Press, 2002).

Stecyk's photography is credited to himself, his written work utilizes several different pseudonyms. Many skateboarding histories–both popular and academic–acknowledge Stecyk's more well-known pseudonyms, "John Smythe" and "Carlos Izan." However, even the canonization of these articles reveals some discrepancies. In *Dogtown: The Legend of the Z-Boys,* a collection of Stecyk's work compiled by himself and fellow Dogtown photographer Glen Friedman*,* the articles, interviews, and "Who's Hot" segments attributed to Smythe or Izan are credited to Stecyk.[48] Yet, not *all* of the articles published under these pseudonyms are included. Though Stecyk's postscript for the collection refers to "the last article created for the original *SkateBoarder Magazine* in 1979," Smythe is credited with a May 1980 article: "History of the World and Other Short Subjects" (118).[49] Other pieces are missing as well, such as an interview "Smythe" conducted with Dogtown skater Shogo Kubo for the May 1979 issue, a curious omission given Friedman's introduction claims the text includes "all of Stecyk's original articles with selected photos that first presented the Z-Boys and the DogTown legend to the world."[50]

Some have suggested that Stecyk's *SkateBoarder* contributions number far more than these histories typically admit. Lorne Platt claims that Stecyk's style can be attributed to other pseudonyms, specifically "Stephen Cline," and proposes that "nearly all of the articles written in the early days of *SkateBoarder Magazine* were the work of Stecyk."[51] *SkateBoarder*'s archive partially substantiates Platt's claim. Works under other pseudonyms, including Cline, do bear rhetorical strategies remarkably similar to Stecyk's more widely known pen names.[52] Commonly,

---

[48] Glen Friedman and C.R. Stecyk III, *DogTown: The Legend of the Z-Boys* (New York: Burning Flags Press, 2019).
[49] Craig Stecyk (John Smythe), "History of the World and Other Short Subjects," *SkateBoarder Magazine*, May 1980, 28-38, 47-51. An expanded version of this article appears as the first chapter in *Dysfunctional*, a skateboarding memoir/photography book and is credited to Stecyk. See: Aaron Rose, Ben Weaver, and Andrew Holmes, *Dysfunctional* (London: Booth-Clibborn, 1999), 7-19.
[50] Friedman and Stecyk, *Legend of the Z-Boys,* 7. For the Kubo intereview, see: Craig Stecyk (John Smythe), "SkateBoarder Interview: Shogo Kubo," *SkateBoarder Magazine,* May 1979, 31-8.
[51] Lorne Platt, "Rhythms of Urban Space: Skateboarding the Canyons, Plains, and Asphalt-Banked Schoolyards of Coastal Los Angeles in the 1970s," *Mobilities* 13, no. 6 (2018): 842.
[52] Craig Stecyk (Stephen Cline), "Skateboarding in the Dark Ages," *SkateBoarder Magazine,* Fall 1975, 38-9.

these articles, like those attributed to Smythe or Izan, feature photography credited to Stecyk directly. While there is not sufficient evidence to confirm that Stecyk wrote "nearly all" of the articles, as Platt claims, his contributions certainly number more than what various histories or collections acknowledge. In another example, *The Original SkateBoarder* makes passing references to Stecyk writing as "Sam Fernando," whose few pieces can also be found in the *SkateBoarder* archive. One of the pieces credited to Fernando, August 1977's "Things are Hot in the Valley," even states "by John Smythe" on that issue's cover, despite the article itself using Sam Fernando.[53] Fernando's contributions appear in other issues as well, including the issue with the aforementioned Shogo Kubo interview.[54] Though Platt more specifically locates these contributions in the "early days" of *SkateBoarder*'s mid-1970s relaunch, the Sam Fernando pieces show that Stecyk's non-Dogtown articles contributions continue throughout *SkateBoarder*.

Stecyk's multiple pseudonyms and the discrepancies surrounding his work are useful for considering the subcultural textuality of these articles. Since there is a broad acknowledgement that Stecyk's rhetorical strategies appear under other pseudonyms, his work is clearly unique within *SkateBoarder*, especially if it can be identified without him claiming it. With a variety of different names putting forward similar themes and narratives, Stecyk's pseudonyms work most clearly to make Dogtown appear to be a bigger subculture than it actually is. His resistance to commodification and framing of skateboarding as an anti-capitalist act take on larger significance when read as works by several authors. However, considered with all of the information available now, the pseudonyms also show the various ways these works are highly

---

[53] Craig Stecyk (Sam Fernando), "Things are Hot in the Valley," *SkateBoarder Magazine*, August 1977, 64-9. "Sam" Fernando seems like an obvious play on the San Fernando valley, which is the subject of the piece, though this does not explain why Stecyk would use this pseudonym for other pieces.
[54] Craig Stecyk (Sam Fernando), "In Search of Giant Pipes," *SkateBoarder Magazine,* May 1979, 60-8.

constructed. Firstly, they hint at the way the pieces utilize fiction, often shifting quickly between seemingly disconnected vignettes or inserting implausible narratives and characters. Stecyk's pseudonyms themselves become characters, different reporters in his constructed world of Dogtown. However, it is their conflicting and confusing nature, which includes contradictory author credits within single *SkateBoarder* issues, that is more significant for the Dogtown articles' subcultural textuality. True to new journalism's subjective style, Stecyk's pseudonyms often play roles in the articles. Appearing within a magazine that presents itself as an authority on skateboarding (especially given that readers rely on it for news and product reviews), they can be read as parody of *SkateBoarder*'s bid to legitimize the sport and its growing industry. Stecyk's fictional authors mock the narratives put forward in the rest of the magazine not just in their content, but also in a broader sense by revealing the stories skateboarding tells about itself to be highly constructed rather than factual reporting. Yet, the layers of Stecyk's multiple and conflicting pseudonyms also point to the constructed nature of *his* work. Even if such texts are often presented as authentically raw, the pseudonyms signify their status as fantasies; the writers, skaters, places, and narratives all become works of fiction. While Stecyk and Friedman's edited collection purports to show how Stecyk first "presented the Z-Boys and DogTown legend to the world," the fictional elements and authors clearly situate such works as whatever narratives he wants Dogtown to articulate. That these numerous pseudonyms have still not been given clarity, even in texts defined as "complete" histories, also shows that Stecyk's layered narratives are quite demanding for the reader. The identities and logics for Smythe, Izan, et al. appear to be closely guarded Dogtown secrets; even to this day they are only knowable by the small group of skaters Stecyk actually worked with and wrote about. Dogtown's constructed fantasy space remains inaccessible to readers. Thus, while it may be an anti-capitalist subcultural narrative, its

primary function is ultimately to control who is and who is not a member of the skateboarding

subculture.

FIGURE 1.5 Stecyk's "Aspects of the Downhill Slide," in contrast to an advertisement for "The Dive Shop of Florida" on the opposite page. *SkateBoarder Magazine,* Fall 1975.

"Aspects of the Downhill Slide"

Stecyk's formation of a subcultural textuality–his reliance on new journalistic literary

practices in an attempt to counter *SkateBoarder*'s commodity function–is evident in the

interaction between his writing and photography in what is largely considered the first Dogtown

article, "Aspects of the Downhill Slide" (fig. 1.5).[55] "Downhill Slide" opens with a full-page

picture of Dogtown skater Tony Alva, the small caption describing him as "speed compressing

atop a lateral bank." The photograph is shot from above, giving the reader a clear view of the

---

[55] Craig Stecyk (Carlos Izan and C. R. Stecyk III), "Aspects of the Downhill Slide," *SkateBoarder Magazine,* Fall 1975, 29-37

large and winding cracks in the concrete as well as the shadows of both Alva and the bordering

chain-link fence. This framing recalls Willard's argument regarding Stecyk's habit of shooting

his subjects from above, emphasizing the skateboarding subculture's lived conditions. Alva's

slightly blurred figure appears to hurtle toward the camera, his smoothness making a sharp

contrast with both the lines from the fences shadow and the cracks in the concrete. His stance

and facial expression, rather than appearing effortless, reflect his determination to prevail over

the harsh and desolate concrete setting. Significantly, Stecyk's opening appears centered in the

photograph as well, Alva seemingly skating not just toward the camera but also a quote that has

become central to the story of Dogtown. It reads: "two hundred years of American technology

has unwittingly created a massive cement playground of unlimited potential. But it was the

minds of 11-year-olds that could see that potential" (29). Overlayed over the photograph, this

epigraph—notably credited to Stecyk himself, despite the fact that "Carlos Izan" is credited as

the article's author on the very same page—situates Alva as a hero figure. His skating is not

granted significance on a technical level in order to emphasize his contribution to skateboarding

as a sport. Instead, Alva's act is a rebellious and subcultural triumph over the wasteland

environment that has now become the "playground of unlimited potential." Situating the

epigraph actually within the photograph makes it difficult to read the visual any other way.

Alva's momentum toward Stecyk's quote mimics the way one's eyes move down the page from

the photograph's subject (Alva) to its contextualization. The inscription over the cracked asphalt

is an almost literal barrier to forming a different interpretation because the words actually block

one's view of the landscape. This obstruction hints at the way the Dogtown articles close the

skateboarding subculture off from any additional narratives or identity formations. Here, the

reader is directed to read Alva's skating in a very particular anti-capitalist framework.

Stecyk's full-page opening image appears in juxtaposition to *SkateBoarder*'s focus on advertisements, mail-order offers, and surf aesthetics. The page opposite "Downhill Slide" features an advertisement for "The Dive Shop of Florida," which highlights skateboarding and surfing commodities.[56] Even though these images are not in full color, as some of the others are, they feature jewelry, shoes, and shirt designs adorned with air-brushed surfing figures or palm trees.[57] The "Skateboard T-Shirt" for sale in the "Dive Shop" advertisement does not include any image of a skateboarding environment, but rather an abstract circle design along with flowers that connect skating to a leisure context, something done to relax rather than for the purpose of subcultural rebellion. While a lot of advertisements in *SkateBoarder* emphasize the technical nature of their commodities and how various equipment could improve one's capabilities as a skater, many, such as Dive Shop's, are lifestyle-based. Though the images include skateboards and equipment, the addition of jewelry and clothing implies that certain commodities are a gateway to constructing one's identity as a skater. In contrast, Stecyk's notion of the playground is described as viewable through "the minds of 11-year-olds," signifying that being a skateboarder is not attainable through acquiring certain aesthetic commodities, but rather a natural response to one's environment. That the cement playground was "unwittingly created" also situates the photograph's desolate setting as a byproduct of American capitalism. In other words, it is waste, although that wasted landscape can apparently be reclaimed by rebellious inhabitants. The article's title is notably "Aspects" of the downhill slide, which again situates Stecyk's anti-capitalist interpretation of skateboarding as unavoidable. Appearing directly below the epigraph, the title frames these ideas not as ways of reading, but as actual "aspects" of Alva's

---

[56] *SkateBoarder Magazine,* Fall 1975, 28.
[57] For advertisements that make use of full color and feature skateboards or shirts with surfing iconography, such as rainbows, palm trees, waves, etc, see: *SkateBoarder Magazine,* Fall 1975, 8, 15, 82.

skateboarding maneuver. This again signals that counter-interpretations are not welcome if one is to engage with the article's subcultural textuality.

FIGURE 1.6 The opening pages of "Downhill Slide," with photographs of Nathan Pratt (top left) and Wentzle Ruml (bottom), as well as a skater who is not identified, but who resembles Tony Alva (top right). *SkateBoarder Magazine,* Fall 1975.

Stecyk's written narrative in "Downhill Slide" relies on new journalistic strategies, including provocative imagery and fictional elements; it frames skateboarding as a dangerous subcultural activity while mocking its consumerist elements. The piece opens somewhat inexplicably with a description of the commodified nationalism of Barry Goldwater's estate, where paying visitors are treated to an "opulent shrine of patriotism," featuring "a flagpole topped by a spotlight, an electric fan and a screaming chrome eagle. The fan blows Barry's flag to keep it erect, while the spot illuminates it 24 hours, day in and day out."[58] This mocking description of the Goldwater estate is an intriguing choice for a skateboard magazine and

---

[58] Stecyk, "Downhill Slide," 30.

especially within an article focused on skaters located in Venice Beach, given the Goldwater

estate is roughly four-hundred miles away and in Arizona. The use of "opulent shrine," and the

description of the flag's mechanics mark the space as highly constructed. In contrast, Dogtown's

playground is "unwittingly created," identifying it as raw and authentic. Even in this first

Dogtown article, Stecyk's mocking tone toward consumerism is evident. His description of the

estate's fan that keeps Barry's flag "erect" is a fairly obvious innuendo, situating

commodification as having an emasculating effect. In contrast, Dogtown, which Stecyk

occasionally terms "Skate Town," is described as a place of "undeniable aggressive proficiency"

that is so noticeable it is scary to "outsiders." The visual layout of the article's opening pages

(fig. 1.6) contributes to this reading, featuring three black-and-white photographs of Dogtown

skaters (30-31). First, in the top right, a large birds-eye-view of a skater with hands against the

concrete while the board appears to be sliding. Then, in the middle of two columns of text,

another photograph captures Nathan Pratt skating a "concrete bank," with some rocks visible at

the lip. Lastly, a large wide-angle picture stretches across the magazine's fold, capturing Wentzle

Ruml's blurry figure as he skates in between cones situated next to a banking with some fencing.

The bare setting is noticeable in all of these photographs. Though Stecyk takes care in these

photographs to match skaters within their environments, the viewer cannot see beyond these

concrete banks. This barren landscape is a sharp difference from the Goldwater shrine's

"opulence." However, this limited perspective also restricts one's ability to consider any

additional contexts to the images' settings. It is not possible to see where these banks are truly

situated and the socioeconomic contexts of these streets, backyard pools, or school playgrounds.

The different-sized images are arranged rather haphazardly on the page and, since Stecyk's

framing leaves no additional visual context, one is forced to read the images through the enlarged

quotes that appear far bigger than the image captions. These quotes connect the photographs to a rebellious and subcultural context, as opposed to suggesting the reader interrogate them as evidence of developing skate techniques. They emphasize danger, such as "the thing about skating banks is if you really fall, you really get hurt," and anti-authority behavior, claiming, "the more illegal they make it, the more attractive it becomes" (30-31). Here, skateboarding's position as a leisure activity is rejected. It is attractive not because it is relaxing, but instead because it is both physically risky and potentially illegal. This produces a subcultural textual effect. It is suggested that the reader is viewing something forbidden, separate from the commodities and news available in the rest of the magazine. Still, it is key to understand how much Stecyk's formation of the skateboarding subculture is highly constructed, despite his insistence on framing it as unpolished. For instance, the images and their limited perspectives, aside from blurred figures signifying speed, do not necessarily depict anything clearly dangerous or even illegal, as the quotes claim. The cone in the large image of Wentzle Ruml even implies that this is an organized activity. While his shirtless appearance does not overtly situate it as a contest, where he might have a number and legible team or sponsor apparel, the cone does convey some semblance of an organized and semi-public social event, rather than spontaneous rebellion or a need to hide from authority. The reader has not, at this point, learned any actual information about Dogtown. However, its juxtaposition against the Goldwater estate, along with the layout of the images and larger quoted selections, already serve key ideological functions. This attempts to position the Dogtown articles as surpassing the commodity focus of *SkateBoarder,* which in turn is mocked and even depicted as potentially emasculating.

"Downhill Slide" also incorporates fictional elements, a key aspect of new journalism, which also seems antithetical to *SkateBoarder*'s function as a niche interest magazine reliant on

both advertising and news or product reviews. Instead of documenting Dogtown and proclaiming its skateboarding scene to be uniquely innovative, Stecyk's work includes fictional elements and anonymous characters that are employed for clear thematic purpose. Immediately after the description of the Goldwater estate, the article focuses on a "local legend and true veteran of the psychedelic wars known only as Spencer," who Stecyk claims skates away, "straight down the hill out of sight. That was the last anyone ever saw of him. His friends figure he rode it out and went off in search of steeper flights" (30-31). Positioned alongside the images of the Dogtown skaters, none of whom are identified as "Spencer" nor are they depicted skating down steep canyon roads, Spencer signifies skating as not just dangerous, but even anti-social. His complex status as relatively anonymous, yet also a "local legend," reveals his figurative function within the article. Further, Stecyk labelling him a "true veteran of the psychedelic wars" instills a notion of authenticity and positions his disappearance as akin to a torch being passed; the older veteran skates away and leaves Dogtown for the teens and preteens who Stecyk portrays as new subcultural visionaries. Here, Spencer is used to evoke a specific theme, rather than as an actual living skater. For Spencer, skating is the ultimate pursuit. He chooses to disappear in search of faster skating and steeper banks instead of taking part in the way skateboarding is depicted throughout *SkateBoarder* as both a leisure activity and developing sporting competition. This contrast is further evident in the piece's conclusion, where Stecyk states that competition organizers should "become relevant to the real challenges and esoteric rewards inherent in skateboarding," rather than "reducing skateboarding to a conveniently packaged commodity" (36). Stecyk's use of "conveniently packaged" is key as it attempts to frame convenience–something *SkateBoarder* would surely position as a positive–as evidence of a lack of determination. "Downhill Slide" belittles readers interested in skateboarding's consumer aspect

and even suggests that they are emasculated in contrast to the aggressive and rebellious figures in Dogtown.

Dogtown as Unattainable Fantasy

While "Downhill Slide" directly addresses Stecyk's resistance to consumerization and introduces the reader to Dogtown as a subculture rooted in his particular framing of said resistance, other articles in the series veer further into fiction and feature more prominently stylized visuals. The Dogtown articles often foreground their fictional elements as a direct contrast to the rest of the magazine's news or advertising content. In addition, the visuals are overwhelming, with photographs frequently stretching across the fold or dominating the pages in comparison to the written narrative. Their connection to the narrative is typically thematic (in other words, as opposed to journalistic) and in some cases their stylized perspectives go beyond the usual close-ups at aggressively low or high angles. Some photographs utilize collage or do not depict skateboarding at all. Taken together, Stecyk's visual style and the articles' layouts construct Dogtown as a type of fantasy space where the skaters have the freedom to revel in an environment that is defined by its resistance to capitalism and consumerism, yet where the reader also never sees much corporate intrusion on that space. In fact, it seems to be the opposite. The skaters appear in complete control of Dogtown and any figures of authority or representatives of capitalism, such as celebrities or business executives, are depicted as under the skaters' thrall. These fictional narratives combine with overwhelming visuals to make Dogtown and its subculture so implausibly perfect in its resistance that it is inaccessible to the reader. The reader, who could not possibly match their world with Dogtown's, is thus shut out from the subculture.

In some cases, pieces such as "Stranger than Fiction" (fig. 1.7), which is subtitled "short stories" by John Smythe, and "Frontier Tales: Or, Any Resemblance to Any Persons Living or Dead is Purely Coincidental" use their titles as indicators of their fictionalization.[59] In addition to a rotating cast of skaters, these articles feature several mysterious ancillary characters, typically referred to with only a given name or nickname and who seem to appear and reappear at Stecyk's will. For instance, in "Stranger than Fiction," Spencer (now nicknamed "Space Monkey") makes a reappearance as an artist who is also involved in a variety of bizarre business ventures.[60] This article does not acknowledge Spencer's supposed disappearance in the prior "Downhill Slide," only that he has returned from Burleigh Heads, an Australian surf destination. However, Stecyk once again calls him a "guerilla fighter in the psychedelic wars" (73). He is simultaneously "on the road to prosperity with his new Balinese-Congolese import-export business," and known to be "legendary" with an airbrush: "His latest exploits include airbrushed special effects for Dino De Laurentis' *King Kong*" (73). Spencer is also apparently a vigilante, depicted as stopping a pair of thieves at the local liquor store. Whether Spencer is the same literal person, a redefining of a fictional character, or a collapsing of multiple lived figures into one is unclear. What is clear, however, is that Spencer exists to serve Stecyk's thematic or stylistic purposes, rather than as a coherent individual featured in a work of factual journalism. Spencer conflates several subject positions, serving as skater, artist, vigilante, salesman, and more all at once. It is not about whether he is real or not, but more that Stecyk blends these identities together. Spencer's position

---

[59] Craig Stecyk (John Smythe and C. R. Stecyk III), "Stranger Than Fiction: Short Stories by John Smythe," *SkateBoarder Magazine*, April 1977, 70-6; Craig Stecyk (John Smythe), "Frontier Tales: Or, Any Resemblance to Any Persons Living or Dead is Purely Coincidental," *SkateBoarder Magazine*, December 1976, 106-9.

[60] Stecyk, "Stranger than Fiction," 73. These business ventures apparently include "selling Levi blue jeans in Eastern European countries at a substantial markup."

as a skater is merely one part of his existence in the subculture and in Dogtown as subcultural

fantasy space.[61]
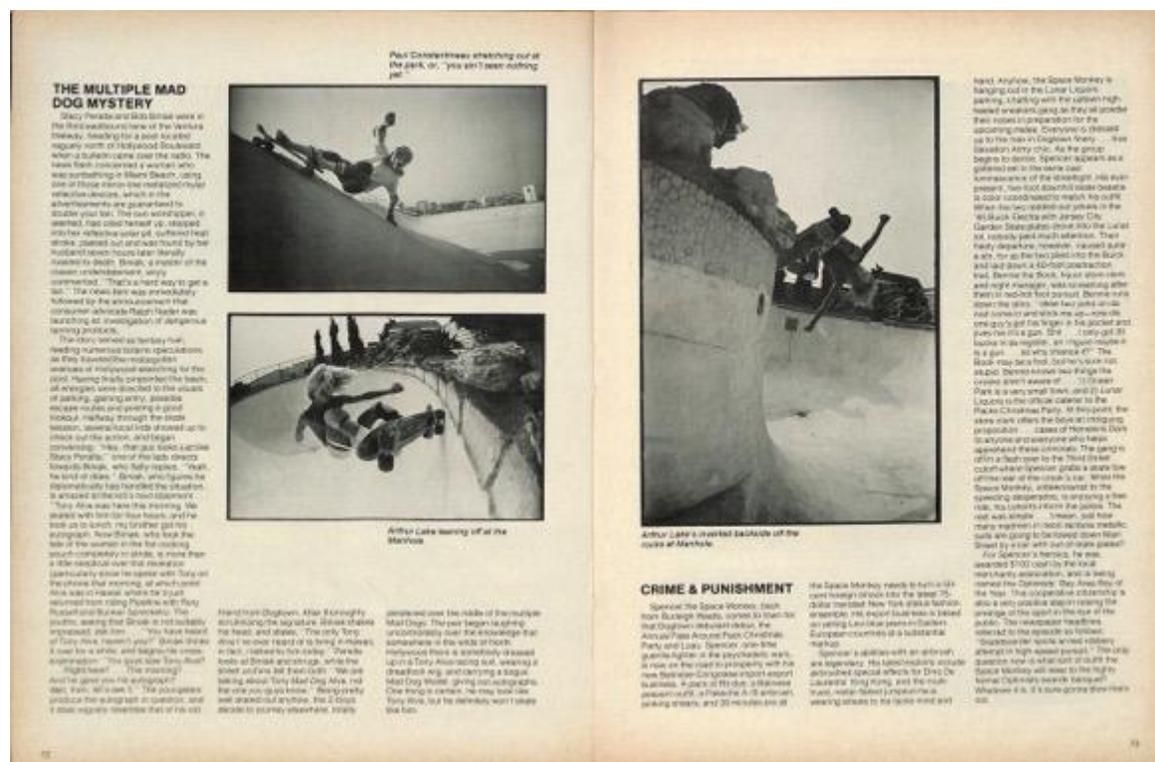
FIGURE 1.7 Two pages from Stecyk's "Stranger than Fiction." Spencer's narrative is featured on the right, around a photograph of skater Arthur Lake. *SkateBoarder Magazine,* April 1977.

In other moments, Stecyk utilizes popular celebrities in absurd situations. In "Frontier

Tales," Fred Astaire and Bob Dylan are portrayed as skateboarding fanatics:

> On the same day elsewhere in Tinseltown, Fred Astaire, age 77, broke his wrist falling off his 29" kicktail in the courtyard of his palatial manor. (Fred's comment, "I practice every day.")
> Bob Dylan kicks the 'kid' and company out of the new pool being constructed at his Point Dume home, but the neighbors say Bob skates it alone at night. (Dylan's comment, "To live outside the law, you must be honest.")[62]

---

[61] In fact, the only real acknowledgment in "Stranger than Fiction" that Spencer is a skater is that he hitches to the back of the liquor thieves' car in order to chase them down.
[62] Stecyk, "Frontier Tales," 107.

While Stecyk's narratives frequently lampoon public figures or mainstream media representatives, his references to Astaire and Dylan serve a different function. Though they are certainly comedic in nature, they also imply skateboarding's subcultural capital.[63] Dylan especially, as a 1960s countercultural icon, connects skating again to a type of outlaw behavior, despite the fact that he is depicted skating secretly on his *own* property. These improbable scenes do not even take place in Dogtown, but instead across Los Angeles stretching into Hollywood and Malibu. This situates Dogtown as not just reacting to or resisting mass culture consumerism, but somehow ahead of it as well. The skaters resist consumerist trends, yet also apparently dictate them, recalling Emily Chivers Yochim's framing of the skateboarding subculture's presentation of itself as simultaneously inside and outside of dominant culture. While Stecyk consistently writes about characters or spaces that exist on Dogtown's periphery, they seem to exist only to reinforce its subcultural narrative. This relationship is visualized in the layouts of "Stranger than Fiction" and "Frontier Tales" (fig. 1.8) where the large photographs, featuring Dogtown skaters, do not document the written content, whether Spencer's daily adventures or Bob Dylan's skate antics. The narratives are quite literally positioned around the larger images. Just as Spencer collapses multiple subcultural identity positions into one figure, these narratives are projected onto the photographs of Dogtown skaters and thus one reads them as representations of those characters or stories. Yet that significance only holds in this form, rather than being attainable for the magazine's readers who want to go mimic the Dogtown style. They may be able to recreate their techniques, but they cannot reproduce the context of Stecyk's mediation.

---

[63] For more on subcultural capital, see: Sarah Thornton, *Club Cultures: Music, Media, and Subcultural Capital,* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1996
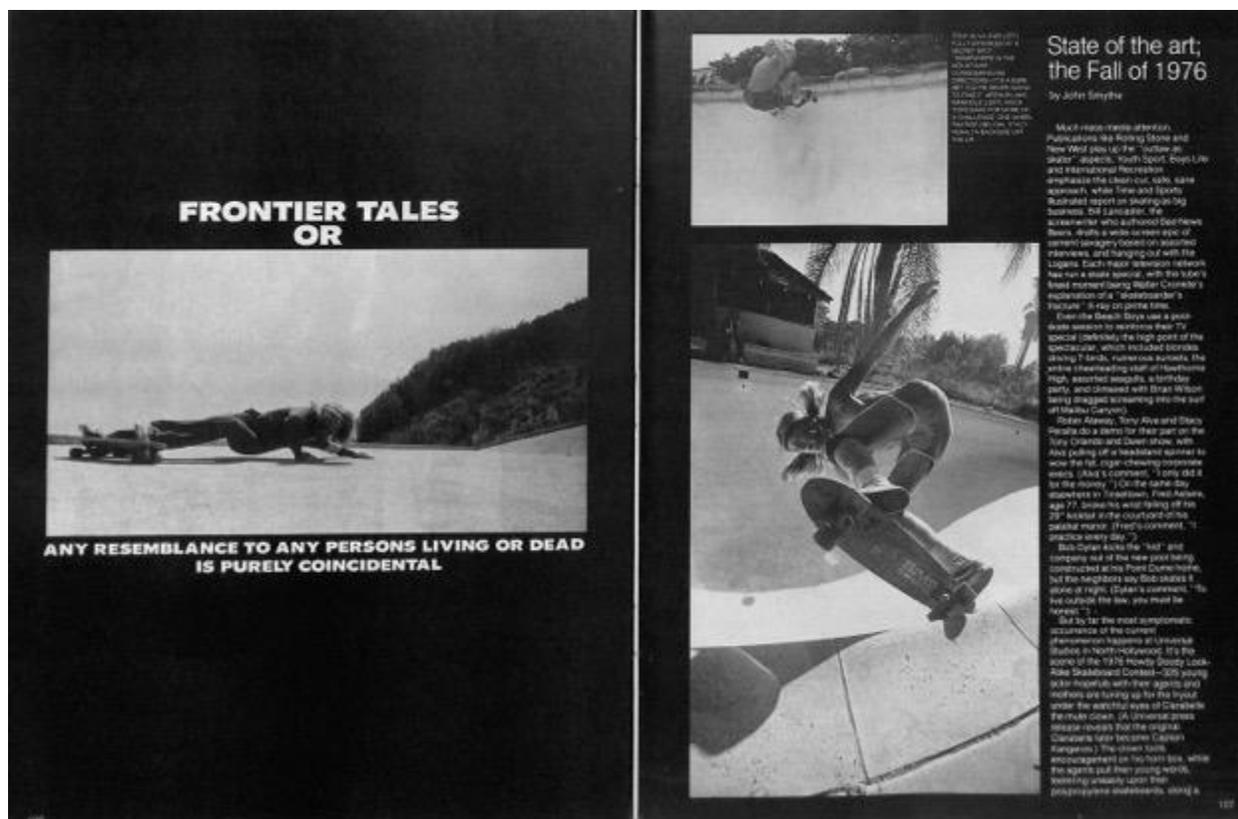
FIGURE 1.8 Stecyk's large photographs in the opening of "Frontier Tales." *SkateBoarder Magazine,* December 1976.

In other pieces, such as "The Westside Style: Or, Under the SkateTown Influence," (fig. 1.9) and "Vicious Lies and More Interplanetary Communications," Stecyk's visual style is more elaborate and stylized as opposed to raw or immediate documentation of a subculture.[64] Dogtown becomes even farther removed from anything resembling reality, becoming associated with more obviously fictional elements from genres such as science-fiction. Stecyk often frames Dogtown skaters as an unstoppable force, not simply prevailing in their environment but instead fully dominating it. "Westside Style" features only two columns of text under the title, while the remaining four pages are dominated by large photographs. The opening photograph is a black-and-white, full-bleed medium shot of a figure identified only as "El Thumper" holding a

---

[64] Craig Stecyk (John Smythe), "The Westside Style: Or, Under the SkateTown Influence," *SkateBoarder Magazine,* August 1976, 70-5; Craig Stecyk (John Smythe and C.R. Stecyk III), "Vicious Lies and More Interplanetary Communications," *SkateBoarder Magazine,* July 1977, 66-71.

skateboard against a heavily graffitied wall.[65] The subject is positioned so that he appears inside the wall's rectangular graffiti, with a cross at his feet reading "Dogtown." Popular histories such as *Dogtown and Z-Boys* frame this graffiti, including both the cross and the crude creature, "Rat Bones," that surround El Thumper as Stecyk's original designs. In Dogtown, the graffiti that overwhelms the landscape stops representing urban decay and instead indicates the subculture's control over the environment. The graffiti is not backdrop, it is their mark and legacy. Here, Stecyk's artistic creations also dominate the page, appearing far bigger than the images of the skaters themselves. The article claims to tell the story of how the Dogtown skaters are dominating the skateboarding world. However, if one is under any influence, as the title indicates, it seems to be El Thumper's. He is framed like some sort of skateboarding subcultural messiah, standing above a Dogtown cross and surrounded by the mysterious Rat Bones creatures. The full-page photograph marks the article as a clear contrast to the rest of the magazine's advertisements, with Stecyk's designs becoming the prominent iconography rather than manufacturer names or logos.[66] While this is significant for designating the article as subcultural and a shift away from utilizing the magazine as a guide to consumer purchases, it also indicates the narrow perspective of this subcultural narrative. The reader, greeted with the Dogtown cross, is at the church of Stecyk, not welcome to form their own interpretations of skateboarding as an act of resistance.

---

[65] Stecyk, "Westside Style," 70.

[66] The Dogtown cross does become part of a brand, "Dogtown Skates," founded by Dogtown skaters Jim Muir and Wes Humpston, who claim Stecyk let them use it for free. In an interview with *Juice Magazine,* Humpston also suggests that "El Thumper" is Dogtown skater Nathan Pratt. See: Ari Marsh, "Dogtown Chronicles: Wes Humpston," *Juice Magazine*, December 2005, 94-95, https://juicemagazine.com/home/dogtown-chronicles-wes-humpston/. Today, Dogtown is used as a brand for a variety of different business, including a coffee shop based in the storefront that was originally the Zephyr Surf Shop, who sponsored the Dogtown skaters: "About Us: Our History," Dogtown Coffee, accessed June 30, 2024, https://www.dogtowncoffee.com/about/. Dogtown Skateboards continues today, co-owned by Jim Muir and his brother Mike: "About Dogtown: Our Only Crime is Being Original," Dogtown Skateboards, accessed June 30, 2024, https://dogtownskateboards.com/pages/about-us.

FIGURE 1.9 Stecyk's "Westside Style," featuring the Dogtown cross, "Rat Bones," and El Thumper. *SkateBoarder Magazine,* August 1976.

"Vicious Lies" opens with a full-page photograph of what Stecyk refers to as a flying saucer, which he describes as being found by two skaters riding down a canyon in the middle of the night.[67] Despite its seeming irreverence, Stecyk manages to connect the moment to skateboarding's spontaneous nature, writing: "This incident proves that in dealing with energy, the thing is not to go find it, but to let it find you" (68-9). This moment blends the religious or messianic overtones noted in the "Westside Style" visuals with science-fiction genre elements. The final picture in the article (fig. 1.10) verges on abstract, with unnatural psychedelic colors and an odd framing, as the skater seems to hover over the wall of graffiti against an orange and purple sky (71). This image is a strangely euphoric ending to vignettes featuring a mix of pool skating, UFO sightings, and Dogtown graffiti or billboard quotes. Of Stecyk's images, its colors

---

[67] Stecyk, "Vicious Lies," 66.

and collage style mark it as most obviously constructed and stylized rather than journalistic documentation. In depicting an unnatural environment with psychedelic colors, it invites the viewer to see skateboarding as access to some type of euphoric fantasy. The wall of graffiti appears to be the one from "Westside Style," though this time its blue outline and black "Rat Bones" creatures make a sharp contrast with the orange and purple sky. Skating seems to inject Dogtown's environment (previously referred to as "wasteland") with psychedelic energy, a type of promising subcultural escapism. However, in framing this image within the Dogtown landscape and including his own unique iconography, Stecyk again marks this fantasy as restricting. Dogtown is an environment seemingly not bound by any rules, whether of nature or authority. The reader is perhaps like the "Rat Bones" creature on the edge of Stecyk's graffiti; they are able to catch a glimpse by peering over the page, but not invited into this world where skateboarding is a cultural force so powerful that its points of comparison are religious icons and extraterrestrials. Stecyk's fantasy mediation does not just resist the rest of *SkateBoarder*'s focus on consumerism, but also constructs a world where such consumerism is completely absent, replaced by different icons and narratives. Yet, this reliance on fantasy and fiction also makes Dogtown clearly unattainable for the reader. The Dogtown articles mark themselves as subcultural texts with ideological significance that moves beyond *SkateBoarder*'s typical content, while also primarily working to keep the reader excluded from Dogtown as a subcultural space.
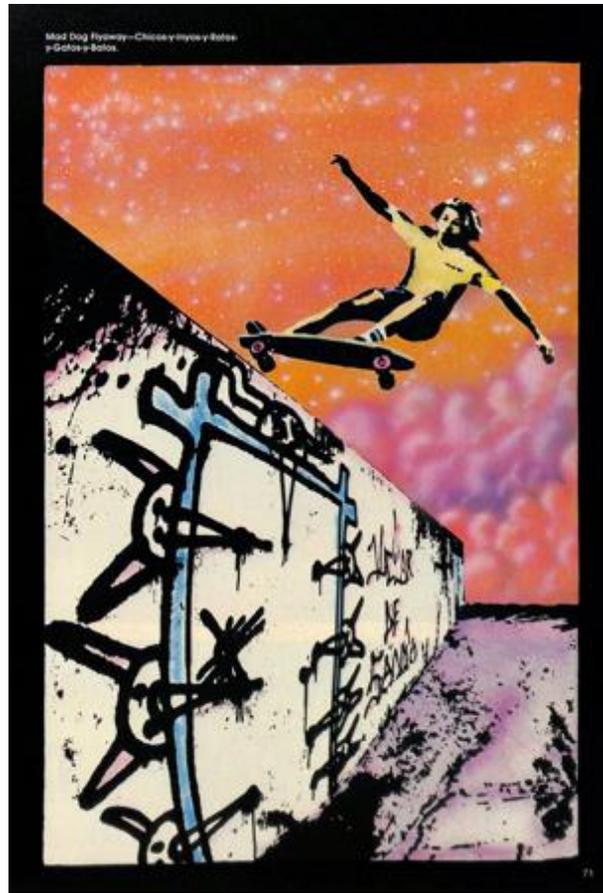
FIGURE 1.10 The final picture in Stecyk's "Vicious Lies." *SkateBoarder Magazine,* July 1977.

Skate Nazis: Race and Capital in the Dogtown Articles

Stecyk's racial politics and negotiated embrace of capitalism are far more explicit ways of policing who is and is not allowed within the subculture. Rather than present skateboarding as potentially resistant to capitalism in general terms, such resistance is positioned as exclusively available for a certain subsect of skaters who are both white and, strangely, financially successful. Although many examples, such as the famous "playgrounds of unlimited potential" in "Aspects of the Downhill Slide," clearly attempt to work against the commodification of skateboarding and situate the subculture as spawning from capitalism's ruins, closer examination of the Dogtown articles reveals that capital and profit are actually important aspects of the subculture. In the aforementioned "Fisheyed Freaks" (fig. 1.11), key Dogtown members are

depicted as akin to skateboarding Robin Hoods. In the opening, skater Nathan Pratt and manager Skip Engblom negotiate an absurdly high rate for Pratt to perform a jump in a Hollywood film. Stecyk describes them as leaving in a studio limo, "laughing like hell."[68] It is not just the celebrities, such as Fred Astaire and Bob Dylan, who are captivated by Dogtown's style, it is the Hollywood studio system more broadly. Stecyk's skateboarding subjects do not necessarily want to topple capitalist systems, but they do apparently want to benefit from them. These are not simply humorous anecdotes or used to exemplify something unique about individual skaters. Instead, Stecyk foregrounds this ability to steal or win money as part of Dogtown's overall narrative. In a description of Woody Waller, whose scam is "that of a skate star," Stecyk writes: "On the streets of Dogtown, everyone has a scam, and that scam is their total essence: their way, manner, time, and place of being are all depending upon their particular scam" (55). While these articles appear to resist commercialization, moments like these reveal a subcultural narrative that more actively embraces financial rewards. Again, Dogtown reaps the benefit of resisting norms while also benefitting from them; capitalism's interest in skateboarding is portrayed as an intrusion that must be resisted and the subculture is depicted as resulting from capitalism's faults and failures. Yet, at the same time, Stecyk's key figures in these pieces are subcultural heroes due to their ability to exploit capitalism to their own financial benefit. To be part of this group, it is not enough to be a good skater in terms of technique or style. One has to also use skating to elevate themselves, but only in these particular ways through scams or similar measures.

Beyond this negotiated embrace of capitalist elements, the Dogtown articles consistently restrict who can identify as members of the skateboarding subculture by foregrounding whiteness and even white supremacist symbols or logics. While some have critiqued *Dogtown and Z-Boys*

---

[68] Stecyk, "Fisheyed Freaks," 52-3

for its use of racialized tropes as well as the film's connection to 1990s American white backlash

politics, such approaches do not adequately consider the film's roots.[69] Stecyk's mediation

frames Dogtown as an exclusively white fantasy. It is a world where rejection of mainstream

norms is easily and in fact naturally available for a select group of skaters within a white-coded

space. In marking the skaters and these spaces with white supremacist rhetoric or iconography,

Stecyk forces readers to accept a subcultural narrative that centers whiteness and works to not

just marginalize other identities, but actively exclude them. The Dogtown articles utilize the term

"skate Nazi" and feature photographs or artworks depicting swastikas in order to signify

Dogtown's rebellious nature and exoticize its "urban" environment in contrast to commodified

environments such as skate parks.[70]

---

[69] Butz, *Grinding California,* "Dogtown: Surf and Skate Rebellion," 64-70; Kusz, *Revolt of the White Athlete*, "White Boyz in the Hood," 105-36.

[70] Here I refer to explicit swastikas that most clearly resemble the symbol's usage by the Nazis (where it is slightly rotated, resting on the symbol's corner rather than one of its flat sides). One can see other versions of the swastika in certain works by Stecyk, including arguably the image of El Thumper in "Westside Style," (fig. 1. 9) where it appears on the top left of the Dogtown cross and seems to inspire the sides of the design.
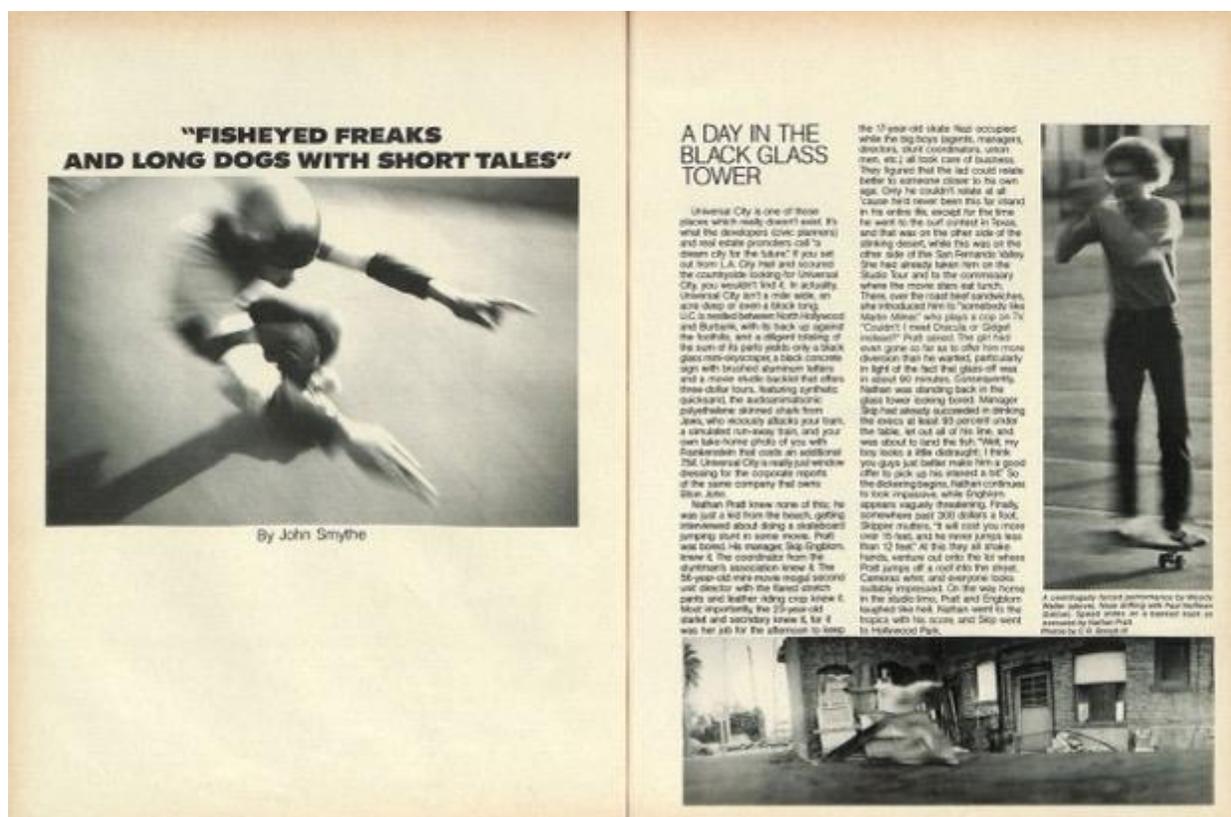
FIGURE 1.11 The first pages of "Fisheyed Freaks," featuring Nathan Pratt and Skip Engblom scamming Hollywood executives. *SkateBoarder Magazine,* June 1976.

In "Fisheyed Freaks," where Nathan Pratt is depicted as righteously stealing a big payday from the Hollywood executives, he is described as both, "just a kid from the beach," and a "17-year-old skate Nazi." Emphasizing Pratt as "just a kid" while the rest of those in the room–Engblom and the executives–are termed "big boys," Stecyk situates Pratt's behavior as innocent. However, he is simultaneously a "Nazi" who is intentionally scamming the industry (53). Likewise, one of the Dogtown scammers in the story is "Paul the Nazi," whose "talent" is offering "automatic weapons with his cleaning service" (55). That Stecyk would include Nazi as a descriptor in situations where Dogtown residents profit from scamming–the so-called "essence" of Dogtown–allows the term to be a key part of engaging with these texts and aligning oneself with these subcultural aims. If to be a Nazi is equated with one's ability to rebel, then resistance to the literal meaning of the word situates one as an outsider and unable to engage

with the subcultural textuality of the Dogtown articles. Using "Nazi" as synonymous with rebellion and intensity reveals Stecyk's connection to the surfing subculture, where the term occupies a complex discursive position. During the 1970s, certain punk subcultures–including skinhead, street punk, and "Oi!"–used the term "Nazi" and the associated iconography (such as the swastika) to identify as outwardly racist. Timothy Brown has identified how these movements deliberately rejected previous articulations of punk (which demonstrated appreciations for Black cultural forms) by foregrounding explicitly racist political lyrics and normalizing racial violence in and around their concert venues or other gatherings.[71] In the same period, members of the surf culture publicly claimed that they used "Nazi" only to signify intensity and rebellion, rather than any form of racism.[72] In framing "Nazi" this way, Stecyk refuses to acknowledge not only the racism exhibited in the surfing subculture, including from prominent figures such as Mickey (more commonly spelled "Miki") Dora, but also the provocative nature of the term's rhetorical function in the Dogtown articles.[73] Within texts obsessively marking themselves as subcultural and in opposition to the mainstream, "Nazi" most clearly works to exclude others, limiting who can engage with the subcultural text to those who are comfortable with its white supremacist logic. Although Stecyk's mediation is not the explicit and violent racism as one sees in certain punk subcultures from the era, it still maintains the shock value of "Nazi" and, since the term still represents a particular intensity, its potential to signify violence. Within *SkateBoarder,* "Nazi" becomes a violent marker of difference and the

---

[71] Timothy Brown, "Subcultures, Pop Music, and Politics: Skinheads and 'Nazi' Rock in England and Germany," in *White riot: Punk Rock and the Politics of Race,* eds. Stephen Duncombe and Maxwell Tremblay (London: Routledge, 2018), 120-129.
[72] Joy Horowitz, "Surf Nazis – Hoarding the Perfect Wave," *Washington Post,* Mar. 18, 1979, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle/1979/03/18/surf-nazis-hoarding-the-perfect-waves/545917f5-4ee4-48ca-b766-4cc8097f8bff/.
[73] Peter Westwick's and Peter Neushul, *The World in the Curl: An Unconventional History of Surfing* (New York: Crown, 2013); Daniel Duane, "The Long, Strange Tale of California's Surf Nazis," *New York Times,* Sept. 28, 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/28/opinion/sunday/surf-racism.html. Dora's white supremacist beliefs were considered a type of open secret in the surfing subculture during the 1960s and 1970s.

Dogtown articles' willingness to feature what is not acceptable within the rest of the magazine's consumerist context. To reject the term is thus also to reject the version of Dogtown that Stecyk depicts.

In other contexts, Dogtown's physical landscape is coded as exotic and its non-skateboarding inhabitants as racialized. While again functioning as provocative, such moments also make clear that white racial superiority is central to the Dogtown subcultural narrative. Stecyk's narratives and aesthetics frame the Dogtown skaters as dominating a landscape that is inhabited by racialized bodies, who are in turn apparently too ignorant to resist capitalism the way the white skaters can. For example, "Fisheyed Freaks," though it is mostly dominated by blurred photographs featuring Tony Alva, Nathan Pratt, and Stacy Peralta performing dizzying jumps and spins, also contains a clearer photo of two Black children sitting together across a skateboard (fig. 1.12). The caption reads: "Indigenous faces from the blacktop jungle."[74] While Pratt's innocence allows him to be a high-flying skate "Nazi," who can command overly high prices for his skating expertise, here the children sitting across the skateboard are given an innocence that situates them as naïve and lacking the skills of the white skaters. Further, though in other contexts scholars have suggested that Stecyk's use of terms such as "jungle" attempts to reject the skaters' whiteness and align them with a lack of privilege, here his use of "blacktop jungle" is mocking.[75] Just as Stecyk turns a description of the Goldwater estate into mockery, this moment functions similarly, albeit in a racialized context. That the young Black children don't skate, but rather sit across the board together, also situates them as outsiders. While "indigenous" could imply belonging, here it instead suggests a racist coding of the children as

---

[74] Stecyk, "Fisheyed Freaks," 56. The collector's edition of the Dogtown articles does not include this image in its version of "Fisheyed Freaks." See: Friedman and Stecyk, *DogTown: The Legend of the Z-Boys,* 24-31.
[75] Butz, *Grinding California,* 58-9

primitive. It is a dramatic contrast from the way "Downhill Slide" portrays the Dogtown skaters'

natural response to their environment as radical and anti-capitalist. These children may be from

Dogtown, but they are clearly excluded from the subculture and not capable of occupying its

resistant stance. Visually, the children are also framed in a dismissive manner, situated below

these stories of Alva and Peralta profiting from skateboarding. Despite being shown skating, the

kids are rendered as backdrop for Dogtown. They become not part of the subcultural narrative,

but part of the environment that Stecyk claims the skaters must overcome. Their innocence is not

radical, only ignorant. As the Dogtown articles dismiss Blackness, they in turn center and overtly

place value on whiteness.
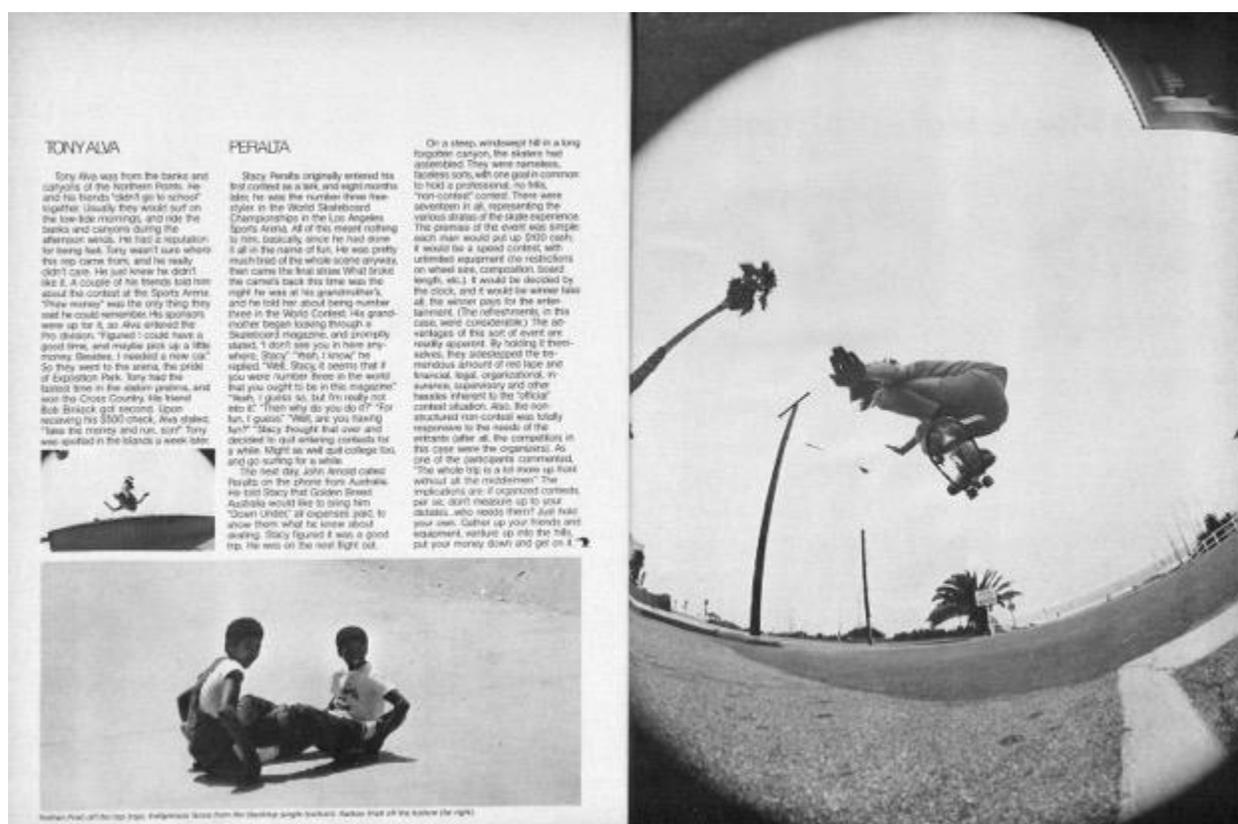
FIGURE 1.12 Stecyk's photograph of two Black children in contrast to his photographs and narratives of white Dogtown skaters. *SkateBoarder Magazine,* June 1976.

In "Truth or Consequences: Or, Let's Not and Say We Did," Stecyk foregrounds images

of the swastika alongside a narrative that revolves around skaters searching for and seemingly

conquering backyard pools for their skate sessions.[76] The article uses Nazi iconography as a marker of subcultural textuality and situates the backyard pool as a white-coded and dominated space. "Truth or Consequences" centers around a semi-anonymous pair of skating brothers from Dogtown referred to as Red Dog and Bull Dog, or the "Dog Brothers," who go to great lengths to find the best pools in the surrounding city and suburban neighborhoods. Stecyk frames their search as military reconnaissance, describing the pair's "numerous trips to the Hall of Records and to the Department of Building and Safety to obtain much needed blueprints and diagrams" as well as the "three days Red Dog spent aerial charting and photographing all of the basins…from an Aero-Rents helicopter" (81). Another one of their strategies involves Bull Dog and an "unnamed female accomplice," who "pose as a house-hunting married couple," so that they can take open-house tours specifically to inspect empty pools and find ones suitable for themselves or other Dogtown skaters (81). While one could read this bait and switch as ridiculing middle-class norms, reclaiming bourgeois space for subcultural and anti-capitalist purpose, it also signals that the Dogtown identity relies on adherence to, rather than opposing, dominant values. Successfully posing as a middle-class couple in Los Angeles, Bull Dog and his "accomplice" gain access to spaces only because of their ability to fit into existing heteronormative structures, notably in a context where they are also claiming to be potential customers. Although the Dogtown articles, as well as their retelling in *Dogtown and Z-Boys* and other media, attempt to frame the hunt for backyard pools as a subcultural plight taken on by lower-class and inherently underprivileged skaters, here the group gains access to pools by being able to mark themselves as privileged potential homeowners. Notably, the "Dog Brothers" and the female accomplice are both framed fairly anonymously. However, the lengthy description of the Dog Brothers' exploits

---

[76] Craig Stecyk (John Smythe and C.R. Stecyk III), "Truth or Consequences: Or, Let's Not and Say We Did," *SkateBoarder Magazine,* August 1977, 80-5.

as well as their possible connections to either Tony Alva (who in many Dogtown articles and various *SkateBoarder* advertisements is given the nickname "Mad Dog,") or Jim and Mike Muir gives them clear importance over the "unnamed" accomplice.[77] Even if the Dog Brothers are fictional, they articulate a gender dynamic where women are used as a means, only significant in that they can help provide the Dog Brothers access to new skate spots. As such, Dogtown's exclusive nature is only articulated through adherence–rather than resistance–to dominant structures, including both heteronormativity and capitalism's emphasis on property ownership. This continues through Stecyk's recounting of the extensive militaristic exploits undertaken to find these pools and houses.

---

[77] Although Stecyk never explicitly clarifies who the "Dog Brothers" are, most of the evidence points to them being Jim and Mike Muir. A photo caption in "Vicious Lies," describes one of Jim's tricks as a "Red Dog frontside axle slide," even though he is never officially referred to as Red Dog in the Dogtown articles. However, in the "about us" section for Dogtown Skateboards, Jim signs his name as Jim "Reddog" Muir. The only issue is that, at the time "Truth or Consequences" was published, Mike Muir would have been roughly fourteen years-old, which makes it somewhat improbable that he could pose as a married adult. Stecyk, "Vicious Lies," 66; "About Us," Dogtown Skateboards.

FIGURE 1.13 Two pages of "Truth or Consequences," featuring a swastika on Tony Alva's skateboard alongside the story of the Dog Brothers' search for backyard pools. *SkateBoarder Magazine,* August 1977.

Though the Dog Brothers' race is not specifically identified, "Truth or Consequences" visually and narratively codes the backyard pool as an exclusively white space (fig. 1.13). Ultimately, the brothers, after nearly being arrested for posing as police officers, resort to finding work emptying pools and skating ones that need replastering. They do so using their "completely restored war surplus German command car…equipped with police band, citizens band, and short-wave radios, quadra-flex tape player, auxiliary night lights, power generator, complete wardrobe changes, and their most prized possession—a high-capacity silent-running portable water pump" (83). The same page features a large rectangular photograph of Tony Alva pivoting his skateboard on the lip of a pool. Alva's board obscures his whole upper-body and is centered in the frame, with a swastika clearly visible above the board's trucks. That Tony Alva, who identifies as mixed-race, appears with the swastika positioned blocking his face is not without

significance. The swastika whitewashes not only the subcultural space of the pool (which

Stecyk's caption identifies as "Adolphs," likely a reference to Adolph Hitler), but Alva's body

and identity as well.[78] On the left, a close-up picture of a Big Boy Restaurant statue is positioned

so that his big smile and cartoonish eyes appear to look directly at Alva's board, as if guiding the

reader to it. The photograph of Alva is even larger, framing the swastika prominently in the

middle of the page. These pictures, along with a third that features Paul Cullen pivoting on a

pool's coping, are all centered, with the Dog Brothers' story filling the outer vertical columns of

each page. Just as in "Frontier Tales," these images and the accompanying narrative are not

explicitly connected. Yet, with the photographs dominating the layout, one reads the narrative as

reinforcing the visuals of the skaters and, in this case, the swastika. The Dog Brothers' exploits,

reliant on dominant norms and even old Nazi war equipment, are positioned as securing space

for Alva and his swastika-adorned skateboard, serving a supporting role both narratively and

visually. "Truth or Consequences" reveals that Stecyk's Dogtown articles reserve the subculture's

resistant stance as only available for white males. Though Stecyk positions skating as a

potentially anti-capitalist activity, this article depicts skaters who can leverage their ability to

present as privileged *and* who use white supremacist rhetoric and symbols to mark their spaces

as subcultural. The swastika itself is a significant marker of the article's subcultural textuality. It

appears as prominently as a manufacturer's logo would in the rest of the magazine's

advertisements. As such, it confronts the magazine's consumer function and clearly mocks it.

Stecyk's provocative imagery is thus a challenge to capitalist structures. However, he maintains

---

[78] One can connect this to similar arguments made about *Dogtown and Z-Boys.* Kyle Kusz argues that the film visually whitewashes Alva through its grainy black-and-white visual style, which prevents the viewer from understanding Alva's identity as mixed-race. This photograph in "Truth or Consequences," reveals that Alva's whitening occurs long before the documentary and is present in Dogtown's original framing in *SkateBoarder.* Kusz, 129-132.

the swastika's racist function and it ultimately remains a tool of exclusion. Dogtown is a place where the swastika is welcomed and where the icon's meaning is never really distorted.[79]

Dogtown's Afterlife & *Thrasher Magazine*'s Subcultural Textuality

Stecyk's legacy and the continuing subcultural textuality of the Dogtown articles are enhanced by his own refusal to discuss his writing in *SkateBoarder* or much of Dogtown in general. This has a significant impact on the way the Dogtown articles are remediated and their stories retold in other media forms or histories of skateboarding as a sport. Stecyk's refusal has two important functions. Firstly, it leaves the mysterious layers of his work, including intertextual references, the status of his various pseudonyms, and the incorporation of fictional elements, intact. His unwillingness to discuss his rhetorical strategies allows these complexities to continue functioning as they do in *SkateBoarder,* leaving Dogtown an unattainable skateboarding fantasy. Without explanation, the Dogtown articles are able to continue excluding readers who resist or cannot make sense of various references or images. Secondly, Stecyk's refusal results in the texts, despite their complexity and layers of meaning, being framed within the context of immediacy as authenticity. They are presented as foundational works from a figure with artistic interests and credentials, yet simultaneously considered raw and spontaneous, rather than highly constructed. As such, this framing of authenticity remains intact, and one cannot escape or question it. The Dogtown fantasy remains carefully guarded and exclusive, which prevents the skateboarding subculture from interrogating the identity politics articulated in these

---

[79] A productive point of comparison here might be *Scorpio Rising* (Kenneth Anger, 1963), an avant-garde short film which uses the swastika and other fascist iconography as well as addresses mass media imagery and consumerism. Juan Suárez argues that Anger's film utilizes the swastika to relate "the adoration of media and religious icons to the violence of fascism." In addition, it distorts the symbol's meaning, placing it in dialogue with the gay and hot rod or biker subcultures and suggesting slippages between mass media consumption, Nazism/fascism, and sadomasochism. See: Juan Suárez, *Bike Boys, Drag Queens, and Superstars: Avant-Garde, Mass Culture, and Gay Identities in the 1960s Underground Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 165.

mediations; they can only ever be accepted or rejected. In interviews, Stecyk expresses an interest in materiality and claims to lack any concern or interest in either the commodification of his work or skateboarding more generally. For instance, he frequently notes that he had no artistic training prior to writing and photographing for *Surfer* or *SkateBoarder*. His father was a documentarian for the U.S. Army during World War II and his mother, a ceramicist, would also encourage him to experiment with whatever tools or materials the family had at home.[80] Stecyk states in an interview with *Juice Magazine*: "I just picked up a camera and used it. I didn't really know how it worked and in fact broke all of my father's equipment. Gradually I absorbed formal theory through attrition and repetition of tasks."[81] He is careful to frame his "absorption" of artistic theory as essentially an accident and is more reluctant to cite, for instance, the Master of Fine Arts degree he received from California State University, Northridge.[82]

This self-presentation style preserves Stecyk's perceived authenticity, where he is both an accidental artist and merely Dogtown's observer. What this ignores is the fact that he is *the* key figure in mediating the Dogtown skate scene and, during the 1970s, had a vested commercial interest in skateboarding. The skateboarders that Stecyk chronicles were initially sponsored by a surf and skateboard shop, Zephyr Productions, in which Stecyk was a co-owner alongside Skip Engblom and Jeff Ho.[83] Further, though Dogtown's contribution to skateboarding is often framed, by Stecyk and many others, as a natural and radical response to the region's geography, such a narrative overlooks the role that Stecyk played as mediator.[84] Even the name, "Dogtown,"

---

[80] Joe Donnelly, *L.A. Man: Profiles from a Big City and a Small World* (Los Angeles: Rare Bird Books, 2018), 82
[81] Dan Levy, "Bones Brigade Chronicles: Craig Stecyk," *Juice Magazine,* December 2011, 66.
[82] This is a fact that Donnelly and others mention but that one never hears from Stecyk himself. A blog post from *Juice* further refers to a workshop he did on campus and calls Stecyk a "world famous" Northridge alumnus. See: "Craig Stecyk III Work Shop and Art Show," *Juice Magazine,* Nov. 9, 2011, https://juicemagazine.com/home/craig-stecyk-iii-work-shop-and-art-show/.
[83] This story is central to *Dogtown and Z-Boys,* which largely sidesteps the issue of commercial interest, but does note that the shop's sponsored skaters quickly moved on to more profitable teams.
[84] This includes both the greater Los Angeles area's steep canyons, asphalt schoolyards built into hills, as well as surrounding suburban neighborhoods with pools that California mandated homeowners empty during 1976 and 1977. For more, see: Platt, "Rhythms of Urban Space."

which refers to "the Los Angeles beach areas stretching from Santa Monica to Ocean Park and Venice Beach," is actually a term Stecyk claims to have originated.[85] In a promotional interview for the Museum of Contemporary Arts' exhibit "Art in the Streets," Stecyk tells artist Shepard Fairey and artist/skateboarder Aaron Rose that he coined the term while "sitting on the bus bench at Bay and Main Streets drinking Silver Satin and Kool Aid. I uttered, 'it's a dog's life in a dog town."[86] This statement is at once in line with Stecyk's insistence that his work is spontaneous and that his visions of the skateboard subculture are authentic, yet simultaneously at odds with his dismissive response to interviewers who credit him as a key figure in skateboarding history. Stecyk's coinage seems to also be a fantasy, framed as a moment of alcoholic melancholy that represents his perspective on Dogtown and its position on the margins of acceptable society. Moments such as these provide a glimpse at how much authorial control Stecyk had and continues to have in mediating Dogtown. Despite many viewing Dogtown as a significant development in skateboarding technicality that led to its industrial success, these works within *SkateBoarder* are still considered subcultural, rather than commercial or mainstream.

Ultimately, these textual strategies that invoke a subcultural reader or viewer become a standard for certain skateboarding media forms, such as *Thrasher Magazine*.[87] While Stecyk, Peralta, and other skateboarding media figures often critique *SkateBoarder* and Surfer Publications for rebranding the magazine as a broader action sports text, *Action Now,* magazines such as *Thrasher* would quickly adopt both Stecyk's textual strategies as well as the inclusion of other action sports and even heavy metal or punk music reviews. It is not that *Action Now* moved on from only focusing on skateboarding, but that it did so without utilizing a subcultural

---

[85] Butz, *Grinding California,* 64.

[86] Shepard Fairey, Craig R. Stecyk III, and Aaron Rose, "Skate and Destroy," Art in the Streets, accessed June 30, 2024, https://artinthestreets.org/text/skate-and-destroy.

[87] Konstantin Butz, "The Authenticity of a T-shirt: Ryan Gosling, Roddy Dangerblood, and the Rebellious Genealogy of *Thrasher* Magazine," *Rock Music Studies* 4, no. 1 (2017): 47-56.

textuality. In contrast, *Thrasher*, a magazine founded by the co-creators and owners of

skateboard truck (the metal that connects the wheels to the board) manufacturer, Independent

Truck Company, immediately hired Stecyk as part of the editorial staff. In contrast, at

SkateBoarder, he was only a contributor.[88] Even though *Thrasher,* similarly to *SkateBoarder*'s

relationship with advertisers, maintained an industrial connection that ties it to skateboarding

commodification, it foregrounded media production and an aggressive mockery of others as

central to the subcultural narrative. *Thrasher*'s early issues suggest that to be a properly

rebellious skateboarder, one should aim to mimic Stecyk and the textual elements of the

Dogtown articles. For example, one editorial instructs readers on how to write, edit, and publish

their own skate magazine, urging them to "add observations and stretch the truth as far as

possible," clearly building on Stecyk's narrative strategies.[89] Just as Stecyk relies on unexplained

intertextual references and irreverence, *Thrasher* states that zines should be edited "down to the

bare essentials, leaving nothing out but leaving everything up to interpretation. Let them read

between the lines" (6). The editorial further emphasizes proper visual style, telling skaters that

"photos should feature the most bizarre subject matter possible while still keeping within the

category of radical skate activities." Additionally, in terms of overall design, "if you can't draw,

steal artwork from other magazines or books" (6). Later issues even feature skate zines similarly

to the way *SkateBoarder* features reviews and information about newly founded skate parks. The

July 1984 issue calls zine producers the "Disciples of Skate" (fig. 1.14).[90] Though it takes

content from these productions and features several write-ups, the piece does not actually

---

[88] "Staff," *Thrasher Magazine,* October 1981, 3; Craig Stecyk (Lowboy), "Skate and Destroy: Or, Multiple Choices to Offend Everyone," *Thrasher Magazine,* December 1982, 24-9. During his time with *Thrasher*, Stecyk would mostly utilize a new pseudonym: Lowboy. The title of Stecyk's December 1982 article "Skate and Destroy" would eventually become *Thrasher*'s slogan, utilized on almost all of its merchandise even today.
[89] Kevin Thatcher, "Talking Ed: How to Write, Edit, Design, Photograph, Paste Up, and Print a Skateboard Magazine," *Thrasher Magazine,* June 1981, 6.
[90] "The Disciples of Skate," *Thrasher Magazine,* July 1984, 20-5.

provide readers a way to acquire them. Instead, it goes out of the way to frame those who can find them on their own as the real authentic skaters. The article states: "We'll give you their names, city and states, but not their addresses. If you can't figure out how to contact any of them, then you're not cool enough to even read them" (20). Just as Stecyk leaves Dogtown hidden behind a layer of fictional elements and unexplained characters or narratives, *Thrasher* insinuates that to be a part of the skateboarding subculture, one must *already* be privy to such subcultural knowledge. While this project's next chapter on 1980s skate video will show that they increasingly allow for a more malleable subcultural narrative, *Thrasher* positions zines as continuing to operate by primarily excluding others.

It is significant that *Thrasher's* highlighting of zines as an authentic and non-commercial form of skateboarding mediation occurs within what is obviously a consumer product. The Dogtown articles present themselves as subcultural texts within *Skateboarder,* while *Thrasher* reframes those narrative strategies as the purpose of the commodity itself. Though its encouraging zine production can be read as challenging media industry norms, scholars such as Stephen Duncombe have shown that the zine format in and of itself cannot be considered resistant. He argues that the form presents an "alternative hegemony," merely adjusting rather than truly challenging late-capitalism's normative structures.[91] *Thrasher* presents itself not necessarily as a guide to skate products the way *SkateBoarder* does, but instead as a guide to skate *media* texts that are key for subcultural participation.

---

[91] Stephen Duncombe, *Notes from Underground: Zines and the Politics of Alternative Culture* (Portland: Microcosm Publishing, 2008).

FIGURE 1.14 "The Disciples of Skate" feature highlights skate zines, giving a sample of their content as well as their location, but does not tell readers explicitly how to find them. *Thrasher Magazine,* July 1984.

Thrasher is representative of a broader shift in skateboard media, where whole commodities are structured around these subcultural textual strategies. Though Stecyk engages with media form in order to counter consumerism, he ultimately shuts the reader out of this political position, framing Dogtown as unattainable fantasy world for a select group of white male skaters. The articles' narratives and visuals excessively mark their pages and the subculture as anti-capitalist, though these texts also embrace forms of capitalist accumulation and adherence to dominant norms. Further, with a public stance that attempts to diminish his contributions, Stecyk's output and persona actually cement his status within skateboarding media as a complex and authentic auteur figure whose strategies and politics cannot be so easily shed in later generations of skateboard media. This framing is too easily resolvable within capitalist structures and is a major aspect of how Dogtown's narrative ends up embraced by not just niche

commodities like *Thrasher,* but Hollywood and the media industry in general as well. Moving forward, this analysis turns more explicitly to film and video texts that similarly reflect on their materiality and subcultural use value while embracing their status as commodities. Such texts engage with their material form as a way of forming subcultural textual relationships with the viewer. However, their function as commodities as well as a medium transition to video ultimately necessitates a shift away from Stecyk's exclusionary strategies and toward a more malleable set of subcultural aesthetics.

2. THE BONES BRIGADE AND *THE SEARCH FOR ANIMAL CHIN*

Subcultural Textuality in the Early Skate Video Era

Introduction: The Shift to Skate Video

Though far from the first depiction of skateboarding in moving images, Powell-Peralta's 1984 release, *The Bones Brigade Video Show* (Stacy Peralta, 1984) is often cited as the first skate *video*. That is, the first skateboard-centered movie sold not just predominantly, but only as a prerecorded videocassette.[1] The opening scene features Stacy Peralta himself watching a news broadcast where the anchor (D. David Morin) attempts to explain skateboarding to the audience. When he holds up a comically flat and plain wooden board, Peralta decides he has had enough. He walks up to the television with a sledgehammer and smashes it. A close up of the destroyed television zooms out as Peralta implausibly pulls a bright red and black Powell-Peralta branded skateboard out from behind the cracked glass (fig. 2.1). He then holds the board so the deck art and trucks are clearly visible for the viewer, looking directly at the camera and exclaiming "now…this is a skateboard." Sean Dinces argues that this opening scene "introduces Peralta as *the* entrepreneurial insider within the skateboarding subculture…if you want to be a *real* skater, you need a skateboard produced and sold by skaters."[2] Though this scene functions clearly and shamelessly as promotion, Peralta is able to retain a discursive authenticity, lending his company's products significant subcultural capital.

---

[1] Here and elsewhere in this chapter, I intentionally use the term "movie" to define prerecorded audiovisual content available for purchase whether through videocassettes, optical discs, or digital formats. This follows other platform scholars who use "movie" when referring broadly to the text and "video" or "film" when referring more specifically to certain mediums/formats. However, as this chapter digs deeper into skate video, I do refer to these works as "videos," in contrast to "films," in order to accurately describe both their material format and generic position.

[2] Sean Dinces, "Flexible Opposition': Skateboarding Subcultures under the Rubric of Late Capitalism," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 28, no. 11 (2011): 1520.

FIGURE 2.1 Peralta pulling a Powell-Peralta skateboard out of his smashed television in *The Bones Brigade Video Show*. Screen capture from video file.

Beyond Peralta's contrived depiction, this scene also indicates the significance of video as a new format and logic within the skateboarding subculture. In smashing the television in the opening moments of the first skate video, Peralta proclaims video as being capable of going beyond television's "passive" structure, where viewers are at the whim of network interests, schedules, and content restrictions. Instead, video becomes the medium for active viewers invested in deeper subcultural access. *Video Show* and other Powell-Peralta videos from this era consciously present themselves as rejecting traditional television and film constraints. In turn, a text such as *Video Show* is framed as a valuable commodity, one that promises the viewer access to both what an authentic producer chooses to show and an increased control over that content

through the ability to rewind, pause, or fast-forward using their videocassette recorder (VCR). Of course, as the 1980s progress, skaters are not the only subculture making use of video. On the contrary, the videocassette–as a platform for both viewing prerecorded movies and "time-shifting" television broadcasts for later viewing or use–ultimately becomes central to subcultural groups and American popular media culture more broadly. Skate videos, as some of the earliest movies released exclusively as prerecorded tapes, represent a new range of textual strategies for the skateboarding subculture.[3] While the previous chapter analyzes the ideological functions of the Dogtown articles' subcultural textuality within the broader *SkateBoarder Magazine,* this chapter moves on to video, where skateboard media producers can frame their entire commodity–and not insignificantly, one whose entire purpose is overtly the promotion of *additional* commodities–as a subcultural text. Though skate video does often parody mainstream culture, as the opening of *Video Show* indicates, it does not operate as the Dogtown articles do, where the textuality produces a particular subcultural narrative that relies on keeping others out and actively restricts the potential identity positions. Instead, skate videos, through both text and various paratexts, present more malleable versions of the subculture. As commodities, they consciously offer a wider variety of content, aesthetics, and narratives when compared to Stecyk's Dogtown articles, working to bring viewers in rather than keep them out. Further, video's material and discursive malleability allows a shift from merely viewers to more accurately users, who are encouraged to use these videos for their own purposes, whether replaying and scrutinizing tricks, as merely background ambience, or for featuring in stores to help sell products. Video is ultimately positioned as both more subcultural and "useful," providing engagement beyond the passive viewing nature of film and linear television. The

---

[3] In other words, in contrast to Hollywood or independent films distributed to theaters and released on video as an additional revenue generating secondary market.

variety of modes and aesthetics featured in Powell-Peralta's Bones Brigade videos intentionally

reframe skateboarding as a subculture invested in appearing if not more diverse, at least more

flexible in terms of allowing a plurality of styles and potential narratives.

Rather than chronicle skate video's entire history, this chapter focuses on the beginnings

of the form in the 1980s and, specifically, the first few skate videos made by a company co-

owned by former Dogtown skater Stacy Peralta: Powell-Peralta. These videos, featuring a group

of skaters coined the Bones Brigade, were released during the 1980s and early-1990s, beginning

with the aforementioned *Video Show* and including *Future Primitive* (Stacy Peralta, 1985), *The

Search for Animal Chin* (Stacy Peralta, 1987), *Public Domain* (Stacy Peralta and C.R. Stecyk,

1988), *Ban This* (Stacy Peralta and C.R. Stecyk, 1989), and *Propaganda* (Stacy Peralta, 1990).[4]

Various histories, such as Peralta's own documentary on this period, *Bones Brigade: An

Autobiography* (Stacy Peralta, 2012), often refer to these six videos as the core Powell-Peralta

Bones Brigade videos. However, an additional shorter work, *Axe Rated* (George Powell, 1988),

was produced as well.[5] In addition to formal analysis of these texts and an emphasis on *Animal

Chin,* I consider the various subcultural paratexts connected to these and video overall during

this formative moment. These paratexts, including video packaging, advertisements from video

---

[4] The "Bones Brigade" was a rotating roster of skaters sponsored by Powell-Peralta, who would regularly compete in competitions using the company's products and occasionally release signature board models with their own unique shape or design. While the Brigade members changed constantly as skaters found new sponsors or quit the sport, its "core" is typically defined as Steve Caballero, Tommy Guerrero, Tony Hawk, Mike McGill, and Lance Mountain, who were with the company throughout this era. Plenty of other skaters appear in these videos and some, such as Rodney Mullen, are significant figures for the subculture and often identified through their connection to the Bones Brigade. Mullen in particular is often framed as one of the group's most significant skaters and occasionally referred to as part of the core group. However, for this chapter's purposes, since Caballero, Guerrero, Hawk, McGill, and Mountain are the only five who appear in each video and are the main cast for *Animal Chin,* I use "Bones Brigade" to refer to these five specifically.
[5] *Axe Rated* is often not considered a core video because many sources, including Peralta, claim it was only produced for skateboard shops, meant to be played on in-store televisions rather than for sale to individual skaters. However, various advertisements in *Thrasher* magazine during the 1980s show that *Axe Rated* could be purchased via mail-order. Though it is not included in contemporary DVD collections of the Bones Brigade videos, *Axe Rated* can be purchased as a digital download from Powell-Peralta's online shop, where it is described as a "video catalog with skateboarding, intended for dealers to play in their shops." "Powell Peralta Axe Rated SD Download," Skate One, accessed July 1, 2024, https://www.skateone.com/powell-peralta-axe-rated-sd-download.

producers or skateboard retailers, and *Thrasher Magazine* features focused on video, are crucial

to understanding the way video is presented as a new and potentially subcultural format and

logic. Though today skate video is often considered a fairly homogenous form, where skate

teams are presented in "parts," each featuring a different skater's montage of tricks and with skits

serving as interludes, these early videos represent a moment of formal experimentation. Peralta's

Bones Brigade videos utilize a mix of editing styles and emphasize video-specific low-fidelity

aesthetics, such as slow-motion, zooms, or haphazard camera movement, as ways of suggesting

that video can go beyond what is offered by traditional film and television or the still

photography featured in skate magazines. In doing so, these texts consciously present themselves

as unique technical spectacles, promising video to be a more immediate and personally malleable

format that allows the viewer deeper access to the skateboarding subculture. Additionally, the

Bones Brigade videos mix together elements of narrative film, music video editing,

documentary, television commercials, and even avant-garde cinema, revealing that it isn't just

the material promise of video technology, but also the format's cultural logic. Such a mix of

modes and styles is enabled by a generally low-fidelity aesthetic, which facilitates the shift

between different narrative or documentary storytelling strategies as well as different

cinematography and editing techniques. Though these videos were prerecorded movies available

for purchase, not entirely unlike the rental or sales potential of Hollywood films on video, they

also featured a blend of filmic and televisual modes, acknowledging the way home viewers were

beginning to use video (whether prerecorded movies or as a recording device itself). While these

formal strategies are important, so are video paratexts, since they do significant discursive work

alongside the Bones Brigade texts to position video as a new logic with subcultural potential. In

this historical moment, video begins to signify something transgressive and personally formative

beyond the traditional restrictions of film or television's formulaic nature. Video use and

collection becomes key for subcultural participation and identity formation. While potentially

transgressive and presented as more subculturally authentic, Peralta's videos do not shy away

from their nature as commodities or their function as promotional materials for the company's

skateboards or other merchandise. Instead, movies such as *Animal Chin* use video aesthetics and

logics as key elements of their commodification, carefully presenting themselves as both anti-

mainstream yet also available to ideally *any* skater.

Theorizations of Skate Video

Conceptually, video has remained integral to the skateboarding subculture since the early

days of the videocassette. This history reveals the way video's material affordances and social

logic are able to be framed as subcultural, despite video simultaneously being incorporated into

the business model for mainstream Hollywood films. In summarizing the history of skate video,

Iain Borden claims that, despite its primary role as promotional material for professional skaters

and board or merchandise manufacturers, "skaters still perceive videos as authentic cultural

definitions."[6] He further notes the significance of the Powell-Peralta Bones Brigade videos for

both the skate industry and these cultural definitions. After Powell-Peralta's initial video releases,

many other skateboard companies, such as Santa Cruz, Alva, Gullwing, G&S, and others,

followed suit and produced their own. In terms of discourse, Borden highlights the impact of a

video like *Animal Chin,* which "is still viewed as 'authentic' and 'essential" for skateboarders, in

addition to featuring a narrative fraught with anxiety regarding the sport's "increasing

corporatization and commercialization" (85). This results in a complex tension, where the text

---

[6] Iain Borden, *Skateboarding and the City: A Complete History* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), 84.

serves an obvious commodity function yet also discursively rejects forms of commodification in its assertion of its own authenticity. Others have used this problematic as a starting point for considering skate video.[7] Often, such scholars have taken an ethnographic approach in attempting to navigate this tension. For example, Dax D'Orazio interviews both professional and amateur skaters in an attempt to produce an explanatory framework for skate video's "enduring legacy" for the subculture. Ultimately, he identifies three central elements:

> a prerequisite of insider knowledge (subcultural capital) to decode meaning and significance and a resulting barrier to market entry and authenticity; b) a mode of qualitative and stylistic judgment as opposed to quantification and standardization; and c) participant replication and experimentation as opposed to passive media consumption.[8]

David Buckingham reaches similar conclusions in his analysis of skateboarding as a youth culture heavily invested in mediatization, though he also points more directly toward replication through amateur video practices, not just the act of skating. Buckingham states that "the production of skateboarding videos is a developed and self-reflexive practice…through both face-to-face and online interactions, these video-makers are establishing their own aesthetic and stylistic conventions."[9] In other words, skateboarders are invested in capturing their skating through a developing set of aesthetics and material practices. They are not only concerned with how skate video's capture professional skaters and how they might mimic those *skating* techniques, but also how they will recreate or adjust those video aesthetics when capturing their own skating.

---

[7] Borden himself points to Sean Brayton and Emily Chivers Yochim and their analysis of skate media's potential to critique middle-class white privilege while also relying on its affordances. For more, see: Sean Brayton, "Back-Lash': Revisiting the 'White Negro' Through Skateboarding," *Sociology of Sport Journal* 22, no. 3 (2005): 356-72 and Emily Chivers Yochim, *Skate Life: Re-Imagining White Masculinity* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010).

[8] Dax D'Orazio, "The Skate Video Revolution: How Promotional Film Changed Skateboarding Subculture," *The International Journal of Sport and Society* 11, no. 3 (2020): 56.

[9] David Buckingham, "Skate Perception: Self-Representation, Identity, and Visual Style in a Youth Subculture," in *Video Cultures: Media Technology and Everyday Creativity,* eds. David Buckingham and Rebekah Willet (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 150.

Although there have been some scholarly considerations of skate video in recent years, such approaches are more commonly connected to subculture studies' embrace of ethnographic analysis. For example, Duncan McDuie-Ra proposes enhancing ethnographic approaches with various conceptions of the archive in order to reveal how skate video has the ability to connect vastly different skateboarders and geographic spaces. He states these texts are "stitching together these fleeting slices of space-time, archiving them into a singular audio-visual artefact. Video thus becomes an ethnographic surrogate; made by skaters for skaters, skate video defies interlocutors and bypasses extractive research practices."[10] Similarly, Paul O'Connor combines ethnography with religion studies in order to identify ritualistic aspects of skateboarding as both a physical act and media subculture. In his narrative analysis of *Animal Chin,* O'Connor states that, though the character Chin "becomes a very evident MacGuffin," the video is invested in mythologizing skateboarding and, "employs Orientalism to construct it, deliberately sidestepping the more familiar California origins of skateboarding."[11] Further, just as the video's narrative can be read as religious allegory, the video itself becomes part of skateboarding mythology and the subculture's essence. O'Connor notes that *Animal Chin* retrospectives*,* such as an episode of the *World of X Games* (ESPN, 2014-) docuseries, titled "*Animal Chin:* The Search is Never Over" about the original skaters reenacting iconic parts thirty years later, are not just spectacle.[12] Rather, these retellings and oral histories consciously reproduce these mythological themes, proclaiming skateboarding to be a potentially liberating activity if one is a devotee.[13]

---

[10] Duncan McDuie-Ra, *Skateboard Video: Archiving the City form Below* (Gateway East: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 28-9.
[11] Paul O'Connor, *Skateboarding and Religion* (Cham, Switzerland; Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 128-9.
[12] *World of X Games,* season 3, episode 45, "*Animal Chin:* The Search is Never Over," featuring Tony Hawk, Lance Mountain, Mike McGill, Steve Caballero, and Stacy Peralta, aired Nov. 13, 2006, ABC, https://youtu.be/gsUf8pCWCcE?si=U3hgIe_lQnUnkR5p.
[13] O'Connor, *Skateboarding and Religion*, 132-3. Such works are common in magazines and on news websites around anniversaries or the release/re-release of related films or products. For examples, see: Luke Zaleski and J. Grant Brittain, "Tony Hawk and the Bones Brigade Tell the Story of Legendary Skate Video 'Animal Chin," *GQ,* Aug. 15, 2017, https://www.gq.com/story/tony-hawk-bones-brigade-animal-chin-oral-history; Jack Erwin, "The Oral History of the Making of the Search for Animal Chin," *Complex,* June 13, 2013, https://www.complex.com/sports/a/jack-erwin/animal-chin-oral-history.

This analysis builds from those ethnographic analyses while also situating the Bones Brigade videos within historical, theoretical, and cultural understandings of video in order to illuminate a profound shift in skateboarding's subcultural textuality. The videocassette's history, especially during the late-1970s and 1980s, is far from a linear narrative. This is an era of conflicting understandings of video's potential for amateur, independent, and Hollywood film producers and distributors alike, all of which shape our various and shifting understandings of video's cultural logic (in both our conceptions of the past and how this logic operates currently). Video scholarship helps clarify how Stacy Peralta's Bones Brigade features present video's material and cultural logics as anti-mainstream. To further analyze this shift to a more malleable subcultural textuality, I situate these primary texts in a slightly different historical timeline compared to other skateboard scholars. Rather than treat the Bones Brigade videos as a beginning, this history begins with short films and documentaries from the 1960s and 1970s, such as *Skaterdater* (Noel Black, 1965), and examples from the surf film sub-genre, including *The Endless Summer* (Bruce Brown, 1965) and *Super Session* (Hal Jepsen, 1976).[14] These films are all key influences on skate video. Viewing them as prototypes allows one to see how skate video both adopts and moves beyond certain elements of the surf film's structure, narrative, and aesthetics. Video's material and cultural affordances ultimately allow new strategies for skateboarding mediators that push past the surf film's primarily documentary constraints. In addition to formal analysis and consideration of video paratexts within the skateboarding subculture, this chapter concludes by considering the afterlife of the Bones Brigade videos and how a text such as *Animal Chin* is historicized and reframed. While skate video continues with

---

[14] This is not to say scholars ignore everything that comes previously, but that the Bones Brigade videos are often framed as skate video prototypes rather than profound shifts in the way skateboarding is depicted in visual media. For instance, Konstantin Butz acknowledges prior works such as *Skaterdater,* but also considers Peralta's videos more as precursors to "skate punk" videos by other companies. See: Konstantin Butz, *Grinding California: Corporeality in American Skate Punk,* (Bielefeld; Transcript, 2012), 186-203.

parody as a subcultural textual strategy, the medium allows the subculture to more thoroughly find its own set of narratives and aesthetics. These texts no longer depict a heavily guarded fantasy where skateboarders dominate, but instead an open and more flexible set of stylistic norms that encourage the viewer to construct their own conception of what a skateboarding fantasy space or narrative entails. Although *Animal Chin* does center a white masculine subject position as part of skateboarding's subcultural narrative, the video itself along with its paratextual elements do not as overtly attempt to police who is and is not allowed to identify as a member of the skateboarding subculture. Yet, despite skate video's commodity function allowing for a more malleable subcultural narrative (useful for their attempt to appeal to as many consumers as possible), the video format's broader material and cultural affordances allow such texts to be positioned as inherently anti-mainstream and unwilling to conform to any particular set of narratives, modes, or aesthetics.

Considering Video: History and Theory

Home video's complex history consists of a variety of different physical formats, home recorders or other playback technology, and constantly shifting industrial practices. As a result, this far from linear history is also open to a range of cultural and political interpretations. Though it is tempting to frame America's relationship with video as a straightforward narrative, where there was a steady adoption of VCRs into domestic spaces during the early-1980s culminating in their existence in nearly every household by the next decade, the industrial chain of events in this historical moment is actually quite fragmented. Frederick Wasser and Joshua Greenberg both chart the videocassette's industrial history and the resulting effect on American movie culture, albeit each with a slightly different focal point for their analysis. Wasser's history primarily

traces the changing stances and approaches taken by Hollywood from the introduction of home VCR machines in 1975 through mass adoption in the early- to mid-1990s. While this history has many twists and turns, with Hollywood flipping between challenging and embracing new video technologies, Wasser ultimately claims that independent distribution companies, who thrived during the VCR's rise, formed the distribution pathways and business models that Hollywood would then copy.[15] The traditional studios' eventual adoption of those business strategies, according to Wasser, transformed the film industry and actually led to the demise of those same independent distributors.[16]

Greenberg and other scholars, such as Daniel Herbert, shift this historical focus from the traditional film industry to those involved in the actual business of videocassette sales and rental. Greenberg presents two arguments:

> First, that the VCR was refashioned from a time-shifting appendage for broadcast television into a medium in its own right for movies and other prerecorded content; and second, that this refashioning was performed not by producers or consumers but by those distributors and retailers who occupied the space between them.[17]

This cultural "refashioning," as Greenberg terms it, is significant because it results in a fundamentally new understanding of how we relate to moving images, even when considering mainstream Hollywood pictures. In taking "movies" out of the traditional theater space, this era

---

[15] This includes a fairly wide range of companies. For example, some, such as American International Pictures, had been in the film business since the 50s making B-pictures and saw this as a new financial opportunity that would expand their distribution. Others were newer independent companies of various sizes, some small and others operating more as "mini-majors." Lastly, Wasser and other scholars frequently point out that adult film distributors were some of the fastest adopters of prerecorded home video, and that the adult industry provided Hollywood additional models beyond the previously mentioned independents. For more on the independents in the early phases of the home video era see: David Cook, "Orders of Magnitude I: Majors, Mini-Majors, 'Instant Majors,' and Independents," *Lost Illusions: American Cinema in the Shadow of Watergate and Vietnam 1970-1979,* ed. David Cook (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2000), 301-336 and Justin Wyatt, "Independents, Packaging, and Inflationary Pressure in 1980s Hollywood," *A New Pot of Gold: Hollywood Under the Electric Rainbow, 1980-1980,* ed. Stephen Prince (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2000), 142-159. For more on the history of pornography on video, see: Peter Alilunas, *Smutty Little Movies: The Creation and Regulation of Adult Video* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016).
[16] Frederick Wasser, *Veni, Vidi, Video: The Hollywood Empire and the VCR* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001), 1-22. Wasser ends this historical period specifically in 1993-4, with the purchase of New Line Cinema and Miramax by Warner and Disney, respectively.
[17] Joshua Greenberg, *From Betamax to Blockbuster: Video Stores and the Invention of Movies on Video* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008), 13.

"problematized previously stable understandings of what a movie was and should be, necessitating the reevaluation of where exactly the boundary lay between the movie and its medium" (16). Despite a shift in focus, Greenberg's analysis of video distribution and retail suggests a narrative similar to Wasser's, where independent–the often-termed "mom and pop"–retailers were eventually marginalized compared to the corporate franchise models from companies such as Blockbuster and Hollywood Video (15). Herbert, in his text, *Videoland: Movie Culture at the American Video Store*, more specifically focuses on this shifting cultural logic by considering the different ways "stores taught us to shop for movies" and how these public spaces changed our domestic video consumption.[18] Though his analysis is specifically focused on these cultural transformations, Herbert considers a wider range of movies, looking outside the typical Hollywood or independent narrative features. He examines independent stores in both big and small markets, using ethnographic and historic approaches to show how, frequently, non-Hollywood videos were crucial for independently owned retailers. This goes beyond the typical "paracinema," such as low-budget horror, pornography, or avant-garde films, to even include instructional videos and, in some cases, bootlegs.[19] Skate videos represent a missing piece of these considerations. As other scholars have claimed, skate videos are significant for both the skateboarding industry and its subcultural participants. Not only were skate videos integral for companies like Powell-Peralta who produced skate products, but the 1980s also saw them become major elements of skate shops and magazines as well. Important for both skaters and the industry, skate video represents a seismic change in skateboarding's

---

[18] Daniel Herbert, *Videoland: Movie Culture at the American Video Store* (Berkely: University of California Press, 2014), 3.
[19] Paracinema conceptually groups these lowbrow genres (including horror and pornography) with highbrow fare, such as modernist avant-garde cinema, in order to acknowledge that reception practices commonly place such marginal genres together, even though they initially seem aimed at very different audiences. For more on paracinema, see: *Sleaze Artists: Cinema at the Margins of Taste, Style, and Politics,* ed. Jeffrey Sconce (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007). For more on bootleg tapes and the political and aesthetic issues here, see: Lucas Hildebrand, *Inherent Vice: Bootleg Histories of Videotape and Copyright* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009).

mediatization. As a result, we can use them to trace a shift to a more malleable subcultural fantasy, where skaters begin using company-produced videos as new ways to learn skateboarding technique and define their personal relationship to the subculture's aesthetics. Video is thus a formal shift in both mediation and reception practices, enabling skateboard media texts to be used in new ways, whether played in homes or on skate shop televisions.

With this importance in mind, my methodology reflects more recent efforts from video scholars interested in video's enduring cultural and material legacy after the supposed "death" of the videocassette itself.[20] While formal analysis of these shifting aesthetics is important, it must be combined with consideration of the paratexts that would have been significant within the skateboarding subculture during this historical moment. As a result, this chapter is less in the mode of traditional formal approaches and instead aligned with recent interests in cinematic paratexts and video's legacy as a platform and cultural logic.[21] I draw from Caetlin Benson-Allott's claim that video constitutes a new form of spectatorship, one that is removed from both celluloid film and the theater as an exhibition space, as well as her position that our experiences as spectators are grounded in a historically specific material media culture.[22] In the case of Powell-Peralta's Bones Brigade videos, the surrounding paratexts work to frame video–in broad terms, not *just* these particular videos–as a subcultural media platform. In contrast to the 1970s, where *SkateBoarder* primarily featureed advertising from skateboarding product manufacturers, 1980s magazines such as *Thrasher* more willingly acknowledged skateboarding as a subculture

---

[20] Hildebrand, in *Inherent Vice,* notes the abundance of mid-2000s news pieces across mainstream (that is, internationally distributed) magazines, newspapers, and television programs highlighting the "death" of VHS. He is also careful to note that, though these pieces defined video as "dead," they also coincided with the rise of YouTube and normalized video streaming on the internet. Hildebrand, 1.

[21] See: Jonathan Gray, *Show Sold Separately: Promos, Spoilers, and Other Media Paratexts* (New York: New York University Press, 2010).

[22] Caetlin Benson-Allott, *Killer Tapes and Shattered Screens: Video Spectatorship from VHS to File Sharing* (Berkely: University of California Press, 2013); Caetlin Benson-Allott, *The Stuff of Spectatorship: Material Cultures of Film and Television* (Berkely: University of California Press, 2021). For more on "media culture," more broadly, see: Douglas Kellner, *Media Culture: Cultural Studies, Identity, and Politics in the Contemporary Moment* (New York: Routledge, 2021 2nd edition).

that intersects with a variety of media habits. Featuring interviews with rockstars or other celebrities, write-ups on popular genre movies, and advertisements for non-skateboarding products such as punk or heavy metal music cassettes and merchandise, 1980s skateboard magazines embraced a new form of media-focused culture.

This historicization draws from Michael Newman's *Video Revolutions: On the History of a Medium*.[23] Newman theorizes three historical framings and definitions of video. First, video as synonymous with television, indicating its superiority in comparison to radio, the "old" broadcast medium; second, video as shorthand for videotape or cassette, now used as both a solution to television's time constraints and a method for watching films, albeit on a format largely known to be visually inferior to celluloid; finally, video as a broader descriptor for film, television, and virtually any other moving image content (2-3). Here, Newman differentiates these eras both by their material affordances and their discursive framings, arguing that we cannot consider one without the other, since material limitations inform discourse and vice versa. The Bones Brigade videos can be situated within that second era of videotape as a medium with the potential to surpass the formal, industrial, and discursive restraints of television and film. Peralta's features depict television in particular as something that video is enabling the subcultural viewer to overcome. *Thrasher Magazine* works alongside these mediations, advertising and writing features about video that position it as almost forbidden, with the possibility to flaunt the norms of traditional film and television. The Bones Brigade videos feature a formal logic–a wide mix of film and television forms, both narrative and nonnarrative–that is significant for the way that they encourage textual engagement. Although Craig Stecyk is a collaborator on some of these videos and Powell-Peralta's advertisements during this era, this new logic allows skate video to

---

[23] Michael Newman, *Video Revolutions: On the History of a Medium* (New York: Columbia Press, 2014).

move beyond Stecyk's more restrictive textual strategies that refuse to allow alternative interpretations for skateboarding's subcultural narrative. With skate video offering more varied narratives and aesthetics through a medium positioned as going beyond mainstream formats, it becomes a necessary component of subcultural participation as opposed to something to be "watched" passively or linearly. The video text is intended to provide the viewer/user the opportunity to form their own relationship to the subculture. Despite video's status as transgressive, this more malleable logic enables it to simultaneously be easily commodified and aimed at a wider variety of consumers.

Pre-Video: Surfing and Skateboard Film and Documentary

One can trace the skate video's formal roots to earlier filmic depictions of skateboarding and, more specifically, the surf film genre. An early example is Noel Black's 1965 short, *Skaterdater*, which features extended sequences of young teens skateboarding. Though the film contains no dialogue, it is certainly a narrative, centered around one of the skating boys falling in love with a girl from the neighborhood and rejecting the rest of the group's hooliganism. An extended skateboarding chase sequence involves the protagonist being bullied by the other skateboarders. So while it is framed within the narrative, the majority of the film's visuals are capturing skateboarding in some context, whether establishing the other boys as hooligans or this chase sequence. In the end, the newly formed couple walks off holding hands as the bullies, in black leather jackets, skate by.[24] Cynthia Felando argues that *Skaterdater*'s visual style and coming-of-age narrative are significant for not only for skateboarding, but short film and youth

---

[24] In the *very* final shot, two young girls smile at the rest of the group and the boys smile back. Now showing an interest in the girls, this positions their skateboarding antics as an immature passing-fad. This ending implies they will ultimately follow the protagonist's example and "grow up."

media culture more broadly. She notes both its success (an Academy Award nomination and major festival awards at Cannes and Venice) and influential formal strategies. Despite being clearly narrative, the film's use of 35mm color stock and "longer duration mobile shots, with more poetic and pictorial imagery" also connects it to documentary.[25] In carefully constructed skateboarding sequences through idyllic California suburban environments, the film is an important example of how even non-Hollywood short films contributed to the way midcentury media allowed "American teenagers in particular to vicariously enjoy the lifestyles of their California counterparts" (54). Yet, despite *Skaterdater*'s nearly twenty-minute runtime of dialogue-free skateboarding scenes, it rarely features prominently when skateboarder's recount their own subcultural history. Though Felando argues that the film is typically credited in part for popularizing skateboarding, her examples are mostly from mainstream sources and in connection with the mid-1960s "swell of popular interest in the still-new activity of skateboarding or 'sidewalk surfing" (53). Further, while she cites skateboarder and memoirist Jocko Weyland, who claims that *Skaterdater* is the "basis for all that came after," this ignores the fact Weyland's own memoir, *The Answer is Never,* places surf films far more prominently in the history of skateboarding media.[26]

Rather than referring to mainstream Hollywood franchises such as *Gidget* (Paul Wendkos, 1959) or independent films capitalizing on that popularity, such as American International Picture's *Beach Party* series, the surf film genre that Weyland and other skateboarders refer to are a loose group of documentary films from the 1960s and 1970s.[27] Though not necessarily the first of this genre cycle, the surf film's structure and aesthetics are

---

[25] Cynthia Felando, "*Skaterdater:* Short Film, Long Ride," *Cineaction* no. 94 (2014): 52.

[26] Jocko Weyland, *The Answer is Never* (New York: Grove Press, 2002).

[27] This series begins with *Beach Party,* (William Asher, 1963). For more on the *Beach Party* series and American International Pictures (AIP), see: Garry Morris, "Beyond the Beach: Social and Formal Aspects of AIP's 'Beach Party' Movies," *Journal of Popular Film & Television* 21, no. 1 (1993): 1-11.

commonly traced to *The Endless Summer. Summer,* a low-budget 16mm film that was enlarged to 35mm for exhibition purposes, combines direct cinema's observational aesthetics with a voiceover that attempts to connect the film's otherwise disjunctive scenes as part of a nonfiction narrative.[28] The film follows two surfers, Mike Hynson and Robert August, on a trip across the world to various surfing spots, some popular and others framed as completely unknown. The supposed year-long trip takes place on both hemispheres, hence the title. This voiceover narrative provides logic for the film's editing, which is almost entirely surfing montages and some brief establishing shots (mostly long-shots of beaches or the surfers arriving). Rather than use surfing as a backdrop for mainstream film coming-of-age or romance narratives as in *Gidget* and *Beach Party*, *Summer*'s only narrative is the quest for the "perfect wave." Thus, the film represents a fairly important shift for surf film and subcultural media more generally. Firstly, its narrative, exclusively the story of a surf trip with hardly any structure (certainly not the structure associated with any Hollywood narrative film), does not attempt to speak to a mass audience, but only the surfing subculture.[29] The film is far more interested in depicting a variety of surfing techniques and locations than it is in telling any coherent story or placing it within a typical three-act structure. Secondly, it helped create a market and a variety of material practices (such as a network of auditoriums where such films were regularly screened) for producing and distributing the genre that would come to be known as "surf film." As Rinehart notes, this is significant in part due to a broader shift to niche commodities in the 1960s and 1970s, but also because it allowed directors influenced by Brown to identify themselves as specifically surf filmmakers within the media industry (551).

---

[28] Robert Rinehart, "Surf Film Then & Now: *The Endless Summer* Meets *Slow Dance*," *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 39, no. 6 (2015): 547.
[29] Though as a piece of nostalgia, this narrative and the film's aesthetics certainly appeal to contemporary viewers (and not just surfers). Rinehart, 550.

Hal Jepsen's surf films–especially his 1975 feature *Super Session*–are crucial for understanding the genre's connections to the skateboarding subculture and as a precursor for skate video. *Super Session* is a largely typical surf film, with montages shot on 16mm film. Rather than through voiceover, the montages are connected in more of a verité style through interviews with surfers such as Larry Bertleman, Gerry Lopez, and Jeff Hakman. In *Dogtown and Z-Boys,* Stacy Peralta and others assert that their early skateboarding style specifically mimicked Larry Bertleman's sequences in *Super Session*. The montages of him performing a "cutback," where one uses the top of the wave to turn sharply back towards where the wave is crashing and then abruptly forward again, were the inspiration for the Zephyr skate team's penchant for sliding their boards in pools or other banked surfaces.[30] Nathan Pratt says in *Dogtown and Z-Boys* that they were attempting to do "full-on, Larry Bertleman, on concrete." Today, this particular way of sliding a skateboard is still referred to variously as a "bert," "Bertleman-slide," or "bertslide." Peralta recalls seeing the film at the Santa Monica Civic Auditorium, suggesting that the legacy is not just what they saw *in* the film, but the memory of its public viewing context as well. Curiously, this framing does not mention the fact that *Super Session* actually includes multiple sequences of the Dogtown skaters and was advertised in multiple *SkateBoarder Magazine* issues. Though he is not identified by name in the film, Peralta is clearly visible in multiple scenes.[31] While Pratt claims that he wanted to mimic Larry Bertleman's surf style on his skateboard, one scene of *Super Session* actually features Bertleman skateboarding and performing those very same slides. Another moment rapidly cuts back and forth between the surfers and Dogtown skaters, making a clear graphic match between the two

---

[30] "How to do a Cutback in Surfing," Surfer Today. Accessed July 2, 2024. https://www.surfertoday.com/surfing/how-to-do-a-cutback.

[31] Other skaters associated with Dogtown, such as Tony Alva and Jay Adams, as well as other skateboarders such as Bruce Logan, are identified, though not interviewed. Further, nearly all of these sequences featuring the Dogtown skaters can be seen in *Dogtown and Z-Boys* as part of the documentary's archival footage.

sports and their styles. In highlighting this, I do not mean to simply point out a misattribution or

discrepancy in *Dogtown and Z-Boys*' historicization, but instead to show that despite multiple

skateboarding montages, *Super Session* is still discursively framed as a surf film rather than

skateboarding media. This is in part due to both its 16mm aesthetic, which has never become part

of skateboarding media's visual style, and also the film's distribution, which relied on public

exhibitions in theaters and high school or community college auditoriums. In *The Surfer's

Journal*'s 1990s docuseries *Filmmakers*, Jepsen describes his production and distribution

methods in seasonal terms; he would film and edit during the fall and winter to be ready for

annual summer tours, mostly exhibiting in California and Hawaii but also occasionally on the

east coast or even internationally in Australia and Japan.[32] Although one could argue that this

was, historically and financially, simply the most feasible option for Jepsen, a low-budget surf

filmmaker who did as much on his own as possible, *Super Session*'s advertising in *SkateBoarder*

(fig 2.2) shows that the public exhibitions were framed as special events.[33] The surfers and

skateboarders are referred to as "superstars," with both subject close-ups and action shots of their

surfing or skateboarding. The tour dates are included and make up a large portion of the

promotional material, which also notes the dates that feature "exclusive" Larry Bertleman

appearances and apparent "door prizes." The advertisement consciously frames the public

exhibition as a crucial space for subcultural participation, promising those star appearances or

prizes as exclusive moments available only for the audience. In one of his interviews in

Filmmakers, Jepsen states that, even long after the widespread adoption of videocassettes and

---

[32] *The Surfer's Journal: Filmmakers,* season 3, episode 6, "Hal Jepsen," hosted by Robert Weaver, directed by Ira Opper, aired Feb. 15, 1996, Outdoor Life Network (OLN), https://www.amazon.com/gp/video/detail/B06XZZCLG3/ref=atv_hm_hom_1_c_lZOsi7_2_1.
[33] "A Film by Hal Jepsen: *Super Session*," *SkateBoarder Magazine*, April 1976, 9. Additionally from this, if Peralta's statement about seeing the film at the Santa Monica Civic Auditorium is true, we can reasonably assume he saw the film on March 13th, 1976. The listing states that this was one of Larry Bertleman's public appearances as well.

home-viewing, he always felt that public exhibition was key for surf films, claiming that watching a video at home is just not how the genre is "meant" to be experienced.

FIGURE 2.2 *Super Session* advertisement in *SkateBoarder Magazine*, April 1976.

One can also consider an actual skateboard film that, despite revolving around Stacy Peralta and featuring several interviews of him and other skaters during this mid-1970s moment, does not get framed as a subcultural text: *Freewheelin'* (Scott Dittrich, 1976). Though it centers around skateboarding, *Freewheelin'* fits squarely within surf genre norms. Its plot loosely follows Peralta's dreams of becoming a professional skater, connecting together observational documentary footage of him skating various locations and in different contests. Rather than traditional "voice of god" style narration, the voiceover is positioned as Peralta's fictionalized girlfriend, Camille (Camille Darrin). Still, Jocko Weyland refers to it as "following the template

laid out in *The Endless Summer*."[34] Additionally, the film's review in the *Los Angeles Times*

states: "the format is Basic Surf Film with two cents' worth of plot added, not enough change to

keep the film from being essentially a documentary."[35] Though this is another film that one could

consider a valuable archive for skateboarders since it documents a key subcultural figure during

a historically significant moment, it is often absent from histories or documentaries such as

Dogtown and Z-Boys. For example, in a *Juice Magazine* interview tracing Peralta's history from

Dogtown through the Bones Brigade videos, he is asked if there are any videos from the 1970s

and early-1980s prior to his own. Peralta replies in the negative, saying, *"SkateBoarder* was the

only game in town."[36] Even if *Freewheelin'*'s "two cents' worth of plot" is responsible for its

absence in skate media's canon of sorts, its use of "slow-motion photography…wide-angle and

fish-eye lenses, hand-held or board-mounted cameras" seem like obvious precursors to skate

video aesthetics.[37] Instead, Peralta frames some of these very same techniques (especially slow-

motion) as unique to videotape, new developments in skate media's subcultural textuality rather

than building from these prior works. These two examples, where *Super Session* is framed as a

surf film despite including skateboarding, and a skateboarding film utilizing surf genre elements,

Freewheelin', is essentially ignored, open an avenue to explore the shift to video as key for the

skateboarding subculture. In moving away from traditional film and documentary modes,

Peralta's Bones Brigade features present video as a new subcultural logic. Even when these

videos appear related to surf film, their paratexts frame video as more personal and discursively

---

[34] Weyland, 102.

[35] Charles Edison Jr, "Movie Review: A Celebration of Skateboarding," *Los Angeles Times,* Nov. 12, 1976. *ProQuest.*

[36] Dan Levy, "Bones Brigade Chronicles: Stacy Peralta," *Juice Magazine,* November 2011, 104. In the same interview, Peralta discusses his experience moving on from Dogtown's Zephyr and getting professional sponsorship that got him sent to tour Australia. This provides the basis for *Freewheelin'*'s plot; its final scene is Peralta boarding the plane for the Australian tour. Still, he does not mention the film.

[37] Edison, Jr. Additionally, Weyland calls the scenes with Darrin and Peralta an "inopportune narrative addition" and that, when Peralta is "not acting…the movie is exceptional." Weyland, 101.

somehow radical; it is as if being able to own the tape is a more subcultural act as opposed to viewing a surf film in a public auditorium. Further, a close reading of Peralta's *Animal Chin* will show that its low-fidelity aesthetics and varied modes of address allow for jarring shifts between narrative, montage, and documentary. This ultimately functions differently than the surf film genre's loose narrative structure used simply to organize scenes shot in traditional documentary style.

Powell Peralta, The Bones Brigade, and Skateboarding "Video" Culture

Powell-Peralta's Bones Brigade videos were produced throughout the mid- to late-1980s as a new promotional strategy for selling the company's various skateboard products, from the necessary parts such as boards, trucks, and wheels, to merchandise including shirts and other items. The promotional aspect of these videos, as *Video Show*'s first scene indicates, is never hidden. In fact, though these texts retain subcultural capital and authenticity today, their function as commodities and marketing material is still often referenced in interviews, biographies, or documentaries that trace skate history. The skateboarding industry, especially in these first few decades, went through various booms and busts. George Powell, the founder of what was originally just Powell Skateboards, felt that, after studying product design and engineering at Stanford, his expertise would benefit what was at the time a growing skateboard market in the mid-1970s. In an interview with *Juice Magazine,* Powell states that, as the skateboarding industry was expanding, he thought it "just needed some engineering help," and that many manufacturers were simply "wood shops that were making oak planks or water-ski companies that would make Sims boards or things like that."[38] Here and in the company's original

---

[38] Dan Levy, "Bones Brigade Chronicles: George Powell," *Juice Magazine*, November 2011, 96-97.

advertisements, Powell emphasizes his engineering and business background, rather than claiming any actual involvement with skateboarding as a subculture. In the company's first advertisement in *SkateBoarder* (fig. 2.3), headlined "Discover Control," Powell highlights the "Quicksilver" board's "unique no-twist construction," which "turns your commands into instant response. We call this combination of flex and response, Uniflex."[39] The bullet points emphasize: "Fast…Stability…Laminated construction," and "Beautiful." In *Juice,* Powell acknowledges that, at the time, he did not understand the skateboarding industry's structure and the relationship manufacturers tended to–and still do–have with sponsored professionals. Rather than working with skaters on the product, Powell instituted a "pyramid marketing type referral program," where skaters simply had names printed on the company's regular boards, allowing Powell to call them "custom" without actually producing different models for different skateboarders.[40] In 1979, not having quite as much success as other companies, George brought on Stacy Peralta and rebranded the company as "Powell-Peralta." Peralta, already a professional skater, claims his deal with Powell was "a total demotion as far as money goes."[41] However, he wanted to follow other skateboarders, such as Tony Alva, who were successful in moving on from sponsorship deals to forming their own companies. He states: "I thought Tony Alva started something with his company and we needed to follow that theme." In steering the company toward a brand centered on the skateboarding subculture, Peralta says he had to convince Powell that "it's not just about the product. It's about the image and the idea (104). Peralta's emphasis on Powell being a "demotion," enhances his status as authentic subcultural figure, framing this shift from

---

[39] *SkateBoarder Magazine*, February 1977, 32-33.
[40] Levy, "George Powell," 97.
[41] Levy, "Stacy Peralta," 103.

skater to entrepreneur as one done for some greater good in order to help Powell actually connect with the subculture.[42]

FIGURE 2.3 The first Powell advertisement in *SkateBoarder Magazine,* February 1977.

Though both partners were focused on expansion, the Bones Brigade videos were conceived during a major contraction in the skateboarding industry in the early-1980s. Even in *SkateBoarder Magazine*'s rebrand to the more well-rounded, *Action Now,* there was admission of the fact that readers' "interests were also broadening," as an explanation for ceasing to feature much skateboarding in a magazine previously devoted to it.[43] Powell claims that, between 1980 and 1983, when "the market just kept getting smaller and smaller," the company looked to video

---

[42] This is a claim Peralta repeats frequently in *Bones Brigade: An Autobiography* and in other contexts when discussing this historical moment.

[43] David Morin and Brian Gillogly, "An Open Letter to Our Readers," *SkateBoarder Magazine,* July 1980, 19. In a 1982 *Thrasher* piece interviewing David Morin, Craig Stecyk (using his *Thrasher*-era pseudonym, Lowboy, but this time spelled, "LoBoy") would pointedly and repeatedly ask Morin why he "killed" skateboarding. See: Craig Stecyk (LoBoy), "*Thrasher* Exclusive Interview: D. David Morin," *Thrasher Magazine,* February 1982, 39-40.

as a marketing strategy, seeking to increase sales and resolve their unpaid bank debts.[44] As a test-run, Peralta put together a montage of the company's skateboarders, shot "using a commercial video camera with a separate recorder."[45] Titled *Skateboarding in the 80s* (Stacy Peralta, 1982), the video apparently "went nowhere" and only sold around three-hundred copies.[46] Though *Skateboarding in the 80s* was offered for retail purchase, Powell-Peralta primarily focused on selling it to skate shops, believing VCRs were too expensive for consumers. The only advertisement for the video in *Thrasher* is a small mention as part of a general listing. At the very bottom following all of the products and merchandise, under the heading "goodies & extras," the video is listed as simply "Team Video Tape," on either Betamax or VHS format.[47] However, noticing that VCR prices were dropping, Powell-Peralta invested in more video equipment, including having an editing console installed in Peralta's house.[48]

---

[44] Levy, "George Powell," 98.
[45] Levy, "Stacy Peralta," 106.
[46] Levy, "George Powell," 98. This short is available as a bonus feature on the *Video Show* DVD, but not officially available elsewhere.
[47] "Powell-Peralta: No.1 Best Buys from Your No.1 Best Guys," *Thrasher Magazine,* December 1982, 49.
[48] Levy, "Stacy Peralta," 108.

FIGURE 2.4 On the left, a full page "advertisement" for *Public Domain* in *Thrasher Magazine,* February 1989.

As video becomes more accessible and the skateboarding industry begins to expand once again, *Thrasher*'s archive reveals that both skate video and video culture more broadly became significant for the subculture during the mid- to late-1980s. Beginning with Powell-Peralta's first advertisement for *The Bones Brigade Video Show*, a simply all-black page with the company's logo saying the video is "coming soon," every *Thrasher* issue from the middle of 1984 through the 1990s features various advertisements, articles, and mail-order offers revolving around videotapes.[49] Building from the Dogtown articles, Powell-Peralta would recruit Craig Stecyk to design most of their marketing materials, and the irreverent advertisements for the Bones Brigade videos clearly reflect this. For instance, two advertisements in the same issue for *The Search for Animal Chin* simply feature a picture of the titular character. One asks: "Have you seen him?" and another just overlays an image of the Bones Brigade skaters, but neither has any

---

[49] "The Bones Brigade Video: Coming Soon," *Thrasher Magazine,* July 1984, 57.

details about the product or even an indication that there is an upcoming video.[50] In another example, the February 1989 advertisement for *Public Domain* is a collage of pictures taken at the video's premiere (fig. 2.4).[51] To understand that *Public Domain* is a skate video, this advertisement seems to rely on the reader having seen *Thrasher*'s previous few issues, which more clearly show the video box art and promise a "video extravaganza in living color" along with the company logo inside what seems to be a television(fig. 2.5).[52]
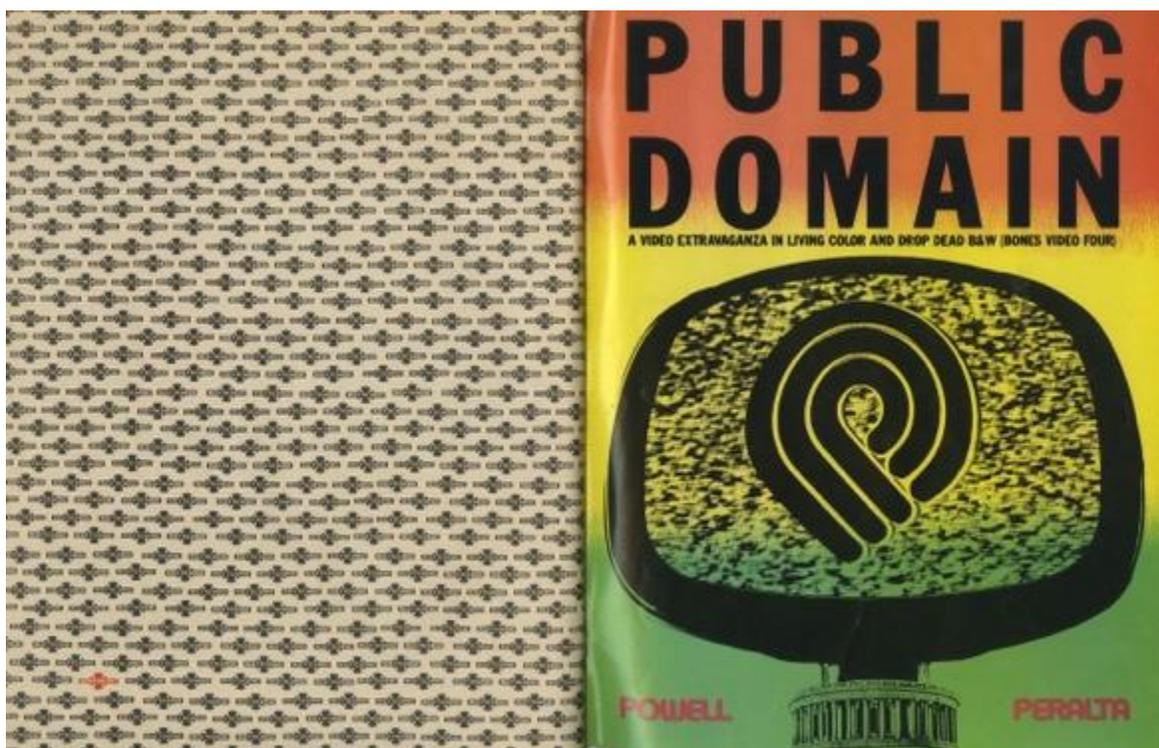
FIGURE 2.5 An advertisement for *Public Domain* promising a "video extravaganza." *Thrasher Magazine,* November 1988.

However, in contrast to the Dogtown articles' closely guarded subcultural knowledge and depiction of unattainable fantasy, the Bones Brigade videos' promotional materials are supplemented with clearly labeled mail-in coupon offers in every *Thrasher* issue. Though these

---

[50] "Have You Seen Him?" and "Powell-Peralta," *Thrasher Magazine,* April 1987, 4, 113.
[51] "Powell-Peralta Public Domain: World Premiere," *Thrasher Magazine,* February 1989, 68.
[52] "Public Domain: A Video Extravaganza in Living Color and Drop Dead B&W (Bones Video Four)," *Thrasher Magazine,* November 1988, 129.

advertisements do change over the years as the company produces new videos, they are

consistent in their style and format. They all display "Bones Brigade" prominently, with offers

for both VHS and Betamax tapes. While the advertisements seem obscure, the existence of mail-

order coupons only pages away acknowledges the videos' status as easily available commodities,

rather than only accessible for a certain group. Aside from being able to purchase the videos

from Powell-Peralta directly, one can see advertisements from actual skate shops that lists the

same videos, typically at a slightly cheaper price.

FIGURE 2.6 A typical Bones Brigade video mail-order offer. *Thrasher Magazine,* March 1986.

For example, *Thrasher'*s March 1986 issue shows Powell-Peralta's videos available from both

the company itself (fig. 2.6) as well as various other sellers.[53] The issue also features a full-page

advertisement for contest videos produced by the National Skateboard Association (NSA), which

promises highlights from the prior 1985 season (fig. 2.7).[54] Contest videos were also popular in

---

[53] "Skateboard Specialists," *Thrasher Magazine,* March 1986, 62. For the full issue, see: "March 1986," *Thrasher Magazine,* Jan. 13, 2010, https://www.thrashermagazine.com/articles/magazine/march-1986/.
[54] "Contest Videos: Highlights of the NSA Pro Competition 1985," *Thrasher Magazine,* March 1986, 19

this early moment, which is roughly a decade prior to when contest coverage would exist on cable or network television, as it would for the X Games. Compared to even the simplistic *Skateboarding in the 80s,* contest videos feature very amateur aesthetics. Often, they are just edited clips and highlights of various skaters, simple graphics for names or final placings, and an occasional interview or sports-television style replays for big moments. The contest format and the use of consumer video cameras mean that the camera operators are constantly zooming in and out, attempting to follow the action.[55] As a result, these videos are not the same quality as stylized promotional texts, such as the examples from the Bones Brigade. Regardless, contest videos were, at the time, the only way to see anything beyond still pictures of the competitions that one could not actually attend. At this moment, when skate videos are only just becoming prominent, NSA's advertisement already lists seven videos for sale. In contrast, Powell-Peralta had produced just three videos, with only *Video Show* and *Future Primitive* remaining for sale and offered in this issue of *Thrasher.*[56] The fact that such amateur videos were clearly in demand and being produced at such a rapid pace highlight the way video was quickly becoming a key aspect of the skateboarding subculture, even before company productions became the standard.

---

[55] For examples, see two of the videos listed in this advertisement: *Rage in the Badlands* (D. Paul Hoffman and J.H. Laury, 1986), YouTube, https://youtu.be/9FVsxuCocAw?si=2HXi0QOpOrIaW0E1; *Terror in Tahoe,* (D. Paul Hoffman, 1986), YouTube, https://youtu.be/_01XLGy_FwU?si=TADqtlaMTQfv0UMG.

[56] "The Bones Brigade: Videos I & II," *Thrasher Magazine,* March 1986, 20. Beginning with that first advertisement for *Video Show* in 1984, that is referred to as "Video One" and *Skateboarding in the 80s* is ignored.

FIGURE 2.7 On the right, NSA Contest Videos advertisement in *Thrasher Magazine,* March 1986.

Beyond specifically "skate" videos, *Thrasher*'s mid- to late-1980s issues reveal a greater interest in media culture as an element of skateboarding. Rather than simply being a magazine about skateboarding, *Thrasher* presents media consumption as a broader aspect of skateboarding's subcultural identity. The magazine regularly features interviews with rockstars and offers to purchase punk and heavy metal records or cassettes. The overlap here is not limited to the magazine, as some skate shop advertisements list punk merchandise and records alongside skate videos and products.[57] Video and movie culture in general are also prominent. One of the magazine's recurring segments during this period was "Rant & Reel," which contained movie reviews and occasional interviews or reporting from premieres or other events. "Rant & Reel," appears in most of the *Thrasher* issues from 1986 onward, though it is absent in 1988 save for the December issue.[58] In a few cases, the column is focused specifically on reviewing skate

---

[57] "Sessions Skateboard Shop," *Thrasher Magazine,* April 1989, 118-119.
[58] "Rant and Reel," *Thrasher Magazine,* December 1988, 86-87.

videos, suggesting which have the best skating or are otherwise "cool." The skate video reviews, though often focused on the quality of the actual skating, also offer advice or logics for viewing the video itself. For instance, one column states that the *NSA Streetstyle in Tempe: Duel at Diablo* (NSI Video, 1986) contest video "enables you to sit back with your buddies and kind of armchair judge the skating," because it is "relatively unedited" and does nothing other than present the competitors' runs in order.[59] In another issue, two videos, *Le Mush* (Joe Schwab, 1988) and *Bone Dry* (Joe Schwab, 1988), are both described as good, yet without any plot or "critical scenes," leading the review to conclude that they are "perfect party back-drops, just add your own cranked soundtrack."[60] Here, even when discussing skate videos specifically, the segment repeatedly uses reception contexts as a gauge for how or why to watch a particular video, rather than solely focusing on the content itself. The suggestion that viewers can add their own "cranked soundtrack" articulates video's increasingly malleable aesthetics. Skaters are not limited to what the text offers. Skate video thus becomes a template for viewers to use in order to form their own subcultural narratives and adopt, at least in part, their own aesthetics.

Though "Rant & Reel," sometimes reviewed skate content specifically, it more frequently functioned as a general movie review section, with a focus on Hollywood action and horror. Often, the column would review and compare several movies, offering comparisons between their gore or action content and whether or not they are worth watching based on those categories. Over time, the column expanded to feature a specific video section with very short one- to two-sentence reviews. The video section appears under a variety of names utilizing the term "Chopping" as a horror-related pun for shopping. Whether under "Chopping Block," or

---

[59] "Rant and Reel," *Thrasher Magazine,* May 1987, 91. This review situates both its praise and critiques as specific to video. It notes that this format provides a viewing context (the "armchair judge" situation), but also leads to the conclusion that "they could have easily edited this footage down to one, 60-minute action-packed tape."
[60] "Rant and Reel," *Thrasher Magazine,* February 1990, 99.

"Video Chopping List," the section's focus on independent and low-budget horror presents video as somehow a more subversive medium compared to traditional film, even when the rest of "Rant & Reel" already focused on horror and action theatrical release.[61] Beyond traditional low genres or skate videos, the "Chopping" section occasionally features video collages or magazines. In one example (fig. 2.8), *Gorgon Video Magazine* (Evan Pendell et al., 1989) is described as a necessity for the "hard-gore addict."[62] That this section goes beyond skate video is significant, as it positions video as broadly subcultural, a means of accessing content not available on traditional film and television. Its status as somehow "forbidden" forms a connection to skateboarding's subcultural narratives of rebellion and transgression. Video becomes in many ways a fantasy medium and a gateway to such transgressive content. However, in contrast to the 1970s Dogtown fantasy, where skaters are dominant and Stecyk uses layers of obscure narratives and references to keep the reader from being able to access such a space, video's subcultural potential is easily available for purchase. *Thrasher* provides readers with a literal shopping list for subcultural media consumption, rather than presenting rebellious video texts as inaccessible or only for a select few. This opens a way for video to become a new subcultural logic for skateboarding that allows its textual strategies to move beyond Stecyk's guarded Dogtown fantasy and emphasis on excluding others from the subculture. This shift is also integral for skateboarding's identity politics. Now that video is easily available and aimed at reaching (rather than alienating) subcultural consumers, these texts represent new ways of centering whiteness that are not as explicitly racist as Stecyk's Dogtown articles.

---

[61] Rant and Reel: Chopping Block," *Thrasher Magazine,* September 1989, 85; "Rant and Reel: Video Chopping List," *Thrasher Magazine,* August 1989, 87.
[62] "Rant and Reel: Chopping Block," *Thrasher Magazine,* November 1989, 95

FIGURE 2.8 "Rant and Reel" featuring a "Chopping Block" section highlighting horror films and video magazines. *Thrasher Magazine,* November 1989.

The Bones Brigade Videos and *The Search for Animal Chin*

Following what Powell and Peralta each frame as the surprising success of *The Bones Brigade Video Show*, the company would continue to produce annual videos.[63] These videos were accompanied by sophisticated marketing campaigns that, with Stecyk's creative input, appeared irreverent and mysterious. Yet, as stated previously, these advertisements were in the same issues as mail-order offers, where readers could easily see which videos are available

---

[63] In various interviews and on *Video Show*'s DVD commentary, Peralta always states the company expected "nothing," similar to his framing of *Skateboarding in the 80s*. However, *Video Show* would go on to sell what various histories estimate as 30,000 copies through skate shops and mail-orders. See: Sean Mortimer, *Stalefish: Skateboard Culture from the Rejects Who Made It* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2008), 120.

(whether from Powell-Peralta or independent sellers) and at what cost.[64] This gives the Bones-

Brigade videos an important discursive flexibility. On the one hand, the company's

advertisements rely on a reader's subcultural knowledge. *Animal Chin*'s "have you seen him"

tagline (fig. 2.9) recalls Stecyk's stylized Dogtown articles. Written under pseudonyms and

consisting of heavily fictionalized vignettes, those works construct the skateboarding subculture

as a mysterious fantasy that is unknowable to outsiders. "Have you seen him" is obviously

directed at the reader and, given that the video situates Chin as someone accessible only to the

most "hardcore" skaters, can be read as asking the reader whether or not they are truly invested

in the subculture. In this way, Powell-Peralta's marketing campaign seems to retain the Dogtown

articles' mysterious aura; Chin (here not even named) becomes a fantasy figure, a type of leader

in a world where skateboarding is the only thing that matters. Yet, in contrast to the Dogtown

articles, which do not explain incoherent narratives of skateboarding dominance or Stecyk's

numerous pseudonyms, the Bones Brigade video advertisements do not actually keep any

knowledge from the reader. On the contrary, the videos themselves were easy to acquire and

mail-order offers or other advertisements within the same magazine issue seem to clarify any

confusion the marketing campaign could have caused.[65] The videos were successful enough that

the company would release one annually for several years, including after Peralta left the

company for a period in 1991. Given that the Bones Brigade videos come before most other

---

[64] During the 1980s, Powell-Peralta's *Thrasher* advertisements lists each video, whether on VHS or Betamax, for $31.50. *Thrasher*'s archive shows that independent skate shops often, though not always, offered them for cheaper. For instance, stores such as Cal Skate and Sport and Gremic offered them at $29.95: "Cal Skate and Sport," *Thrasher Magazine,* July 1988, 28; "Gremic Mail Order," *Thrasher Magazine,* December 1986, 100. Skateboard Specialists, though their mail-order promises "lowest" prices, lists them slightly higher, at $33: "Skateboard Specialists," *Thrasher Magazine,* June 1986, 77. By 1990, Powell-Peralta were themselves selling the videos for just $19.95: "Powell-Peralta: Bones Brigade Videos," *Thrasher Magazine,* November 1990, 100.

[65] Powell-Peralta would almost always have multiple advertisements, in each issue of *Thrasher.* However one chooses to read the magazine, whether linearly or merely flipping through the pages at random, it would be easy to connect a confusing advertisement to a mail-order listing in the same issue. As an example, the September 1987 issue has four Powell-Peralta advertisements, plus a mail-order listing for the videos which features the Animal Chin cover art. *Thrasher Magazine,* September 1987, 5, 39, 83, 107, 113

companies began producing their own at similarly rapid paces, they are now seen as somewhat of an archive of mid- to late-1980s skating. Beyond their aesthetics and ubiquity, they are also significant for their representation of a transitional moment in skateboarding, a time when vert, pool, or park competitions were popular and street skating was just beginning to develop. While park and vert are still popular, especially in competitions such as the X Games and now the Olympics, street skating (which became fairly dominant in the 1990s) is far more prominent in contemporary skate video. This means that videos such as *Animal Chin* are typically viewed as prototypes for both skate video form and the technical development of street skating.[66]

FIGURE 2.9 On the left, the first advertisement for *Animal Chin. Thrasher Magazine,* April 1987.

Further, the Bones Brigade videos were a crucial element of skateboarding's return to financial success and its embrace as a subject or reference in various prominent Hollywood

---

[66] Even if one has no knowledge of skateboarding technique, watching the Bones Brigade videos in the order of their release would provide a clear sense of street skating's development. In *Video Show,* the street sequences seem to simply link various parts as the skaters move from location to location. With each release, one can see these scenes become parts and montages themselves, not just transitional moments.

films. For instance, Peralta claims that his production techniques, such as his handheld camera work in *Future Primitive,* got him Hollywood gigs because producers wanted skateboarding scenes to look like proper skate videos.[67] The company's third video, *The Search for Animal Chin,* came out at somewhat of a peak for the 1980s skateboarding industry in terms of mainstream interests. Powell claims they were able to budget over $50,000 for the video and that, after its release in 1987, he and Peralta received toy and clothing merchandising offers as one would for a Hollywood film, leading to concerns about the company "getting too successful."[68] However, *Animal Chin* is not only notable for its success and ultimately an enduring legacy among skateboarders. It is also representative of the way video gets framed as a subcultural logic for skateboarders during this historical moment. *Animal Chin* engages prominently with video as a logic that goes beyond existing media forms such as television. Though it is technically a narrative feature, the video presents a mix of visual modes and genres, using low-fidelity aesthetics to facilitate drastic shifts between documentary, music video, narrative, montage, and even avant-garde experimentation during various scenes. Refusing to conform to one mode, *Animal Chin* acknowledges that video has the potential to become a uniquely subcultural logic that is not restricted by the traditional media industry norms, such as Hollywood's emphasis on film genre or the way television networks maintain a divide between news programs and fictional series. In *Animal Chin,* video's material and technical affordances are positioned as somehow inherently radical or at least anti-mainstream, yet simultaneously the text is itself is both an obvious commodity in its own right as well as clear promotional content for other Powell-Peralta merchandise. This malleability results in a dramatic change for skateboarding's subcultural narrative. With a mix of modes and aesthetics, *Animal Chin* no

---

[67] Levy, "Stacy Peralta," 109.
[68] Levy, "George Powell," 99; "Stacy Peralta," 109.

longer presents a narrative like the Dogtown articles, where Stecyk's rigid interpretation of

skateboarding's politics is insistent on defining a narrow identity for anyone who wants to be

involved in the subculture. Instead, *Animal Chin* positions skateboarding as far more varied, its

mix of styles articulating a shift from readers or viewers to a more quasi-participatory mode,

where those who watch the video can use it to define their own relationship to the subculture and

the fantastical freedom that skateboarding provides.
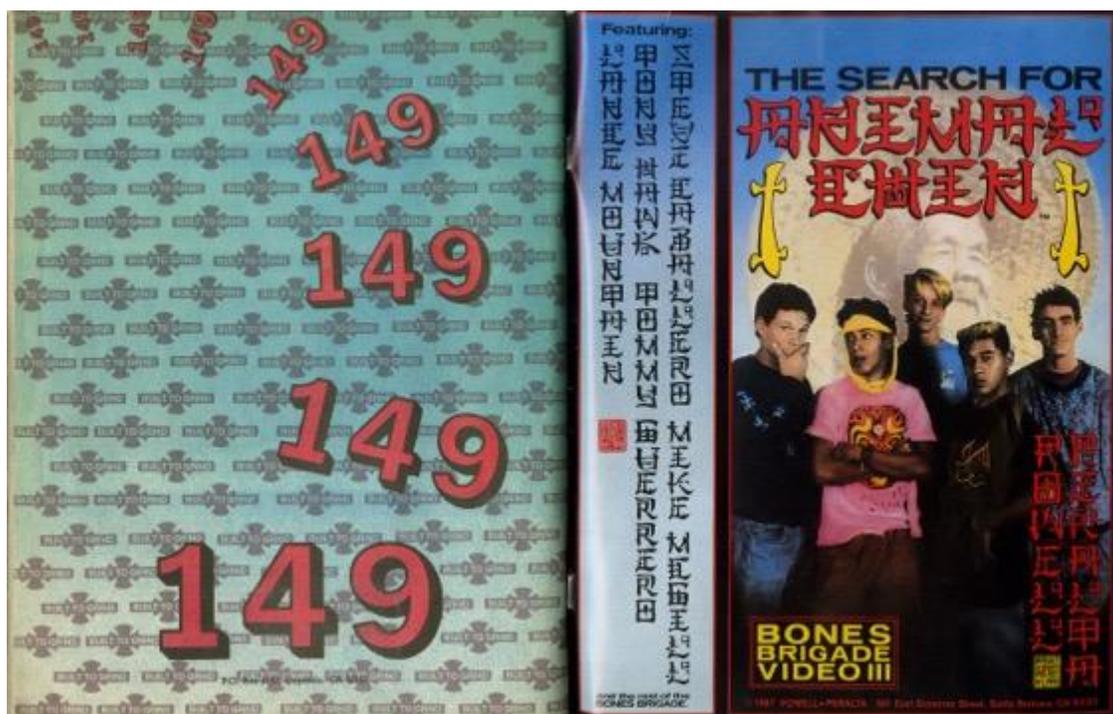
FIGURE 2.10 *Animal Chin* advertisement (right) that is the same as the video's box art. *Thrasher Magazine,* June 1986.

Animal Chin follows the members of the Bones Brigade as they search for, "Won Ton

'Animal' Chin," the very first skateboarder who has fled underground due to skateboarding's

rising popularity. Initially conceived as an ignorant caricature, here Chin is reframed in a more

essentializing and orientalist fashion, where he represents a form of "pure" skateboarding free

from capitalism's intrusion.[69] Immediately, the racial politics take on a very different form from the Dogtown articles, where racialized bodies are portrayed as incapable of fitting into skateboarding's subcultural narrative. In the video, Chin is the inverse, depicted as the original skateboarder and thus the subculture's ideal. Rather than ignorant, he represents an originality and authenticity to which the Bones Brigade desire to return. However, this desire is never realized; Chin is a fantasy and cannot be truly accessed. He ultimately becomes more of a metaphor for the Bones Brigade's journey. In this sense, his racialized body is used as a means, merely a way for the skaters to assert their own place as true members of the subculture. *Animal Chin*'s box art (fig. 2.10) allows the skaters to take on a racialized positionality, their names appearing in a font that mimics Chinese character script. Rather than overtly asserting their white identity and spaces, the Bones Brigade seem to want to shed them. Yet, the art also obscures Chin both visually and discursively. He is partially hidden on the video's cover and, since the image's source has never been revealed, he of course cannot be credited as the skaters are. While not all of the core Bones Brigade members identify as white, this does place them in a dominant and notably flexible racial position, able to adopt elements of other identities as part of their subcultural narrative.[70]

The video itself opens with a scene nearly identical to *Video Show,* with Peralta sitting on his couch watching the evening news (this time, he is eating Chinese take-out). After watching

---

[69] The character actually appears initially in an advertisement for Powell-Peralta prior to the video's production. In this first advertisement, he is instead described in far more reductive terms, as "a human being who had never even seen a skateboard" nor "even having touched concrete." In the video's narrative, he is a skateboarding legend who has gone into hiding. The advertisements appear to be a stock image of an Asian man, but when seen in the video (only briefly) he is portrayed by Craig Stecyk. Only his shadow appears in the film and the character is not listed in the credits, though in DVD extras and documentaries such as *Bones Brigade: An Autobiography*, Stecyk openly discusses portraying Chin. For the original advertisement, see: "Powell-Peralta: Hot New 'Animal' Chin Model," *Thrasher Magazine,* March 1986, 5

[70] Steve Caballero and Tommy Guerrero are both mixed-race and each claim some degree of Asian ethnicity. Caballero identifies as being of Japanese and Mexican descent, while Guerrero states in a *Thrasher* interview that "brown comes from my father's side," and that he has Chilean, Filipino and Ohlone ancestry. Clayton Blaha, "Tommy Guerrero Interview," *Thrasher Magazine,* accessed July 2, 2024, https://www.thrashermagazine.com/articles/music-interviews/tommy-guerrero/. For more on Asian Pacific American identities in the skateboarding subculture, see: Amy Sueyoshi, "Skate and Create: Skateboarding, Asian Pacific America, and Masculinity," *Amerasia Journal* 41, no. 2 (2015): 2-24.

an insulting interview segment with an obnoxious and ignorant skateboard manufacturer (Gerrit Graham), Peralta this time chooses to unplug the television and throw it out his back window. The fall and resulting spectacular explosion on the concrete driveway are captured at a low angle so that, when the sequence ends, we are left with a close-up of the destroyed television (fig. 2.11), now essentially an empty box with shattered glass and plastic bits covering Peralta's driveway. Returning to his living room, Peralta opens his fortune cookie, which reads, in reference to the video's guerilla advertising campaign, "have you seen him?" Through scrolling title cards, the viewer learns that the Bones Brigade are inspired to look for Chin despite the fact that he is missing, having fled the "dark forces" that have invaded skateboarding. The team is thus travelling to various "hardcore" spots in order to search for the man who is clearly the ultimate skater. The rest of the video follows the group's search as they make stops at various skate spots in Hawaii and California. In between these skate montages, the group is typically shown goofing around, partying, or otherwise just talking about skating. As O'Connor notes, Chin is certainly a MacGuffin; when the group fails to find him, they come to the realization that it was the search and all of the fun experiences that really matter, as that is what makes them "true" skaters.[71] That does not mean, however, that the video does not have a plot and is not intentionally structured. The closing sequence at a one-of-a-kind vertical skate ramp is still a climactic moment and the video clearly builds up to this spectacle. *Animal Chin*, through aesthetics and narrative, positions video as skateboarding's preferred subcultural medium with an increasingly flexible set of norms and styles.

---

[71] O'Connor, *Skateboarding and Religion,* 128-9.

FIGURE 2.11 Peralta's television "slams" against his concrete driveway in *The Search for Animal Chin*'s opening scene. Screen capture from video file.

As the opening suggests, *Animal Chin* presents television as incapable of capturing the skateboarding subculture. Narratively, it is only after Peralta's television smashes against the concrete that the video can begin, the movie noticeably pausing on the now screenless and decimated television shell before Peralta's fortune cookie segues into the actual plot. In a post-credits sequence, Peralta is seen taking the television to a repair shop, where he and the shopkeeper (uncredited, though it appears to be Stecyk) discuss the damage as if it had occurred in a skateboarding mishap. The fall is described with humorous skateboarding terminology, such as measurements for what type of "transition" the jump was, whether the aerial was a "hanger" or a "slam," and if it landed in a "roll out" or a "slide." Though these opening and closing moments seem to function as simple parody, they also present television as inadequate, either through a failure to properly depict skateboarding or its inability to endure it (hence the joke that

Peralta's television was damaged during a skating maneuver). As the similarity with *Video Show* suggests, television is a recurring motif in the Bones Brigade videos, often either destroyed or its form mocked in various ways. Just as *Video Show* and *Animal Chin* show Peralta destroying his home set, the opening to *Public Domain* depicts him running over a television with a hot rod. In another example, the second video, *Future Primitive,* opens with a traditional television sign-off image, a low-angle long shot of the American flag as the anthem plays in the background. Abruptly, the image turns to static, presenting the title and beginning the video. Here, the skate video becomes a "forbidden" type of commodity, one not fit for television's mainstream norms and only available once the broadcast signal dies.[72] It is not just that *Animal Chin* and the other Bones Brigade videos mock television as "mainstream," but that its recurring nature in these early videos implies that television must be avoided, overcome, or simply destroyed.

Animal Chin also utilizes video-specific low-fidelity aesthetics, articulating a new set of stylistic norms for the skateboarding subculture and a shift away from the surf film genre's emphasis on observational documentary. In the Bones Brigade videos, Peralta presents slow-motion as key to understanding video technology's superiority over magazines or television broadcasts. For example, in *Video Show*, sequences featuring Tony Hawk's high-flying bowl maneuvers and Rodney Mullen's unique flat-ground tricks often use slow-motion–occasionally even replaying a trick immediately–to allow the viewer to see grabs or footwork more clearly. Rodney Mullen's scene in particular presents video aesthetics as useful, rather than spectacular. This scene is full of jump cuts, often moving from trick to trick without changing angles and going intermittently to slow-motion. It is not that video is a cinematic technical wonder meant to

---

[72] Notably, this scene also recalls the opening of the horror film, *Poltergeist* (Tobe Hooper, 1982), where the television's shift from sign-off to static is the moment the spirits are able to enter the family's domestic space and begin terrorizing them. Thus, this can also be read as connecting skate video to the horror genre and its similarly "forbidden" status.

seen in the same light as expensive Hollywood special effects, but that certain elements, such as slow-motion, are seen as a tool for skaters. In *Video Show*'s DVD commentary, Peralta highlights slow-motion as a utility, since it helps skaters comprehend fast-paced maneuvers. Yet, he also notes that this is certainly a business strategy, believing that this increased access encourages skaters to learn more and, in turn, buy more products from Powell-Peralta. Though this is, on the one hand, done with increased revenue in mind, it also acknowledges the way video is used by skaters, who are not necessarily consuming the text linearly, as one would have to do if they were watching a film in a theater or auditorium. Peralta's aesthetics assume that viewers will be using features such as pause or rewind to repeat and scrutinize individual moments. *Animal Chin* does not feature an overwhelming amount of slow-motion, but it does utilize it in scenes centered around pools and vertical ramps. While slow-motion implies a certain type of spectacle (in that something has to be spectacular enough to be worthy of being captured at a slower speed), it is, in this case, also important for revealing skateboarding's technical nuances. The video's finale, which features a montage of vertical tricks all captured from the top of a ramp, presents trick after trick rather than showing skaters descent into the half-pipe and their resulting landing. In many cases, the video is edited so that the image dissolves while the skater is still mid-air, immediately moving to the next skater's jump. This repetition and occasional freezing of the image prior to the dissolve invites the viewer's scrutiny. They are encouraged to become users, replaying tricks over and over or even pausing to see details in a skater's footwork, flips, or grabs. In doing so, *Animal Chin's* useful aesthetic marks video's more malleable reception contexts in contrast to film and television as part of its subcultural textuality.

As the movie's narrative fades away in favor of highly contrived scenarios that are merely excuses for full-blown skateboarding sessions, *Animal Chin* makes use of rapid montage-

style editing, with frequent low angle close-up shots. After an extended sequence of the team

skating through San Francisco (including through Chinatown) searching for Chin, the Bones

Brigade seem to wander into a suburban neighborhood, where they join a session with other

skaters at a backyard vertical ramp. The movie's narrative promptly recedes, and the viewer is

treated to a montage showcasing the team performing tricks in rapid succession on the ramp. In

contrast to the surf film genre, which relies on long observational shots, Peralta's video features

far more close-ups and much faster editing. As various skaters take turns on the ramp, it cuts

between a mobile camera on the side of the ramp (which moves back and forth while

haphazardly zooming in and out as it tracks each skater) and shots taken from a low angle at the

top, so that the viewer can see close-ups of tricks performed either in the air or on the "lip" of the

ramp. This strategy embraces montage with no real organizing logic; the video shows a different

skater in nearly every shot, seeming to break with any semblance of narrative or order. However,

at the same time, Peralta's editing here also embraces the continuity editing style associated with

narrative film. The video often clearly maintains continuity when cutting between the low angle

close-up and the more mobile long shot; skaters are shown reaching the top of the ramp before a

cut to the close-up as they actually perform their trick. In other moments, Peralta cuts to various

reaction shots of the skaters cheering each other on or being shocked at various tricks. These

represent a clear break from both the disjunctive montage style (appearing to ground these

spectacular tricks in the video's diegesis) and observational documentary (where such cuts are

not the norm). Yet even these moments of continuity editing appear tenuous and do not fully

situate the video within the narrative mode. *Animal Chin'*s reaction shots are clearly staged or

heavily stylized.[73] For example, in the next scene, the team's session at the Pink Motel's pool, Lance Mountain's reaction shots instead dissolve in, with his disembodied head simply appearing above the pool as the rest of the group skates (fig. 2.12). Mountain's exaggerated reactions certainly make this a comedic moment, but they also reveal video's flexibility in shifting between different modes and aesthetics. Moving between disjunctive montage and continuity editing styles with haphazard camera movement, zooms, or strange dissolves, *Animal Chin* acknowledges the malleability offered by video's low-fidelity aesthetics. It is as if video is the new–to borrow Stecyk's oft-quoted opening to the Dogtown articles– "playground of unlimited potential."[74] It is an adaptable medium that has the ability to simultaneously borrow and reject norms from various modes or genres, a new opportunity to shape one's relationship to the skateboarding subculture now through both textual production and reception.

---

[73] In a similar backyard ramp sequence in *Video Show,* the skaters are cheered on by a group of girls, though in the commentary Peralta acknowledges this scene was shot separately and the girls did not actually watch the skaters. In *Future Primitive,* this scene is reprised and parodied in a way that acknowledges its separate production by having the Bones Brigade skaters dress up as the same girls and implausibly react to themselves.

[74] Craig Stecyk (Carlos Izan and C. R. Stecyk III), "Aspects of the Downhill Slide," *SkateBoarder Magazine,* Fall 1975, 29-37

FIGURE 2.12. Lance Mountain's floating head reaction shots at the Pink Motel pool session. Screen capture from video file.

This shift between several different narrative and aesthetic modes is what ultimately allows the Bones Brigade videos to articulate a new subcultural textuality for skateboarding. As *Animal Chin*'s aesthetics show, part of this is related to the video format's material affordances, as the movie presents its scenes in ways that invite pausing, rewinding, or replaying. However, this also acknowledges video's cultural logics, shifting between different forms of storytelling rather than strictly narrative or documentary. On the one hand, the "search" for Chin is a plot that provides an organizing logic for various skateboarding sequences, just as the world tour in *Endless Summer* gives the documentary a structure for its observational surfing shots. But in contrast to the surf film genre, *Animal Chin* shifts between narrative, documentary, montage, and even music video and avant-garde modes. As the prior scenes show, the video moves between editing styles even within individual scenes. In other moments, the shifts feel even more drastic. After skating the Pink Motel pool, the team goofs around in their room, discussing previous

skate sessions and occasionally messing with their skateboards, acting out fantasy tricks while laying on their backs, boards in the air above them. The scene is mostly shown in a medium shot, the camera situated in the corner of the room so that the whole group is visible, occasionally zooming in on individual skaters or cutting to a close-up. The camera's pans and zooms grant the scene a documentary feel, as the group's conversation seems unscripted and is not related to the larger narrative. However, the scene also exhibits multiple jarring shifts. For example, at one point Tommy Guerrero asks Tony Hawk to "do" the ollie that he did over the fence at Del Mar. In close-up, Hawk is shown putting his helmet and pads on, before the video cuts to the scene at Del Mar, where we see Hawk's jump over the fence in dramatic slow motion. The next cut immediately returns to the motel room, where the group cheers and grab Hawk's hands enthusiastically (fig. 2.13), exclaiming "that was mental." It is as if the trick has *just* occurred, even though Hawk remains seated on the ground. It is unclear, in this moment, whether the group considers him to be reenacting the trick or if they are somehow collectively imagining it. This scene both destabilizes the initial documentary function and articulates a new mode of skateboarding as a subcultural fantasy. Here, video has the potential to make ephemerality, if not permanent, at least longer lasting and more collective rather than individual. Hawk's trick is replayed as if the group is watching it back together, similar to the way video offers skaters new ways to replay scenes and assess the text collectively. In framing this moment as one of potential imagination or fantasy, *Animal Chin* suggests that skateboarding as a "fantasy" is no longer unattainable, but instead actually reliant on video's potential to textually increase the subculture's accessibility.

FIGURE 2.13 The Bones Brigade in their room at the Pink Motel, hyping up Tony Hawk, who is shown sitting on the floor wearing his helmet. Screen capture from video file.

After this, the scene experiences another transition. When the team retires for the night, they each begin to toss and turn, with close-ups on their sweat-drenched faces cutting to what appear to be skate-centric nightmares. The video moves to another montage, this time mostly consisting of the team falling during various trick attempts.[75] Rather than simply featuring fall after fall, the dream montage becomes increasingly incoherent. After Lance Mountain is shown struggling under his blanket, we see shots of the group skating while wearing cardboard boxes, before an abrupt cut to an extreme close-up of Mountain's face. No longer a simple montage of falls, this scene begins to resemble an avant-garde psychodrama of sorts. Its visuals utilize a blue tinge that clearly separates it from the rest of the diegesis, as a creeping keyboard score

---

[75] Eventually, sequences of skaters falling would become standard for skate videos and would not need to be contextualized (whether part of a nightmare or otherwise). Such parts are commonly referred to as the "slam" section. For more, see: Chivers Yochim, 147.

highlights the way each moment is not necessarily comedic, but certainly bizarre. The characters'

nightmares seem in no way related to the narrative. It is not clear if the Bones Brigade, for

instance, have underlying fears about their skateboarding skills and worry they are unworthy of

meeting the great Won Ton Animal Chin. Further, the group never addresses the nightmares for

the rest of the movie. It is a small moment, but one that reflects video's ability to shift between

different modes no matter how brief or jarring. Other scenes, such as the Bones Brigade's stop at

Johnny Rad's (Rob Roy Fitzgerald) nightclub where Rad performs multiple lounge-style songs

with skateboarding lyrics, go further in embracing a blend of visual modes, even simultaneously.

Rad's performance is featured in its entirety, though the scene never quite shifts completely into

a music video. Instead, shots of him singing cut to various crowd shots that emphasize the

skaters at the party, giving them room to perform skate tricks on the dance floor. While this

moment and the dream sequence do feature plenty of comedy and parody, they are not

necessarily relied on exclusively. Instead, *Animal Chin,* embraces video's status as a medium not

restricted to "old" modes in the way television and traditional film are. The movie's plot is able

to fade in and out as necessary as each scene shifts between offering skating montages, moments

of documentary realism, or actually working to further the narrative. While the mid-1980s is also

a moment where MTV's popularity has led scholars to write about its flexible "flow," *Animal*

Chin seems to reject flow in between or within its scenes, incorporating video's affordances and

letting the modal and generic shifts appear far more jarring.[76]

---

[76] Ann Kaplan, in her analysis of MTV's postmodern "flow" logic, notes that it is inherently reliant on the "televisual apparatus" and its various technical or industrial affordances which makes shifts between various forms of content (such as music videos, narrative shows, advertisements, news programs, etc…) a natural part of engaging with the medium. She suggests that this "decenters" the viewer, blurring their anxieties and desires. Ann Kaplan, *Rocking Around the Clock: Music Television, Postmodernism, and Consumer Culture* (New York: Methuen, 1987), 3-5. For more on MTV, especially during this mid-1980s moment, see: Andrew Goodwin, *Dancing in the Distraction Factory: Music Television and Popular Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992).

FIGURE 2.14 Mike McGill (yellow shirt), Steve Caballero (red shirt), Tony Hawk (pink shirt) and Lance Mountain (blue shirt) on the *Animal Chin* ramp in the video's finale. Publicity still from Powell-Peralta website.

While the "search" for Chin is a MacGuffin, as O'Connor claims, the video's finale still serves a climactic narrative function. Following his band's performance, Johnny Rad tells the Bones Brigade that he knows Chin has a "secret" ramp somewhere in the desert, one that only diehard skaters can find. The next day, after hours of searching, the group finally stumbles upon a massive stone statue of a skateboard.[77] From the vantage point high on a desert hillside, they are finally able to see the massive skateboard ramp seemingly in the middle of nowhere. What follows is a nearly twenty-minute skate montage, by far the video's longest, as the Bones Brigade members take turns skating individually and in pairs for more coordinated maneuvers. This sequence emphasizes the ramp's spectacular nature, featuring several transitions and

---

[77] In addition to being in the video, this statue is the focus of one of Powell-Peralta's advertisements in *Thrasher* right around the time of *Animal Chin*'s release. See: "Powell-Peralta," *Thrasher Magazine,* May 1987, 113.

coordinated tricks only possible due to its unique shape (fig. 2.14).[78] Yet, as spectacular as the

scene is, showcasing a clearly ephemeral skateboarding moment (i.e. – a one-of-a-kind ramp

built on a large empty piece of land exclusively for the video), the group's conclusion that it is

the "search" for Chin that matters places a value on the wide variety of skating shown in the

video up to this finale. In this way, the climactic twenty-minute montage is framed as catharsis,

the group's reward for combing through backyard half-pipes, motel pools, and skating endless

city streets. In the DVD commentary, Peralta notes the commercial incentive for this narrative to

encompass a variety of skating, attempting to make the company appealing to skaters in diverse

locations and with differing abilities. The same is true in the commentary for *Video Show* and

Future Primitive, where Peralta states that the desire to show different types of skating was

among his primary goals when editing. Instead of mocking outsiders through parody and layered

narratives that rely on insider knowledge, Peralta's videos use their commodity status as a logic

for broadening skateboarding's subcultural narrative. Even the Chin ramp, a massive and

expensive construction project, is positioned as if not attainable by regular skaters, at least

relatable. It is merely one stop on the skaters' journey to realizing what skateboarding means to

them, rather than a location framed as actually necessary for achieving some form of

skateboarding nirvana. This, in turn, helps construct Powell-Peralta as a company that is not just

for a select group of hardcore skaters, but for a wider variety of consumers in terms of interests

or skill level. It also presents the video *itself* as for anyone, as one can use its malleable nature to

replay and focus only on the parts they're interested in (whether for the skating itself or its

presentation). This is what ultimately helps preserve *Animal Chin*'s legacy as a video, made up of

---

[78] The Animal Chin ramp is really two adjacent halfpipes positioned back-to-back (with a removable board in the middle in order to allow for passing in-between the two), so that the Bones Brigade can transfer from one to the other. The video's iconic shot frames all four skaters (two on each side) together performing simultaneous hand grabs on the ramp's lip, so that they appear suspended upside down together momentarily.

several iconic moments that have, over time, become part of the skateboarding subculture's archival knowledge. Its subcultural textuality is grounded in its mix of both aesthetics and modes, intentionally varied so as to increase the video's potential as a commodity and marketing tool. Its low-fidelity nature makes the text a mediated fantasy that is relatable and seemingly achievable, no matter how amateur one is as a skater or videographer.

Conclusion: *Animal Chin* and the Legacy of Early Skate Video

While *Animal Chin* exemplifies a new direction for skateboarding's subcultural textuality, the video's place in the subculture's canon is complex. The Bones Brigade videos are certainly considered key developments for skate video and often framed as prototypes for the texts from the 1990s that eventually standardize the form. However, *Animal Chin* itself is commonly positioned as low-quality. Even Peralta has repeatedly criticized the movie's narrative and attempts at humor. In his interview in *Juice,* he says that it is "the worst video we have. I'm still embarrassed by it."[79] The DVD's commentary track is a group session with Peralta and the skaters, where they spend most of the time calling it "corny," and questioning how certain scenes or the Animal Chin character could have ever seemed like good ideas.[80] In *Bones Brigade: An Autobiography,* Peralta and photographer Glen Friedman single out the scenes shot at the Pink Motel, noting the queer subtext in the skaters' interactions with each other and the Motel's proprietor, Monty (Monty Thomulka). The documentary then makes this subtext explicit, showing a montage of the Pink Motel's scenes featuring the barely clothed Bones Brigade laying together on their beds, as well as an earlier scene where they have some sort of fruit feast on the

---

[79] Levy, "Stacy Peralta," 107.
[80] The commentary also reveals some disagreement regarding the video's production. Peralta recalls the scenes relying on improvisation and trying to document the skaters' daily lives, with minimal attempt at forming a narrative. However, the Bones Brigade skaters claim they were given a script and told to memorize lines during most of the filming.

beach (Steve Caballero eating half of a banana in one bite is replayed in slow motion). Further,

Peralta's documentary utilizes video aesthetics here, shifting between the clips in the montage

using an exaggerated video fast-forward aesthetic and scanlines appearing across the screen.

While the documentary makes this queer subtext overtly legible, this editing highlights that, in a

video context, it is about how the text is used and manipulated by the viewer. One must pause,

replay, fast-forward, or rewind between these moments to access the underlying homoeroticism

in the Bones Brigades' interactions with each other. Even though in *Bones Brigade: An*

Autobiography, the group expresses discomfort at confronting the video in this contemporary

moment, they ultimately end up reasserting its legacy as a moment in the subculture's history.

Animal Chin's apparent amateurism, "corny" narrative, and homoerotic subtext become instead

reasons to celebrate its textuality and its reception contexts. As McDuie-Ra notes, skate video

serves an archival function for skaters.[81] However, with *Animal Chin,* we can see that the video's

archival function goes beyond just its depiction of skating and encompasses the broader

textuality. Despite singling out the Pink Motel as scenes as embarrassing, Powell-Peralta's

YouTube channel features multiple Pink Motel clips as *Animal Chin*'s highlights.[82] In another

example, the Pink Motel ultimately becomes a reference in other skateboard media, such as the

2003 comedy film, *Grind* (Casey La Scala, 2003) which turns the homoerotic tension between

the skaters in their room (fig. 2.15) and with the motel's proprietor into obvious comedy and

absurdity.[83] This moment's existence as a subcultural reference, even in a mass media text,

reveals the way *Animal Chin*'s arguably amateur qualities are actually significant for its legacy.

---

[81] McDuie-Ra, 128-129.

[82] "Playlist: The Search for Animal Chin," YouTube*,* Aug. 20, 2018,
https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLPAU9QCmrFTmKF52loepBZ-UcF2OoL-3I.

[83] *Grind* centers around skaters and is full of references to the skateboarding subculture, but it is also narratively and generically a road/sex comedy. At the Pink Motel, the skaters share the "honeymoon suite" and one bed. Just as in *Animal Chin,* they offer to clean the motel's pool in return for being able to skate it. The proprietor's (Bob Goldthwait) costuming, with short shorts and an exposed gut, mimics Monty's frequently shirtless attire in *Animal Chin* as well.

Peralta's repeated claims that the video is embarrassing frames this success as unlikely. Thus, unlikely success becomes inherently connected not to the text's quality, but its reception context as a video widely shared and replayed within the skateboarding subculture. A social media post from Tony Hawk promoting Powell-Peralta uploading *Animal Chin* to YouTube jokes that there is finally "no more borrowing your friend's worn-out VHS."[84] Similarly, a previous online release of the video in 2012 features a social media campaign that tasks users with sharing a "memory" of the Bones Brigade to "unlock" a free download of *Animal Chin*.[85] The video becomes part of a shared subcultural history, rather than simply a text one remembers. This move is only possible due to the way that *Animal Chin* and the Bones Brigade videos articulate their new subcultural textuality, one that differs from and is more malleable than traditional film and television.

---

[84] Tony Hawk (tonyhawk), "The Search for Animal Chin is now on YouTube! So no more borrowing your friend's worn-out VHS [VHS emoji]," Twitter, June 19, 2019, 11:32pm, https://twitter.com/tonyhawk/status/1141549391137820672.
[85] Stacy Peralta (peraltastacy), "Post your Bones Brigade memories on Instagram with #bonesbrigade to unlock a download of The Search for Animal Chin animalch.in/d00," Twitter, Aug. 20, 2012, 3:26pm, https://twitter.com/peraltastacy/status/237631614031642624. Peralta's link (presumably posted using a link shortener) has expired, though the video's website is still partially functional. https://animalchin.com, accessed July 12, 2024.

FIGURE 2.15 The Pink Motel's "Honeymoon Suite" in the 2003 Warner Bros. film, *Grind.* Screen capture from video file.

Although *Animal Chin* is not exactly a common reference in popular culture, its reference in a Hollywood film such as *Grind* is part of a broader trend. From the 1990s and onward, skate video aesthetic and narrative strategies become major influences on mainstream film and television. Some of the 1990s most influential skate videographers, namely Spike Jonze, are now associated with the Hollywood film industry. Jonze's videos, including *Video Days* (Spike Jonze, 1991)*, Mouse* (Spike Jonze, 1997)*, Yeah Right!* (Ty Evans and Spike Jonze, 2003), and *Fully Flared* (Ty Evans, Spike Jonze, and Cory Weincheque, 2007) are noted for their aesthetic and narrative innovations for skate media. Although Jonze's trajectory from skate video producer to Academy Award winner initially seems like an aberration, this project's next chapter will contextualize this as part of a broader shift, where conglomerate media texts begin to incorporate skateboarding's subcultural textuality. In particular, reality television series such as *Jackass*

(MTV, 2000-1) and *Viva La Bam* (MTV, 2003-6), build formally and industrially from 1990s skate video as the form's low-fidelity aesthetics begin to embrace more primarily nonfiction modes. As a result, this early-2000s period is a significant reframing of skate media's subcultural textuality. I focus in particular on *Viva La Bam,* a series that simultaneously is grounded in reality television norms yet also presents its subject, Bam Margera, as king of a domestic skateboarding fantasy space that is decisively inaccessible for the show's viewers.

3. SKATE VIDEO TO REALITY TV:

Fantasies of Domestic Domination in *Viva La Bam*

Introduction: The *Jackass* Moment

On October 23ʳᵈ, 2002, the video game *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4* (Activision, 2002) was released in America on home consoles and would eventually sell over three million copies in North America alone.[1] That same week, *Jackass: The Movie* (Jeff Tremaine, 2002)–featuring several pro skateboarders, including regular cast members Bam Margera and Jason "Wee Man" Acuña as well as guest stars Tony Hawk, Clyde Singleton, and Eric Koston–premiered and topped the box office charts, earning over $22 million for the domestic opening weekend and eventually a global total of over $79 million against its miniscule $5 million budget.[2] In one week, two releases from massive media conglomerates sold millions of copies or admission tickets while foregrounding not just the act of skateboarding, but also the subculture's stars, aesthetics, and narratives. Though we can trace skateboarding's presence in mass media texts through various moments in history, the early-2000s finds the subculture in an unusually prominent spot across blockbuster video games, television series, and films. Marisol Cortez, in an analysis of the *Jackass* franchise (Dickhouse Productions, 2000-), notes that this era has been coined the *"Jackass* moment."[3] She acknowledges this period, which includes the *Jackass* television series (MTV, 2000-1), numerous film releases, and a variety of loosely related or "spin-off" texts, as a merging of the "ethos of 'extreme' sports with a 'dumb' white masculinity"

---

[1] "Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4," VGChartz, accessed Mar. 21, 2024, https://www.vgchartz.com/game/6512/tony-hawks-pro-skater-4/.

[2] "Domestic 2002 Weekend 43," Box Office Mojo, accessed Mar. 21, 2024, https://www.boxofficemojo.com/weekend/2002W43/?ref_=bo_rl_table_1

[3] Marisol Cortez, "Ambivalent Anality: Revisiting the Queer Ecologic of 'the *Jackass* Moment," *Media + Environment* 4, no. 2 (2022): 1-28. Cortez uses this framing for her analysis, but credits it to Jason Concepcion, a writer for the sports and popular culture website and podcast production outlet, *The Ringer.* For Concepcion's article, see: Jason Concepcion, "American Idiots: Remembering the '*Jackass'* Moment," *The Ringer,* Aug. 1, 2018, https://www.theringer.com/tv/2018/8/1/17638148/jackass-best-tv-episodes-johnny-knoxville.

that had slowly risen to prominence during the 1990s (2). For Cortez and other scholars, this ethos peaks in the early-2000s and then subsequently vanishes around the beginning of the Obama administration (2). During this *Jackass* moment, skateboarding stars and aesthetics are key textual elements in a variety of mainstream mediations. Further, these inclusions are neither accidental nor can they be simply reduced to mainstream companies hoping to cash-in on an arbitrary cultural moment where skateboarding happens to be popular. On the contrary, the *Jackass* "moment" has its roots in skate culture, rising formally and industrially from skate video and magazines, and occurring at a unique moment in media history that sees various industries experiencing seismic shifts across production, distribution, and technology.

Jackass' formal and industrial connections to earlier skateboarding eras make it a useful focal point for considering a shifting textuality in mediations of the skateboarding subculture. Rising directly from independently produced subcultural print magazines and videotapes, the mass media texts associated with the *Jackass* "moment" in the early-2000s bring skateboarding's aesthetics and modes to more obviously mainstream distribution pathways and reception contexts. This is also what marks the era as a departure from previous instances in which skateboarding is simply folded into existing mass media contexts and generic structures. That complex history includes–though is certainly not limited to–examples such as Stacy Peralta's guest cameo on an episode of *Charlie's Angels* (ABC, 1976-1981), Marty McFly (Michael J. Fox) skateboarding through *Back to The Future* (Robert Zemeckis, 1985), and ESPN's refashioning of Olympic Games-style competition for extreme sporting events through *The X Games* (ESPN/ABC, 1994-).[4] These texts, while bringing skateboarding to mass media

---

[4] For the specific episode of *Charlie's Angels,* see: *Charlie's Angels,* season 4, episode 8, "The Prince and the Angel," directed by Cliff Bole, aired Nov. 14, 1979, ABC. https://tv.apple.com/us/episode/the-prince-and-the-angel/umc.cmc.33cw5sgnn1lpi5z7wje6tqv4q?showId=umc.cmc.4nv5ieqc7idl8oghdqy100vbq.

audiences, rely on existing genres or formats that are not endemic to the skateboarding subculture. This is not to say they do not borrow from skate aesthetics. In fact, in some cases they go to great lengths to mimic the styles and aesthetic elements found in existing subcultural texts such as skate video.[5] Yet, the early-2000s function in the reverse, with skateboarders, the subculture's media producers, and their existing textual strategies becoming more thoroughly incorporated into film, television, and video games. As a result, this cultural moment is uniquely suited to considering how subcultural textuality functions within mainstream forms and contexts. In reaching broader audiences and in more identifiable generic forms, these skate media texts lose the malleable reception contexts associated with the early video era. Similarly, their fantasies of domination are different from Stecyk's fictional narratives in *SkateBoarder Magazine* in the 1970s, in which Dogtown is rendered an inaccessible and unrealizable space. In the midst of the *Jackass* moment, skateboarding's identifiable aesthetics and modes present the subculture as a realistic fantasy for young white men to be free from social norms in not only public space, but within the private domestic sphere as well. Such male figures never face any repercussions; their domination and manipulation of these spaces, including the female and racialized bodies within them, are presented as integral to subcultural authenticity. However, in early-2000's mass media texts, the skateboarding subculture's inflexible fantasy of domination is clearly situated as a possible and sought-after lived reality, rather than fictional and inaccessible.

To explore this shift, this analysis uses both a slightly different historical timeline and set of primary texts compared to other scholars who have written about skateboarding in mass media at the beginning of the new millennium. Firstly, I trace the key developments in skate video

---

[5] This is, for instance, why Stacy Peralta claimed he was hired as a second-unit director and/or technical consultant for Hollywood films during the 1980s, since producers wanted scenes featuring skateboarding to connect to with that audience. Still, these are Hollywood features that fit within a variety of industrial norms and simply incorporate skateboarding into their narratives. For examples, see: *Gleaming the Cube* (Graeme Clifford, 1989) and *Thrashin'* (David Winters, 1986).

through the 1990s as its form and aesthetics become more removed from the early video era. This period exhibits significant formal tension. Though skate video becomes a more standardized medium with a recognizable set of structures and aesthetics, some video producers are simultaneously embracing experimental elements, including unrelated narrative sequences within the same video and a more thorough embrace of recognizably home video and documentary modes. These videos include Spike Jonze's influential works, *Video Days* (Spike Jonze, 1991) and *Mouse* (Spike Jonze, 1996), *Big Brother Magazine's* releases *Shit* (Eric Mattheis and Jeff Tremaine, 1996), *Number Two* (Jeff Tremaine et al., 1998), *boob* (Jeff Tremaine et al., 1999), and *Crap* (Dimitry Elyashkevich, Dave Carnie, and Rick Kosick, 2001), and finally Bam Margera's mixture of skate video, pranks, and skits in his *CKY* video series (1999-2002).[6] *Big Brother* and *CKY* are each formal and industrial precursors to *Jackass* and several related television series, such as *Viva La Bam* (MTV, 2003-6), *Wildboyz* (MTV, 2003-6), and *Nitro Circus* (MTV, 2008-9). *Jackass'* first season even features content lifted directly from *Big Brother* and the *CKY* video releases. This chapter's history illuminates these aesthetic and industrial links while also analyzing how skateboarding's subcultural fantasy begins to demand authentic behavior not only in public spaces, but in the private domestic sphere as well.

Thus, after tracing skate video's significance to the *Jackass* moment, this analysis then instead looks more closely at Margera's own MTV reality series, *Viva La Bam.* While often framed as a *Jackass* "spin-off," *Viva La Bam* not only maintains many of the same formal and industrial links to skateboarding subcultural media practices, but it also presents Margera as the most authentic skateboarder possible. As a day-in-the-life style reality series, *Viva La Bam* is

---

[6] *Big Brother*'s videos do not credit one or more directors, but instead a "created by" team. For both *Number Two* and *boob* that team in full is: Jeff Tremaine, Sean Cliver, Dave Carnie, Rick Kosick, and Dimitry Elyashkevich. Margera's *CKY* series includes four video releases: *CKY* (Bam Margera, 1999), *CKY2K* (Bam Margera, 2000), *CKY3* (Bam Margera and Brandon DiCamillo, 2001), and *CKY4: The Latest and Greatest* (Bam Margera, 2002).

even more directly engaged with notions of fantasy. Margera's financial and subcultural capital are catalysts for his ability to flaunt social norms in both public and, more importantly, private spaces. With episodes frequently taking place almost exclusively around Margera's home, the series reframes subcultural authenticity within a more obviously neoliberal context where demands for turning every space and moment into a skateboarding fantasy are present around-the-clock. The home not only becomes yet another playground for the skateboarder, but it *has* to if Margera is to claim any amount of subcultural authenticity. His seemingly absolute control over both his private domestic space as well as the show's production means that, as he is under surveillance by the MTV crew, Margera always appears to be in a totally dominant subject position. While Margera's performance is one of excess in terms of his time spent skateboarding, engaging in crude humor and pranks, or spending large amounts of money on whatever he wants, the excessive behavior of other members of the cast, including women and people of color, are framed instead as points of mockery. Ultimately, the series builds from the increasingly nonfiction tendencies of *Big Brother* and *CKY* to position skateboarding subcultural belonging as no longer limited to a set of aesthetics or narratives, but instead a more all-encompassing identity that one must inhabit around-the-clock. Its politics are therefore more revealing of the so-called *Jackass* moment's white masculine dominant fantasies than *Jackass* itself.

Subcultural Authenticity and Reality Television in the Early-2000s

The *Jackass* moment occurs during a strange period for both television and the broader media industry. Prior to the normalization of streaming services, the end of the cable era meant that content was still delivered in typical linear fashion, yet often aimed at a niche audience. For cheap reality series such as *Jackass* and *Viva La Bam,* this meant a focus on subculturally

authentic narratives and aesthetics, despite media conglomerate distribution on basic cable

platforms. Many subculture scholars, such as Sarah Thornton, David Muggleton, and Rupert

Weinzirel, have argued that analyzing such obviously commercial media aimed at subcultures

requires adopting a "post-subculture" approach that complicates our understandings of what

constitutes subcultural practice.[7] However, as previous chapters of this project show, the

skateboarding subculture has always been engaged with capitalist processes even when adopting

seemingly anti-capitalist rhetoric or aesthetics. For this analysis, I retain subculture studies' focus

on ideology while incorporating post-subcultural approaches, considering the function of niche

reality television content for both subcultural textual engagement as well as the media industry

generally. The use of subcultural figures and aesthetics on linear television is of course inherently

political, since such content makes clear aims to depict only certain narratives or identity

positions as subculturally "authentic."

As post-subculture studies becomes more prominent during the late-1990s and early-

2000s, media scholars are simultaneously considering the industry's shift to content aimed at

niche audiences. That shift requires texts to, in various ways, present as authentic mediations for

those more specific markets. In the contemporary digital era, such strategies may seem common,

but it was a significant departure from the earlier days of television as a truly "mass" medium

where producers and distributors sought as large an audience as possible. Amanda Lotz analyzes

these developments for the television industry specifically, breaking its history into three periods:

the original "network" era, a slow-moving period of change in targeted cable programming

termed "multi-channel transition," and finally a contemporary "post-network" era.[8] Though Lotz

---

[7] Sarah Thornton, *Club Cultures: Music, Media, and Subcultural Capital,* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1996); David Muggleton and Rupert Weinzierl, "What is 'Post-subcultural Studies' Anyway," in *The Post-Subcultures Reader,* eds. David Muggleton and Rupert Weinzierl (New York: Berg, 2003), 9-12.
[8] Amanda Lotz, *The Television Will Be Revolutionized* (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 7-8.

notes that "indications of a 'post-network'" era emerged in the early-2000s, the period overlapped with the elements of multi-channel transition (15). She argues that multi-channel transition was essentially a series of slow-moving changes for the industry, where "new technologies including the remote control, video-cassette recorder, and analog cable systems expanded viewer choice and control" (12). Such technological developments changed one's experience of television gradually over multiple decades. While these shifts began on a smaller level, with broader "targeted" programming through channels like ESPN, MTV, and CNN, Lotz's analysis shows that, by the early- to mid-2000s, many cable channels were targeting even more niche groups and often in competition with each other. For an example, she cites stations such as Lifetime, Oxygen, and WE (Women's Entertainment), all of which "specifically, pursued women…, yet developed clearly differentiated programing that might be 'more satisfying' to women with divergent interests" (15). This marks a complex historical moment for considering television content aimed at niche or subcultural audiences. Right at this overlap between the multi-channel and post-network eras, the media industry is operating largely as it had been for several decades. For the vast majority of the American public, the concept of watching "television" in 2003 (the year *Viva La Bam* premiered on MTV) still meant to turn on a television set and watch something that was broadcast linearly, whether through an over-the-air antenna, cable box, or satellite dish. However, the steady adoption of various new media technologies in addition to an ever-expanding amount of cable and satellite channels meant that the actual televisual content was dramatically different than it had been ten or twenty years prior. For many producers, the beginning of the new millennium represented the apex of content delivered in a traditional linear format while aimed at a very specific subset of television viewers. This logically produced two main circumstances for the historical moment. Firstly, the content had to

be produced cheaply, since the expected audiences were going to be smaller and thus the broadcast would generate less advertising revenue. Secondly, to resonate with those niche audiences, there was a far greater need for such content to appear authentic and relatable to the lived-experiences and fantasies of those specific viewers. Taking these two conditions together, it is no surprise that, for the television industry, reality programming became overwhelmingly prominent during the early- to mid-2000s.

Reality television's many subgenres make it an impossible form to generalize, but the mode's claims to authenticity and realism are primary concerns for a variety of scholars. This comes as no surprise given reality programming's numerous connections to the documentary film genre, another place where scholars have long debated and theorized the way moving images claim to depict and/or manipulate an authentic reality. Daniel Marcus argues that reality television's connection to documentary film and participatory video movements goes beyond the tenuous nonfiction genre designation. Instead, reality television retains the formal strategies of various film and video movements, including "direct cinema (and the parallel cinema verité), Andy Warhol's Factory films, and activist video of counterculture collectives and cooperatives."[9] Technologically, this means the use of more portable cameras and sound recording equipment, which are often positioned as opportunities for revealing complex or even hidden truths. Marcus further cites the "tropes of realism and celebrity," given that direct cinema, alternative video or television, and contemporary reality programming are all invested in "constructing a behind-the-scenes approach that claims to strip away the artifice of mainstream entertainment forms" (141). While these different movements have obviously different political implications, especially given reality television's status as "tightly controlled by show-business professionals" and "usually

---

[9] Daniel Marcus, "From Participatory Video to Reality Television," in *The Companion to Reality Television,* ed. Laurie Ouellette (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2014), 137.

profit-driven rather than politically inspired" (137), Marcus argues that they all share an interest in using new media technology to go beyond what are seen as typical mainstream depictions, such as narrative film and television content, standard news programming, and more. Amy West takes Marcus' argument in a more formal direction, noting reality television's reliance on low-fidelity aesthetics as well as its foregrounding of camera technology. West specifically traces the legacy of early "caught-on-tape" programming featuring "a multitude of anonymous authors wielding home handycams, storefront CCTV sets, and police chase helicopter-cams."[10] These shows are certainly different from more elaborately-staged programs such as *Big Brother* (CBS, 2000-)*,* but West argues that "the self-reflexive acknowledgement (and often self-conscious displays of) the process or production (even when these processes are not those of the amateur handycam)" remains "indebted to the strategies of the caught-on-tape brand of reality" (88-9). Ultimately, reality television's claim to authenticity is not in its immediacy, but actually its overtly hypermediated textuality. Reality television foregrounds its own production, primarily through its constant depiction and acknowledgment of its own cameras and crews.

By presenting this hypermediacy as key to its authentic status, reality television also normalizes new media surveillance technologies as inherent aspects of daily life. The fact that reality television's popularity coincides with the increasing presence of various digital media in the average person's day-to-day existence is an important consideration for scholars interested in how technologies of surveillance have become increasingly normalized. In *Reality TV: The Work of Being Watched,* Mark Andrejevic notes that we cannot wholly divorce the phenomena of reality television from digital media's promise to increase the ways the average viewer or user can connect to others and, significantly, document themselves. For the media industry, both

---

[10] Amy West, "Caught on Tape: A Legacy of Low-tech Reality," in *The Spectacle of the Real: From Hollywood to Reality TV and Beyond,* ed. Geoff King (Portland: Intellect Books, 2005), 83.

developments are framed as democratic. While "not everyone can have their own television show," reality television claims to at least offer the average person the chance "to participate in a realm from which they have been excluded."[11] Similarly, the internet and developing digital technologies allow one to "be watched all the time," as they submit "to the comprehensive monitoring of the rhythms of their daily lives" (6). Nick Couldry has similarly considered surveillance technologies and their connections to reality television through an analysis of *Big Brother*. Couldry builds from Andrejevic's "powerful critique of 'interactivity' more generally," arguing that shows such as *Big Brother* not only normalize surveillance, but also reproduce a profoundly neoliberal understanding of authenticity where one must perform their authentic self both at work and in the no longer truly private domestic space.[12] Couldry writes:

> In these various ways, the 'as if' of reality TV tracks with striking fidelity the dynamics of the neoliberal workplace: it is a place of compulsory self-staging, required team-work, and regulation by unquestionable external authority mediated via equally unquestionable norms or 'values,' to which nonetheless the worker/player must submit in a 'positive,' even 'passionate' embrace, while enduring, alone, the long-term consequences of the 'game,' if game it is. (14)

Reality television's constant surveillance of its contestants (whether they are competing or simply "living" for the camera) reproduces the increasing demands of neoliberal society, where one is expected to perform authentically in both the public workspace and the private domestic sphere. This is especially true for a program such as *Big Brother,* where around-the-clock surveillance attempts to catch the contestants revealing their true and more flawed self in private moments. In this way, viewers are being encouraged to look for signs that a given cast member's presentation of themselves lacks authenticity, since that is by-and-large how the show creates drama.

---

[11] Mark Andrejevic, *Reality TV: The Work of Being Watched* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), 6.
[12] Nick Couldry, "Reality TV, or the Secret Theater of Neoliberalism," *Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies* 30, no. 3 (2008): 11.

As a historical moment, the early-2000s' reality television boon means an excess of content aimed at specific niche audiences and subcultures while using surveillance technology to normalize authenticity as an around-the-clock obligation. Thus, this has new implications for not just our understanding of subcultural authenticity, but also how that authenticity is articulated textually. For skateboarding, the texts from previous eras, such as the 1970s Dogtown articles and the 1980s Bones Brigade videos, center around isolated moments of fantasy. Craig Stecyk's short fictional narratives and Stacy Peralta's malleable video features certainly differ in both their presentation of skateboarding as a subcultural fantasy and, significantly, the politics of what identity positions are allowed in said fantasy. Still, each's engagement with media forms and materiality marks them as useful subcultural media objects, their textuality rendering engagement with the media text as a subcultural experience in and of itself. As a reality television series, *Viva La Bam* ultimately functions very differently, redefining the meaning of an "authentic" skateboarder so that it is no longer limited to certain narratives, aesthetics, or commodities. Instead, Margera's subcultural authenticity, captured by a constantly surveilling MTV camera crew, is articulated by his apparently twenty-four-hours-a-day and seven-days-a-week skateboarding lifestyle, where societal norms–either in public or domestic spaces–must be rejected at all times. Margera's power to reject such norms situates him within a text on a mainstream platform as being subcultural skateboarder par excellence. Building from Couldry's notion of neoliberal surveillance in reality television, this in turn shows skateboarding as developing a neoliberal logic; skaters are now demanded to act subculturally "authentic" all the time. Given that, Margera appears to be the endpoint: a skater who acts as such around-the-clock, whether in public or private space, and crucially seems to have the power and means to document himself doing so. This again has implications for the subculture's identity politics,

further narrowing the acceptable subject positions to those with the privilege to "act" like a skateboarder all the time. Scholars interested in the racial, gender, and economic politics of the *Jackass* moment and its assorted texts (though primarily *Jackass*) have frequently debated the potential for these mediations to function as polysemic. These texts depict excessive amounts of humor and self-mockery in particular, which complicate issues of identity and authenticity. However, *Viva La Bam* reveals that this moment is clearly reliant on an exclusively privileged subject whose authenticity is established by excessive behavior and domination of others. Margera's excess and constant insistence on doing nothing other than skateboarding or pranking others only reinforces that he has achieved the ultimate subcultural fantasy. In contrast, the excessive behavior of other cast members, whether due to gender, body type, or race/ethnicity, must always be mocked and positioned as clearly outside of the skateboarding subculture.

White Male Backlash and Mediating Extreme Sports

The *Jackass* moment and extreme sports' corresponding rise to cultural prominence has often been contextualized as part of the broader white male backlash politics evident in American popular culture through the 1990s and 2000s. As American culture becomes, at least to some degree, more diverse and various popular media texts begin to foreground nonwhite and nonmale perspectives, there is a simultaneous notion of the marginalized or somehow "forgotten" white male. Sean Brayton argues that this is a broad cultural phenomenon across a variety of media texts where white men adopt a marginal subject position as part of an "effort to reclaim the tacit social privileges of being white, heterosexual, and male."[13] He cites examples from popular cinema, including *Fight Club* (David Fincher, 1999), and music, noting independent rock

---

[13] Sean Brayton, "MTV's *Jackass:* Transgression, Abjection, and the Economy of White Masculinity," *Journal of Gender Studies* 16, no. 1 (2007): 58.

musicians as well as outlaw or "even 'hard country' music singers like Hank Williams and Merle

Haggard" (58-60). For Brayton, a franchise such as *Jackass* is a key–albeit more complex–

example of white male backlash because it appears to reject and even mock the privileges

afforded to and certain values associated with dominant white masculinity.[14]

Similarly, Kyle Kusz considers these backlash politics in extreme sports and more

general 1990s and 2000s sports media, calling it a politics of "revolt." Kusz cites examples

across sports media where narratives of white masculinity become central to American identity,

often framed as somehow needing reestablishing in light of "gains" by marginalized groups

through practices such as affirmative action.[15] This is notable in mainstream sports stories, such

as a *New York Times* article on Marcus Jacoby, a white football quarterback whose only

scholarship came from Southern University, a historically Black institution that Jacoby

ultimately withdrew from "because he felt that he could no longer take the extreme isolation,

stress, and anxiety," of "being a racial minority" (8).[16] Kusz continues:

> Additionally, media stories which celebrated extreme sports (or alternative or action
> sports as they are now increasingly called) as a contemporary extensions of the hearty,
> pioneering, masculinizing, democratic ideals first espoused by our (white male)
> American forefathers, expressed contemporary white desires not only to re-center white
> masculinity within mainstream American sports culture at a time when it had been
> challenged, but also they rearticulate white masculinity with American national identity at
> a time when this link also had been threatened by revisionist histories and multiculture
> advocates. (9)

Kusz stresses that this racial project is not a coordinated effort across media outlets or through

different athletes, yet their shared politics illuminates one of the many ways whiteness is

---

[14] Brayton cites numerous examples from *Jackass: The Movie* in which white masculinity is both mocked and upheld as a dominant standard. To understand the film's humor, one must agree with the premise that white masculinity is typically dominant. The most straightforward example is his analysis of the skit, "Ass Kicked by a Girl." Brayton, 61.

[15] Kyle Kusz, *Revolt of the White Athlete: Race, Media, and the Emergence of Extreme Athletes in America* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 7.

[16] For the original article Kusz is referencing, see: Ira Berkow, "The Minority Quarterback," *New York Times,* July 2, 2000, https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/library/national/race/070200berkow-sports.html?scp=7&sq=Quarterback&st=cse.

eventually reestablished as the default American identity position after a period that seemingly embraced diversity.

Extreme sports such as skateboarding, bicycle motocross (BMX) stunts or racing, inline skating, and numerous others sports or related activities (including the stunts in *Jackass* and *Nitro Circus*) represent a crucial piece of this puzzle, as their stars and media narratives often articulate a similar marginal subject position. It is no accident that Brayton's reading of white male backlash and Kusz' framing of revolt recall Emily Chivers Yochim's argument about the skateboarding subculture specifically, where participants are simultaneously "resistant to and in possession of dominant modes of power."[17] Many scholars have in turn noted that these extreme sports and *Jackass* moment texts are, at least potentially, polysemic in nature. For Brayton, this is due to the humor and "paradoxical sketches," which make it hard to utilize one theoretical approach or ultimately produce a unified ideological critique.[18] In a different context, Jorie Lagerway identifies *Jackass'* potential for diverging ideological implications in its connection to skate culture as well as "purposefully amateur aesthetic, including its use of video and handheld digital cameras, its ideology of collective production, its use of urban landscapes as backdrop, and its project of social intervention."[19]

Only in the past decade have scholars become more forceful in their critiques of these related subcultural sports and texts. This pushback against more negotiated readings aims to position this cultural moment as far more explicit in its endorsement of white masculine dominance in any context and over any other subject position. Christina Marie Tourino argues

---

[17] Emily Chivers Yochim, *Skate Life: Re-Imagining White Masculinity* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010), 28.
[18] Brayton, "MTV's *Jackass*," 58.
[19] Jorie Lagerwey, "*Jackass* for President: Revitalizing an American Public Life Through the Aesthetic of the Amateur," *Spectator* 24, no. 1 (2004): 86.

that Brayton overstates "the play in the system between alternate or negotiated masculinities."[20]

For Tourino, *Jackass'* parody establishes a white masculine norm that is "especially regressive

for men of color and victims of torture," who do not possess the same "semiotic field on which

to romp because they've been excluded from the political process that constitutes that field in the

first place" (694). Marisol Cortez provides even more contemporary context for these politics,

arguing that, "just as *Jackass* in 2004 came to figure the recklessness of neoconservative state

power under Bush ("Iraqass"), it also became in 2016 an extended political metaphor for the

narcissistic and nihilistic chaos of Trumpian politics."[21] Thus, though some view *Jackass'* humor

as complicating its ideological implications, Cortez and Tourino show that it ultimately continues

to function as a way for white men to pose as transgressive or resistant while maintaining clear

dominance over nonwhite and nonmale others.

Yet, few scholars have focused on *Viva La Bam,* an MTV series that builds from the same

roots as *Jackass,* features one of the franchise's professional skateboarding stars, and that

articulates an even clearer fantasy of white male domination of others within public and private

spaces often positioned along gender and racial lines. Carly Gieseler and the aforementioned

Emily Chivers Yochim are two scholars who actually devote space to analyzing Margera's reality

series and its identity politics within skateboarding's transmedia environment during the *Jackass*

moment, situating it alongside *Jackass, Wildboyz, Nitro Circus,* and *Viva La Bam's* follow-up

series centered around Margera's engagement and wedding, *Bam's Unholy Union* (MTV, 2007).

Chivers Yochim argues that *Viva La Bam* "valorizes white adolescent male dominance and

---

[20] Christina Marie Tourino, "The Leisured Testes: White Ball-Breaking as Surplus Masculinity in *Jackass*," *The Journal of Popular Culture* 48, no. 4 (2015): 694.

[21] Cortez, 24. Cortez's reference to "Iraqass" is a political cartoon by the artist R.J. Matson. The one-panel piece depicts members of the Bush administration riding in a giant shopping cart, an explicit reference to the opening scene and promotional image of *Jackass: The Movie.* Cortez writes about seeing the cartoon at an exhibit at the Cartoon Art Museum in San Francisco, but the image can be viewed on Matson's website as well. "Best Cartoons of the Bush Years," R.J. Matson Cartoons, accessed July 2, 2024, https://www.rjmatsoncartoons.com/editorialcartoons/gwbushyears?itemId=ug1b38w8h91jpgayxwl09b5op63odu.

exhibits an explicit mockery of the working class, women, and people of color" who appear either in the cast or as guest stars.[22] Gieseler similarly positions the series as part of this group of texts' broader reassertion of "boy code' acts of playground cruelty, humiliation, and one-upmanship."[23] Both scholars acknowledge that these performances of white masculinity are significant shifts from other modes of white masculine power and that their seemingly ironic sensibilities are certainly a "renegotiation of male norms." This marks the *Jackass* moment's identity politics as distinct from both its contemporary and historical media counterparts invested in asserting or reasserting white male dominance.[24] However, Gieseler and Chivers Yochim are primarily focused on this power as discursive. While they each acknowledge the transmedia dynamic of the *Jackass* moment texts, such acknowledgements are mostly their intertextual connections between various cast members and creators. Chivers Yochim in particular is invested in the reception of these texts within the skateboarding subculture. She takes a post-subculture studies approach, utilizing ethnographic evidence to explore *Viva La Bam*'s "active and inconsistent correspondence with skateboarding culture as well as the complex nature of that culture and its multiple takes on commercialism." (137). This analysis builds from both scholars' claims, but also considers *Viva La Bam* as part of a more formal historical timeline. The series' reassertion of white masculine dominance (via Margera himself) comes from the skateboarding subculture's more thorough embrace of nonfiction aesthetics and modes over the course of the 1990s and into the new millennium. Its fantasies are ultimately indebted to subcultural textual

---

[22] Chivers Yochim, 131.

[23] Carly Gieseler, "Pranking Peter Pans: Performing Playground Masculinities in Extreme Sports," *Text and Performance Quarterly* 34, no. 4 (2014): 335.

[24] Chivers Yochim, 115-6. In terms of contemporaries, Chivers Yochim points specifically to far-right evangelical Christian groups "men's" movements and also acknowledges the film *Fight Club* as sharing similar concerns, yet with drastically different textual strategies and political implications. Historically, Chivers Yochim and others (such as Brayton) frequently contrast *Jackass*' depiction of the male body with the 1980s "hard-body" era action films. See: Susan Jeffords, *Hard Bodies: Hollywood Masculinity in the Reagan Era* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1994).

strategies, yet also shifts them into a decisively mainstream context and form, which has significant implications for subcultural identity. On *Viva La Bam,* Margera alone seems in control of the text, dictating the behavior of the cast and crew as he proceeds to do what he wants, whenever he wants to do it. Distributed on a mainstream platform yet clearly marking its subcultural capital, the series uses skate media aesthetics to narrow the identity positions for who can be, like Margera, the truly authentic skateboarder. Margera's ability to "play" this role for the surveilling MTV crew fits within reality television norms, yet also builds from the development of the skate video form in the 1990s, as it began incorporating nonfiction modes and acknowledging the camera's role in both public and private performance spaces.

From Skate Video on Tape to *Jackass* on MTV

Part 1: Developing Aesthetics and the VX1000

Over the course of the 1990s, skate video shifts dramatically from the aesthetics and narratives present in 1980s examples such as the Bones Brigade videos. On the one hand, the form becomes far more standardized, as companies begin to separate their videos into "parts" focusing on individual skaters.[25] This normalization is a departure from videos such as *The Search for Animal Chin* (Stacy Peralta, 1987), which maintains a semblance of narrative structure–even if the emphasis is primarily geographic–as the skaters perform together in various locations while searching for Chin. This is not to say skate video becomes so standardized that experimentation is not possible or that narrative sequences disappear entirely as a company's professional roster becomes the primary organizing logic. On the contrary, 1990s skate videos become more experimental as parts allow for looser expectations on how each sequence connects

---

[25] "Part" is the subcultural term for these segments, which just indicates it is a certain skater's "part" within the skate video as a whole.

to the previous one. Though 1980s skate videos utilize low-fidelity aesthetics to shift between

various fiction, nonfiction, and avant-garde modes, 1990s video parts enable texts to incorporate

more diverse material. Individual parts not only take on their own style within videos, but the

breaks between them also provide space for pranks, narrative skits, or media ripped from other

sources such as film or television. Rather than malleability in terms of reception contexts, 1990s

videos begin to exhibit more emphasis on manipulation and experimental production strategies in

both filming and editing. These aesthetic changes are also brought on by changes to video

technology, especially the release of the Sony VX1000, a consumer grade digital video

camcorder that functions well in everyday situations with suboptimal lighting. This allows late

1990s videos to incorporate more varied content and begin to function as home and/or road video

diaries. This shift to nonfiction modes is significant for the skate videos that precede *Jackass* and

Viva La Bam, such as the *Big Brother* and *CKY* series.

Spike Jonze's 1991 video for Blind Skateboards, *Video Days,* is often framed as the text

that enables many of skate video's changes for the rest of the decade. It is also frequently cited as

the first video to use parts as its primary structure.[26] The video opens with Blind's team, Mark

Gonzales, Rudy Johnson, Jason Lee, Guy Mariano, and Jordan Richter, riding in a sedan. The

title, "Video Days," appears in a low-fidelity cursive font over a handheld shot (seemingly out of

the car's window) of nondescript city streets. The same cursive is used to introduce each skater,

who is given an introductory clip featuring their skating, and then used throughout as the roughly

twenty-minute short moves from part to part. Beyond the introduction of clearly identified parts,

Video Days also utilizes an irreverent tone with emphasis on humor, skits, and seemingly random

---

[26] This is commonly referenced as part of *Video Days'* status as an "all-time" great video within the subculture, which one can find on using any internet search engine, whether clicking through forums, various media outlets, or company blogs. For an example (in this case, a typical top result across most search engines), see: Chris Sayer, "10 Best Skate Movies," Red Bull, Nov. 29, 2019, https://www.redbull.com/us-en/best-skateboarding-movies.

intertextual references or scenes that articulate a desire to manipulate and experiment with video production strategies. For example, prior to Mark Gonzales' part, a brief moment from *Willy Wonka & The Chocolate Factory* (Mel Stuart, 1971) plays, featuring Gene Wilder saying, "we are the dreamers of dreams." The few second clip not only seems arbitrary, but is also in the middle of a jarring transition; it comes just after Jordan Richter's part, where he skates aggressively to the sound of Black Flag's punk anthem "My War," and just before Gonzales skates in a variety of locations over a jazz song, identified in the credits as simply "some damn good jazz."[27] The video goes on to feature several skits and moments of random humor or parody, though even parodic moments seem vaguely apolitical. In one skit, when Jason Lee is captured yelling "no war for heavy metal" in between shots of a crowd rallying in support of troops in the Gulf War, the exact subject of mockery is unclear. The video ends with the team doing burnouts in their sedan and then drinking and spilling beer over the car's interior while exterior shots show them drifting on a dirt road. In the final shot before the credits begin, the car veers off-road, plummeting into a canyon with an explosion sound effect as the video fades to black. The credits then identify the skaters with their birth years and "1991," as if they all perished in the crash. In these moments, Jonze's *Video Days* reflects the way 1990s skate videos begin to experiment with a new irreverent tone and more playful engagement with the viewer.

---

[27] Copyright issues are of no concern in this era. *Thrasher Magazine* posted Mark Gonzales' part on their YouTube channel, describing it as "influential skater of all time, in the best part from an epic video." Because of the impact of the Digital Millennium Copyright Act of 1998 (DMCA), *Thrasher*'s post required them to properly get a license to use the song, which is "Traneing In" from John Coltrane and The Red Garland Trio's album of the same name. "Classics: Mark Gonzales in Video Days," YouTube, Apr. 12, 2011, https://youtu.be/gizM-PuVnY0.

FIGURE 3.1 The opening scene of Spike Jonze's 1996 video, *Mouse.* Screen capture from video file.

Jonze's 1996 video for Girl Skateboards, *Mouse,* takes this further by incorporating more narrative scenes, elaborate skits that embrace intertextuality, and experimental skate sequences. Between its standard parts, *Mouse* features moments that seem to function as short films in their own right. In the opening scene (fig. 3.1), a skater (Jeron Wilson) dressed in a mouse costume drives a motorized scooter, dropping a friend (Mike Carroll) at a fast-food restaurant job before a few minutes of skateboarding shenanigans (still dressed as a mouse). In another skit, skater Rick Howard bumps his head retrieving his board from his car's trunk. A close-up on his stunned face cuts to him closing the trunk and all of sudden being inexplicably lost in middle of the woods. Regardless, he proceeds to skate, sliding down hills and grinding on fallen tree logs. The scene is shot mostly at a low-angle that is typical for skate videos, making a minimal effort to obscure the leaves-covered plywood that enables Howard to appear as if he is skating off-road. Other scenes

are more heavily intertextual and removed from skate video's typical aesthetics. For example, one is shot and edited as if it were a silent film, with Eric Koston dressed as Charlie Chaplin, pretending to find a skateboard for the first time and ultimately skating it while incorporating Chaplin's physical style (fig. 3.2). The skit is largely static black-and-white full shots, rather than skate video's typically mobile camerawork that relies on close-ups and low-angles. A final skit, titled "Brothas from Different Mothas," is entirely removed from skating; it references Blaxploitation cinema, with several skaters dressed in 1970s attire while riding in an old Cadillac sedan and chasing various individuals through back alleys. The shots are intercut with material from various Blaxploitation and detective films or television series, embracing an elaborate intertextuality rather than simple parody.[28] Shot in the same style as its references (as with the Koston skit), it is often difficult to tell where the skate video ends and the older material begins. Even before considering the individual skate parts, one can see that the content in *Mouse* is extremely diverse in terms of aesthetics and modes. While both *Mouse* and *Video Days* were directed by Jonze, they reflect the way 1990s skate videos begin featuring more varied content and embracing a playful form of experimentation and even manipulation (such as making the video look like silent-era or 1970s exploitation cinema).

---

[28] One could also consider this an intertextual reference to the popular music video that Spike Jonze had previously directed for the Beastie Boys song, "Sabotage," which, although not Blaxploitation, similarly utilizes 1970s detective film and television series aesthetics. See: "Sabotage," *The Work of Director Spike Jonze,* directed by Spike Jonze, featuring performances by the Beastie Boys (1994; New York, NY: Palm Pictures, 2003, DVD).

FIGURE 3.2 Eric Koston in *Mouse,* skating in character as Charlie Chaplin and captured in silent film aesthetics. Screen capture from video file.

This is not to attribute these elements solely to Jonze as a type of skate video auteur, but rather to situate them as part of a broader shift due to technological developments in consumer camera technology in the 1990s. *Mouse* is in production just as Sony's VX1000 camcorder comes on the market in 1995 and the camera has a major impact on the skateboard subculture's video aesthetics. *Jenkem Magazine,* a skateboard blog and video content producer, has published a series of articles and videos tracing the importance of Sony's camera for the subculture's aesthetics and the newfound ability to cheaply shoot video virtually anytime and anywhere. One article notes that, while Sony initially produced the camera for the broadcast industry, the VX1000 ultimately worked for a variety of amateurs due to cost, ease of use, and durability. *Jenkem* writer Nic Dobija-Nootens quotes Sony's 1990s personal video division head as saying that, compared to cheap film cameras, the VX1000's "quality was so much better and it had

lowlight visibility."[29] In the same piece, Aaron Meza, a skateboarder who helped shoot *Mouse,*

describes using the camera despite having just purchased it. He says, "I think it was literally the

first day I filmed with it. All the footage is darker than it should be because I was trying to figure

it out" (fig. 3.3).[30] Skateboarders were not the only amateur filmmakers using the VX1000 in

lowlight, everyday situations. Given the camera's strengths, it became popular amongst

pornographers as well. In another *Jenkem* piece, pornographer John Stagliano cites the camera's

mobility, advantages in lowlight situations, and its high-quality internal microphone, which

Stagliano states is not only cheaper, but "more omnidirectional" than utilizing a boom

microphone and sound technician.[31] Stagliano's insights are useful because he is famous for not

just using the VX1000 to cut cost, but to consciously produce pornography with a distinctly

amateur aesthetic. He is commonly cited as the creator of the "gonzo" subgenre, which he

describes as pornography with conscious "recognition that there is a camera there and you're

performing for it."[32] For both skateboarding and pornography, the amateur aesthetic offered by

the digital video camcorder is crucial for grounding the text in reality. This is not to say late

1990s skate or gonzo pornography videos never include narrative scenes, but rather that each

more explicitly acknowledge the camera as an element within the scene and a mediating force in

general. The skateboard subculture in particular remains influenced by digital video and this era

of consumer grade camera technology. *Jenkem* has even published guides on how to continue

using Sony's VX1000 despite the camera being nearly thirty years old and digital video tapes

---

[29] Nic Dobija-Nootens, "Tracing the History of Skateboarding's Most Famous Camera," *Jenkem Magazine*, July 13, 2018, https://www.jenkemmag.com/home/2018/07/13/tracing-history-skateboardings-most-famous-camera/.
[30] Ibid. *Jenkem*'s video essay version of this article shows the corresponding moment in *Mouse,* which is specifically Eric Koston's part (his full part, not the Chaplin skit). Meza specifically cites the footage captured in Vancouver, since that trip was directly after picking up the camera. For the video essay, see: Alex Coles, "Video Essay: A History of the VX1000," *Jenkem Magazine,* Sept. 21, 2020, https://www.jenkemmag.com/home/2020/09/21/history-vx1000-skatings-favorite-camera/.
[31] James Lee, "How the VX1000 Infiltrated Porn," *Jenkem Magazine,* Oct. 3, 2017, https://www.jenkemmag.com/home/2017/10/03/vx1000-infiltrated-porn/.
[32] Ibid. For more on "gonzo" pornography and the subgenre's utilization of a consciously amateur aesthetic, see: Renato Stella, "The Amateur Roots of Gonzo Pornography," *Porn Studies* 3, no. 4 (2016): 351-361.

becoming harder and harder to find.[33] A search on a skateboard forum site, such as *SLAP,* will

reveal dozens of pages with users trying to find used VX1000's, compatible fisheye lenses, and

the sought-after digital video tapes.[34]

FIGURE 3.3 Eric Koston, captured on a Sony VX1000 camera, in *Mouse.* Screen capture from
video file.

Thus, this period is a major technological turning point that goes hand-in-hand with a

change in aesthetics. Just as gonzo pornography relies on acknowledging the camera as part of a

sexual act, the skate videos produced after Sony's introduction of the VX1000 are similarly

invested in performing for the camera. Such performances are not limited to the act of skating,

but rather presenting a certain type of skateboarding *identity* within the video. As a result, this

---

[33] Erick Carrada & Mike Pompeo, "Tutorial: How to Film on a VX1000 Without Tapes," *Jenkem Magazine,* May 19, 2021, https://www.jenkemmag.com/home/2021/05/19/tutorial-film-vx1000-without-tapes/.
[34] Mattchew, "VX1000 General Discussion (gear/set-ups, filming/editing, tips/advice, etc.)," Filming/Editing, SLAP, Oct. 24, 2016, https://www.slapmagazine.com/index.php?topic=93076.0.

aesthetic shift also results in a change of mode; late-1990s skate videos begin to incorporate elements of video diaries and home movies, regularly utilizing direct address to the camera and often capturing seemingly random day-to-day moments–ranging from mundane to obscene and/or extreme–framed as elements of daily skateboarding subcultural life. In further overlap with gonzo pornography, the videos produced by *Big Brother Magazine* and as part of Bam Margera's *CKY* series also embrace provocative subjects, including fecal matter as well as extensive–and occasionally sexually explicit–nudity. Though it would be tempting to position such material similarly to Stecyk's Dogtown articles, the purposefully amateur digital video aesthetics ultimately produce very different implications. Obscenities and other material intended to offend are no longer part of a fictional subcultural fantasy space, but instead part of everyday life as a skateboarder. Stecyk's subcultural textuality renders Dogtown inaccessible because his fictional elements and unexplained or provocative references mark the space as incompatible with reality. In contrast, late-1990s skate video aesthetics are grounded in digital video realism. The obscene material is not just to make a reader/viewer uncomfortable or offended, but also to ground skateboarding identity in these various transgressive acts. Such acts are no longer imagined; instead, they are positioned as real and even essential for subcultural belonging. This is crucial for the *Big Brother* and *CKY* video series. Both are grounded in nonfiction video modes, presenting the skateboarding subculture as a constant fantasy where even private spaces should be treated as a potential playground. This ultimately informs the narratives, aesthetics, and implications of the *Jackass* moment and *Viva La Bam* in particular.

Part 2: *Big Brother, CKY,* and the roots of *Jackass*

Big Brother's video releases function as extensions of *Big Brother Magazine,* a publication whose primary goal was producing content more provocative than existing skateboard magazines, such as *Thrasher* and *Transworld.* In two recent films, including the documentary *Dumb: The Story of Big Brother Magazine* (Patrick O'Dell, 2017) and the behind-the-scenes and extra footage component of *Jackass Forever* (Jeff Tremaine, 2022), *Jackass 4.5* (Jeff Tremaine, 2022), several interview subjects recount *Big Brother*'s founding largely as an experiment. They all claim that skateboard company World Industries and its co-founder Steve Rocco were mostly upset that their provocative advertisements were not being allowed in *Thrasher* and *Transworld,* the two publications that dominated the subculture at the time. This is stated explicitly in first issue's letter from the editor, which opens with: "We couldn't fuckin' run ads in Transworld and Rocco flips out all the time. So we fuckin' decide 'Fuck This!' this is fucked. We'll do our own fuckin' mag."[35] Rocco himself follows with a separate editorial attacking *Transworld.* He calls the magazine, "the whore that works the village between the two cities" and defends World Industries' graphics, which feature "devils, crack pipes, nude women, aborted babies and condoms."[36] *Big Brother* was published independently until 1997, when it

---

[35] The Editor Speaks," *Big Brother Magazine* no. 1 1992. The article uses some variation of the word "fuck" twenty-five times. Many issues of *Big Brother* do not contain crucial information such as page numbers, date, or place of publication. In some cases this information is included, though is obviously parody. The first issue was published in 1992, but the magazine itself lists it as "June 1973, Vol. 189, #1234567891011121314, published by I don't know who publishes it, Inc." "The Editor Speaks" is not credited to any author and no editor is listed, though issue two lists Jeff Tremaine as "managing editor" and Mark McKee as "editor." Since *Big Brother Magazine* has no official archive and the issues themselves with conflicting or parodic information, this chapter utilizes fan uploads on sites such as Reddit, Internet Archive, or other sources. See: "List of Magazine Issues," Skateboard Magazine Archive Blogspot, accessed July 13, 2024, https://skatemagarchive.blogspot.com/p/list-of-magazine-issues.html; "Big Brother October 1997," Internet Archive, Dec. 6, 2020, https://archive.org/details/big-brother-october-1997.
[36] Steve Rocco, "Soap Box," *Big Brother,* no. 1, 1992.

was purchased by media mogul Larry Flynt.[37] While the magazine goes defunct in the early-2000s, its legacy in the skateboarding subculture is cemented by not only its status as an industrial precursor for *Jackass,* but also its commitment to publishing content not allowed in more mainstream outlets. This includes allowing explicitly racist, sexist, and homophobic language. In an interview in the magazine's second issue, Rocco's brother Sal espouses white supremacist and misogynist views, even advocating for violence against people of color.[38] Such language is often framed somewhat ironically (Sal's interview is prefaced with the disclaimer that he is "fucked"), though clearly encouraged by the editors. The magazine's interviews often ask controversial personal questions to get angry or comedic reactions out of their subjects. In one, skateboarder Mike Vallely (who later appears in several episodes of *Viva La Bam* and entries in the *Tony Hawk* video game series) is confronted about his use of racist language, to which he admits he has "certain prejudices," but argues back that some of the *Big Brother* editors and photographers "say some pretty crazy shit too."[39] The magazine's confrontational nature allows its interviews to function similarly to pranks, attempting to bait subjects into discussing topics they normally would not or simply asking knowingly offensive questions solely for a reaction.

This confrontational nature grants *Big Brother* some discursive flexibility, allowing even explicitly offensive content to be framed as irreverent or parodic. This subcultural textuality

---

[37] Flynt is best-known for publishing the pornography magazine *Hustler*, though his publishing company Larry Flynt Publications had a variety of magazines aimed at specific audiences. See: Shelly Branch, "Larry Flynt's New Target: Black Men – Upscale Magazine, *Code,* Wants Reader Group Others Ignore, But Will Advertisers Follow?" *Wall Street Journal,* Dec. 21, 1999, https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB945736068746402005. Famously, Flynt's company once mixed up its subscriber lists, resulting in *Big Brother* subscribers receiving *Hustler Taboo,* a hardcore pornography magazine, and vice versa. See: Peter Carlson, "Cruisin' for a Bruisin'," *Washington Post,* May 22, 2000, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle/2000/05/23/cruisin-for-a-bruisin/859d8da9-c331-409b-a05e-a576cee1eda4/. For the apology that the company sent out, see: "Big Brother (USA) 1992: Taboo Letter," Vintage Skateboard Magazines, accessed July 8, 2024, http://vintageskateboardmagazines.com/big_brother_(usa).html.
[38] Mark Lewman, "Interview: Sal Rocco Jr," *Big Brother,* no. 2, 1992. The photographs of Rocco Jr in this interview are credited to Spike Jonze.
[39] Jeff Tremaine, "Mike Vallely Interview," *Big Brother* no. 14, 1994.

relying on shock value and provocation can be linked back to Stecyk's strategies, including his use of swastikas, in *SkateBoarder* in the 1970s. As the letter from the editor in the first issue indicates, *Big Brother* does parody other skateboarding publications. In other issues, standard magazine elements, such as reader mail, video reviews, or "how-to" guides, are mockeries of the content found in magazines such as *Thrasher* or *Transworld. Big Brother*'s "how-to" guides even brought them significant coverage in mainstream media outlets, since they frequently tested the limits of acceptable speech, with one on different methods for suicide and another on how to manipulate, scan, and print images for producing fake drivers' licenses.[40] These articles often do not contain actual comedic lines within them. Instead, their humorous framing lies in their blatantly transgressive nature and parodying of other skateboard magazines. In this way, the humor is only recognizable for those within the subculture, relying on layers of subcultural knowledge as Stecyk did in his 1970s Dogtown articles.

---

[40] Rory Storm, "How to Kill Yourself," *Big Brother* no. 3; "How to Make a Fake I.D," *Big Brother* no. 7.

FIGURE 3.4 Ed Parker's interview with Candy in *Big Brother Magazine*'s third issue.

However, a key difference in *Big Brother*'s textuality is its rejection of fictional elements to produce a subcultural fantasy for the reader. The magazine is instead grounded in documentation, with articles about skateboarding competitions, tours, or other events positioned clearly as nonfiction. The third issue's feature, "Two Tales from a City," on the San Francisco's "Disco in Frisco" street competition, makes this explicit.[41] The article is printed on alternating yellow and blue pages, with Ed Parker's narrative on the blue pages claiming to present "a zanier perspective." While the yellow pages tell the story of the contest, Parker's blue pages instead depict him getting drunk, confronting skate company owner George Powell (getting him to say that *Big Brother* sucks), and finally interviewing a supposed heroin addict named Candy (fig.

---

[41] Ed Parker, "Two Tales from a City," *Big Brother* no. 3.

3.4). Parker prefaces his interview with Candy by saying he wants to see the town from "her view," including pictures of her and the various scenes she shows him in "the Tenderloin,' the gnarliest section of town." Rather than a fictional fantasy world where skaters dominate, Parker's interview is clearly positioned as nonfiction. The "fantasy" is instead one of transgression and flexibility, where Parker is able to access different spaces at a whim, transitioning seamlessly from interviewing George Powell at the contest to getting a tour of Candy's neighborhood and living situation. Further, visually framed as only half of the contest story, "Two Tales" suggests that *Big Brother* is not afraid to reveal the more real or honest elements of the skateboarding subculture that are seemingly ignored by mainstream publications. This allows the confrontational interviews to be framed as grappling earnestly with skateboarding's politics in a way that *Thrasher* or *Transworld* refuse and also positions explicitly racist language as humor or parody, yet simultaneously more factually representative of skateboarding's subcultural politics. While this clearly relates to the way scholars such as Brayton have defined the staff's later work in *Jackass* as polysemic, the extent and earnest nature of some of the magazine's racist, homophobic, and misogynistic language makes it hard for one to read it so flexibly. Even without listing additional examples from the magazine itself, it is perhaps telling that Patrick O'Dell's *Dumb* documentary includes an interview with Gavin McInnes, the white supremacist founder of the neo-fascist organization Proud Boys, who cites the magazine's content as influential.

FIGURE 3.5 A member of the *Big Brother Magazine* staff defecating in a diaper while on camera in *Shit*. Screen capture from video file.

The *Big Brother* videos function similarly to the magazine. Working within an obviously amateur mode featuring low-fidelity aesthetics, extensive direct address to the camera, and virtually no editing logic, *Big Brother'*s first two videos, *Shit* and *Number Two,* claim to be real-world documents of skaters and various members of the magazine's editorial staff transgressing various norms in public spaces. *Shit* opens with a fairly standard introductory skate montage, utilizing the typical video aesthetics including the fisheye lens, low camera angles either following a skater or panning across at the location of a trick, and quick cuts immediately after each trick. However, instead of being structured into parts, *Shit* then transitions to the magazine staff driving in a pair of vans along the highway, telling the camera that they are documenting the beginning of an East coast tour. The video immediately cuts to a close-up of the van's

speedometer at night, showing them driving at highway speeds. As the camera haphazardly zooms out, we see the driver leaning back in his seat with only his feet on the wheel. The rest of the scene is similarly chaotic, cutting between various shenanigans as the crew tease or prank each other in the van. The audio, with loud music playing through the van's speakers and the windows open, makes it nearly impossible to make out any dialogue beyond the group's yelling. Before an intertitle reveals the group has arrived in Boston, we also see a shot where the camera zooms out the van's window, revealing a red van travelling beside them.[42] The red van's sliding door is fully open to reveal a naked man flipping off the camera operator. Right before the credits roll at the end of the video, a nearly identical slow-motion shot features the same man masturbating while leaning out of the van's door. The rest of *Shit* proceeds in alternating fashion, shifting between skateboarding montages and scenes that function more as a video diary of the magazine staff's tour. The tour sequences involve content resembling the stunts that would later become *Jackass*, scenes of general partying, and also repurposed media from television news broadcasts criticizing *Big Brother*. Linking this seemingly different content throughout the video and in between various skating montages, *Shit* continues the magazine's broadening of skateboarding's subcultural narrative to include virtually any daily experience. For example, the finale is a series of unrelated scenes linked only by an intertitle identifying various partying and skateboarding moments as "Mardi Gras, 1999." In one scene, the magazine staff record themselves binge drinking while wearing only diapers, then documenting their resulting urination and, living up to the video's title, defecation (fig. 3.5). Another scene simply replays an evening news broadcast criticizing the magazine's content and arguing it constitutes obscenity.

---

[42] *Big Brother*'s videos make use of simple intertitles and lower-thirds to identify locations on the tour or members of the group (whether skaters, stunt performers, strangers, magazine editors, etc). These appear in a standard white, lowercase Helvetica font. The *Jackass* franchise has always introduced its skits and cast members in the exact same font.

Even without editing the broadcast at all, the video reframes it as an element of subcultural textuality, incorporating the clips in between scenes of skateboarding or partying. This ultimately reenforces the forbidden and transgressive nature of the rest of the video, reminding the viewer that being part of the skateboarding subculture means offending others and breaking the rules no matter what. As with the magazine, this subcultural narrative is positioned as grounded in reality, rather than incorporating fictional elements.

Bam Margera's *CKY* videos feature a similar mix of aesthetics, incorporating skate video elements while also functioning within the home mode and documenting various skits or pranks as crucial parts of the skateboarding subculture. However, one of the bigger shifts with *CKY* is that Margera and his castmates (most of whom are simply his friends and only a few–Margera himself as well as Kerry Getz and Mike Maldonado–are professional skateboarders or skateboarders at all) are not explicitly connected to a skateboarding company or publication. The only sponsor referenced in the video is in the title at the very beginning, when the video is presented by "Landspeed," a subsidiary of Toy Machine, Margera's sponsor during the video's production. Some of Margera's comments in various interviews, such as a July 2001 issue of *Big Brother,* suggest that Toy Machine and Landspeed were involved in *CKY*'s distribution, but he does not state specifics.[43] Other than the opening credits and the video's original packaging, Landspeed is never referenced and no skaters are identified as being with them or Toy Machine. As a result, the low-fidelity aesthetics and extensive acknowledgment of performing for the

---

[43] Chris Nieratko, "Big Bro Interview: Bam Margera," *Big Brother Magazine* no. 74, July 2001, 81-90. Margera states only that Toy Machine "was ripping me off for the CKY video" (82). This issue of *Big Brother* is not available in any archive (official or unofficial), but appears as text on one *Jackass* fan site: Chris Nieratko, "Big Bro Interview: Bam Margera," Welcome2Jackass, accessed July 9, 2024, https://welcom2jackass.tripod.com/jackasses/id10.html. The text can be verified by a similar post on the *Jackass* subreddit page, where a user uploads images of a personal copy of this issue in response to another user's request. See: u/bluntraumaa, "Does anyone in the community own a copy of Big Brother Magazine Issue #74, July 2001?," r/jackass, Reddit, Sept. 27, 2021, https://www.reddit.com/r/jackass/comments/pwe47o/does_anyone_in_the_community_own_a_copy_of_big/. For the upload, see: "Bam Margera interview," Imgur, accessed July 8, 2024, https://imgur.com/a/jUCTXea.

camera allows *CKY* to function even more as a "home" video. While the group does tour in a similar fashion to *Big Brother,* appearing at skate competitions or partying in more clearly labeled destinations (as an example, *CKY2K* features a trip to Iceland), most of the *CKY* series is set in Margera's hometown: West Chester, Pennsylvania. And although skate videos are known for frequently utilizing nondescript locations, such as public staircases, streets, or back alleys, *CKY* more prominently features a fairly generic American suburban environment and even rural areas. Much of the first video takes place on narrow country roads, unidentified woods, or the corners of various large suburban store parking lots. The generic setting and limited set of actual skateboarders grants the *CKY* series a greater sense of amateurism and the feeling of watching a series of private, rather than public and confrontational, moments. This is not to argue that Margera's videos explicitly counter 1990s skate videos or *Big Brother*'s in particular, especially since the group includes plenty of pranks on various members of the general public. However, it does allow the videos to function more clearly as surveillance, as they seem to document the cast's private life and suggest that these moments are just as crucial to their subcultural involvement as the actual act of skating.

FIGURE 3.6 Bam Margera, Rake Yohn, and Brandon DiCamillo laughing after pretending to eat Ryan Dunn's battle wound in a skit in *CKY.* Screen capture from video file.

The skits, pranks, and stunts in Margera's first *CKY* video bring the skateboarding subculture's notions of fantasy into the private sphere. While *Big Brother*'s videos seem to document a skateboarding trip and the group making a skate video, *CKY* simply documents the daily life of skateboarders beyond skating, partying, or moments of public confrontation. *CKY*'s structure is initially remarkably similar, with jarring transitions between skate video montages and pranks or narrative skits. The skate sections primarily feature Margera or Getz, however some captured at skate parks and competitions show numerous unidentified skaters. As with *Big Brother,* there are no clearly identified "parts," as one would see in a company video. However, *CKY* is even less structured, with fewer skits or locations identified by intertitles. The video simply moves from scene to scene with no logic even by skate video standards, making it seem like one is watching a compilation of home recordings. This is enhanced by the skits, which

often incorporate parodies of popular culture and cinema. For instance, one skit opens with

Margera stumbling out of a bar in a grey hooded sweatshirt and smashing a wine bottle on the

ground. This quickly transitions to a montage that parodies *Rocky* (John G. Avildsen, 1976), as

we see Margera doing push-ups (with someone simultaneously stomping and kicking him) and

reenacting the film's iconic scene at the Philadelphia Museum of Art steps while the soundtrack

plays a heavy metal cover of "Eye of the Tiger." In another, Margera and friends dress in military

camouflage. A mixture of black-and-white and color handheld shots depict them running across a

field as if in a war. The props consist only of toy guns and even sticks, but the audio track plays

exaggerated war sound effects and voiceovers that make no attempt to match the images. In the

scene's closing moment, a close-up captured with a fisheye lens shows the group resorting to

some form of cannibalism or zombie parody, pretending to bite and attack each other before

devolving into laughter (fig. 3.6). Other skits range from simple prank phone calls or drive-

through food orders (captured in close-ups on home phone speakers or in cars) to dressing as

Santa Claus for a local Christmas parade, which then fades into a full-length music video

montage for the group's heavy metal rendition of "Santa Claus is Comin' to Town." The montage

includes a variety of nonsensical scenes, including Santa Claus fighting a man dressed in a

chicken costume, Margera's brother Jess playing drums in the middle of a highway median, and

the group chasing each other through a fake graveyard (the graves featuring the names of still-

living celebrities, some juvenile puns, or serial killers). Margera's video is thus more of a home

movie than an actual skate video, but its connection to the subculture and its aesthetics allows it

to function somewhere in between the two. Despite its stylization, *CKY*'s low fidelity, even

greater mix of modes (compared to the subculture's earlier videos, such as *Animal Chin*), and

neglect of standard skate video "parts," turns the text into a sort of home documentary. Thus,

CKY crucially allows the demands for subcultural authenticity and participation to enter the private sphere.

With heavy use of home video (that is, video captured both within Margera's home as well as the surrounding suburban and rural space), non-sync sound, and parodic narrative cinema reenactments, *CKY* shares many of the tendencies of New York's downtown cinema and No Wave movements. These frequently 16mm or even 8mm films, such as *The Blank Generation* (Ivan Kral and Amos Poe, 1976), *Rome '78* (James Nares, 1978), or *Subway Riders* (Amos Poe, 1981), similarly mix narrative and home or documentary modes with a lack of synchronized sound and other "errors" in continuity editing or costuming. For example, in *Rome '78*, an 8mm feature that is simultaneously a historical costume drama yet makes no attempt to hide that it was filmed in contemporary New York City, Nares leaves the camera running during mistakes in the dialogue and even after scenes end, showing the actors laughing, exiting the frame, or discussing the scene. These DIY films, which grew out of the punk rock subculture, are often credited with new understandings of camp. James Hoberman states that the No Wave filmmakers, certainly "familiar with the avant-garde canon of the 1960s," move away from camp's obsession with "mass-produced glamour" to the "sleaze" of older Universal horror and more recent B-movies from filmmakers such as Roger Corman.[44] More significantly, they ground their ironic send-up of genre tropes in an unabashed amateur realism. The cheap filmstock and shoddy aesthetics reinforce that the film is a product of real individuals. The No Wave films often had no prints available for typical distribution. Instead, the sole version of the film would be shown at various punk clubs and "suitably regarded as live performance" as opposed to merely viewing a film.[45]

---

[44] James Hoberman, "No Wavelength: The Para-Punk Underground," in *Downtown Film & TV Culture,* ed. Joan Hawkins (Chicago: Intellect, 2015), 18
[45] Tony Conrad, "At Last Real Movies: Super 8 Cinema from New York," in *Downtown Film & TV Culture,* ed. Joan Hawkins (Chicago: Intellect, 2015), 27

Margera's *CKY,* although with a markedly different style and distribution strategy, similarly moves beyond the notion of low fidelity and into the home mode. The video is clearly a product of real skateboarders and their friends remixing both sub- and mass-cultural texts in their own way and in their own spaces. Along with *Big Brother*'s video releases, it paves the way for a skateboarding to reframe subcultural participation as also occurring within private sphere video *production* (rather than reception) contexts. With new and cheaper ways to document themselves, it becomes expected that skateboarders turn any private moment into a subcultural media text.

Formally and industrially, *CKY* and *Big Brother* video series are also direct precursors to the *Jackass* franchise's beginning as a reality television series on MTV. In the aforementioned *Big Brother* documentary *Dumb* and the several documentary-style scenes in *Jackass 4.5,* co-creator Jeff Tremaine describes moving on from *Big Brother* after the magazine was purchased by Larry Flynt's publishing corporation. Seeing television as an opportunity, Tremaine asked Margera if he could edit *Big Brother*'s first few video releases together with *CKY* as a pseudo-pilot episode that could be used to pitch the idea to various networks. According to *Jackass: The Movie – The Official Companion Book,* this included, "Comedy Central, FX, and HBO (the last mainly in the amusing hopes of getting away with cuss words and full-frontal-nudity)," before the series ultimately landed at Viacom to air on MTV.[46] In some cases, Tremaine even credits Margera's videos over than the rest of the group, despite the fact that network pitches were spearheaded by Tremaine, Johnny Knoxville, and Spike Jonze (9). In a 2002 interview with *Sports Illustrated,* Tremaine claims that the majority of *Jackass* builds from "what Bam [Margera] created in *CKY,*" and describes the production process as simply "borrowed" from

---

[46] Sean Cliver, *Jackass: The Movie – The Official Companion Book* (New York: MTV/Pocket Books, 2002), 13.

Margera's world.[47] In a profile in *Rolling Stone*, Margera concurs: "The whole first season of *Jackass* is my *CKY* videos…there was no directing."[48] This framing of the story, recounted in documentaries and various *Jackass* paratexts, recalls Peralta's discursive authenticity when describing the "unlikely" commercial success of the early Bones Brigade videos. It also positions the group as continuously in control of their own production. The *Official Companion Book* describes the Tremaine's efforts to begin producing material for MTV in "a makeshift workspace…in a vacant office building in Hollywood" on a "meager yet seemingly substantial budget" that enabled the cast to go "running around half-cocked throughout L.A. filming anything and everything."[49] As told through official paratexts, *Jackass* retains subcultural authenticity through utilizing the same production strategies as skate videos and even incorporating material from the original videos into the series. It was seemingly produced without any intrusion from MTV, only benefiting from funding and a new form of distribution. Thus, the series is also positioned as free from reality television genre norms. This allows *Jackass* to function as both mass media and subcultural media simultaneously. *Jackass* appeared on a basic cable channel owned by a massive media conglomerate, yet also so closely resembled skate videos in production strategies, aesthetics, and actual content.

---

[47] Daniel G. Habib, "A World of Hurt Skating a Fine Line: Tony Hawk Protégé and 'Jackass' Co-Creator Bam Margera Has Parlayed Pains into Gains, First on TV and Now at the Box Office," *Sports Illustrated*, Oct. 14, 2002, https://vault.si.com/vault/2002/10/14/a-world-of-hurt-skating-a-fine-line-tony-hawk-protege-and-jackass-cocreator-bam-margera-has-parlayed-pain-into-gains-first-on-tv-and-now-at-the-box-office.
[48] Vanessa Grigoriandis, "The Notorious B.A.M.," *Rolling Stone,* May 27, 2004, 62-64. *ProQuest.*
[49] Cliver, 13

FIGURE 3.7 A scene from *CKY* in which Margera smashes his head on a box spring mattress appears in *Jackass*' pilot episode, "Poo Cocktail," with Margera's name added in *Jackass*' standard Helvetica font, the same used in the *Big Brother* videos. Screen capture from video file.

While Tremaine's framing is no doubt a rhetorical strategy that garners a very particular authenticity, it is also not exactly inaccurate. The majority of *Jackass*' pilot, "Poo Cocktail," is in fact mostly a compilation of scenes from *Big Brother'*s *Shit* and *Number Two* as well as *CKY* and *CKY2K*.[50] These scenes are obviously edited for television (both in terms of episode length as well as the permissible content), but otherwise they are remarkably untouched. "Poo Cocktail," is most similar to watching bits and pieces of the previously released videos. Although *Jackass* features no skate sessions, its use of prominent subcultural figures and skate-related stunts allows it to seem as if we are watching a behind-the-scenes depiction of authentic skateboarders. The heavy use of direct address noted in the videos is now supplemented with numerous hidden

---

[50] *Jackass*, season 1, episode 1, "Poo Cocktail," featuring Johnny Knoxville and Bam Margera, aired Oct. 1, 2001, MTV, https://www.paramountplus.com/shows/jackass/.

camera scenarios, aggressively asserting the show's nonfiction status and claim that it depicts

real skateboarders in their daily and absurd lives. As other scholars have indicated, the public

nature of some of *Jackass'* stunts is in many ways key to franchise's politics and significance in

general. True, "Poo Cocktail" does feature several scenes where various people are pranked in

public and captured on cameras hidden on the cast members or shot from a distance. However,

many scenes, especially those lifted from the *CKY* videos, are surprisingly mundane and private.

In one, a static camera captures Margera running in his home's hallway before diving and

smashing his head on a box spring mattress so that he is shot back violently upwards (fig. 3.7). In

another, the crew put on fat suits and fall or goof around in various locations, including an indoor

bit where Margera simply falls down a staircase. *Jackass* is often positioned as an unusual or

exceptional franchise due to its obscene content and lack of editing logic, but these private

moments reveal a function similar to many reality television series, which normalize modes of

surveillance within the domestic space. Captured performing stunts around their homes, the

Jackass cast members assert that their subcultural identity is not only based on engaging the

public or disrupting their spaces. Instead, their "extreme" nature extends to the private sphere. In

some ways, *Jackass'* opening warning that stunts are not to be recreated grants the crew

excessive amounts of subcultural capital, positioning them as exclusively privileged to use any

environment as a space of subcultural play or fantasy.[51] This is a fairly big shift away from

---

[51] *Jackass,* in its many forms, has always had an opening intertitle warning viewers against mimicking the franchise's stunts. Originally, the series' warning was comedic, concluding with, "MTV insists that neither you or any of your dumb little buddies attempt the dangerous crap in this show." After several high-profile incidents where children were mimicking the show regardless of the warning, MTV replaced this with more straightforward language. Today, viewed on Paramount Plus's streaming service, the original *Jackass* series comes with an additional intertitle, stating "This program is airing in its original form with outdated social norms." See Kevin Canfield, "MTV Hardens 'Jackass' Disclaimer, Moves Stunt Show to Later Hour," *Hartford Courant* (Hartford, CT)*,* Feb. 22, 2001, https://www.courant.com/2001/02/22/mtv-hardens-jackass-disclaimer-moves-stunt-show-to-later-hour/#:~:text=MTV%20has%20quietly%20changed%20the,Joseph%20I. Some fans of the show claim that careful viewing reveals that, despite the use of "original form" in the contemporary warning, Paramount has actually removed certain scenes and episodes from its streaming service. See: u/lamefartriot, "Problem with the episodes on Paramount+," r/jackass, Reddit, Apr. 6, 2022, https://www.reddit.com/r/jackass/comments/txaj7k/problem_with_the_episodes_on_paramount/.

Stecyk's conceptualization of skateboarding's use of capitalist wastelands as its "playgrounds of unlimited potential." For skateboarding on mass media reality television, the playground extends into the home, a symbol of capitalist accumulation rather than waste.[52]

Jackass was a major success for Viacom and both scholarship and the popular press acknowledge the franchise as a broadly significant cultural moment. *Jackass* led to an overall ratings boost for MTV.[53] Further, its success was regularly covered in entertainment trades and general business press as part of the television industry's increasing reliance on lower budget reality programming. In 2001, *Variety* reported that the series' first seven months on air averaged 2.7 million viewers during primetime, outpacing all other MTV shows.[54] A *Wall Street Journal* article from the same spring cites *Jackass* as second-highest in ratings amongst all cable programming and integral for MTV's success during this reality television boon.[55] The article states:

> This heady cocktail of gross humor and dumb jokes helped MTV's primetime ratings surge 17% in the season to date, Nielsen figures show. The edgy content isn't just pulling in MTV's biggest audiences ever. It's also attracting an older audience that previously shunned the network…MTV's audience of 25- to 34-year olds grew 33% during the last five years, far outpacing the 17% growth in 12- to 17-year olds during the same period. (ibid)

With the network's success during this period, it would be easy to simply view the various related *Jackass* series as others have, as "spin-offs." MTV, seeing increased ratings and

---

[52] Here and below I use "playground" to engage with Stecyk's framing, where the environments are used (or abused) by skateboarders to enact moments of subcultural fantasy. In contrast, Carly Gieseler uses "playground" to engage with theories of adolescent masculinity, where "boys test their capacity to shroud fear or vulnerability in the (re)productions of playground mechanisms." This is not to reject Gieseler's analysis, but to clarify the distinction between playground as specific to skateboarding's subcultural fantasy as opposed to a broader theory of male adolescent development. See Gieseler, 338-9.

[53] *Jackass* is still distributed through the same conglomerate, which has gone through a complex series of spin-offs from and mergers with CBS. After re-merging to become "ViacomCBS," the conglomerate recently rebranded to "Paramount Global." For more, see Cynthia Littleton, "Goodbye Viacom and CBS: Viacom CBS Changes Corporate Name to Paramount," *Variety,* Feb. 15, 2022, https://variety.com/2022/film/news/viacomcbs-paramount-corporate-name-change-1235182825/.

[54] "Jackass' Rules," *Variety,* May 14-20, 2001. *ProQuest.*

[55] Sally Beatty, "MTV Ratings Soar Off Gross Humor, Sex—and That's the Tame Stuff—Controversial Shows Feature Leaches, Playing in a Sewer; A Foul Surprise for Audience," *Wall Street Journal,* Apr. 20, 2001, https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB987713208758822968.

advertising budgets, would understandably seek similar content relying on stunts, nudity, and various scenarios verging as close to "obscene" as possible. However, this period also saw a rise of reality programming centered around celebrities and public figures within the domestic space, reinforcing the private sphere as a performative environment space that surveillance technology has rendered indistinguishable from more public forums. *Jackass* premiered the same week as MTV's *Cribs* (MTV, 2000-)*,* a series that showcased lavish celebrity mansions, establishing them as extensions of a performer's star text.[56] Numerous similar shows would follow, including the network's even bigger success, *The Osbournes* (MTV, 2002-5), a day-in-the-life style reality series featuring Ozzy Osbourne and his family set primarily in their home.

Despite this success, *Jackass'* tendency to push the boundaries of basic cable programming led to its cancellation as a series. This was largely due to the decentralized production structure that retained the aesthetics from the *CKY* and *Big Brother* videos. Brian Graden, who was MTV's president of entertainment during this period, states in an oral history that the network did not feel they could mimic the videos. Thus, instead of sending a crew to produce the series, MTV let the cast proceed on their own. The cast would not shoot all together, nor would they even decide on any coherent episode script. They would simply split into groups and shoot whatever they wanted, sending it back to Tremaine to edit together.[57] This led to challenges, since cast members were recording and submitting segments that MTV would ultimately not allow to go to air, either because they were too dangerous, involved too much

---

[56] "About MTV Timeline," MTV Press, accessed July 8, 2024, https://web.archive.org/web/20131016014405/http://mtvpress.com/shows/mtv_timeline. Eventually, *Cribs* would feature the *Jackass* cast as part of a special episode that parodies the obscene wealth that most celebrities typically feature. Margera shows off his parents' house while Steve-O and Ryan Dunn each show off their modest and filthy apartments. In the final scene, Chris Pontius pretends that he lives in his car. See: *MTV Cribs,* "Jackass Edition," directed by Erika Clarke and Xionin Lorenzo, featuring Steve-O, Johnny Knoxville, Bam Margera, Chris Pontius, and Ryan Dunn, aired Oct. 23, 2002, MTV, https://youtu.be/0Jp_-qSlfZI?si=ihWVm9QDSYh0mdLs.

[57] Marc Spitz, "*Jackass*: An Oral History," *Maxim,* October 26, 2010, https://www.maxim.com/entertainment/jackass-oral-history/.

excrement or nudity, or resulted in arrests. The show was occasionally the subject of very public

controversy, which led MTV to move the series to 10pm instead of its original 9pm timeslot.

Viacom eventually shifted distribution to MTV's film division where the content could be

repackaged as a film that could receive an "R" rating.[58] Initial reviews in the popular press for

Jackass: The Movie highlight its ability to go beyond what was allowed on MTV, calling the

content "crude, brutal, and obscene."[59] Yet, most reviews also acknowledge that the film does not

deviate from the form exhibited on MTV. One states that its "muddy, messy digital video"

aesthetics are "little more than a feature-length version of the TV series."[60] The film's director of

photography, Dmitry Elyashkevich (a former videographer for the *Big Brother* videos), claims

that only the opening shopping cart scene was shot on film, using a full set of camera assistants

as well as various industry standards, such as "special effects, stunt coordinators, and a catering

truck."[61] The rest of the film relies on digital video. Its amateur aesthetics, lack of structure, and

decentralized production can all be traced to the franchise's roots in skate video. The first film's

perceived rawness, both in content and aesthetics, is often cited as part of the franchise's legacy

in popular culture.[62] These reviews highlight that, whether airing on MTV or distributed by MTV

Films, *Jackass* retained a form of subcultural authenticity that was broadly acknowledged as

removed from the entertainment industry's typical content and production practices. While MTV

did shift *Jackass* away from television distribution, the network did not stop featuring the

skateboarding subculture. With *Viva La Bam,* MTV combined skateboarding's subcultural

---

[58] Cliver, 20.

[59] A.O. Scott, "Film Review: It Has a Misleading Title, But Not for the First Word," *New York Times,* Oct. 26, 2002, https://www.nytimes.com/2002/10/26/movies/film-review-it-has-a-misleading-title-but-not-for-the-first-word.html.

[60] Joy Leydon, "*Jackass: The Movie* Review," *Variety*, Nov. 4-10, 2002, 28. *ProQuest.*

[61] Cliver, 126-7.

[62] For instance, in the Scott review, his calling the film "brutal and obscene" is actually meant as praise. He further refers to the "amateurishly recorded" stunts as "like demented science experiments." In his final article as the *New York Times*' film critic, Scott reiterates that *Jackass* is one of his favorites amongst the era's "crude…but also interesting movies," and calls it "conceptually daring and aesthetically serious" more than two decades after its initial release. See: A.O Scott, "And Now Let's Review…" *New York Times,* Mar. 17, 2023, https://www.nytimes.com/2023/03/17/movies/film-critic-ao-scott.html.

textuality with a more typical reality television approach that played on the rising interest in surveillance of celebrities within their private domestic spaces, exhibited by series such as *Cribs* and *The Osbornes*. Margera's series ultimately presents his private home life as unbridled fantasy for both the skateboarding subculture *and* advertisers seeking to market to that audience.

Viva La Bam: Marketing the Subcultural Skateboarder

In advance of the fall 2003 television season, MTV Networks hosted its first ever "upfront" presentation, pitching their content in-development to advertisers. The network claimed to expect a "15% to 25% spike" in advertising sales and nearly $4 billion in overall revenue.[63] During that spring, MTV's success and upfront presentation were routinely highlighted in the trade press. *The Hollywood Reporter* describes the network as having "thumbed its nose at the elder broadcasters," such as ABC, CBS, NBC, and Fox, with an "extravaganza topped by a performance by Elton John at the Theater in Madison Square Garden."[64] Presenting the week before the traditional big four television networks, "MTV was clearly attempting to link itself in advertisers' mind with the big networks" while simultaneously portraying the network as a better bargain for reaching the highly sought-after 18-34 and 18-49 viewing demographics. (17) As part of their pitch, MTV highlighted several shows in development, including an "untitled" reality project with *Jackass* star Bam Margera, promising it to document his "masochistic life."[65] Featuring Margera in their pitch for advertising executives, MTV made clear that they remained invested in reaching the still lucrative *Jackass* audience and using a famous skateboarder to do so. Ultimately, MTV would make over $800 million in

---

[63] Diane Mermigas, "MTV Wants Bigger Share of Upfront," *Television Week,* May 12, 2003, 25. *ProQuest.*
[64] Andrew Wallenstein, "MTV Presents Unified Upfront: Viacom Positions Channels to go After Big 4 Ads," *The Hollywood Reporter,* May 7, 2003, 3. *ProQuest.*
[65] Brian Ford Sullivan, "Cable Upfront Presentations: MTV" The Futon Critic*,* May 3, 2003, http://www.thefutoncritic.com/news/2003/04/03/cable-upfront-presentations-mtv-15862/5852/.

advertising dollars during the 2003 upfronts.[66] Crucial to MTV and Viacom's presentation was not only their success in reaching a key age-group, but also that Viacom's cable channels, including VH1, Nickelodeon, CMT, BET, and more, had *different* demographics and interests. This allowed the company to present large advertising groups and corporations with a way to get their brands in front of a diverse set of viewers, all with one deal. In 2004, MTV Networks sold their advertising in "integrated units,' of five-spots across five networks," promising advertisers an "unduplicated audience-competitive to broadcast."[67] *Viva La Bam* would ultimately become somewhat of a tentpole for MTV during that coveted Sunday evening block, frequently airing at either 10pm or 10:30pm on the East coast as part of a late primetime slot coined "Sunday Stew." In 2004, Sunday Stew was "the most watched in its time period among males 12-17 versus all of television, even out-delivering broadcast."[68] While on a mainstream cable channel as part of a conglomerate's larger roster, *Viva La Bam* was clearly aimed at a specific subcultural audience and intended to represent a key piece of MTV and Viacom's programming.

Viva La Bam's unique subcultural textuality is grounded in this tension where the show is simultaneously positioned as authentically unruly (similar to *Jackass*), yet also representative of mainstream reality television's standard production strategies and narratives. The series is thus somehow on the subcultural margins while being just as reliable for television ratings as series such as *The Osbornes* or *Cribs*. Just as *Jackass* builds from skate video's engagement with the camera as an element of performance, Margera is in many ways presented as the host of his show. He frequently talks to the crew or at the camera as if he is addressing another person while

---

[66] Wayne Friedman, "Upfront Looks Good for MTV," *Television Week,* May 10, 2004, 32. *ProQuest.*
[67] Megan Larson, "MTV Nets Comes to Upfronts With Dollar Signs in its Eyes," *Adweek,* May 3, 2004, 7. *ProQuest.*
[68] MTV Press Release, "MTV Cooks Up Another Season of the Sunday Stew," The Futon Critic, Feb. 10, 2005, http://www.thefutoncritic.com/news/2005/02/10/mtv-cooks-up-another-season-of-the-sunday-stew-premiering-sunday-march-6th-featuring-the-new-series-damage-control-plus-returning-favorites-punkd-pimp-my-ride-and-viva-la-bam-17821/20050210mtv01/.

setting up the various narratives and pranks for each episode. However, in contrast to *Jackass'*

low-fidelity digital video aesthetics that are key to its presentation as "amateur," *Viva La Bam*

was not produced by Jeff Tremaine's Dickhouse Productions. Instead, MTV took the show in a

more standard direction, bringing in crews and a creative team with credits in reality television

and comedy specials.[69] Margera maintains he was in control as a "creator" and writer, but that

MTV required him to submit his ideas so they could be crafted into episodes. In multiple

appearances on skateboarding podcast, *The Nine Club,* Margera goes into detail about the show's

production.[70] *Viva La Bam* episodes, each of which had a $300,000 budget, were filmed over the

course of a full week, though were commonly edited to appear as though they took place during

only one or two days.[71] Margera claims this budget gave him significant leeway when coming up

with narratives, whether planning extensive travel, destroying houses and cars, or skits involving

substantial rented equipment, personnel, or even circus animals. As a "day-in-the-life" style

reality series, most of the cast is simply Margera and his family, including his parents, Phil and

April, his uncle, Don Vito, and the same revolving door of friends featured in the *CKY* videos,

including Chris Raab, Brandon DiCamillo, Rake Yohn, and Ryan Dunn.

---

[69] As an example, the series' main co-creator was Troy Miller, who has written for, produced, and directed numerous stand-up comedy specials, both narrative and reality television series, and segments for the Academy Awards. See: "Troy Miller," IMDb, accessed July 8, 2024, https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0382501/fullcredits/?ref_=ttco_sa_1.

[70] For these two episodes, see: Chris Roberts, *The Nine Club With Chris Roberts,* "Bam Margera, Episode 70," Nov. 6, 2017, YouTube, https://youtu.be/nEO_U166pxc; Chris Roberts, *The Nine Club With Chris Roberts – Stop and Chat,* "Bam Margera & Family – Stop and Chat, Episode 90," Jan. 30, 2023, YouTube, https://youtu.be/jkSutBxTck4.

[71] For this specific reference, see a clip from Margera's episode: *The Nine Club Clips,* "Bam Margera got $300,000 a Week to Film *Viva La Bam*!!" Apr. 3, 2018, https://youtu.be/PtwDd389xqo. This number is repeated in various unofficial sources such as fan forums or IMBD "trivia' sections, but is not officially verified. It does, however, align with a quote from then-MTV Networks chairman Tom Freston during the 2003 upfront presentation, where he says, "If it's choosing between an episode we can own and do what we want with, like paying $300,000 for Real World vs. paying $1 million an episode licensing off-network shows like Seinfeld, we'll go with our own product" (Mermigas). The figure is likely not exact, but close enough that it would be used in a generic comparison.
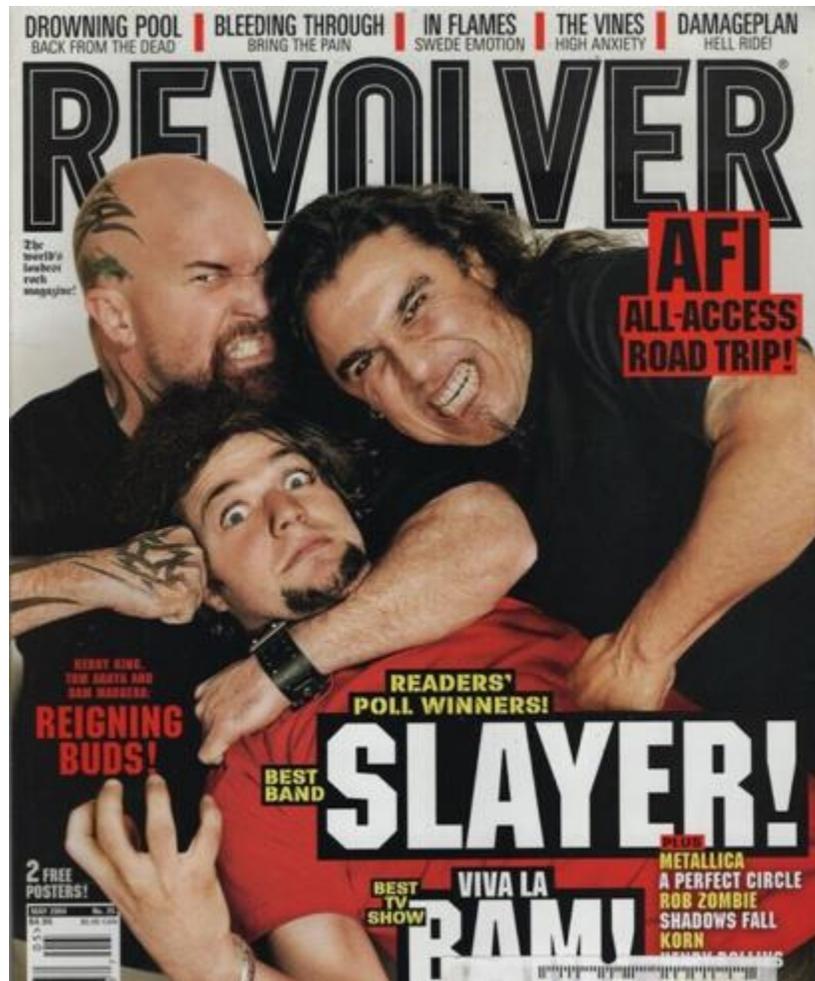
FIGURE 3.8 Slayer and Bam Margera share a 2004 cover of heavy metal magazine *Revolver.* Footage of the photoshoot can be seen in the *Viva La Bam* episode, "Dating Don Vito." Image from eBay listing.

While Margera is the show's subject, he also functions as its de-facto subcultural host. The vast majority of the narratives are presented as his own ideas of fun things to do. Margera routinely gives the MTV crew instructions as he sets up pranks and explains the rules of games or contests (such as scavenger hunts) that become the basis for an episode. Despite engaging directly with the camera and crew, Margera's presentation as in control of the show's narrative direction in many ways obscures its commercial function. The show's frequent guest stars, including numerous famous skateboarders and heavy metal musicians, appear to show up as if they are simply "dropping by" or because Margera thinks they would be crucial for a skit, prank,

or as judges for an episode's contest. This conceals the way the series, as successful primetime

television, is not only supported by the products and services featured during the commercial

breaks, but also allows celebrities to use the actual televisual text to in turn sell themselves by

presenting as connected to Margera's subcultural identity position. For instance, in "Dating Don

Vito," Margera invites the heavy metal band Slayer to play a housewarming party at his new

house "Castle Bam."[72] The band is presented as one of Margera's favorites and simply his idea.

What is unspoken is that the event was also a promotion for an upcoming cover story in the

heavy metal magazine, *Revolver* (fig. 3.8).[73] In another episode, en route to Mardi Gras in rented

RVs, Margera's family and friends (including Tony Hawk) decide to make a seemingly

spontaneous stop in Ohio at Skatopia, an anarchist skate park and commune.[74] This presentation

makes a clear aim for a very specific skateboarding subcultural authenticity. Despite their wealth,

Hawk and Margera make the effort to visit a grassroots skateboarding community whose

authenticity is grounded in its rejection of the subculture's commercialization.[75] However, the

episode never alludes to the fact that the two skateboarders were working with Skatopia to

become a playable level in the upcoming *Tony Hawk* video game, *Tony Hawk's Underground 2*

(Activision, 2004), which also features scenes filmed during the episode within its bonus content.

Despite its anti-commercial status, Skatopia would continue partnering with mainstream media

productions and at one point even had a series of its own in development at MTV.[76] In every

---

[72] *Viva La Bam,* season 2, episode 2, "Dating Don Vito," written by Bam Margera and Troy Miller, aired May 2, 2004, MTV, MTV Home Entertainment, 2005, DVD.
[73] "Slayer to Perform on MTV's *Viva La Bam,*" Blabbermouth.Net, Apr. 13, 2004, https://blabbermouth.net/news/slayer-to-perform-on-mtv-s-viva-la-bam. For the *Revolver* issue, see a recent eBay listing: "Revolver Music Magazine Slayer Kerry King Tom Araya May 2004 093020nonr," eBay, accessed July 8, 2024. https://www.ebay.com/itm/392981446312.
[74] *Viva La Bam,* season 2, episode 5, "Mardi Gras – Part 2," written by Bam Margera and Troy Miller, aired May 23, 2004, MTV, MTV Home Entertainment, 2005, DVD.
[75] For more on Skatopia, see: *Skatopia: 88 Acres of Anarchy* (Laurie House and Colin Powers, 2010).
[76] Mike Ludwig, "Skatopia Might Become Subject of MTV Documentary Series," *The Athens News* (Athens, OH), Mar. 2, 2009. https://www.athensnews.com/news/local/skatopia-might-become-subject-of-mtv-documentary-series/article_b5b48286-8477-56e9-93b1-b577cc8457ef.html.

example, Margera's wealth obviously enables his ability to travel anywhere and introduce whatever skits, stunts, or contests he desires as an episode's narrative. Yet, *Viva La Bam* still disguises how much of the show is invested in Margera as a powerfully wealthy figure whose brand is integral for the various celebrities or products that appear. It is never mentioned that one of the show's frequent cast members, Tim Glomb, who is depicted as the carpenter of the CKY crew and tasked with building whatever skate-related project Margera desires, was also the skateboarder's brand manager at the time. In an interview with *Forbes,* Glomb, now an advertising executive, states that *Viva La Bam* "used television as a commercial for [Margera's] lifestyle, good, bad, or indifferent. And the brands that were attached to him rode that wave."[77] In these ways, the series is invested in positioning Margera as authentic and not concerned with commercializing himself, his friends (whether they are skateboarders or musicians), or the products he purchases, despite that being the show's primary goal. As a result, Margera's continuous surveillance by an MTV crew only makes the show's commercial function more easily obscured. He is able to present as both constantly and subculturally authentic, yet also the perfect marketing opportunity for virtually any product interested in appealing to skateboarders.

Given that Margera's authentic persona is integral to *Viva La Bam*'s functions, his political positioning in regard to race, class, and gender is clearly significant. Textually, Margera appears to live within a subcultural fantasy for seemingly every minute of his life and possesses an ability to control, dominate, mark, or occupy any space (public or private) or identity position at any given time. Two episodes in the series' first season are useful for interrogating its utilization of reality television's surveillance apparatus to depict Margera as skateboarding's

---

[77] David Bloom, "From Bam's Skate Ramps to Zero-Party Data Marketing, Tim Glomb is Building a Better Way to Sell," *Forbes,* Oct.17, 2022, https://www.forbes.com/sites/dbloom/2022/10/17/from-bams-skate-ramps-to-zero-party-data-marketing-tim-glomb-is-building-a-better-way-to-sell/.

ideal fantasy subject. Firstly, the pilot, "Phil's Hell Day/Bam's Skate Park," where Margera

pranks his parents in various ways in an attempt to capture their angry reactions.[78] The pilot's

climax, where the family's entire ground floor and backyard are gutted so that Margera can

install a skate park, establishes his dominance in the domestic space and his reframing of

skateboarding's playground as one reliant on capitalist accumulation. Secondly, the series'

identity politics are established in its third episode, "The Family Reunion," where Margera plans

an absurd dinner party for both his family as well as visiting friend and professional

skateboarder, Terry Kennedy, who presents as a Black caricature, "Compton Ass Terry."[79]

Kennedy's depiction is integral to both Gieseler and Chivers Yochim's analysis of *Viva La Bam*'s

flexible white masculine privilege, where said privileged status is mocked but simultaneously

upheld.[80] I build on these claims by positioning Margera's white masculinity more thoroughly

within the realm of subcultural fantasy and belonging. *Viva La Bam*'s interest in marketing

Margera's life means that his excessive behavior only increases his claim to subcultural

authenticity. In contrast, the behavior of the rest of the cast, including Kennedy's performance,

April's attempts to control the domestic space, and Don Vito's anger and gluttony are decisively

marked as outside of the skateboarding subculture. While the text adapts an irreverent

hypermediated aesthetic to capture Margera as in control, it instead depicts the excessive

behavior of others (whether due to race, gender, or age/body type) as practically uncapturable or

indecipherable. As a result, only Margera's white masculine identity is able to occupy the

subculturally authentic position.

---

[78] *Viva La Bam,* season 1, episode 1," Phil's Hell Day/Bam's Skate Park," written by Bam Margera and Troy Miller, aired Oct. 26, 2003, MTV, MTV Home Entertainment, 2004, DVD.
[79] *Viva La Bam,* season 1, episode 3, "The Family Reunion," written by Bam Margera and Troy Miller, aired Nov. 9, 2003, MTV, MTV Home Entertainment, 2004, DVD.
[80] Gieseler, 348-9; Chivers Yochim, 132-5.

FIGURE 3.9 Margera frozen in a psychedelic graphic in the opening scene of *Viva La Bam*'s pilot as he prepares to enter his house with a chainsaw. Screen capture from video file.

*Viva La Bam'*s pilot episode frames Margera's parents and their home space as foundational for his authenticity and fantasy. As an introduction to the series and its typical narratives, it crucially establishes that Margera's parents are, first and foremost, opportunities for disruptive play. Their possessions, bodies, and spaces are new playgrounds that his wealth and disregard for societal norms enable him to dominate. Just like his perceived control of the show, Margera's control over nearly every aspect of his parents, despite their anger and protests, is central to his presentation as authentic skateboarder and is also, not insignificantly, the conflict that drives many of the episodes. The first half of the pilot focuses on Margera's attempts to annoy his father by destroying parts of his house, car, and clothing. For each prank, Margera addresses the camera directly, explaining his desire to ruin various aspects of Phil's daily life. In the very opening, Margera stands at his family's front door, explaining that he is "always"

messing with his father Phil. The following short montage of the two physically fighting appears

nearly identical to montages that appeared previously in the *CKY* videos. Much like an episode

of *Cribs,* Margera's introduction invites the camera further into the domestic space. As the

television crew follows him into the house and up a staircase, the scene cuts repeatedly to hidden

night-vision cameras in Phil and April's bedroom. The two are shown waking up suddenly before

a cut to a low-angle close-up of Margera immediately cutting a hole in the floor with a chainsaw

so that he can install a firepole. Within the first minute of the show, the family's house is altered

for seemingly no reason at all other than Margera's enjoyment. The remainder of the episode's

pranks on Phil (hamburger logos ironed onto all of his clothes, raw meat in his toothpaste,

hydraulics installed on his van, and then eventually his van's total destruction) are presented with

a similarly rapid and hypermediated style that remains the series' aesthetic norm. Though

Margera acknowledges that each episode took a week to shoot, this first half of the pilot has

fictionalized timestamps appearing at the start of each scene, making it appear as if the pranks on

Phil are part of a single normal day for the skateboarder and his family failing to coexist. The

various plot points, prank elements, and new characters are always punctuated with graphics and

rock music bumpers, as moments are frozen and presented with dramatic psychedelic colors and

bold moving text (fig. 3.9). As scholars such as Amy West have indicated, this hypermediacy is

key for reality television's claim to authenticity. *Viva La Bam*'s constant graphics, replayed

moments, and visible camera crew signal its nonfiction status and Margera's authenticity, despite

the series' often absurd moments. In this way, Margera appears in control of not only the crew

filming him, but the text as a whole, his skits and ideas providing the logic for the show's editing

and post-production. Margera's perceived influence on the show's textuality reinforces his status

as having achieved the ultimate subcultural fantasy. His insistence on performing for the camera

thus appears perfectly in-line with his image, rather than part of MTV's surveillance and corporate marketing apparatus.

FIGURE 3.10 Margera, in a half-pipe situated in what used to be the living room, skating past his parents and girlfriend. MTV crew members are clearly visible, with multiple cameras focused on April's reaction. Screen capture from video file.

In the second half of the pilot, Margera has a few friends take his parents to a weekend in Atlantic City, depicted as a montage of them riding in a limousine, gambling, and relaxing in a luxurious hot tub. While they are gone, Glomb and the remaining crew are tasked with emptying the house and converting it into a skatepark so that they can host a party for Margera's friends. This includes prominent professional skateboarders such as Tony Hawk and Bucky Lasek, whose appearances indicate the pilot's attempts to signify its subcultural capital. As the group begins transforming the Margera house into a skatepark, a gendered dynamic emerges that mocks both Margera's mother April and his girlfriend Jenn's failed attempts to restore order to the domestic space. In April's absence, the group declares Jenn solely responsible for the house and

possessions. As the men joke about skateboarding and test out their new ramps, Jenn is shown

removing various decorations and trying to stop the men from breaking anything. The scene

plays out mostly as a skate montage, though it pauses to allow the cast to repeatedly address the

camera, apologizing only to April, never Phil, when the house gets damaged over and over again.

Upon their return, Phil seems amused. However, the MTV crew remains focused on April's

reactions, zooming in at her horrified face and emphasizing her repeated shrill screams in

contrast to Phil's subdued laughter. In the final minutes, a still camera positioned surveillance

style in the corner of the living-room-turned-half-pipe captures Margera skating around and over

his family, Phil applauding over April's protests as two camera-operators can be seen filming her

in close proximity (fig. 3.10). The skaters themselves also contribute to the surveillance, as the

scene cuts to Tony Hawk showing the MTV crew pictures from his own digital camera that

capture April's shocked face and anger. In the very final moment, April reluctantly joins the

skaters: a high-angle medium close-up with the skate-video-style fisheye lens captures her

kicking a hole in her own wall as the large crowd looms behind. Ultimately, the pilot's use of

skate video aesthetics, hypermediated graphics, and the extensive featuring of and direct address

to various cameras all reinforce the skaters' control over both the house and the show's textuality.

Margera's daily life is an excessive fantasy, but only accessible for him and his white male

skateboarding friends, while everyone else is presented as an obstacle or other.

FIGURE 3.11 Terry Kennedy as "Compton Ass Terry" in the Margera house's kitchen. Screen capture from video file.

Viva La Bam must constantly reaffirm Margera's dominant status and authenticity. His endless rejection of societal norms only means that he has succeeded in making every aspect of his daily life fit with his identity as skateboarder who is comfortable in such a perfectly chaotic fantasy. While the series primarily focuses on the Margera family dynamics and his skateboarding antics that constantly disrupt their daily domestic life, many episodes also revolve around excursions to other cities or countries where Margera remains steadfastly in control. Other cultures and racial identities routinely become incorporated into his playground, presented as merely aesthetics for him to momentarily adopt and enjoy. In several episodes, the cast travels beyond the United States, where local culture is always a key piece of an episode's narrative or contest where Margera is yet again positioned as judge or host. When evaluating and mocking others, Margera is not necessarily shown as an expert on other identities or cultures, but is clearly

an arbiter on what has and does not have subcultural value to him as a skateboarder. Although the series' many road narratives could be interrogated for their identity politics and their routine essentializing or mocking of various cultural others, "The Family Reunion" episode at the Margera household is perhaps the most telling instance of the way only Margera's own excessive behavior is positioned as cool and desirable, while others are reduced to caricature. Aside from planning a family reunion dinner where he will eventually demolish the front door and bring an elephant inside, the episode's key side plot involves Margera's visiting friend, "Compton Ass Terry" Kennedy (fig. 3.11), taking Margera and his father into Philadelphia so they can get proper "bling." At the time of the episode, Kennedy was a pro skateboarder for Element, the same company sponsoring Margera and whose skateboards and apparel are prominently displayed throughout the series. In his own appearance on *The Nine Club,* Kennedy states that "Compton Ass Terry" was a character Margera created when coordinating the first season of *Viva La Bam*.[81] Kennedy further acknowledges that, while he got "heat" due to the character's racist stereotypes, he felt that it was both somewhat autobiographical (having grown up near Compton and having friends and family connected to well-known West coast hip-hop artists) and also allowed him to grow his brand.[82] Yet, despite their shared status as professional skateboarders, *Viva La Bam* does not treat Kennedy and Margera's excessive behavior equally.

---

[81] *The Nine Club with Chris Roberts,* "Terry Kennedy, Episode 49," May 22, 2017, https://youtu.be/OCf1SG20hd4.
[82] As with Margera, Kennedy's skateboarding career was entangled with more mainstream popular culture, including cameos in music videos and other non-skateboarding media. He was also the subject of his own short-lived reality series on another Viacom-owned channel, Black Entertainment Television (BET), *Being Terry Kennedy* (BET, 2010).

FIGURE 3.12 Kennedy leading the Margera family through Philadelphia, as "Bling!" pops up over and over again over shots of city streets and pawn shops. Screen Capture from video file.

"The Family Reunion," mocks both Kennedy and Margera's uncle, Don Vito, marking their behavior as not fitting within the series' subcultural textuality. Their excess, including Kennedy's racist caricature and Don Vito's binge eating and drinking, is positioned as uncontrollable, in contrast to Margera's ability to manipulate and direct the televisual text and the MTV crew. Whereas in the pilot, Tony Hawk and Bucky Lasek are marked clearly as professional skaters, Kennedy is identified only as the "Compton Ass Terry" character. Margera never mentions Kennedy's status as a professional, instead saying the two only met after Margera, "made a wrong turn…, ended up in Compton, and met this dude." Chivers Yochim reads this moment as indicating that Kennedy is, to the Margera family's, "a novelty brought in from a strange land," since Margera "would never be found in Compton" save for his wrong

turn.[83] However, this ignores how such framing heightens Margera's own authenticity. Compton may be clearly identified as a "strange land," but it is still one Margera spontaneously finds himself in. Despite his wealth and extravagant suburban home life, he still seeks out skateboarding spots, even in urban spaces associated with crime and poverty. While in the pilot, professional skaters Tony Hawk and Bucky Lasek add subcultural capital to *Viva La Bam* as a text, Kennedy's appearance only reinforces Margera's own subcultural authenticity and sense of adventure as a skateboarder. As the rest of the group plans for the reunion dinner, Margera and his father accompany Kennedy to Philadelphia, where he is shown asking various store owners if they have "bling" for the Margera family. Kennedy leads the group around the city while "Bling!" graphics pop up repeatedly and haphazardly around the screen (fig. 3.12), as if to indicate the natural excess of Black culture in contrast to Margera's suburban life, where any excess is artificially provided only by his skateboarding and other disruptive behavior. Though Margera's appearances in skate videos and his own *CKY* series often feature him performing skate tricks in Philadelphia's urban environment, the episode still positions Kennedy as the group's guide, in need of a Black escort or interpreter within these spaces. The final shot shows the group leaving in Margera's Hummer, where he simply drives over the sidewalk to exit a parking lot. This last moment reinforces his dominance and lack of respect for norms or boundaries, even in a space that the episode has gone to great lengths to articulate is not his own.

---

[83] Chivers Yochim, 134.

FIGURE 3.13 Don Vito fights off the CKY crew while trying to binge eat and drink in the finale of "The Family Reunion." His unintelligible rambling is captioned as ellipses, though most later episodes transcribe it as gibberish. Screen capture from video file.

While Margera's desires to skate and do whatever he wants result in his absolute control over the text, others are always mocked for their refusal to act within social norms (or, in April's case, or inability to impose them). Chivers Yochim and Gieseler have both identified the way the series operates on gender, racial, and class lines. Chivers Yochim in particular argues that Margera's "purposefully daring and irreverent" behavior can be sharply contrasted with not only Kennedy's wild behavior (which is presented in connection with his racialized character as "natural"), but also the extended Margera family's working-class status and grotesquely obese bodies (128-34). Since *Viva La Bam* is always reinforcing the marketability of Margera's status as a subculturally authentic skater, his refusal to abide by various norms, whether in the domestic space or in public, is always his own choice. Margera's antics are explained through his direct

address to the camera, and any accompanying graphics seem to reaffirm his control over the text, introducing his narratives or replaying his pranks. In contrast, *Viva La Bam* presents Kennedy and Margera's extended family, especially his uncle Don Vito, as so uncontrollably excessive that the text can barely contain them. Just as Kennedy and the Black-coded space of Philadelphia cause the "bling" graphics to jump haphazardly out at the viewer, Don Vito's rampant hunger, alcoholism, and anger are practically uncapturable by the crew. As Margera and his friends are shown eating large servings of meat and drinking beer at the family reunion dinner, typically saluting or gesturing at the camera in close-up, the scene focuses on his uncle. Vito is framed in a medium shot from above, with food and beer piling up around him as the rest of the crew encourages his indulgence. While the crew yells at him, he chugs various alcoholic beverages and grabs the entire head of the family's pig roast, ripping off pieces and finally eating both the pig's eye and a cigarette to everyone's disgust. As various cast members continue to tease Vito, his ranting is presented through subtitles, a strategy the show uses for him repeatedly and that became a commonly praised element within fan communities (fig. 3.13).[84] In "The Family Reunion," Vito's subtitles capture most of his yelling, but also presents his mumbling as merely a string of ellipses. Later episodes mock him more directly by captioning nearly all of his language as gibberish, presenting him as inarticulate and incapable in sharp contrast to Margera himself. The family reunion dinner itself is an elaborate spectacle: Kennedy rides in on an elephant, a castle wall is constructed–and then destroyed–around the house, and the front door is demolished to make way for a moat and drawbridge so that Vito can lead an elephant inside. Margera is responsible for the construction and destruction of the house, yet the resulting spectacle largely

---

[84] As an example, an internet search for "Don Vito subtitles," will yield plenty results from *Jackass/Viva La Bam* forum posts or fan-created montages on sites such as YouTube. See: [deleted], "Can we give props to whoever subtitled Vito in Viva La Bam," r/jackass, Reddit, July 17, 2022, https://www.reddit.com/r/jackass/comments/w0u7qi/can_we_give_props_to_whoever_subtitled_vito_in/; "Don Vito Jibberish & Funny Moments Montage," YouTube, Jan. 9, 2017, https://youtu.be/4mZ3jdZhPUM?si=BudSKFwUAH9VeuS4.

spares him as a participant. Instead, Margera's subcultural fantasy is in his wealth and power as an organizer of these disruptive moments, while the indulgence and foolish behavior is displaced onto Kennedy's and Vito's apparently excessive bodies. *Viva La Bam* ultimately constructs a fantasy where only Margera and other white male skaters are able to be in control.

Conclusion

The skateboarding subculture's prominent place in the mainstream during the *Jackass* moment is a profound shift for subcultural politics and textuality. Series such as *Viva La Bam* redefine skateboarding's adoption of nonfiction video aesthetics, using those same textual strategies within reality television's surveillance mode to clarify more explicitly who is and is not allowed to identify as a subculturally authentic skater. Though other scholars have acknowledged that the *Jackass* moment is intertwined with white male backlash politics, *Viva La Bam* allows one to see has such politics make their way from subcultural forms (i.e., skate video) to the basic cable mainstream. Further, *Viva La Bam* and *Jackass*' shared formal and industrial histories, including Tremaine's insistence that *Jackass* is indebted to Margera's *CKY* videos, reveals a deep connection that problematizes the notion that *Jackass* is polysemic. However, identifying the roots and layers of *Viva La Bam*'s reductive identity politics is not to suggest that the *Jackass* moment is without complexity. On the contrary, *Viva La Bam* is merely one text within a transmedia environment. The series' cast members, creators, and aesthetics are all intertwined with a variety of texts across different media forms. At the same time one could watch MTV crews surveilling Margera's private life, they could also virtually reenact similar skateboarding transgressions through the popular *Tony Hawk* video game series. In particular, *Tony Hawk's Underground* (Activision, 2003) and *Tony Hawk's Underground 2*–in which Tony Hawk and

Bam Margera share space on the cover art–feature narrative gameplay that revolve around the player documenting themselves, making skate videos, and performing *Viva La Bam-* and *Jackass*-style stunts in order to prove their created character's subcultural value. *Underground 2* is especially intertextual, featuring not only the skateboarders, such as Margera or Jason "Wee Man" Acuña, but also various non-skateboarding figures from related *Jackass* moment texts, including Margera's father Phil and *Jackass* star Steve-O. Despite these games presenting clearly fictional virtual narratives, their reliance on documentation and surveillance engages with the skateboarding subculture's continued embrace of nonfiction modes from skate video to reality-based television and film franchises. Few scholars have considered these game as part of the *Jackass* moment, with only David Leonard producing a thorough critique of the *Tony Hawk* series' racial politics, arguing that the franchise "constructs the ghetto as a space of cultural difference, a destination of virtual tourists needing exotic and dangerous space to prove White masculine coolness, courage, and domination."[85] Yet, even Leonard's critique is more grounded in gaming's broader promise of vicarious pleasure through both narrative and play, rather than the way such texts engage with subcultural aesthetics as part of a transmedia environment in which skateboarding's emphasis on transgression is articulated as explicit domination of other bodies and spaces. While the video era allowed for malleable texts and acknowledged the subculture's different reception practices, *Viva La Bam* and other *Jackass* moment texts instead seek to commercialize a very narrow and specific white masculine skateboarding identity.

As acknowledged in the introduction, the *Jackass* moment is broadly considered "over" at the beginning of the Obama administration. Yet, that neglects how the skateboarding

---

[85] David Leonard, "To the White Extreme in the Mainstream: Manhood and White Youth Culture in a Virtual Sports World," in *Youth Cultures & Sport: Identity, Power, and Politics,* eds. Michael Giardina and Michele Donnelly (New York: Routledge, 2008), 100.

subculture continues to show up in a variety of media forms as the subculture becomes deeply connected to nonfiction modes and documentary film. Since the *Jackass* moment, the franchise's cast members and creators have been utilizing their skateboarding subcultural image as evidence of their status as authentic and disruptive documentarians. Margera and Knoxville have continued to present as transgressors in their respective television series, *Bam's Bad Ass Game Show* (TBS, 2014) and *The Prank Panel* (ABC, 2023-), where they judge contestants' abilities to prank others and perform various stunts. In terms of creators, Jeff Tremaine and Spike Jonze have continued engaging with both documentary and surveillance video forms. Tremaine continues to direct the *Jackass* films while also working on and producing documentaries or narrative films that utilize pranks and hidden cameras, such as *Bad Trip* (Kitao Sakurai, 2021). Jonze, in addition to his narrative film work, has produced advertisements and music videos featuring documentary aesthetics, often presenting himself as able to engage with tropes of documentary or live performance.[86] Jonze is also the creative director for Vice TV, a cable channel which primarily airs documentary films and series, including a series focused on the skateboarding subculture, *Epicly Later'd* (Vice TV, 2017, 2024-).

While the *Jackass* moment may be "over," skateboarding continues to produce and engage with nonfiction media across a variety of forms. Even more importantly, as skateboarding's prominent figures (both the skaters and media creators) age, there is a significant trend of them using documentary as a mode for retelling the subculture's history. The most well-

---

[86] For example, Jonze has produced "live" music videos and dance pieces for both *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert* and *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon*. His *Fallon* appearance was promoted with a video from the audience's point-of-view, where Jonze's camera operation is one of the main spectacles. See: "Spike Jonze's Live Dance Film on The Tonight Show (Audience POV)," YouTube, Sept. 14, 2017, https://youtu.be/Um1Fxljj1Uc Jonze also directed a short film advertising Volvo's S40 automobile: *The Mystery of Dalarö* (Spike Jonze, 2004). The advertisement is a short mockumentary tracing thirty-two residents of a small Swedish town who all coincidentally purchase the car on the same day. See: "The Mystery of Dalarö – Volvo S40," YouTube, Oct. 15, 2016, https://youtu.be/toD0WzAbb3I. Lastly, there is Jonze's *Beastie Boys Story* (Spike Jonze, 2020) a "live" documentary featuring the rap-group the Beastie Boys telling their story to a live theater audience while Jonze projects a series of videos and photographs on the screen behind them.

known work in this genre is Stacy Peralta's documentary, *Dogtown and Z-Boys* (Stacy Peralta, 2001)*,* which focuses on the Dogtown era skaters as well as Craig Stecyk's *SkateBoarder Magazine* articles. Peralta's film, in addition to being co-written by Stecyk, utilizes the aesthetics of the Dogtown articles to assert the historic and authentic nature of the era's skateboarders. Since Peralta's film, many other documentaries have attempted to historicize skateboarding and its prominent subcultural figures. Such works frequently reframe previous eras of skateboarding subcultural media as part of their textuality. The final chapter of this project considers this complex engagement with skateboarding's collective media archive, how historicization continues to gatekeep subcultural authenticity, and finally how newer films featuring more diverse narratives and skaters challenge the decades of mediations that assert white masculine dominance in the skateboarding subculture.

4. A HISTORY LESSON:

Subcultural Archives and Nostalgic Fantasies in the Skateboarding Sports Documentary

Introduction: Skateboarding as History

1999 is often presented as a breakthrough year for the skateboarding subculture. That summer, Tony Hawk would become the first skateboarder to be documented completing the notoriously difficult 900-degree aerial rotation, landing the trick on a live ESPN broadcast of the networks' X Games as part of the event's skateboarding freestyle vert competition. While the X Games were conceptualized and are still presented as a sporting event, the original broadcast of Hawk's 900 reveals it to also function as a subcultural moment. Even though the freestyle competition timer had run out, Hawk was allowed to continue making additional attempts.[1] Each time he returns to the top of the ramp, close-ups capture his intense face while the announcers and crowd cheer. When Hawk drops in, the announcers merely shout variations of "900" over and over as the broadcast reframes, allowing wider shots to capture the large crowd and Hawk's impressive aerials. Despite going far over the time limit to land the trick, the rest of the competitors cheer Hawk on and eventually plunge themselves into the ramp when he is successful. The whole group revels in the completion of what was previously thought to be impossible, rather than lamenting that they have now "lost" the competition. As a result, the broadcast of the 900 is frequently viewed as a moment of subcultural recognition and acknowledgement that, even during a live competition telecast, skateboarding does not need to adhere to rules. The 900 was somewhat coincidentally followed by the release of the very first *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater* (Activision, 1999) video game that same fall, a similar watershed

---

[1] While this is well-known in the skateboarding subculture, it is often removed from retellings in documentaries or ESPN/X Games marketing material, which typically only feature Hawk's final and successful attempt. The best version of the broadcast can be found here: "Tony Hawk's first ever 900!," YouTube, Aug. 15, 2014: https://youtu.be/3pb8XFlRKsI?si=VUEMG-SbBJSfYGDE.

moment for mainstream mediations of skateboarding steeped in the subculture's aesthetics and narratives that had now been developing for nearly a quarter-century, since Craig Stecyk's first "Dogtown" article in *Skateboarder Magazine* in 1975. Hawk's breakthrough and global recognition at this historical moment are thus often framed in progressive terms, taking skateboarding technically beyond what was previously considered possible and using his celebrity to boost the subculture's visibility in the mainstream.

However, 1999 also functions in the reverse. In light of this increased mainstream recognition, the subculture also begins to look back on itself, with various media producers shifting from documenting current styles to instead documenting the subculture's history. This new period of skateboarding historicity begins with two magazine articles reconsidering the subculture's aesthetic legacy, specifically tracing it back to the skaters and media texts associated with the mid-1970s Dogtown era. Greg Beato's March 1999 feature for the music and cultural magazine, *Spin,* titled "Lords of Dogtown," describes Dogtown as "largely forgotten," but also an era of the subculture that's influence is "inescapable."[2] Further, Beato quotes Stecyk and utilizes many of his photographs alongside those from Glen Friedman, another Dogtown skateboard photographer. Beato situates Stecyk's work in *Skateboarder* as a significant aspect of the subculture's early aesthetic development, quoting his iconic reference to skateboarders as "urban guerillas" and identifying his depiction of key figures, including Tony Alva and Jay Adams, as inspirational for aspiring skateboarders at the time (119-20). Despite writing on the cusp of Hawk's ascent to global stardom, Beato refuses to draw a direct line between the early antics of Dogtown and skateboarding's mainstream resurgence through the X Games. Instead, by situating Dogtown as "largely forgotten," Beato marks the era's fantasy wasteland as temporally

---

[2] Greg Beato, "Lords of Dogtown," *Spin,* March 1999, 114 -120, 147.

inaccessible. When describing Jay Adams and Tony Alva, Beato similarly positions the two as subcultural figures who somehow remain in the past. The two are no longer recognizable, in contrast to Hawk's continued presence in both mainstream and subcultural media. Writing about Alva's contemporary attendance at a new skatepark opening, Beato states that Alva appears as "just another skateboarder in baggy jeans…Somewhat older perhaps, but of no readily apparent significance (115). Adams is similarly living and surfing "in Hawaii, where he keeps a vintage Zephyr-Flex fiberglass skateboard in the backseat of his car" (147). Their status as "forgotten" legends merely reemphasizes their subcultural authenticity. As Beato writes it, Alva and Adams represent the purest version of the skateboarding subculture; the two legends seem totally divorced from the sport's mass media image and consumer product, even though Alva had been running his own namesake skateboarding and apparel company for decades. Not identifiable even to skaters, Alva and Adams remain locked in 1970s Dogtown, free from contemporary mainstream mediations such as the X Games and changes in subcultural aesthetics or skating techniques. Although Beato's article in *Spin*, an "alternative" music and culture magazine, does not exactly fit within the skateboarding subcultural media discourse, *Spin*'s 1990s publications do engage with a variety of subcultures and reflect on both their status and media habits.[3]

---

[3] For more on *Spin* magazine and subcultures, see: Jim Finnegan, "Theoretical Tailspins: Reading 'Alternative' Performance in Spin Magazine." *Postmodern Culture* 10, no. 1 (1999). *Project MUSE.*
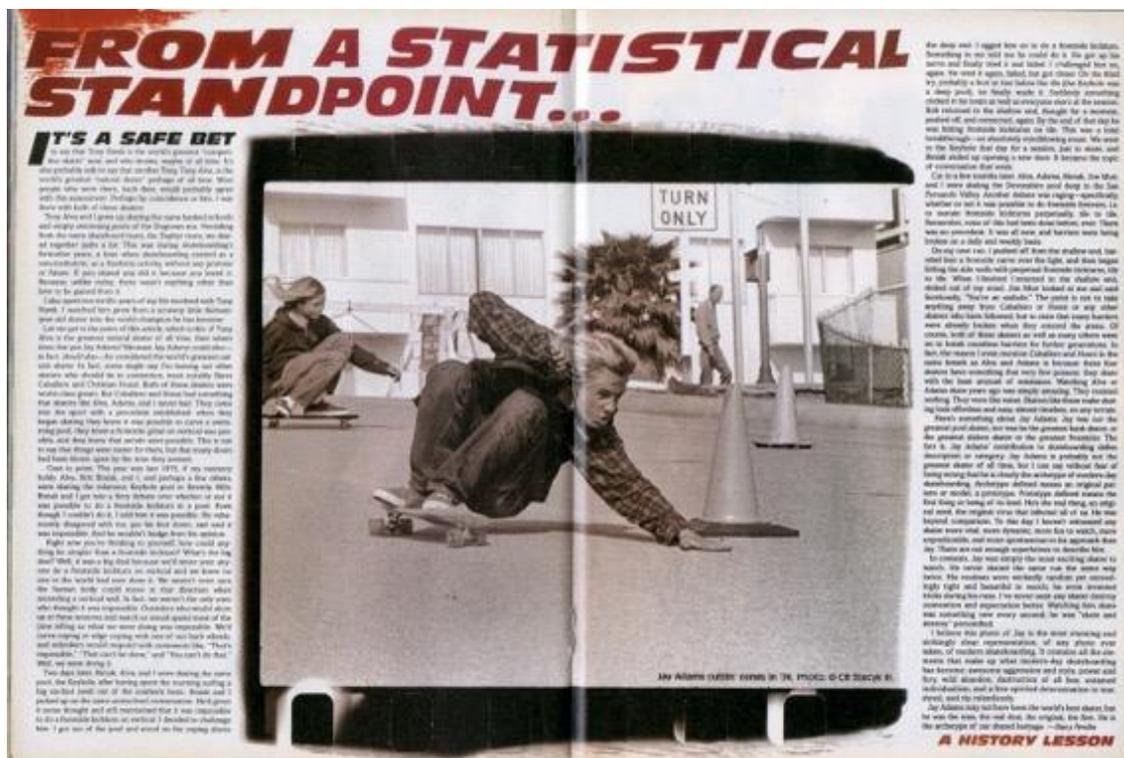
FIGURE 4.1 Stacy Peralta's "A History Lesson." *Thrasher Magazine*, July 1999.

Regardless of whether or not 1990s skateboarders were actively consuming *Spin,* a similarly reflective article by none other than Stacy Peralta appears in the July 1999 issue of *Thrasher Magazine,* one of the canonical skateboarding magazines. In a short two-page article titled, "A History Lesson" (fig. 4.1), Peralta echoes Beato's notions of Dogtown as "forgotten," while making the argument that, despite Tony Hawk's recent and well-documented heroics, it is Jay Adams who deserves the most recognition among skateboarders. Peralta writes that Adams' "contribution to skateboarding defies description or category," before going on to call him "the man, the real deal, the original, the first. He is the archetype of our shared heritage."[4] Peralta's brief article is two columns of text. In the center, stretching across the magazine's fold, is a Craig Stecyk photograph of Adams, crouched on his board with one hand on the pavement as he seems

---

[4] Stacy Peralta, "A History Lesson" *Thrasher Magazine,* July 1999, 72-73.

to slalom between cones. Peralta emphasizes the photograph and Stecyk's mediation of Adams'

skate aesthetic as key to understanding the subculture:

> I believe this photo of Jay is the most stunning and strikingly clear representation, of any
> photo ever taken, of modern skateboarding. It contains all the elements that make up what
> modern-day skateboarding has become: awesome aggression and style, power and fury,
> wild abandon, destruction of all fear, untamed individualism, and a free-spirted
> determination to tear, shred, and rip relentlessly. (73)

Similar to Beato, Peralta asserts that Dogtown's skating and media texts are the de facto origins

of the contemporary skateboarding subculture, whether or not they are recognized as such. While

Peralta does not explicitly use the phrase "forgotten," his rhetoric–directed at the skateboarding

subculture through its own media–implies that skaters are somehow in need of a reminder or, as

the title states, a "history lesson." Further, by contrasting Adams' archetypal "determination to

tear, shred, and rip relentlessly," with Hawk, who is described as merely the best "competitive"

skater, Peralta nostalgically reinscribes the 1970s Dogtown era as purer than contemporary

skateboarding. It is not as if Dogtown had been actually forgotten. Just looking at *Thrasher*

alone, Adams and Dogtown had appeared numerous times, with Adams being featured on the

cover photograph of multiple issues throughout the 1980s.[5] Even in 1999, Dogtown remained a

popular skateboarding brand. One can find various advertisements for Dogtown products in

Thrasher, all of which utilize the Dogtown cross and other aesthetics that connect back to

Stecyk's work in the 1970s.[6] Peralta is not necessarily reminding late-1990s skateboarders that

Adams was a good skater or that Dogtown existed, but rather asserting that Adams, Dogtown,

and Stecyk's mediations remain the subculture's undisputed origins. While contemporary

skateboarding may reach new technical heights (such as the 900) and adopt different aesthetics,

---

[5] *Thrasher Magazine,* August 1982 and January 1989.
[6] *Thrasher Magazine*, January 1999, 25; *Thrasher Magazine,* February 1999, 97; *Thrasher Magazine,* June 1999, 58.

Dogtown is the "archetype" and there will never be another era that matches its subcultural authenticity.

In the immediately following years, as the "Jackass moment" becomes the dominant mode of skateboarding's representation in the mainstream and Tony Hawk repeatedly tours North American arenas with his own extreme sports stunt show, "Boom Boom HuckJam," a contrasting movement in the subculture's media textuality is a shift to documentary filmmaking.[7] This includes films such as *Dogtown and Z-Boys* (Stacy Peralta, 2001) and *Bones Brigade: An Autobiography* (Stacy Peralta, 2012), two documentaries directed by Stacy Peralta himself and which trace the significance of not just the skateboarding from these eras, but also the media texts associated with each and analyzed in this project's first two chapters. The legacy of Peralta's films no doubt benefit from his status within the subculture, with *Dogtown and Z-Boys* retaining a particular subcultural authenticity. Craig Stecyk serves as a co-writer, and the documentary's narration and visual style clearly build from the Dogtown articles, incorporating Stecyk's phrasings and featuring black-and-white photography extensively. *Bones Brigade: An Autobiography* focuses on Powell-Peralta's 1980s skate team, the Bones Brigade, and the group's contributions to skate video aesthetics even after new styles of skateboarding became more popular during the 1990s. Similarly to *Dogtown*'s use of Stecyk's 1970s output, *Bones Brigade* overwhelmingly features 1980s low-fidelity video aesthetics. Beyond these examples, the twenty-first century has seen many more documentary films that explore skateboarding's subcultural or technical history, various conceptions of its key figures, and the media texts produced by different eras or movements within the subculture. These include *Stoked: The Rise and Fall of Gator* (Helen Stickler, 2003), *Pray for Me: The Jason Jessee Film* (Steve Nemsick

---

[7] Hawk's show primarily showcased skateboarding, but also bicycle and motorcycle stunts as well. For a documentary on the tour, see: *Tony Hawk's Boom Boom HuckJam North America Tour* (Morgan Stone, 2002)

and David Rogerson, 2007), *Waiting for Lightning* (Jacob Rosenberg, 2012), *Dumb: The Story of Big Brother Magazine* (Patrick O'Dell, 2017), *The Original SkateBoarder* (Coan Buddy Nichols and Rick Charmoski, 2018), *Pretending I'm Superman: The Tony Hawk Video Game Story* (Ludvig Gür, 2020), *All the Streets are Silent: The Convergence of Hip Hop and Skateboarding 1987-1997* (Jeremy Elkin, 2021), and *Tony Hawk: Until the Wheels Fall Off* (Sam Jones, 2022). Additionally, Patrick O'Dell's documentary television series, *Epicly Later'd* (Vice TV, 2017, 2024-), focuses almost entirely on the lives of professional skateboarders, with two episodes reserved for filmmakers with connections to the subculture: Spike Jonze and Harmony Korine.

Even as skateboarding becomes a more heterogenous subculture (both through the growing diversity of its participants as well as the increasingly varied and technical maneuvers one sees in competitions and videos), these documentaries are primarily concerned with reasserting the value of previous eras and historicizing the subculture's well-known movements, stars, and media texts. I identify the following textual strategies that work toward these implications. Firstly, these films and series are overwhelmingly concerned with skateboarding's subcultural media archive. They are extremely nostalgic historicizations, stressing the value of largely (though not entirely) pre-digital subcultural media forms and their correspondingly limited material conditions. These documentaries, including *Dogtown, Bones Brigade,* and *Pretending I'm Superman,* argue that, through their unlikely success and lasting legacy, texts such as the Dogtown articles, Bones Brigade videos, and the *Tony Hawk* video game series retain a powerful subcultural authenticity that is more valuable than later works, despite those later works exhibiting increasing aesthetic and narrative complexity. Secondly, just as these documentaries reassert the value of earlier subcultural mediations, they also position previous generations of skaters as inherently more authentic. Peralta's article and the *Dogtown*

documentary both argue for Jay Adams' recognition as one of the all-time greatest skaters despite his lack of financial or competitive success. Other documentary films, such as *Stoked* and *Pray for Me,* similarly champion their respective "failed" subcultural heroes, Mark "Gator" Rogowski and Jason Jessee, despite their disturbing behavior and violent criminal history. Whether focusing on Adams, Rogowski, or Jessee, these documentaries position their subject as "truer" than contemporary skateboarders. Their failures and violent crimes become merely signifiers of–rather than detracting from–their perceived authenticity. Finally, these documentaries are fraught with notions of loss and death, not only for the material conditions of media found within the subcultural archive, but also for the subculture's heroes, failed or otherwise. Peralta's *Dogtown* and *Bones Brigade* each lean heavily into the affective elements of their narratives, with soundtracks featuring rock ballads over emotional interviews lamenting the end of certain skateboarding eras or texts. Even more explicitly, *Until The Wheels Fall Off* and Bam Margera's *Epicly Later'd* episode are both deeply concerned with the actual potential death of their respective subjects. Each dwells extensively on their failing bodies, which signify both Hawk and Margera's authenticity as they each continue to skate into and even past middle-age despite a litany of injuries and against the wishes of friends, family, and health professionals. Yet, as the two skateboarders continue to age and repeatedly injure or otherwise mistreat their bodies, each documentary fails to truly interrogate these impulses. Instead, they are left unquestioned and merely part of their authentic identities. Just as these final two films are unable to grapple with the death of their respective subjects, this group of documentaries as a whole refuses to come to terms with a skateboarding subculture that exists beyond each film's particular subjects' influence and mediations. This results in a set of films invested only in nostalgia for certain

subcultural eras and figures, preventing contemporary skaters from achieving the same levels of authenticity.

This analysis builds from multiple areas of scholarly inquiry in order to reconsider these films as a group or movement, rather than isolated texts or aberrations in skateboarding mediation. Since the chapter focuses entirely on documentaries, it utilizes Bill Nichols' conception of documentary modes for considering these films' rhetorical strategies and how they nostalgically reassert the value of skateboarding's subcultural textual archive. Since that nostalgia revolves around subcultural and independently produced mediations, it is also necessary to engage with scholars, such as David Church, who are interested in the cultural politics of nostalgia and related reframings of archival media. Despite these films being subcultural texts, it must be acknowledged that, in terms of mode and rhetoric, they fit firmly within the sports documentary subgenre, emphasizing both archival media and the participatory documentary mode. As a result, this analysis considers the fairly nascent field of sports documentary studies and how these films similarly historicize skateboarding media texts and stars. Lastly, I acknowledge that scholars in a variety of cultural studies fields have utilized some of these documentary texts, in particular Peralta's *Dogtown* and *Bones Brigade*. Rather than explicitly challenge those claims, this analysis seeks instead to complicate them by reevaluating skateboard documentary as a more cohesive movement rather than isolated texts. By considering the similar textual strategies across these films as a group, one can see how the skateboarding subculture's new emphasis on historicization polices the boundaries of subcultural authenticity, constantly asserting that skateboarding's increasing diversity in technique, participants, and aesthetics is not as "pure" as these archival works.

In recent years, documentaries that challenge skateboarding's continued emphasis on white masculine figures and directly address the weaknesses or otherwise missing elements of the subculture's media archive have become more common. This includes films within the same sports documentary subgenre, such as *Skate Dreams* (Jessica Edwards, 2022) and *Stay On Board: The Leo Baker Story* (Nicola Marsh & Giovanni Reda, 2022), which position female and transgender skaters as their respective subjects. As a result, each film reckons with what identity positions and concerns are missing from skateboarding's subcultural archive and also illuminate ways for skateboarding documentaries and other types of mediations to grapple with archival absence and potentially produce new meanings. Although generically similar, *Skate Dreams* and *Stay on Board* represent a shift in skateboarding's subcultural textuality by complicating depictions of the archive, rejecting such nostalgic conceptions of authenticity and considering how skateboarding's subcultural narrative is still being shaped rather than situating it as decided by an inaccessible past era. This recent questioning of the archive and more earnest reevaluation of the subculture's identity politics has meant that some films depart from the sports documentary subgenre entirely. In fact, *Minding the Gap* (Bing Liu, 2018), a prominent film that precedes both *Skate Dreams* and *Stay on Board,* uses skateboarding not as a subject but instead a way to explore cycles of addiction, poverty, violence, and racism. Liu's film is heavily self-reflexive, questioning his status as documentarian and his ethical dilemma as he navigates his own past as a victim of abuse while witnessing one of his best friends, Zack Mulligan become an abuser himself. Additionally, the film follows Keire Johnson, another friend of both Liu and Mulligan, as he tries to escape poverty and grapple with racism both in general and within the skateboarding subculture. As part of the documentary's self-reflexive mode, Liu also incorporates skate video footage from the group's past. While skateboarding becomes an outlet

for the three friends, their video archive also reveals the subculture's inability to truly reckon with the issues each subject confronts. *Minding the Gap's* questioning of the archival absence of the very things that drew the group to skateboarding, including poverty, addiction, domestic violence, and racism, means that the film not only complicates the subcultural archive, but the skateboarding subculture at large as well. In the conclusion to this chapter, I identify a series of mediations across different forms and modes, including serial narrative television, nonfiction internet video series, as well as photography and autobiographical print texts, which build on *Minding the Gap*'s self-reflexive approach and use the skateboarding subculture to interrogate questions of identity, sexuality, history, and more. Thus, this chapter not only identifies the nostalgic and regressive functions of the skateboarding sports documentary, but also shows how more recent texts directly address those weaknesses and present new modes of subcultural mediation.

Sports Documentary, Discourses of Sobriety, and Subcultural Archival Nostalgia

Although skateboarding media texts typically operate within their own subcultural modes, these films that attempt to historicize the subculture post-Tony Hawk's global stardom and the rise of the X Games are generically sports documentaries. In contrast to the subculture's previous textual strategies, these texts do not attempt to mix various modes or genres, relying solely on normative documentary modes and narratives. Given this generic stability, one can position all of these films within Bill Nichols' notion of documentaries as part of our larger framework of discourses of sobriety. Nichols states that documentary "claims to address the historical world and to possess the capacity to intervene by shaping how we regard it."[8] The vast

---

[8] Bill Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017), 26.

majority of these skateboarding documentaries utilize a mixture of archival media (frequently old film or video clips, but also photographs and magazines) as evidentiary editing while working within Nichols' notion of the participatory mode. In these films, interviews are presented as granting exclusive access to the past, whether through key skateboarders, media producers, or other figures such as relatives or close friends. Functioning within the discourses of sobriety, skateboarding documentaries claim to offer the viewer the opportunity to learn and further understand the significance of skateboarding history. As a result, their textual strategies are a dramatic departure from previous subcultural mediations where textuality itself was key to subcultural engagement and skateboarding's perceived resistance to mainstream media. Working strictly within sports documentary norms, skateboarding documentaries are a clear departure from the magazine articles, skate videos, and reality television series considered in previous chapters, eschewing a textuality that formally links to subcultural aesthetics and narratives for a normative one focused on educating the viewer.

While sports documentary is still a somewhat nascent field of study, the media industry's increasing convergence and resulting demands for content have led to more focus on the subgenre's growing popularity. Some scholars, such as Ian McDonald, argue that sports documentaries do not fit within Nichols' framework. McDonald states that "the low appreciation of sport's social and political significance has placed the sport documentary on the lower rungs of the documentary hierarchy, which itself struggles to be taken seriously within the discourses of sobriety."[9] To McDonald, too much of both popular and scholarly discourse view sports as elements of mass entertainment and thus, not worth situating alongside the serious political, cultural, or scientific concerns that are more common documentary subjects. However, the past

---

[9] Ian McDonald "Situating the Sports Documentary," *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 31, no. 3 (2007): 211.

decade or so has seen sports documentary become a more important subject for scholars and popular writers alike as documentary films and series have proliferated across streaming platforms.[10] In terms of formal, discursive, and industrial analysis, scholars such as Joshua Malitsky, Travis Vogan, and Samantha Sheppard have pushed to consider how sports documentaries operate and how they change our understandings of what sports mean. Malitsky argues, in contrast to McDonald, that the documentary genre can imbue sports with a different form of cultural capital, allowing the viewer to reevaluate their cultural or political understandings of significant athletic events or the careers of particular athletes. For Malitsky, sports documentaries reflect on sports as inherently narrativized and visual spectacles and address the complex relationships between human drama, capital interests, and mediation.[11] Similarly, Sheppard and Vogan, in calling for more interdisciplinary scholarship on the subgenre, state that, by focusing on "an unusually popular site of culture," sports documentaries "usefully reposition sport from a site of leisurely consumption into an occasion to consider the cultural attitudes and intersecting forces that inform them."[12] Skateboarding, as a subculture, is not exactly a "site of leisurely consumption" in the way we often frame typical sports. However, like sport, it is a highly mediated and public activity, similarly intertwined with notions of capital, culture, and history. One of the more significant contrasts would be that skateboarding is not as "inherently narrativized" because it largely resists competitive structures and their associated narrative elements, such as a beginning, middle, and end, or winners and losers. Even Tony

---

[10] Sports documentaries also remain an industry talking point for journalists covering the media industry and sports business. For an example from a media industry perspective, see: Gavin Bridge, "Data: A Deep Dive into Sports Documentary Viewership," *Variety,* July 9, 2021, https://variety.com/vip/data-a-deep-dive-into-sports-documentary-viewership-1235015077/. For an example from sports and sports business journalism, see: Luke Smith, "How *Drive to Survive* Remade Formula One for America," *The Athletic,* Feb. 24, 2023, https://theathletic.com/4245028/2023/02/24/formula-1-drive-to-survive-american-fans/.

[11] Joshua Malitsky, "Knowing Sports: The Logic of Contemporary Sports Documentary," *Journal of Sport History* 41, no. 2 (2014), 205-214.

[12] Samantha Sheppard and Travis Vogan, introduction to *Critical Readings of the Sports Documentary*, eds. Samantha Sheppard and Travis Vogan (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2020), 1.

Hawk's 900, which does resemble an inherently spectacular and narrative moment, breaks from the competitive structure that it was seemingly part of to instead become a subcultural experience where technical progress and camaraderie are foregrounded over determining winners and losers. This ultimately only makes skateboarding documentaries and their placement within the sport documentary subgenre worthy of even more analytic scrutiny. These films do not just similarly reflect on skateboarding's cultural significance, but crucially take a subculture reliant on a discontinuous act (the start and stop of runs during a skate session) and eras featuring contrasting mediations and instead form linear historical narratives for the viewer.

The increasing popularity of and industrial demand for sports documentaries raise new concerns regarding the way these texts position their respective archives and how such archival media are presented as valuable in ways that are radically different from the value of live sports broadcasts. Although documentary scholars have acknowledged that sports have been central to a few significant documentary films, such as *Pumping Iron* (George Butler and Robert Flore, 1977) and *Hoop Dreams* (Steve James, 1994), the tail end of the cable era and the normalization of internet streaming has seen sports networks and streaming platforms in general seeking out sports documentaries in greater quantities and with far more specificity. Travis Vogan traces the beginning of this shift in his history of ESPN, *ESPN: The Making of a Sports Empire.*[13] Vogan notes that, as the network grew during the 1990s, ESPN (like many other media companies) embraced horizontal integration, expanding to magazine publications (*ESPN The Magazine*) and even sports-themed arcades and restaurants with ESPN Zone. As ESPN's television programming began to move beyond sports news and competition broadcasts, the network initially experimented with a variety of nonfiction programming through its ESPN Classics

---

[13] Travis Vogan *ESPN: The Making of a Sports Empire* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2015).

channel. As Vogan describes, their initial effort was *SportsCentury* (ESPN, 1997-2007): stories

of great coaches, athletes, games, or otherwise significant moments modeled largely after Ken

Burns' successful series such as *The Civil War* (PBS, 1990) and, in particular, *Baseball* (PBS,

1994). In contrast to ESPN's typical sports journalism aesthetic, *SportsCentury* "lights

interviewees with a golden hue, frames them in medium-close-up, and captions them with a

signature *SportsCentury* graphic," in an attempt to fashion "a sober, scholarly historical register"

(48). Vogan goes on to devote a whole chapter to ESPN's later documentary efforts through

ESPN Films, where emphasis on quality documentary programming would continue with the *30*

for 30 (ESPN, 2009-) docuseries. Vogan traces the series' attempt to appear even more

"cinematic" through both its design (including its celluloid film logo) as well as its emphasis on

recruiting notable documentary filmmakers, including Steve James, Barbara Kopple, Albert

Maysles, and more, who could bring their already identifiable aesthetic and narrative strategies

to their works (134).[14] By recruiting iconic documentarians, ESPN allows their archive to

become repurposed as "quality," rather than "mass" television entertainment.[15] Broadcast

highlights of various sports competitions or even segments from postgame news conferences

ultimately are framed to allow reflection on culture, history, mediation, and politics. By using

their own media archive, ESPN could save money yet still produce material branded as

cinematic and serious within documentary's discourses of sobriety, in contrast to other cable

---

[14] It's worth noting that former *Big Brother Magazine* editor and *Jackass* creator Jeff Tremaine has also directed two *30 for 30* features. Though neither incorporates skateboarding aesthetics per se, they do each focus on some form of extreme sports and the desire to test different athletic boundaries. One is about bicycle motocross (BMX) star Mat Hoffman, famous for attempting to jump as high as possible, and the other about Nick Piantanida, a truck driver who tried to skydive from the edge of the Earth's atmosphere. See: *30 for 30,* season 1, episode 17, "The Birth of Big Air," directed by Jeff Tremaine, aired Apr. 24, 2010, ESPN, https://www.espn.com/watch/player/_/id/8217b6ad-dbd5-46c9-868c-05951c3180fe; *30 for 30,* season 2, episode 30, "Angry Sky," directed by Jeff Tremaine, aired July 30, 2015, ESPN, https://www.espn.com/watch/player/_/id/fcdc0f5a-6de7-4030-9e18-11534908fc0e.
[15] "Quality" television often refers to serial narrative dramas, but is frequently used interchangeably for fiction and nonfiction content that is perceived as "better" than existing television due to narrative complexity, aesthetic experimentation, connections to film rather than tradition television reception contexts, etc. For more on "quality" television, see: Robert Thompson, *Television's Second Golden Age: From Hill Street Blues to ER* (Syracuse; Syracuse University Press, 1997).

networks who were, at the same time, seeking low-budget and reality content aimed at a far younger and less serious teen audience.

The sports documentary subgenre's reliance on archival media raises the question of how such elements are presented as "historical" and qualitatively different from contemporary mediations. While documentary scholars have long debated the genre's framings of historical truths, media depicted explicitly as archival are rightfully subject to more scrutiny, since they are often positioned as evidence of how true or false our historical narratives are. Jaimie Baron argues that in order to interrogate such works, we must reframe out understanding of viewing archival media within a text as one of reception, acknowledging that "archival documents exist as 'archival' only insofar as the viewer of a given film perceives certain documents within that film as coming from another, previous – and primary – context of use or intended use."[16] Calling this experience the "archive effect," she states:

> This reformulation of archival footage and other indexical archival documents as a *relationship* produced between particular elements of a film and the film's viewer allows us to account not only for the emergent types of archives and the diverse documents held within them but also for the ways in which certain documents from the past – whether found in an official archive, a family basement, or online – may be imbued by the viewer with various evidentiary values as they are appropriated and repurposed in new films. (7)

Skateboard documentaries, as in the sports documentary subgenre more generally, deal heavily with archival media. Examples from popular culture, skate videos and magazines, or even earlier surf films, are frequently used within evidentiary editing norms to elaborate on or provide examples for the interview subjects' framings of skateboarding history. While Baron is correct that this archive effect produces an understanding where the viewer shifts into a mode of reception that recognizes such archival material as separate from the documentary text itself and as an example of history, subcultural authenticity complicates this relationship. Subcultural

---

[16] Jamie Baron, *The Archive Effect: Found Footage and the Audiovisual Experience of History* (London: Routledge, 2013), 7.

archival material within documentary film produces not only the experience of historical difference, but also reinforces the notion that the material found in the archive is more authentic than contemporary subcultural mediations.

The value of archival subcultural media is therefore entwined with notions of nostalgia for both the media texts themselves as well as the material conditions of their production and reception contexts. Various media scholars, especially those interested in cult cinema, have debated the way contemporary films or television series remediate or otherwise engage with older media forms to produce feelings of nostalgia. Many analyses, such as Caetlin Benson-Allott's consideration of the double-feature *Grindhouse* (Robert Rodriguez and Quentin Tarantino, 2007), have combined formal and historical approaches to critique how viewers ultimately feel nostalgic for a past that is far more imagined than it is real.[17] Cult cinema parody and pastiche continue not only from filmmakers such as Rodriguez or Tarantino, but also streaming services and television networks, which have revived series focused on cult films, such as Netflix's *Mystery Science Theater 3000* (Netflix, 2017-18, Gizmoplex, 2022-), Shudder's use of cable-era horror hosts, including *The Last Drive-in with Joe Bob Briggs* (Shudder, 2019-) or *Elvira's 40th Anniversary, Very Scary, Very Special, Special* (Shudder, 2021), and MeTV's continuation of the long-running *Svengoolie* (MeTV, 2011-). While some, such as Jeffrey Sconce, have positioned the continued popularity of cult media as largely ironic ways of rejecting both scholarly and mainstream cinephile standards, others have proposed reevaluating our understandings of subcultural media nostalgia.[18] David Church, in *Grindhouse Nostalgia: Memory, Home Video, and Exploitation Film Fandom,* argues that, for exploitation cinema,

---

[17] Caetlin Benson-Allott, *Killer Tapes and Shattered Screen: Video Spectatorship from VHS to File Sharing* (Berkely: University of California Press, 2013), 132-166.
[18] *Sleaze Artists: Cinema at the Margins of Taste, Style, and Politics,* ed. Jeffrey Sconce (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

nostalgia is not simply an ironic or reactionary response to contemporary norms. Instead, he suggests that nostalgia "arises as a spatio-temporal structure of feeling," and "grounds the subcultural ideologies and capitals of film fandom by providing an imagined time and space in relation to which one's fandom can be mnemonically located."[19] For Church, contemporary distribution of or programming that features cult or subcultural films produces nostalgia for both the text and their associated material conditions, such as drive-in or grindhouse movie theaters, late night cable television, video rental stores, and more. Such conditions are in some ways imaginary, as Benson-Allott argues, but are nevertheless important elements of both one's memories of subcultural media as well as contemporary experiences with subcultural archives and their remediation in documentaries and other texts. Although skateboarding rarely overlaps with the common conception of cult media, which is typically associated with narrative film genres such as horror, science-fiction, and exploitation cinema in general, its various media texts certainly constitute a subcultural archive, the remediation of which across documentary films articulates a nostalgic feeling for both the aesthetics and material conditions of those previous eras.

Skateboarding Documentary Scholarship

As the skateboarding subculture becomes more and more concerned with representations of its own history, scholars have considered the political or intellectual implications of such nostalgic framings. However, these works are commonly reduced to focusing on a single text as an example of larger concerns or issues either within the subculture or scholarly field. For example, Kyle Kusz, in his analysis of *Dogtown and Z-Boys,* argues that the documentary is

---

[19] David Church, *Grindhouse Nostalgia: Memory, Home Video, and Exploitation Film Fandom* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 4-5.

exemplary of a late-twentieth and early-twenty- first century form of cultural racism, presenting

Dogtown era skaters as relatable to viewers because, although they are predominantly white,

they seemingly did not possess any semblance of white privilege.[20] The film's narrative and

aesthetics reproduce more contemporary forms of white male backlash politics, where white men

resist the urge to act within various social constraints and present themselves as newly

disadvantages due to legal and cultural gains by people of color. Kusz notes that it is not only

Peralta's narrative which centers this specific white masculine experience, but also the film's

black and white aesthetics. Grainy archival photographs and similarly styled interviews mark

Dogtown as an impoverished locale (thus eliminating any potential privilege) and also reduce the

viewer's ability to comprehend the different racial or ethnic identity positions of the

skateboarders, such as the Japanese Peggy Oki and Shogo Kubo and, even more significantly due

to his prominence in the narrative, the mixed-race Tony Alva (129-132). Kusz does conclude by

acknowledging the documentary's adaptation into the Hollywood narrative film, *Lords of

Dogtown* (Catherine Hardwicke, 2005), yet he still remains focused on *Dogtown* as a single text

in order to formulate a broader conclusion regarding the subculture's racial politics (132-136). In

a more recent reevaluation of his argument, Kusz laments that his own critique continues to

center white masculinity at the expense of Black, Asian, Latin, or Indigenous subject positions

even when they are referenced in *Dogtown*.[21] Kusz's self-critique is a valuable one since it

recognizes a larger weakness in cultural studies, where attempts at critique can still ultimately

---

[20] Kyle Kusz, *Revolt of the White Athlete: Race, Media, and the Emergence of Extreme Athletes in America* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 105-36.

[21] Kyle Kusz, "The Next Progression: Centering Race and Ethnicity in Skateboarding Studies," in *Skateboard Studies,* eds. Konstantin Butz and Christian Peters (Cologne: Walther König, 2018), 66-85. In this chapter, Kusz acknowledges that his initial analysis glosses over elements of the film that reproduce narratives of racial violence. For example, he states that he neglected to consider the ramification of Stecyk's writing, where Dogtown is described geographically as the endpoint of Route 66 and America's "Manifest Destiny." Such a reference does not only make the subject relatable to white Americans, but more importantly foregrounds a legacy of colonial imperialism as well as the systemic erasure and murder of Indigenous groups.

reinscribe white masculinity as a dominant subject position. Further, although Kusz connects *Dogtown* to contemporary white backlash politics and thus, some additional media texts, he still neglects to recognize the film's function as part of a broader group of documentaries engaged in their own historical project.

Similarly, other scholars have utilized Peralta's *Dogtown* or *Bones Brigade* as case studies for addressing the broader formal or political implications of skateboarding mediation, yet repeatedly resist considering the shared textual strategies across various documentaries. David Johnson argues that the way *Dogtown* connects the aesthetics of its archival media to its contemporary interviews allows the film to function as an adaptation of Stecyk's *SkateBoarder Magazine* writing and photography.[22] For Johnson, the excessive textuality of *Dogtown* offers potential for scholars to broaden their conception of cinematic adaptation and also consider more interdisciplinary approaches from the usually separate adaptation and documentary studies fields. In another example, Indigo Willing, Ben Green, and Adele Pavlidis propose that *Bones Brigade*'s highly affective interviews "embody flexible and overlapping formations of hyper to alternative masculinity," showing that, despite its issues, skateboarding's emotional elements present an opportunity to reevaluate masculine norms and encourage a certain degree of diversity.[23] Although subculture studies scholars wishing to form more forceful critiques of skateboarding's identity politics have often resisted this type of textual analysis in favor of ethnographic approaches, considering the textuality of the contemporary skateboard documentary subgenre as a whole allows one to provide a more nuanced understanding of exactly how these films remediate archival media and reassert their status as subculturally authentic. Further, such use of

---

[22] David Johnson, "Playgrounds of Unlimited Potential: Adaptation, Documentary, and *Dogtown and Z-Boys,*" *Adaptation* 2 no. 1, 1-16.

[23] Indigo Willing et al, "The 'Boy Scouts' and 'Bad Boys' of Skateboarding: A Thematic Analysis of the Bones Brigade," *Sport in Society* 23, no. 5 (2020): 832-846.

the subcultural archive helps us acknowledge other documentaries that explicitly challenge the identity politics that many scholars critique. These films, such as *Skate Dreams, Stay on Board,* and *Minding the Gap,* are more properly understood by a broader approach to skateboarding documentary films, since their engagement with archival media represents a profound shift in textuality as part of their critique of nostalgic depictions that temporally gatekeep certain notions of subcultural authenticity.

The Authentic Subcultural Archive in *Dogtown and Z-Boys, Bones Brigade: An Autobiography,* and Beyond

Stacy Peralta's two major skateboarding documentaries, *Dogtown and Z-Boys* and *Bones Brigade: An Autobiography,* each align themselves with the textual strategies and material affordances of skateboarding's subcultural media archive. Peralta's films do not merely adapt or remediate early eras of skateboard media, but actually situate themselves as part of the past. *Dogtown* and *Bones Brigade* foreground the materiality of their respective media subjects and assert their value over newer and more contemporary forms by adopting those aesthetics within the documentary film text. For *Dogtown,* this means extensive utilization of the aesthetics and narratives from Stecyk's Dogtown articles. The documentary's black-and-white cinematography places its interview subjects in similarly gritty settings meant to evoke Stecyk's imagined fantasy wasteland of Dogtown. Further, by utilizing Stecyk's photography and writing, the film claims spatiotemporal access to the imagined Dogtown, grounding its subcultural authenticity in a time and space that bears no resemblance to contemporary depictions of the skateboarding subculture in new mediations, such as the X Games or the various texts of the early *Jackass* moment. Similarly, *Bones Brigade* not only features extensive clips from the Bones Brigade videos, but

also embraces those low-fidelity video aesthetics within the documentary itself. Rather than placing its subjects in a Dogtown-style wasteland, *Bones Brigade*'s interviews take place in a studio filled with the material elements of 1980s skate video culture. Elaborately arranged skateboards, cathode-ray-tube (CRT) televisions, and props from various Bones Brigade videos fill the spaces behind each subject, forming an idealized version of 1980s skate video reception practices. Surrounded by carefully positioned material symbols of skate identity, the members of the Bones Brigade represent not just themselves, but a broader fantasy of perfectly authentic skateboarders. As a result, each of these films evoke David Church's notion of nostalgia as a spatiotemporal structure of feeling. Positioning themselves in the past, *Dogtown* and *Bones Brigade* reassert the values of these subcultural media texts and their material, spatial, and temporal structures. In contrast, more contemporary mediations are positioned as lacking the extensive material affordances of the subculture's earlier eras. The difficulties in being able to produce and accumulate these media objects, such as physical issues of *Skateboarder Magazine* or the early Bones Brigade videotapes, signal that such texts contribute far more to one's subculturally authentic identity position when compared to more easily producible and accessible contemporary media.

Peralta and Stecyk's narrative for *Dogtown* situates the skaters as subcultural heroes of a unique historical moment that could never be replicated in any other time or place. Much has been made about the Dogtown era's geographic and historic specificity; the era's skaters had access to both schoolyards built into canyon hillsides and, as a result of California's mid-1970s draughts, empty swimming pools throughout the Los Angeles area.[24] This is key context for the development of a surf-influenced style that eventually led to far more technical forms of vertical

---

[24] Lorne Platt, "Rhythms of Urban Space: Skateboarding the Canyons, Plains, and Asphalt-Banked Schoolyards of Coastal Los Angeles in the 1970s," *Mobilities* 13 no. 6 (2018), 825-843.

skateboarding. However, *Dogtown*'s narrative goes beyond that when situating the skaters'

domination over the apparent wastelands of Venice and Santa Monica. As Kusz notes, one of the

first scenes in *Dogtown* locates the skateboarding subculture's origins by connecting it to the

concept of manifest destiny. The film's immediate post-title card voiceover, delivered by Sean

Penn, states dramatically: "There is a place where America's manifest destiny collides into the

Pacific Ocean. A place where the fabled Route 66, the roadway of American dreams, terminates.

This is Dogtown." Kusz claims that this racialized narrative not only centers white masculinity,

but also positions the subculture's origins as building from the systemic genocide of Indigenous

peoples and other bodies of color. These subcultural origins are even more specifically located in

a "secret" locals-only surf spot situated amongst the rubble of the Pacific Ocean Park pier. The

voiceover describes it as "a place where pyromaniacs, junkies, artists, and surfers could excel in

symbiotic disharmony." This frames the subculture as part of both a historical concept and a set

of contexts not reproducible in the contemporary moment. Immediately after establishing

Dogtown as the place where American dreams and manifest destiny "terminate," a black-and-

white photograph depicts a young skateboarder on a garbage laden street. Peralta and Stecyk's

Dogtown, where various misfit groups "excel in symbiotic disharmony," exists only in a past

where skateboarders and surfers were forced to adapt to destroyed and desolate environments.

Many of Stecyk's original lines from his *Skateboarder* articles appear throughout the

documentary, positioning the skaters as "urban guerillas" and depicting their vigilante-style

search for new skate spots that could push the subculture forward. Rather than emphasize the

many affordances of the area's geography and economy, the narrative instead foregrounds

Dogtown's roots in the lack of any opportunity in terms of the American dream, skateboarding,

or general socioeconomic mobility. [25] As the documentary tells it, the group seems to rise directly

from the rubbles of the Pacific Ocean Park pier, dominating a landscape abandoned by capitalism

and achieving an extremely narrow articulation of the American dream at a time when it seemed

to be, according to this particular narrative, crumbling.

FIGURE 4.2 Tony Alva's interview in *Dogtown and Z-Boys*. Screen capture from video file.

Beyond its narrative, *Dogtown*'s formal elements go to great lengths to not only

remediate Stecyk's photography aesthetics, but actually attempt to situate the documentary itself

as part of the past. The film utilizes a standard aspect ratio, giving it a low-budget look that

embraces a nostalgia for past media formats, such as skate videos or earlier eras of independent

cinema. The Dogtown skaters and mediators interviewed in the present, have obviously aged.

---

[25] This particular area of Venice Beach may have been impoverished, but the skaters did have access to the numerous opportunities afforded by the Los Angeles-centered film and television industries. As the first chapter of this project shows, some of Stecyk's original Dogtown articles even engage with the fact that the skaters were immediately offered walk-on and cameo roles in film and television texts. See: Craig Stecyk (John Smythe), "Fisheyed Freaks and Long Dogs with Short Tales," *SkateBoarder Magazine*, June 1976, 52-7.

However, shot in black-and-white against gritty urban settings, they appear to remain in the Dogtown Stecyk captured in the 1970s.[26] Peralta and Nathan Pratt each stand in front of nondescript buildings that look potentially abandoned. Tony Alva sits in a yard with a blank wall behind him, as if he is still inhabiting the secret backyard pool skate spots that the crew are depicted searching for in Stecyk's articles (fig 4.2).[27] Nearly three decades after the Dogtown era, the skaters still seem to exist in the same wasteland they were able to dominate, as if time and space remain, for them at least, eternally on pause. Jay Adams articulates this in a soundbite during the film's opening montage, describing his life as "summer vacation for about twenty years," a line that Peralta would eventually incorporate into the *Lords of Dogtown* Hollywood narrative adaptation, on which he served as screenwriter. Beyond their visuals, *Dogtown*'s interviews are conducted with a constructed casual atmosphere. At multiple points, including the opening montage, subjects laugh and tell Peralta (whose voice as the interviewer is audible in most cases, save for his own) when his questions are inadequate or when he is not understanding their answers. In a climactic scene in which Jay Adams–who was incarcerated during filming– describes mistakes he has made since the 1970s, he mocks Peralta's follow-up question by saying he "kinda just did" give his answer, and the scene lingers as the two of them awkwardly laugh. Even Sean Penn's narration, which was praised in mainstream reviews of the film, features stumbles or coughs at various moments.[28] Not only does Penn's flawed performance add to the film's casual atmosphere, the subjects at once more mature and reflective yet with the same childhood attitudes in the same locations, but it also connects to a nostalgic element of his

---

[26] Stecyk's own interview is notably one of the few in color. He appears in a junkyard surrounded by rusted automobile bodies. Even though he is shot in color, he too seems to still exist in the desolate environment of 1970s Dogtown.

[27] The end of the film makes this explicit. As intertitles and contemporary film or photography state what the Dogtown skaters are currently doing, Alva's reads: "He has two children. He skates pools every day."

[28] Duane Bygre, "Dogtown and Z-Boys,' THR's 2001 Sundance Film Festival Review," *The Hollywood Reporter,* Jan. 19, 2024, https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/movies/movie-news/dogtown-and-z-boys-review-1235792787/.

star text. Nearly all reviews of the documentary note that Penn's performance recalls his role as the stoner in *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* (Amy Heckerling, 1982), specifically referencing his "slangy" delivery and "iconic weight" of his *Fast Times* character.[29] It is significant that even Penn, who is obviously not a Dogtown skater, is described in such nostalgic terms, emphasizing his place in the canon rather than his contemporary subcultural capital and political activism.

FIGURE 4.3 Henry Rollins describing *Skateboarder Magazine* in *Dogtown and Z-Boys.* Screen capture from video file.

The depiction of Stecyk's Dogtown articles themselves emphasize their physicality, going beyond their narratives and aesthetics to clarify it is their exclusive material nature and archival status that grants the articles significance in shaping skateboarding's subcultural narrative. The film's segment on the Dogtown articles notably includes a wider range of interview subjects,

---

[29] Stephen Holden, "Film Review; Skating on Top of the World During an Endless Summer," *New York Times,* Apr. 26, 2002, https://www.nytimes.com/2002/04/26/movies/film-review-skating-on-top-of-the-world-during-an-endless-summer.html; Dennis Harvey, "Dogtown and Z-Boys: Skateboard Docu Off Track," *Variety,* Feb. 12-18, 2001, 35. *ProQuest.*

including non-Dogtown skateboarders such as Tony Hawk and figures with broader subcultural

capital, such as punk singer and writer Henry Rollins. Rollins is framed in medium close-up in

front of a cluttered bookcase with books and compact disc jewel cases (fig. 4.3). He describes his

teenage self anxiously waiting for each month's *Skateboarder* in order to live "vicariously"

through Stecyk's articles. As he does so, his hands mimic turning page after page of the physical

magazine, explaining its significance for someone not in Dogtown or California at all, but rather

"three thousand miles away in a town that had snow." Rollins' framing, descriptions, and

emphatic hand gestures all foreground the importance of material media in the early days of the

skateboarding subculture. That the East coast Rollins seems to have had no other skate media

other than a southern California-based magazine only enhances the subcultural authenticity of

Stecyk's work in *Skateboarder,* positioning it as bold, progressive, and exclusive in a way that

contemporary audiences–who live in a world where the X Games airs on national television and

Tony Hawk's video games are available at every major retailer–could seemingly never

understand. As Rollins and others praise Stecyk's work, the film features scans of *Skateboarder.*

While *Dogtown* obviously focuses more on Stecyk's articles, it includes the magazine's covers as

well. The 1970s classic rock soundtrack and interviews play over a rapid sequence of

Skateboarder covers and sections from the Dogtown articles. Rather than a typical slow camera

movement, as one sees in documentaries that utilize techniques such as the Ken Burns effect,

Peralta's film rushes over the magazine's pages. Fast and repeating pans or zooms present the

aesthetics and physical nature of the magazine as excessive and overwhelming. Pages are turned

or quickly slid out of the frame, as endless photographs, nearly all by Stecyk, rush past the

viewer. It as if the contemporary viewer is being told they cannot comprehend the articles'

material function and excessive subcultural significance during this historical moment. Taken

together with the narrative, these formal elements show that *Dogtown* embraces the 1970s era of the subculture so thoroughly that it allows its subjects–both the skaters and the related media objects–to exist as they did in the past. The documentary promises the viewer a glimpse, but still makes clear that they cannot truly access Dogtown's spatiotemporal structures and material conditions. Thus, no matter how devoted one is to the skateboarding subculture, they can never match the authenticity of Dogtown skaters or their mediations.

FIGURE 4.4 "This film takes place in the 1980's" intertitle at the beginning of Peralta's *Bones Brigade: An Autobiography.* Screen capture from video file.

Peralta's 2012 *Bones Brigade* documentary similarly seeks to align itself with the nostalgic aesthetics and material nature of its archival subjects. In fact, the film arguably does so even more explicitly. Similarly to *Dogtown, Bones Brigade* opens with a montage of interview clips, as each member of the Bones Brigade explains why they chose to start skateboarding. Each describes some form of feeling like an outcast and how skateboarding allowed them to excel.

Steve Caballero says it broke him out of a cycle of juvenile delinquency, while others, such as

Tony Hawk and Rodney Mullen, describe it as freeing them from masculine athletic norms. Each

subject sits in a bright room adorned with skateboards, Bones Brigade video props and

merchandise, and a noticeable CRT television with visible static on its screen. As the montage

finishes, the documentary fades to black. Scanlines appear and the distorted intertitle reads: "this

film takes place in the 1980's" (fig. 4.4). Just as *Dogtown* implies its subjects retain access to a

skateboard fantasy space that exists only in the past, *Bones Brigade* more explicitly positions

itself as actually in that past space. Recounting their history in a room surrounded by the

subculture's material objects and media technology, the Bones Brigade represent an idealized

version of subcultural authenticity. That the group's legacy is primarily rooted in the way they

developed the initial concept of skate video is not insignificant. Focusing primarily on skate

video history and adorning the set with related 1980s ephemera, Peralta asserts that

contemporary skateboarding, as much as it has grown, cannot match the creativity of earlier eras.

Bones Brigade's evidentiary editing similarly features video aesthetics, utilizing distortion and

scanlines to suture together the various archival images and contemporary interviews. Allowing

these aesthetics and material media objects to enter the profilmic space, the film embraces the

spatiotemporal structures of nostalgia. *Bones Brigade* and *Dogtown*'s respective media subjects

are seemingly powerful enough to transcend time, and each film allows 1970s and 1980s

aesthetics and material conditions to continue in ways that contemporary media could not

possibly emulate.

It is not only Peralta's features that function this way, but rather the skateboard sports

documentary subgenre at large. Other documentaries similarly focused on historicizing the

subculture's media texts, such as *The Original SkateBoarder, Dumb: The Story of Big Brother*

Magazine, and *Pretending I'm Superman: The Tony Hawk Video Game Story,* all feature evidentiary editing which revel in the material nature of each film's respective archive. Pages upon pages of magazines or distorted extreme close-ups of 64-bit video game graphics on CRT televisions emphasize the vast material gap between earlier eras of subcultural mediation and the contemporary moment. The material conditions and aesthetics of the past recall vastly different spatiotemporal contexts, positioning these eras as more authentic. Further, as with Peralta's works, subjects are always framed in environments that engage with the subject's material and aesthetic elements. For example, in *Original SkateBoarder,* many skaters, writers, and photographers are interviewed in their garage or office, with piles of magazines, photographs, and old skateboards visible around them. Surrounded by their own personal archive, the subjects' contemporary profilmic space forms a connection with the evidentiary editing. It seems as if the archival materials presented are the subjects' own, rather than from any potentially "official" archive. As a result, contemporary viewers are held at a distance, constantly reminded that they cannot maintain the same access to the past. Contemporary skaters are not ignored, but in fact often used in these documentaries to proclaim the legacy of the archive, positioning themselves as indebted to the original subcultural narratives, aesthetics, or modes of representation. One of *Minding the Gap*'s subjects*,* Keire Johnson, appears in *Pretending I'm Superman,* crediting his commitment to succeeding as a Black skater to the fact that *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater'*s features Kareem Campbell as a playable character. Although Campbell is the sole Black character on the game's roster, a point that could be easily critiqued, Johnson's interview instead offers praise. He positions the game as, if not progressive on its own, at least with a progressive potential that inspired nonwhite and nonmale skaters at a time when few were featured in mass and subcultural

media alike.[30] It is not that what Johnson says is untrue per se, but that it allows the documentary to frame lack of diversity as a positive. In other words, the previous eras of the subculture and the related key figures remain more authentic because of, not in spite of, their flaws.

Flawed Heroes as Subculturally Authentic

This leads to another significant trend of the skateboarding documentary, which is its representation of flawed and quantifiably less successful skateboarders as the true subcultural heroes. As other scholars and popular reviewers note, one of *Dogtown*'s main narratives revolves around how Tony Alva and Jay Adams embody skateboarding's key subcultural narratives of youthful rebellion. Since they lack the global recognition of contemporary stars such as Tony Hawk, Bob Burnquist, or Bam Margera, Alva and Adams are positioned as more authentic heroes, committed to living the ideal subcultural narrative day in and day out without as much interference from mainstream media. However, as Peralta's "History Lesson," article indicates, Adams is especially foregrounded as the skateboarder that best exemplifies the subculture's origins, potentials, and attitude. In *Dogtown,* photographs of Adams–ranging from innocent child to teenage skate punk and eventually incarcerated adult–are presented in montage while Neil Young's "Old Man," plays on the soundtrack. Young's ballad contextualizes Adams' failed career as a professional skateboarder. Its sparse instrumentation and reflective lyrics explicitly engage with the contrast between Adams' contemporary incarcerated status and the many photographs and recounted stories of his youthful freedom and energy. Such positioning clearly articulates a narrative of sorrow and injustice. It is as if the subculture has been robbed of what it could have potentially gained from Adams' skateboarding techniques and aggressive style. However, this

---

[30] The documentary also features a remarkably similar interview with Jordyn Barrett, one of the subjects of *Skate Dreams,* who states the same claim regarding the game's sole nonmale playable character, Elissa Steamer.

only heightens Adams' subcultural authenticity, as if the mistakes and crimes that prevented his mainstream success mark him as purer than skateboarding's biggest stars. It is not only *Dogtown*; after Adams' 2014 death from a heart attack, mainstream press obituaries consistently position his criminal past as youthful mistakes inherently connected to his rebellious and authentic skateboarding persona. On the same day his death was a news story, a *New York Times,* "An Appraisal," column states in back-to-back sentences regarding Adams' troubled past that "his Skatopia Skatepark ID featured a picture of him making an obscene gesture. In 1982 he was convicted of felony assault for involvement in the death of a gay man at a concert in Hollywood."[31] Participating in and being convicted of a hate crime seem to only increase the legitimacy of what the *Times* calls his "outlaw image." In a follow-up article for *Vice,* Jonathan Smith argues that these mainstream news outlets–including not only the *New York Times* but also the *Los Angeles Times* and *Associated Press*–and skateboarding's subcultural media either rhetorically minimize Adams' assault conviction or neglect to mention it entirely.[32] Smith's article also includes excerpts from Keith David Hamm's *Scarred for Life: Eleven Stories about Skateboarders,* which clarifies details of the assault, noting that the two victims were a mixed-race homosexual couple and cites Adams' own admission that he used both racial and homophobic slurs while committing the act.[33] Only recently have subcultural forums and publications showed a willingness to grapple with the way Adams' is simultaneously the "purest"

[31] Cole Louison, "In Empty Pools, Sport's Pioneer Found a Way to Make a Splash," *New York Times,* Aug. 17, 2014, https://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/18/sports/a-pioneer-on-a-skateboard-began-as-a-disciple-of-surfing-.html.
[32] Jonathan Smith, "Maybe We Shouldn't Be So Quick to Idolize a Gay-Bashing Skateboarder," *Vice,* Aug. 19. 2014, https://www.vice.com/en/article/jmbbk3/maybe-we-shouldnt-be-so-sentimental-about-a-gay-bashing-skateboarder-658; David Colker and Elaine Wood, "Jay Adams Dies at 53; Legendary Skateboarder," *Los Angeles Times,* Aug. 15, 2014, https://www.latimes.com/local/obituaries/la-me-jay-adams-20140816-story.html.
[33] Keith David Hamm, *Scarred for Life: Eleven Stories about Skateboarders* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2004), 88-89.

skateboarder yet also someone who participated in a hate crime and continued to associate with hateful symbols such as the swastika for the rest of his life.[34]

However, the connection between Adams' criminality and subcultural authenticity is not an outlier. On the contrary, the flawed subcultural hero is a key element of the skateboarding sports documentary. Following *Dogtown,* two independent documentaries trace other skateboarders with disturbing criminal pasts. These films, *Stoked: The Rise and Fall of Gator* and *Pray for Me: The Jason Jessee Film,* each claim to represent flawed skateboarders whose criminality only enhances their subcultural authenticity. *Stoked* covers the history of Mark "Gator" Rogowski, a former professional skateboarder currently serving a life-sentence for a rape and murder he committed in the 1990s. *Pray for Me* follows the complicated life story of another former professional, Jason Jessee, whose controversies range from various arrests due to erratic behavior, car theft, and gun possession, to racist and homophobic interview rants. In contrast to *Dogtown,* neither *Stoked* nor *Pray for Me* shy away from Gator or Jessee's convictions and behavior. However, these documentaries still refuse to interrogate these issues. Instead, they each are centered around the skateboarding subculture's loss of these two stars. Their crimes and apparent mental illness become things to mourn only because it means the subculture can no longer benefit from their skating.

Stoked begins, as Peralta does with *Bones Brigade,* with the skateboarding subculture's return to economic success in the mid-1980s. Gator's 1980s career as a sponsored vert skateboarder is the center of the story, and interviews and archival videos go to great lengths to

---

[34] "Jay Adams: The Freestyle and Vert Skateboarding Pioneer," Surfer Today, accessed July 10, 2024. https://www.surfertoday.com/skateboarding/jay-adams-the-freestyle-and-vert-skateboarding-pioneer. Searching skateboarding subcultural forums, such as SLAP, will show that Adams' name crops up repeatedly in online debates regarding the subculture's politics. Many users will consistently point to Adams as an earnest racist, identifying his "skate Nazi" swastika adorned board model and his "100% skateboarding tattoo" where the four connected skateboards somewhat obviously form a swastika. Adams' tattoo is visible in one image from the *Surfer Today* piece. For a forum example, see: mr cheese, "Racist Skaters," Useless Wooden Toy Banter, SLAP, Apr. 26, 2014, https://www.slapmagazine.com/index.php?topic=77709.0.

argue that he was just as technically influential as his more successful peers. Just as *Dogtown* positions Adams' mistakes as examples of simply too much partying and success gone to his head, Stickler's *Stoked* frames Gator's 1980s fame as his worst enemy. While the Bones Brigade were making their videos that remain canonical examples of endemic skateboarding media with a textuality that acknowledged subculture's reception practices, Gator instead became sponsored by a more mainstream apparel company, Vision Street Wear. The interviews clarify that this was the beginning of Gator's downfall, as Vision was not seen as endemic to the skateboarding subculture. Tony Hawk, Stacy Peralta, and others repeatedly state that Vision products were not restricted to skate shops, but actually more prominent at mainstream stores and mall outlets, indicating the brand's inauthenticity. After the skateboarding market takes a brief plummet in the early-1990s, Gator's involvement with Vision is reinforced as part of his career missteps, despite the fact that even the most successful skaters were facing similar financial challenges at the same time.[35] As various interviews recount Gator's struggles, archival videos depict him not in any sort of financial ruin, but instead as a decisively uncool skateboarder. Gator fails repeatedly at 1990s street style skateboarding, and the interviews clarify that his failure is grounded in his seemingly uncool aesthetic, rather than poor technique (even though the viewer does see him failing to land street style tricks). At the time, Vision's style was rooted in bright colors and exaggerated designs that resembled mainstream 1980s aesthetics. Such colors are drastically different from the simple (and often dark) shirts or plain baggy denim jeans visible in 1990s

---

[35] A commonly repeated anecdote in *Bones Brigade, Until the Wheels Fall Off,* and virtually any history featuring Tony Hawk is that he had to take entry-level video editing freelance jobs to pay his bills during this time, which clarifies that even the most successful skater of all time was in a major financial bind. You can see an example of Hawk's video editing in a promotional video for the game, *Lords of Thunder* (Turbo Technologies, 1993, 1995): "Lords of Thunder Turbografx-16 Promo :: VHS Tape (1080p / 60 FPS) – Video Game B-Roll," YouTube, Mar. 26, 2016, https://youtu.be/-bTcDO0Ab2A?si=RKL_HXzNbC0WAyTB. See Hawk's tweet in response to users asking if he really edited this: Tony Hawk (tonyhawk), "@gamesack holy crap, yes I did." Twitter, reply, Mar. 16, 2017, 8:22pm, https://twitter.com/tonyhawk/status/842531647958339584?s=61&t=7IlSvB_GhiBiBN51Ud55eA.

skateboarding subcultural texts, such as *Video Days* (Spike Jonze, 1991). Even as the timeline moves into the 1990s, Gator's numerous 1980s Vision advertisements and MTV appearances continue to be displayed in montage, as if context for his overindulgence in mainstream media (that Peralta appears as part of the broadcast team in one of these clips is not mentioned). This directly contrasts with *Dogtown,* where a section clarifies the Zephyr-sponsored skaters looked anti-mainstream and all wore simple sponsor shirts and blue Vans skate shoes. As some have noted, Vans were the primary funders of Peralta's documentary.[36] Although today, both companies are part of large conglomerates, Vans maintains considerable discursive authenticity within the skateboarding subculture while still selling many of their original shoe designs from the 1970s. It is not that Gator was wrong to continue using the aesthetics and apparel from a previous era, just that he seems to have done so incorrectly by attaching himself to a brand that fails to garner the same sense of subcultural nostalgia.

As Stickler's documentary moves from Gator's skateboarding career to his eventual rape and murder of Jessica Bergstein, the best friend of a woman Gator had recently broken up with, the film allows him to retain control of the narrative. Although the contemporary Gator does not appear visually in the film, he speaks throughout via phone interview. The documentary opens with a montage of archival material as a recording states instructions for receiving a call from an incarcerated individual before Gator begins speaking. His interview is delivered in a calm and measured tone, reflecting on his past and repeatedly offering remorse or explanations for his mistakes, ranging from the perceived "uncool" Vision advertisements to his actual crimes. As skateboarding's subcultural archive fades out of focus in favor of crime scene photography, news footage, and court room recordings or sketches, Gator's reflective and apologetic tone remains

---

[36] David Johnson, 6-7.

significant. His calm explanations of what he did and why, in both the contemporary phone interview and archival courtroom footage, reinforce his textual power even after incarceration. Gator's ex-girlfriend and Bergstein's best friend, Brandi McClain, sobs in her interview when recounting the horrific details of Bergstein's murder in a sharp contrast to Gator. By constantly allowing Gator's phone interview to explain the images the viewer sees, the film reveals it is far more interested in Gator's absence rather than the absence of the woman he murdered. His slightly distorted phone interview plays over the archival media, as if a reminder that *Stoked* is primarily mourning what his absence means to the skateboarding subculture. Gator's bad choices, from mainstream sponsorship to a crime that landed him in prison, permeate the film in ways that deflect attention away from his actual actions and instead towards the way the subculture did not get to benefit from him as it did from more successful stars. McClain is the only subject who appears to mourn Bergstein, and her affect, in contrast to Gator's calmness, positions her as an outsider. It is not that *Stoked* ignores the reality of what Gator did (in fact it presents his crime in arguably lurid detail with extensive crime scene photography and interviews with the detectives), but that the documentary is much more interested in how he alienated himself from the skateboarding subculture. In becoming a film about how the subculture itself lost Gator, *Stoked* aligns with the broader skateboard sports documentary subgenre's nostalgic appraisal of "lost" heroes who are positioned as more authentic than the subculture's most famous stars.

In an early scene of *Stoked* that recounts a story where Gator instigated a fight with a police officer during a 1980s skateboard contest, Jason Jessee praises Gator for standing up for subcultural values, telling the interviewer to not even show the finished documentary to any cops, finishing with: "I just hate pigs, man." A few years after *Stoked,* Steve Nemsick and David

Rogerson would produce a documentary, *Pray for Me: The Jason Jessee Film,* following Jessee's life. Although not incarcerated, Jessee's various mental health struggles, legal issues, and controversies are the documentary's main narratives and result in his eventual alienation from the subculture in a way that mirrors the stories of both Gator and Jay Adams. Nemsick, *Pray for Me*'s editor, has primarily worked as an editor on reality television series, and his work on the documentary shows his interest in diving into conflict and juxtaposing archival footage with Jessee's more concerning contemporary life.[37] *Pray for Me* explores Jessee's life from young skateboard phenomenon to his current status, where he seems largely estranged from both the subculture and his family. After establishing Jessee's subcultural credentials early in the documentary, the rest is more invested in the way those around Jessee are concerned by his behavior. As other skateboarders or family members reveal issues in Jessee's life, ranging from his insecurity about his weight to increasing paranoia, fascination with guns, and reckless motorcycle riding, Nemsick juxtaposes the subcultural and familial archive with Jessee's present. Both skate and home videos featuring Jessee's skateboarding and seemingly normal family life contrast with contemporary footage of him shooting assault rifles (indoors as well as outside), explaining far-fetched conspiracies (he sees governmental surveillance aircraft in clouds), and doing burnouts or standing on fast-moving motorcycles without a helmet. In contrast to Gator's visual absence in *Stoked,* Jessee is overwhelmingly present in *Pray for Me,* akin to a reality television star one cannot look away from. He walks through his custom car and motorcycle shop with guns in hand, afraid that he is being watched or stalked by either the government or his enemies, yet is simultaneously open and candid with the documentary crew.

---

[37] "Steve Nemsick," IMdB, accessed July 10, 2024, https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0626011/?ref_=tt_ov_dr.

Following the trend of documentaries that foreground the "lost" subcultural hero, *Pray for Me* is not interested in interrogating Jessee's deteriorating mental health, instead allowing his disturbing behavior to become the film's spectacle. Although his contemporary life is primarily juxtaposed with the archival videos showing him to be a successful skateboarder, the film's final sequence aligns the two. The documentary shifts to a more affective mode, as soft rock music plays over cuts between somber interviews with skateboarders and family members explaining how bad they feel for Jessee. However, in the very final moments, even as the documentary acknowledges Jessee's latest (at the time) arrest for threatening other passengers on a commercial flight, Jessee's friends and families connect his disturbing behavior to his authentic persona and his identity as a skateboarder.[38] He is framed as a daredevil, whether they like it or not. Further, it is acknowledged that his arrest connects to his subcultural mediation, having played the role of an arrested skateboarder in the opening sequence of the well-known early skate video for Santa Cruz Skateboards, *Streets on Fire* (Scott Dittrich, 1989). Refusing to thoroughly explore Jessee's behavior or even elaborate on more disturbing incidents, such as interviews and confrontations with other skaters where he openly positions himself as racist, *Pray for Me* ends in a moment of mourning for Jesse's lost status as a subcultural hero while maintaining his authenticity. Although in recent years the skateboard subculture has rebuked

---

[38] Jessee has been arrested more recently, but at the time he was arrested for, as an article in *OC Weekly* describes: "acting bizarrely…and 'clutching his backpack" while "writing in a journal with the words 'suicide bomber' hand-written on the cover. See: "I've Had so Much Fun with Cops," *OC Weekly* (Los Angeles, CA), Apr. 20, 2006, https://www.ocweekly.com/ive-had-so-much-fun-with-cops-6421833/. Jessee's journal is shown in the movie and does indeed have "suicide bomber" on the cover. The journal's cover and design were used as the art for *Pray for Me*'s DVD booklet and can be seen on recent eBay listings. See: "Pray for Me DVD Jason Jessee Film Documentary Skateboarding Santa Cruz Original," eBay, accessed July 10, 2024, https://www.ebay.com/itm/285478601092.

Jessee's disturbing behavior and racism to the point where he has lost all of his sponsorship, the film still mourns him rather than situating him as deserving of blame.[39]

The affective "mourning" of lost subcultural heroes is a broad trend in the skateboarding sports documentary. Even in cases such as *Stoked,* where there are actual dead victims to mourn, any scene constructed to generate an affective response in the viewer is centered around the skateboarding subculture and what figures or eras are now only accessible through the archive. These scenes always occur at the end of the documentary. Rather than grapple with complex legacies or acknowledge the flaws of past stars or mediations, skateboarding documentaries conclude by mourning their archival representations. They refuse to allow these nostalgic subcultural narratives to extend to contemporary skaters, instead keeping them temporally locked in the past. Peralta's *Bones Brigade* is perhaps the most telling example of this. The film's final minutes center around the dissolution of the Bones Brigade team and how each subject moved on from Powell-Peralta in the early-1990s. Over a quiet score, archival footage and slow-moving close-ups of each Bones Brigade member show them in tears as they recount how the team dissolved. The section opens with Peralta shaking his head as if he is still in disbelief at the team's accomplishments twenty years later. He seems to choke on each word looking down and away from the camera, saying that "it wasn't going to last…what it was couldn't be." A montage of moments from the Bones Brigade videos begins and transitions to the rest of the team similarly describing how much they accomplished, how thankful they are, and how their impact was so monumental that their collective creative energy necessitated them moving on to other companies and projects. Rather than address changes in skateboarding's subcultural narrative,

---

[39] See: Andrew Murrell, "Skateboarding Icon Jason Jessee is Under Fire for Use of Swastikas and Racist Remarks," *Vice,* May 24, 2018, https://www.vice.com/en/article/59q343/skateboarding-icon-jason-jessee-is-under-fire-for-use-of-swastikas-and-racist-remarks. Murrell's article cites both the racist and homophobic statements Jessee has made in various magazine interviews as well as SLAP online forum posts of skateboarders sharing and discussing these events. Murrell's article comes after these posts, indicating that it is the subculture itself that originally highlighted these interviews and moments in Jessee's past.

mediation strategies, or shifting notions of identity, *Bones Brigade* mourns the death of what its subjects consider the subculture's authentic peak. The past's authenticity remains locked in the nostalgic archive. The skateboard documentary subgenre as a whole seems uninterested in considering how the narrative changes, only in marking the end of subcultural authenticity with the demise of its subject. In the most recent films, this becomes even more explicit. As these subcultural figures age, these documentaries begin to acknowledge their actual physical demise and looming death. Again, these films refuse to address the complexity of what the loss of such heroes means to the subculture's future. Instead, their potential deaths are positioned as logical endpoints of their authentic status.

The Death of the Skateboarder

Of course, "death" is not an entirely new concept for the skateboarding subculture given that it often foregrounds various forms of risk and behavior that is dangerous or illegal (or both). Even Stecyk's original Dogtown articles acknowledge a type of death as a signifier for subcultural authenticity. The initial depiction of Spencer in "Aspect of the Downhill Slide"–the "true veteran of the psychedelic wars" who disappears "straight down the hill out of sight" while skating a steep canyon road–seems to praise death as the logical conclusion for those whose lives fully encompass skateboarding's subcultural narrative.[40] As these eras of the subculture fade further into the past and are frequently retold and historicized, the potential death of these iconic skateboarders becomes real, rather than imagined. Given the passage of time, it is understandable that some scholars have considered this through more general discussions of sports and aging. Within the skateboarding subculture, ethnographic and discursive analysis of aging have led to

---

[40] Craig Stecyk (Carlos Izan and C. R. Stecyk III), "Aspects of the Downhill Slide," *SkateBoarder Magazine,* Fall 1975, 29-37.

mixed claims regarding its effect on authenticity and identity. Although Paul O'Connor's

utilization of "temporal capital" acknowledges that older skaters value their aging status as part

of their subcultural identity, he and other scholars often frame this as a positive development that

challenges skateboarding's typical status as "youth" culture and combats certain masculine

norms.[41] However, this ignores the way death is frequently a part of skateboarding media

invested in historicizing the legacy of the subculture's aging heroes as a way of revising the

standards of subcultural authenticity so that they are once again restricted to a temporally narrow

group.

In terms of sports in general, the increasing research and media coverage regarding

athletes who suffer repeated concussions has brought more attention to concerns about death and

the athlete's body. Sean Brayton and Michelle T. Helstein acknowledge that athlete suicides, in

particular those that call attention to the way professional sports leagues exploit their bodies, are

fraught with complexity. Brayton and Helstein focus primarily on the "protest" suicides of

hockey or football players suffering from chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE) due to

repeated concussions. These suicides turn private individual suffering into more public and

arguably systemic displays of protest against capitalist forces.[42] In using their self-inflicted

deaths and actual physical remains (since one can only be diagnosed with CTE through a

posthumous autopsy) to call attention to these injustices, protest suicides also explicitly allow for

the athletic body to remain "productive" after death when it is no longer exploitable by

capitalism (146). In recent years, especially following the suicide of BMX star Dave Mirra, the

---

[41] Paul O'Connor, "Beyond the Youth Culture: Understanding Middle-Aged Skateboarders through Temporal Capital," *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 53, no. 8 (2018): 924-943; Indigo Willing, Andy Bennett, Mikko Piispa, and Ben Green, "Skateboarding and the 'Tired Generation': Ageing in Youth Cultures and Lifestyle Sports," *Sociology* 53, no. 3 (2019): 503-518.
[42] Sean Brayton and Michelle T. Helstein, "The Athlete's Body and the Social Text of Suicide," in *Sociocultural Examinations of Sports Concussions,* eds. Matt Ventresca and Mary G. McDonald (London: Routledge, 2020), 139.

first "extreme" sports athlete posthumously diagnosed with CTE, concussions and other risks

inherent in skateboarding have become more significant discourses within the subculture.[43] Tony

Hawk has discussed Mirra's suicide and his own repeated concussions in mainstream

interviews.[44] Similarly, even skateboard magazines are covering these issues with more

regularity.[45] Although Mirra's death could be read as a protest suicide, his connection to an

extreme sports subculture not unlike skateboarding adds a certain complexity. Mirra, an X

Games star similar to Tony Hawk, certainly had his body exploited by capitalist forces. However,

it is also true that any participation in extreme sports subcultures necessitates putting one's body

at risk in ways that are different from other sports, even contact ones such as football or hockey.

For skateboarding, those that take the most risk ultimately become the ones framed as the most

technically progressive and influential, since it is that risk that enables one to create new tricks,

styles, and dangerous video parts. As a result, with a subcultural narrative that is deeply entwined

with risk-taking and the associated potential bodily harm, it is no surprise that skateboarding

documentaries are interested in not just the figurative deaths of their aging subjects, but their

looming literal deaths as well.

Every episode of Patrick O'Dell's Vice TV docuseries, *Epicly Later'd*, traces the complex

life of a figure connected to the skateboarding subculture. By often focusing on those from

earlier eras, the series fits neatly into the concept of the lost subcultural hero and typically

positions these forgotten or lesser-known skaters as more authentic than the subculture's most

---

[43] Alyssa Roenigk, "Doctors Say Late BMX Legend Dave Mirra Had CTE," *ESPN,* May 24, 2016, https://www.espn.com/action/story/_/id/15614274/bmx-legend-dave-mirra-diagnosed-cte.
[44] John Lonsdale, "Tony Hawk on CTE in Extreme Sports: 'It's Absolutely a Concern," *Men's Journal,* Dec. 4, 2017, https://www.mensjournal.com/sports/tony-hawk-on-cte-in-extreme-sports-its-absolutely-a-concern-w207982. Tony Hawk also discusses CTE and how much of it risk it is for skateboarders somewhat at length during his episode of Joe Rogan's podcast. See: *The Joe Rogan Experience,* "Joe Rogan Experience #1477 – Tony Hawk," YouTube*,* May 20, 2020, https://youtu.be/At4kjSXFr-U?si=4KEHjOn8xxM0EvJz&t=1154.
[45] Andrew Murrell, "How Worried Should Skaters Be About CTE?" *Jenkem Magazine,* Aug. 28, 2018, https://www.jenkemmag.com/home/2018/08/28/skateboarders-worried-cte/.

visible stars. Additionally, many episodes also foreground tragedy, injury, and death as integral to the authenticity of the subject. Even the briefest descriptions found on YouTube or other platforms for episodes focused on skaters Heath Kirchart, Andy Roy, Andrew Reynolds, and Jason Dill, acknowledge either the risks these skaters regularly take or near-death experiences that are central to the episode's narrative.[46] It is significant that the series–which initially ran for only a single eight-episode season before returning in 2024–would choose Bam Margera for its pilot episode.[47] Despite Margera's global popularity, his drop in visibility after the end of his various reality television series allows him to function as a lost subcultural hero. Beyond that, the episode's focus on the demise of Margera's physical and mental health after years of tragedy and addiction reframes his subcultural authenticity. Removed from his transmedia stardom and pervasive visibility during the *Jackass* moment, *Epicly Later'd* positions Margera as reclusive and irrevocably damaged by both his skateboarding and struggles with fame. Yet, O'Dell refuses to grapple with the role skateboarding and, perhaps more significantly, skateboarding media played in Margera's declining health. Instead, Margera's struggles, including brushes with death and having virtually lost his ability to skate, become reduced to markers of his authenticity. In other words, it is not enough to be a groundbreaking and globally famous skater; one must have the damaged body and psyche to go along with it.

Margera's *Epicly Later'd* begins with a cold open as he struggles in a skate session with an accompanying videographer, Thomas Winkle. A montage begins, showing Margera's classic

---

[46] "*Epicly Later'd,* season 1," YouTube, accessed July 10, 2024. https://www.youtube.com/show/SC8Kdn30qP4XroxgybosTMUg?sbp=GhoKGFVDSERFd2ZpV0ZiQ2xPdERxQTVQdmV5Zw%253D%253D

[47] Patrick O'Dell (epiclylaterd), "New Season of Epicly Later'd starting soon on @vice. They should be monthly for awhile on @vice's YouTube. Thank you to @vice and the 100 or so people we've interviewed for it so far ♡ I'm so excited to be back 🎉" Instagram, reel, Dec. 22, 2023, https://www.instagram.com/epiclylaterd/reel/C1KP-YJr_wV/; *Epicly Later'd,* season 1, episode 1, "Bam Margera,"directed by Patrick O'Dell, aired Sept. 7, 2017, Vice TV, https://tubitv.com/tv-shows/671714/s01-e01-bam-margera.

skate videos and snippets from *Jackass* and *Viva La Bam,* all of which contrast with both his current skating ability and body, since he now appears noticeably older and heavier. The episode moves back and forth between Margera's parents' house, where various members of the family are interviewed, and Barcelona, where Margera is living temporarily as he attempts to, in his words, "get his muscle memory back," in a locale where he might not be immediately recognized. In interviews, Margera and his family acknowledge that he essentially stopped skateboarding during and after the success of *Viva La Bam* as he struggled with alcoholism and drug addiction. In part, this allows the archival media, especially the scenes from *Viva La Bam,* to be recontextualized, now revealing a disturbing underside to the endless partying and pranks that viewers saw on MTV. However, the archival footage also focuses on Margera's body and skating to emphasize how he no longer resembles the subcultural hero he once was. Margera's parents candidly describe how his alcoholism, drug use, and eating disorders were tied to depictions of his body in skate media. As the archive shows a young Margera slim and shirtless in various skate videos and scenes from *Viva La Bam,* Margera's mother April reveals that he constantly monitored his appearance and persistently mentioned his anxiety about ending up obese like his father Phil and uncle Don Vito. April's candid interview also reveals another layer to the fact that Phil and Don Vito's largeness were key elements of the pranks in *Viva La Bam, Jackass,* and the *CKY* videos. In between the interviews and archival clips, Margera is shown cleaning dirty areas of his house or stretching and working out before his skate sessions, as if trying to reclaim the wealthy domestic space and slim body represented in the archive. This sharp contrast becomes the episode's main spectacle. Even when the archive's flaws are acknowledged, as it is with clips mocking Phil or Don Vito or showing various cast members drinking excessively, it is still positioned as desirable, albeit unobtainable. It is not only out of

reach for the viewer, but Margera himself since he cannot return to the skater he once was and the lifestyle he claimed to live via his many mediations.

FIGURE 4.5. Margera, after a fall, listening to Winkle tell him he has to "taste it" before he can "roll away from it." Screen capture from Tubi.

However, as Margera continues relearning to skate and attempts to remain sober, his bodily demise is reframed as not only tragic, but also indicative of his continued subcultural authenticity despite no longer physically resembling what viewers see in the archive. In one interview, Margera reveals that his attempts to become reacquainted with his skateboard are against the wishes of his doctor, who has described Margera's body as so dehydrated by drugs and alcohol that his muscles and ankles might as well be "dry rotted rubber bands." Of course, Margera skates anyway. In one scene, Winkle sets up a close-up on a ramp, only for Margera to repeatedly fail to execute the trick. When he lands especially hard, Winkle and Margera agree that the pain is necessary. As Margera sits up wincing, Winkle states, as if reminding him, "you

gotta taste it before you roll away from it, right?" (fig. 4.5). Margera's determination to land

("roll away" is a subcultural term for landing a trick, since you continue rolling on the board)

requires physical pain and comes at the risk of further and seemingly irrevocable damage to his

body.[48] However, O'Dell never interrogates this. Although Margera's journey is ostensibly one of

self-improvement, what one really celebrates is his desire to continuing putting his body at risk

through skateboarding and making skate media. He remains committed to the skateboarding

subculture even though it already has and will continue to harm him. The episode ends

inconclusively, with contemporary footage of Margera at Philadelphia's FDR skatepark again

being juxtaposed with his image and performance in early skate videos (many of his iconic clips

were captured at the same park). In the final few interviews, various friends and family

acknowledge that Margera has not truly healed. *CKY* video series and *Viva La Bam* cast member

Brandon Novak, a former heroin addict who now works in addiction recovery, states that

Margera "might" have what it takes to maintain his sobriety. Margera's mother, April, says only

that she "wants" Margera to return to the person he was before his fame and addictions spiraled.

The inconclusive ending can be read in multiple ways. While Margera has the potential to

recover, there is also the implication that his demise will continue. O'Dell's refusal to provide a

narrative conclusion allows Margera's potential death to signify his continued subcultural

authenticity, whether it comes through addiction relapse or from the risks to his body as he

continues to skate against doctor's orders. Although Margera is not the same skater he once was,

he remains undisputably marked by the mediations seen in the subcultural archive, a standard of

authenticity that contemporary viewers cannot match.

---

[48] The subcultural term "roll away" also inspired the title of another recent skateboarding documentary about another famous skateboarder and MTV star, Ryan Scheckler. The film traces his recovery from a leg injury and desire to complete the video part he was working on when he got hurt. See *Rolling Away* (Kirk Dianda, 2023).

While Margera's *Epicly Later'd* is perhaps implicitly concerned with his potential death, *Tony Hawk: Until the Wheels Fall Off* foregrounds its subject's impending death more explicitly. *Until the Wheels Fall Off* initially seems to function differently than the other full-length documentaries and segments of other films that trace the history of lost or failed subcultural heroes that we can only access through archival mediations. Firstly, the over fifty-year old Tony Hawk is still one of the most visible and successful skateboarders of all time and, as the documentary's opening scene and Hawk's current public media persona emphasize, he can certainly still skate. The film opens with Hawk practicing on his own private ramp. Although the montage of his runs shows him struggling to land the famous "900," the scene displays his continued determination and discipline, as opposed to Margera's exasperated failure to roll away in *Epicly Later'd*. The scene features no music or substantive dialogue. It is almost entirely the sounds of Hawk's board and his body as he falls repeatedly. After a particularly nasty fall, the camera lingers on Hawk as his board goes flying off screen. He yells an expletive at the top of his lungs, his voice hoarse and anguished. For a skater, Hawk is old, though he appears just as angry and dedicated to the "900" as he did during X Games broadcast more than twenty years prior. Another important distinction is that, other than a section focused on the early-1990s when Hawk and the skateboarding industry overall struggled financially, *Until the Wheels Fall Off* features no issues with addiction, mental illness, or criminal convictions akin to those that plague the subjects of other skateboard documentaries. In this, Hawk is perhaps the subculture's most normative "athlete," whose story is one of determination and ultimately massive success and

recognition. Although the documentary does trace Hawk's history and how he was able to defy the odds to become a successful skateboarder, it is more interested in his potential death.[49]

Until the Wheels Fall Off begins and ends with scenes revolving around the anxieties of aging and the ways we attempt to narrativize one's life and eventual death. After the opening montage and title sequence, the film's initial segment covering Hawk's childhood is accompanied by contemporary footage of him visiting his mother, Nancy, in an assisted living facility. The camera focuses on Nancy, whose condition is bad enough that she is physically unable to respond as her son speaks. Over archival home videos and photographs, interviews begin to situate Hawk's young age in relation to his much older siblings and relatively elderly parents. They describe that even the early days of Hawk's skating were fraught with anxiety since his siblings were gone and his mother–who had him at age forty-three–feared both his potential injuries and that her age would render her unable to care for him, especially if an accident occurred while skating. The scene lingers on Hawk as he leaves his mother's facility, the crew following him at a distance that positions him as isolated, echoing the narratives the interviewees tell about Hawk's early childhood. Although the documentary quickly moves on to the proper start of Hawk's career and his work with Stacy Peralta and the Bones Brigade, it is significant that it begins by foregrounding multiple different anxieties about aging and death. While speaking to his mother, Hawk even jokes that his youngest two children are almost adults, meaning that his oldest, Riley (who is now also a professional skateboarder), might soon be moving back in. The implication is that Hawk is, if not already there, at least approaching a stage

---

[49] Although Tony Hawk stands a bit over six feet tall, the film's narrative of his athleticism is one of pure determination rather than physical ability. The documentary claims that, skating at such a young age, the then-small and frail Hawk could barely generate enough momentum to perform aerials. As a result, he would adapt the normally flat-ground "ollie" and use it to instead on vertical surfaces so that he could jump out of pools or ramps (whereas previously, skaters relied solely on their momentum to generate air). In the film, Peralta states that witnessing this technical maneuver was one of the reasons he chose to sign Hawk to the Bones Brigade.

of life similar to his mother's need for elderly care. Beyond the documentary, Hawk's media

persona reflects this. On social media, he often jokes about reaching a stage where, despite his

fame, many in public do not recognize him as himself, but instead as someone who merely

"looks like" Tony Hawk.[50] Recently, he has also become a brand ambassador for, among other

products, Qunol turmeric supplements, a clear acknowledgment that his age connects him to an

audience that is different from skateboarding's typical youth culture.[51] Hawk's media persona

and the opening of *Until the Wheels Fall Off* could initially be read as providing viewers with

moments of relatability to the skateboarding subculture's most famous star. Like everyone else,

Hawk must contend with the perils of aging, including trips to elderly care facilities and

choosing the right brand of anti-inflammatory dietary supplements. This is a common strategy

for films or series within the sport documentary subgenre that focus on individual athletes, where

viewers are inclined to see athletes as relatable and their successes due to heroic effort, rather

than inherent ability. However, the film's final moments reject this relatability by foreshadowing

Hawk's potential death as the logical endpoint for his subcultural authenticity, something the

viewer could never possibly reach or understand.

Instead of narrativizing Hawk's legacy, the final section of *Until the Wheels Fall Off*

focuses on the filming of "*Animal Chin:* The Search is Never Over," a 2016 episode of the

docuseries, *World of X Games* (ESPN, 2014-).[52] The episode features Tony Hawk largely in

---

[50] Hawk's social media bit has gone viral enough times that an internet search engine will yield dozens of listicles with his posts describing these encounters. For example, see: Mike D. Sykes II, "It's 2022 and People are Still Somehow Hilariously Not Recognizing Tony Hawk When They See Him," *USA Today,* Apr. 7, 2022, https://ftw.usatoday.com/lists/tony-hawk-skateboarding-nobody-knows-him-anymore.
[51] "Skateboarding Legend Tony Hawk Teams up with Qunol," Qunol Blog, accessed July 10, 2024, https://www.qunol.com/blogs/blog/qunolandtonyhawk. For the commercial featuring Hawk, see: "Qunol Turmeric Commercial (Tony Hawk) (01/2023)," YouTube, Jan. 6, 2023, https://youtu.be/b1zjEZcVppY?si=Xnttn_RnuA1LDpF8.
[52] *World of X Games,* season 3, episode 45, "*Animal Chin:* The Search is Never Over," featuring Tony Hawk, Lance Mountain, Mike McGill, Steve Caballero, and Stacy Peralta, aired Nov. 13, 2006, ABC, https://youtu.be/gsUf8pCWCcE?si=U3hgIe_lQnUnkR5p. The same event was used for a different 10-minute short on Tony Hawk's RIDE Channel, which in part functions as promotion for the *World of X Games* episode. See: "Animal Chin 30 Years – Tony Hawk, Steve Caballero, Mike McGill, & Lance Mountain 2/4," YouTube, Oct. 28, 2016, https://youtu.be/k51n4hhmu6w?si=A4-xRFD5sN5GXTaJ.

charge of organizing a skate session with the Bones Brigade members and cast of Peralta's *The Search for Animal Chin* (Stacy Peralta, 1987) on a rebuilt version of the video's iconic ramp. As a montage of behind-the-scenes shots showcase the now much older skaters still landing the tricks they did as teens, Peralta's interview contextualizes the intensity of the session and how, despite their age, the skaters still push each other to perform. However, rather than end with a celebration as one sees in "The Search is Never Over," *Until the Wheels Fall Off* reveals that Hawk suffered a concussion during filming. With no camera operators situated in the ramp, one sees Hawk's injury in a series of long shots. He slams against the bottom of the half-pipe, his helmet flying, before looking around completely dazed. Two long-shots, one at the top of the ramp and another on the ground a distance away, capture the other skaters and Hawk's wife surrounding him and slowly helping him make his way only to the corner of the half-pipe before he slumps and sits again. In his interview, Peralta–who is shot in a soft-focus medium close-up with only tress visible in the background, rather than anything connected to skateboarding– describes Tony's "Einstein-y" hair and "pitch-white skin" giving him the shocking appearance of someone seventy years-old, rather than fifty. He explains calling those connected to Hawk, including Hawk's brother Steve as well as frequent collaborator and writer Sean Mortimer, and pleading with them to get Hawk to stop doing such risky skateboarding maneuvers.

FIGURE 4.6 Lance Mountain interviewed in a pool sitting on his skateboard in *Until the Wheels Fall Off.* Screen capture from video file.

At this point, the film's pacing slows dramatically. The scene pauses after Peralta states that Hawk is heading for not just a bad concussion, but a real "disaster." There is no background sound or music, the viewer left only with Peralta's stunned silence before a cut to Bones Brigade member Lance Mountain, who sits with his head resting on his hand, a pool's coping visible in the soft focus behind him. Mountain stares up and away from the camera for a long beat before answering, "I think it's no one's place to say that to him." The shot remains uninterrupted as an unidentified interviewer asks, "Okay. So, what do you mean?" Mountain sticks his hand out at the camera, as if to signal his discomfort, before looking away and saying, "I don't know." After this, a jump cut shows Mountain, now in a medium shot, more visibly seated on his skateboard in the pool (fig. 4.6). He begins a long answer, where the only interruption is a transition back to the soft-focus closeup. He speaks, ostensibly about Peralta's concern:

> "He doesn't understand. He doesn't even understand that we're gonna probably die skateboarding and kill ourselves. It's something you can't change. I can't sleep. I can't sleep on my shoulders. It's terrible. It's horrible. You're actually destroying yourself on what you love. But it's not…it's too late, first of all, to be concerned about, like – 'oh it's time for us to slow down.' Like, I don't know. I don't know how to…I don't know how to react to that. He's right, but I don't know how to react to it."

After a brief cut to Hawk's brother Steve, who elaborates on moments when the skater has seemingly cheated death, Mountain continues, again uninterrupted other than switching between medium-shot and close-up:

> "Yeah, it's foolish. It's foolish what we've done to ourselves. Tony…a lot of us. It's foolish. We're gonna live in absolute pain. I've had so many concussions. I know I have. You know. I know I have what those football players have, and I'm probably gonna have a brain tumor like my dad. And it's because…we were stupid skateboarding and we got injured. It is what it is. He is going to probably get another gnarly concussion. He's probably gonna break another bone. He's probably gonna get to the point where his body will not let him do it. And that's the way we're gonna go. Stupid? Yes."

While in Peralta's *Dogtown* or *Bones Brigade,* interview subjects are seen giving affective responses that mourn either lost career potential or eras of the subculture, Mountain speaks to the camera in a calm, matter-of-fact tone. To him, death is simply the next logical step for those that are truly subculturally authentic skateboarders. Just as Margera alludes to his destroyed ankles in *Epicly Later'd,* Mountain also foregrounds his decaying body, acknowledging the specific damage done to his brain and shoulders. The mise-en-scène of Mountain's interview contrasts directly with Peralta's. Sitting in a pool on his skateboard, Mountain pointedly says that Peralta does not "understand." Peralta, with decades of subcultural capital as not only an original Dogtown skater but also the de-facto creator of the skate video mode, is still ultimately deemed inauthentic in comparison to damaged figures such as Hawk and Mountain. The acknowledgement that Peralta is "right," further alienates him from the skateboarding subculture. Peralta has seemingly aged out, but the real subcultural participants cannot stop themselves from skating, even with the risks it carries for the aging bodies. *Until the Wheels Fall Off* closes just as

it begins, with a contemporary montage of Tony Hawk skating his ramp. The viewer, now aware of the full significance Hawk's continued skating, now associates true subcultural authenticity with the notion that injury and eventually death are the only acceptable conclusions for those who truly claim skateboarding as their identity.

Challenging and Reimagining the Subcultural Archive

In light of the numerous skateboarding sports documentaries that use nostalgia to distance viewers from the idealized authenticity represented in the subcultural archive, it is worth acknowledging some of the more recent films that challenge the collective mourning of both our temporal distance from the seemingly "pure" eras of skateboarding and the impending deaths of those eras' key figures. Further, it is significant that these newer documentaries, such as *Skate Dreams, Stay on Board: The Leo Baker Story,* and *Minding the Gap,* foreground alternatives to skateboarding's emphasis on white masculinity, focusing to varying degrees on nonwhite, nonmale, and transgender subjects. Each film shifts away from the participatory mode found in normative sports documentaries, instead embracing reflexive strategies to interrogate narratives that the aforementioned skateboarding documentaries present as undisputed. This does not only suggest alternatives to the subculture's emphasis on white masculinity, but also questions the inherent value and legitimacy of skateboarding's media archive. In doing so, each of these films embraces skateboarding as a progressive subculture, with more diverse authentic subject positions as well as the potential for a type of rebirth rather than impending death.

For example, *Skate Dreams* and *Stay on Board: The Leo Baker Story* not only trace the experiences of nonmale members of the subculture, but also reveal the inadequacies of skateboarding's media archive. Each film's narrative is rooted in the formation of the United

States' Women's Skateboarding National Team for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, using

skateboarding's first appearance as an Olympic sport to reevaluate its history and reflect on the

ways its white male dominated media archive has typically been presented without question.

After its title sequence, *Skate Dreams* opens with soon-to-be-named coach for the national team,

Mimi Knoop, who uses various archives to show the lack of female representation in the

skateboarding subculture. First, she is shown in her garage digging through bins of *Thrasher* and

Transworld magazines, showing only one *Thrasher* featuring a woman–Cara-Beth Burnside–on

the cover.[53] Next, the scene cuts to Knoop's living room, where her and videographer Lisa

Whitaker watch old contest footage. Rather than highlighting this footage as iconic for the

subculture, the two position it as so marginalized that it is almost private to the two of them.

Whitaker describes in detail how she consistently filmed without any press credentials, since

male contest organizers were happy to let her in if she only filmed the women's contests. As the

documentary continues, it frequently juxtaposes glamorous footage of men's competitions at the

X Games to the sparser opportunities offered for the women. One segment in particular

historicizes the 2005 X Games, where Burnside led Knoop and others in a boycott of the

competition due to the paltry purse offered to the women's winner.[54] Beyond historicizing

women's competitive skating and the current group attempting to qualify for the Olympic team,

Skate Dreams also foregrounds the creation of alternative archives for nonmale skateboarders.

Sections of the documentary focus on various projects that address the lack of female

representation in skateboarding's subcultural archive, such as Skateistan, a non-profit focused on

helping girls who live in impoverished countries learn to skate, and the Girls Skate Network, a

---

[53] *Thrasher Magazine,* August 1989.
[54] Matt Higgins, "On a Mission, and Rolling," *New York Times,* July 26, 2006,
https://www.nytimes.com/2006/07/26/sports/othersports/26skateboard.html.

curating platform that helps female skaters share their mediations and connect with potential sponsors. In this, the film emphasizes that equal opportunity for female skaters hinges on their ability to produce and distribute media, combatting the overwhelmingly white masculine subcultural archive. Further, and not insignificantly, *Skate Dreams* foregrounds both new young skaters and their opportunities to create skate media in sharp contrast to other skateboard documentaries that only look to the past or mourn their subject's impending death.

Although *Stay on Board* focuses on a singular subject, it similarly opens with a scene that acknowledges the flaws of skateboarding's media archive. Further, the film's narrative of Leo Baker's gender transition challenges the normative skate documentary's focus on flawed male heroes whose authenticities are reinforced by their inability to change and thus whose stories must logically conclude with their death. The film opens with not just an acknowledgement that skateboarding's archive is flawed, but also a scene that positions said archive as highly constructed rather than raw or immediate. In the opening montage, Baker places a VHS tape in his CRT television, showing a montage of his successful pre-transition skateboarding career. Extreme close-ups of the television distort the images while the viewer hears Baker's interview deconstructing the video. He describes the person in the footage (using his former name, Lacey) as not real, but a constructed persona forced on him by skateboarding manufacturers and media producers who Baker to adopt a more feminine style.[55] The film follows Baker through a challenging transition process, foregrounding his gender dysphoria in both his personal and professional life. Unlike some of the subjects of *Skate Dreams,* Baker does qualify for the

---

[55] Confronting pre-transition images or mediations is often a key element of documentary films exploring gender transition, since such moments are frequently fraught with notions of authenticity or lack thereof. Many, such as Christie Milliken, have considered how confronting pre-transition images may potentially reenforce conservative notions of gender and authenticity. Here, although Baker does present the pre-transition images as inauthentic, *Stay on Board* recognizes that Baker's surgical transition is merely one element of his journey as a transmasculine skater and makes clear that such a journey is an ongoing process. See: Christie Milliken, "*Unheimlich* Maneuvers: The Genres and Genders of Transsexual Documentary," *The Velvet Light Trap* no. 41 (1998): 47-61.

Olympic team, but he ultimately decides he needs to embrace his transmasculine identity rather than associate with the manufactured persona from his pretransition career.[56] Although in the end Baker is unable to compete at the Olympics, he begins a new phase of his career as transmasculine skateboarder no longer bound by the constructed images that the film's opening shows from the subcultural archive.

In rejecting the archive and tracing a narrative where Baker not only comes out but has to rediscover his own identity as a skateboarder, *Stay on Board* challenges all the main functions of the skateboard sports documentary subgenre. The film's reveal that the archive is a set of highly constructed and potentially flawed and inauthentic mediations rejects the subgenre's typical indulgence in the spatiotemporal affective structures of nostalgia. Instead of allowing the archive's narratives and aesthetics to shape the documentary, *Stay on Board* instead consciously distorts them. Further, Baker's reevaluation of his identity challenges the rigid narratives that other documentaries portray about who can claim to be a subculturally authentic skater. By rejecting his past mediations, Baker implies that the subculture is not beholden to flawed heroes simply because they have produced iconic media texts. In finally refusing to be a part of the women's Olympic team and instead embracing his new subcultural identity, Baker asserts that not only can the subculture move on from its flaws, but that progression, reinvention, and diversification are what mark him as an authentic skateboarder.[57] Whereas the normative sports

---

[56] The competitive qualification process is part of both *Skate Dreams* and *Stay on Board.* Since it relied on skaters' placings at certain sanctioned competitions in 2019 and 2020, Baker was only able to qualify for the women's team. See: "USA Skateboarding National Team Announced," *Transworld Skateboarding,* Mar. 19, 2019, https://www.skateboarding.com/news/usa-skateboarding-olympic-team-announced.

[57] For some examples of how media has covered Baker, see: Cameron Cook and Ivan Lagos, "Leo Baker is Finding his Feet Again after Transitioning," *Huck,* Jan. 10, 2023, https://www.huckmag.com/article/leo-baker-is-finding-his-feet-again-after-transitioning. Additionally, see Baker's interview with Nike regarding the release of his new signature shoe (Nike's first for a transgender athlete): "Leo Baker," Nike SB, Sept. 13, 2023, https://www.nikesb.com/articles/leo-baker.

documentaries traced in this chapter mourn the impending death of the subculture's heroes, *Stay on Board* foregrounds a type of rebirth for its subject.

<small>FIGURE</small> 4.7 Bing Liu while interviewing his mother in *Minding the Gap.* Screen capture from video file.

In many ways, as a documentary about an athlete's gender transition journey, *Stay on Board* is both a skateboard sports documentary as well as a documentary that exceeds the subgenre's constraints by more poignantly using skateboarding as a way of reflecting on a particular social issue. Bing Liu's heavily self-reflexive 2018 documentary, *Minding the Gap,* has been positioned similarly. Journalist Jay Caspian Kang describes the film as contemporary verité and notes that it is perhaps so consumed with the various social issues it wishes to cover that it is potentially "not a skateboarding film at all."[58] Kang's invocation of cinema verité is a significant one, since it recognizes how *Minding the Gap* goes beyond the typical participatory

---

[58] Jay Caspian Kang, "*Minding the Gap:* What It's About," Criterion*,* Jan 12, 2021, https://www.criterion.com/current/posts/7240-minding-the-gap-what-its-about.

mode that is far more common for the skateboarding sports documentary subgenre and sports documentaries in general. Liu and his camera are an undeniable presence in every scene of the film as he documents his own attempts to reckon with his abusive upbringing, Keire Johnson's experiences with poverty and racism, and Zack Mulligan's descent into alcoholism and committing—rather than being a victim of—domestic abuse. Liu frequently speaks from behind the camera or turns it on himself, questioning his inability to interrogate his own upbringing, the subculture's racial politics, or the film's potential ethical responsibilities for depicting Mulligan's abusive and alcoholic behavior. For example, Liu interviews his mother in a scene that begins almost as a confrontation as he begins to ask her a series of questions about how she could let her husband (Liu's stepfather) abuse her and the children. As she struggles to answer, Liu similarly struggles to find the right questions. Accordingly, the scene shifts away from typical interview aesthetics; a second camera focused on Liu haphazardly zooms in and out, capturing his frustration and sadness as he stumbles while trying to simultaneously confront, support, and understand his mother. Liu is shown in soft-focus, which makes the lights, microphone pole, and camera he operates a cluttered presence (fig. 4.7). The conversation resists conclusion, questioning whether or not Liu's film is even able to answer these questions. Liu's mother frustratingly says that everything he asks about is in the past and that she has no answers for him. Her interview ends with her saying she simply "doesn't know what to do," refusing to let the documentary form a clear narrative regarding Liu's childhood abuse and how it connects to his identity as a skater. In this way, the film also questions the broader ability of documentary to narrativize the past, a clear departure from the skateboard sports documentary subgenre's typically simplistic and nostalgic historicizations.

Minding the Gap's other two subjects, Johnson and Mulligan, are treated similarly, as the film presents their skate and personal media archives in a self-reflexive mode that questions both the archive itself as well as the documentary's ability to depict that archive truthfully. For example, when Johnson suggests that skateboarding is an outlet for his anger and otherwise uncontrollable emotions, the film shows multiple archival videos of then-young Johnson, one featuring him happily skateboarding but another which shows him smashing a board to pieces in a fit of rage. It is a small moment, but a telling one that reveals the film's commitment to embracing the complexities and incongruities of the archive rather than letting temporal distance create a simplistic narrative. Similarly, although Johnson takes pride in being a Black skater, multiple scenes show white skaters (including Mulligan) making or sharing racist jokes in Johnson's presence. Each time, Liu shifts the camera away from the white skaters and toward Johnson, emphasizing his discomfort within a subculture he claims has offered him so much freedom. Rather than let each subject dictate what skateboarding means to them, Liu's use of the archive as juxtaposition and his overwhelming presence in the profilmic space constantly call the subculture's meanings into question. Over the course of the film, Liu's attempts to grapple with his abusive upbringing and Johnson's desires to overcome poverty and racism are never fully resolved.[59] Thus, although the two continuously state that participation in the skateboard subculture enables them to overcome what they're facing, the use of the archive and lack of narrative resolution ultimately questions whether or not skateboarding offers what Liu and Johnson claim it does.

---

[59] It's worth noting that as a skater, Johnson is certainly the most successful of the three. *Minding the Gap* states that he became sponsored by "Emage Skateshop & Satire Skateboards." Today, Johnson's Instagram profile lists Tony Hawk's Birdhouse Skateboards, though he does not appear on the company's list of team members. This would mark him as not quite a "pro," but certainly amateur level. See: Keire Johnson (animalshin), Instagram profile, accessed July 10, 2024, https://www.instagram.com/animalshin/?hl=en.

However, it is Mulligan's narrative that is the most significant for *Minding the Gap*'s rejection of normative skateboard sports documentary impulses. Over the course of the film, Mulligan repeatedly breaks up with and gets back together with his girlfriend, Nina Bowgren, as he struggles with alcoholism and eventually becomes physically abusive. As Mulligan candidly discusses both issues with Liu, one could potentially read him as another example of the failed subcultural hero. In one sequence, Mulligan uses his phone to play an audio recording of Bowgren saying she's going to stab him with a knife. The next scene features a close-up interview with Bowgren, who has visible marks on her eye and lip as she tells Liu that the recording leaves out the evidence of Mulligan's abuse that we can only now see visually. However, in a scene where the two have briefly reconciled, Liu sits in the back of Bowgren's car as they wait for Mulligan to pick up a take-out food order for the whole crew. Liu asks how the film should approach Mulligan's physical abuse, to which Bowgren replies that it should not. Liu switches between close-ups of Bowgren adjusting her make-up in the car's mirror and her fingers nervously thumbing her smartphone, visual reminders that the film is constantly seeking to question each subject's framing or mediation of themselves. Eventually, in Mulligan's final interview, Liu does ask about the phone recording and its context, to which Mulligan insists that "bitches need to get slapped sometimes." When the film's end credits feature a montage of all three subjects skating along to an upbeat indie rock soundtrack, the subcultural archive is again called into question, as it is immediately clear that Mulligan's abuse and alcoholism are both absent from his representation in skate media and never resolved within the documentary itself. As a result, *Minding the Gap* acknowledges the flaws of the subcultural archive, which is both incomplete and inadequate in its representation of each subjects' positionality. This juxtaposition refuses to allow depictions of Mulligan's skateboarding to function together with his alcoholism

and abusive behavior in order to make him a flawed subcultural hero. Instead, the film's reflexive tendencies question the skateboarding subculture's ability to reckon with its potential flaws and meanings. It is not that *Minding the Gap* is "not a skateboarding film at all," as Kang argues, but that its departure from the typically nostalgic approach that mourns only what the subculture has lost (or potentially will lose) is such a significant shift for the subculture's textuality that its open-endedness constitutes an entirely new mode for skateboarding films or other mediations.

Conclusion

The skateboard sports documentary subgenre reveals how the subculture's shift to the documentary mode and emphasis on historization textually reasserts the authenticity of the figures and media texts from earlier eras. Looking at those documentaries as a cohesive group as opposed to individual texts allows one to grasp how their aesthetic and discursive elements function as a larger project that seeks to limit the potential identity positions and experiences that constitute skateboarding's subcultural narrative. With shared aesthetics across archival mediations and contemporary interviews, the subjects of the normative skateboard sports documentary maintain a connection to the archive and seem to permanently exist in a spatiotemporal nostalgic fantasy that is inaccessible to viewers. Foregrounding "lost" heroes reframes the subculture's flaws and past mistakes as markers of authenticity in contrast to mainstream media's more successful and visible skateboarders. Finally, proactively mourning the looming literal deaths of their respective subjects rather than earnestly grappling with what that means for their legacies ultimately positions death as the sole authentic endpoint for one's subcultural narrative. Although previous eras of the skateboarding subculture feature, to varying

degrees, a mixture of modes, aesthetics, and narratives that frame textual engagement as an act of subcultural participation, the shift to documentary filmmaking displaces that participation onto a nostalgic archival past and tragic future that contemporary viewers are accordingly shut out from. One is, as Peralta's 1999 *Thrasher* article indicates, invited to the "history lesson," but cannot engage textually with the subcultural fantasy proposed by the skateboarding documentary subgenre.

These more recent films, including *Skate Dreams, Stay on Board,* and *Minding the Gap,* each reject all of those functions in their questioning of skateboarding's subcultural media archive. As a result, these documentaries challenge the notion that the subculture's authenticity relies on spatiotemporal distance and a set of material conditions unfamiliar to contemporary skaters. Instead, all three films look ahead to the ways skateboarding can potentially change in terms of the diversity of its participants and the implications of its subcultural narrative. These more progressive and open-ended understandings of what skateboarding may mean or what a text that revolves around skateboarding can (or cannot) accomplish are themselves part of a broader push for more diverse articulations of what constitutes subcultural participation via textual engagement. Contemporary skateboarding subcultural media resists the shared strategies across different texts from the same era as demonstrated by each of this project's chapters. Although skate video and magazines continue, many recent texts across a variety of media forms increasingly use skateboarding and the subculture as a mode in order to interrogate history, politics, identity, and other issues. These diverse examples range from narrative films and television series, such as Crystal Moselle's *Skate Kitchen* (Crystal Moselle, 2018) and its spin-off series, *Betty* (HBO, 2020-2021), engagement with art and fashion, such as Ed Templeton's artwork and autobiographical photobook, *Wires Crossed,* or Bill Strobeck's skate videos and

photography for the streetwear company, Supreme, nonfiction web series such as *Thrasher*'s

architectural history series, *This Old Ledge* (YouTube, 2024-), and finally community-made

modifications for skateboarding video game series, including *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater*

(Activision, 1999-2015, 2020) and *SkaterXL* (Easy Days Studios, 2018). These works reveal

skateboarding's increasing utilization of entirely different narratives, aesthetics, and modes in

search of a more genuinely heterogenous textuality that uses skateboarding to explore a variety

of issues and political or historical contexts, rather than essentializing a certain set of textual

norms, eras, or key figures.

MEDIOGRAPHY

900 Films, prod. *World of X Games.* Season 3, episode 46, "*Animal Chin:* The Search is
   Never Over." Featuring Lance Mountain, Tony Hawk, Mike McGill, Steve Caballero, and
   Stacy Peralta. Aired Nov. 13, 2006, ABC.
   https://youtu.be/gsUf8pCWCcE?si=UItpDjMKlf16cyaQ.

Anger, Kenneth, dir. *Scorpio Rising.* 1963; New York, NY: Puck Film Productions.
   https://youtu.be/8lFPK6_j7PM?si=VXL9a5i8R8PGU1HR.

"Animal Chin 30 Years Later – Tony Hawk, Steve Caballero, Mike McGill, & Lance Mountain
   2/4." YouTube, Oct. 28, 2016. https://youtu.be/k51n4hhmu6w?si=8rnetU0xJYJQZ5jb.

Asher, William, dir. *Beach Party.* 1963; Los Angeles, CA: MGM Home Entertainment.
   https://tubitv.com/movies/100010922/beach-party.

Avildsen, John G., dir. *Rocky.* 1976; Hollywood, CA: United Artists.
   https://www.amazon.com/gp/video/detail/B0017VT5E8/ref=atv_dp_share_cu_r.

Black, Noel, dir. *Skaterdater.* 1965; Hollywood, CA: United Artists.
   https://youtu.be/IhgrkjSyrJU?si=LucOuoKQcGGZgOPX.

Brown, Bruce, dir. *The Endless Summer.* 1965; San Francisco, CA: BayView Entertainment.
   https://tubitv.com/movies/154268/the-endless-summer-digitally-remastered.

Butler, George and Robert Flore, dirs. *Pumping Iron.* 1977; Holderness, NH:
   https://tubitv.com/movies/300173/pumping-iron.

Clarke, Eirka and Xionin Lorenzo, dirs. *MTV Cribs.* "Jackass Edition." Featuring Steve-O,
   Johnny Knoxville, Bam Margera, Chris Pontius, and Ryan Dunn. Aired Oct. 23, 2002,
   MTV. https://www.youtube.com/watch?si=ihWVm9QDSYh0mdLs&v=0Jp_-
   qSlfZI&feature=youtu.be.

Clifford, Graeme, dir. *Gleaming the Cube.* 1989; Century City, CA: 20th Century Fox.
   https://www.amazon.com/gp/video/detail/B09QFPF45V.

Dianda, Kirk, dir. *Rolling Away.* 2023; Wals, Austria: Red Bull Media House.
   https://youtu.be/KUrPD-iRRBI?si=VZ75hw5eu3hAZ-j7.

Dittrich, Scott, dir. *Freewheelin'.* 1976; Los Angeles, CA: Turtle Releasing.
   https://tubitv.com/movies/571826/freewheelin.

---, dir. *Streets on Fire.* 1989; Santa Cruz, CA; NHS/Santa Cruz Skateboards.
   https://youtu.be/bal21rPEt2E?si=G-j78vp_LxJ6xiss.

Edwards, Jessica, dir. *Skate Dreams.* 2022; Brooklyn, NY: Film First.

https://vimeo.com/ondemand/skatedreams/679571356.

Elkin, Jeremy, dir. *All the Streets are Silent: The Convergence of Hip Hop and Skateboarding 1987-1999.* 2021; New York, NY: Greenwich Entertainment. https://www.hulu.com/movie/all-the-streets-are-silent-the-convergence-of-hip-hop-and-skateboarding-542b859f-cc74-4442-9331-8b4947bf8de7?entity_id=542b859f-cc74-4442-9331-8b4947bf8de7.

Elyashkevich, Dimitry, Dave Carnie, and Rick Kosick, dirs. *Crap.* 2001; Beverly Hills, CA: Larry Flynt Publications Video. https://vimeo.com/713752395.

Evans, Ty and Spike Jonze. *Yeah Right!* 2003; Torrance, CA: Girl Skateboards. https://girlskateboards.com/films/watch/yeah-right.

Fincher, David, dir. *Fight Club.* 1999; Los Angeles, CA: 20th Century Fox. https://www.hulu.com/movie/0ec7a9e6-d59c-4a73-b9d4-0bb336af58f6.

Gür, Ludvig, dir. *Pretending I'm Superman: The Tony Hawk Video Game Story.* 2020; Mission Viejo, CA: D'Amato Productions. https://tubitv.com/movies/683315/pretending-i-m-a-superman-the-tony-hawk-video-game-story.

Hardwicke, Catherine. *Lords of Dogtown.* 2005; Culver City, CA: Columbia Pictures. https://tv.apple.com/us/movie/lords-of-dogtown/umc.cmc.594hu5fi55dsqlg1ivoz97or0.

Heckerling, Amy, dir. *Fast Times at Ridgemont High.* 1982; Universal City, CA: Universal Pictures. https://www.amazon.com/gp/video/detail/B003PUOTKE/ref=atv_dp_share_cu_r.

Hoffman, D. Paul, dir. *Terror in Tahoe.* 1986: Costa Mesa, CA: Vision. https://youtu.be/_01XLGy_FwU?si=cv-JgyFxBW5Ii4AF.

Hoffman, D. Paul and J.H. Laury, dirs. *Rage in the Badlands.* 1986; Costa Mesa, CA: Vision. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9FVsxuCocAw.

Hooper, Tobe, dir. *Poltergeist.* 1982; Los Angeles, CA: MGM/UA Entertainment Co. https://tv.apple.com/us/movie/poltergeist/umc.cmc.4cqxif55i6c4afe1n05plxnjj.

House, Laurie and Colin Powers, dirs.. *Skatopia: 88 Acres of Anarchy.* 2010; Brooklyn, NY: Headlamp Pictures. https://vimeo.com/ondemand/skatopia88acresofanarchy.

"How-To Skateboarding: No Comply with Tony Hawk & Mike Vallely." YouTube. Apr. 20, 2012. https://youtu.be/dewL9m9SkEw?si=GE45YRaNE9GOYnuE.

James, Steve. *Hoop Dreams.* 1994: Chicago, IL: Kartemquin Films. https://play.max.com/movie/8de6f0f3-38a2-48f8-88ad-7b2805d72782.

Jepsen, Hal, dir. *Super Session.* 1975; Malibu, CA: Hal Jepsen Films.
https://www.amazon.com/gp/video/detail/B06Y4542TR/ref=atv_dp_share_cu_r.

Jones, Sam, dir. *Tony Hawk: Until the Wheels Fall Off.* 2022; New York, NY: HBO Max.
https://play.max.com/movie/39035636-b5f7-4fa9-ac3e-7af2183287da.

Jonze, Spike. dir. *Beastie Boys Story*. 2020; Cupertino, CA: Apple TV.
https://tv.apple.com/us/movie/beastie-boys-story/umc.cmc.6d0mrskjsusw2jd2d228p88c2.

---, dir. *Mouse: A Girl Skateboard Company Film.* 1997; Torrance, CA: Girl
Skateboards.
https://girlskateboards.com/films/watch/mouse#:~:text=Mouse%20is%20the%20second
%20full,in%20between%20skate%20heavy%20sections.

---, dir. *The Mystery of Dalarö.* 2004; Dalarö, Sweden: Volvo.
https://youtu.be/toD0WzAbb3I?si=u28TCMaNaj7YvqiN.

---, dir. "Sabotage." *The Work of Director Spike Jonze,* featuring performances by the Beastie
Boys. 2003; New York, NY: Palm Pictures. DVD.

---, dir. *Video Days*. 1991; El Seguendo, CA: Blind Skateboards.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7MtaYISJQHg.

Jonze, Spike, Ty Evans, and Cory Weincheque, dirs. *Fully Flared*. 2007; Torrance, CA: Lakai
Limited Footwear. https://tubitv.com/movies/669119/fully-flared.

Kral, Ivan and Amos Poe, dirs. *The Blank Generation.* 1976; New York, NY, New Line Cinema.
https://youtu.be/kZqWkGbqxq8?si=qtb8oLa31aC2Gzne.

La Scala, Casey, dir. *Grind.* 2003; Burbank, CA: Warner Bros, 2004. DVD.

Lakso, Edward and Lauri Lakso, writers. *Charlie's Angels.* Season 4, episode 8, "The Prince and
the Angel." Directed by Cliff Bole, featuring Stacy Peralta. Aired Nov. 14, 1979, ABC.
https://tv.apple.com/us/episode/the-prince-and-the-angel/.

Liu, Bing, dir. *Minding the Gap.* 2018; Chicago, IL: Kartemquin Films.
https://www.hulu.com/movie/minding-the-gap-efcd9be9-9541-46b4-abbc-
dd8b0606b304?entity_id=efcd9be9-9541-46b4-abbc-dd8b0606b304.

Margera, Bam, dir. *CKY.* 1999; West Chester, PA: Bam Margera Inc., 2019. Video file.

---, dir. *CKY2K.* 2000; West Chester, PA: Bam Margera Inc., 2019. Video file.

---, dir. *CKY4: The Latest and Greatest.* 2002; West Chester, PA: Bam Margera Inc., 2019.
Video file.

Margera, Bam and Brandon DiCamillo, dirs. *CKY3.* 2001; West Chester, PA: Bam Margera Inc., 2019. Video file.

Margera, Bam and Troy Miller, dirs. *Viva La Bam.* Season 1, episode 1, "Phil's Hell Day/Bam's Skate Park." Featuring Bam Margera, April Margera, Phil Margera, Tony Hawk, and Bucky Lasek. Aired Oct. 26, 2003, MTV. MTV Home Entertainment, 2004, DVD.

---, dirs. *Viva La Bam.* Season 1, episode 3, "The Family Reunion." Featuring Bam Margera, Vincent "Don Vito" Margera, and Terry Kennedy. Aired Nov. 9, 2003, MTV. MTV Home Entertainment, 2004, DVD.

---, dirs. *Viva La Bam.* Season 2, episode 2, "Dating Don Vito." Directed by Bam Margera and Troy Miller, featuring Bam Margera and Vincent "Don Vito" Margera. Aired May 2, 2004, MTV. MTV Home Entertainment, 2005. DVD.

---, dirs. *Viva La Bam*. Season 2, episode 5, "Mardi Gras – Part 2." Featuring Bam Margera, Vincent "Don Vito" Margera, Tony Hawk, and Brewce Martin. Aired May 23, 2004, MTV. MTV Home Entertainment, 2005. DVD.

Marsh, Nicola and Giovanni Reda, dirs. *Stay On Board: The Leo Baker Story.* 2022; New York, NY: GLAAD. https://www.netflix.com/title/81018205.

Mattheis, Eric and Jeff Tremaine, dirs. *Shit.* 1996; Beverly Hills, CA: Dickhouse Publishing Group. https://youtu.be/I8wbwvkFqWo?si=zGpYwGGgFZwz6RUo.

Moselle, Crystal, dir. *Skate Kitchen.* 2018; New York, NY: Magnolia Pictures. https://pluto.tv/on-demand/movies/628c0dbe40fe890013b87115.

Nares, James, dir. *Rome '78.* 1978; New York, NY: Monday Wednesday Friday Video Club. https://youtu.be/3zDOmK4brYE?si=RArd2XLylD8IjoOO.

Nemsick, Steve and David Rogerson, dirs. *Pray for Me: The Jason Jessee Film.* 2007. 7G Productions. https://vimeo.com/202063634.

Neversoft. *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater*. Activision, 1999. Nintendo 64. Featuring Tony Hawk, Kareem Campbell, and Elissa Steamer.

---. *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4.* Activision, 2002. PlayStation 2. Featuring Tony Hawk, Bam Margera, and Mike Vallely.

---. *Tony Hawk's Underground.* Activision, 2003. PlayStation 2. Featuring Tony Hawk, Bam Margera, and Stacy Peralta.

---. *Tony Hawk's Underground 2.* Activision, 2004. PlayStation 2. Featuring Tony Hawk, Bam Margera, Phil Margera, Steve-O, and Jason "Wee Man" Acuña.

NSI Video, prod. *NSA Streetstyle in Tempe: Duel at Diablo.* 1986; Hermosa Beach, CA: NSI
Home Video. https://youtu.be/HenqkWvR4m8.

Nichols, Coan and Rick Charnoski, dirs. *The Original SkateBoarder.* 2018; Carlsbad,
CA: Transworld Skateboarding. https://www.redbull.com/us-en/films/the-original-
skateboarder.

"No Comply' – Instagram." Vimeo. Jul. 21, 2021, https://vimeo.com/577665609.

O'Dell, Patrick, dir. *Dumb: The Story of Big Brother Magazine.* 2017; Los Angeles, CA: Hulu.
https://www.hulu.com/movie/c25b4f59-194f-4eed-bc11-19d2d749520e.

---, dir. *Epicly Later'd.* Season 1, episode 1, "Bam Margera." featuring Bam
Margera. Aired Sep. 7, 2017, Vice TV. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CuluhA3S--U.

Opper, Ira, dir. *The Surfer's Journal: Filmmakers.* Season 3, episode 6, "Hal Jepsen."
Hosted by Robert Weaver, featuring Hal Jepsen, aired Feb. 15, 1996, Outdoor Life
Network (OLN).
https://www.amazon.com/gp/video/detail/B06XZZCLG3/ref=atv_hm_hom_1_c_lZOsi7_
2_1

Pendell, Evan et al, dirs. *Gorgon Video Magazine.* 1989; Los Angeles, CA: International
Harmony. https://youtu.be/bL3Hx65oGKE

Peralta, Stacy, dir. *Bones Brigade: An Autobiography.* 2012; New York, NY: The Film Sales
Company, 2012. DVD.

---, dir. *The Bones Brigade Video Show.* 1984; Santa Barbara, CA: Powell-Peralta,
2009. DVD

---, dir. *Dogtown and Z-Boys.* 2002: New York, NY: Sony Pictures Classic, 2012.
Blu-Ray.

---, dir. *Future Primitive.* 1985; Santa Barbara, CA: Powell-Peralta, 2012. DVD.

---, dir. *Propaganda.* 1990; Santa Barbara, CA: Powell-Peralta, 2004. DVD.

--, dir. *The Search for Animal Chin.* 1987; Santa Barbara, CA: Powell-Peralta, 2005. DVD.

--, dir. *Skateboarding in the 80s.* 1982: Santa Barbara, CA: Powell-Peralta, 2009. DVD.

Peralta, Stacy and C.R. Stecyk, dirs. *Ban This.* 1989; Santa Barbara, CA: 2004. DVD.

--, dirs. *Public Domain.* 1988; Santa Barbara, CA: Powell-Peralta,
2004. DVD.

Poe, Amos, dir. *Subway Riders*. 1981; New York, NY: HEP Pictures, Inc.
  https://youtu.be/V3vNgSzzyP0?si=vje2Am-ww7dwpK7O.

Powell, George, dir. *Axe Rated*. 1988; Santa Barbara, CA: Powell-Peralta, 2016. Video file.

Roberts, Chris. *The Nine Club with Chris Roberts*. "Bam Margera, Episode 70." YouTube. Nov.
  6, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nEO_U166pxc&feature=youtu.be.

---. *The Nine Club with Chris Roberts*. "Terry Kennedy, Episode 49." YouTube. May 22, 2017,
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OCf1SG20hd4&feature=youtu.be.

---. *The Nine Club with Chris Roberts – Stop and Chat*. "Bam Margera & Family – Stop and
  Chat, Episode 90." YouTube. Jan. 30, 2023,
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jkSutBxTck4&feature=youtu.be.

Rodriguez, Robert and Quentin Tarantino. *Grindhouse*. 2007; Austin, TX: Troublemaker
  Studios, 2010. Blu-Ray.

Rogan, Joe. *The Joe Rogan Experience*. "Joe Rogan Experience #1477 – Tony Hawk,"
  YouTube. May 20, 2020.
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?si=4KEHjOn8xxM0EvJz&t=1154&v=At4kjSXFr-
  U&feature=youtu.be.

Rosenberg, Jacob, dir. *Waiting for Lightning*. 2012; Culver City, CA: Samuel Goldwyn Films.
  https://tv.apple.com/us/movie/waiting-for-
  lightning/umc.cmc.2rs4u5leapjqst173ow2smlem.

Sakurai, Kitao, dir. *Bad Trip*. 2012; Los Angeles, CA: Orion Pictures.
  https://www.netflix.com/watch/81287254.

Schwab, Joe, dir. *Bone Dry*. 1988; San Jose, CA: Poor Sport Skate Videos.
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EDQ4m2XN_z4.

---, dir. *Le Mush*. 1988; Son Jose, CA: Poor Sport Skate Videos.
  https://youtu.be/sSH6wzlAyks?si=8Wl65RVWD2Nms6JH.

"Spike Jonze's Live Dance Film on The Tonight Show (Audience POV)." YouTube. Sept. 14,
  2017, https://youtu.be/Um1Fxljj1Uc?si=sOH3dSAr5lEXLMok.

Sticker, Helen, dir. *Stoked: The Rise and Fall of Gator*. 2003; New York, NY: Lions Gate Home
  Entertainment, 2003. DVD.

Stone, Morgan, dir. *Tony Hawk's Boom Boom HuckJam North American Tour*. 2002; Laguna
  Beach, CA: Ventura Distribution, 2003. DVD.

"Tony Hawk's first ever 900!" YouTube. Aug. 15, 2014,
https://www.youtube.com/watch?si=VUEMG-
SbBJSfYGDE&v=3pb8XFlRKsI&feature=youtu.be.

Tremaine, Jeff, dir. *30 for 30.* Season 1, episode 17, "The Birth of Big Air." Featuring Mat
Hoffman, Tony Hawk, and Spike Jonze. Aired Apr. 24, 2010, ESPN.
https://www.espn.com/watch/player/_/id/8217b6ad-dbd5-46c9-868c-05951c3180fe.

---, dir. *30 for 30.* Season 2, episode 30, "Angry Sky." Featuring Nick Piantanida. Aired July 30,
2015, ESPN. https://www.espn.com/watch/player/_/id/fcdc0f5a-6de7-4030-9e18-
11534908fc0e.

---, dir. *Jackass 4.5*. 2022; Hollywood, CA: MTV Entertainment Studios.
https://www.netflix.com/title/81404276.

---, dir. *Jackass Forever.* 2021; Hollywood, CA: MTV Entertainment Studios.
https://www.paramountplus.com/movies/video/jrB1R7geuFK6LEGRIkJzuwqqFMcem3si
/.

---, dir. *Jackass: The Movie.* 2002; Hollywood, CA: MTV Films.
https://www.paramountplus.com/movies/video/iUDAH7h2fms7QKq3vSQ2HNpyHlIusiq
h/.

Tremaine, Jeff et al., dirs. *Number Two.* 1998; Beverly Hills, CA: Big Brother.
https://youtu.be/6emBFPJFqGE?si=zqLG45NyK-iCkBNg.

Tremaine, Jeff et al., dirs. *boob.* 1999; Beverly Hills, CA: Larry Flynt Publications Video.
https://vimeo.com/713752059.

Tremaine, Jeff et al., writers. *Jackass.* Season 1, episode 1, "Poo Cocktail." Featuring Johnny
Knoxville, Bam Margera, Ryan Dunn, and Brandon DiCamillo. Aired Oct. 1, 2000, MTV.
https://www.paramountplus.com/shows/jackass/.

Wendkos, Paul, dir. *Gidget.* 1959; Culver City, CA: Columbia Pictures.
https://tubitv.com/movies/658541/gidget-1959.

Winters, David, dir. *Thrashin'.* 1986; Los Angeles, CA: MGM Home Entertainment.
https://www.amazon.com/gp/video/detail/B09BTJL91V/ref=atv_dp_share_cu_r.

Zemeckis, Robert, dir. *Back to the Future*. 1985; City, CA: Universal Pictures.
https://www.peacocktv.com/watch/asset/movies/adventure/back-to-the-future/.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

"About Dogtown: Our Only Crime is Being Original." Dogtown Skateboards. Accessed June 30, 2024. https://dogtownskateboards.com/pages/about-us.

"About MTV Timeline." MTV Press. Accessed July 8, https://web.archive.org/web/20131016014405/http:/mtvpress.com/shows/mtv_timeline.

"About Us: Our History." Dogtown Coffee. Accessed June 30, 2024. https://www.dogtowncoffee.com/about/.

Acland, Charles. *Screen Traffic: Movies, Multiplexes, and Global Culture.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2003.

"Action Now (USA) 1980." Vintage Skateboard Magazines. Accessed June 29, 2024. http://vintageskateboardmagazines.com/ActionNowUSA.html.

Andrejevic, Mark. *Reality TV: The Work of Being Watched.* Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004.

Angel, Sherry. "Surfing, Skateboarding, and Skiing: He's Riding Waves of Reading Interest." *Los Angeles Times,* Jan. 21, 1976. *ProQuest.*

Alilunas, Peter. *Smutty Little Movies: The Creation and Regulation of Adult Video.* Oakland: University of California Press, 2016.

Almond, Elliott. "Magazine Mirrors Explosive Popularity of Skateboarding." *Los Angeles Times,* Sept. 18, 1977. *ProQuest.*

Atencio, Matthew and Becky Beal. "Beautiful Losers: The Symbolic Exhibition and Legitimization of Outsider Masculinity." *Sport in Society* 14, no. 1 (2011): 1-16.

Barnett, Kendra. "Facebook Rides into Tokyo Games with New Skateboarding Campaign." *The Drum,* July 19, 2021, https://www.thedrum.com/news/2021/07/19/facebook-rides-tokyo-games-with-new-skateboarding-campaign.

Baron, Jamie. *The Archive Effect: Found Footage and the Audiovisual Experience of History.* London: Routledge, 2013.

Beal, Becky. "Disqualifying the Official: An Exploration of Social Resistance Through the Subculture of Skateboarding." *Sociology of Sport Journal* 12, no. 3 (1995): 252-267.

Beato, Greg. "Lords of Dogtown." *Spin.* March 1999.

Beatty, Sally. "MTV Ratings Soar Off Gross Humor, Sex–and That's the Tame Stuff–

Controversial Shows Feature Leaches, Playing in a Sewer; A Foul Surprise for Audience." *Wall Street Journal,* Apr. 20, 2001, https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB987713208758822968.

Benson-Allott, Caetlin. *Killer Tapes and Shattered Screens: Video Spectatorship from VHS to File Sharing.* Berkely: University of California Press, 2013.

---. *The Stuff of Spectatorship: Material Cultures of Film and Television.* Berkely: University of California Press, 2021.

Berkow, Ira. "The Minority Quarterback," *New York Times,* July 2, 2000, https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/library/national/race/070200berkow-sports.html?scp=7&sq=Quarterback&st=cse.

"Best Cartoons of the Bush Years." R.J. Matson Cartoons. Accessed July 2, 2024. https://www.rjmatsoncartoons.com/editorialcartoons/gwbushyears?itemId=ug1b38w8h91jpgayxwl09b5op63odu.

"Big Brother (USA) 1992: Taboo Letter." Vintage Skateboard Magazines. Accessed July 8, 2024. http://vintageskateboardmagazines.com/big_brother_(usa).html.

"Big Brother October 1997." Internet Archive. Dec. 6, 2020, https://archive.org/details/big-brother-october-1997.

Blaha, Cynthia. "Tommy Guerrero Interview." *Thrasher Magazine.* Accessed July 2, 2024. https://www.thrashermagazine.com/articles/music-interviews/tommy-guerrero/.

Bloom, David. "From Bam's Skate Ramps to Zero-Party Data Marketing, Tim Glomb is Building a Better Way to Sell." *Forbes,* Oct. 17, 2022, https://www.forbes.com/sites/dbloom/2022/10/17/from-bams-skate-ramps-to-zero-party-data-marketing-tim-glomb-is-building-a-better-way-to-sell/.

Borden, Iain, "Performing the City." In *The Subcultures Reader,* edited by Ken Gelder, 256-70. New York: Routledge, 2005.

---. *Skateboarding and the City: A Complete History.* London: Bloomsbury, 2019.

Branch, Shelly. "Larry Flynt's New Target: Black Men – Upscale Magazine, *Code,* Wants Reader Group Others Ignore, But Will Advertisers Follow?" *Wall Street Journal,* Dec. 21, 1999, https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB945736068746402005.

Bruady, Leo. *The Hollywood Sign: Fantasy and Reality of an American Icon.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011.

Brayton, Sean. "Back-Lash': Revisiting the 'White Negro' Through Skateboarding." *Sociology of Sport Journal 22,* no. 3 (2005): 356-72.

---. "MTV's *Jackass:* Transgression, Abjection, and the Economy of White Masculinity."
      Journal of Gender Studies 16, no. 1 (2007): 57-72.

Brayton, Sean and Michelle T. Helstein. "The Athlete's Body and the Social Text of Suicide." In
      Sociocultural Examinations of Sports Concussions, edited by Matt Ventresca and Mary
      G. McDonald, 132-150. London: Routledge, 2020.

Bridge, Gavin. "Data: A Deep Dive into Sports Documentary Viewership." *Variety,* July 9,
      2021, https://variety.com/vip/data-a-deep-dive-into-sports-documentary-viewership-
      1235015077/.

Brown, Timothy. "Subcultures, Pop Music and Politics: Skinheads and 'Nazi' Rock in England
      and Germany." In *White Riot: Punk Rock and the Politics of Race*, edited by Stephen
      Duncombe and Maxwell Tremblay, 120-9. New York: Routledge, 2019.

Buckingham, David. "Skate Perception: Self-Representation, Identity, and Visual Style in a
      Youth Subculture." In *Video Cultures: Media Cultures and Everyday Creativity,* edited by
      David Buckingham and Rebekah Willet, 133-51. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

Butler, Judith. *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex.'* London: Routledge, 1993.

---. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity.* London: Routledge,
      1990.

Butz, Konstantin. *Grinding California: Culture and Corporeality in American Skate Punk.*
      Bielefeld: Transcript, 2012

---. "The Authenticity of a T-Shirt: Ryan Gosling, Roddy Dangerblood, and the
      Rebellious Genealogy of *Thrasher* Magazine." *Rock Music Studies* 4, no. 1 (2017): 47–
      56.

Butz, Konstantin and Christian Peters editors. *Skateboard Studies*. Cologne: Koenig Books,
      2018.

Bygre, Duane. "'Dogtown and Z-Boys,' THR's 2001 Sundance Film Festival Review." *The
      Hollywood Reporter,* Jan. 19, 2024, https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/movies/movie-
      news/dogtown-and-z-boys-review-1235792787/.

Canfield, Kevin. "MTV Hardens 'Jackass' Disclaimer, Moves Stunt Show to Later Hour."
      Hartford Courant (Hartford, CT), Feb. 22, 2001,
      https://www.courant.com/2001/02/22/mtv-hardens-jackass-disclaimer-moves-stunt-show-
      to-later-hour/#:~:text=MTV%20has%20quietly%20changed%20the,Joseph%20I.

Carayol, Seb. *Agents Provocateurs: 100 Subversive Skateboarding Graphics.* Richmond: Gingko
      Press, 2014.

Carlson, Peter. "Cruisin' for a Bruisin'." *Washington Post,* May 22, 2000, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle/2000/05/23/cruisin-for-a-bruisin/859d8da9-c331-409b-a05e-a576cee1eda4/.

Carrada, Erick and Mike Pompeo. "Tutorial: How to Film on a VX1000 Without Tapes." *Jenkem Magazine,* May 19, 2021, https://www.jenkemmag.com/home/2021/05/19/tutorial-film-vx1000-without-tapes/.

Carroll, Jordan S. "White-Collar Masochism: Grove Press and the Death of the Managerial Subject." *Twentieth-Century Literature* 64, no. 1 (2018): 1-24.

Castro, Alexis. "Will TikTok be the New Home for Skateboarding on the Internet." *Jenkem Magazine,* Sept. 13, 2023, https://www.jenkemmag.com/home/2023/09/13/will-tiktok-be-the-new-home-for-skateboarding-on-the-internet/.

Chivers Yochim, Emily. *Skate Life: Re-Imagining White Masculinity.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010.

Church, David. *Disposable Passions: Vintage Pornography and the Material Legacies of Adult Cinema.* New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016.

---. *Grindhouse Nostalgia: Memory, Home Video, and Exploitation Film Fandom.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015.

Cliver, Sean. *Jackass: The Movie – The Official Companion Book.* New York: MTV/Pocket Books, 2002.

Coles, Alex. "Video Essay: A History of the VX1000." *Jenkem Magazine,* Sept. 21, 2020, https://www.jenkemmag.com/home/2020/09/21/history-vx1000-skatings-favorite-camera/.

Colker, David and Elaine Wood. "Jay Adams Dies at 53; Legendary Skateboarder." *Los Angeles Times,* Aug. 15, 2014, https://www.latimes.com/local/obituaries/la-me-jay-adams-20140816-story.html.

Concepcion, Jason. "American Idiots: Remembering the '*Jackass*' Moment." *The Ringer,* Aug. 1, 2018, https://www.theringer.com/tv/2018/8/1/17638148/jackass-best-tv-episodes-johnny-knoxville.

Conrad, Tony. "At Last Real Movies: Super 8 Cinema from New York." In *Downtown Film & TV Culture,* edited by Joan Hawkins, 23-28. Chicago: Intellect, 2015.

Cook, Cameron and Ivan Lagos. "Leo Baker is Finding his Feet Again after Transitioning." *Huck,* Jan. 10, 2023, https://www.huckmag.com/article/leo-baker-is-finding-his-feet-again-after-transitioning.

Cook, David. "Orders of Magnitude I: Majors, Mini-Majors, 'Instant Majors,'" and Independents." In *Lost Illusions: American Cinema in the Shadow of Watergate and Vietnam, 1970-1979,* edited by David Cook, 301-36. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2000.

Cortez, Marisol. "Ambivalent Anality: Revisiting the Queer Ecologic of "the *Jackass* Moment." *Media + Environment* 4, no. 2 (2022): 1-28.

Couldry, Nick. "Reality TV, or the Secret Theater of Neoliberalism." *Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies* 30, no. 3 (2008): 1-19.

Courtney, Susan. *Hollywood Fantasies of Miscegenation: Spectacular Narratives of Gender and Race, 1903-1967.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.

"Craig Stecyk III Work Shop and Art Show." *Juice Magazine,* Nov. 9, 2011, https://juicemagazine.com/home/craig-stecyk-iii-work-shop-and-art-show/.

D'Orazio, Dax. "The Skate Video Revolution: How Promotional Film Changed Skateboarding Subculture." *The International Journal of Sport and Society* 11, no. 3 (2020): 55-72.

Davis, Ronald L. *The Glamour Factory: Inside Hollywood's Big Studio System.* Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1993.

Dinces, Sean. "Flexible Opposition': Skateboarding Subcultures under the Rubric of Late Capitalism." *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 28, no. 11 (2011): 1512-35.

Dobija-Nootens, Nic. "Tracing the History of Skateboarding's Most Famous Camera." *Jenkem Magazine,* July 13, 2018, https://www.jenkemmag.com/home/2018/07/13/tracing-history-skateboardings-most-famous-camera/.

Doernberg, Jerry. "Skateboarders Near Thin Ice: Valley Cities Ready to Outlaw Them or Stop Winking at Violations of Laws." *Los Angeles Times,* May 24, 1965. *ProQuest.*

"Domestic 2002 Weekend 43." Box Office Mojo. Accessed Mar. 21, 2024. https://www.boxofficemojo.com/weekend/2002W43/?ref_=bo_rl_table_1.

Donnelly, Joe. *L.A. Man: Profiles from a Big City and a Small World.* Los Angeles: Rare Bird Books, 2018.

Duane, Daniel. "The Long, Strange Tale of California's Surf Nazis." *New York Times,* Sept. 28, 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/28/opinion/sunday/surf-racism.html.

Duncombe, Stephen. *Notes from Underground: Zines and the Politics of Alternative Culture.* Portland: Microcosm Publishing, 2008.

Durant, Celeste. "Skateboard: Personal Rapid Transit, Southern California Style." *Los Angeles Times,* June 2, 1975. *ProQuest.*

Eason, David L. "The New Journalism and the Image-World: Two Modes of Organizing Experience." *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 1, no. 1 (1984): 51-65.

Edison Jr, Charles. "Movie Review: A Celebration of Skateboarding." *Los Angeles Times,* November 12, 1976. *ProQuest.*

Erwin, Jack. "The Oral History of the Making of the Search for Animal Chin." *Complex,* June 13, 2013. https://www.complex.com/sports/2013/06/animal-chin-oral-history/

Fairey, Shepard, Craig R. Stecyk III, and Aaron Rose. "Skate and Destroy." Art in the Streets. Accessed June 30, 2024. https://artinthestreets.org/text/skate-and-destroy.

Felando, Cynthia. "*Skaterdater:* Short Film, Long Ride." *Cineaction* no. 94 (2014): 51-5.

Finnegan, Jim. "Theoretical Tailspins: Reading 'Alternative' Performance in *Spin* Magazine." *Postmodern Culture* 10, no. 1 (1999). *Project MUSE.*

Friedman, Glen, and C.R. Stecyk III. *DogTown: The Legend of the Z-Boys.* New York: Burning Flags Press, 2019.

Friedman, Wayne. "Upfront Looks Good for MTV." *Television Week,* May 10, 2004. *ProQuest.*

Gelder, Ken. *Subcultures: Cultural Histories and Social Practice.* New York: Routledge, 2007.

Genette, Gerard. *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Gieseler, Carly. "Pranking Peter Pans: Performing Playground Masculinities in Extreme Sports." *Text and Performance Quarterly* 34, no. 4 (2014): 334-353.

Goldstein, Richard. "John Severson, Surfer Who Illustrated Allure of Waves, Dies at 83." *New York Times,* May 28, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/28/sports/john-severson-dead-surfer-magazine-artist.html?smid=url-share.

Goodwin, Andrew. *Dancing in the Distraction Factory: Music Television and Popular Culture.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992.

Gray, Jonathan. *Show Sold Separately: Promos, Spoilers, and Other Media Paratexts.* New York: New York University Press, 2010.

Greenberg, Joshua. *From Betamax to Blockbuster: Video Stores and the Invention of Movies on Video.* Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008.

Grigoriandis, Vanessa. "The Notorious B.A.M." *Rolling Stone,* May 27, 2004, 62-64. *ProQuest.*

Habib, Daniel G. "A World of Hurt Skating a Fine Line: Tony Hawk Protégé and 'Jackass' Co-Creator Bam Margera Has Parlayed Pains into Gains, First on TV and Now at the Box Office." *Sports Illustrated,* Oct. 14, 2002, https://vault.si.com/vault/2002/10/14/a-world-of-hurt-skating-a-fine-line-tony-hawk-protege-and-jackass-cocreator-bam-margera-has-parlayed-pain-into-gains-first-on-tv-and-now-at-the-box-office.

Hall, Scott and Tony Jefferson, editors. *Resistance Through Ritual: Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain.* London: Routledge, 1993.

Hamm, Keith David. *Scarred for Life: Eleven Stories about Skateboarders.* San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2004.

Harvey, David. "Flexible Accumulation: Through Urbanization: Reflections on 'Post-Modernism' in the American City." *Antipode* 19, no. 3 (1987): 260-86.

Harvey, Dennis. "Dogtown and Z-Boys: Skateboard Docu Off Track." *Variety,* Feb. 12-18, 2001. *ProQuest.*

Hawk, Tony (tonyhawk). "The Search for Animal Chin is now on YouTube! So no more borrowing your friend's worn-out VHS [VHS emoji]." Twitter, June 19, 2019, 11:32pm, https://twitter.com/tonyhawk/status/1141549391137820672.

Hawkins, Joan. *Cutting Edge: Art-Horror and the Horrific Avant-Garde.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000.

Hebdige, Dick. *Subculture: The Meaning of Style.* London: Metheun, 1979.

Heckler Magazine, *Declaration of Independents: Snowboarding, Skateboarding & Music – An Intersection of Cultures.* San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2001.

Hellmann, John. "Fables Of Fact: New Journalism Reconsidered." *The Centennial Review* 21, no. 4 (1977): 414-32.

Herbert, Daniel. *Videoland: Movie Culture at the American Video Store.* Berkely: University of California Press, 2014.

"Here Come the Sidewalk Surfers." *Life Magazine,* June 5, 1964. *EBSCO.*

Higgins, Matt. "On a Mission, and Rolling." *New York Times,* July 26, 2006, https://www.nytimes.com/2006/07/26/sports/othersports/26skateboard.html.

Hildebrand, Lucas. *Inherent Vice: Bootleg Histories of Videotape and Copyright.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2009.

Hoberman, James. "No Wavelength: The Para-Punk Underground." In *Downtown Film & TV Culture,* edited by Joan Hawkins, 15-20. Chicago: Intellect, 2015.

Holden, Stephen. "Film Review; Skating on Top of the World During an Endless Summer." *New York Times,* Apr. 26, 2002, https://www.nytimes.com/2002/04/26/movies/film-review-skating-on-top-of-the-world-during-an-endless-summer.html.

Horowitz, Joy. "Surf Nazis – Hoarding the Perfect Wave." *Washington Post,* Mar. 18, 1979, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle/1979/03/18/surf-nazis-hoarding-the-perfect-waves/545917f5-4ee4-48ca-b766-4cc8097f8bff/.

Hozic, Aida. *Hollyworld: Space, Power, and Fantasy in the American Economy.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001.

"I've Had so Much Fun with Cops." *OC Weekly* (Los Angeles, CA), Apr. 20, 2006, https://www.ocweekly.com/ive-had-so-much-fun-with-cops-6421833/.

"Jackass' Rules." *Variety,* May 14-20, 2001. *ProQuest.*

James, David. *Allegories of Cinema: American Film in the Sixties.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989.

"Jay Adams: The Freestyle and Vert Skateboarding Pioneer." Surfer Today. Accessed July 10, 2024. https://www.surfertoday.com/skateboarding/jay-adams-the-freestyle-and-vert-skateboarding-pioneer.

Jeffords, Susan. *Hard Bodies: Hollywood Masculinity in the Regan Era.* New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1994.

Johnson, David T. "Playgrounds of Unlimited Potential: Adaptation, Documentary, and *Dogtown and Z-Boys.*" *Adaptation* 2, no. 1 (2009): 1-16.

Johnson, Keire (animalshin). Instagram profile. Accessed July 10, 2024. https://www.instagram.com/animalshin/?hl=en.

Johnson, Michael. *New Journalism: The Underground Press, The Artists of Nonfiction, and Changes in the Established Media.* Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1971.

Jones, Rose Apodaca. "Surfer Magazine Owners Are Considering a Sale." *Los Angeles Times,* July 30, 1998, https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1998-jul-30-fi-8459-story.html.

Kang, Jay Caspian. "*Minding the Gap:* What It's About." Criterion. Jan. 12, 2021, https://www.criterion.com/current/posts/7240-minding-the-gap-what-its-about.

Kaplan, Ann. *Rocking Around the Clock: Music Television, Postmodernism, and Consumer*

Culture. New York: Methuen, 1987.

Kellner, Douglas. *Media Culture: Cultural Studies, Identity, and Politics in the Contemporary Moment.* New York: Routledge, 2021.

Kernan, Lisa. *Coming Attractions: Reading American Movie Trailers* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004).

Klinger, Barbara. *Beyond the Multiplex: Cinema, New Technologies, and the Home.* Berkely: University of California Press, 2006.

Kusz, Kyle. *Revolt of the White Athlete: Race, Media, and the Emergence of Extreme Athletes in America*. New York: Peter Lang, 2007.

---. "The Next Progression: Centering Race and Ethnicity in Skateboarding Studies." In *Skateboard Studies,* edited by Konstantin Butz and Christian Peters, 66-85. Cologne: Walther König, 2018.

Lagerwey, Jorie. "*Jackass* for President: Revitalizing an American Public Life Through the Aesthetics of the Amateur." *Spectator* 24, no. 1 (2004): 86-97.

Larson, Megan, "MTV Nets Comes to Upfronts With Dollar Signs in its Eyes." *Adweek,* May 3, 2004. *ProQuest.*

Lee, James. "How the VX1000 Infiltrated Porn." *Jenkem Magazine,* Oct. 3, 2017, https://www.jenkemmag.com/home/2017/10/03/vx1000-infiltrated-porn/.

"Leo Baker." Nike SB. Sept. 13, 2023. https://www.nikesb.com/articles/leo-baker.

Leonard, David. "To the White Extreme in the Mainstream: Manhood and White Youth Culture in a Virtual Sports World." In *Youth Cultures & Sport: Identity, Power, and Politics,* edited by Michael Giardina and Michele Donnelly, 91-112. New York: Routledge, 2008.

Levy, Dan. "Bones Brigade Chronicles: Craig Stecyk." *Juice Magazine,* December 2011.

---. "Bones Brigade Chronicles: Stacy Peralta." *Juice Magazine,* November 2011.

---. "Bones Brigade Chronicles: George Powell." *Juice Magazine,* November 2011.

Leydon, Joy. "*Jackass: The Movie* Review." *Variety,* Nov. 4-10, 2002. *ProQuest.*

"List of Magazine Issues." Skateboard Magazine Archive Blogspot. Accessed July 13, 2024. https://skatemagarchive.blogspot.com/p/list-of-magazine-issues.html.

Littleton, Cynthia. "Goodbye Viacom and CBS: Viacom CBS Changes Corporate Name to

Paramount." *Variety,* Feb. 15, 2002, https://variety.com/2022/film/news/viacomcbs-paramount-corporate-name-change-1235182825/.

Lonsdale, John. "Tony Hawk on CTE in Extreme Sports: 'It's Absolutely a Concern." *Men's Journal,* Dec. 4, 2017, https://www.mensjournal.com/sports/tony-hawk-on-cte-in-extreme-sports-its-absolutely-a-concern-w207982.

Louison, Cole. "In Empty Pools, Sport's Pioneer Found a Way to Make a Splash." *New York Times,* Aug. 17, 2014, https://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/18/sports/a-pioneer-on-a-skateboard-began-as-a-disciple-of-surfing-.html.

Lotz, Amanda. *The Television Will Be Revolutionized.* New York: New York University Press, 2007.

Ludwig, Mike. "Skatopia Might Become Subject of MTV Documentary Series." *The Athens News* (Athens, OH), Mar. 2, 2009. https://www.athensnews.com/news/local/skatopia-might-become-subject-of-mtv-documentary-series/article_b5b48286-8477-56e9-93b1-b577cc8457ef.html.

Maffesoli, Michael. *The Time of the Tribes: The Decline of Individualism in Mass Society.* London: Sage, 1996.

Malitsky, Joshua. "Knowing Sports: The Logic of Contemporary Sports Documentary." *Journal of Sport History* 41, no. 2 (2014): 205-214.

Marcus, Daniel. "From Participatory Video to Reality Television." In *The Companion to Reality Television,* edited by Laurie Ouellette, 134-154. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2014.

Marsh, Ari. "Dogtown Chronicles: Wes Humpston." *Juice Magazine,* December 2005, https://juicemagazine.com/home/dogtown-chronicles-wes-humpston/.

Mattchew. "VX1000 General Discussion (gear/set-ups, filming/editing, tips/advice, etc.)." Filming/Editing, SLAP, Oct. 24, 2016, https://www.slapmagazine.com/index.php?topic=93076.0.

McDonald, Ian. "Situating the Sports Documentary." *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 31, no. 3 (2007): 208-225.

McDuie-Ra, Duncan. *Skateboard Video: Archiving the City from Below.* Gateway East: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

"Media Briefs." *Los Angeles Times,* May 1, 1977. *ProQuest.*

Mermigas, Diane. "MTV Wants Bigger Share of Upfront." *Television Week,* May 12, 2003. *ProQuest.*

Milliken, Christie. "*Unheimlich* Maneuvers: The Genres and Genders of Transsexual Documentary." *The Velvet Light Trap* no. 41 (1998): 47-61.

Mosser, Jason. "What's Gonzo about Gonzo Journalism." *Literary Journalism Studies* 4, no. 1 (2012): 85-90.

Morris, Gary. "Beyond the Beach: Social and Formal Aspects of AIP's 'Beach Party' Movies." *Journal of Popular Film & Television,* 21, no. 1 (1993): 1-11

Mortimer, Sean. *Stalefish: Skateboard Culture from the Rejects Who Made It*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2008.

"MTV Cooks Up Another Season of the Sunday Stew." The Futon Critic. Feb. 10, 2005, http://www.thefutoncritic.com/news/2005/02/10/mtv-cooks-up-another-season-of-the-sunday-stew-premiering-sunday-march-6th-featuring-the-new-series-damage-control-plus-returning-favorites-punkd-pimp-my-ride-and-viva-la-bam-17821/20050210mtv01/.

Muggleton, David and Rupert Weinzierl. "What is 'Post-subcultural studies' Anyway." In *The Post-Subcultures Reader,* edited by David Muggleton and Rupert Weinzierl, 3-23. New York: Berg, 2003.

Murrell, Andrew. "How Worried Should Skaters Be About CTE?" *Jenkem Magazine,* Aug. 28, 2018, https://www.jenkemmag.com/home/2018/08/28/skateboarders-worried-cte/.

---. "Skateboarding Icon Jason Jessee is Under Fire for Use of Swastikas and Racist Remarks." *Vice,* May 24, 2018, https://www.vice.com/en/article/59q343/skateboarding-icon-jason-jessee-is-under-fire-for-use-of-swastikas-and-racist-remarks.

Murray, Tim. *Like a Film: Ideological Fantasy on Screen, Camera, and Canvas.* London: Routledge, 1993.

Newman, Michael. *Video Revolutions: On the History of a Medium.* New York: Columbia Press, 2014.

Nichols, Bill. *Introduction to Documentary.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017.

Nieratko, Chris. "Big Bro Interview: Bam Margera." *Big Brother Magazine* no. 74, July 2001, 81-90.

---. "Skateboarding's Most Provocative Graphics." *Vice,* Aug. 22, 2014, https://www.vice.com/en/article/4w77bn/skateboardings-most-provocative-graphics.

O'Connor, Paul. "Beyond the Youth Culture: Understanding Middle-Aged Skateboarders through Temporal Capital." *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 53, no. 8 (2018): 924-943.

---. *Skateboarding and Religion.* Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020.

O'Mahony, Mike. "Through a Glass Darkly: Reflections on Photography and the Visual Representation of Sport." *Historical Social Research* 43, no. 2 (2018): 25-38.

"Our Brands." The Arena Group. Accessed June 29, 2024. https://thearenagroup.net/our-brands/.

Peralta, Stacy (peraltastacy). "Post your Bones Brigade memories on Instagram with #bonesbrigade to unlock a download of The Search for Animal Chin animalch.in/d00." Twitter, Aug. 20, 2012, 3:26pm, https://twitter.com/peraltastacy/status/237631614031642624.

Plantinga, Carl. *Moving Viewers: American Film and the Spectator's Experience.* Berkely: University of California Press, 2009.

Platt, Lorne. "Rhythms of Urban Space: Skateboarding the Canyons, Plains, and Asphalt-Banked Schoolyards of Coastal Los Angeles in the 1970s." *Mobilities* 13, no. 6 (2018): 825-43.

"Playlist: The Search for Animal Chin," YouTube. Aug. 20, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLPAU9QCmrFTmKF52loepBZ-UcF2OoL-3I.

"Powell Peralta Axe Rated SD Download." Skate One. Accessed July 1, 2024, https://www.skateone.com/powell-peralta-axe-rated-sd-download.

Reynolds, Bill. "On the Road to Gonzo: Hunter S. Thompson's Early Literary Journalism (1961-1970)." *Literary Journalism Studies* 4, no. 1 (2012): 51-84.

Rinehart, Robert. "Surf Film Then & Now: *The Endless Summer* Meets *Slow Dance.*" *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 39, no. 6 (2015): 545-61.

Roenigk, Alyssa. "Doctors Say Late BMX Legend Dave Mirra Had CTE." *ESPN,* May 24, 2016, https://www.espn.com/action/story/_/id/15614274/bmx-legend-dave-mirra-diagnosed-cte.

Rose, Aaron, Ben Weaver and Andrew Holmes. *Dysfunctional*. London: Booth-Clibborn, 1999

Sayer, Chris. "10 Best Skate Movies." Red Bull, Nov. 29, 2019, https://www.redbull.com/us-en/best-skateboarding-movies.

Schaeffer, Eric. *Bold! Daring! Shocking! True: A History of Exploitation Films, 1919-1959.* Durham: Duke University Press, 1999.

Sconce, Jeffrey, editor. *Sleaze Artists: Cinema at the Margins of Taste, Style, and Politics.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2007.

Scott, A.O. "Film Review: It Has a Misleading Title, But Not for the First Word." *New York*

Times, Oct. 26, 2002, https://www.nytimes.com/2002/10/26/movies/film-review-it-has-a-misleading-title-but-not-for-the-first-word.html.

---. "And Now Let's Review…" *New York Times,* Mar. 17, 2023. https://www.nytimes.com/2023/03/17/movies/film-critic-ao-scott.html.

Sheppard, Samantha and Travis Vogan. Introduction to *Critical Readings of the Sports Documentary,* 1-10. Edited by Samantha Sheppard and Travis Vogan. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2020.

"SkateBoarder Magazine Archives." Transworld Skateboarding. July 1, 2017, https://skateboarding.transworld.net/skateboarder-magazine-archives.

"Skateboarding Legend Tony Hawk Teams up with Qunol." Qunol Blog. Accessed July 10, 2024. https://www.qunol.com/blogs/blog/qunolandtonyhawk.

"Slayer to Perform on MTV's *Viva La Bam.*" Blabbermouth.Net. Apr. 13, 2004, https://blabbermouth.net/news/slayer-to-perform-on-mtv-s-viva-la-bam.

Smith, Jonathan. "Maybe We Shouldn't Be So Quick to Idolize a Gay-Bashing Skateboarder." *Vice,* Aug. 19, 2014, https://www.vice.com/en/article/jmbbk3/maybe-we-shouldnt-be-so-sentimental-about-a-gay-bashing-skateboarder-658.

Smith, Luke. "How *Drive to Survive* Remade Formula One for America." *The Athletic,* Feb. 24, 2023, https://theathletic.com/4245028/2023/02/24/formula-1-drive-to-survive-american-fans/.

Spitz, Marc. "*Jackass:* An Oral History." *Maxim,* Oct. 26, 2010, https://www.maxim.com/entertainment/jackass-oral-history/.

Stauff, Markus. "The Assertive Image: Referentiality and Reflexivity in Sports Photography." *Historical Social Research,* 43, no. 2 (2018): 53-71.

Stella, Renato. "The Amateur Roots of Gonzo Pornography." *Porn Studies* 3, no. 4 (2016): 351-361.

"Steve Nemsick." IMdB. Accessed July 10, 2024. https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0626011/?ref_=tt_ov_dr.

Suárez, Juan Antonio. *Bike Boys, Drag Queens, & Superstars: Avant-Garde, Mass Culture, and Gay Identities in the 1960s Underground Cinema.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996.

Sueyoshi, Amy. "Skate and Create: Skateboarding, Asian Pacific America, and Masculinity." *Ameriasia Journal* 41, no. 2 (2015): 2-24.

Sullivan, Brian Ford. "Cable Upfront Presentations: MTV." The Futon Critic. May 3, 2003, http://www.thefutoncritic.com/news/2003/04/03/cable-upfront-presentations-mtv-15862/5852/.

Sumner, David. *The Magazine Century: American Magazines Since 1900.* New York: Peter Lang, 2010.

Sykes II, Mike D. "It's 2022 and People are Still Somehow Hilariously Not Recognizing Tony Hawk When They See Him." *USA Today,* Apr. 7, 2022, https://ftw.usatoday.com/lists/tony-hawk-skateboarding-nobody-knows-him-anymore.

Templeton, Ed. *Wires Crossed.* New York: Aperture, 2023.

Thompson, Robert. *Television's Second Golden Age: From Hill Street Blues to ER.* Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1997.

Thornton, Sarah. *Club Cultures: Music, Media, and Subcultural Capital*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1996.

"The Thrasher Mag Archives," Thrasher Magazine. Accessed July 11, 2024. https://www.thrashermagazine.com/covers/

"Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4." VGChartz. Accessed Mar. 21, 2024. https://www.vgchartz.com/game/6512/tony-hawks-pro-skater-4/.

Tourino, Christina Marie. "The Leisured Testes: While Ball-Breaking as Surplus Masculinity in *Jackass.*" *The Journal of Popular Culture* 48, no. 4 (2015): 691-702.

"Troy Miller." IMdB. Accessed July 8, 2024. https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0382501/fullcredits/?ref_=ttco_sa_1.

Tryon, Chuck. *Reinventing Cinema: Movies in the Age of Media Convergence.* New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2009.

"USA Skateboarding National Team Announced." *Transworld Skateboarding,* Mar. 19, 2019, https://www.skateboarding.com/news/usa-skateboarding-olympic-team-announced.

Vogan, Travis. *ESPN: The Making of a Sports Empire.* Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2015.

Wallenstein, Andrew. "MTV Presents Unified Upfront: Viacom Positions Channels to go After Big 4 Ads." *The Hollywood Reporter,* May 7, 2003. *ProQuest.*

Wasser, Frederick. *Veni Vidi Video: The Hollywood Empire and the VCR.* Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001.

West, Amy. "Caught on Tape: A Legacy of Low-tech Reality." In *The Spectacle of the Real: From Hollywood to Reality TV and Beyond,* edited by Geoff King, 83-92. Portland: Intellect Books, 2005.

Westwick, Peter and Peter Neushul. *The World in the Curl: An Unconventional History of Surfing.* New York: Crown, 2013.

Weyland, Jocko. *The Answer is Never*. New York: Grove Press, 2002.

Wheaton, Belinda. "Lifestyle Sport Magazines and the Discourses of Sporting Masculinity." *The Sociological Review* 51, no. 1 (2003): 193–221.

Wheaton, Belinda, and Becky Beal. "'Keeping It Real': Subcultural Media and the Discourses of Authenticity in Alternative Sport." *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 38, no. 2 (2003): 155-76.

Willing, Indigo, Andy Bennet, and Mikko Piispa. "Skateboarding and the "Tired Generation': Ageing in Youth Cultures and Lifestyle Sports." *Sociology* 53, no. 3 (2019): 503-518.

Willing, Indigo, Ben Green, and Adele Pavlidis. "The 'Boy Scouts' and 'Bad Boys' of Skateboarding: A Thematic Analysis of the Bones Brigade." *Sport in Society* 23, no. 5 (2020): 832-846.

Willard, Michael Nevin. "Skate and Punk at the Far End of the American Century." In *America in the Seventies*, edited by Beth Bailey and David Farber, 181-207 Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2003.

Winston, Matthew. "How do You Like America: Hunter S. Thompson and Gonzo Sports Journalism." *Journalism Studies* 16, no. 3 (2015): 403-416.

Wolfe, Tom. "The 'Me' Decade and the Third Great Awakening." *New York Magazine,* August 1976, https://nymag.com/article/tom-wolfe-me-decade-third-great-awakening.html.

Wyatt, Justin. "Independents, Packaging, and Inflationary Pressure in 1980s Hollywood." In *A New Pot of Gold: Hollywood, 1980-1989,* edited by Stephen Prince, 142-59. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2000.

Young, Paul. *The Cinema Dreams Its Rivals: Media Fantasy Films from Radio to the Internet.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006.

Zaleski, Luke and J. Grant Brittain. "Tony Hawk and the Bones Brigade Tell the Story of Legendary Skate Video 'Animal Chin." *GQ,* Aug. 15, 2007. https://www.gq.com/story/tony-hawk-bones-brigade-animal-chin-oral-history.

SIMON VANGEL

PhD Candidate, Department of English, Syracuse University
Lecturer, Department of Composition and Communications, SUNY Morrisville
sastaple@syr.edu – vangels@morrisville.edu - (347) 436-6758

Education

PhD Candidate	English, Syracuse University	2017–2024

Dissertation: *Subcultural Textuality: Skateboarding and the Politics of Subcultural Media*
       Defense date: August 8, 2024

Bachelor of Arts	English & Communications, Syracuse University	2012–2016

Teaching

SUNY MORRISVILLE, DEPARTMENT OF COMPOSITION AND COMMUNICATIONS
LECTURER (2024–present)
       COMP 100: College Composition (Fall 2024)
       COMP 102: Writing about Literature (Fall 2024)
       COMM 100: Critical Readings (Fall 2024)

SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY, DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
INSTRUCTOR OF RECORD (2019–2024)
       ENG 145: Reading Popular Culture (Fall 2019, Spring 2022)
       ENG 154: Interpretation of Film (Spring 2020, Spring 2024)
       ENG 155: Interpretation of Nonfiction (Fall 2020, Spring 2021, Fall 2021)
       ENG 171: World Cinema, Beginnings to Present (Fall 2023)

TEACHING ASSISTANT (2017-2019)
       ENG 154: Interpretation of Film (Spring 2018, Spring 2019)
       ENG 170: American Cinema, Beginnings to Present (Fall 2017)
       ENG 171: World Cinema, Beginnings to Present (Fall 2018)

TEACHING MENTOR (2020-2022)
       Graduate School Teaching Assistant Orientation Program (Summers 2020, 2021, 2022)

ONONDAGA COMMUNITY COLLEGE
ADJUNCT ENGLISH FACULTY, HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES (2023–2024)
       ENG 103: Freshman Composition (Fall 2023)
       ENG 104: Freshman Composition II (Spring 2024)

Publicly Engaged Humanities

WRITE OUT (2021–present)
       Community writing project partnering SU and SUNY ESF students with after-school programs that
       work primarily with first-generation immigrants, New Americans, and other students from
       traditionally underrepresented groups, especially girls of color.

Community Program Director (2023–present)
>Girls Inc, at the YWCA (Syracuse, NY)

Publications Manager (2023-present)
>*Write Out: A Collection of Creative Writing* (chapbook featuring student writing, 2023 & 2024)
>*Words on the Move* (art installation featuring student writing, 2023)

Writing Mentor (2021–2023)
>Girls Inc, at the YWCA (Syracuse, NY)
>North Side Learning Center (Syracuse, NY)

Awards

>2022-2023 Graduate School Research Excellence Dissertation Fellowship (Syracuse University)
>2022 Cheryl F. Plawsky Summer Fellowship (Syracuse University)
>2022 Master of Philosophy in English (Syracuse University)
>2021 English Department Dissertation Fellowship (Syracuse University)
>2020 Graduate School Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award (Syracuse University)
>2019 Stony Brook University English Graduate Conference Best Paper Award (SUNY Stony Brook)
>2016 Honors Distinction: *Magna Cum Laude* (Syracuse University)

Presentations

>"Dogtown, *SkateBoarder Magazine,* and the Limits of Subcultural Textuality," conference paper, Popular Culture Association Annual Conference, Material Culture panel, April 13-16, 2022 (virtual)

>"Punks and Stunts: Skate Media, *Jackass,* and a Pragmatic Approach to Transmedia Genre," conference paper, Stony Brook University English Graduate Conference, March 1, 2019 (Stony Brook, NY)

References

Roger Hallas
Professor
Department of English, Syracuse University
Hall of Languages
University Pl, Syracuse, NY 13244
rhallas@syr.edu
(315) 436-5460

Will Scheibel
Professor and Chair
Department of English, Syracuse University
Hall of Languages
University Pl, Syracuse, NY 13244
lschebe@syr.edu
(315) 443-4950

Matt DelConte
Professor of English and Chair
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Onondaga Community College

Mawhinney Hall
4585 West Seneca Turnpike
Syracuse, NY 13215
delcontm@sunyocc.edu
(315) 498-2126