BROKEN FINGERS

freestyle skateboarding quarterly



Longboard Freestyle

Ryan Brynelson

The Roundup!



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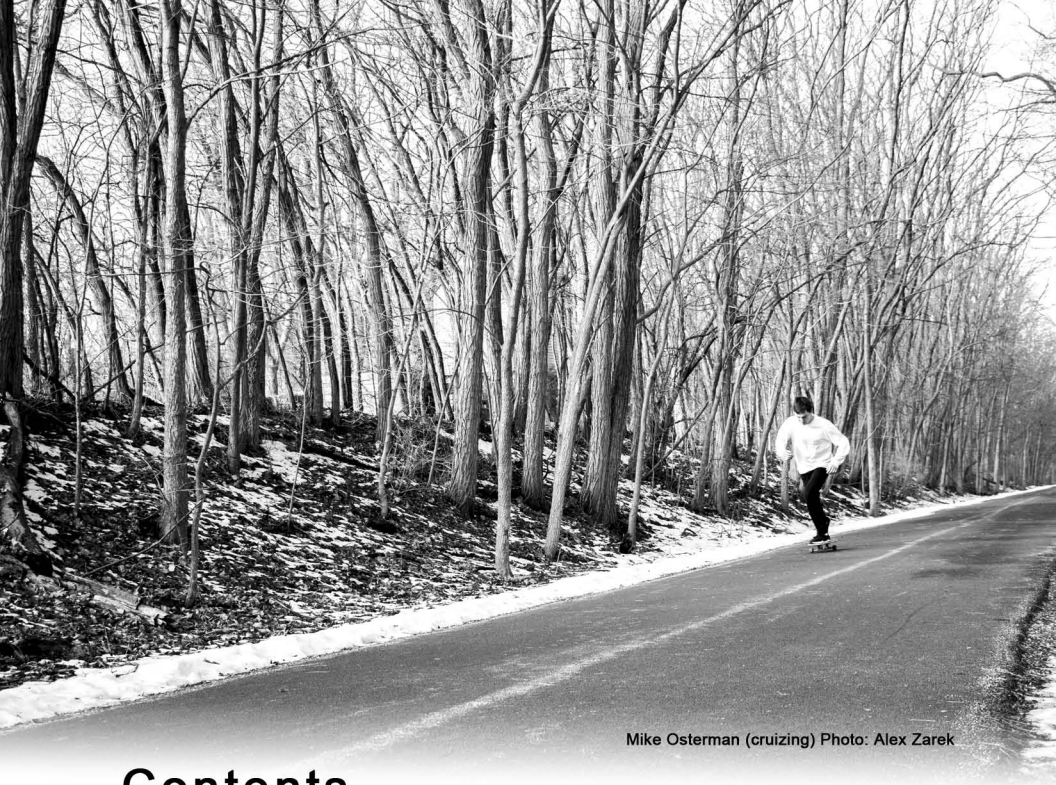
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Cover Photo: Ryan Brynelson (cross armed sidewinder) by: Jim Goodrich
top: Gary Holl(540 Shuvit) Farid A Abraham



Nenad Kocic (No-handed 50-50) Photo: Nicolas Heitz



Mike Osterman (cruizing) Photo: Alex Zarek

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Benton Farquhar (Rail Flip) Photo: James Farquhar



Jason Quinn Photo: Christian Barnard



Longboard Freestyle

By Bob Loftin

"Every freestyler should also ride a longboard".

Those are the words (approximately) of my podcasting partner Tony Gale.

Few who've seen his current freestyle would argue when I say that Tony is easily one of the best freestylers in the world right now. But I remember years ago, when Tony was but a wee lad, he wasn't so smooth or powerful in his skating. He had some good tricks back in those days, but he had that gangly teenaged style. It may have been the giant pants and chain wallet too. Not sure.

Then Tony did the best thing he's ever done for his freestyle. He stopped freestyling.

Tony spent his university years mostly just riding a longboard. A pin tail. No nose, no tail. Just a long skateboard with wide trucks -- set loose -- and big soft wheels. Tony rode hills. He turned. A lot of freestylers never turn. They don't carve. Technical freestyle often demands tight trucks, which of course obliterates the flow created by turning your board.

When Tony returned to the freestyle board there was an obvious and positive change in his skating. Regarding the benefits of longboarding for the freestyler, Tony notes "The importance of fluidity. Of carving, of turning without tic-tac-ing, of smooth movements."

"In all seriousness, my viewpoint is that too many freestylers approach skating as a largely static, trick-based activity. They focus so much on just landing another flip. Longboarding - at least the way I approached it - taught me to disregard tricks completely. It was all about movement. Carving, cross-stepping, turning."

In my memory, freestyle boards started to evolve to their current form in about 1978, as skaters began to drill their front trucks back and focus on new flip tricks and rail tricks. Before that, you would often see freestyle done on what was then an all-around setup. But even before that, when the age of the urethane wheel as in its infancy, freestyle was done by at least one on a longboard.

While it had probably been done before, Tom Sims (founder of Sims Skateboards) is the first person I know to have ridden a longboard in freestyle. Video is available on Youtube for the doubters. Later, freestyle legend Chris Chaput utilized longboards in his freestyle routines. There's even some footage of Bruce Walker riding a longboard in freestyle in the 1980s. Then, as freestyle went underground, it seems the longboard disappeared for a while.

Now, jump to the 2000s. A guy named Adam Colton, inspired by footage of Chris Chaput's smooth board walking moves, begins to popularize longboard freestyle on 60" homemade boards. Within 5 years, longboard "dancing", as Adam calls it, has taken hold in the growing longboard community. But guess what -- it's freestyle. 100% freestyle. It may not look like a classic 1980s freestyle routine, but it's freestyle.

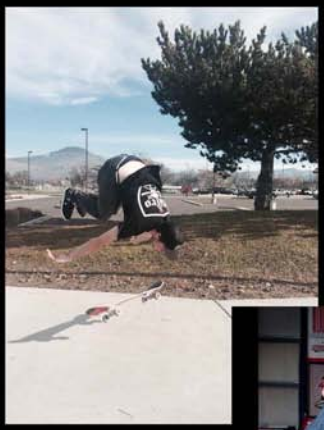
A few years ago the longboarders started to come out to the Philly Freestyle contest. In 2013 I decided to ride a longboard in the Masters division, and I was stoked to see Steven Vera, of Bustin Boards, and El Paso's Garrett Danger Morrison both riding longboards in the Amateur division. Both guys killed it, and showed a different way to think about flatground skating.

So here's my advice. Get yourself a longboard. Get one that will challenge you. Don't get one that is like a longer freestyle board. Those are great and fun, but the point is to learn to skate a little differently, not transfer all your tricks to a larger board. Get a board that is built for carving, with a wheelbase over 22". Get some 65mm or 70mm wheels in the 78a - 86a hardness range. Get some trucks that turn. Roll. Bend your knees. Grab the rail. Go fast. Roll over stuff. Really feel the turn. Feel your center of gravity driving through the board into the street as you carve next to the curb.

Your freestyle will thank you.

That's all. Get on it. BL

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Nenad Kocic (fingerflip) Photo: Nicolas Heitz



Gary Holl (One foot wheelie) Photo: ss



Five Underrated Tricks
By Tony Gale

So, in the last issue I ranted about the worst possible tricks in freestyle, and while I stand behind that list 100 percent, I don't want people to think I'm an entirely negative person. So here, for the follow-up, is my list of the most underrated tricks in freestyle.

1) The G-turn.

I think the g-turn has been largely overlooked over the last few years. It's one of the most basic and fundamental moves, dating back almost to the dawn of freestyle itself, but honestly, it's so much goddamned fun. There are few things on a skateboard that feel better than going into a g-turn at high speed, no matter which version you opt for. And when you see someone who's really mastered the g-turn, and can get multiple turns, with smooth, flowing style, there's few things more visually striking.

2) The Hang-Ten Spacewalk.

This is a weird one. Often accompanied by the dreaded Windmill Arms of Death™, it can look like absolute ass, and could — in the wrong hands — have ended up on the previous list. But as anyone who's seen the Casper Video will attest, they don't have to be that way. Grogan's one is fast, snappy, and, most importantly, looks good. The problem is that they're insanely difficult to do well. I've heard rumors of people practicing them for half-an-hour every day for months just to get them to an acceptable level, and I can well believe it.

3) The Primo Slide.

As mentioned in the last article, the coconut wheelie has been the go-to trick for many freestylers. Everyone and their auntie wants to learn them, and I can

understand why; they're fun, they're fast, they're an eye-catching trick, and they're something that looks like a Primo slide that you can do EVERYWHERE. (The latter is certainly why I learned them.) The downside to this is that the classic Primo slide is pretty much falling by the wayside — but I don't mean the nasty, axle-nut-grinding, straight-sliding, smooth-surface flip-in-and-out one that every kid learns. I mean the proper, fast, balls-out, kick-it-backside-and-make-it-scream Primo slide that the man himself does. There's something raw and primal about it that makes it deeply satisfying to do, and the coconut wheelie (or aforementioned ersatz-Primo) never really replicates that feeling.

So what if it demolishes your deck in two sessions and you can't do it on asphalt? It's gnarly with a capital fuck you, and that's something freestyle is largely missing. Plus, it sounds like a dying orca whale and gets the attention of everyone within a two-mile radius, which is always a plus.

4) Casper Spins

You know how I said a few paragraphs ago that few things feel better than a g-turn? A really locked-in casper spin might just beat it. Honestly, it's a great feeling, sailing around on an upside-down board. I don't know why you don't see casper spins more often — maybe it's because they're difficult to do without shuffling (see last issue's article on how I feel about that) or the fact they demolish the tail of your board, but I imagine now that Mullen's dropped a clip of him 360 flipping out of one to rail, we'll be seeing a sudden rise in popularity of the good ol' casper spin. And also, probably, a rise in board sales.

(It's worth pointing out at this point that while fakie backside casper spins, i.e. the standard casper spin, are easy; going the other way is hard as hell. The first person who sends me footage of them doing a clean, non-shuffled frontside casper spin that goes at least 540 degrees wins. I don't know what, actually. Stickers, maybe? A Jimmy'z hat? I don't know. I'll find something. I just want to see it done.)

5) Kickbacks

I'm starting this with a disclaimer: Kickbacks and I don't get on. We never have. It's a mutual loathing, I think. The damn things always want to kill me. Too much flip, too little flip, unwanted rotation — you name it, they'll do it. For 10 sodding years, I've wanted to do a rolling kickback as clean as Tommy Harward's one in the night section of the Casper Video, and I've never managed. That's why I'm so bloody impressed with Jesse Whalen's mastery of the kickback; it's a fiddly trick, but it's one that looks amazing. I can only assume that other people don't touch them for the same reasons I've never filmed one. But like the hang-ten spacewalk, I think they're worth the persistence. Who knows — maybe in another 10 years I'll finally do them justice.

Special bonus mention: Anything Hans Smit has done, ever.

I remember the first time I saw Hans Smit skate in person. It was the amateur division of the 2006 World Championships, and honestly, it made my hair stand on end. The combination of a popular, uptempo and energetic tune and perfectly flowing footwork proved that you don't necessarily need the biggest flip tricks or pogo combos to wow a crowd, and that a two-minute run — even when it's not flawless — can really work from start to finish.

I know I'm being slightly flippant here (although I do really love Hans' skating, and wish he'd do more of it nowadays), but that one run still sends shivers up my spine when I think about it. While freestylers worldwide are arguing about jam formats versus one-minute runs versus two-minute runs, and mocking footwork as "gay ballerina stuff," I'd like to hold up that one moment in time as proof that the classic footwork-laden two-minute run can be a truly spectacular thing. You just have to be really good at it, and Hans Smit is.

TG



Mike Osterman (rail flip) Photo: Alex Zarek



Benton Farquhar (one wheeler) Photo: James Farquhar


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Ryan Brynelson (double board rolling handstand) Photo: Break Your Crayons Collective



Ryan Brynelson (two board nose 360s) Photo: Jordan Strong



Ryan Brynelson

By Tony Gale

I guess we should start at the beginning. Let's get the basic details out of the way first.

I'm Ryan Brynelsen, I'm from Canada, I'm 22 years old, and I've been skating for about 8 years now.

You know, a while back I had a conversation with Callum Bowran about our generation. Although there's a couple of years between us, Callum and I realized we're the old guard in this generation now. I remember when you and Mike Osterman, who was interviewed in the first issue, were just starting out, and now you've got pro models and you're ripping.

Thank you! Yeah, Mike's still out there killing it, I mean with all the technical ollie tricks and flip tricks he has. Jeez, I can't do anything like that. Maybe we're on opposite ends on some sense. Like, it's funny, I can ollie, but any of the ollie flip tricks, even the basic ollie kickflip, I can't do. So I would just try to work around that weakness and focus on truck tricks, or handstands, or whatever, anything that the average skater was doing I couldn't, so I worked around that weakness.

So is that what got you into freestyle in the first place?

Well, I was just skating street, and I could ollie and do some few basic things, and then I ended up breaking my arm pretty badly. It was this weird compound fracture, where it twisted. You know how you've got two bones in your forearm?

Oh, one of those breaks where it turns into a spiral?

Yeah; it was pretty bad. I wasn't going to be able to skate during my first summer, so I was pretty bummed. My uncle heard about what happened, and he was actually good friends with Monty Little, so he and Monty got me over to Kevin Harris' place for the 2007 World Championships where I met Gary Holl, Christian Opperman, Rene Shigueto, and Kevin Harris. I'd seen a few videos of freestyle skateboarding but I didn't know it was still alive today, and I just saw this different type of skating and went, "Wow, I want to get into this." So I just started from there. After a year of practicing, I met Kevin Harris again, and I said to him, "Hey, remember me? I was at your house for this barbecue thing." And he kinda remembered me, so I showed him what I'd been practicing over the year, just basics like a truck trick to a sidewinder, something like that, something that was pure freestyle. And from there he started teaching me, so I went on and kept going from there.

My god. What an introduction to freestyle! To be dropped into that, having Kevin Harris on your doorstep, and being able to pick his brain about things.

Yeah, I was definitely very, very fortunate to have that introduction to it, and it would always help keep me going. I'd hang out with Kevin, and I'd show him a new trick, and he'd get excited. I was just this young kid, always looking up to him, and always wanting to learn a new trick, thinking, "I wonder how Kevin will react to this the next time I see him!." So that was the thing that kept me going, and before I knew it, I was practicing more and more on my own.

It's also really interesting in that it fits in with this theory that I have in that freestyle today is—at least with our generation and those younger—largely dominated with people who've come from street skating. It's not like years ago where people might have seen freestyle and said , "That looks fun. I'll try that," without having done street first. And most of those people are exposed to it from Rodney Mullen, so they associate freestyle with technical flip tricks predominately of the stationary variety, and as a result there's people who only want to do railtricks, pogos and caspers. In comparison, you've obviously got that Harris lineage and connection, and it shows in your skating. It's a totally different approach. Do you think if you'd not met Harris, your trick set would be completely different?

Hmm, I don't know. Everyone's different and we all have our own different preferences. One size doesn't fit all, and ollie flip tricks—like 360 flips, inward heelflips, that sort of thing—just never really worked for me. Of course, nothing's impossible, but I just didn't enjoy it as much as other people. I remember practicing an ollie kickflip because everyone said you had to be able to do it, and I just didn't really like that. On the other hand, I enjoyed practicing truck tricks. But when I got bored of those I'd start trying manuals, and after that I'd start working on handstands, and then spins. I'd look at a street skater practicing a kickflip and a 360 flip and all these ollie flip tricks, and for me, I'd get bored practicing just one category of tricks. It'd just start to feel the same.

I find the idea of only doing one style of trick pretty mind-numbing. I mean, you can argue that 360 flips and laser flips are two completely different tricks but their starting point is the same and they fundamentally feel the same to me.

Ryan Brynelson (no handed pogo) Photo: Break Your Crayons Collective





Ryan Brynelson (finger flip) Photo: Jordan Strong

Exactly, that's exactly it. Kevin Harris brought up a good point. He'd look at someone technical like Guenter, and he'd look at someone like Takashi Suzuki, and they're doing two totally different things. He went so far as to say that they're almost like two different sports. We put it all under the name of freestyle skateboarding, but they're two radically different approaches. Again, one size doesn't fit all. You look at longboarding now, and there's a ton of people who are into longboarding, but they'd never get into skateboarding otherwise.

The freestyle scene in Japan (where you lived recently), from an outsider's perspective, is huge! So what's the reception to freestyle both from the public and the general skateboarding populace in Japan?

Freestyle in Japan is awesome. I think a lot of people have it in their heads that when I go to the skatepark I'm skating with a ton of freestylers, and that's not the case. But there are definitely a lot of freestylers around, and it wouldn't be too much of a foreign thing to someone in Japan skating street or vert if they came across a freestyler. They wouldn't start freaking out and saying, "Oh, you skate like Rodney Mullen." They'd come up to you and ask, "Oh, how long have you been doing freestyle skateboarding?" or "Where do you usually practice your freestyle skateboarding?" They always use the phrase "freestyle skateboarding," which I thought was really cool.

I feel like in Japan there's not so much of a barrier between the different styles of skateboarding. Everyone's willing to try everything. Whereas I feel like elsewhere, you look at how big street skateboarding has gotten, and people think that is skateboarding, and if you want to be a good skateboarder, you have to skate like these people, and there's all these sponsors and incentives for people who do that sort of skateboarding very well. We've got it very much drilled into us through these companies, sponsors and incentives that skateboarding is just street skating in our common culture, whereas in Japan, people are a little more open. Look at someone like Gou Miyagi or Chopper from the Osaka Daggers. We see these guys from the outside and we think that they're probably living off sponsorships, but in Japan nobody, and I mean nobody, is making a living as a professional skateboarder. Every single professional skateboarder is working a normal job, and I think because of that, they don't have companies saying if you don't skate like this you can't make a living off of skateboarding. That could be one of the reasons people are a little more open and look at freestyle or any other kind of skateboarding and just take it with a grain of salt and enjoy it more. I don't want it to come off as me trying to say everyone outside of Japan is just skating for money, but I think things like that definitely do play a factor.

Anyway, with all this talk about sponsorship, we should probably talk about the fact that you just went pro. Congratulations on that! And that's for Protest, right?

Yeah, Protest Skateboards.

How did you get involved with them? What's the deal there?

Well, after about one year of freestyle skateboarding, I started looking at different events and I found this contest series that Hippie Mike was running. In Vancouver, we have a lot of different skateparks so he'd go to a different one every weekend in the summer and have a contest, so I decided to go to one of these. I'd never entered a skateboarding contest before, and normally he just has a bunch of street skaters in these things so I was the only freestyler. The first contest I entered he gave me second, and some people weren't exactly stoked with that, but he was all over it.

One thing I have to say about Hippie Mike is he's all about skateboarding, so when he had these contests, he'd never say, "Oh, it's a street contest" or "Oh, this is a vert contest." He'd just let anyone skate in any style. I went to another contest and I'd see one or two other freestylers, vert skaters, street, guys doing all sorts of weird things. There's this one kid called Django who skates on his knee, which is weird but he totally rips. So I kept entering these contests and got to know Hippie Mike over the years, and before the first World Round-Up he gave me a call and talked to me about putting me on Protest, and sponsored me the day before that event. We kept building our relationship and doing different things. I started doing more demos with Kevin Harris, and while doing these demos I'd be handing out Protest stickers.

So regarding your pro model, I just want to say that it's good to see a freestyle board which actually has a good graphic because most freestyle models— and not just recently, but going all the way back—have had some terrible graphics It's almost like a running joke, like freestyle companies are trying to outdo each other, so it's nice to see one that actually looks really good! Where did that come from? Who drew it up?

It was one of Hippie Mike's; he drew it up, and I had no idea about it. He mentioned something about a pro model before, talking about it and saying "Hey, what do you think of this?" and I said it'd be cool but I didn't know what he wanted to do with it. always liked lions so I said he should just stick a lion on there, and from there, do what he's got to do. I'm definitely no artist—I'm terrible at drawing—so when it comes to stuff like that I just leave it to the professionals. I was living in Japan at the time when he drew it up, so I guess he just went with it. When I came back to Vancouver for the World Round-Up, he gave me a ride to the contest and said "can you get that board from the back?" and when I went to grab it for him, it was my pro model!

So what's the plan for the future? Are you heading back out to Japan?

I just got back from Japan last week, actually. I was going to a Japanese language school, and I've been studying Japanese since I was younger. In Vancouver, there's a ton of Japanese people, so even before I went to Japan, I was speaking a lot of Japanese. It was definitely one of the best experiences of my life. I had a fantastic time out there. They started exploring different ptions for me for the future. I just thought I was going for Japanese lessons for the year, but it was so much more than that.They really cared about the

Ryan Brynelson (rail handstand) Photo: Break Your Crayons Collective

different students, and wanted to make sure their lives in Japan would go well, so they offered different things: looking for jobs, colleges, university. And one of the teachers, in particular, was very supportive and encouraging, saying "You need to go to university here!" It's something I'd always wanted to do but I never thought it was really a viable option, but she showed me the system for foreigners to get into a Japanese university, and I realized it was actually something I could do, so I've decided I'll actually be going back next April or May, and I'll go on a working holiday for the year just to get ready for university.

What is it you're going to study, then?

I'm looking at linguistics.

Let's do three top threes. So, if you could only have three favorite tricks, what could you go for?

Ones I can do now, or three I'd like to be able to do?

Let's have a list of both.

Okay. So spins, spins are a ton of fun; handstand kickflips; and cross-armed sidewinders!

So, three dream tricks. As wild as you want.

No-handed carousels would definitely be up there!

That's a hell of a trick. I was massively impressed with that one.

Thank you! But the consistency really isn't there yet. That's a trick I get two or three times a day. So, yeah. Definitely want to get those up there. But as far as tricks go, I I think I'd rather develop my style more, and I want to be able to skate faster, so I'm not as focused on tricks, more doing the things I can already do more consistently and cleaner. Oh, and I definitely want to be able to hit higher spins. I'd like to one day get into the 50s, and with steel wheels, maybe hit 100 one day.

On a personal note, I suck at spins. I always wanted to get good at them, but I get far too dizzy and it upsets me. I wanted to get 10 by the end of the year, and I got up to 7, and then I blew my bushings and pivot cups, swapped them out, changed trucks, and now I'm back down to doing three. Gone.

I wouldn't look at it as being gone. You've still got that balance there, you've just got to work out a new way to balance. All that work hasn't gone to waste. I'm sure if you practiced in this other area, what you learned before will come back, and you'll probably be better as a whole. It's just a patience game, and I had dial-up internet until I was 15, so if anyone knows patience!

Okay, let's rein this in, otherwise we'll be talking about freestyle forever. So let's end with two more lists of three, because I like picking your brain on these things. How about the top three board graphics? What do you reckon?

Definitely Kevin Harris' model; it's so Canadian! Oh, jeez, who else? Oh! The Marco Sassi Decomposed boards; he Samurai ones. And the third, you know, I've been really stoked on Kilian's Powell graphic.



Ryan Brynelson (getting shot) Photo: Break Your Crayons Collective

Yeah, that one's great. So for the last one, three freestylers that you find interesting or enjoy watching.

Obviously Mike Osterman. I enjoy watching his skating for sure. And, Takashi Suzuki!

Good choice. Always one of my favorites to watch.

And for number three, hmm. I'd have to say Marco Sassi! Especially on his footwork. When I saw him and Mario's "Freestyle Gangbang"—was it "Freestyle Gangbang", or was it some other crazy title?—yeah, I saw his footwork and I thought it was sick.

To be honest, that's the same three I would have gone with.

Really?

Yeah, I think we're fairly similar in that respect. Freestyle hive mind.

Well, they're definitely the best in our generation! Hopefully I can be up in those ranks one day.

TG

Nenad Kocic (Impossible) Photo: Nicolas Heitz



The Roundup!

Kevin Harris and Monty Little have been rounding-up the world's top freestyle skaters for the past four years creating the hottest free attraction at the Cloverdale Rodeo & Country Fair. With over 80,000 people attending the rodeo and fair last year, coupled with $10,000 in Prize Money, it's no wonder that the World Freestyle Round-Up Skateboard Championships have become the contest that freestyle skaters worldwide want to attend. The four day event will take place May 15th to the18th inside the Cloverdale Curling Rink which will be transformed into an arena setting, so rain or shine you can enjoy the show in comfort.

And what's in store at this year's World Round-Up you ask? Well for starters there are over 30 skaters coming from as far away as Brazil and Japan. One of those Japanese skater is 12 year old Isamu Yamamoto who won the 2014 amateur division, he's turning Pro this year, so keep your eyes on him as he is constantly laying down new tricks as he is competing.

Then there is Shen "Dominick" Meng from Beijing, China who is back to WOW the crowds. Last year, after getting the bad news that his Canadian Visa had been denied, he wrote the Canadian Prime Minister, Stephen Harper, asking for his help, talk about determination. And we can't forget those crazy Brazilians' who are back in numbers and leaving the crowd wanting more.

Above: The whole 2014 Roundup crew Photo: Jim Goodrich



Stefan "Lillis" Akesson 6th place Pro 2014 Photo: Jim Goodrich



There will also be several displays for the crowd to enjoy, including the popular Skull Skates Skateboard Museum with more memorabilia and vintage skateboards this year. And there will be a display of legendary skateboard photography by Jim Goodrich who was inducted into the Florida Skateboard Hall of Fame for his dedication to the sport of skateboarding through the lens of his camera.

We are also very excited to announce a new event taking place at this year, the Legends Freestyle Classic. This new event will honor and showcase those freestyle legends, age 50 and over, that have paved the way for the sport of Freestyle Skating and who still skate whenever they get the chance.

Joining Kevin and Monty's team are Russ Howell, Jim Goodrich, AJ Kohn and Hippie Mike who collectively have over 240 years of skateboarding experience. That works out to thousands of Skateboard Safety Clinics that they have put on, hundreds of contests that they have organized, MC'ed and ran from local, to regional, to national, to world championships. They have lobbied, designed and help build several skateparks, have driven thousands upon thousands of miles across Canada and the US, even flown around the world, putting on demos. They have photographed, videoed and written articles to promote skateboarding, and each of them in their own right has been an ambassador for our sport and an advocate for youth. When you put all of that together you come up with a very knowledgeable team that is dedicated to making the World Freestyle Round-Up the very best that it can be. Come join us May 15th to the 18th and be a part of something very special.!

For a list of times and events visit www.theworldroundup.com

Above: Jesse Whalen 3rd place Pro 2014 Photo: Jim Goodrich



Benton Farquhar (Tabletop 50-50) Photo: James Farquhar



Mike Osterman (50-50 transfer) Photo: Alex Zarek



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