BROKEN FINGERS

freestyle skateboarding quarterly



Marius Constantin

2 Minute Run

Cats in Japan



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Cover Photo: Marius Constantin (One Wheeler) by: Boris Staver
top: Moichi Suzuki and Masahiro Fujii (Double Pogo) Photo: Daniel Trujillo



Bill Robertson (Spinning) Photo: Ryan Maddox



John Hanson (360 Railflip) Photo: Simon Mrozinski

Contents

Marius Constantin ——— **Page 5**
Tony Gale

2 Minute Run ——— **Page 19**
Bob Loftin

Cats in Japan ——— **Page 25**
Daniel Trujillo

Philly Freestyle 2015 ——— **Page 39**
Bob Loftin

Contributors:

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Marius Constantin Photo: Radu Catalin

Marius Constantin

By Tony Gale

How you doing, mate? What have you been up to?

I'm okay. I was trying to film something for the Romanian kids; they're always asking me questions on Facebook about skateboarding like "I want to skate. What do I have to know?" And I'm so tired of writing all the time, so I was thinking last night that I'll wake up today and film one or two minutes of stuff like "what board do I get? What wheels? What trucks? Where do I get them?" It'll be so much easier for me to just give them a video.

For everyone reading Broken Fingers who doesn't know this, you're basically an internet celebrity in Romania, right?

Yeah, I guess so. I mean, it's not like there's another guy who's doing this, you know? Nobody bothers to do this, so I try my best to help.

How many followers do you have on YouTube now? It's quite a few, isn't it?

70,360 subscribers. And on Facebook, I have 12,000 likes.

And the population of Romania is 20,000,000, so that's quite a hefty chunk subscribing to you and watching your freestyle antics.



Marius Constantin (360 Shovit) Photo: Simon Mrozinski

I started doing Romanian language tutorials five or six years ago, so that's why I've got this many subscribers. When I started skating, there were maybe three tutorial videos in my language - all for basic street tricks. So I did tutorials with the Slatina Skate Crew; we talked to kids, and while we're not the best, we loved learning these tricks, so we spread them. I mean, why should I keep it for myself? We just wanted to help the kids. And we made a list of every skater we knew at the time, and every time we made a tutorial we shared it publicly with these guys through MSN Messenger - which was really popular in Romania around 2008. Our channel got so popular that when Slatina Skate Crew was on Messenger back then all the kids were constantly sending us messages.

So that's why I'm trying to tell everyone from another country, when they ask me "how can I gain popularity?", it's easy! Just make tutorials in your language. It might take three years to work, but you have to be dedicated. You can't just make one tutorial and leave it. All the dedication in Slatina paid off; all these kids started watching the videos. So when I got 9th place at Paderborn in 2012, and then got 2nd place Amateur at NASS in 2013 and the sponsors started to come, all the kids saw and started to say "hey, look! You can actually get somewhere with freestyle. It really is possible. Look at Marius!" And the next year, everyone knew that I got first place at Paderborn. It was crazy. Loads of people were sharing the photo of me with my trophy. Now, everyone knows about this stuff - they all know about freestyle. There is not one single kid in Romania that knows about skating that doesn't know about freestyle. It's become a standard part of skating in this country.

I've talked to people who run various skate companies and they always say to me "Freestyle? Who freestyles anymore?" I always respond by saying that they'd be surprised; there's great scenes in Japan, Germany, Britain, Brazil, the USA. And then there's this huge Romanian scene, with loads of little kids getting into it. And their reaction is always "Romania? Why?!" and obviously you've been a huge part of that with everything you've done, but my theory is that Romania has largely been ignored by the skateboarding industry, so it doesn't have the infrastructure or the media that skateboarding has in places like the UK. And so in the absence of lots of skateparks, magazines and videos, what's left? It's freestyle - you, the board and the floor. Right?

Yeah - nobody gives a f--k about skateboarding here. There's only really one team in the whole country, and that's Eroilor Mafia from Bucharest. It's run by this guy called Niki who was basically doing the same thing I was doing in Slatina, but at a bigger level because he was in Bucharest. He's the only one in Romania who keeps a street skating team together, and he's got the best skaters in the country. And he sponsors me, a freestyler! He told me "Marius, I want the best freestyle skater in Romania to be a part of this, because I want diversity in my team." But Niki does everything, and if he leaves for some reason, the team would split apart. So we need more people like him, people who can sacrifice time for it. But that's a lot to ask because you lose years doing this stuff! If you get into it, you have to know what exactly you're getting into, because no one can give you the years back. I have friends my age who have kids, families, houses, cars, everything. But I don't have shit.

I just have my board. I skated all through my youth, because that's what I love. But I know that I did something right for the skateboarding community in Romania, so that makes me think it's not that bad. I didn't waste all my time.

It was the Eroilor Mafia boards you were cutting down to make freestyle boards before Cirus came along, right?

Yeah! Niki always sends me street boards. He knew that I didn't have money to buy boards from America for $50 and pay $70 for the shipping costs. So he would send me street boards, and I had a Kilian Martin board from Sk8kings that I kept as a template, and I'd draw around it with a pencil onto the street board. Of course, you can't compare it with a proper freestyle board, but when you have no money, they're so much better than a regular street board.

That seems to be a theme in not just in Romania but in lots of former Eastern Bloc countries; kids taking boards and hacking them apart, cutting them down, and some of them are so janky... nothing's cut straight!

The kids sometimes ask me on Facebook "Do you think if I cut my board down I could skate freestyle better?" and I used to tell them no, because if they cut their board, they don't have freestyle sized trucks, so the trucks are going to be bigger than the board! A shop in Bucharest started selling 4.25" Slant trucks from Dwindle. They're not specially made for freestyle - they're for cruisers - but they're the right size. And they sell cruiser wheels - 60mm, but they cover the axle. So I posted on Facebook about it, and some of the kids bought them and cut their deck, and they basically have a freestyle board! Of course, Dwindle also make Kryptonics wheels, and while I'd rather shops bought in Seismic's freestyle wheels, if a shop's already getting products from Dwindle, it's very easy to just add Kryptonics wheels onto the order.

Marius Constantin (50-50 at sunset) Photo: Radu Catalin

Some shops have already ordered the 55mm ones, so they'll have Slant trucks and Kryptonics wheels in the spring, making it easier for me to bring in Cirus boards.

Just so that people reading this get an idea of the economic situation, how much would a pair of the Slant trucks cost you in Romania?

The prices in Romania are the same prices as they would be in England, or maybe higher. No joke. I don't know why, because our salary is ten times smaller. It works out much cheaper in America, but the shipping cost is just too much. So even though we have less money, we don't have cheaper products. Our currency is the Leu, and the regular price for one pair of Slant trucks is 240 Leu - $57.

And what's the average monthly salary in Romania?

The minimum is 800 Leu - $190.

800 a month?

Yeah. Most jobs give you the minimum salary. I'm a little bit lucky - I get a bit more, but not that much.

And then kids are expected to buy trucks - CHEAP trucks - that cost over a quarter of a month's pay? You need to work for a whole week for one set of trucks?!

Yeah, that's why it's so hard for me to convince them that the boards they ask for my opinion on are no good. They're looking at boards made in China for 150 Leu. How do I tell the kid that it's not good enough? All these little kids are like peasants. They're from the countryside - it's like North Korea. They have nothing. Some kids I can help. Not all of them, but sometimes I can. And I worry, because some kids get to a point where they get really good, but if they have no help and no money, how can they continue to skate?

I noticed that Enjoi are putting out a freestyle board and the price of that complete is going to be £90. I don't know what the quality's going to be like, but that puts it around 550 Leu for a complete. Is that going to change freestyle in Romania?

It wouldn't. You can buy a complete Darkstar street board for 320 Leu. I know that the trucks are not the best and the wheels are terrible, but why can't they make complete freestyle boards for the same price? Why is this so much more expensive?

While I was surprised that they were even making it, the price was what really shocked me. I couldn't believe it was that cheap. But you're telling me that's still too high for Romania?!

Yeah, it's still too high. But don't get me wrong, there are going to be some kids who will buy that because they can get everything at once -



Marius Constantin (Gymnast plant) Photo: Radu Catalin

they won't have to buy every part from a different country and pay all those extra shipping costs. Maybe one out of ten will buy it. So it's still something good to bring in a complete freestyle board - even though they don't have skid plates - but it's still a higher price than most of the street boards. You don't have the cheap stuff in freestyle like the completes from Darkstar with wheels that don't roll and bushings that stick to one side.

I know the ones you mean. Dwindle produce those things in China at the cheapest possible rate.

But the kids will buy these shit boards because they're cheap. The whole board costs almost the same as a professional quality deck - a deck will cost 200 or 300 Leu, so 320 Leu for a complete is good for them.

Something you said a second ago that I should pick up on is that part of the problem with freestyle - not just in Romania, but everywhere - is that you can get a deck from here, but then you have to get your wheels from there, and your skid plates from there... there's very few one-stop-shops where you can everything in one location. There's only really Decomposed, Sk8kings or Never Enough.

Yes, and the problem is that if you buy from Decomposed or Sk8kings, the shipping cost and import tax almost doubles the price of the board! The first time I bought from Sk8kings, I told them to not list the price on the package, and to tell the post office that I got it for free, so that I wouldn't have to pay the import tax. But a little kid won't think to do that, or won't be able to convince our post office that they got it for free! So America is useless to us - even more so now that they eliminated the cheaper shipping rate, so now you've got to pay $70 for international shipping! No one in Romania will pay more than the price of the board for shipping!

I have the same problem in Britain - every package from America gets caught with import tax.

It's so crazy. Thankfully now we have trucks, wheels and bushings for freestyle in shops in Romania, and hopefully next year we'll have decks and skid plates, so everything is going according to my plan, and everyone will be able to get everything they need within the country. They're still going to pay a lot, but at least they have the products.

So this sets everything up for the freestyle competition you were telling me about?

Of course. I want to do it the right way - I want at least seven kids who'd enter, and make it a Romanian national amateur competition to begin with. But for all the top places, I want to be able to give freestyle prizes. Not street decks or wheels - proper freestyle gear. Skid plates, offset wheels, 106mm trucks, that sort of thing. And I want great trophies for freestyle, so kids will want to come next year, too. And maybe, if I can get a budget, I can even give them some money. I have the place, the staff, the network; I really want to make this happen next summer.



Marius Constantin (Bone Breaker) Photo: Florin Popescu

And of course, I'll film everything. I'm not going to be one of those guys who say "this will be the best contest" and then never upload a single run. Take the Big Rio competition - where's the video? I want to see Guenter's run. Where is it? I can find more video from a competition in the 80s than I can from a competition in 2015! I respect the guys who put the competition together, but they need to understand that if they want to push freestyle to a higher level, they need to put video out there! Why is it so hard? Just pay someone $50 to film the event! Who's going to be interested in coming to your next competition if they can't see what you do? And it's the same problem with the World Round Up in Canada. They have the livestream, but not everyone is available at that hour to watch it. You have a camera and you're filming, so why not put the videos onto a YouTube channel for the whole world to see them?

There's even a way to run a livestream through Google that will save it straight to your YouTube channel.

Look at Paderborn. Every year, after one week, you have all the runs online. Why is this not possible in America, in Canada, in Brazil? Look at Japan. All the videos are there. Someone puts in the time and the passion to do all the videos. We're not in the 70s and 80s anymore - we all have a phone or a camera. This is a really big problem for me and I don't accept any excuses from anyone that makes competitions on this. Do you want to keep this underground and hidden, or do you want people to see it? How can freestyle grow if we don't film everything we do?

Let's get back on topic; maybe we can get some companies to contribute to your prize pool.

Thanks - I appreciate it. I don't need a ton of stuff. I just want to give the kids great prizes. And I want the prizes to be so much better than the street ones that people will see it and go "look at the freestyle scene! Look at the prizes you can get from freestyle! And proper trophies - you don't get that in street competitions!" That's the point I want to make.

Marius Constantin (Butterflip) Photo: Simon Mroziński

What I personally want to see next summer - and I think this is probably going to happen - is a European contest circuit. Because obviously Paderborn will be happening again, there's your event, there's the UK Round Up, possibly another one in the Netherlands, and I hear rumours there may be one in Sweden.

F--k yeah, Sweden! I'll go there!

Exactly! Denis Šopović is trying to arrange a competition in Stockholm, so it looks like we'll be able to get a contest circuit going.

So many contests in Europe next year and I have to go to all of them! I'd love to go to the Japanese one, too.

Yeah, but it's like going to Canada - it's a lot of money.

Well, for me, it's the same price as going to Canada.

I'd much rather go to the Japanese event than the Canadian one, I think.

Yeah, I agree, but I've already got my money sorted for Canada - I didn't know that the Japanese will do an event in September. They do great events but they're terrible at spreading the info out in English. It's hard for them to make the dates and locations well known. And so I won't have a second round of money from the government to get to the Japanese event - maybe my sponsors can help me, but the bureaucracy won't move fast enough to give me more money.

All these events, but even if you only go to one, this is a big year for you, isn't it? You make the step up to the Pro division!

Yeah! I can't compete as an Am anymore. I know that! When they gave me the 1st place at Paderborn in the summer, did you hear what they told me? "Look at that prize, Marius! Enjoy it, because it's your last one!"

And for your last question... who was better: Pierre Andre or Don Brown?

Damn, what kind of question is this? It's a trap! I think I like Pierre more. He had some special tricks. He invented coco wheelies. He had the one footed spins where he grabs his foot. The pogo with two feet on the bottom truck. And he was always right behind Rodney. Don't get me wrong, Don Brown was good, he had some great runs, but I think Pierre wins it.

That's perfectly fine, but I think that as a fellow Brit, I need to back Don Brown up by saying he invented the broken fingers -

FUCK! What?

Yeah, that's Don Brown's trick, the broken fingers, and Don Brown is the only person I know of to do the handstand 360 flip.

Fuck. I didn't know this shit.

It's okay. You've answered now. It's done. -TG



Vladislav (Carousel) Russia



Simon Mrozinski (50-50 flip out) Photo: Tony Gale

2 Minute Run

Bob Loftin

Here's where I piss some people off, but please believe me when I tell you that is not my intention. I appreciate everyone who seeks to promote free-style. You are all good people.

But here's the thing.

The trend toward 1-minute runs and "battle format", well, it isn't good.

There was a time when I might have been a proponent of the "new ways." How do we make freestyle exciting? Why aren't more people drawn to it? Why don't we get more props from the skateboarding world in general for our skills? These are the kinds of questions that have led to shortened contest runs.

I think the question we should be asking is "Why is any of that desireable?"

Of course it is good, and needed, for new freestylers to come into our little world. People get old and die. And worse yet, their tricks become routine and stale. We need new minds and ideas in freestyle to keep it dynamic. But at some point, when you change what you are doing simply to draw in new people, what you are doing is no longer what you were doing. A component of your art, or perhaps multiple components, is lost. You have given up what you are. You have not been true to yourself.

What is given up when a skater must cram as much as possible into one minute? Well, first of all, art. Most likely, aesthetic merit is thrown in the rubbish heap. Skateboarding happens at many different speeds and paces, but the 1-minute format demands one pace - fast. Obsession with trick density in a run turns to mania.

Next up in the list -- tricks that take more than one or two seconds to complete. Sure you can do them, but who will chose to throw in a graceful, beautiful wheelie that last 15 seconds under such conditions? I'll tell you who. The true artist who has entered the contest and stays true to himself/herself, despite the format.

I'm sure there are others. I'll let you think about it.

So why the need to ask those first questions - the ones that have led us to change our art to accommodate the Short Attention Span Era? I'm going to throw out a few ideas, one of which, again, might anger some people. It is not intended that way, but if it angers you, perhaps you should examine your own motivations. First, of course, is that we all love freestyle and want others to enjoy it. I think that in most instances this is the case. Second, it would be quite nice if some of the incredible talent in our community could actually make a living from their skating the way others are able. This may seem like a pipe dream, but pipe dreams can be good if they lead to action.

Third, and here is where I may lose some friends, but I hope not. I love all you guys. Here it is...wait for it. Ego. Most everyone wants some level of ego gratification. No harm, no foul. The desire to be "the best" can drive people to greatness. We enter contests to not just to jam with our friends. Let's face it.


Tony Gale (540 Shovit) Photo: Andy Turner

We want to test ourselves, perhaps against others. Friendly competition. Who can keep it together -- hopefully for 2 minutes? Who can be the smoothest or most inventive on any given day? But does our collective Ego yearn for the respect and admiration of the skateboarding world in general? How much do we change to get that?

Wow, I have ended a lot of sentences in this article with the question mark. I guess I don't have any answers. I do have a suggestion though. I suggest that contest organizers make any "championships" the traditional 2-minute run format. The only drawback to this is that it may not draw in people who probably would not be drawn in anyway. It has the massive benefit of allowing skaters to full express their talents and creativity. Of course, contest organizers can do whatever they want. This isn't some kind of dictatorship. But consider it. Let's make the attempt to keep what makes Freestyle great in freestyle, lest it devolve into a game of SKATE. -BL



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Thank you,
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Alexandre Feliz (Truck Stand) Photo: Andre Magarao



Moichi Suzuki (Space Walk) Photo: Daniel Trujillo



Cat in Japan Photo: Daniel Trujillo

Cats in Japan

By Daniel Trujillo

It was the best of times, it was the blurst of times.

By the time you read this article, it will have been written, completely erased, and rewritten numerous times over. Reason being, that I cannot find an adequate description of the marvel I beheld whilst in Japan. The contest was executed like clockwork and without a hitch, nobody skated during other people's runs, everybody helped clean up the contest area and rebuild the plywood skate surface without being asked (it needed to be flipped every few hours due to warping). Being hosted in a shopping mall put the elimination format contest in plain view of non-skaters, and many stopped to spectate. The competition was tough, but in the end the legendary Masahiro Fujii prevailed against the prodigious Isamu Yamamoto. A week gap between the contest and the demos/skate school provided me ample time to skate, relax, explore, party, and lose my way during a typhoon. It was pretty sweet. Crowds nearly equaling the contest weekend accompanied the demos and skate school where young and old alike delighted in learning to wheelieboard.

I met many great people in my travels and I'm sad that I've already gone over my word count.

Fin. -DT



Isamu Yamamoto Photo: Daniel Trujillo



Satoshi Ohashi (M80) Photo: Daniel Trujillo



Kanae Kawamura (Rail Flip) Photo: Daniel Trujillo



Cats in Japan: back row from left to right; Moichi Suzuki, Stefan"Lillis" Akesson, Ryan Brynelson, Satoshi Kanagawa, Satoshi Ohashi, Yuta Kikuchi, Mitsuhiro Yasumoto, middle row from left to right: Masahiro Fujii, Tomo Koyano, Hidemi Ohishi, Masanori Yoshida, front row from left to right: Takashi Suzuki, Ikkei Nagao, Isamu Yamamoto, Mario Steinemann, Toshiaki Fujii Photo: Daniel Trujillo



Mitsuhiro Yasumoto (360 kickflip/classicflip) Photo: Daniel Trujillo

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Graham "Mac" McEachran (50-50 Wrap around) Photo: Simon Mrozinski

Erwin 'Shuv-it' Schuijtvlot (Pressueflip to Truck) Photo: Andy Turner





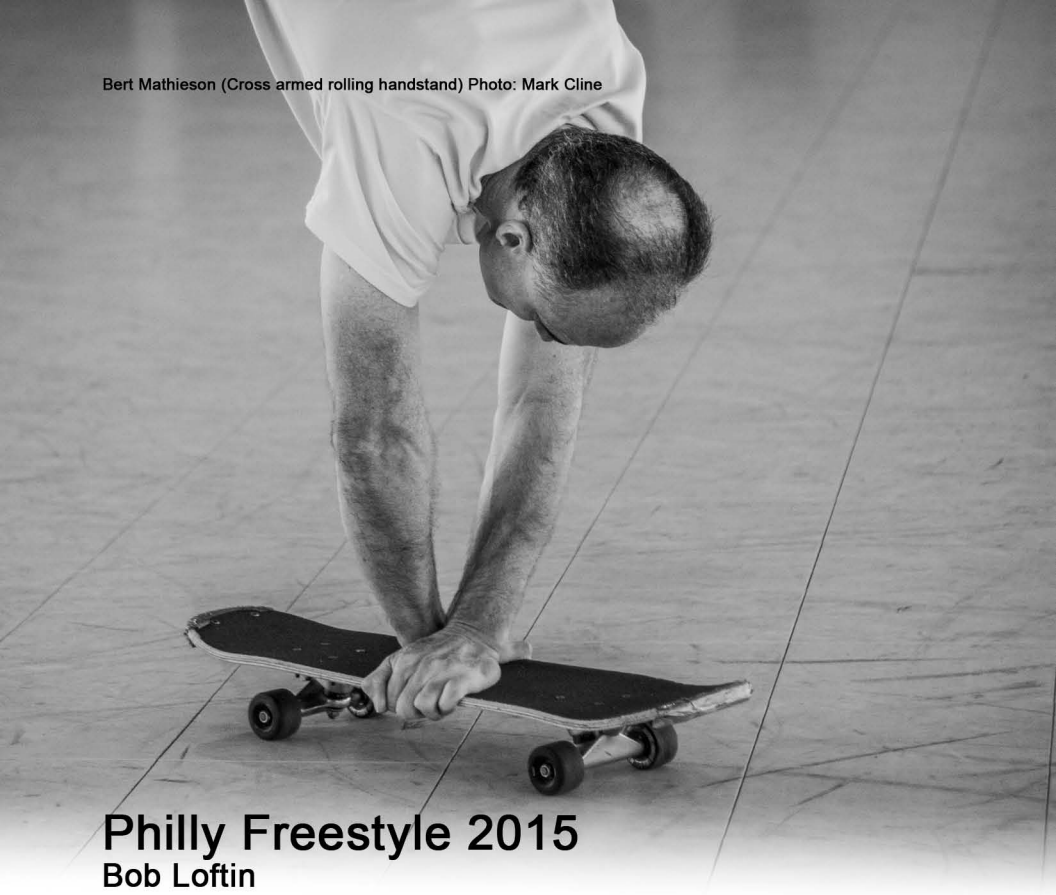
Callum Bowran (G-Turn) Photo: Simon Mrozinski



Nathan 'Laiszie' Pseuzan (Railflip) Photo: Simon Mrozinski



Alan Benson (Hang Ten Nose Wheelie) Photo: Mark Cline



Bert Mathieson (Cross armed rolling handstand) Photo: Mark Cline

Philly Freestyle 2015

Bob Loftin

The annual Philly Freestyle took place at Rizzo Rink, in Philladelphia on Oct. 10, 2015. Organized by AJ Kohn, the event took place inside this year, on a massive ice skating rink (minus the ice), providing what must be the biggest skating area of any freestyle contest in recent history.

Skaters were, as always, interested and concerned about the surface they'd be riding on. While many felt that the surface was overly slick, the ability of skaters to adapt (especially the pros) is amazing.

For the sake of space, I'm going to just break down the Pro placings.

OK, the Pros....

7 skaters entered the Pro division. Not a fantastic turnout, but the skating was quite excellent. In particular, the top 3 skaters are certainly at levels that rival and in some ways surpass the skills of the best pros of the 1980s.

7th: Jacob Whitt. Jacob has come a long way the last few years. His handstand game continues to improve. I don't think this was the best set of runs he can do -- but that's competition. Looking forward to watching him continue to develop.

6th: Kyle Hamilton. The Skateboarding Globetrotter skated two very light-hearted runs, mixing in some difficult tricks with his trademark personal style.

5th: Pete Betti, is a ripper, and I think that of all the skaters he was perhaps most affected by the riding surface due to his emphasis on very difficult truck-transfer type tricks. However, he adapted quite well, and pulled off some amazing and difficult moves.

4th: Bert Mathieson. Bert is well-known for his amazing gymnastic abilities, and he continues to create bizarre and difficult new handstand variations.

3rd: Jesse Whalen. As with the other top 3, Jesse is now a long-time fixture on the freestyle scene. Besides his usual difficult tricks, Jesse mixed in some distinctive and difficult footwork -- the kind of stuff that is often overlooked. Always great to see him and skate with him.

2nd: Mike Osterman continued his great contest performances with mostly flawless and difficult runs in Philly. Mike rolls fast, doing excellent and precise ollie impossibles, kickflip variations, and the slickest 540 shove-it around. His stationary game is also great.

1st: Connor Burke solidified the Mode Skateboards dominance of the top 2 spots with very fast, very powerful skating. Connor doesn't just do an Ollie Impossible. He does one that could go over a small child. Power, height, and speed compliment his effortless precision. 360 fingerflips? On a full-sized street board? No problem. Connor has you covered.

Congrats to all the Pros. You guys put on a great show, and it was inspiring.

Other classes....

Novice
1. Mark Klause
2. John Valentine
3. Thomas Inglesby
4. Michael Marono
5. Phoenix Biddle

Amateur
1. Derek Elliot
2. Beau Trifiro
3. Arjun Shah
4. Tyrone Williams
5. Michael

Masters
1. Mike Kinney
2. Alan Benson
3. Rodney Watkins
4. Jim Simmons
5. Bob Loftin

-BL



Connor Burke (360 Fingerflip) Photo: Mark Cline



Mike Osterman (Impossible) Photo: Mark Cline



Jesse Whalen (540 Shovit) Photo: Mark Cline



Bert Mathieson (Rolling handstand finger flip) Photo: Mark Cline



Lillis (Swedish Nose Wheelie) Photo: Andy Turner



Michael Erskine (railflip) Photo: Simon Mrozinski

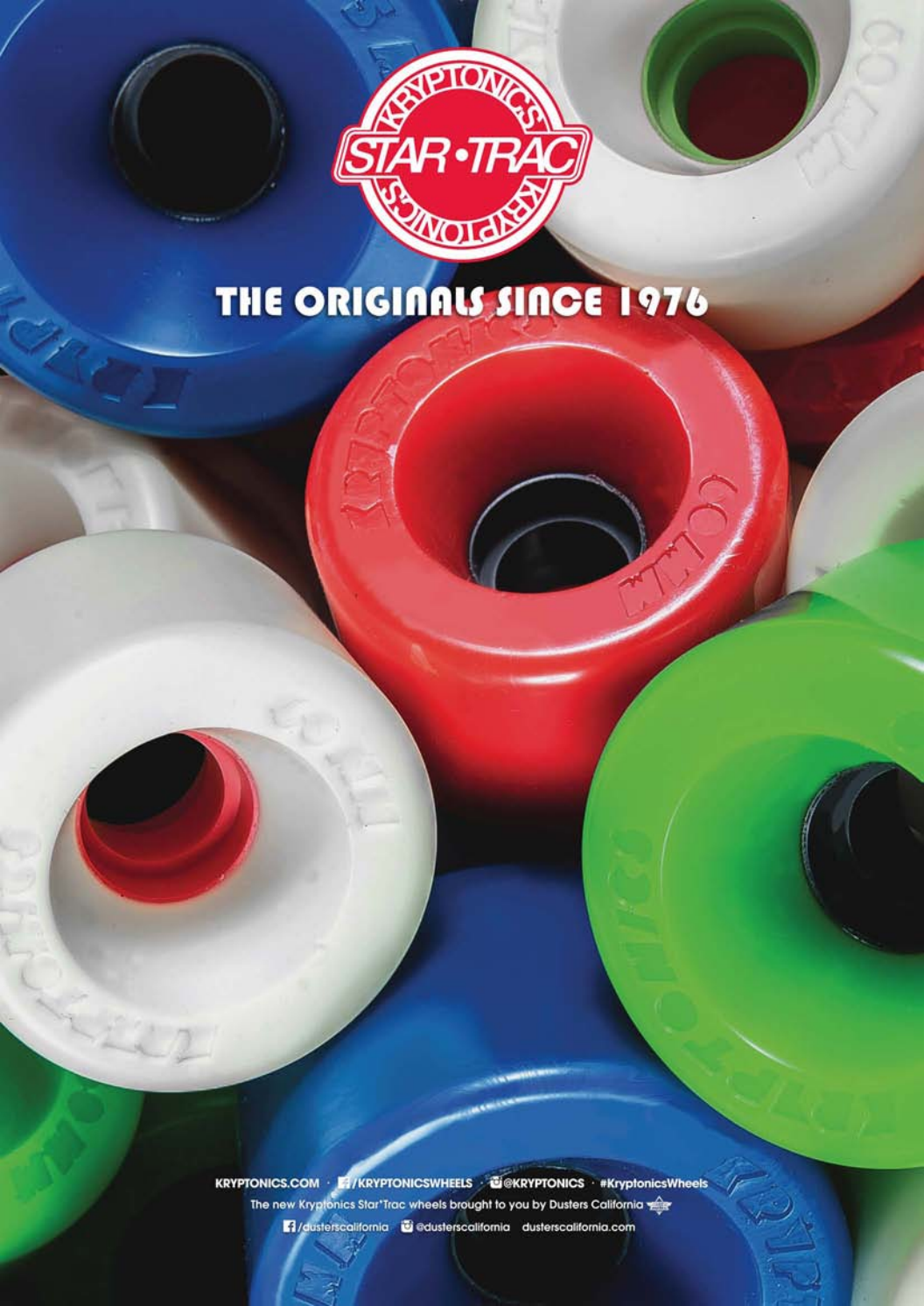


Alex Foster (Finger Flip) Photo: Simon Mrozinski



Denham Hill (Carousel) Photo: Andy Turner


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