

Paris, le 19 février 2008

* Josh Stewart



L'homme derrière
les vidéos "static" est
à droite de cette photo
Il est aussi certainement
l'une des personnes les
plus motivées de notre
petit monde. En pleine
réalisation de la "static" //

il fait une petite pause ~~et~~
et nous accorde une interview...

JOSH, AT FIRST, PLEASE INTRODUCE YOURSELF:

How's it going ... My name is Josh Stewart and I live in Brooklyn, New York. I'm a filmmaker and photographer and my subject-matter is typically around 99% skateboarding. The majority of my work is focussed on an independent film series I've produced since 1999 called «Static».

COULD YOU EXPLAIN WHAT IS YOUR GOAL WITH THE STATIC PROJECT ?

Well, at first the Static project started because I wanted to do a skate video that would highlight talented skateboarders from different areas around the world, who had gone unnoticed by the majority of the skate-world. but as time moved on, skateboarding began to become more and more popular with the mainstream world. Soon I found myself continuing to produce Static projects more out of frustration with the modern trends influencing the skateboard industry. The ideals of true street-skateboarding were quickly being lost and skateboarding has been kidnapped from us and turned into a pop-culture marketing tool. So Static has sort of become my way to fight against what I see as the pop-culture destruction of an art-form that I love.



99% Skate-
boarding

WHERE THIS TASTE FOR OLD WALL, OLD BRIDGE, METAL LEDGE IS FROM ?

Well, I just think that through time after travelling and producing a lot of different film projects, your tastes begin to sharpen and tighten around a certain look or feel. I felt my visual tastes start to lean toward old turn-of-the-century, industrial-age architecture and symbolism. I find old cities, brick, iron and history very fascinating. And when I looked around at modern skateboarding videos, the thing I felt they lacked the most was art-direction. Videos were focussing far too much on the difficulty of the tricks being done, but not about the experience, not about the feeling of being on a skateboard. I feel like skateboarding develops a sense of oneness with a city. It might sound really gay to some people, but the more you skate in cities and urban surroundings, the more you develop a sort of relationship with your surroundings. And I feel that incorporating this imagery into a film helps to bring the viewer more into that experience of feeling the city that we are a part of while we're skating it. I also just think it helps to create a visually enjoyable experience...after all, it IS a film. We're not watching sports highlights videos on a sports channel here.



I feel like skateboarding develops a sense of oneness with a city

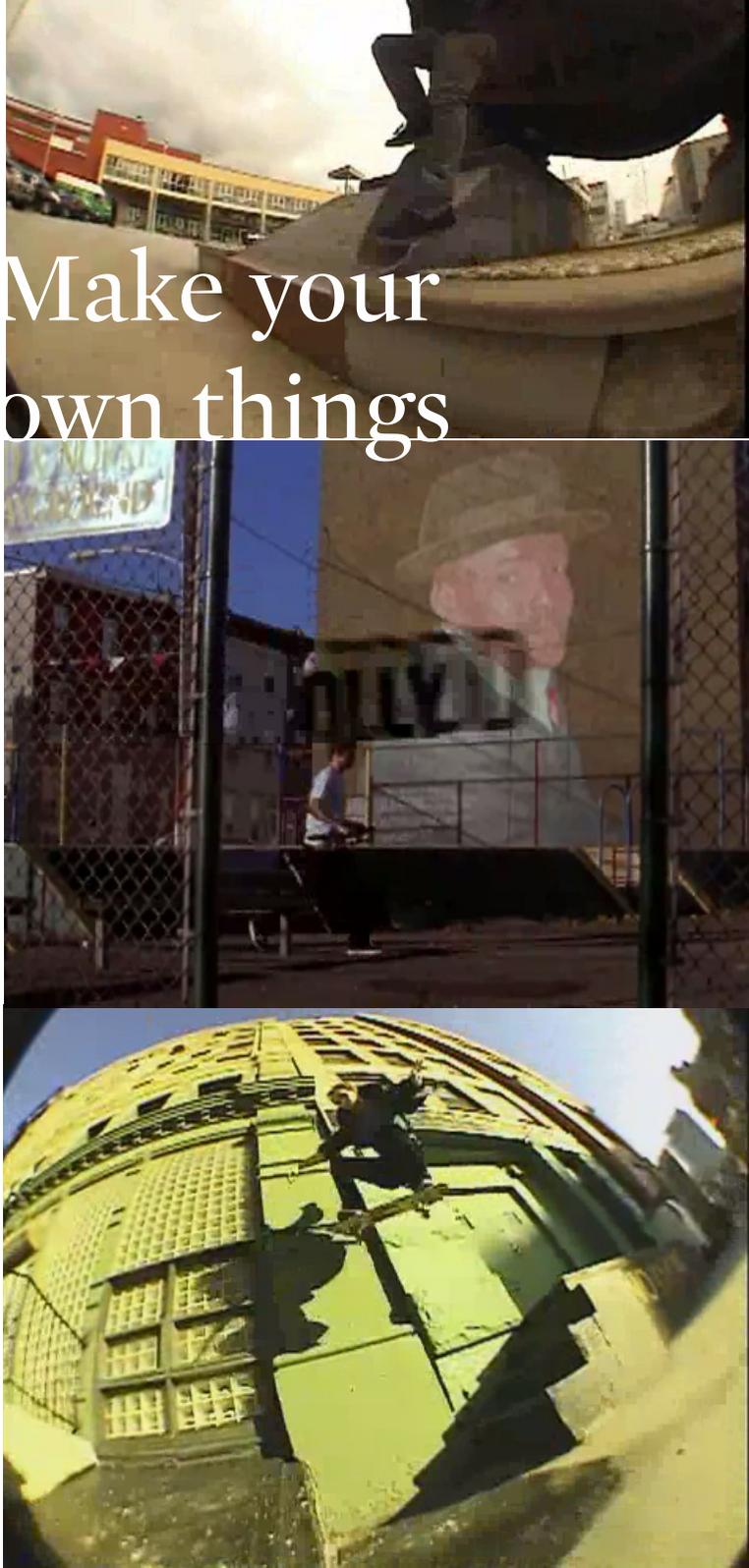
EVERYBODY ASKING YOU MORE BOBBY PULEO, YOU'RE NOT TIRED ?

Haha....I love Bobby's skateboarding, but even more, I love the unique way he sees a city. I think it's better that he keeps his footage underground and then saves it up for his own video parts. I feel like I appreciate footage of my favorite skaters when they're faces aren't plastered across every magazine and video that comes out every month. Bobby's a master of controlling his footage and keeping us all wanting more.

BEING INDEPENDENT, WHY ?

Being independent has always been extremely important to me. Skateboarders are very aware of when companies are trying to sell something to them. And if I was to work for a company, I feel like it twists the way skaters would view my work. And, most importantly, it wouldn't allow me to pick the skaters I want to work with. Static I, II and III wouldn't have been possible if I was working for a company. I would've had to stick with the skaters that company sponsored. It makes the film biased. There are very very few independent companies or videos remaining in our corporate-controlled world these days. I would like to fight for as long as I possibly can to remain one of the last independent voices left in skateboarding. Few years ago you realized an adio video, why you're not trying to work again for a big compagny and beside make your own things...and save your house !

Haha.... that's a great question. Well, I had a really good time working on the Adio video. And I don't regret that one bit. But, when you're making a video for a company, especially a big successful company, you are forced to question why you are doing it. And if your only answer is «for the money» then I don't think it's something you should be doing. I did the Adio video because I was friends with the team, because it was a great opportunity for me and it was a great way to help fund future Static video projects. I wouldn't say that I'll never do another video for a big company again....it just would depend on the company and whether or not I would be doing it because it's something I'd like to do or if I'd just be doing it for the money. Unfortunately, sometimes we have to do things for the money. Otherwise there would be no way to fund the things I care the most about, like Static videos and getting the skaters I care about seen by the rest of the world.



Make your
own things

HOW DO YOU DEAL WITH BIG VIDEO AS NIKE OR LAKAI?

That's a good question.....honestly, I just thought that people would support Static III because they'd know that I'm a small guy who isn't selling skateboards or shoes....I'm only selling videos. I tried to promote Static III as much as possible. We got a lot of coverage in magazines around the world and made it known to all that Static III was an independent video that was being done for the love of skateboarding and getting these skaters seen by the world. But we still couldn't compete with Lakai and Habitat in the long run. Those companies have smashed Static sales to pieces. It has been a really tough market to sell videos, but Lakai and Habitat have still done really well. As they should, because they're both incredible videos for different reasons.

But Static sales have been really really slow and it's obvious to me that it was a huge mistake to release Static III on the same week as these other 2 videos. I just thought people would make a bigger effort to support us, since we were the small guy fighting two huge companies. The support has definitely been there, but it's been much smaller than I had hoped for.



2008, ANY PROJECT?

I'm really hoping to get a Static IV video done by the end of the year. But it really depends on Static III sales, which aren't so good right now. I really want to do one last Static video, it just depends on if I can come up with a way to find money to make it happen. I'm also trying to work on a documentary project and hopefully will be starting that very soon as well. Unfortunately, the market for skateboarding videos has gotten really bad these days.... so there's a chance that in a month or two, I'll just be waiting tables at a restaurant in New York. But I'm going to fight until my last dying breath to keep the skate-video thing going as long as I can.

WHY THIS TASTE FOR WALLS WITH REDS BRICK? WHY THE SPOT IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE TRICKS?

Well, it didn't used to be like this. When only a few new skate-videos were coming out each year, the skateboarding was by far the most important thing. But now that there are a million videos out each year, and the video market has climbed out of infancy, passed through its teenage years, and is now growing into adulthood, I think that the look and feel of a video are just as important as the skateboarding being done. It's all about style. Skateboarding is not a sport...there's no such thing as the «best». You can have the best hitting record in baseball, but skateboarding has no best or worst. It's all a matter of opinion and a matter of style and taste. So, I think that we have all become much more critical these days and spots have become very very important. A skater's style has become incredibly important and the overall feel of a video (meaning the look, art-direction, cinematography, and music) has become vital to determining if a video is good or bad. I consider video-making an artform. Most companies don't realize how important all this stuff is but when we think of skateboard history, the videos that stick out in our minds are the ones that were done in a unique way and in which there was an obvious plan, art-direction, great music and loads of style. So, I want to make a video that is remembered and respected. I don't know if I have achieved this yet, but I know that the skaters in my videos have succeeded in creating what I consider to be beautiful art, and that alone is something to be proud of for me.



I consider video-making an art-form

WHY CHOOSING THIS LIFE “FILMING SKATEBOARDING”?

You know what, I have no idea.....haha, it sure hasn't made me rich, famous or «successful» in the way we all hoped to be when we were kids. I think it actually chose me. My brother was a sponsored skater when I was a kid in the 80's, and he always tried to get me to skate. I always refused to for so long. But it was inevitable, and I finally started around 1988. I became obsessed with it and I forgot about becoming a lawyer, doctor, or any of my original goals. I think that skateboarding provides us all with a strong sense of independence and individuality. And that's hard to find in a lot of other «sports» or hobbies. I've met some of the most amazing and unique people through skateboarding and I think that it either attracts these types of people or helps build people into interesting people and strong personalities. I'm definitely not sorry that I chose this life.....I just hope that those of us who care about keeping skateboarding in the hands of skateboarders, and who love skateboarding for the art-form that we see it as, will some time in the future finally have our day.

That people like Bobby Puleo, Ricky Oyola, Olly Todd, Soy Panday, Jack Sabback, Quim Cardona, Tony Manfre and Danny Renaud won't have to live in poverty for the rest of their lives, just because they chose to never sell out and to fight for something they loved. For some reason though, I think that this hard life sort of makes us love these skaters and people even more. Their struggle to suffer for skateboarding has made us all proud and given us something to believe in while we skate in our own cities and towns. Anyways, thanks a lot for the opportunity to talk everybody's ears off. Sorry if I sound like a whiney baby, but I just don't like where skateboarding is going and I figure I should speak out when I have the chance to. Thanks to everybody who has supported the skateboarding they believe in. Be it Lakain or Static III, it's important to support the things you care about.

Best wishes to everybody from Brooklyn and have a great 2008.

love skate- boarding



JOSH STEWART À DEUX SITES INTERNET :

- Static 3, le site promotionnel {<http://static3video.com>}
- Theories of Atlantis, son blog à partir duquel vous pouvez vous procurer sa vidéo. {<http://www.theoriesofatlantis.com/>}

Interview de Josh Stewart réalisée par Pierre Prospero, le 10 février 2008 pour Soupe de lait.