

# BONES BRIGADE: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY



Official Selection at the 2012 Sundance Film Festival

Directed by Stacy Peralta

2012 / Color / 90 minutes

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## **SHORT SYNOPSIS**

**BONES BRIGADE: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY** is a very personal story of a group of young, straight laced American kids who did the impossible through a combination of work, skill, passion, and the belief that anything is possible: they succeeded in turning skateboarding from a fringe pastime to a thrilling action sport filled with extraordinary gravity defying feats and generated a billion dollar industry. The Bones Brigade was the team they formed that revolutionized not only their lives, but international popular culture as well.

## **LONG SYNOPSIS**

It's not a death metal band, an extreme diet club or historic dominoes association—the Bones Brigade was a talented gang of teenage straight-laced outcasts (definitely not the cool/hip/popular kids) who were deeply dedicated and committed to their art form: **SKATEBOARDING**. For most of the 1980s, this gang of misfits headed by a 1970's ex-skateboard champion blasted the industry with a mixture of art, raw talent, mind-blowing tricks and the belief that anything is possible became the most popular skateboarding team in history. They succeeded in turning skateboarding from a fringe pastime to a thrilling action sport filled with extraordinary gravity defying feats and generated a multi-million dollar industry.

The Bones Brigade was the team they formed that revolutionized not only their lives, but international popular culture as well. While the guys invented skate tricks that still today are considered iconic, they also were going through the struggles of adolescence, an internal and external push to reach an ever-raising bar, the expectations of family and fans, a shift from amateur to pro, and the fear of inadequacy and defeat. The team founder and leader, Stacy Peralta, himself a former professional skateboarder barely five years older than the kids on his team, found himself balancing roles of coach, mentor and quasi-dad for which he wasn't always prepared.

## **DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT**

I was approached to direct the Bones Brigade film close to ten years ago. At that time I was aware it was a vibrant and worthy story and viable history that featured compelling characters, but I declined. Having directed *Dogtown and Z-Boys*, a story in which I was both film-maker and subject, I didn't feel comfortable taking on that dual role again and felt another director would be better suited. But over the years since I was first asked, no other director emerged who was able to get the film off the ground. Then in late 2010 Lance Mountain called me. He said that he and the other five Bones Brigade members had been talking and were still eager to tell their story and he asked if I would reconsider getting involved. It was something specific Lance said though that triggered my getting involved; "the six of us Bones Brigade members are now older than you were when you made Dogtown, the time to tell our story is NOW." I couldn't disagree with him, so at that moment I decided to put my reservations aside and make the film.

All six skateboarders featured in this film made a large contribution to their chosen art-form. Looking 20 years back it's clear that their lives made a difference. Yet at the time during the 80s, none of them were concerned with being hip or cool or the most popular, what they were concerned with was being the best and joining together as a team. From the age of 13 until their late 20s, they would become the very best skateboarding team the sport has ever fielded and in the process they would become the primary architects of modern skateboarding.

My interest as a film-maker was in exploring how and why this team came into being? What role "team" plays when you are individually considered the best. Why these individuals decided to stay together as a team when any one of them could have broken off and gone it alone? And what are the challenges of being the best? Does being the best exact a price from the individual? Is "best" a gift, a natural talent, or is being the best something that one must work for? These are all concepts I wanted to explore and that we do explore in my film.

## **BACKGROUND**

In 1978 a Stanford engineer, George Powell, who experimented on skateboard products teamed up with Stacy Peralta, one of the most popular skaters of the era. They founded Powell Peralta and immediately began retooling how skateboard products were made and marketed.

George produced innovative equipment such as double radial Bones wheels, named for their unique whiteness, while Stacy recruited the skaters and handled marketing along with his longtime creative cohort Craig Stecyk III. Rejecting the expected action shot marketing; they used their young team to create esoteric images conveying the culture's sarcasm and disenfranchised dark humor. While spit-balling about his stable of skaters, Stacy commented that he never wanted to call them a "team," a label that invited all kinds of jock baggage. Craig shrugged and simply said, "Bones Brigade."

Powell Peralta reinterpreted a military motif, warping it with pioneering skateboard graphics more suited to biker gang tats than decks. As great a skater as Stacy was, his scouting skills surpassed any celebrated onboard skills. By 1984, Tony Hawk, Rodney Mullen, Steve Caballero, Lance Mountain, Tommy Guerrero and Mike McGill comprised the most competitively dominant skateboard team in history. Together they created new ways to skate and pioneered modern technical skating.

Disgruntled at the way the skate mags played favorites, Stacy took matters into his own hands and turned to the possibilities offered by consumer VCRs. This vision did not pay off immediately but eventually reaped unimaginable rewards. He directed the *Bones Brigade Video Show* in 1983; this low-budget amateur skateboard video was the first of its kind and sold a surprising 30,000 copies (including Betamax!).

At the time, skating needed all the help it could get. The "70s fad" initially built around the invention of the urethane wheel had deflated embarrassingly by 1982 and the remaining participants' social status ranked below the chess club. Powell Peralta averaged an anemic 500 monthly board sales and Tony Hawk once received a royalty check for 85¢. To increase brand awareness and grow skateboarding, Stacy created and directed a new BONES BRIGADE video every year that showcased the Brigade's varied personalities as well as their elite skating, featuring their latest inventions. The videos routinely featured riders crawling out of sewers, skating abandoned pools and back alleys, bombing desolate hills—essentially exposing an apocalyptic world hidden to most non-skaters.

By the mid-'80s, with the international spread of the Bones Brigade videos and the revolution in wooden skateboard ramps, a new generation of teens discovered skating, making the Brigade international stars. Powell Peralta peaked in 1987 with \$27 million in annual sales while its pro team continued to dominate contests, cash \$20,000 monthly royalty checks, tour the world, occasionally cause riots and star in the ambitious *The Search for Animal Chin*, which remains the most successful skateboard video of all time.

But the activity's cyclical nature reaffirmed itself by the end of the decade and skateboarding descended back to the faded fad category. The industry broke apart as zeros dropped off checks and most top pros drifted away in search of second jobs. Powell Peralta dissolved over business differences between the company founders Powell and Peralta and Stacy eventually left to pursue filmmaking and almost all the core Brigade members started their own skateboard brands just like their mentor had in 1978. George regrouped and continued making skate products under the Powell and Bones banner.

Twenty years on, the Brigade all remain in skateboarding. Although they've succeeded in separate endeavors, they continue to be bonded together as veterans of a culture war. Tony Hawk, Rodney Mullen, Lance Mountain and Steve Caballero remain skate stars while Tommy Guerrero runs a skate brand and Mike McGill owns and operates one of the most successful independent skate shops in the country. In 2001, Stacy returned to skateboarding with his award-winning documentary *Dogtown and Z Boys*.

## **TONY HAWK**

During the start of his reign as world champion skateboarder, a high school Tony Hawk was manhandled by jocks, spat on by skate legends and rode a sanitation ditch all the way home. The 15-year-old pro had discovered his brother's discarded banana board only four years earlier, but his pathological determination allowed the scrawny skater to barge through any and all obstacles. Tony outlasted and outshined his detractors, eventually winning them over with his creativity and willingness to sacrifice his body to further skateboarding. From 1983—1999, Tony entered 103 professional skate contests, winning 73 of them and placing second in 19.

But, as the documentary points out, competitions are a mixed bag for skaters. Tony's real pleasure came from skating for himself and not for a panel of judges. He spent most days during the 1980s altering skating's future at the cruddy local Del Mar skatepark or his private ramp. He developed a method of mid-air grabs allowing for greater technical precision and invented over 80 vertical maneuvers.

Along with changing how people skated transitions, Tony dismantled and rebuilt the possibilities for professional skaters. His career repeatedly rode through loserdom and fandom and he cashed chaotic royalty checks ranging from 85¢ to \$20,000 a month. As the world's most recognizable skateboarder, he headed into uncharted territory attempting to fuse skate culture with mainstream companies. Tony's partnerships weren't always as successful as his contest runs, but the ones that worked cut a new path for other pros to follow.

Tony and the mainstream connected in an unprecedented way at the end of the millennium. By 1999 he'd already won a fistful of X Games medals but landing the first 900—arguably skateboarding's most sought-after trick—as ESPN zapped the contest all over the world changed mainstream perception. Skating broke into sports pages just as Tony's biography climbed the NYT bestseller list and the first installment of his video game series unexpectedly scaled the sales charts. (Eventually, the series raked in over a billion bucks in sales).

What does a world champion do to cash in on that string of successes? He retires from competition so he can skate how he wants to, learning whatever tricks spark his fancy. "I don't think my success has changed my outlook on skating," Tony says. "If anything, it gave me a chance to skate more the way I always wanted to."

Today Tony still skates as much as before and runs Birdhouse Projects, his skateboard company. As the most popular alternative athlete in the world, he continues to travel the world for demos, award shows, charity events and has transformed into a brand himself. Tony Hawk Incorporated fills a large office building with unusually high ceiling allowing for his custom built million-dollar ramp. He juggles photo shoots for *Forbes* and *The Skateboard Mag* and his peers still call him a skate rat regardless of the material rewards of his career. His foundation has donated over \$3,000,000 to help build skateparks in low-income areas. Tony still shreds backyard pools, invents tricks and ices his hip when innovation doesn't go as planned.

## **RODNEY MULLEN**

"I struggle with isolation and skating to this day," Rodney Mullen says, but no other professional skateboarder has thrived in the woods like Rodney. Raised on a rural Floridian farm, the skate obsessed 11-year-old practiced every night with only his dog

and wandering cows watching. On weekends, he'd beg his mom for a ride to Sensation Basin skatepark where he would stay until it closed.

A major motivation behind the isolation was the incendiary anger of an abusive father whose hatred for skateboarding only intensified with every trophy his son dragged home. When Rodney returned from California, struggling with an oversized trophy that crowned the 13-year-old the youngest freestyle world champion, his father took him in before saying, "Good, now you can move onto something real" and made him promise to quit skateboarding.

Rodney finagled a hall pass to skate again, but the giveth and taketh pattern repeated over the years creating an unparalleled attachment between skater and his board. Stress squeezed out in unpredictable ways for the teenager fearful of losing his sole escape from the traumatic home atmosphere. While paving the best record in professional skateboarding—winning 32 of 33 professional freestyle contests over a decade—Rodney suffered from anorexic tendencies, often slept in his closet, went days without talking and battled depression while maintaining a 4.0 GPA.

The contest wins are mostly forgotten and Rodney disposed of his trophies long ago, but numerous tricks he invented on that rural farm remain as bold strikes on skateboarding's evolutionary timeline. Rodney looked outside of the flatland prison of freestyle skateboarding and invented ways to do tricks mid-air without ramps. By inventing the 'flatland ollie' he opened up another plane for his skateboarding and quickly went berserk on his board, unleashing a flurry of tricks—'kickflips', 'heelflips', '360 flips', 'impossibles'. These tricks were so advanced that his freestyle peers were unable to learn them and it took a new generation of skaters to adapt them into building blocks for street skating. It wasn't until board technology advanced—and we were all allowed to cheat—that these tricks became accessible to the masses.

Alas, Rodney had picked the Dodo of skate styles and for all intents and purposes, freestyle went extinct in 1990. By then he had quit Powell Peralta, literally escaped from his father's house under the cover of darkness and co-owned World Industries, the most popular skateboard brand at the time. Stubborn as a mentally ill Billy goat, he simply stockpiled freestyle boards and skated alone as usual. Slowly, a close friend managed to convince him to try skating streets.

Rodney came to enjoy the challenge and years later added another level of technical proficiency to street skating. He and his partners sold World Industries in 1998, providing Rodney with enough money to "skate exactly as I wanted." Essentially, this means continuing to skate from midnight to 4AM. Alone.

Unlike traditional sports where jocks enjoy dominating competitions, Rodney loathed the entire process, seeing it as an exercise that hobbled progression. The most dominant freestyler competitor in the world has never entered a street contest. This didn't stop him

from winning the *Transworld* Skater of the Year award in 2006. He gave away that trophy too.

## **STEVIE CABALLERO**

The smallest member of the Bones Brigade packed the most power. Mentor and Coach Stacy Peralta once compared Cab's size-to-power ratio to that of a primate. The first recruit of the core unit of the Brigade initially didn't make such a strong impression on everyone. Stacy recruited Cab in 1978 after watching him underwhelm the judges at a contest who placed him fifth. But just like with the rest of the Brigade, Stacy recognized that Cab's power originated from a unique and explosive motivation, one that would be a game changer if detonated.

Cab was the first skater to blend the 1970s-era style emphasis with the upcoming power and technicality emphasis. "He was the innovator," Tony Hawk says. "He did switch inverts. *Nobody* did switch stuff back then." Cab's heat in the skate world was so unrivaled that it boosted Powell Peralta's reputation, defining it as the brand for the new generation. In 1980, on his way to becoming a world champion, he invented his namesake 'Caballerial', a 360-degree no-handed aerial. This was no simple extension of another trick—Cab looked as if he'd returned from time travel with a futuristic trick and it dramatically altered how skaters thought of tricks.

Cab evoked fan-outs from everyday skaters as well as fellow Brigade mates. After joining the Brigade and desperate to make an impression, Tony Hawk infamously ate spent chewing gum from Cab's toes while soaking in a hot tub. (Tony was only 12-years-old so cut him a teeny bit of slack.)

The teenage Cab thrived through skating's early-'80s depression and submerged into skate culture more than any other professional. He squeezed a ramp into his narrow backyard and his house became the hub for the San Jose vert scene. His band The Faction helped usher in skate rock with the song "Skate and Destroy" and he spent hours publishing *Skate Punk*, a DIY Xerox zine to stoke the scene and act as a low-fi information portal since the major slick mags had ceased publication.

Along with the rest of the Brigade, he crowded the top five spots at contests during the 1980s and in 1988 used his power to blast a world-record backside air, boosting 11 feet above a ramp. Besides leading the way on his board, Cab was the first pro to define a new endorsement market. His signature Vans shoes revolutionized how pros made money and redefined when a skater arrived on the top shelf. Unlike his Brigade peers, the royalties from Vans allowed Cab to comfortably weather skating's last depression during the early-'90s.

Cab's signature shoe continues to thrive, almost a quarter-century later, just like the skater who continues to blast out of pools and slide around tiles. Cab was the only

Brigade member to stay with George when Powell Peralta disbanded. No other professional skater has stayed with a board sponsor longer. Maintaining friendships with George and Stacy, Cab played an integral part in repairing his mentors' relationship and helping resurrect the Powell Peralta brand.

## **LANCE MOUNTAIN**

Unlike Tony Hawk, Rodney Mullen and Stevie Caballero, Lance Mountain's skateboarding wasn't motivated by technical progression. Hooked on the rolling carefree freedom as a kid, Lance simply didn't want that feeling to end. "The point of skateboarding was to stay young and have fun," Lance says. "It was never, in my mind, this thing to do to get in the Olympics or be famous or win first place. Skateboarding totally stunts you. It keeps you immature. There was a fear of growing up. Still is."

Lance built his own playground in his backyard, constructing one of the earliest ramps with extended flatbottom. The Mountain Manor Ramp became an international destination and Lance often returned home to find a crew of unknown skaters babbling in a foreign language on his ramp. His love of skating pushed him to progress in whatever direction felt fun and Veriflex sponsored him. During the 1980s, contests defined a pro's worth, but early on Lance proved incapable of taking them seriously and often placed last by dorking around mid-run.

Veriflex turned Lance pro as skating dropped into a depression. Cashing \$14 royalty checks wasn't a problem while Lance lived at home, but around the time he graduated, Veriflex quit making pro models and essentially became a toy company. Lance's pro career was dead and he worked a variety of jobs while paying his own way to contest to skate with friends.

The skateboard world was tight during the early '80s and Lance's mom asked Stacy Peralta—as an ex-pro who remained in skateboarding—for advice. Stacy hired Lance as an intern of sorts: a quasi pro that would train to take over as Bones Brigade team manager. While the other Brigade members focused on pushing skateboarding boundaries, Lance's skating naturally expressed his fun-loving personality. "I *always* knew when I got on Powell exactly what I represented," Lance says. "I knew that most skaters weren't as talented as the Powell team, most of them are like me. I was a real skateboarder, not a gifted skateboarder."

Lance was told not to expect a pro model from Powell Peralta, but realized he could force the issue if he exchanged his worth into currency everybody used. "I had to make a sacrifice and some of the fun and carefree attitude kind of went out the door," he says. "I had to win contest and make a little money and prove myself and that was work." The self-described "not a gifted" skater beat the most elite pros on numerous occasions and the winning results did indeed increase his perceived worth. But it was Lance's personality that ultimately earned him a Powell Peralta pro model and turned him into a

star. Stacy's first skateboard video provided a new medium that perfectly projected Lance's love of fun and *The Bones Brigade Video Show* instantly created a fervent fanbase.

Lance's personality burned through his contest accomplishments and he became the most beloved member of the Brigade by personifying the love of skateboarding rather than the progression. Most skaters couldn't directly relate to the technical mastery of Tony and Rodney and lacked the power of Caballero, but Lance seemed to say that it's all right as long as you love skating.

Today, Lance continues his professional career, skating for some of the most popular brands in skateboarding. His name has become shorthand for the goofy, fun-loving aspect of skating and he's still featured on the cover of skateboard magazines, travels the world skating demos and just last year was nominated for best transition skater by *Transworld Skateboarding* magazine. He has two pools in his backyard—one for soaking and an empty one for shredding.

## **TOMMY GUERRERO**

For a poor city kid in 1975 San Francisco, the rollercoaster hills directly outside the front door made skateboards a particularly thrilling toy. Tommy Guerrero began rolling around the hills on a hand-me-down prehistoric board with clay wheels, which was a Cadillac compared to his buddies. "A friend made a skateboard out of an old Formica table and put rollerskate wheels on it," Tommy remembers.

Tommy eventually progressed to modern equipment and by age 10 was bombing the local hills, weaving through traffic and dodging angry residents armed with garden hoses to spray the rambunctious kids who treated the bus up the infamous 9<sup>th</sup> street hill like a ski lift. He also hit the local skateparks and caught the attention of a sponsor for his inherent flowing style. Still a kid, Tommy peaked on the concrete waves just as skateboarding slumped into a massive depression in 1980. Participants moved on and virtual every skatepark in the country closed.

Feeling betrayed, Tommy cut up all his membership cards and seethed until slowly transforming his urban surroundings into a giant skatepark. Reinterpreting everyday obstacles like ledges and curbs, Tommy skated in a manner that was uncategorizable during a time when only vertical and freestyle were recognized as legitimate styles of skateboarding.

Viewed as a lark by most professionals, San Francisco hosted the world's first "street style" contest in 1983 and even actual street skaters didn't fully understand the concept. Tommy, unfamiliar with the label and contest rules, entered against the world's best pros and cleaned up. The organizers handed Tommy a trophy sans prize money due to his amateur status and things flashed from sweet to sour. "I was pissed," Tommy says. "What the fuck? Where's my loot? Give me the loot!"

Powell Peralta turned Tommy pro two years later and his groundbreaking segment opened *Future Primitive*, the most anticipated skateboard video of the year. It was the first time any video singled out and showcased street skating. At age 19, Tommy opened his first bank account and began dumping in tens of thousands in royalties.

Tommy and a handful of other street pros introduced what would become the most popular form of skateboarding. By implementing their own creativity and some of Rodney Mullen's tricks, they showed starting skaters as well as elite pros the potential in everyday streets. "Watching Tommy's part in *Future Primitive* and he ollies over the bushes—that was it," Tony Hawk says. "I thought, *You can ollie over obstacles—you don't need a ramp!*"

Tommy was infused with a natural style on and off his board, speaking, dressing and skating differently than his fellow suburban established pros. Unlike vert skating with the hassles of available terrain and cumbersome padding up, average kids immediately connected with Tommy who simply opened his front door and started tearing it up.

Tommy is remembered as one of the premiere stylists of the streets, a trait that never ages out regardless of generational trends. After leaving the Brigade, Tommy started REAL skateboards with his friend Jim Thiebaud and it remains one of the world's most popular skate brands. A musician since his teenage years—his first band's name "Free Beer" guaranteed a crowd—Tommy established himself as a world-renowned guitarist. Besides touring the globe for gigs, he provided some of the soundtrack for *Bones Brigade: An autobiography*.

## **MIKE MCGILL**

No skater has ever carved out such a brutal demarcation line as Mike McGill did with his McTwist. When he unveiled his mid-air, flipping 540-degree spin at a 1984 contest, he literally broke professional careers on the spot. A large portion of the professional vert world never recovered. The skaters who learned the trick spent months struggling with self-doubt and unaccustomed long-term frustration that reduced many to tears. "I remember landing it and walking over to the brick wall and smashing my board into pieces," Lance Mountain remembers. "I wasn't even happy that I made it ... I was pissed it had to be that much a battle."

Raised in the stifling atmosphere of Florida, Mike tagged along with a friend on a 1979 trip to Stacy Peralta's house. Stacy gave the young teenager an old board and Mike skated with him during a photo shoot. The tagalong scored the centerfold photo in *SkateBoarder* and soon began receiving brand new gear from Stacy.

Mike and Stevie Caballero represented the foundation for the core unit of the Bones Brigade. A hard worker without the natural talent of a Caballero, Mike's drive and dedication overcame any genetic disadvantage. Powell Peralta turned him pro and the royalties dramatically increased with his second round of graphics. Mike's signature

below a skull clenching its teeth around a twisting snake is a board that continues to sell today.

Mike consistently placed in the top five during early 1980s contests and predictably hummed along until pushing himself to make the 'McTwist'. "It took a lot of courage because I didn't necessarily do that kind of thing," Mike says. "I didn't take that kind of risk."

Rodney Mullen's initial reaction upon witnessing the 'McTwist' was a thankfulness for not skating vert and that is was "neck breaking material." Lance, the first vert skater to watch Mike stomp the trick, stood stunned and thought, "What the heck just happened?" One of the major skate magazines put Mike on the cover with two simple words: The Trick.

Mike was more than just a pro with a kickass trick. He involved himself in the core scene by opening McGill's Skate Shop in 1987. He also operated a skatepark—*a/ways* a losing proposition—to provide a destination and safe haven for local skaters. While other vert skaters were left destitute when skating dropped in the 1990s, Mike simply downsized his career and focused on supporting skating through his shop.

Today, people continue to struggle with 'McTwists' and amazingly, unlike other groundbreaking trick, it remains a demarcation line for skating.

## **GEORGE POWELL**

The first time George Powell saw a skateboard it wasn't called a skateboard. "I saw somebody riding a two-by-four," George says. In the mid-1950s there were no commercially available skateboards but the OG generation lit the fuse with DIY projects involving scrap lumber and mutilated rollerskates.

A decade later, George was married and studying engineering at Stanford. He hadn't rolled in years, but cashed in his books of blue chip stamps for two commercially produced skateboards. He and his wife eventually burned out on rolling around the campus and mothballed the boards.

A decade after that, George passed down his skateboard to his son, who promptly complained that his relic ride sucked compared newer models. Ever the tinkering scientist, George researched the new urethane wheels and composite decks and set up a low-rent R&D lab in his garage. His day job revolved around the aerospace industry and he employed its high-tech approach to making aluminum skinned decks and the first double-radial wheels called "Bones" due to their rare white color.

George ran Powell Skateboards with moderate success until one of the most famous skaters of the 1970s randomly rang him up in 1978. Stacy Peralta and George had spoken a few times before and the skater had always been impressed with Powell's

product. The engineer likewise appreciated the marketing power that the star skater provided. "I was a designer—I didn't know the skaters," George says. They formed Powell Peralta and each owned their own side of the company coin. Stacy and his creative cohort Craig Stecyk tackled marketing, quickly producing artistic and sardonic ads unlike anything seen in skateboarding. George hunkered down and focused on improving skate product. Powell Peralta found their stride at exactly the wrong moment. "Stacy had just introduced the Bones Brigade concept," George says, "we had really high-quality wheels and decks and then the market just died. Went to zero. We'd call shops for orders and they'd say they were going out of business."

Powell Peralta weathered the depression until a new generation discovered skateboarding in the mid-'80s. Sales peaked in 1987 with annual sales topping 27 million bucks, but by the end of the decade the landscape had changed and the iconic company absorbed multiple near-fatal wounds. Stacy and most of the Bones Brigade departed, but George retooled his business and brought his companies back from bankruptcy by returning to his original focus on upgrading standard skateboard components. Today, Bones Bearings and Bones wheels are among the strongest and most respected brands in skateboarding.

### **STACY PERALTA (Director)**

Directing Credits include:

*Bones Brigade: An Autobiography*

*Crips and Blood: Made in America*

*Riding Giants*

*Dogtown and Z-Boys*

*The Search for Animal Chin*

In 1977, Stacy Peralta was a 20-year-old champion skateboarder with the world's best-selling skateboard model. Renowned as the smoothest pro around, he starred in movies and travelled the world as an ambassador for skateboarding. Unfortunately, accomplishments like this mutated hideously when transferring outside the skateboard bubble and an adult dedicating himself to a kiddie fad made him snicker bait for non-skating peers.

"Skateboarding was considered as trivial as the pogo-stick," Stacy says. "I sometimes think how remarkable my parents were because if my son spent the greater part of his day riding a pogo-stick, I'd worry about him."

The fact that Stacy cashed monthly checks in excess of five Gs may have shifted his parent's perspective, but he soon put a stop to that. A typical 1970's-era professional skater career mimicked fireworks: blast up, blow up and fall down sputtering out. Naturally, most pros rode that ride as long as possible, but Stacy quit sponsorship with

Gorden and Peak skateboards at his peak and partnered up with engineer George Powell to start their own brand, Powell Peralta in 1978. NO OTHER PRO SKATER had pulled that move before and it confused OTHER skaters to no end. Not wanting to overshadow the young team he recruited, Stacy refused to issue himself a pro model on Powell Peralta but still won *SkateBoarder* magazine's skater of the year in 1979. Officially retired, Stacy surprised himself by enjoying nurturing his team EVEN more than his OWN pro career.

And he kicked ass at it. Stacy had an unparalleled instinct for finding hidden talent, always bypassing obvious choices to recruit raw and "weird" skaters based on personality rather than obvious physical talent. Steve Caballero was picked after placing fifth in a contest. After bailing a trick, Tony Hawk's face full of self-disgust caught Stacy's attention. He recognized Rodney Mullen's technical precision stemmed from a desire to control *something* in his emotional harrowing life.

By 1983 Stacy had picked a team that dominated contests and created entirely new ways of skating. Unhappy with the way the magazines covered the Brigade, Stacy and cohort Craig Stecyk III circumvented them with newfangled VCRs and created a new propaganda weapon. After firing the initial director he had hired to direct the first Bones Brigade Video Show — Stacy gave himself some on-the-job training and essentially directed Powell Peralta's low-fi home movie. *The Bones Brigade Video Show* was the first skateboard video and it instantly rearranging skate media priorities. Expecting soft sales of perhaps 300, they sold a hundred times that and boosted Powell Peralta's market share in the process. *Future Primitive*, *BONES BRIGADE VIDEO 2*, released in 1985, is often argued as the "best" skateboard video ever produced. Unlike *BBVS*'s simple linear storyline and collection of tricks, *Future Primitive* submerged itself in skating subculture. Skaters crawl out of sewers, skate back alleys and decrepit ditches. *Primitive* pointedly turned away from the mainstream. Gone were the days of longing to be accepted and the Brigade reveled in skating's anointed position as cockroaches of traditional sports as they skated an apocalyptic landscape.

Stacy directed a steady string of successful videos, peaking in 1987 with the beloved cheese fest *The Search for Animal Chin*, an ambitious story of the Brigade's search for the elusive Chin. (Think 1970s-era porno with skating instead of sex. The acting quality was pretty much the same, though.) Skating bombed out three years later and Powell Peralta crashed and burned. Stacy had held together skateboarding's most successful team for a decade—dog years in skateboard terms. The team's influence regarding contest domination, progressive tricks, marketing has never been matched. After leaving Powell Peralta, Stacy pursued his filmmaking aspirations, eventually writing feature film screenplays and becoming an award-winning director.

## QUOTES FROM BONES BRIGADE: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

**Glen Friedman:** "You couldn't find a nicer group of fucking Boy Scouts than the Bones Brigade."

**Stacy Peralta:** "They weren't just guys who dominated competition, but they were also skateboarders who invented some of the most revolutionary maneuvers out of that entire decade."

**Duane Peters:** "I didn't like his [Hawk's] style. He was just an annoying little fucking kid with way too many pads on."

**Stacy Peralta:** "Stecyk and I are spitballing ideas one day and I'm telling him that I don't want to call this a team and I don't want the word skateboarding in the name of it. Craig looks at me and says, 'Bones Brigade.'"

**Sean Mortimer:** "Everybody is like: Who is this weirdo? He pops out, says some fortune cookie thing that makes no sense and then recedes back."

**Craig Stecyk III:** "I would love to be able to tell you I'm wearing woman's underwear and I don't know why I'm wearing woman's underwear, but I'm not."

**Lance Mountain:** "They asked Cab, 'Could you hold this dead dog for an ad?' He said, 'Aw, I don't want to do it.' I said, 'I'll do it!' I was Mikey that got all the cool stuff that they thought was lame."

**Steve Caballero:** "It was the first time that I've ever had someone so serious and say, 'What's wrong with you? Don't you care about skateboarding?' I think I almost started crying."

**Rodney Mullen:** "What makes us all do what we do at a high level is an inspiration that comes from so deep ... almost a controlled desperation and if you can't tap into that then it extinguishes."

**Duane Peters:** "I won two of the Whittiers and then I needed beer money. I didn't think I could win because I wasn't skating that much, but I knew I could get in the top 5. That was when I really noticed that Hawk was doing some shit that didn't make any sense to me."

**Tony Hawk:** "The prize money for first at a pro contest was \$150, but I was fourteen-years-old! Sign me up. I'm cashing in. I'm going to buy a Moped!"

**Stacy Peralta:** "I learned early on from my own generation that one of the worst things you can do to a teenager is give them too much attention and money. It destroys their perception of themselves and it wrecks them."

**Lance Mountain:** "It sounds terrible to say, but our group of dudes pioneered the way to make money at skateboarding."

**Rodney Mullen:** "He won everything, or close to it. That creates so much more pressure because there's no gratification in winning, there's only upholding something so you don't lose it ... it's like a Kafka short story: you build something but you can't live in the house because you sit around guarding it."

**Tommy Guerrero:** "Rodney was fucking crazy. Completely. But in the mad genius way: He could tell you some historical fact, but then he'd be ... 'Hey, how do you open this door?'"

**Lance Mountain:** "Skateboarding has nothing to do with competition or sport. It has to do with trying to stay as immature as you can for the rest of your life. It's kind of a lame thing to say, but it really is."