

# What *Thrasher* Magazine Means to Me

—Ryan Henry, Managing Editor, *Thrasher Magazine*

When I was a kid, *Thrasher* was the instruction manual for a life that seemed bigger and better than the one in which I was stuck. It was a lifeline to a world where the streets were lined with quarterpipes, where punk bands played in every basement, and where dudes with names as far-fetched as “Lester Kasai” and “Lance Mountain” blasted 10-foot airs above fantastic ramps and pools. The skateboard world was as big as the Vision Pro Skate Escape and as small as a ditch contest (in nearby Pflugerville, Texas!). I studied each new mag as if it were the Torah and, after breaking my leg in eighth grade, memorized all the back issues, too, thanks to an older skater who lent me his prized collection.

As an adult working for *Thrasher*, I imagine kids like I was, and I try to provide them with all the important things I remember about the mag — wild photos, a few laughs, and stories about the people, both famous and underground, who make skateboarding so special. I’m not sure if there are skaters who pore over *Thrasher* the way I did (what with the internet and The Bam and all), but if there are, I want to show them that world — a world rife with adventure and opportunity, but one that they can only get to by riding their skateboards.

—Michael Burnett

The testimonial you’ve just read was written by one of *Thrasher* magazine’s editors, Michael Burnett, for our new book *Skate and Destroy* — The First 25 Years of *Thrasher* Magazine. The most comprehensive skateboard book ever printed, *Skate and Destroy* is a 288-page retrospective put together by the magazine’s staff, past and present, in which they left no ramp unturned or old concrete park unscoured in seeking out the lost photos, the covers that never were, the untold stories of secret skate missions, and the accounts from skateboarding’s top riders of what *Thrasher* magazine has meant to them. Along

the way, *Skate and Destroy* illustrates and recounts all of skateboarding's milestones, twists, and turns of the last quarter century.

Published monthly since January of 1981, *Thrasher* magazine has long been praised by librarians, parents, and teachers for its ability to unite hard-to-reach students and their reading requirements. *Skate and Destroy* continues this tradition and goes even further: reluctant readers not only will find themselves immersed in the profiles of their favorite skateboarding pros and in tales of skate adventures but also will find inspiration in the biographies of *Thrasher's* founders and staff. These biographies detail unconventional paths to success: within the pages of *Skate and Destroy* are the stories of accomplished artists, writers, and photographers — even of doctors and lawyers and businessmen — who may have been reluctant readers themselves at one time. What we've learned over the years is that, to unlock a young person's ambition, you just need the right key.

Take, for example, the chronicles in *Skate and Destroy* of the architects and builders of today's massive concrete skateboard parks. These visionaries are a select group of adults who, as children, spent their classroom days drawing in their copies of *Thrasher*, daydreaming up images of skateboard ramps and obstacle courses that even Salvador Dali would have approved as impossibly surreal. These kids, skateboarders all, triggered a revolution by turning their one-dimensional sketches into three-dimensional realities. After school, they'd talk local construction crews into dropping off excess cement at the base of an unused public property, such as on the underside of an overpass. Their teachers would stop by to help with the labor. With trowels and shovels, they would begin to shape the concrete into skate-worthy works of art. Although their efforts were primitive and shoddy at first, their skills evolved into those of professional artisans. Now, years away from those classroom drawings, these skater-builders are in high demand in communities all over the world, hired by city governments to construct skateboard parks for their children.

Skateboarding can turn reluctance into ambition, and *Skate and Destroy* documents this drive. It also shows the potency of connecting kids with their

interests, in this case turning reluctant readers who are also avid skateboarders into avid readers as well.

**SUGGESTED READING:**

Thrasher

Insane Terrain

by Thrasher Magazine

Universe | TR | 978-0-7893-0536-7 | 192 pp. | \$27.50/\$39.95 Can.

Thrasher Skate and Destroy

The First 25 Years of Thrasher Magazine

by High Speed Productions

Universe | TR | 978-0-7893-1386-7 | 288 pp. | \$32.50/\$45.00 Can.