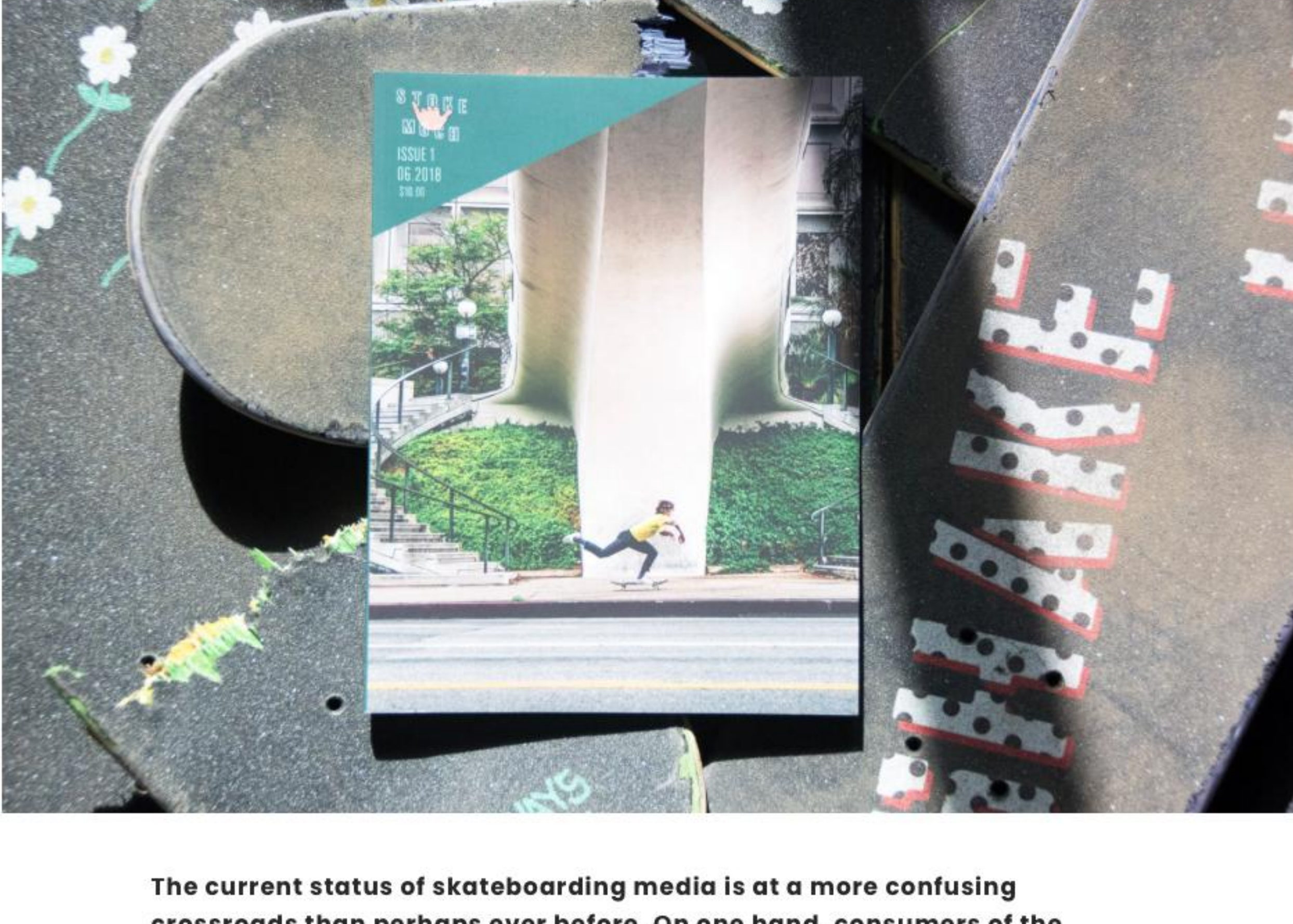


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Staff Picks: Stoke Much Magazine

by Daniel Fedkenheuer

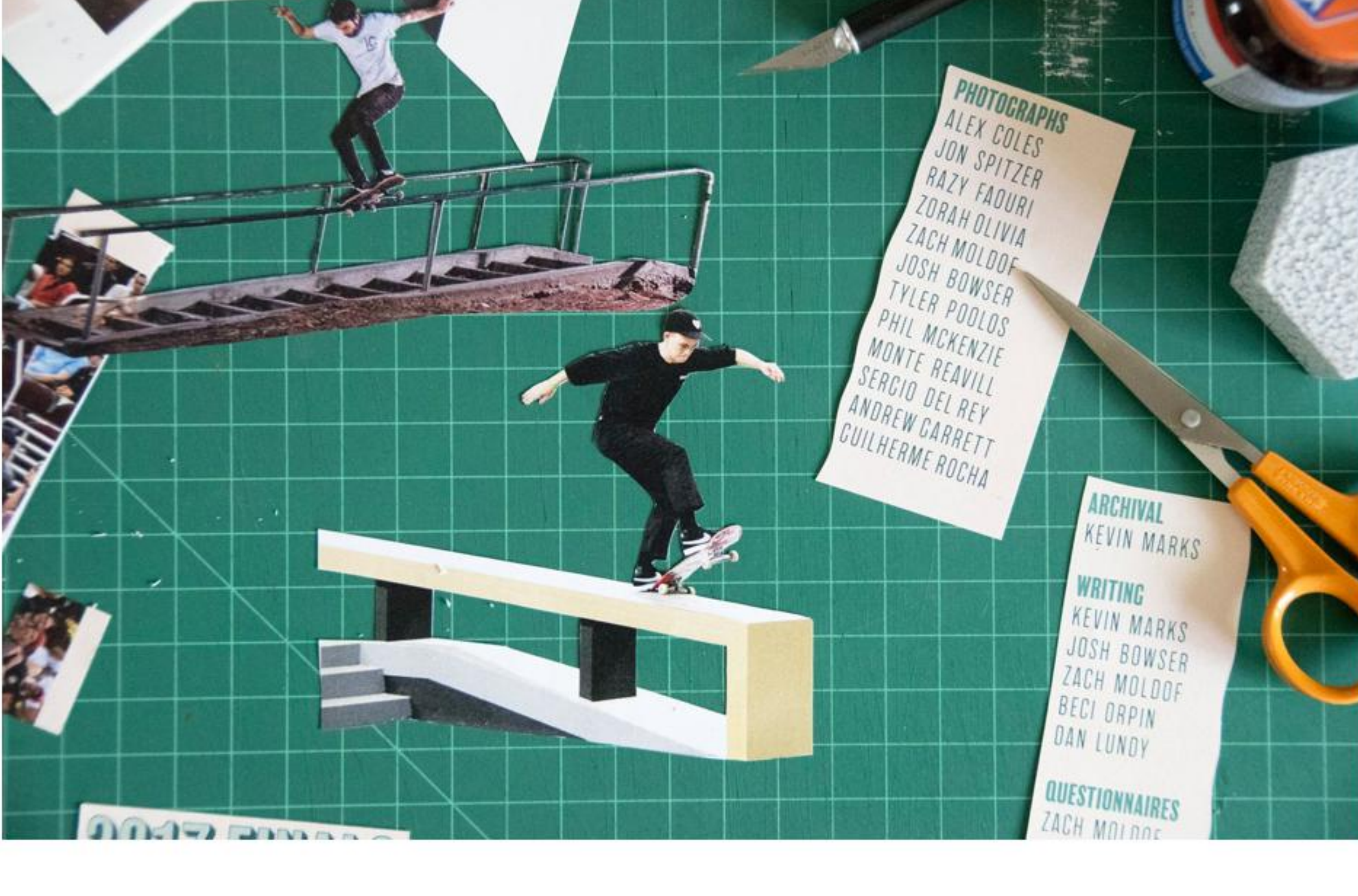


The current status of skateboarding media is at a more confusing crossroads than perhaps ever before. On one hand, consumers of the culture have been left with few available resources in the magazine department as the death of print and the reign of the internet has made steady work of killing off and bankrupting traditional media outlets.

With nowhere else to turn but phone screens and keyboards, many get sucked into the whirlwind of social media. Though they can engage with more content here than anywhere else, they are left equally susceptible to the headache of overconsumption. Though this all may sound bleak, several new faces in skateboarding's independent publishing scene are making a much needed effort to change the narrative of our existing paradigm.

On the bright side, skateboarding has minds like Zach Moldof, creator of Stoke Much Magazine, to lend a hand. Though Moldof is brand new to working in skateboarding, his critique on the state of existing media provides a refreshing interpretation of what solid skateboarding journalism looks like.

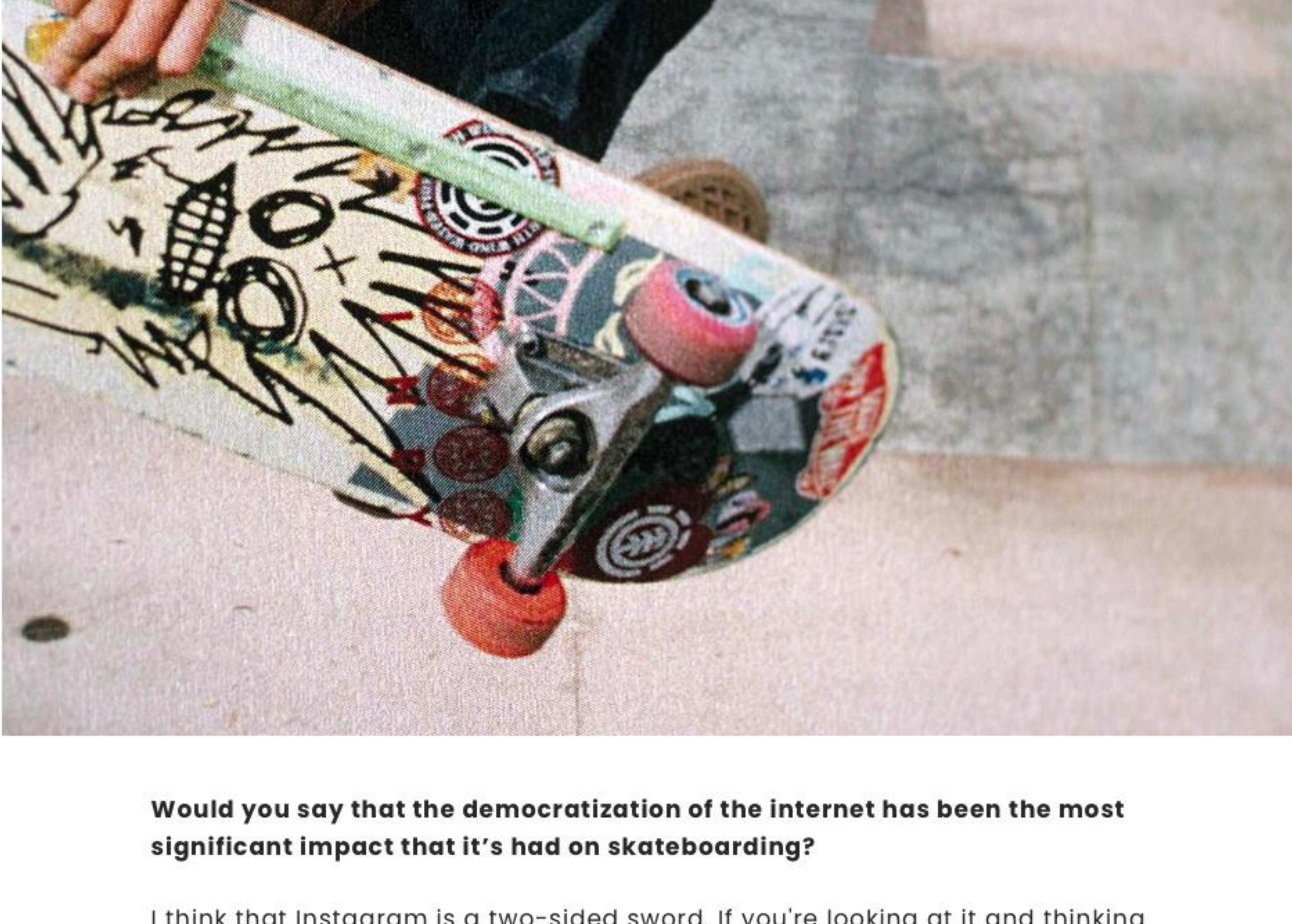
His work with Issue #1 is a visually engaging and thought provoking stab at what he feels is a proper representation of creative skateboarding culture. Though Stoke Much is still in it's infancy, we didn't just pick this one because of a shared namesake. We chose it so we could shed some extra light on Moldof's valuable insights on the following:



Stoked Ride Shop: What do you feel is the role of the independent media in skateboarding today?

Zach Moldof: That's a complicated one. Obviously, you have Thrasher, and Thrasher is always gonna be Thrasher. I don't think it's a bad magazine, and I don't think that the people who make it are bad people. I don't expect Thrasher to be a balanced publication that values and promotes all people equally. I expect Thrasher to present an image of skateboarding that represents the Thrasher ethos. And they're the biggest skate media outlet, so I don't expect their influence to suddenly dissipate. But I also don't agree with the message that Thrasher is sending, and I think it's dangerous for this to be the sole voice of skateboarding in America. As a skate brand, they're free to do whatever they want. But when it comes to media outlets in skate, Thrasher is not doing nearly enough, and they often endorse a message that is contradictory to many people's values.

With that being said, the responsibility of independent skate media is to accept the reality that Thrasher isn't going to change, and build a suitable alternative. Historically, skateboarders in the USA have avoided the difficult conversations. We glorify extremity in both action, and the consumption of substances. But our culture doesn't engage in much deep thinking. I can't really speak to other people's values, or how other people should be running their businesses. But I know I'm really interested in building each issue around concepts that are relevant to skateboarders everywhere, and taking the time to write about skateboarding the same way I write about music, visual art, food, and any other type of culture...



Would you say that the democratization of the internet has been the most significant impact that it's had on skateboarding?

I think that Instagram is a two-sided sword. If you're looking at it and thinking it does one thing well, there's always an opposite side to that equation where it's doing something else equally bad. For that reason, I'd have to say that the positive democratization that Instagram has created, has also ushered in an entirely negative era of bullshit speech. Lots of insignificant, and self-centered thoughts are being filtered through a bizarre psychosis and posted as comments or DMs on Instagram. So, while it has allowed us to all connect, it has also given a voice to a whole lot of things that are better left unsaid. And in my opinion, these things are both having an equal impact on skate culture.

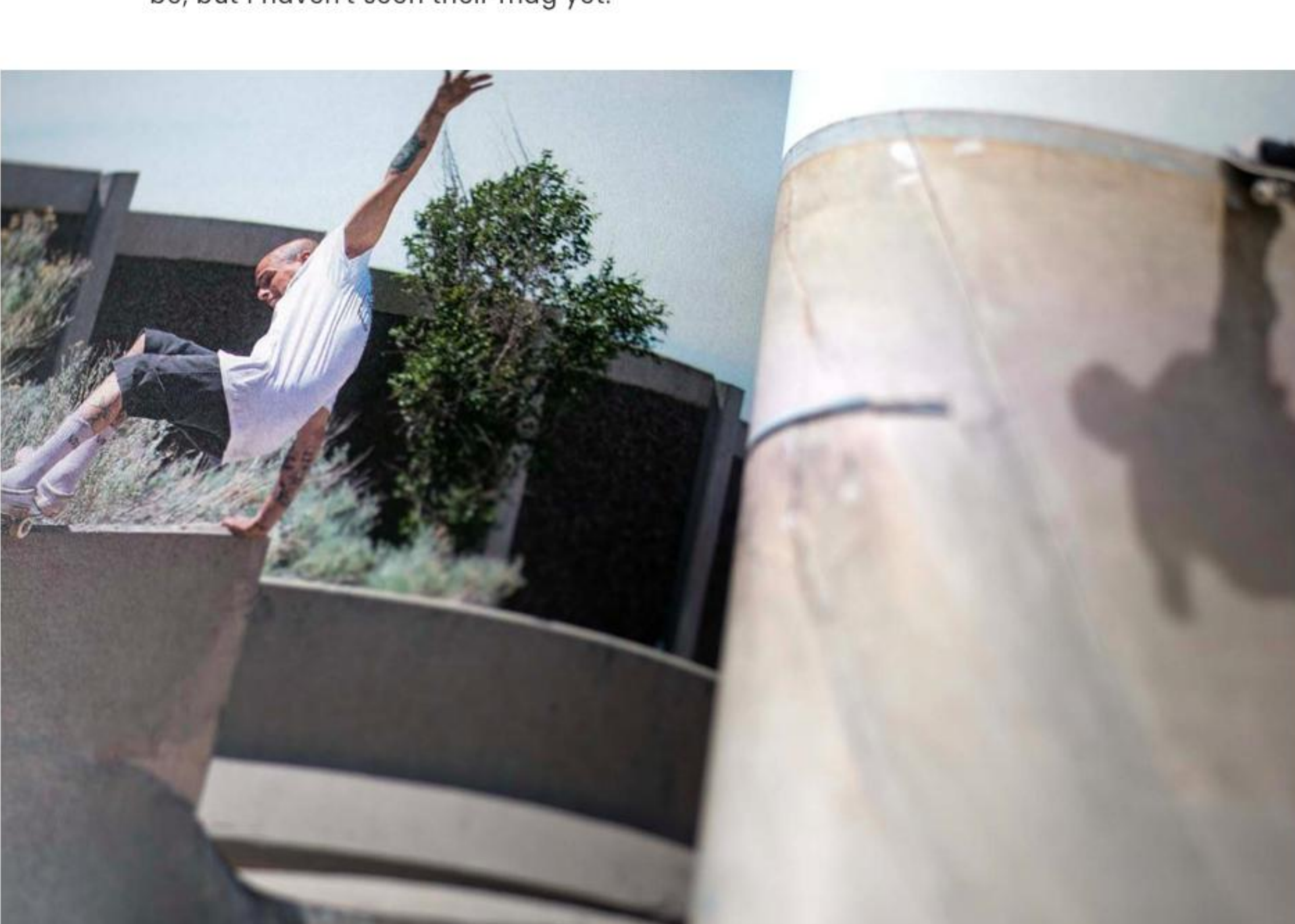


How do you think the existing magazines in skateboarding today handle the creative culture of skateboarding?

Well, I think magazines in Europe are doing a great job of it. They seem to have a really great balance of poignant thinking, rad skating, strong design, and unexpected turns. And then in the US there is Thrasher/Transworld, then everyone else. I think Thrasher's interpretation of creativity is buried somewhere within the overall ethos of Thrasher—it doesn't seem like Thrasher is really striving to prioritize or promote the concept of creativity. They're not depicting skaters as uncreative, but they place more of a premium on skaters as radicals. Transworld seems to be embracing a lot of what makes the European mags great. But Transworld seems to place more of a premium on being creative with the layout, rather than depicting skateboarders as inherently creative people. Obviously, Transworld is proving that skaters are creative people, but it feels like the magazine is moreso focused on providing a digest of skate tricks, and skate trips in a creative format.

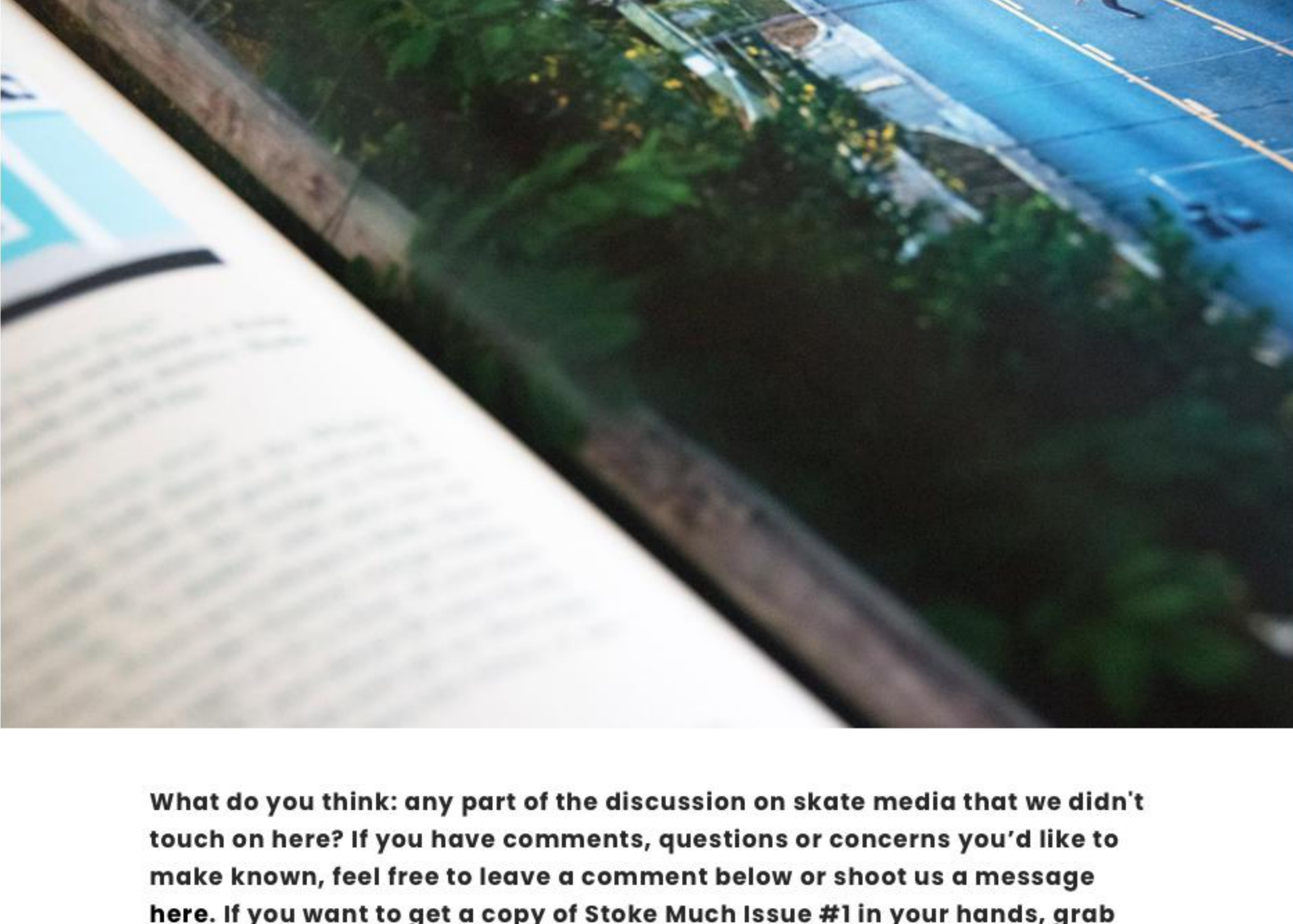


And then you have a ton of smaller publications like Anomaly, Love, Skate Juice, Medium, et al. All of these folks are pushing the envelope a bit more because they're coming with forms that are in keeping with major capitalism. And because capitalism and creativity are indirectly related, all the smaller publications are inherently creative. They're skateboarders creative enough to compile and publish a magazine on a regular basis. It takes a lot of creativity to lay out a magazine. When you start the page is utterly empty, and you have to come up with everything. So, doing that without the support of a capitalist institution is evidence of tremendous creativity. But, I haven't seen anyone that's really looking at skateboarding as a creative act first, and a sport second. Of course I could be wrong, because I'm certainly not an authority on what's out there. I feel like Anomaly might be, but I haven't seen their mag yet.



Where do you aim to take the magazine in the future?

I want to take it to the Olympics in 2020 for sure. That's a top priority. My goal is to create a magazine that delivers a devoted dose of stoke 4 times a year, and employ a small staff of dedicated creative people. I want to take money from large corporations, and give money to skate companies, skate shops, and riders. I'm not trying to stay true to the past, but I am definitely working hard to honor and revere the roots. If everything goes according to plan Stoke Much will be a platform for a global skateboard culture, and I will strive to present a balanced representation that reflects all the kinds of people making skateboarding what it is around the world.



What do you think: any part of the discussion on skate media that we didn't touch on here? If you have comments, questions or concerns you'd like to make known, feel free to leave a comment below or shoot us a message here. If you want to get a copy of Stoke Much issue #1 in your hands, grab one here.

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