

# adrenaline Junkies

Skateboarding  
is more popular than ever

by NATHAN HAN

PHOTOS BY  
BEVERLY REGINO

Even though skateboarding is officially prohibited on campus, that doesn't deter Tristan Martinez and the growing number of other students who are passionately devoted to the sport.

Martinez is obsessed. Each day, he heads out of the classroom with only one thing on his mind. He grabs his board and either heads to Manhattan Beach Skate Park on Marine Street or hunts for perfect stairs and ledges around downtown L.A.

For Tristan and his skater friends, the world is their playground. "We can skate anything, anywhere."

After all, Los Angeles is the "Mecca" of the skateboarding world.

Skateboarding has been Martinez's passion for nearly his entire life. He was first introduced to it by his older half-brother at the ripe age of three. But it wasn't until sixth grade that the spark became a flame, igniting a passion for the sport that hasn't slowed down.

Skateboarding brings him joy. It makes him feel like he's flying. To him, skating is all about

freedom.

"There are no rules, coaches or teammates. The focus is all about progressing your own personal skill and enjoying the ride."

The whole world seems to feel the same way about skating. During the pandemic, skateboarding provided many teenagers a much-needed break from being stuck in the house all day playing video games or mindlessly scrolling through TikTok and its popularity has suddenly exploded.

According to ActionWatch, a sales data company tracking only specialty skate and surf shops, skateboard sales jumped 75 percent in 2020 compared to 2019.

The affordability of the boards helped usher in this new wave of interest.

Skateboards from Target or Walmart, while significantly lacking in quality, are sold at prices as low as \$20 to newcomers. For those willing to make the commitment, they should expect to spend a one-time \$200 payment for a solid, trustworthy board setup courtesy of their local shop.

The sport is also accessible. Don't worry about

paying for a gym or a park, if it has concrete, you can skate it.

Even for people that have never touched a board in their lives, skating has probably influenced them in some way. The stereotypical fashion of a skater is well known across the country: Carhartt beanie, Dickies pants and Vans shoes.

Companies like Thrasher, Supreme and Palace have transformed from small skateboard starters to multi-million dollar street-wear brands.

In the '50s, no one would have guessed that the newly-created "surfboards on wheels" could grow to become a two billion dollar industry.

These initial "sidewalk surfers" were simple wooden boards still on metal wheels created for surfers who wanted to ride when the waves were low. They were then marketed and sold as children's toys.

The late '60s and early '70s brought about important innovations for the skateboards which included the kick-tail, allowing for greater tricks like the famous ollie, and the polyurethane wheels, the classic neon-colored circles that are still used to allow for smoother rides on the street.

In the '80s, popularity for the mainstream "vert" skating competitions, skating usually involving ramps, waned and was replaced by the empty pools and steep stairs of street-skating.

The skating culture of the '90s went underground, and survived as it was embraced by punk and hip-hop, groups that were considered anti-establishment and rebellious. This stigma around the activity still exists to this day.

"They think everybody that skates is a bad kid, or does drugs or something. It's just not the case, people skate to have fun, hang out with friends or get better at tricks," freshman Nathan Banoun said.

Competitive skating has made huge developments in diversifying how skating is perceived in popular culture. The first X-games were held in 1995 and have since then highlighted countless famous names of pro-athletes for kids to look up to. Tony Hawk is one of these names that needs no introduction and has become popular with everyone, even outside the skateboarding world. Now 25 years after the first X-games, the sport joined the Olympics and has helped support the careers of the next group of skaters which will inspire the next generation.

Competitions are important for the growth of the sport, but a lot of skaters on campus aren't looking to earn first-place medals. Most of them just want to have fun and meet others who share their passion.

"I've actually gotten multiple close friends get into skating. No matter the risks, I think it's a [great] learning experience. To keep going with skating through all the falls shows you have a strong will to keep going at what you love," Martinez said.

At its core, like all sports and activities, skating is about taking pride in your own accomplishments and sharing that with others to be a part of something bigger than yourself.

Martinez recommends that everyone starts skating, but if you ever do try, maybe think about leaving your board at home.

"I've skated here [on campus] before and there have been teachers who haven't given back my board for an entire week" Freshman Dahlia "DW" Wallace said. "I think that's pretty crappy."

Even if school may not be open to skateboarding, Pedlow Skate Park always is, and it's only four miles away.



Michael Rivera

► I started skating March 2020, right when the pandemic hit. In middle school, my friend started skating and I wanted to join them. ► I usually go to Pedlo or just skate the flat ground around this area. There aren't many people that skate here at Van Nuys. I usually go to a park and meet up with friends, skate together and film videos for fun. ► I like to kickflip, those are my favorite tricks.



Dahlia DW Wallace

► I've been skating for 13 years and I'm 16 now so since I was three. ► I was actually going to a piano class and my dad just decided to get me a board at Val Surf. I still have that really torn up board. My dad doesn't know how to skate, he just thought I would like it as a sport. I practice almost every day, some days I just ride up and down the street. ► I like to skate Lake Balboa Skate Park. But I like to skate anywhere I can though. If it has concrete, I will skate it. ► The skateboarding culture is pretty small. You can see people using it for transportation but I think there should be more appreciation from the school. I understand we have the lockers but I don't think that's enough to support the community.



Tristan Martinez

► One memorable time is when I got chased by cops; that's really rare. I was skating down by the beach with a lot of my friends. We try to be super respectful when skating in public places. You have to be like that if you want to set the future of skateboarding. ► But this random older guy came up to us, super grumpy, and argued it out with one of my friends. The argument escalated until my friend kicked a sign which landed on his leg. He wasn't hurt at all but we knew we had to dip since the cops were called. The cops over there in Manhattan Beach do not mess around. We ran past the police station and all I remember hearing was 8 cop cars following us. We ended up hiding in this alleyway in these newly constructed houses. We do know that they had dogs on us. ► Our friend Jose got tackled by one of the dogs. That day was one of the craziest and funnest moments.



Nathan Banoun

► I've been skating since I was four years old so it's been about 11 years now. ► My dad skated when I was little and my grandpa thought I would like it so he bought me my first board. Skating is a way to get my mind off things. I skate every day, before or after school, sometimes even during school. ► I find skate spots near my house. There is a ledge near my sisters school which I like to use a lot. It's mixed. Everyone has their own styles, and it's very diverse. ► [People who don't skate] think everybody that skates is a bad kid or does drugs or something. It's not the case. People just skate to have fun, hang out with friends or get better at tricks. My easiest trick that I have on lock is a heel flip.



Jaya Darrington

► I bought my first board from Walmart, it was just a starter board. Later, my friend Trace Hernandez bought me a really nice longboard from Kryptonics on Amazon. ► I prefer my skateboard over my longboard simply because it's more portable and not as heavy. Skateboarding is a really freeing form of transportation. I can skate anywhere, anytime and don't have to worry about traffic. I ride my board every day. I ride it to school, I ride it to work and ride it back home. ► I think everyone should skate, you should at least try to learn. It's hard to learn at first. I think if you can power through it and balance yourself, it's a good metaphor for life. You're going to fall off and hurt yourself. If you can figure out how to get back on and keep going, it's worth the ride.



Alexis Cortez

► I've been skating for a year and a half. I skate probably every day, for a couple of minutes at least. I grew up in Panorama city and I go to the skatepark near there. ► I also go to Pedlow, a skate park on Victory. ► Skating is fun for me. I had nothing to do during quarantine and I then I saw videos on YouTube and thought it looked cool. I decided to try and just fell in love with it. ► I met a lot of my friends through skating, a whole community at skate parks. ► My advice for new skaters would be if you're scared, just try it. Everyone has to start somewhere. I was really scared to go to skate parks because I thought everyone would be way better than me. But the vibe was really nice, the skaters there just take people in under their wing.