

STACY PERALTA

2nd SkateBoarder Magazine Interview

INTERVIEWER'S NOTES

About 6 months ago W.B. decided that Peralta deserved a second interview, due to his long-term intimate perspective on life as a top pro.

CAREER NOTES

He was the only pro to place in the '75 Bahne Cadillac Nationals, the '75 Hang Ten World, the '76 Cow Palace Northern California Championships and the '78 Freeformer World titles.

He sold approximately 100,000 signature model skates and then decided to start over with a smaller company.

He starred in "FREEWHEELIN'," the first 35mm feature film about skating, and is featured in the upcoming film, "SKATEBOARD MADNESS."

He has toured extensively in the Continental U.S., Mexico, Fiji, Europe, England, Scandinavia, Puerto Rico, Hawaii, the West Indies and Australia.

He remains a prime stylistic innovator on banked and vertical terrains.

He has been identified as one of the sport's "Golden Boys," a label he neither sought nor wants. Says he, "Anyone who considers me to be 'Mr. Nice Boy' must be comparing me to a total jerk. I just try to be normal."

His moves in competition have sometimes been a matter of controversy. . . "He definitely got burned at the Runway Freeformer World Contest. I think some of the judges were blind." – Gregg Ayres

The following interview was completed in the second "O" of the Hollywood sign on a smogless day in January.

Since this is your second interview, I guess we should advise everyone to go back and read your first (Vol. 3 #1), and that way we can avoid repeating all the basics.

Good idea. If they can even find the issue, considering I was told it was the worst selling issue they've ever had.

Who told you that?

Warren (Bolster)

Well, he's got a great sense of humor!

It made me feel good after I heard it.

Well, here you are, back again!

What can you say, that's the way it goes. Maybe this will be the second worst!

Well, you can live and hope.

No, thank you.

What do you want to talk about?

I don't know. . .motorcycles? You know, whatever, what are we supposed to talk about?

Let's just jump right into something here. The past few years you've participated in contests and you've done fairly well. Yet, you've remained rather outspoken and critical of them. For instance, you walked off from the Big "O" contest in protest.

I didn't exactly walk off, but I definitely protested it. I didn't give way to their rules.

It's kind of a dichotomy. You participate in these things, but you seem to have reservations. Why don't we discuss that.

Well, the thing is there is so much more to all this than anybody even cares to think about. I've had trouble with a few people I've worked with in the past because they couldn't understand why I didn't go into contests with what they considered "a winning attitude." For instance, in many contests they have certain moves you have to do in order to place. I'm not going to learn a move I'm not interested in, just to win a contest. They're either going to give me a good placing because they like the way I skate or they're not. I'm there to show what I can do. Contests should be about reflecting *your* personality and *your* style rather than just going for a high placing so your team and sponsor can throw you big kisses. That's what has happened in a lot of instances. People would say to me, "Hey man, if you did this move and that move you could do so good in this contest. " So, I'd say, "Sorry."

What kind of people?

People that you'd call the "elites" in skateboarding right now. Certain skaters and manufacturers. I mean, they don't push me, but they can't understand it. I look ahead of that and say, "What the heck, how seriously do people take these contests, anyway?" They're great; they bring everybody together and you learn. It gets people inventing new stuff. It makes you more into a so-called athlete. But the thing is, I just ain't gonna do stuff that I don't want to do, as far as learnin' new moves. There are certain things I like to do. I do a lot of different moves that not many people do, and not many people understand. I really don't like doing what everybody else does. Like, when a new trick comes out everybody jumps on that trick, then there is really no use in learning it - if everybody learns it there is no thrill. There is only a thrill when you can learn something hardly anybody knows or nobody knows. If you're gonna be unique, you got to be unique. If you're gonna be a leader, you gotta be unique, so you've got to learn your own moves or moves that no one else is doing. If you learn everybody's moves, it's like you're just following them. Everybody does it to an extent, but you've got to maintain a good balance.

You say that some people don't understand your tricks and your moves. Why is that?

Some of the things I do, not a lot of people do. So, either the judges think they are easy, and nobody else is doing them because of that, or they just don't know what they are and they just pass them by. I don't know how they got off calling it the "World Contest" (the Freeformer Runway Pro) when they had the bank contest. It finally happens after bank riding has been dead; as far as the media's concerned, it's dead. As far as I'm concerned, bank riding has always been alive and always will be. It will open up in the media in about a year or two probably. But anyway, I went there and my first routine I got 3 bum scores because I was doing things they'd never seen on banks. I was doing slides and things that were invented on banks, while I'd say the bulk of the other competitors were doing a lot of flatland and freestyle work, like kick-flips, dog-walks and toe spins. I can't put that stuff down; but yet, it was a bank contest, and I was doing moves that were invented on banks. After the contest, I was talking to the judges and they told me that they did not know what I was doing. Ayres was screaming at them and telling them that they "blew it."

Who were the judges?

Hoffman, Hester, Morin, Hesselgrave. I know there was someone else there, but I can't remember. Anyway, they told me they didn't realize what I was doing. They told me I had to do more flatland freestyle trips. I told them, "I don't do that stuff, and I will not because that's not the way I skate." I figure if you do good enough stuff at what you do, you shouldn't have to do anything more. They kept telling me they didn't understand it. Everybody kept saying, "Hey you gotta do it, give in man and do it." And I said, "No." Still, by the end of the contest I got 2nd. The thing is, I was watching all of the competitors in the contest, and style and finesse is pretty much overlooked as far as I'm concerned. It's hard to judge, and so it's totally ignored. There were a couple of people in that contest who were looking pretty shaky but they were doing the moves, and that's *all* they were doing. That's what's happening with a lot of skaters. There's all these new skaters doing the moves but they just don't know the basics.

Why do you think that's happening?

It could be because they didn't learn right.

How do you learn right?

I think one of the best ways to learn how to skate is to learn on banks, 'cause you learn how to un-weight and weight. You learn how to put a little style in there. Get relaxed when you skate. But, when you go straight on the vertical you're too much of a macho thing right now with vertical. The whole thing is vertical, vertical. The vertical guys get down on the freestyle guys. It's a bunch of crap. They outta just ride what they like and shut up. I mean, seriously, who's to say who's bad and who's to say who's good? Vertical riding is the most radical thing to do in skateboarding, as far as being thrilling or getting hurt. But, there are other parts to the sport. A lot of vertical tricks I work out on banks first. I learn where my weight is going to be when I'm in the middle of a trick. I figure out the trick on banks, then I take it to vertical. I've already figured out about 70% of the trick by then. All I have to do then is figure out how to do it on a steeper incline. Then you've got it. I skate banks a lot now on my own in the evenings and stuff. I go to the schools near my house - in skatetown. There's usually people there skatin' around having a good time. There's nobody there to hassle you like in a park, no officials or anything. We have a good time with the boys.

Isn't that how you sorta got started?

Exactly. That's how I started out and that's probably where I'm gonna end up, too.

You had a lucrative association with a prominent manufacturer and you bailed out, which astounded some people. You're now associated with a considerably smaller, less well known company. Why?

When I was with the people before, they treated me good and I treated them good. The whole main reason for my leaving that company was, you've gotta move on. You've gotta keep going, you can't stagnate. You've always gotta move on and do something different, because if you stay in one place too long, you get hung-up because nothing changes. When I did move, I definitely *did* take a decrease in "payola!" I had several offers from backers to front a company under my own name. You know, the same old thing; just go somewhere and get some wheels made, use the same laminates as everyone else and throw on a logo. Then you run some color ads and sit back with your sponsor and wait for the bucks to flow in. With Powell, I'm part of the company, so financially, if they do good, I'll do good. The thing about George is he's serious about what he's doing. He's a good engineer and he's into skating. At Powell now, if I want to change a design, experiment with new materials, or try anything different he's behind me.

Get into some of the things you're designing there. Would you describe your new equipment as being substantially different than what was being made before with your name on it?

Oh, yeah, it's different. We are getting much more into the technological end of it. I don't know a whole lot about engineering, but I know what I want. I know what kind of stuff I like to ride, so I can give George an idea and he can put it down in materials. He knows where to go and he knows what to do. Plus, he's got a million ideas of his own. We're both working together designing new wheels and equipment, new boards, that kind of thing. We're working with some materials that I know nobody knows about, because they're totally space-age. Everybody's doing that conical wheel right now and we think it's great because we're not. They're all fighting each other for it. We're going to do something different. We are doing the best we can to *not* follow everyone else. There are a lot of good people out there, but when a lot of companies start putting out the same thing, you've got to start wondering. When all the rest are copying each other, you've gotta do something else. We're trying to work out ways to put things out that are different, that sets us apart and makes us unique. you've got to be unique if you're going to be on top.

From your perspective as a skater, designer, professional, part-time company owner and what not, what do you think the industry is going to do right now? A lot of people have predicted excruciatingly hard times ahead.

The people who are making good stuff are going to stay. The millions, trillions of people that are in there for the fast buck, making garbage, they're going to be out there soon - goodbye. There's going to be so many people gone, it's really going to be good because the industry is going to be cleaned up. There are so many fly-by-nighters around. They're not doing anything for the sport or anybody. They copy these guys trucks and those guys boards and make their graphics like someone else's, and they think they've got a product and they hire a couple of guys to ride for them. All these guys are just looking for the fast buck. There's definitely going to be a shake-up. From then on there will probably be about 5-10 strong manufacturers throughout the wheel, truck and board industry.

You mentioned putting something back in the sport. Is that important to you?

Oh, yeah. Whether it's giving out a good product, telling people how to do a new movie - it's important. Getting somebody stoked on it. You've got to put back what you take. I hope I've done it. I try to be as conscious as I can about it, because there's been a lot of people who just took, took, took and put nothing back. They put it in their bank accounts, I guess.

Who do you think has done a lot for the sport?

There are a lot of people. . . I could go on forever. It's too hard!

What people do you think have done the least for the sport?

I'd rather not even get into that, 'cause everybody knows who they are, anyway. You can just look through the magazine and tell right there who's done it and who hasn't.

Who do you think the most underrated skaters around are?

There's quite a few. The thing is, one of the reasons a lot of guys are overrated is because people think in being a skate "star" all they have to do is be able to skate. A lot of these guys, they can skate, but their attitudes are funky; they don't know how to push themselves, they don't know how to relate to people, so they get nowhere. You gotta know how to relate to people and talk to them if you're gonna get anywhere. Unless your skating ability is out-of-control, unreal, and there's very few people who make it that way. As for the guys that are underrated, there's Darrell Miller. Gregg Ayres might be a little underrated, just because the guy is more of an all-around skater than people think. Constantineau is another one. Shreddy Repas, Stephenson, Doug De Montemorency, Chris Dawson, Arnie Hoag - they're all in there.

You keep referring to commercialism. Are you anti-commercial?

No. I just like to see things done right. I'm putting together a team right now, and it's real small, has a few guys here and there. I consider all the guys on the team to be excellent skaters. I don't want to have a million guys on my team because I only want to have enough people on my team that I can cover and take care of and make happy. If I've got guys on my team that are hanging out and bummed at me, it's no use, 'cause I was there one time myself. I know what it's like. I've been doing this a long time and I know how I like to be treated; I know pretty much how other people like to be treated. What I'm saying is, I just like to see it done fairly. There have been a lot of times when I've gone through a lot of garbage, especially the latter Pepsi program. There was a skatepark design thing and some other company that flopped. I hate sounding negative. But, I'm just saying it to warn people. I like having a good attitude and I always like to trust people. If they screw up, that's their fault. They may burn me for a bit, but they're the ones that are gonna lose in the long run.

What potential pro skating career is there for kids now coming up?

It depends on their skating. Being an all-around skater is so important if you want to be a traveling skater. You've got to have a good attitude; you've got to be able to talk to people. If you don't have that, you're nowhere. There's a lot of good skaters right now that are tops in the magazines, but they're gonna have to learn to relate to people. It's nothing bad, but there's certain things you've gotta do to hang in there. You've gotta know how to talk to the press and say the right things. When I went to England, I had to skate parks that looked like mine fields out of the war, and I skated some good ones, too. I had to skate in the rain. You've just gotta do your best. Complain all you want if there's room for complaining; but still, you've gotta get up there and do it, 'cause, man, people want to see you skate, they want to see you do your stuff. It's kinda hard sometimes. I've done a lot of traveling and I'd say more than 50% of the places you skate are not up to par. I don't know if the spectators realize it, but there are times when you just can't do your best, skate the best, 'cause you're riding stuff that just isn't that good. But, then again, you've just got to do what you can do.

Based on your travels, are there any particular emerging energy pockets out there?

Yeah, lots. There's a heavy one in the Northeast right now. Texas has a pretty fair one. England has a hot one; France, Sweden, they're going. I'll tell you, those people are ready for some action. They're really in there. A lot of people in Europe have never seen anything like skating. They don't know much about surfing, and they don't know anything about skating. It's just blowing their minds because they've never seen such a thing. They're takin' off and doing unreal. They've got a lot of energy, so it's happening. It's definitely a worldwide happening.

Have you gotten any feedback from Australia?

I think Cheyne Horan may still skate a little; he's heavily into surfing right now. Like John Tezzerio, the guy writes me all the time and says it's happening. The thing is, where he's at right now is exactly where me and all the other "Zephyr" boys were at about 5 years ago. There's just a little bit of commercialization down there, and the guys have their own trip. They go to skatin' banks all the time. They are totally following our footsteps, with just subtle differences. But, in my eyes, they're doing exactly what we did, which is unreal. They don't care about making money when they skate; they're just doing it and having fun. They're doing it for the fun of it. It's a problem, because there's a lot of these beginning skaters and all they think about is making bucks. It's understandable, 'cause they want to skate full-time and not work; but you can't just win one contest and all of a sudden expect to get a model. That is so misunderstood right now. You've gotta pay if you're gonna play. You've got to put in for what you're gonna take out.

How important is personal acclaim to you?

What do you mean?

To be specific, you were in the top 5 of the skateboarder poll last year. This interview is taking place before this year's poll results, so we have no idea what you're gonna do. How important is that kind of thing, the feedback and all? We're talking head trips.

Ego? I don't try to let that affect me. Because this ego thing, it's hard to explain, but ego, what it all comes down to, means nothing. All this fame and fortune, it all means nothing, because something could happen to you and then where are you at? If I could never skate again, where's all that other stuff, it's gone. Then my ego would have to leave, too. So there's no use in being an egotist and not talking to people and thinking you're bad and thinking you're bitchen, because it's meaningless, totally meaningless. If you have a big head and you're just off in your own little world, you're totally alone. And you're alienating yourself from a lot of people and you lose a lot of your friends. I get stoked man, doing what I'm doing; I'm able to meet a lot of people and make a lot of connections. If I'm going to travel somewhere, I've got friends in a lot of places in the world, which I would've never made if I was a jerk. I get stoked on people, and they get stoked on me, 'cause we just become friends. As far as the poll goes, if a lot of people vote for you in it and have seen you and met you, then you realize that you've done a pretty good job. You can take it two ways; you can be Mr. Bitchen or you can help somebody, help the sport.

Be honest. What was it like last year when you placed? Did you think you'd place that high?

I figured I'd be in there somewhere. I wasn't sure, though.

What about this year?

Who knows? I don't know.

Well, take a chance, this magazine will probably come out after the poll thing's over. You might look like a jerk if you're wrong, but go ahead!

I have no idea.

How about a guess?

84.

Did you vote last year?

Did I vote? No way! What am I going to vote for?

Did any of your friends vote?

I have no idea. They might have voted for themselves, but I don't know. I know a few people who wanted to vote for themselves this year in quantities of hundreds, so their manufacturer would go, "Good boy. Now I'm going to make you a model and you're going to become a star." The thing is, it's too bad, because when the guy wins the poll with millions of fake ballots and his manufacturer gets his boards out, who's going to buy them? Him? Everything keeps going to the negative zone.

What's the best thing about skateboarding today?

Going out with your friends and getting down. Havin' a good time.

What's the worst thing?

Well, for me, the worst things about it are heavy crowds at the parks. The whole thing about fun skating is you don't have to wait; you can just go out and do what you want. If it's too crowded, I'll just back off; I just won't go

out. That's one thing I don't like about contests. Practice sessions are just too crowded. If you wait 15 minutes for a ride, there's no use. You lose your stamina.

Because you were on the original Zephyr team and you are from the Santa Monica area, you've been associated with the Dogtown thing and publicly disassociated with it, too. Is there anything going on with Dogtown now, or do you even think about it?

I don't know, we've got our own park now. Things are happening again. It's a bit diluted now; it's not a heavy unified group like it used to be, but it's still happening. Everybody's still got the energy and everybody's still stoked. The style's still the same with us. The one thing about the Santa Monica area that I totally dig is style. Heavy surf-style in skateboarding is my favorite thing.

Do you think surfing relates to skateboarding?

Only if you make it relate. If you want to make it, it can. If you don't, it doesn't have to. I like to because I can almost sometimes fantasize riding a wave when I'm in a pool. I can do certain things that I would do on a surfboard. Where as a guy from inland, he doesn't surf, so he doesn't know what it's about. So, I can put two trips into skating instead of just one.

How about skiing: are there any parallels there?

Just speed. When I ride banks, I just try to flow with the bank, let the bank make me go faster, not my wheels. See, if you time your body right and you put yourself in the right position in a wall or bank or on vertical, you don't have to do anything. I like to use minimal energy for maximum speed. That's my favorite thing. Man, when you get in the perfect position, what's the use of doing anything more? Get into the flow and just hang in there. I just dig doing the arches; I've been heavily into doing arches. Body torques on banks and vertical.

What kind of goals are important to you right now?

Right now, just hanging into the skate thing. Skatin' good, learning more moves. I've got a lot more moves I've thought of that I want to get down. I'm putting together a good team. Doing a lot of traveling and just making sure that skateboarding makes it as an unreal thing and doesn't get shot down by all of these big wigs.

What sort of big wigs do you mean?

Skate officials, federal people, whoever there are that don't dig skating. Who don't give it a chance, who don't remember being a kid. They're trying to protect us "from ourselves." They should figure out what's happening. One thing I've seen in traveling is, there are a lot of gnarly cities. I see all these street people, like street gang members, and skating is the heaviest thing they've ever done. They're doing skateboarding because they can fully get their aggression out. These guys are the kinda guys I've met that hung out and went around breaking into houses and stealing stuff for the fun of it; that's all they've got to do. They've got nothing else to do except get into trouble. With skateboarding, it gives these guys a good thing to do and they're stoked. I've seen a lot of people like that. I've met a few people that have blown my mind with their life stories. You've got the government in certain places saying, "no, we can't have that. These kids are hurting themselves." Well, shoot, if they did the right thing in the first place, they wouldn't hurt themselves. I heard of one case where this kid was walking across the street with his skateboard in his hand, he got hit by a car, and they blamed it on the skateboard. When somebody gets hurt on a skateboard, it's not the skateboard's fault, it's the kid's. How can you blame it on something when the kid should have known what he was doing?

What do you look for in a good pair of sweat socks?

Nothing. A cheap price. Considering they only last about 2 weeks.

Are you a religious person?

I have my own beliefs.

What do you think about punk rock?

The name Olson strikes my mind.

Did you see "The Exorcist"?

No. I'm not interested.

What's your favorite arcade game?

God, there's very few. I don't even dig that stuff at all.

What kind of automobile do you drive?

What does it matter?

Well, this whole line of questioning is just sort of an exercise in auto recall. It's asking a lot of unrelated questions in a very short space so we can give our readers a kind of brief analysis of what a real skater is like.

A Volvo.

Are you conscious of your diet?

Try to be. But never end up being.

Do you take vitamins or protein supplements?

Nope. I've tried. Every week I try to do something like that.

Do you smoke cigarettes?

Nope. Never did, never will. No way, no use. No reason to.

As a traveling professional, what are your five favorite food chains or national franchises in general?

The good salads at pizza hut. Malts and shakes at Carl's. Happy Kine's Bun and Run is a good one. Most of the other ones are pretty bad. McDonalds. You know, the usual eat and suffer! I'm not really into them and don't think about it too much.

What was the last drug, narcotic or controlled substance that you purchased?

I don't know. When you take them, you lose your memory, anyway, so I can't remember. I forgot. Where am I right now?

Coping with an image problem?

O.K., that's the thing. When it comes to drugs, girls and anything like that, man, it's my own business. That's one reason why I may have had a disassociation with Dogtown. When I skate, I do what I want. There's a lot of times I had to turn down getting high because I don't dig getting high when I skate. There's times for getting high, and there's time for everything. I don't particularly care for screaming out "garbage queens" out of a window at girls and stuff like that. A lot of guys I know who do that, when it comes down to it, they're nowhere;

they don't have girlfriends, they don't have anything. Their insecurity makes them say that. I don't want to get too heavy, but what I'm saying is, I do my own trip and I have a good time. I don't need to scream at girls.

What's your favorite discotheque?

I've never been to one.

Do you listen to your parents?

Usually. When they've got good stuff to say.

Do they listen to you?

Yeah, they do. Heavily. They don't try to push me, they just guide me.

What's your favorite World War II aircraft?

Aircraft? X15

STACY PERALTA

2nd SkateBoarder Magazine Interview part II

How about land vehicle?

Half-track.

What are some of the highlights of your career?

One of the highlights is being in a helicopter with the Godfather, flying over Hanalai Bay about 20 feet above the water and watching unreal surfing and getting intense "G" force. It was unreal. The European trip, I met a lot of nice people, a lot of nice girls. Australia, surfing some good waves. There is a lot more, for sure. Gotta keep thinking. Mt. Baldy, being one of the first people to kick-turn in a pool, stuff like that.

Have you ever been arrested?

Yep. That's another reason I keep low-key. It was for a ridiculous reason. It was for pointing a toy gun at somebody. A *toy gun*. I was with Nathan Pratt and we were on the Coast Hwy., and it was idiotic, we actually got arrested for it. When I was about 12 years old we were throwing smoke bombs in my neighbors window, and we got in trouble for that. There were other times, just stupid times. The only one time I got arrested, though, was the time I pointed the toy gun at somebody when we were just having fun. After that there were so many close calls, I realized you've gotta maintain. You've gotta do things at the right time; you can't do the wrong things at the wrong times. That's why I straightened up a bit. What I mean by "straightened up" is, I try to do things where it's cool, and I try not to do them where it ain't cool. Some people can't understand that.

Are groupies much of a problem?

In what way?

Well, Gregg Ayres had asked you why you had a phone number under an assumed name.

Because I don't want people calling my house. I don't like prank calls. I don't take advantage of groupies, either. I don't know, they're there I guess. They're good for business.

Have you ever had an electric shock?

Yes.

Was it 110 or 220 volts?

I don't know it was enough to throw me.

Have you ever had you life pass before your eyes?

Close.

Who do you think are up-and-coming skaters?

Two that I work closely with are [Alan Gelfand](#) and Ray Bones. Ray Bones could already win pro contests. In fact, he already has won a few, but he's going to stay amateur until he's ready to go pro. That kid's insane. And Alan Gelfand, man, he's heavy. He's a perfect example of a guy doing something that people can't understand because it's so radical that people aren't going to be doing it for a long, long time. He's been doing this move called the Ollie pop for two years and people still aren't doing it like he does. He does aerials with no hands, ollie Airs; man, those things are insane.

What do you think of the ISA?

There's a lot of people giving them garbage and getting down on them and stuff. I gotta say they ain't making a lot of money. They're not into it for the money. They're there for the benefit of the sport. All these guys that get down on them are the guys that get nothing out of 'em. Like, they've sent a lot of people, including myself, around the world, getting us trips and things like that. They're kinda like agents in a way. They get you a trip and you pay them 10% and you make out like a bandit. The problem is, a lot of skaters complain that they're making the rules. But everytime they call a meeting, nobody shows. None of the people show; the ones that don't show are usually the ones that complain about not having any unity or about this or that. The ISA does the best it can. They've lost a lot of money by getting skaters jobs and never receiving the 10%. I just think they're working their butts off and not getting much in return.

Who's your favorite Las Vegas nightclub entertainer?

I like Don Rickles. Who's that guy that gets no respect?

Steve Martin?

Not him. He's good. Steve Martin's funny as shit.

Rodney Dangerfield?

Yeah, Dangerfield's funny. Martin Mull and Monty Python are my favorites.

So, what was the last time you stole something?

Stole something? Uh, I try not to steal. Too much afraid it would get stolen from me.

Do you believe in the law of karma?

Heavily; totally.

Is it true you've been reading mind control books?

Mind control?

Edgar Casey?

That's not really mind control. Just interesting things.

What's your favorite fishing lure?

I don't know.

Favorite fish?

Swordfish, lobster, mahi mahi, probably.

Who's your favorite western star?

Was Sky king a western star?

Do you have any advice or parting comments?

Do what you feel is good. Do what you want to do. Have a good time.