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SAN JOSE BRONCO BUSTING MISSION

BLKPRJKT



Sometimes shit just happens. One minute you're sitting around contemplating the great morass of holiday depression, the next minute you're packing a bag and heading for the airport on an impromptu skate mission. Yeah, that's the dream we all have but who is living it? Phelps takes the H.R.C. on the wing to Oz every holiday season, but most of us are just lazy and broke and simply end up swirling the drain locally. That's not how Friday played out for MRZ and myself though. All at once a flurry of phone calls and e-mails informed us we had to drag ourselves through holiday security at LAX and jet up to SJ for the day, grab rental vehicles and provide safe passage for a couple of heavies to the new skate complex at Lake Cunningham. The reason? Simple. A heavily secret evaluation/testing/feedback session designed around some top pros and veteran concrete riders. We were invited guests of California Skateparks for this test session as a part of their expanding research and development process.



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Even with a skylift, you can barely get the whole thing in frame.



Salba caught mid-nosegrind in the 12 footer.

We started getting amped when from the windows of our arriving flight, we could just make out the gray contours of the park, on the distant shores of the lake. It's possible that this park might be seen from space, it's gargantuan to be sure. Our immediate crew consisted of Steve Alba and his son Jesse, Lance Mountain, Peter Hewitt, Joe Ciaglia of California Skateparks and his son, Anthony. Steve Caballero was already at the park feeling things out, and a few mystery guests were on their way. Lance had spoken with Cab moments before we picked him up and this was his initial report- "Cabbie is already out there skating, he says the full pipe is the one of the best things he's ever skated, and he hates fullpipes."





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Salba deep up in the funnel as Hewitt poaches from above.

En route to the park with Salba riding shotgun, the talk quickly turned to the subject of the infamous Doctor Rick Blackhart, and just how revolutionary he and his skating were in the boring early days of pro bowl riding. His roll-in at Newark pretty much hurt the feelings of anybody who thought they were the shit back then, even the judges. Little did we know that Blackhart was in

transit and would arrive shortly after us. The talk then shifted towards the Raging Waters butt park which is dormant this time of year. Aside from hosting one of the widest vert ramps ever built in the mid 80's, it also contained pools that were drained on occasion. Salba once skated the massive catch pool and we wondered if perhaps it might be empty. Of course as soon as we rolled up on the park, we forgot all about that monster, as were confronted with an entirely new series of monsters, massive bowls, a huge pipe, and a vast expanse of concrete contours.



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Jesse Alba torture tests one of the cantilevered bench features with a solid nose grind.



Amoeba.



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Anthony Ciaglia tearing into one of the big ledges beyond the fullpipe.



Erol is OG Buena Vista loc, but he digs rounds too.





Cab hotrodding a 5-0 over the shallow end deathbox in the amoeba.

This mission was akin to a wild west bronco busting expedition of old. We didn't bring a horse whisperer either. Back in the frontier days, or rather, back when there actually was a frontier, if you couldn't afford a horse you had to go out and tame one for yourself. A wild horse that no man had ever ridden. No 8 second rodeo clock or clowns were there to save you either. You simply had to man up and try not to get bucked to your death. In true wild horse fashion, this park wasn't going to be tamed easily. Salba's first run in the amoeba yielded a near-disastrous kingpin snap. Minutes later, Hewitt was pushing 11 o'clock in the massive pipe when he was bucked off and served with a nasty scalp abrasion. I carelessly rolled out of one of the smaller bowls at high speed and my front wheel was devoured by one of the post holes for the fencing that is still in the process of being installed and

came up on a nice swellbow. Everyone was paying some dues on this day. Still, the session was intensifying as the day wore on, and Salba, Lance, Cab, Dave Friel, Erol, Blackhart, and Tom Max were consistently pushing the limits.



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No stranger to one-wheelers, Blackhart peels off a scorcher.



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Old dogs, new coping.





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"You know what this pool is like? Boulder... that park in the 70's... only GOOD." Lance had a nostalgic moment before hoisting this invert 13 feet above the drain. Banging his rear truck on the way in, like the good old days too.

Initial impressions of the park? Yeah, alright. Huge. Not just in sheer square footage, but let's be honest, some of the stuff here is straight king kong scale. 22 foot funneled full pipe leading into 12 to 8 foot bowl combos. The 73 (probably more like 37) foot tombstone feature connected to the thimble and cradle flow bowl which also contains an over vert clam pocket. The showtime pool which clocks in at about 13 feet in the deep end, and a huge rectangular bowl that runs a 6 foot shallow and a 10 foot deep end. These are just the man-sized pieces of terrain. Next you have the amoeba pool, penrose-lined, and about as close as you will ever get to a backyard pool in a skatepark, with 2 death boxes, stairs and a tightened up deep end that is 100% backyard. There is a medium sized bowl that runs 5 to 7 feet, a rectangle elbow with an extension that flows into a tight round slingshot bowl. Across the park, you have the kid's area. This is something unique in the current skatepark area, at least unique in that it was executed correctly with tykes in mind. The bowls here start at one foot deep with gentle rolling transitions. Then a series of bowls ranging from 2 to 4 feet, including the mini-me-ba, and a small scale spine for young rippers. The street zone is also structured on a learning curve based ideology, small bank and box combos for the little ones, leading up to larger rails, larger banks, a unique fly-out banked wall jammer, and some kick ass cantilevered bench features. In addition to this massive street area, there are ledges and manual pads of varying sizes placed beyond the full pipe, ensuring that no errant street boards are going into the bowls or the

pipe. This segregation of street elements and transition elements is something more parks need to keep things running smoothly. Zach Wormhoudt's design seems to address skateboarding in a different way from many of his previous parks, following the form and function of Pacifica and Santa Cruz, and is definitely several steps in the right direction. The collaboration with California Skateparks is also beneficial, with extremely precise shotcrete work and excellent surface characteristics being the payoff. These guys are really raising the bar in skatepark building and the results are excellent.



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Salba's first hits in the cradle were well past the seam.



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Please note the location of Steve Caballero on this monsterlith. If you look closely in his shadow you'll see the sticker he pasted moments earlier.



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This extension is roughly 11 feet. To get here, Lance screamed down the pipe, pinballed through the 12 foot bowl and up into this elevated backside air.

Basically there is something for everyone here. If you can't find something you like, maybe you're just not a skateboarder. Judging by what's been built, it would seem that the level of skateboarding in San Jose is about to start rising rapidly. We said our goodbyes to all involved and departed into the brisk nor cal night, already hungry for the next opportunity to tame this beast.



You shoulda been here yesterday.

-BLKPRJKT / PHOTOS MRZ

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