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SLAP - February 2005 - STEVE NESSER

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AT HOME IN MINNEAPOLIS 

Steve
Nesser

Californian skaters have it too easy. Kids here grow up with skateable weather 90 percent of the time, tons of spots, regular sightings of pros and ams, and they learn about the new tricks and trends as they happen. It's skateboard paradise, but it also makes for a bunch of spoiled brats who take a lot for granted. When somebody makes it as a pro skater coming from a place where they don't have access to this stuff, you know how hard they had to work and how much they had to want it. Steve Nesser is a prime example. With lots of determination, desire and talent, Nesser came up out of Minneapolis, Minnesota to become a heavy hitter who gets respect and who gets it done, regardless. We spent some time with him back home in Minneapolis to see what kind of scene makes for a skater like Nesser.

How do you think so many good skaters have come out of Minnesota given the challenges of the weather and the distance from most of the skate media? There isn't a huge skateboard population out there; it's a small scene that looks up to what's happening in California. You see what you want to do in skateboarding and have to figure out your own way of making it happen. You have to do everything yourself like filming, shooting photos. Basically you just have to work really hard to make it happen out there. It's not easy to get hooked up, and that's kind of a motivator. You know you have to work hard. There have always been a lot of really good people out there, and that's what the generation of skaters younger than the good guys looks up to and strive for. I think it just has to do with how hard people work and how hungry they are to make it happen.

Why don't more skaters from the Midwest make it to the level of being known beyond

home like so many of you guys have? I've wondered that myself, but it just comes down to the fact that we had a complete crew. We had all the right parts, one of everybody. We had a lot of good skaters at the same time, we had an artist to do graphics, we had a photographer, we had access to cameras, we figured out how to film and edit, and then we had Fobia (skateshop) who was right behind us and encouraging us. They gave us the opportunity to promote ourselves through them. We first wanted the shop to succeed so we made our own videos and flyers. We'd come out to California, see what was happening, then go home and make it happen back there. The crew we had worked really hard to make it happen and Fobia helped get us out there bit-by-bit. We had a collective goal. Everybody involved was really motivated, and that was the difference, I guess. I don't know why other places haven't had the same thing happen.

How much of the year is really comfortably skateable at home? How much do you skate beyond when it's comfortable? You can skate from maybe May to October. By Halloween it's pretty much over. Some people, like our friend Seth, will skate outside after that, but it's like hell. All the photos in this interview were shot in 40-degree weather at the end of October. There's one heated parking garage and a mall that's open 24-hours a day where you can skate inside in the middle of the night, but that's it.

Beyond skateboarding, what do you like about life in Minnesota? What's better or worse about life in general there versus in California? I like things better there in general just because it's home, all my family is there, all my friends that I do things other than skateboard with are there, my family has a cabin that I go to to fish a lot. I don't know; I just have a good life there. Everything is more laid back; there are not as many people. There's a good music scene, there's good clubs, there's lots of outdoors stuff. We go cliff jumping a lot. There's the ocean out here, but we've got 10,000 lakes. It's just a good place.

Do you see yourself living there most of your life? Yeah. I want to do summers there and winters here in California for however long skating lasts for me. If it weren't for skating I'd probably be there year round because I like the winters there. I could buy a house there for half the price of here. It just has the overall life-style there that I like.

How does Minnesota compare to other places you've been when it comes to how hard it is to go skate street spots? It's way easier to skate. Only the downtown area is a bust. You get a lot more time at the spots. It's way better. I should probably say it sucks so more people don't start showing up. There's not as many people skating so you don't have to go to a spot and worry about 30 other people being there and having done what you want to do at the spot. It's a lot easier to get away with skating there. Not as much is knobbed, especially in the outskirts because people don't really expect it to be a problem. If you find a spot you can go back and hit it again when you want. There aren't as many people competing for spots, especially because people aren't competing for coverage as much there.

Minneapolis has been getting hit up by a lot of out-of-towners in the last year or two. Are you stoked for the town to be getting some more coverage or bummed that your spots are getting blown out a little? I don't get bummed. I like when other people come through, because I know a lot of people in the industry and it's cool when they come through to skate spots I grew up skating rather than vice versa. It's cool to get to hang out with people not in California. A lot of people have been hitting it up, though. Once a gold mine spot is leaked out, more and more people will come to skate it again and again. It gets hyped, and more people keep coming.



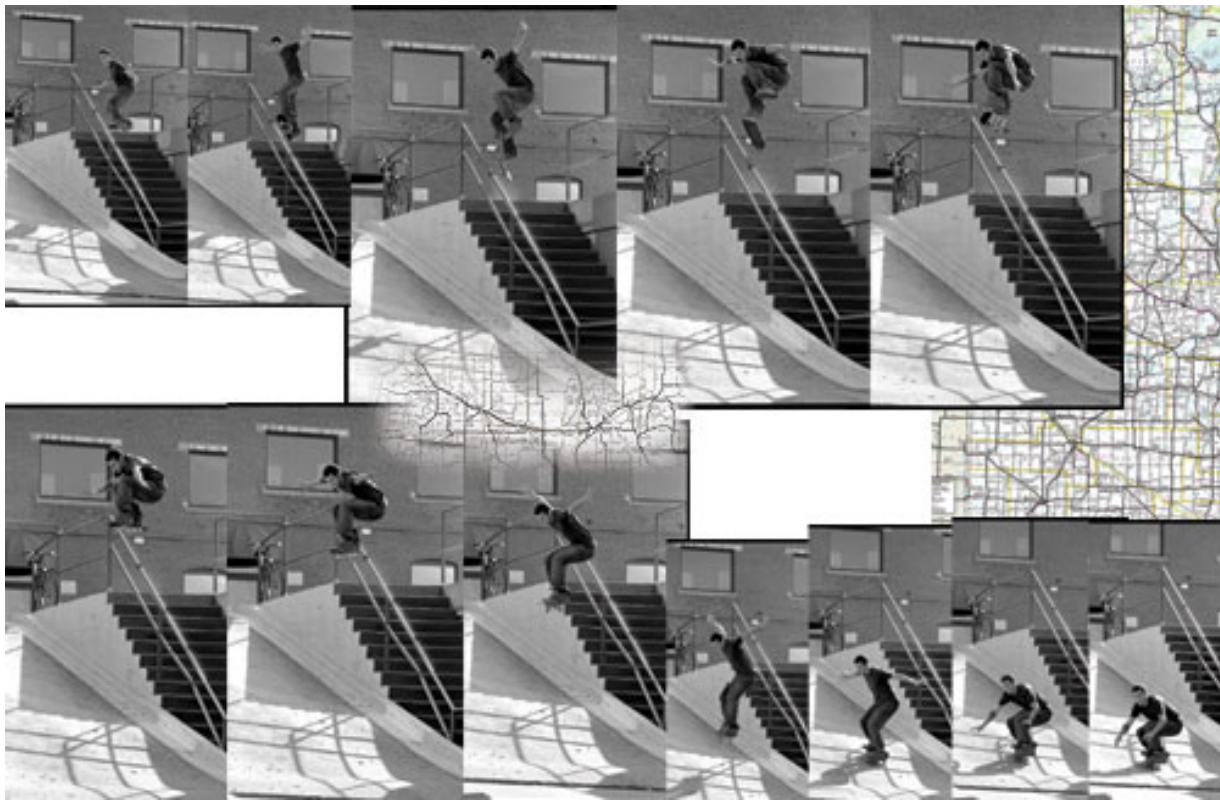
Your main time to shoot photos for this article was supposed to be a little earlier than it ended up being. Talk about what you did to your hand. I was on a Birdhouse trip in New York. I was skating at a demo and slipped out on a ledge. I did a flip with my hand down, like a one-handed cartwheel. My pinky and ring fingers on my right hand bent back so far that they were touching my wrist. The pinky bent back so hard that the skin tore open at one of the joints. The tip of my pinky was 90 degrees to the side, too. I also hit my head. Suski came up to me and told me I was bleeding, so I started checking my head, but then he said, "No, it's your hand." I look and it's just gushing blood because I tore a vein. I had to pop it back in, and then the owner of the skatepark drives me to the hospital and just drops me off. I'm sitting there for two hours in the ER by myself, and then they put in six stitches. They gave me all these shots to numb my hand, they gave me a tetanus shot, I had this huge lump on my rib from slamming; I had blood in my hair, blood on my pants. I had a rubber band around my finger to stop the blood from squirting out from my torn vein. So that happened. They wouldn't give me any pain killers so I finished the tour without pain killers, flew home and postponed the interview because there's no way I could have skated with my hand like it was. Then I just got faded for three weeks. It sucks. I still can't even make a fist and it's been three months.

How has the switch to Birdhouse worked out so far? Are you stoked? It's been good. It's made a lot of things easier. It's been easier to get coverage because more is available with a bigger company backing you.

What made you want to make the change? Just knowing there was more opportunity. I'm not getting any younger, and I wanted the chance to experience some things I might not have been able to experience otherwise.

What have you been working on since you got on? We're trying to do a video by next fall, so filming a lot for that. I'm going to work really hard on that. I've also been working a lot with Adio. I'm just trying to get a lot of coverage and get out there.

Any thanks? My family for inspiration, JB, all my friends, Jim Thiebaud, Jeff Taylor and the Adio crew, Seamus, Vanessa, Jeremy Klein and everybody at Birdhouse, Fobia, Joe Brook and SLAP, and anybody else who has helped me out in any way.



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