



# The Battle of Normandy



In mid-June a bunch of riders from Palace, Sour, Antiz, Magenta and Element Europe spent five days in a huge villa hidden somewhere between Rouen, Caen and Le Havre in the French countryside. Its location was as remote as it was beautiful which I can safely say is quite unusual for a skate trip. Here at 'La Cascade de Gertrude', the closest form of civilisation (read 'a village big enough to sell beer') was almost an hour away by foot and WiFi/phone signal was virtually non-existent. Instead we had a lovely little stream that trickled through the garden from the overlooking mountains and we were surrounded by cows (and one very confused llama): it was surreal. It felt like we'd all been sent on a work retreat by the management of our IT company to focus on team building and bonding exercises. And boy was there a lot of bonding... I was expecting to wake up to focused boards and unplugged camera batteries every morning, not people from different teams playing football or showing each other cute stretches. By the end of it, as if all the bro-ing down that was taking place at the house wasn't enough, two teams went as far as spending a whole day skating the same city together, turning the session into some kind of weird Go Skateboarding Day with a mic and shitloads of communal beverages. It's called The Battle of Normandy for fucks sake! You're not supposed to be mates!

I'm obviously joking... For there to be any kind of competition there would have had to be winners and as knowledgeable as we like to pretend we are on the topic, fuck having to decide if Lucas Puig's crew did better skateboarding that week than Tyler Surrey's or Jacopo Carozzi's.

What we can do on the other hand is give you an idea of what it was like to be immersed in all this mess and look how each crew managed to make the most of what there was to skate in the North of France. Because let's face it, some of these spots may look quite good in the photos, a lot of the time: they weren't. It was The Battle of Normandy, not The Battle of Catalonia: on some days shit got desperate (see Madars' photo).

Before getting into the specifics though, we'd like to give the floor to the only other person who shared

the house with us that week: Marcos, our beloved cook. On top of putting up with our nonsense, this man prepared gargantuan amounts of delicious food, blasted tunes every morning so we'd pull our heads out of our asses and tried to steal Chico Brenes' special coffee maker. He was unpredictable, hilarious and had some gnarly keepy uppy skills.

How did you find yourself cooking dinners for 40 skateboarders during the week of The Battle of Normandy?

Marcos Ramos Marin: I arrived in Rouen eight years ago with my skateboard and have been quite involved in the scene here. Alongside this I've also been working for various associations, catering for large groups... I became close to Bud Skateshop, who organise a big contest in the region every year called: 'The Firing Line'. They decided to get me involved in that, which then led to me doing this.

Was cooking for skaters any different to cooking for other large groups?

Not really, it was just a group that liked eating well without it having to be too fancy. You try to make sure it's tasty, filling and that there's a lot of protein in there. And obviously you cook way more than you think you should and treat them to a cake every now and then, that sort of thing...

That chocolate cake you made was gnarly. I bet it weighed like two kilos.

Ha ha yeah you're definitely working with very large quantities of food, like kilos and kilos of pasta, which makes organising your time a little trickier... But you prepare stuff that can last a few days so it doesn't go to waste.

What ingredient do you think you used the most of?

I'm from a Mediterranean background so we went through quite a few litres of olive oil. A ton of tomatoes and garlic... But I also lived in the UK where I learnt to enjoy making curries and some African dishes



like Maafe... I'm not sure it's hard to say.

Was it strange for you at all living and cooking for some people you recognised from skate videos? Were you star-struck at all?

Not really, I mean I hadn't met any of them before and obviously a lot of them are quite famous within skating, but they all seemed very happy to be there and I could tell they appreciated the food so it was nice. I got along really well with the Palace guys... I don't know if it has to do with British culture or what but they were just very easy and helpful. Especially Danny Brady who'd get up early to go get stuff for the breakfasts with me. I also really enjoyed jamming and playing the guitar with Madars, kicking a football about with everyone in the mornings... Tyler Surrey lives in Barcelona and speaks really good Spanish so we chatted a fair bit as well...

You're not from Barcelona yourself though right?

No I'm from Cadiz, in the south. It's another rhythm down there, another quality of life, with a slower pace. Skaters always seem to think Barcelona is Spain but it's definitely not; where I'm from things are very different, you'd love it.

Was the amount of people in one house something that was ever difficult to deal with? I can imagine sharing a place with 40 skaters you've never met getting a bit much at times, especially if you don't drink...

It's actually really nice that you asked me that because yeah it was great most of the time but that doesn't mean it was always easy. It was a communal space we were all sharing and I was just hired to cook, not to wash people's dishes, pick up people's cigarettes and beer cans, etc., which I found myself doing quite a lot. I skate but I'm not as involved in it as you guys and from where I stand I feel like there's a kind of a 'thug life, everyone for themselves' mentality that kind of tarnishes the idealistic image a lot people have of the skate world. People sort of need to take their responsibilities, life isn't just hotel rooms, fancy cars and swimming pools. That being said as I mentioned earlier individually so many of the guys were super helpful and amazing so it's not the

main thing I'll take away from the week. It's more of a general comment...

You were speaking very fondly of your hometown earlier, what would you say is keeping you in this part of France then?

It's hard so say, there's so much I love about the North of France: the people, the architecture, the local products... I'm a huge fan of French 'pâtisserie'; it's something I've done an apprenticeship in. And I guess all the Norman deserts that use apples, the *Tarte Tatin*'s... The cheeses like the Camembert and the *Neufchâtel*...

It's also very green and cities are surrounded by all this incredible countryside, but you're close to the sea, so there's a lot of good seafood. And the rocky beaches of the North are amazing. The water is a bit cold but they're really worth checking out... They're also obviously very historically significant in the context of the Second World War and the Normandy landings.

One of the things I like the most about this region, is that it's very clearly rooted in the past, with loads of old gothic churches but at the same time, especially in cities like Rouen you can see that they're developing rapidly, with all sorts of cultural events and really vibrant music scenes...

Yeah I noticed! Briefly walking through Rouen on the evening of the *Fête de La Musique* (Music Day), it looked nuts.

Yeah it's the one/day night where people can really do whatever they want: free concerts everywhere, it's great. It's maybe not very representative of the general feeling of freedom you have in France at the moment though. Obviously it's nothing like in the States, but you can still really feel the effect of the recent terror attacks, especially when working with local authorities to organise events and stuff. Ask the guys from Bud how hard it was for them to organise their Firing Line comp outside... Which is stupid because although these are very tragic events, they're also isolated ones. Festivals, art shows, skate events... These things are essential! They are what get people through troubled times!

Thanks Marcos! Hopefully see you next year.

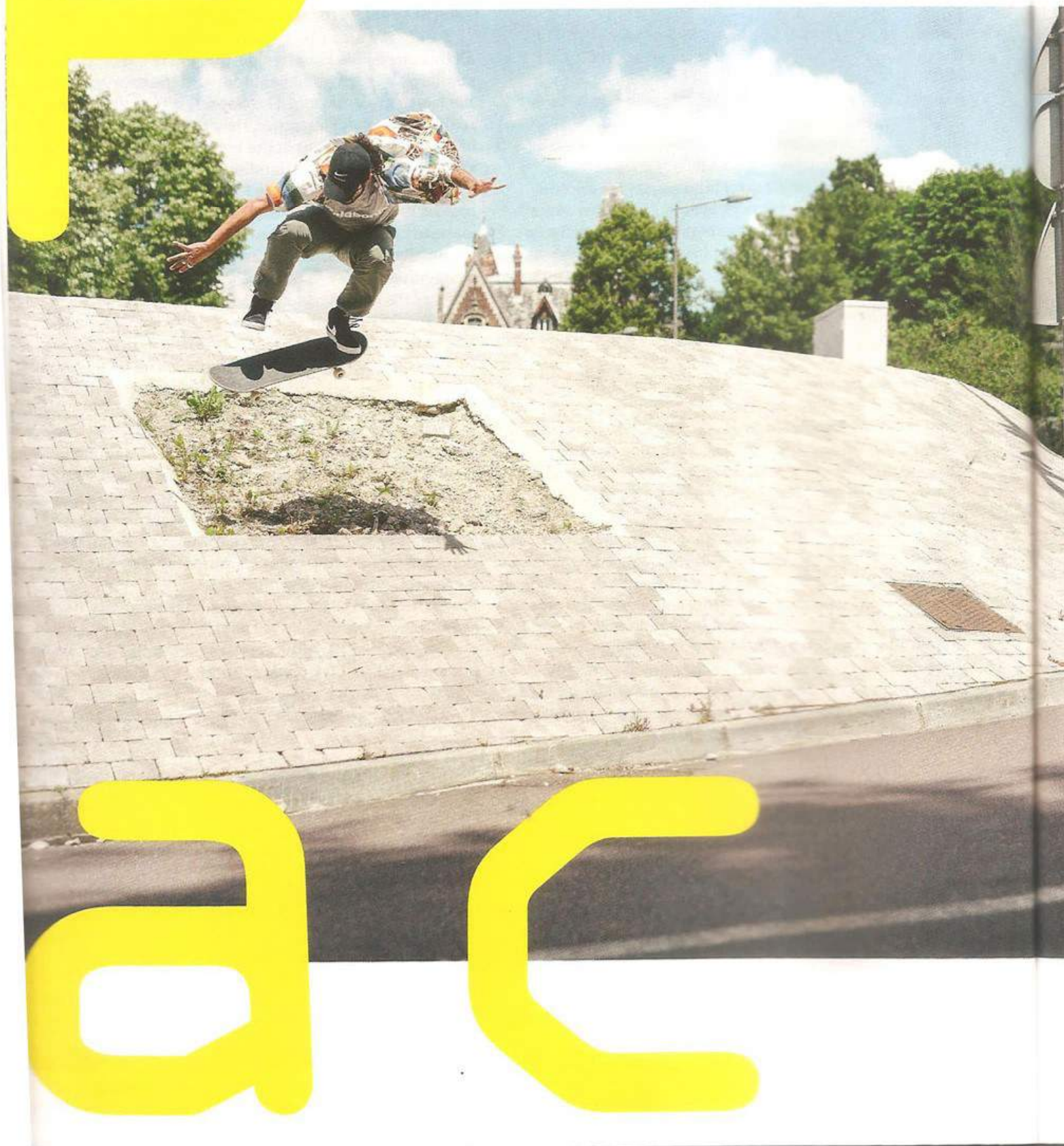


Words

Arthur Derrien



Photography  
Sam Ashley







Juan Saavedra  
Kickflip  
Rouen

The Palace guys definitely came in with a few advantages. For one, like Magenta and Element Europe, they'd already taken part in this thing the first time around, so Chewy at least had a vague idea of what cities were good. Then they had Lucas Puig (I don't think that needs any further explanation). And finally their team manager was like Jamie Thomas on speed (minus the bandanas and crosses). Danny Brady would be the first one up every day and would be back with croissants/pain au chocolats for his boys before 95% of the house had stepped out of bed. Then he'd be the first one to hit the road and he got more photos than the rest of his team put together. It was gnarly.

Luckily to balance things out they had one thing holding them back: both the French and the English boys on their team love football (and pints), and our little adventure was taking place during the World Cup. This meant that on quite a few days their schedule revolved around where they'd be able to find a pub to watch the games that would usually take place late afternoon, which is of course the best time for skating in the middle of summer. At least they're good at skating even when they're a bit steaming so it didn't always mean that the day was written off after that (see Chewy's switch pole jam).

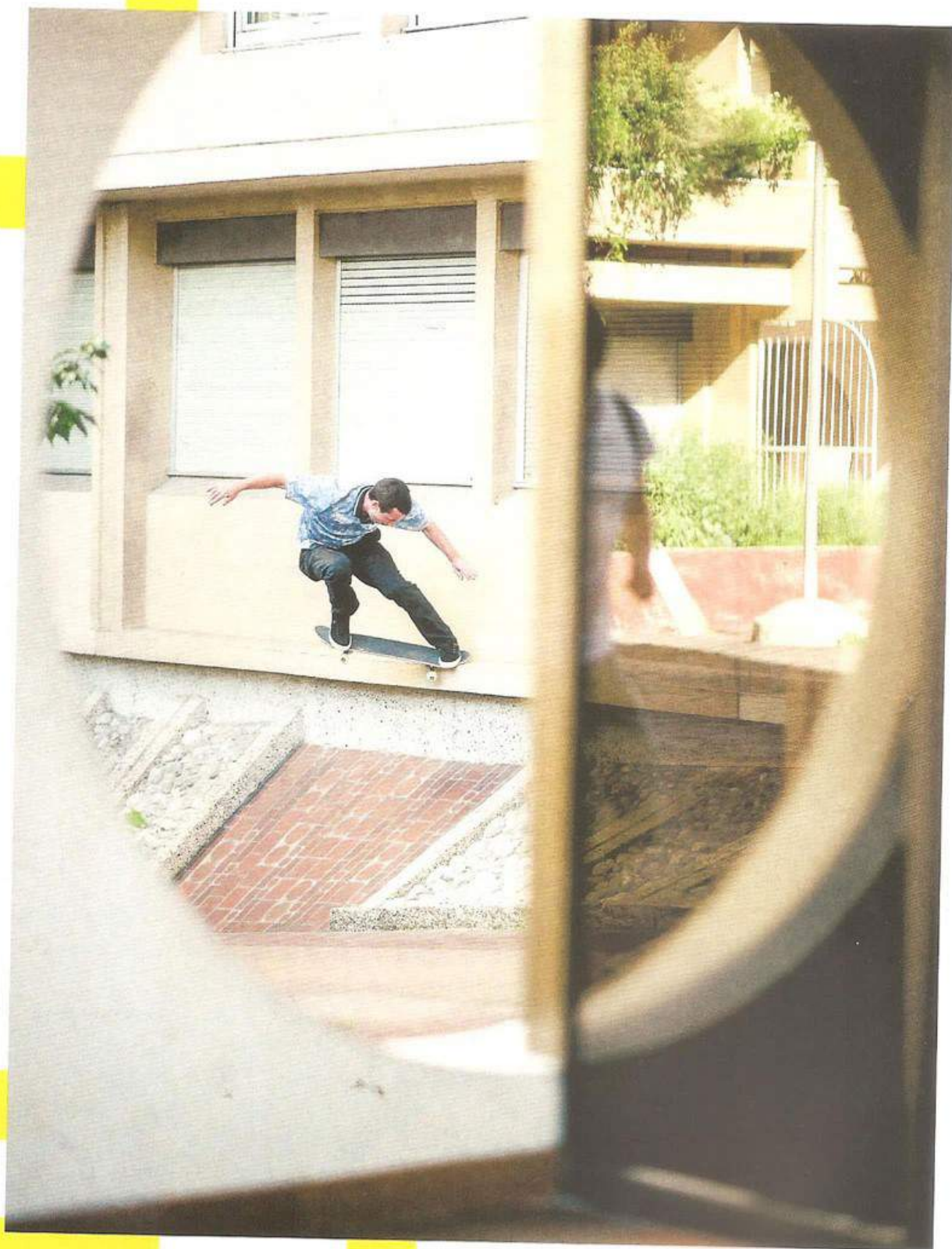
Another thing that's worth mentioning is that they had Chico fucking Brenes as a guest! I hadn't fanned out on a pro skater like that in a very long time and I could tell I

wasn't the only one. To the point where at times I almost felt bad for him... By the end of the trip everyone in the house (okay I was probably the main offender) had his song from Mouse stuck in their heads and would randomly start whistling it regardless of if he was in the room, van or sitting at the table with them. At the same time rarely do you see skateboarding that ages so well. Three flatground tricks and you were instantly teleported to Lockwood during Chocolate's heyday, it was pretty magical. Chico is still the skateboarder that looks the most like he's dancing when he steps on his board.





Danny Brady  
Crooks to fakie  
Rouen





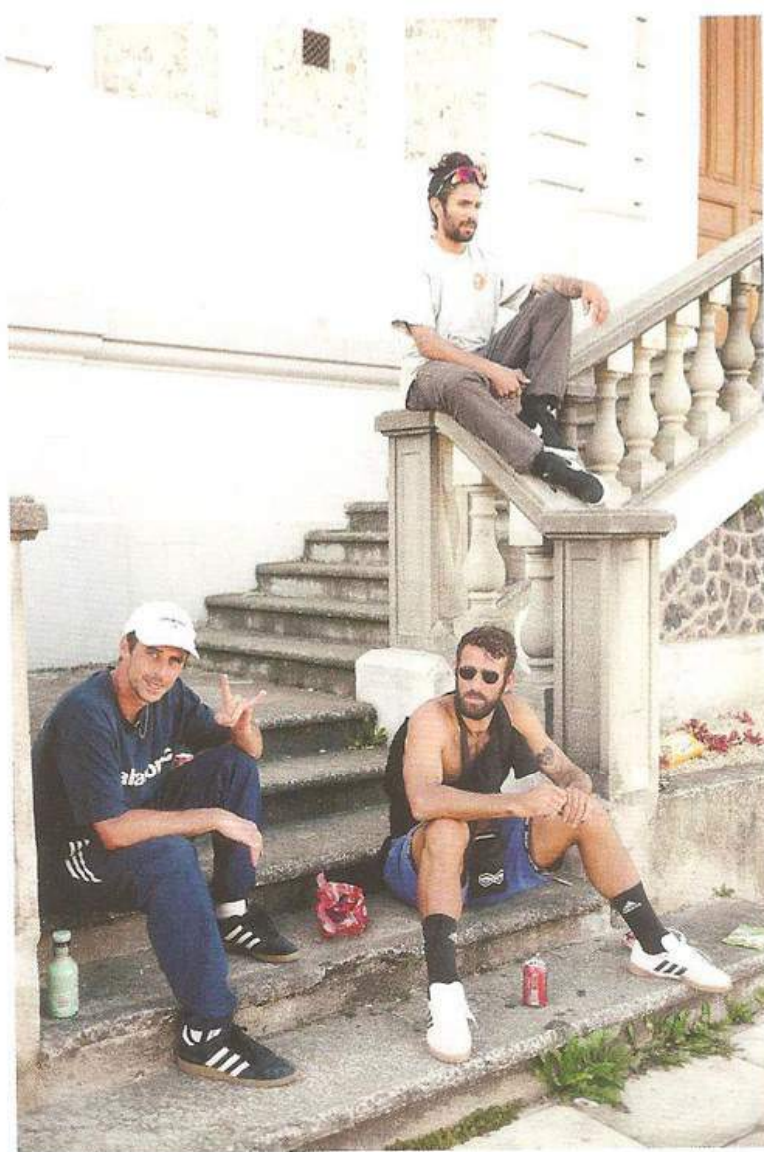


**Chewy Cannon**  
**Switch pole-jam**  
**Rouen**

**Chewy Cannon**  
**Frontside noseslide**  
**Rouen**







1



Chico Brenes  
Nollie backside heelflip  
Le Havre



Danny Brady  
Pupecki grind  
Caen



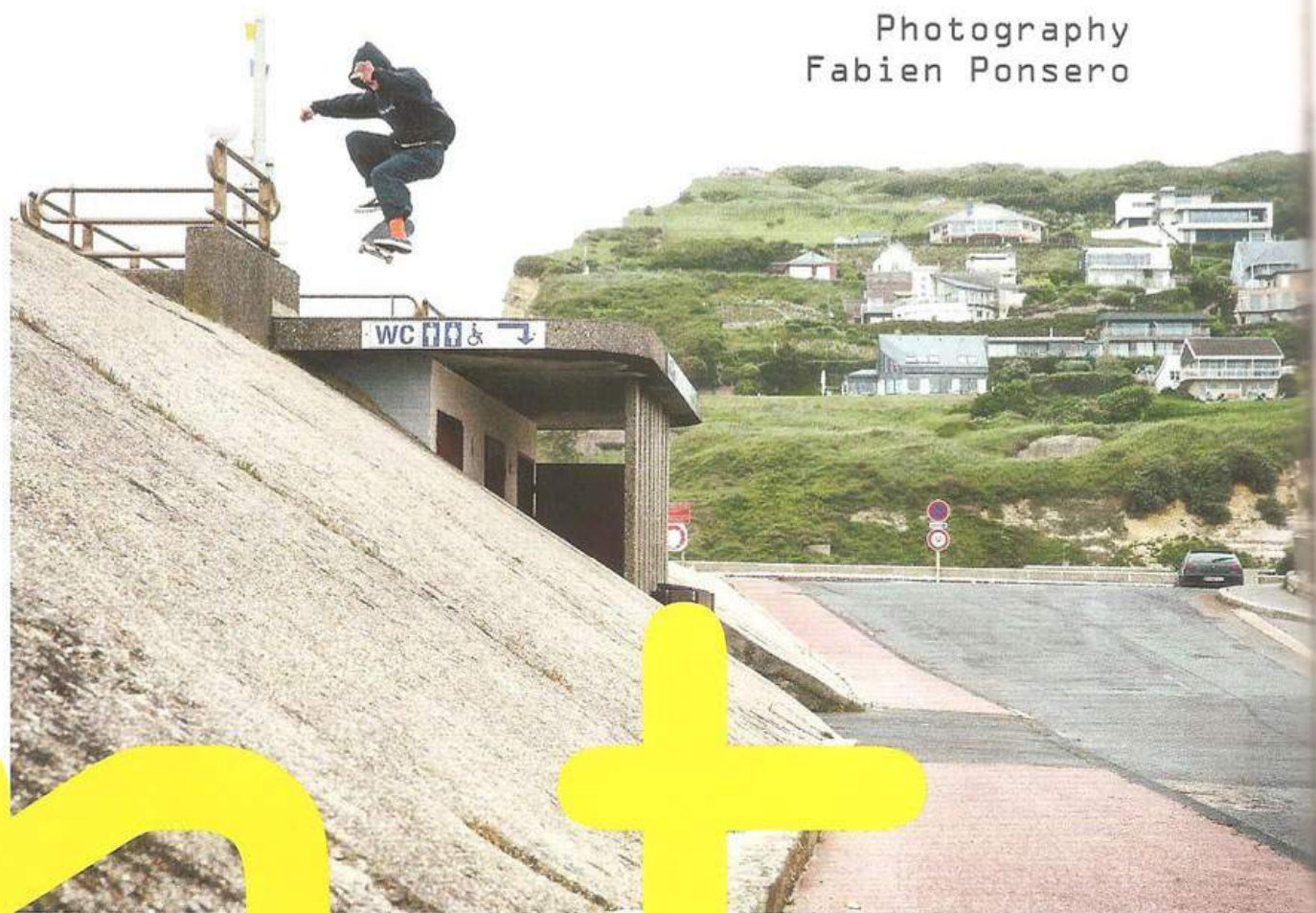




Lucas Puig  
Backside noesbluntslide pop into the bank  
Le Havre



Photography  
Fabien Ponsero



Although I didn't actually get a chance to spend a proper day on the road with the Antiz crew, in a weird way it felt like they were with me the whole time. At the house the loudness of Quentin Boillon's outfits (and boombox dangling from his neck) made it feel like he was constantly somewhere in your peripheral vision. Outside of the house no matter what team I was with that day, we'd always come across at least one stupidly gnarly spot (usually some sort of drop in made out of gravel) that would jokingly get categorised as 'one for Antiz'. What's funny is that judging by their photos I bet they actually hit quite few of the spots we piss-takingly claimed for them (thinking that obviously nobody would ever bother). Triple kink rail with grass run up and sandpaper landing anyone? 'Sure! Looks fun!'

Another thing I feel like mentioning is the message we received from Fabien Ponsero (their photographer) when we asked him to send over his shots. It went

something like this: 'THANKS A LOT for this "tour", "meeting", "thing"! It was so nice to be there in this house, surrounded by nature with so many friends and new people! Plus the luxury of having a cook and real beds (which doesn't happen very often to us!), it was lovely!!'

By the end of this week in Normandy I was myself completely obliterated and I didn't even have to skate, drive or do anything really. Just five days of looking for spots in cities I didn't know and piling into one big house with 40 skaters did me in. For these guys it was like a week at The Ritz in comparison to how they've been travelling for the past 15+ years. Not sure where I'm going with this but yeah, just thought that was quite gnarly. You kind of have to admire the passion.

Quentin Boillon  
Frontside 360 one-foot  
Fécamp

Mickael Germond  
Pole-jam  
Le Havre



# A







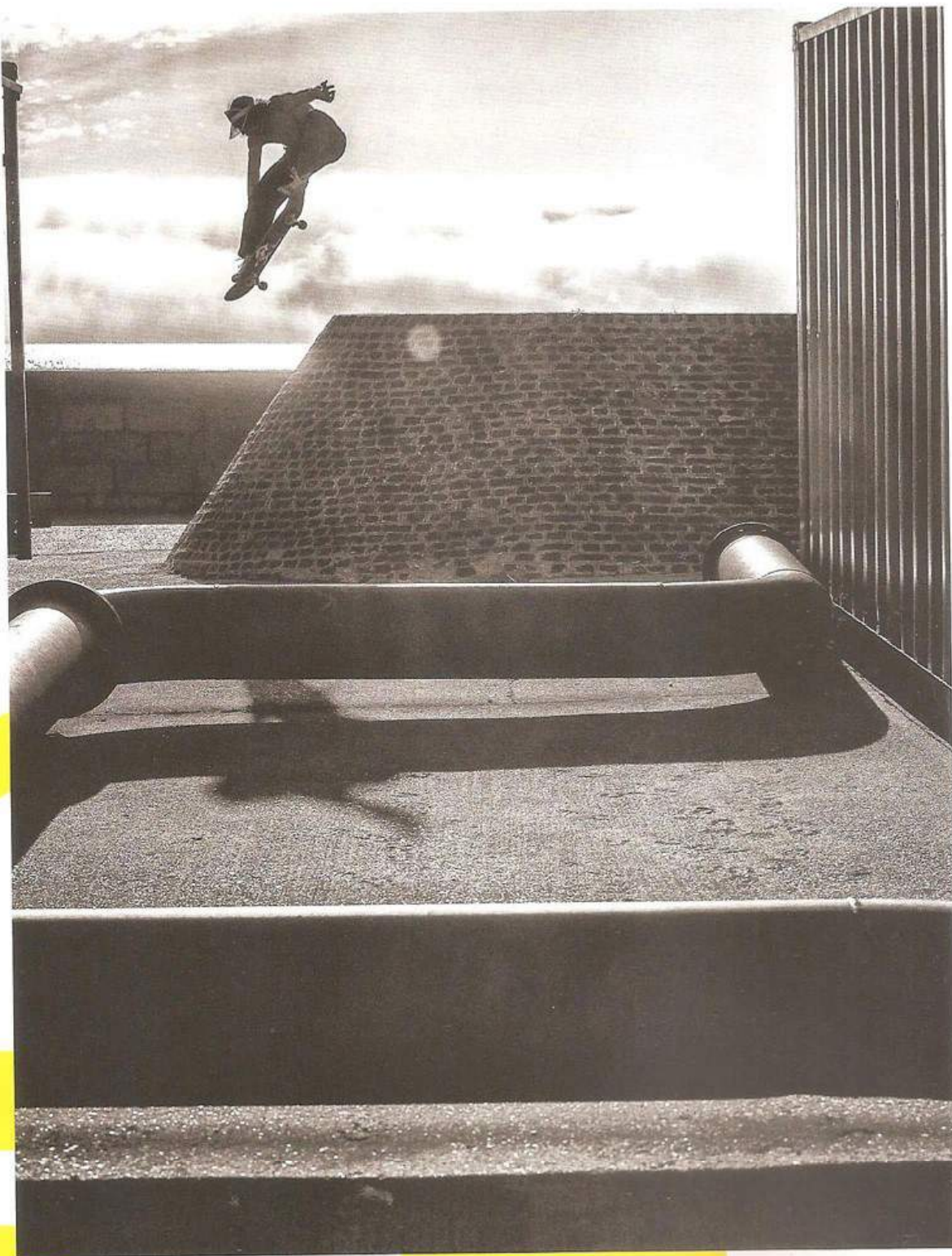




Mickaël Germond  
Caveman boardslide  
Caen







Quentin Boillon  
Ollie in  
Le Havre



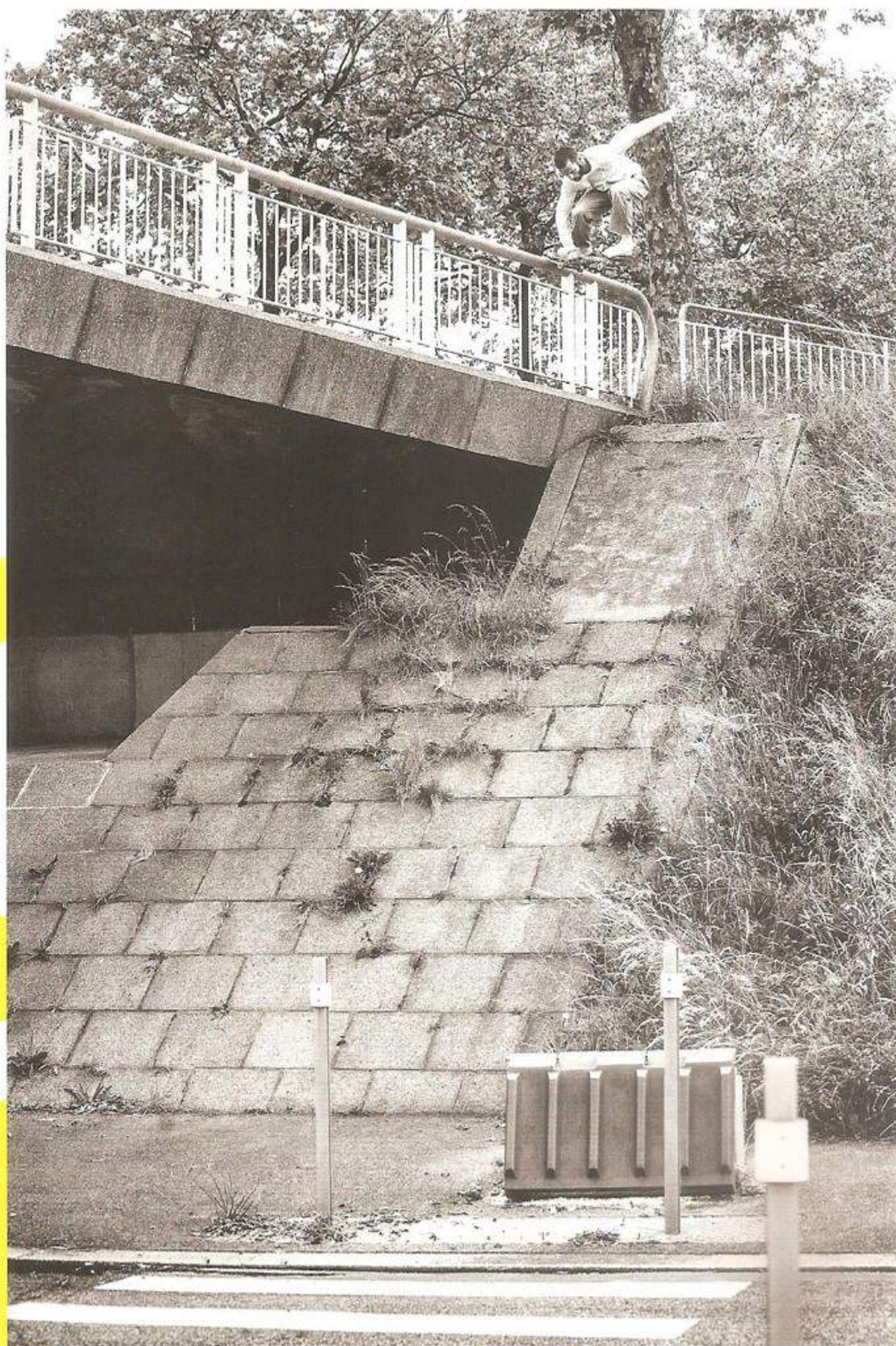
**Yeelen Moens**  
**Backside no-comply wallie**  
**Le Havre**



Whatever you do, keep the camera dry



Mickael Germond  
Tail drop Indy  
Le Havre

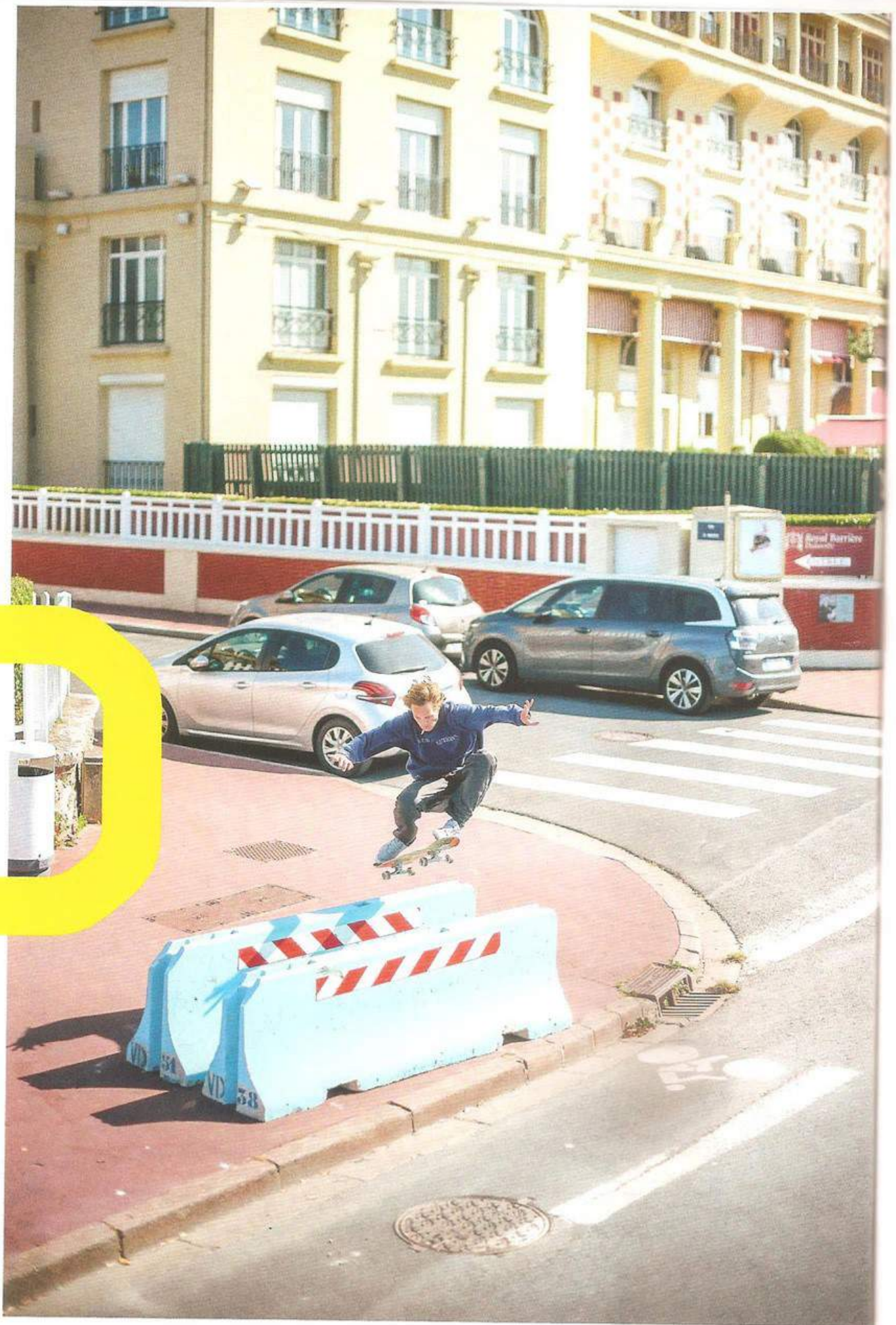






Yeelen Moens  
180 no-comply  
Le Havre





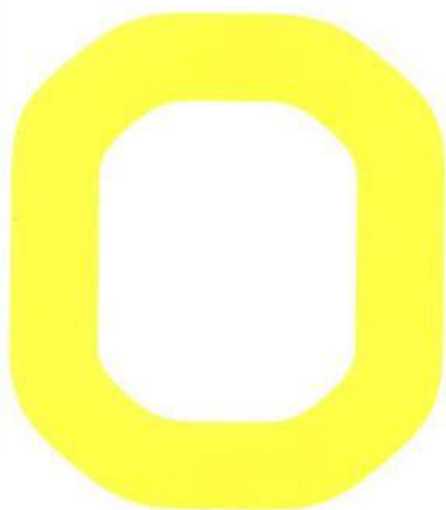
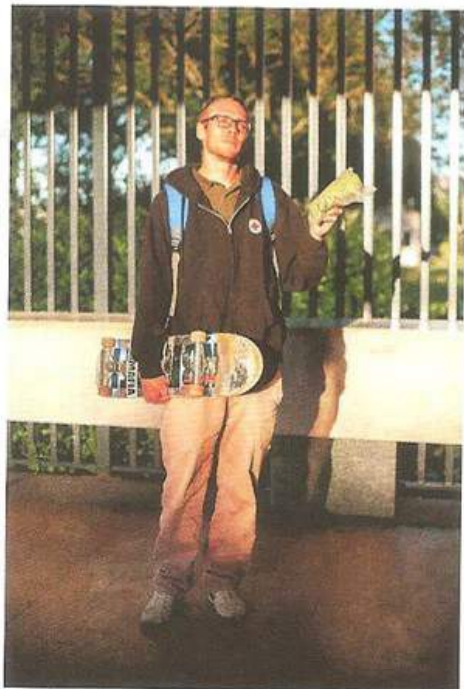


The house we were staying in had 48 beds, yet on most nights at least one of the 40 guests would (for reasons that still confuse me) sleep on the floor. Nisse was one of those people. After a few glasses of red wine he decided that Oscar Candon's bed looked quite inviting but instead of sliding in discretely, he tried to lie down directly on top of him. Given it was pitch black and Oscar was fast asleep with earplugs in, the poor guy very quickly went from being terrified to extremely pissed off, brutally ejecting Nisse who decided to crawl into the bathroom where he spent a lovely night, curled up by a toilet. What went through Nisse's head that evening we'll never know, but one thing is certain, had it escalated just a little bit more, delicate Swedish sloth vs. angry French rock-climber is not a fight that would have ended well...

Despite probably being the team that got the least amount of sleep that week they were by far the most impressive to see skate in person. The session I witnessed at that quarter in Le Havre was an absolute joke. The ground just before it is awful, the quarter itself super whippy and the wood coping properly sticks out from the already vertical transition. Basically I couldn't rock fakie the damn thing and these guys were rolling away from 180 fakie 5-0 grinds half an hour into the session. It was fucked.

Adrien Bulard, who recently tick tacked his way to a back tail down El Toro, is Rouen's local hero. What's interesting is that unlike in America, here in Europe he's not admired for this brave handrail move edited to Russian trap music. We celebrate him for his four seconds of fame in Palace's *Très Trill* video from the previous edition of the Battle. Some stairs are hopped up two by two, a few timid glances made over his shoulder, some kind words and a friendly handshake exchanged with Chewy, then a quick thumbs up and he's on his way as swiftly as he came. Timeless stuff. Then Chewy back-fifties a kinked hubba, does a banging nollie frontside flip and the rest is history. The clip is so iconic that the Sour boys (probably out of desperation from not having bumped into the enigmatic character) decided to recreate the magic for themselves. These photos of Albert and Tyler (on the next page) show their devotion to this cause.





**Albert Nyberg**  
**channeling Chewy**  
**Backside 50-50**  
**Rouen**



Nisse Ingemarsson  
Kickflip to fakie  
Deauville





**Josef Scott Jatta**  
**Frontside crooked grind to fakie**  
**Le Havre**



**Tyler Surrey**  
**Alley-oop fakie 5-0**  
**Le Havre**







**Tyler Surrey**  
**Blindside kickflip to fakie**  
**Le Havre**



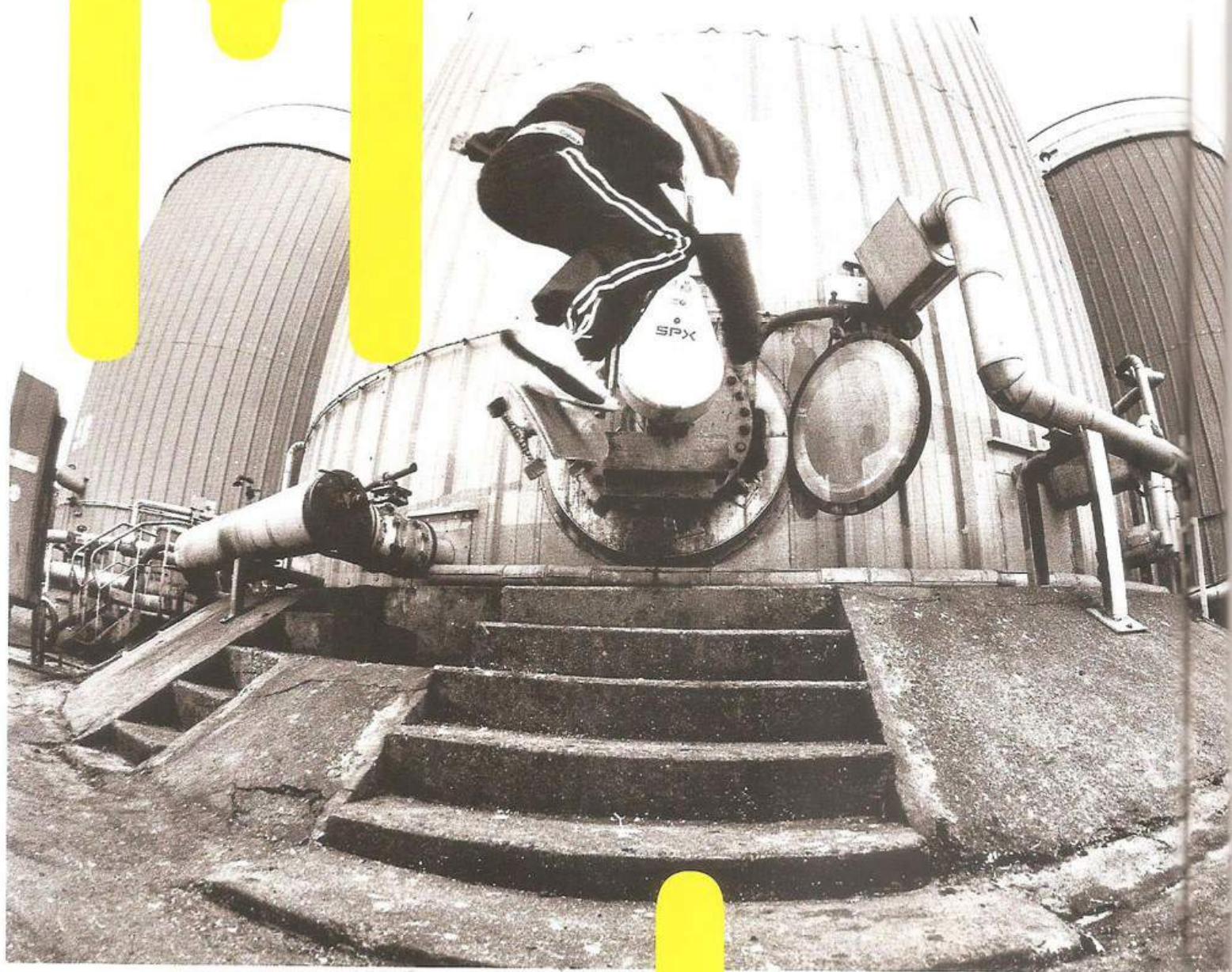




Albert Nyberg  
Ollie  
Secret spot on the way to Normandy



Photography  
Richard Hart



Glen Fox  
Blindside kickflip to fakie  
Le Havre





Seeing Jersey duo Luka Pinto and Glen Fox on a hype, bouncing around Caen was probably one of the highlights of my trip. I'm sure Glen fires out ten flatground tricks a minute even when his buddy's not chasing him around with a VX, but for some reason seeing them together made that energy extra contagious. If they're flying around a spot, just sitting down makes you feel like such a waste of space that you often find yourself getting back on it even when there's clearly nothing left in the tank.

What cracks me up is that Luka has somehow transferred this weird hyper-activeness from skating into filming. I'll always remember the day I saw him walk in and out of an off licence, then skate up the road to where *Eleventh Hour* was being premiered, then slowly say 'hi' to all these guys he hadn't seen in ages, camera in hand the whole time with its fisheye firmly screwed on. As if there was still a chance he might get a clip between the shop run and taking a seat to watch the vid?! One of the reasons Luka's been filming a lot recently is that he's been instructed to lay off the skating for a bit by his doctor. So, in an attempt to further prevent himself from popping his tail too much, he's also started wearing these massive North Face hiking boots. Problem is, he's so addicted that apart from sprinkling a bit of Tom Penny into his Quim Cardonna-esque style, it doesn't appear to have changed very much. He still goes Mach 10 at everything he sees and he's still way better than most of us will ever be. Only now he's wearing shoes we probably wouldn't be able to kickflip in.

I think a lot of people were half-expecting a little bit of tension between the Magenta and Palace crews given all the highly entertaining Instagram beef we've been subjected to over the years but there was none of that. When questioned about it, it seems like the Frenchies are quite happy to be called out by Lev as it gives their sales a considerable boost every time (a million followers tends to do that...) and I guess everyone else loves it because the level of boyment is pretty hilarious. By the end of the trip Rory was even telling us how sick it would be to do a trip to Jersey to visit Glen and Luka! We really shouldn't have bothered calling it a 'Battle'...

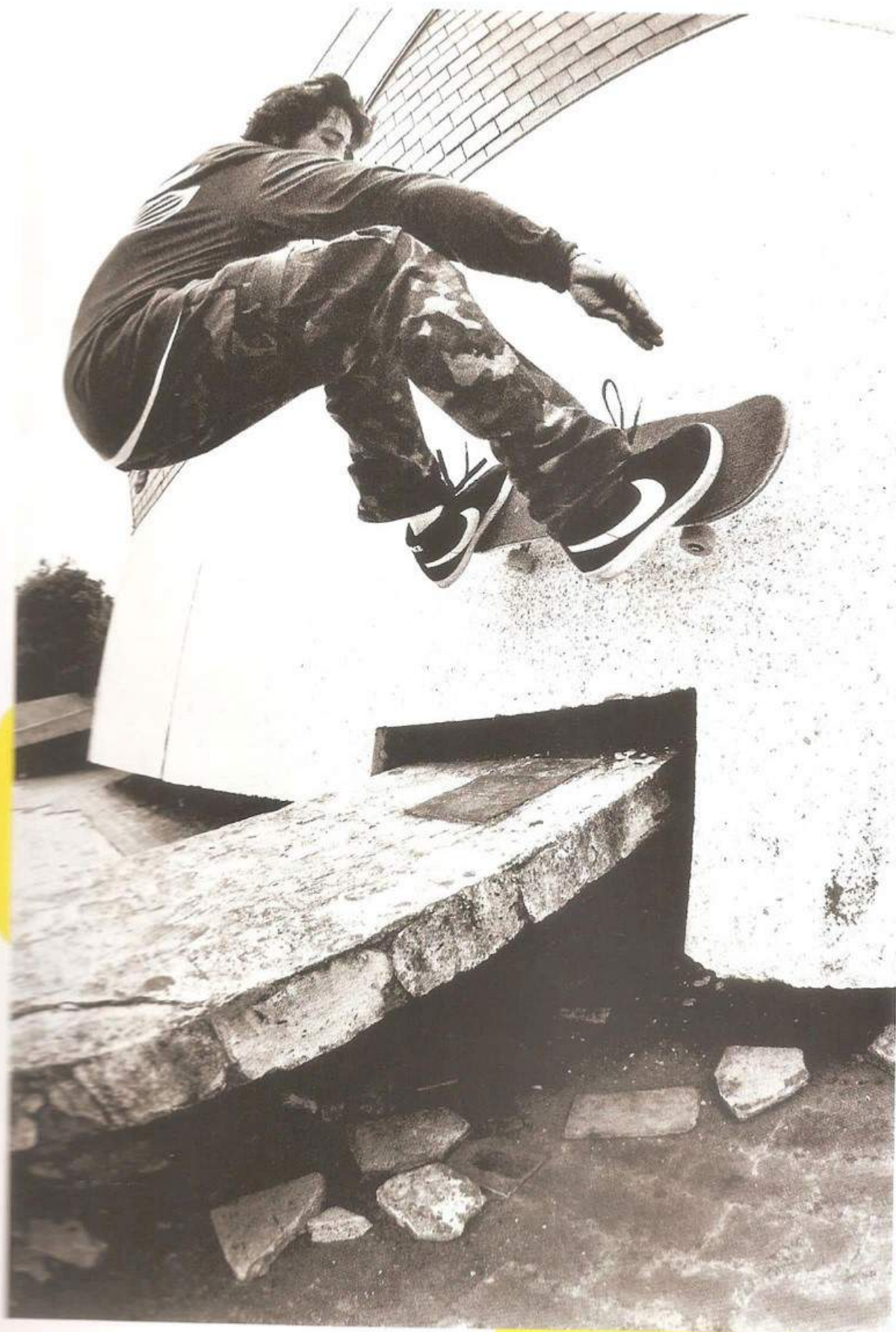
Q e a



Leo Valls  
Backside Smith slash  
Rouen







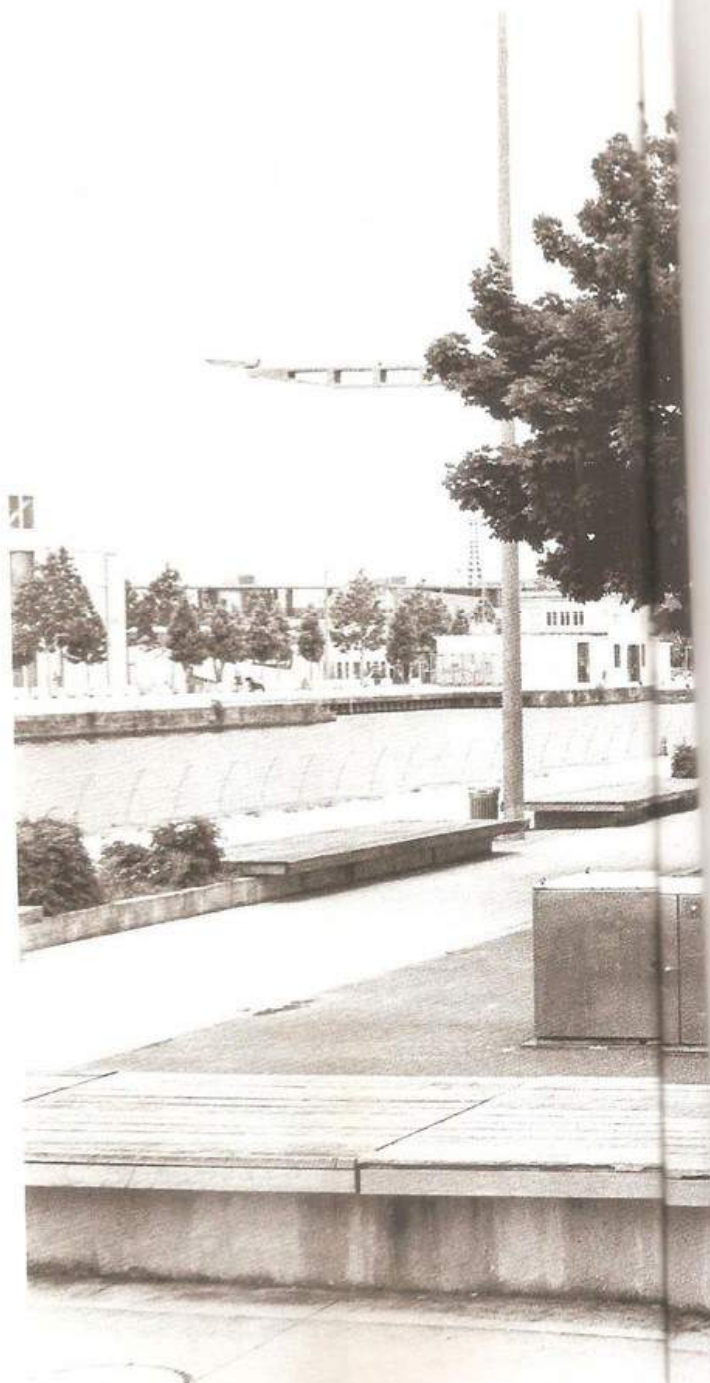
Santiago Sasson  
Ollie to frontside wallride  
Caen



# M



Masaki Ui  
Philly cheese grind  
Caen



# t





Glen Fox  
Ollie on to kickflip off  
Caen



Going into the day I spent with Element Europe my thoughts were 'okay, it's Element Europe: these guys are going to go H.A.M.!' It turns out I couldn't have been more wrong... By the second spot they were all lying in the grass singing songs about Micky Papa ('What's going on instagraaaaaaaaam?') and by the middle of the afternoon we were having a fully blown sit down meal with piles of sushi and cervezas. The ones I was expecting to see win the demo at every spot were treating it like a holiday! They even had a portable karaoke set-up with a sparkling mic and all sorts of sound effects.

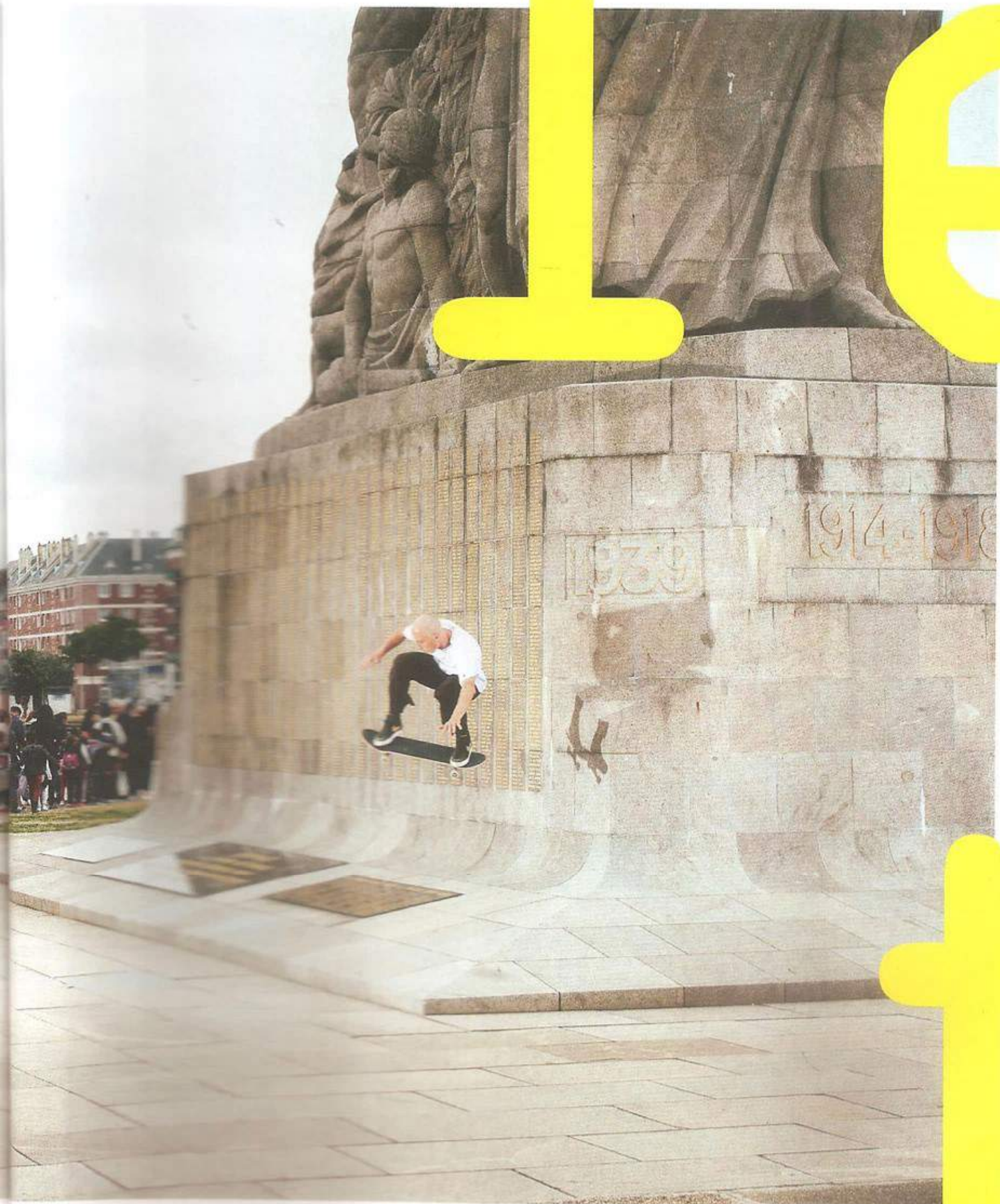
Judging by their photos though I think I can safely say that day probably wasn't very representative of their productivity. Jacopo in particular probably got the best stuff out of anyone that week and that frontside flip we used as the cover is something I really didn't think was possible. To my knowledge the

closest anyone else on The Battle got to skating it that week was a 5-minute discussion at the top of the stairs about if it would be possible for a human to just carve the bank down them. And the general consensus was that no, it probably wasn't.





Photography  
Clément Le Gall



Phil Zwijssen  
Wallie out to flat  
Le Havre







Madars Apse  
Roll-in  
Le Havre





Jacopo Carozzi  
Switch ollie  
Le Havre







Jaakko Ojanen  
Backside noseblunt  
Le Havre

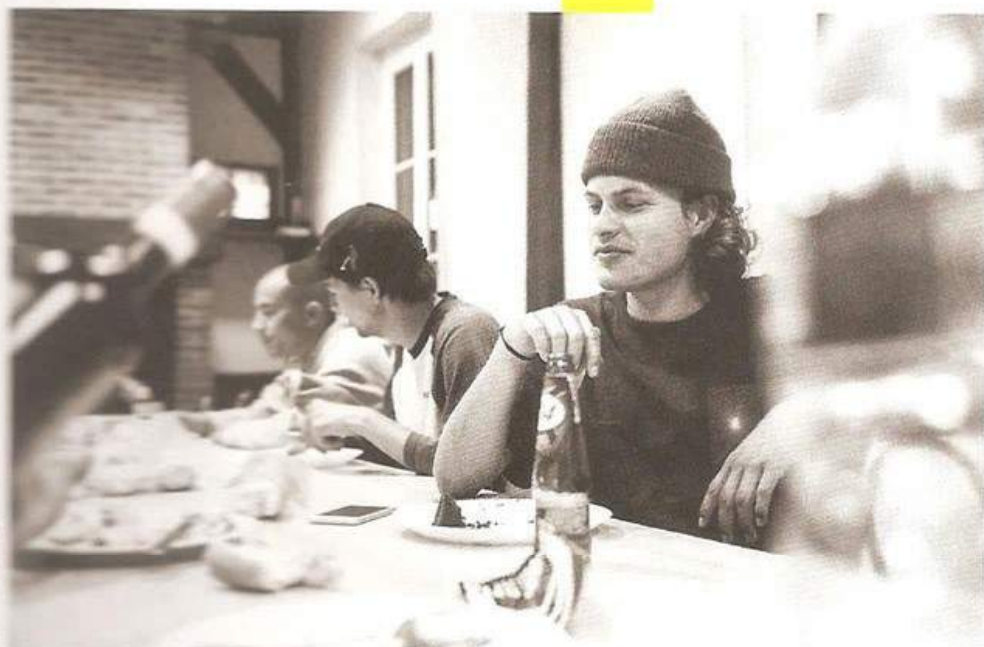


**Jacopo Carozzi**  
**Backside ollie over the hip**  
**Le Havre**





PH. BASTIER



Special thanks to Best Skatedrop for helping organise The Battle, the Friday Live contest: it lead up to and for everything else that they do for the scene in Normandy.