



IN A COMER

THE JON COMER INTERVIEW

'WHEN IT WAS TIME TO HAVE MY FOOT AMPUTATED I WAS PRETTY STOKED ABOUT THE WHOLE IDEA.' JON COMER ALMOST MAKES ME LAUGH AS HE CANDIDLY DESCRIBES WHAT MOST PEOPLE HAVE ONLY THOUGHT ABOUT IN THEIR WORST NIGHTMARES.

It's hard to find heroes that you can relate to these days, especially in the small little worlds that we all operate in. Sure you watch Rocky and feel positive for a few hours, but it's so rare to find someone so understated, making such an impact in such an unexpected way.

As we watched the trailer for *Never Been Done: The Jon Comer Story*, complete silence came over us. The opening few scenes tell the brief story of Jon's accident as a small boy and the subsequent loss of his right leg. It then shows him putting on his prosthetic leg. Then it shows him walking normally.

The next shot I remember cuts to him doing a tail grab, on a skateboard, on a ramp. That's tough.

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OPPOSITE
YOU KNOW SOMETHING, I WANT TO KNOW HOW THE HELL HE DOES IT. SMITH GRIND

You see Jon's life is far from ordinary. Take the whole 'leg thing' out of the picture and he is one of the most talented and stylish skaters you're going to see anywhere. Get him to role up his right pant leg and you start to feel like all of a sudden that you may not have tried hard enough at anything in your life. It's a real slap in the face for mediocrity.

Jon's been a professional skateboarder for seven years now. He came into the sport via his older brother and like the rest of us 'kids' from the 80s Jon was fuelled by skate movies like *Thrashin* and *Gleaming the Cube*. To find out more we got on the phone to Jon at his place in Texas.



ABOVE
 HALF CAB LEG, I MEAN HIP TRANSFER
 RIGHT
 STYLED TUCK KNEE, FUCKING AMAZING



'WHEN IT WAS TIME TO HAVE MY FOOT AMPUTATED I WAS PRETTY STOKED ABOUT THE WHOLE IDEA.' -JON COMER

what he remembers of the day the accident happened. Jon replies, 'About that day I have a vague recollection of waking up in the hospital. When I got hit by the car I didn't lose my foot until three years later. They tried to save it (my foot) for all that time so I mean from that day I may remember waking up in the hospital after it happened; it might have been for any number of other surgeries that I had around that same time.'

The amazing thing about this story is that it all happened to a small four-year-old boy who was just playing on his tricycle or as he called it a 'big wheel' outside the back of his house. From what Jon can tell me it almost feels like he doesn't blame anyone, he goes on to explain.

'There was like an alley behind my house and a kid that had taken his mom's car out for a joyride was cruising through the alleys to

avoid the cops or whatever. I wasn't being very smart because I couldn't see anybody until they were right in front of me basically. Even if it wasn't some kid I think anybody probably could have hit me.'

As his calm words come out of his mouth I can feel myself raging deep inside for him. But that's just it. This is the exact reason why Jon Comer is like no one else; as this man doesn't make excuses for anyone, especially for himself, and I guess that is partly what separates him from everyday people. It's a no blame mentality and a blinding belief that he can do anything he sets his mind to.

This attitude clearly comes to the surface when asked, having lost his leg, if there's anything he felt he couldn't do, or more to the point, any tricks on a board he was ever limited to.

'No, not really. I definitely think that there are some things that are more difficult and some things that I can do less consistently, but I mean there is not a trick that I have really put my mind to doing that I haven't been able to do at least once. You know what I'm saying? Like maybe I did it once and it wasn't worth all that frustration, so I never did it again. But at least I did it once.'

When asked if he is working on any new tricks right now, Jon replies, 'Actually I have been skating for 20 years and I finally just learned backside smith grinds on transitions! That trick has been eluding me forever, and I finally just got it.'

My mind wanders off to the hours of me, and my 'able body', trying to learn new tricks ... and then giving up. I decide to ask some more about the aftermath of the accident.

ABOVE
 IF I DIDN'T HAVE ONE LEG I WOULD MAKE MODEL TRAINS IN MY FUCKING GARAGE. JON HOWEVER MAKES FRESH S-O FRONTSIDE SHUVIT OUT



'WHEN I GOT HIT BY THE CAR I DIDN'T LOOSE MY FOOT UNTIL THREE YEARS LATER.' - JON COMER

'Yeah it kind of sucked. I was in a wheelchair for a long time and I was on crutches most of the time, there was a few instances where I was able to walk for a while without any kind of ... I normally had to have some kind of brace you know. I was in and out of a lot of surgery; they kept breaking my leg and trying to straighten it because after the accident it grew crooked.'

This is where the reality sets in. Jon is so much better without a leg than with one. It's hard to comprehend but Jon continues, 'There were three years where I was pretty much screwed and when it was time to have my foot amputated I was pretty stoked about the whole idea. I definitely would rather be where I am now than have my foot after the accident because it would pretty much be useless'.

It's at this stage I have to ask if he has a disabled sticker on his car.

'Actually I don't, but I've thought about it, especially when I was a teenager I was like "Man I gotta get me a sticker!" You have to get

LEFT
THIS TRICK DIDN'T ALLUDE. JON FOR 20 YEARS,
THE BACKSIDE ONE HOWEVER DID. SMITH GRIND



a doctor to sign off that you need it, and I definitely know that my doctor wouldn't!

Then it is on to the question of prosthetic technology. Jon explains, 'The first one was fibreglass. The socket, you know the part that my stump goes into, was fibreglass and the foot was like a rubber foot with little carbon fibre plates moulded into the rubber or whatever and then it just bolted onto the bottom of the socket. There was just one bolt that bolted it on. Especially after I started skating, if the bolt broke I would wind up duct taping my foot to my leg so I could keep skating or whatever because it was kind of a hassle. Every time it happened I had to get it repaired and it would be a couple of weeks without it so I would kind of rig it up so it would last me as long as it could'.

I query about cost.

'Oh yeah, it's pretty crazy. My insurance is pretty good and I just got

ABOVE
IF JON WENT TO DO A SHOW AND SOME SHOW BIZ PERSON SAID 'BREAK A LEG' HE COULD BE LIKE 'HOW FUCKING LUCKY AM I THEN?' OLLIE TREE GAP

sponsored by this company called College Park. They make this foot called the venture and it's like the best thing I have ever had. I have had a lot different foot sponsors and this one is just so good, it's adjustable, it's got flexibility that I would really like to have for skating and it doesn't break. All the other feet I have had have broken on the first day. When you are talking about something that costs like \$3000 just for the foot it kind of sucks.'

This gets me wondering are there different legs for different occasions? I'm not talking about the going out-to-dinner leg but I ask Jon does he wear something different when he goes skating does to when he is just walking around?

'No I don't, I wear the same thing. When I was a kid I used to have a skate leg and a school leg, that's what my mom called it. But I pretty much just wore the skate leg all the time because it was too much of a hassle to switch back all the time.'

Daniel joins this line of questioning. 'I had a friend that had a car accident and had a prostatic ear, every time he had a few beers he would take it off and throw it in peoples' drinks. Do you have any similar leg jokes that you pull out?'

'Actually one time I was at a bar while on the Vans' Warped tour and we had a day off so we were cutting loose and we were at a bar and I was pretty drunk by the time this happened and I took it off and sat it up on the bar and they filled it up with beer and we drank out of it.'

Cool.

And Jon's definition of tough? 'Someone who can keep going no matter what obstacles get in their way.'

Humble to the very end. ■