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PHOTO BY TOM TRANFAGLIA

Jaks' flying their colors with the classic eyeball image at a bar in Petaluma, CA. (The "Absolute Music" has something to do with vodka and being in a Jaks band, or something, I have no idea.)

CREEMEDIA

PUNKS, HELLRAISERS, SOCIAL PLAGUE, SKATEBOARD HOCKEY CLUB—AND NOW, LIBRETTISTS

CREEM's introduction to a new opera on the Hells Angels of
skateboarding, the Jaks Team.

by: Tom Tranfaglia

September 2, 2022

“What the hell is the Jaks Team?” is a question I am asked a lot. I say the same thing every time: “They’re like the Hells Angels of skateboarding.”

I think this is a fair description of a gang of skateboard misfits, but it’s not very accurate. Unlike Hells Angels, Jaks don’t run guns, manufacture methamphetamines, or dabble in racketeering. But a lot like Hells Angels, they wear “colors”: denim vests covered in patches with an iconic eyeball painted on the back. And they raise hell—not on motorcycles, but on skateboards and in mosh pits.





PHOTO BY TOM TRANFAGLIA

Jaks discussing choreography and operatics during rehearsal (there wasn't a rehearsal) onstage at the Phoenix Theater in Petaluma.

Jaks have nicknames like Melvis, Blue Lagoon, and Goose. They take over skateparks and crash the local bars in numbers. They'll throw beer bottles at your favorite band if they like them and throw bar stools if they don't. Some are sober, most are wasted, and the old ones are worn and crippled. They are armed with skateboards and fireworks instead of knives and chains. Hauling drums, guitars, and amplifiers, Jaks will show up to party anywhere there's a good spot to skate.

Every July 1 (Canada Day) through July 4th (America Day) a Jaks "convention"

is held. Jaks from Vancouver, Canada to Long Beach, California come together with their best bands, best skateboarders, and best skateboard hockey players to represent their countries in a weekend of absolute debauchery. This year they united in Petaluma, California to beat the shit out of each other in their annual skateboard hockey tournament.



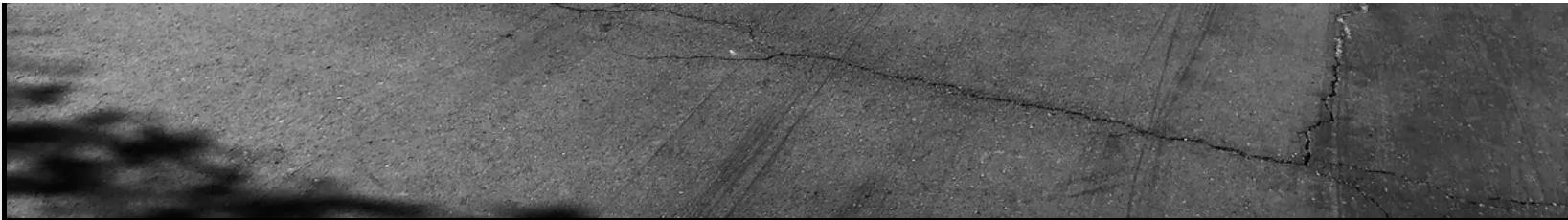


PHOTO BY TOM TRANFAGLIA

A tournament skate hockey game taking place on a sheet of hot black asphalt. No zambonis required.

What the hell is skateboard hockey? Skateboard hockey is hockey reimagined by skateboarding punks, played on skateboards instead of skates, on burning asphalt instead of ice. In skateboard hockey, you don't use a traditional hockey puck. An empty Fosters or Sapporo can—the large, steel ones—is required. The can stands erect at the beginning of the game, but in minutes, it is smashed flat, flying with the wind. The edges are sharp, *really sharp*, and like real hockey, blood will spill. Helmets and pads are allowed, but not required. People get hurt. And while "rules are for squares," they do insist that "you have to keep at least one foot on the board when you shoot the puck."



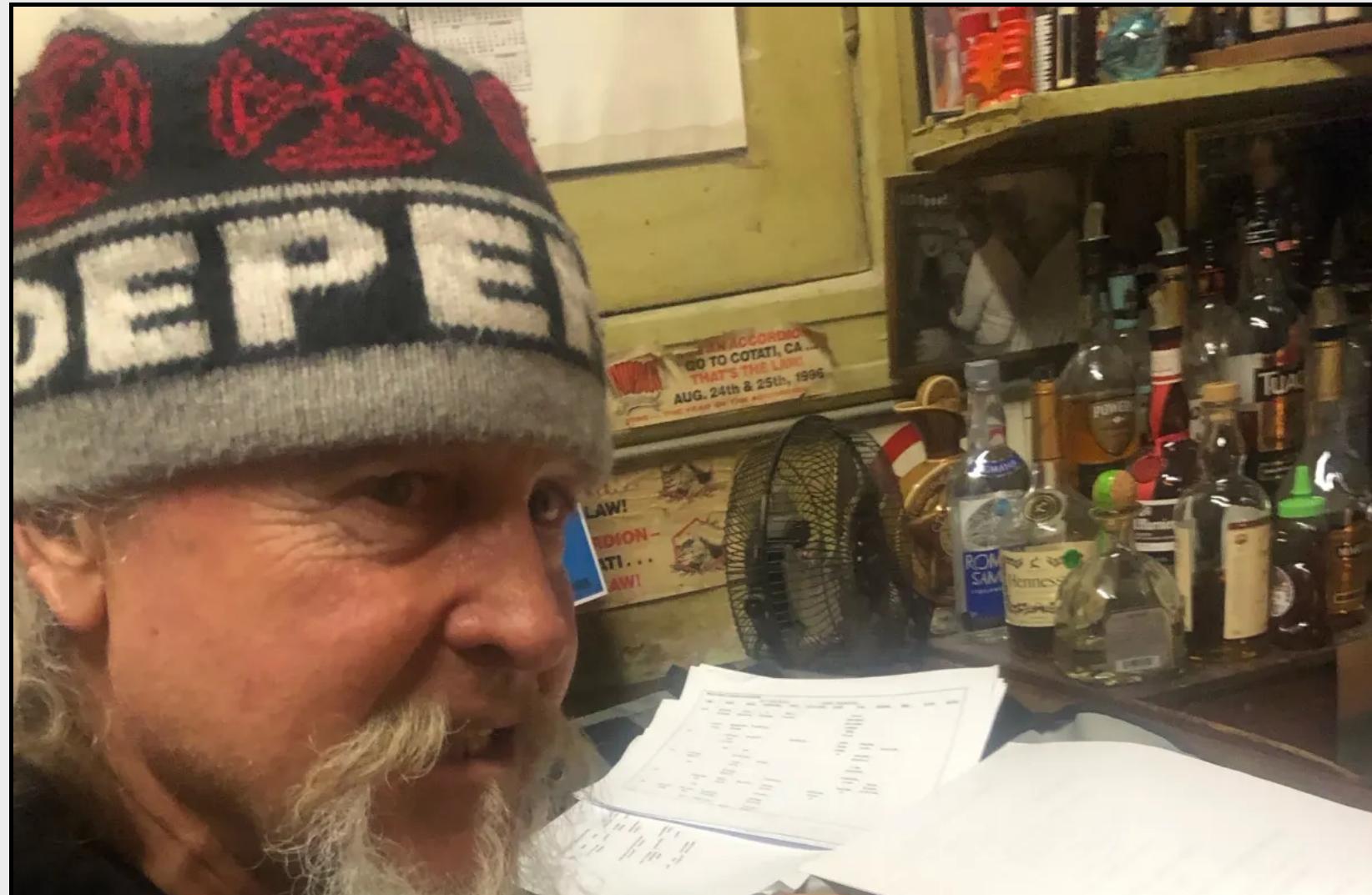


PHOTO BY TOM TRANFAGLIA

Like most images of the Jaks tribe, it's difficult to tell what's going on here, but there is a trophy in the photo so apparently someone won the skateboard hockey tournament.

Visionary Tom Scott is a founder (and resident wizard) of the Jaks Team. He lost his leg in a gruesome accident at age 44. It was July 2000, the morning, and while he was skating to work on a narrow San Francisco street, his messenger bag got snagged on a passing, meandering, lost delivery truck. Scott was

dragged under the wheels and his entire leg was taken off just below the hip. The truck driver claims that he looked in his rearview mirror at the very moment Tom's leg was amputated, and the driver sued Tom (unsuccessfully) for "mental distress."



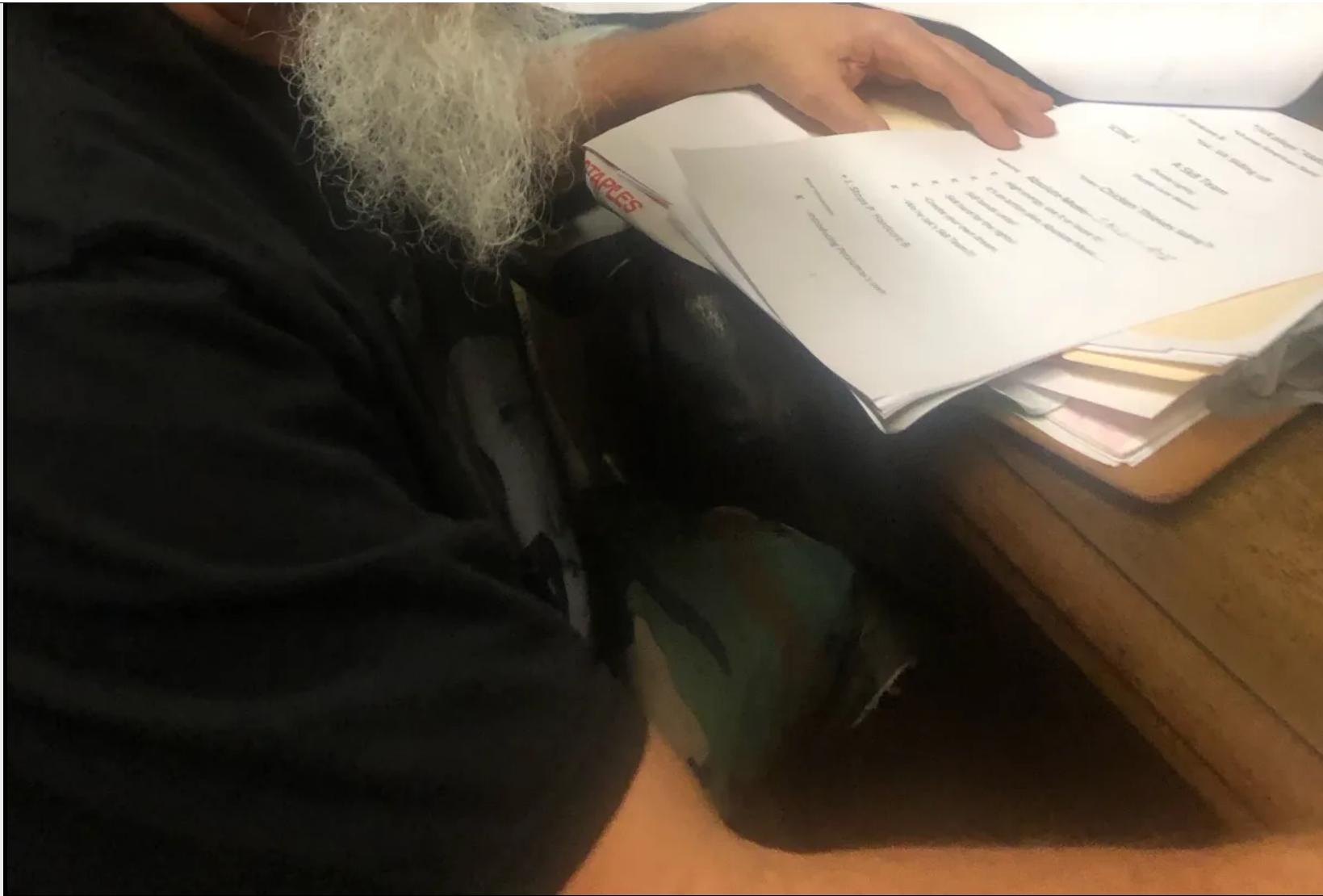


PHOTO BY TOM TRANAGLIA

Jaks' co-founder and recent librettist, Tom Scott, making some last minute edits to the opera script at the bar.

Scott now crutches around with a skateboard under his remaining foot. His energy is limitless and his attitude is contagious. When he is not playing team

leader, mentor, or life coach to the younger Jaks, while kicking ass and keeping order with the elder Jaks, he is organizing hockey games, punk shows, driving to skateparks, and trespassing backyard pools with his team.

For the last two years, like everything else, the Jaks convention was suspended due to COVID-19. So Scott turned his energy to something new: theater. When you're a punk rock zealot like Tom Scott, and you spend your whole life shredding and destroying societal norms, embracing theater is the obvious next step. As a 50-year witness to skateboarding's history, Scott embarked on a mission to "set the record straight" by writing and producing the world's very first skate opera: *20/20 Eyeball Wizard*, Tom Scott's vision of the history of skateboarding. (Pun intended.) It was performed at this year's convention, on the Phoenix Theater's stage in Petaluma, California—Tom's hometown.



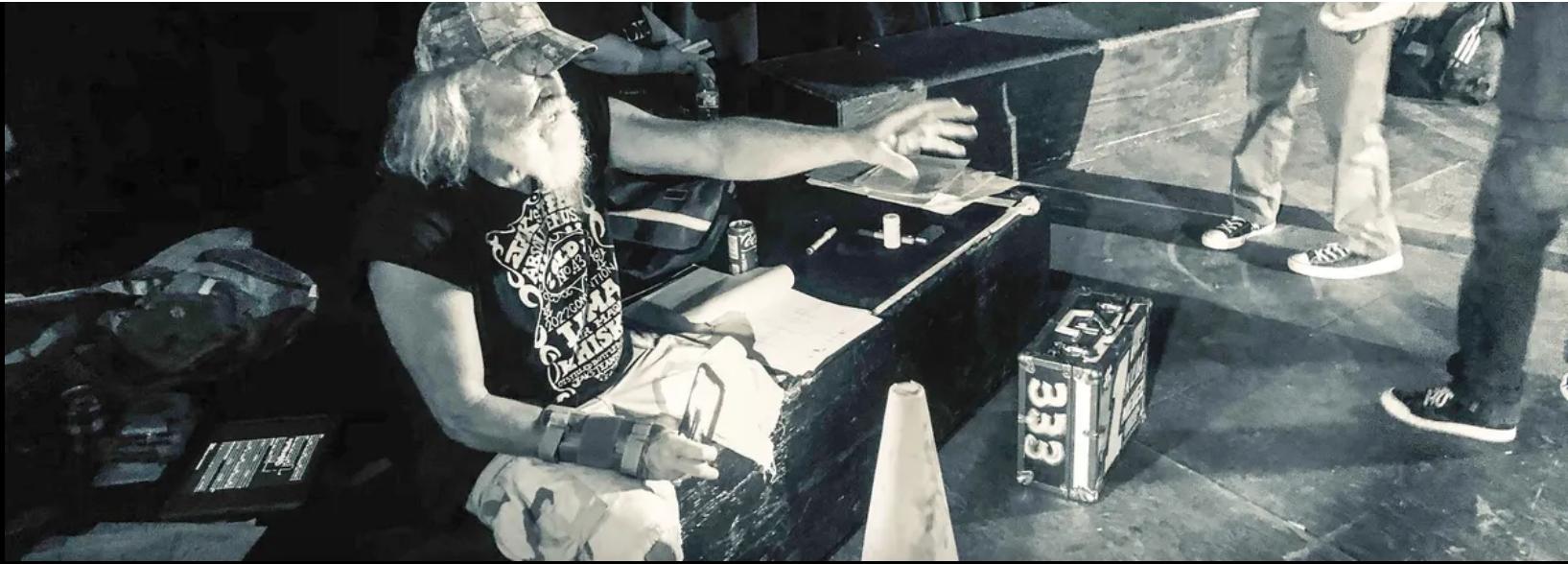


PHOTO BY TOM TRANFAGLIA

Tom Scott liberates his inner librettist as he directs his opera just offstage.

Using stage performance, live music, choreography, and historic film footage, Scott tells the story of the birth of skate rock from skateboarding's dark-ages (1950s) to the present. Like the invention of urethane wheels and modern precision ball bearings, *20/20 Eyeball Wizard* argues that the invention and evolution of skate rock was a crucial element in influencing skate culture. Because, as it reminds the viewer, skateboarding was once forbidden. Now, it's an uber-American pastime, one that helped usher in the genre of "extreme sports."





PHOTO BY NIK COTTON

Aiden Sharkey launches off the quarter pipe onto the stage.

Recruiting from in-house, Tom Scott called on bands like San Francisco's Verbal Abuse and the Fuck Ups, as well as Canada's Fully Crazed to supply the soundtrack. A slew of local bands and musicians also pitched in and played throughout the performance. Skaters provided the visuals—mostly just shredding

the shit out of the ramps arranged on stage and around the theater.



PHOTO BY TOM TRANFAGLIA

A blurry photo of a skate opera performance. We've been told there is someone named "Stinky Mark" in the image. Perhaps it is the man in the corner with the microphone that no one is sitting near?

After the performance was over and the theater closed, punks and pagans

descended upon Petaluma's idyllic city center as notorious bands flocked to town filling stage slots at local bars. Members of the Dwarves' new project, HeWhoCannotBeNamed, and San Francisco legends, the Fuck Ups and Verbal Abuse, turned out blistering punk at local bars. They inspired epic mosh-pits and dished out hangovers and bruises night after night.



PHOTO BY TOM TRANFAGLIA

HeWhoCannotBeNamed of the Dwarves performing at a Petaluma watering hole.



PHOTO BY TOM TRANFAGLIA

Fully Crazed from Canada getting fully crazed.

The soundtrack to *20/20 Eyeball Wizard*, and a video of the performance, will soon be released along with a coffee table book filled with a lifetime of Jaks' photos, flyers, and storytelling, curated by Tom Scott and friends. To learn more, you can knock a dirty Jak off their skateboard and ask them about it. 

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