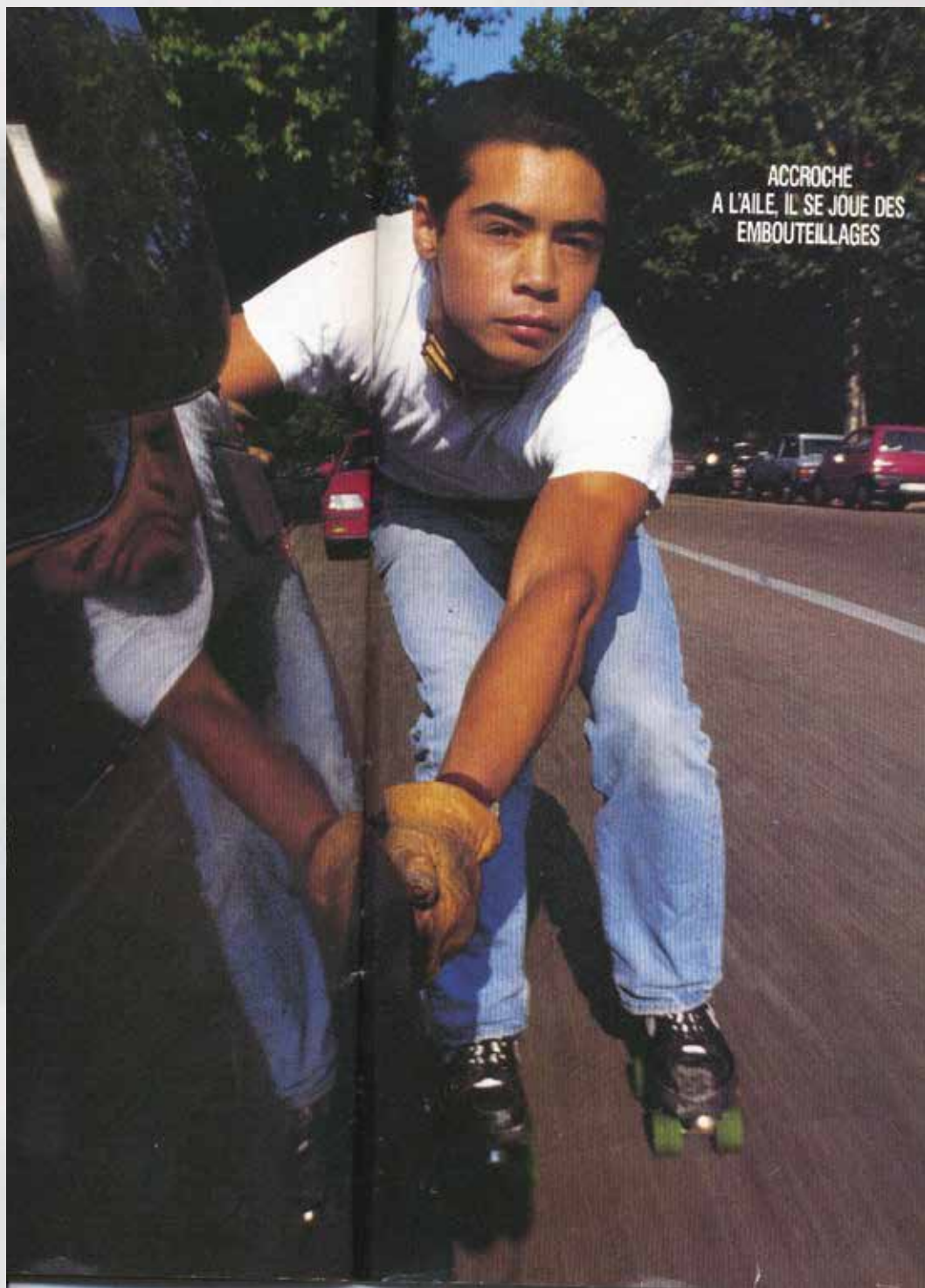




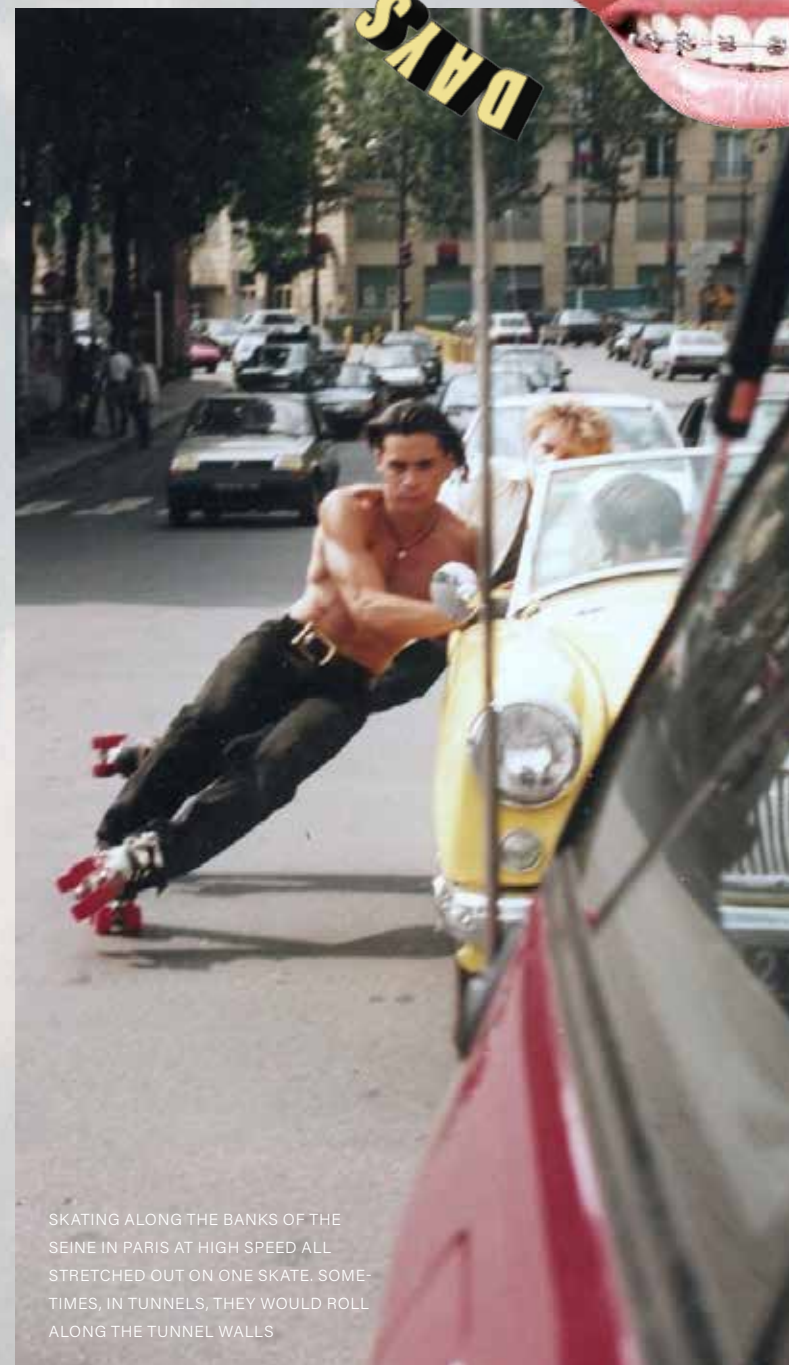
THE TROCADÉRO, WITH ITS WORLD-FAMOUS POSTCARD VIEW ON THE EIFFEL TOWER, IS HIGHLY FREQUENTED BY TOURISTS VISITING PARIS THESE DAYS. BUT THERE WAS A TIME WHEN THE WIDE ESPLANADE NEXT TO THE PALAIS DE CHAILLOT, WITH ITS PERFECTLY SMOOTH SURFACE, WAS IN THE HANDS OF ROLLER SKATERS. THE HISTORY OF SKATING ON THE TROCADÉRO DATES BACK TO THE 1930s, BUT IN THE 1980s A NEW GENERATION OF YOUNG DREAMERS, ARMED WITH A PAIR OF SKATES AND A REBELLIOUS SPIRIT, MADE THE ESPLANADE THEIR PLAYGROUND. PHIL "TONY BOY" DUSSOL WAS ONE OF THEM. HERE HE DELVES INTO A BYGONE ERA OF HIGH-FLYING STUNTS, POLICE CHASES, AND A TIME OF ULTIMATE FREEDOM

PHIL AND A FRIEND HANGING ONTO A FRIEND'S CAR WHILE SKATING ON THE CHAMPS-ÉLYSÉES. THEY WERE ON THEIR WAY TO THE TUNNEL DE L'ÉTOILE WHICH PASSES UNDERNEATH THE ARC DE TRIOMPHE. SPEEDING THROUGH THE TUNNEL AND LETTING GO OF THE CAR AT THE END TO SPEED AND SLALOM BETWEEN CARS



I was 13 when we moved from the French countryside to Paris. It was also the year I started skating after I discovered the quad scene at the Trocadero. I asked my mom for a pair of skates for Christmas. As soon as I got them, I immediately took the metro to the Trocadéro. Little did I know how harshly I would be rejected by the local skaters for not passing their initiation ritual of jumping the five-stair of the esplanade. In the following weeks, I went there early, when they weren't there and practiced until I finally managed to jump the five stairs. I was mesmerized by the advanced skaters' ability to do anything on their skates. It was like a playground, where they

jumped down stairs, slid on barriers, and played on railings. There was so much joy and also a vulnerability and innocence about them that touched me, reminding me of the camaraderie in E.T. Growing up in a strict and severe Vietnamese upbringing, in an intellectual desert, the Trocadéro opened the door to freedom. It felt like I finally found my world and my escape plan from a colorless life full of frustration and injustice. I was driven to improve and develop my own style. I would train every day. I even skated to school. I only lived for this. Within two years, the Trocadéro began to change. New faces started appearing from all social backgrounds, and unique personalities



SKATING ALONG THE BANKS OF THE SEINE IN PARIS AT HIGH SPEED ALL STRETCHED OUT ON ONE SKATE. SOMETIMES, IN TUNNELS, THEY WOULD ROLL ALONG THE TUNNEL WALLS

DAYS OF RECKLESS ABANDON



transformed this playground into a place of madness. Anything was possible. There were about a hundred of us, with a core group of around forty skaters. The "Troca" was home to multiple disciplines, with the jumpers at the top esplanade, while slalom skaters and dancers shared the lower area. At some point we switched from jumping stairs to jumping ramps and over high obstacles. And we did "randos." These were group skate sessions with the older skaters, which involved some quite rebellious actions. The "original" rando was about skating on the roads and sidewalks at full speed, skitching rides from cars. It was exhilarating. We laughed uncontrollably as the police ran after us like in a Charlie Chaplin movie. Sometimes they'd chase us on bikes, motorbikes, or in cars. These chases made us even stronger, since jumping stairs or rolling over car hoods in traffic was now second nature—some of us doing wild tricks in the process. Without realizing it, our skill level skyrocketed. The goal was always not to end up at the police station, so that our parents wouldn't find out and then ban us from going to the Trocadero because of the 'bad influences.' It didn't always work out. On rainy days, unable to skate outside, we teased metro inspectors, playing hide-and-seek, luring them to large escalators which we raced down at top speed, far too fast for them to catch us. It was crazy—we were happy, free kids. When I started doing my first jumps at the Trocadero at the age of 13-14, an agent spotted me and cast me in a roller-skating ad for children's clothing called "Tony Boy." From that point on, I became the "Tony Boy" of the Trocadero. I joined a junior modeling agency, and worked a lot with them. This allowed me to afford wheels and bearings, which were incredibly expensive at that time. It was a luxury to skate with Kryptonics—they were the only wheels on the market that worked for what we were doing. Soon after, I was sponsored by brands like FNAC Sport, Quiksilver, Reebok, Adidas, and others. The press was interested in me because I was a teenager willing to risk my life for my passion and had a somewhat rebellious spirit. To them, that was intriguing. And what we Trocadéro skaters did was a very new



PHIL HAD ALWAYS WANTED TO JUMP OVER A HELICOPTER WHILE HOVERING IN PLACE. "I THEN HAD A MOMENT OF DOUBT WHEN I LOCKED EYES WITH MY MOTHER." ULTIMATELY, HE SCRAPPED THE PLAN AND INSTEAD ADDED TWO OF HIS SPONSOR'S CARS "TO INCREASE THE RISK." LOOKING BACK, HE IS GLAD HE CHANGED HIS MIND

TONY BOY PARIS



concept to the public. I was already clear on the life I wanted and the one I didn't. I continued with school, though, with a sense of indifference. I was upset that the school system was robbing me of my childhood and grading me as if to impose a life on me I hadn't yet chosen. A few years later, I founded the 340 Roller Team together with a manager. The 340s gathered the best of the Troc, but we skated with everyone. We invented our own moves and sometimes performed them in duos, combining tricks based on each skater's style to make them beautiful, aesthetic, and exciting. But soon

the 340 became more of a fairground demo team with no ethics, so I eventually left the team. I was also focused on cinema, which had become a big part of my life, though roller skating also remained important. While studying film, I made a short film called *Easy Money*, that incorporated roller skating—but it wasn't a film about skating. It's a love story about a couple who have turned anarchist. Roller skating is their shared passion, which they use as an outlet against a dull, suffocating life. The preparation was intense. I had to learn the technical side



and design a custom setup for the challenging film cameras, which were heavy and cumbersome at the time. I even practiced stunts with the cameras to convince rental companies to trust me. The filming process was self-produced due to lack of industry support. No one would grant us permits to film our stunts on the Champs-Élysées or on the highway. This forced me to adopt a guerrilla-style approach. Filming in public spaces with actors firing blanks often terrified passersby, as they couldn't see the camera. I've never officially worked as a roller-skating cameraman, but I did manage to film a bit for friends' projects and for the mo-

vie *Lords of Dogtown*. I was thrilled to work as a second unit on the action scenes. It was an epic adventure. My main job is directing. I shoot commercials for the international market, short films, and work as a second unit director on feature films, while also developing feature-length projects. Today, I still skate. I took a break from high-speed skating and jumps for ten years, but I've been back at it for five years and recently started practicing in skateparks. Skating is vital. I need to move my body until exhaustion. It's in those moments that I feel truly alive. I take fewer risks than I used to, because I no longer have the same muscle strength to handle falls. But I still

race through Paris in traffic. I love the speed—feeling free and vulnerable at the same time. After I sprint between cars, I take a break in a small café to write or read.

The time at the Trocadéro was the best of my life. It played a major role in everything that came after. It allowed me to dream and to believe in a life that was better than the one being shaped by parental pressure. We had the drive to live out our passion no matter the cost. We didn't know where we were heading, but living in the moment was enough to convince us we were in the right place, and that we didn't need to create a future that society was trying to impose on us.

DAYS OF RECKLESS ABANDON



GATHERING OF ABOUT 100 OF QUAD SKATERS AT THE TROCADÉRO GETTING READY FOR A SKATE TOUR THROUGH PARIS (BOTTOM LEFT). THE TROCADÉRO, WITH ITS ICONIC VIEW OF THE EIFFEL TOWER, WAS THE NUMBER ONE ROLLER SKATING SPOT IN PARIS FOR MANY YEARS (ABOVE)

