

DEEP IN THE SWELTERING DESERT OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA LIES ONE OF THE BURLIEST OBSTACLES EVER BUILT FOR SKATEBOARDING: A HUGE WOODEN RAMP WITH A 60-FOOT GAP IN THE MIDDLE AND A 28-FOOT QUARTERPIPE ON THE OTHER SIDE. THE ROLL-IN ON THE RAMP IS 48 FEET TALL AND PROPELS SKATERS ACROSS THE GAP AT SPEEDS OF UP TO 40 MPH. THIS "MEGA RAMP," AS IT'S CALLED, WAS DESIGNED BY SKATEBOARDING'S VERSION OF EVEL KNieVEL, THE LEGENDARY DANNY WAY, AND ONLY THE BEST VERT SKATERS IN THE WORLD (MAYBE 20 AT THE MOST) HAVE STEPPED TO IT. ONE OF THEM IS 15-YEAR-OLD

LYN-Z ADAMS HAWKINS

At age 12, Lyn-z was being touted as the next big thing in vert skating. Unfortunately, the combination of being a vert disciple at a time in skateboarding that—outside of Tony Hawk and the X Games—is dominated by street skating and its heroes (as opposed to the late '80s, when it was exactly the opposite), and being a gangly kid with a penchant for skating in giant helmets and flowery knee pads, didn't help Lyn-z's reputation. Inside the sometimes snarky culture of pro skateboarding, she was hardly considered cool. So most of the early media hype she received was on the pages of teen mags like *Seventeen* and *YM* rather than *Thrasher* and *Skateboarder*.

Even getting older and better at skating didn't help her image much. When she learned kickflip to Indys—the first girl ever to do the trick on vert—instead of being impressed, other skaters took her youthful excitement for bragging and mocked her, saying things like, "I can do a kickflip to Indy on the flatbottom of a vert ramp."

When she ventured out on skate trips, like the first Girl's Tour in 2002, respect was even harder to come by. "Obviously going on tour I was the grom, so I always got hassled. I'd get to the point of crying every day almost," she says. "They'd beat me to the ground and take my Game Boy, stuff like that."

The older skaters, like Jen O'Brien and Cara Beth Burnside, were somewhat sympathetic because, considering her age, Lyn-z did alright. "She's pretty on it for being so young, so it's not hard to travel with her," Jen says. "But with the likes of Vanessa [Torres] and Amy [Caron] on tour, she paid her dues."

BY BROOKE GEERY
PHOTOS: BRIAN FICK

On one stop Lyn-z dropped into a bowl, only to have Vanessa drop in after her. Although she was trying to get out of her way, Lyn-z ended up cutting her off. "I remember Vanessa ended up on the ground, and it didn't make things any better for me," she says. Hiding Vanessa's board in frustration afterward didn't help, either, but Lyn-z was too young then to realize how her less-than-mature responses to being picked on were part of the reason it continued.

But for Lyn-z, getting tortured for being a grom was a small price to pay for getting to skateboard all the time and travel to cool places to do it. Plus, she had bigger things to care about.

In 2003, Lyn-z lost her biggest fan. Her father, Ron, had attended every event he could and loved to watch Lyn-z and her older brother, Tyler, skate. "I hated when he'd try and tell me how to do things, because I was like, *you don't know*," Lyn-z says. "But then I realized later that he did because how could he not? He was there watching everyone all the time."

After suffering from chronic heart problems, Ron had a fatal heart attack while driving to Tahoe to spend the holidays with the family. Lyn-z pays tribute to him on every griptape job she does, penning "Rest in Peace Dad" somewhere among the drawings that adorn her boards. She also never takes off the necklace her dad gave her three months before he died—a sterling-silver mold of an arrowhead that he found when he was a kid. "I still feel close to him and I know he's watching over me," she says.

One can only assume he's proud of what he sees. Lyn-z has gone from being "pretty good at vert" to really good overall, and things are finally starting to smooth out for the little girl in a giant helmet.

lyn-z, post-slam, pre-hospital:
see *afterthought* [p.112]
for the carnage.



LYN-Z

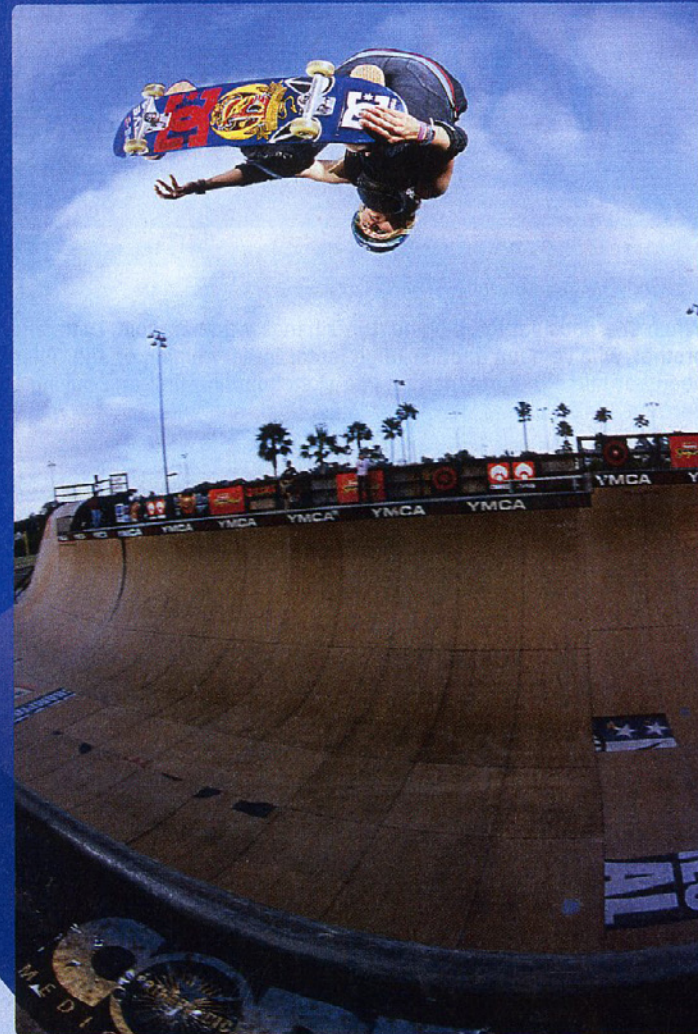
"I'M STRAIGHT THUG NOW," SHE SAYS, SMILING. Getting rid of the full pads and helmet was a big first step. "I wasn't comfortable without knee pads for so long. At my first Slam City I wore knee pads under my pants. But then I got hassled so much and just kind of grew out of it," she says.

Not being 12—well, that's helped too. With a few more years under her belt now, Lyn-z has it mostly figured out. "I think I kind of asked for it a little bit. I would freak out and [the other skaters] thought it was really fun to hassle me. If I hadn't made such a big deal about it, they wouldn't have bugged me so much," she says. "The last trip I went on with Vanessa, I'd put my board up [to drop in] and she'd look at me and put her board up and [snake me], but I stopped caring so it's no fun for them anymore."

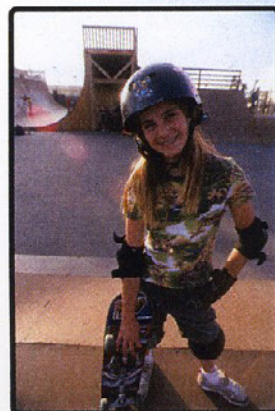
These days, Lyn-z is much more capable and together. "She knows how to get along with everyone and can be away from home as long as she needs to—as long as she has her skateboard and her pillow," Tyler says.



straight thug [circa now].



lofty b/s tailgrab at the encinitas y.



pro-tec poster child [circa then].
photo: patty segovia

crooked grind [bonus points for power stance].



f/s invert, tempe, az.

LYN-Z

When she *does* get to be home, Lyn-z hangs with her mom, Lynn, and her brother, who've been another huge factor in her coming of age. Tyler has been her muse of sorts, getting into skateboarding first and buying Lyn-z her first YMCA skatepark membership when she was just six years old.

Her mother—who bought Lyn-z her very first skateboard for Christmas when she was one-and-a-half—also travels with her and helps to manage her career, even though she's quite confident that Lyn-z can take care of herself. "She always, from the time she was little, climbed the biggest tree, went down the biggest slide. When she was three she'd climb the goalpost at the football field. Everyone else always freaked out, but I knew she didn't want to get hurt," Lynn says.

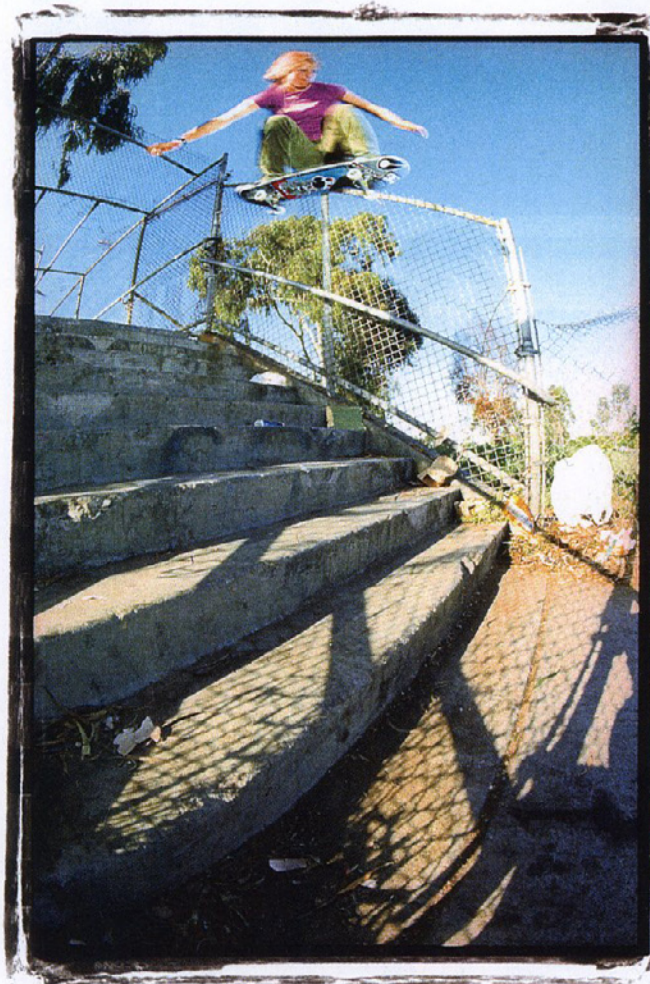
"EVEN WHEN I SAW HER DO THE MEGA RAMP I WASN'T SCARED... I KNEW SHE HAD IT FIGURED OUT."

When she's at home, her bedroom is her little sanctuary. The entire room has a monkey theme—Lyn-z collects them, which is fitting in more ways than one. On the walls are numerous awards, including X Games medals and Vans trophies, as well as a few awards for snowboarding, surfing, and even riding horses. There's also a computer—the only place she spends more time at than the skatepark. Though her schedule is hectic, she still manages to find time to post daily updates on her Myspace profile.

Actually, Lyn-z pretty much does whatever she wants, which these days includes a lot of snowboarding. "I did so much snowboarding stuff back-to-back this year. Almost every skate trip I've been on I've had snowboard stuff with me," she says. "I think it's just fun for me because there's way more kids my age and it's not skating. It gives me a break and makes me want to skate more."

Growing up in Southern California, it almost goes without saying that she's into surfing as well. All these sports leave her with little time to do anything else. "I don't have any friends that don't have to do with snowboarding, surfing, or skating. I don't have time to just hang out," she says.

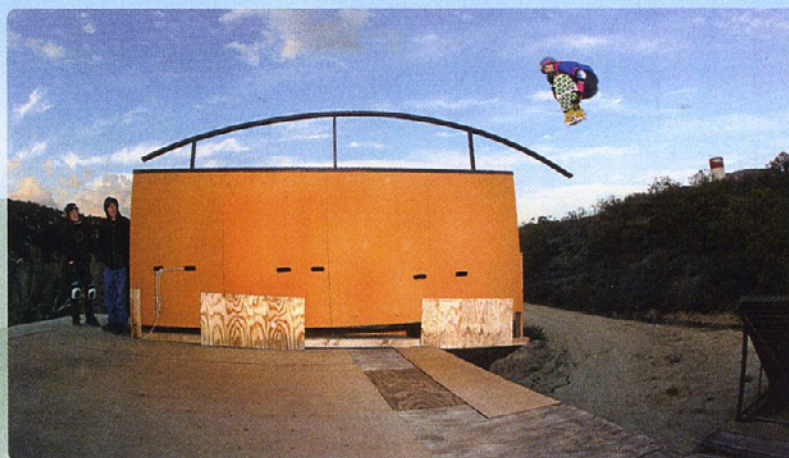
"Yeah, I don't see Lyn-z going to the mall," her mother adds.



flexing her street muscles.



though the mega ramp eats shoes, lyn-z still won't go to the mall.



at the mega ramp. photo: dave swift

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[continued from p. 046]

LYN-Z

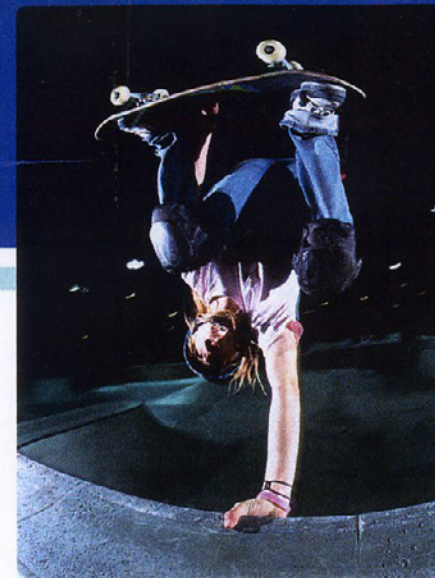
Of course, being a top skater also has its drawbacks. Recently Lyn-z suffered her first major career injury, a broken hand and 12 staples in her head when she slipped out on a ledge she was skating for this interview. Although the healing process requires her to have a cast up to her shoulder for nearly three months, and might keep her from doing the Mega Ramp exhibition at the Summer X Games, she's basically shrugged it off. "At least I can still skate," she says.

And you're most likely to find her skating at the Encinitas YMCA, which is the epicenter of professional vert skating, and where Lyn-z grew up, surrounded and inspired by the best skaters in the world.

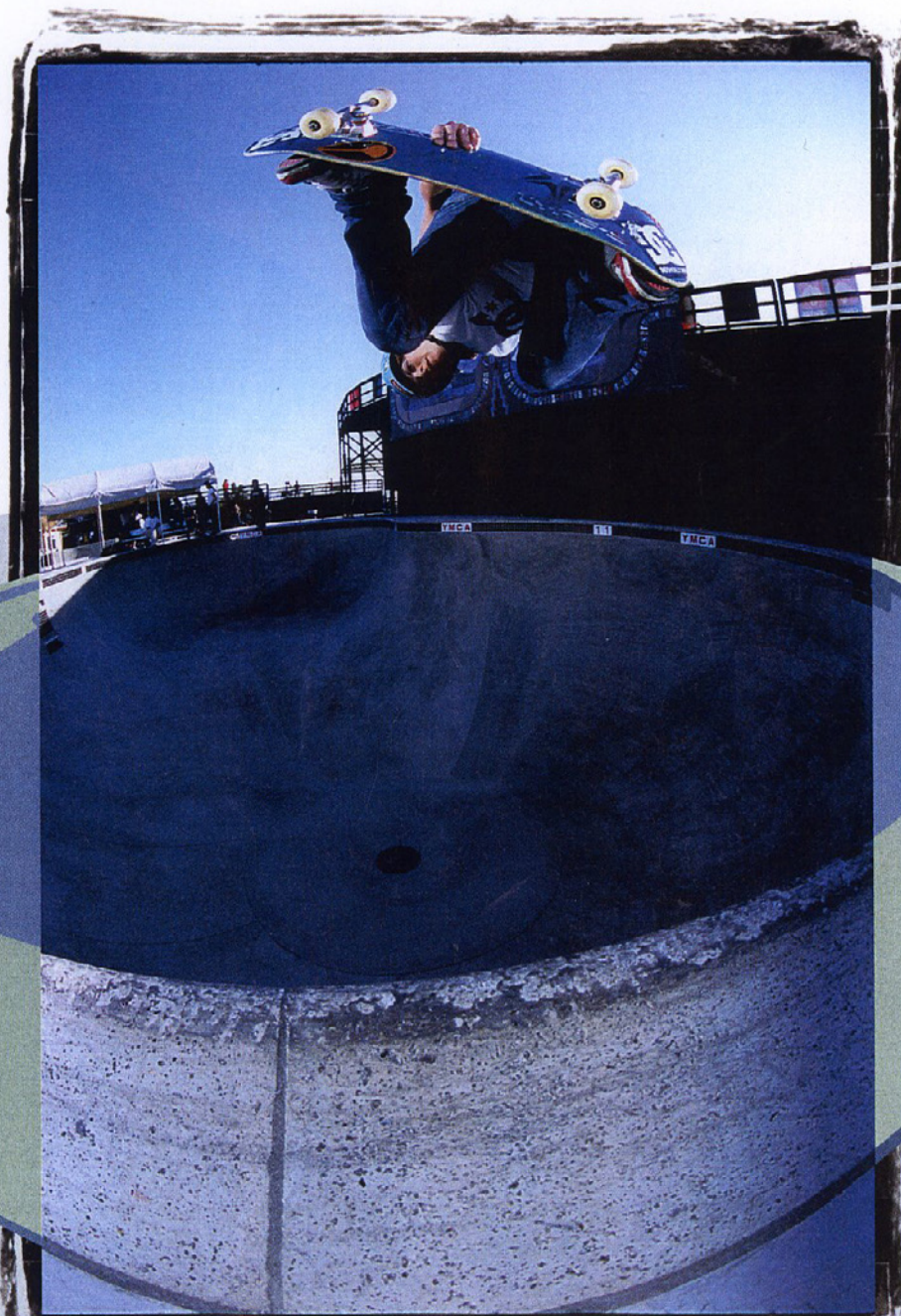
"It can be a challenge for young skaters to stay interested long-term," says vert legend Chris Miller, who has known Lyn-z and watched her skate at the Y since she was a tiny kid.

"THERE HAVE BEEN PLENTY OF 'KID SKATE STARS' THAT DON'T WIND UP BEING THE BEST PROS. I THINK LYN-Z WON'T SUFFER THAT FATE—SHE'S TALENTED AND HAS A GREAT ATTITUDE AND A SENSIBLE PERSPECTIVE. I THINK SHE IS GOING TO BE THE BEST ALL-AROUND FEMALE SKATEBOARDER. EVER."

SG



andrecht in tempe, a



big, padless b/s method at the y.

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