# The 25 Best Skateboard Decks From the '80s



BY<u>EBY GHAFARIAN</u> OCT 30, 2012

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While the '70s hosted some minimal art on skateboards, it was really the '80s that brought the use of the skateboard deck as a graphic medium into play. We decided to take a look back and determine **The 25 Best Skateboard Decks From the '80s**. This is obviously a subjective matter and your local 40-year-old fully-padded park dad will probably complain about why the boards he had growing up are not on it. I am sure they are on other's top 25 lists, but we took a look at the best (graphically), not necessarily the most iconic. Many of these graphics were so far ahead of their time that they could hold their own weight today as great designs amongst the current trend of recycled concepts and logo

boards. The '90s pushed the envelope with controversy and trademark infringements, but the '80s defined the culture and gave people something tangible to rally around. Hop in the Delorean and let's take you back to the '80s.

We would like to give a shout out to Sean Cliver and his book **Disposable: A History** of Skateboard Art. If you like these decks, we recommend you pick up that book for tons of other great images from skateboarding's past.

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# Nolder





## 25. Hosoi Monty Nolder

Illustrator Or Designer: Justin Forbes Year: 1988 Skater: Monty Nolder

There was no shortage of Native American imagery in the '80s, but this arrowhead is one of the best uses, even to this day. This graphic is not typical of most Hosoi graphics too, which is a plus.

# Shark



#### 24. Shut Shark

Illustrator Or Designer: Wylie Singer Year: 1989 Skater: N/A Somebody had to hold it down for the East Coast and that is where Shut came in. While their graphics were very graffiti influenced, it was mostly corny graffiti styling, like their Assault Vehicle, Street Posse, and Zoo York graphics, but the Shut Shark was by far their best (minus the lettering). It is a great graphic, with the perfect addition of sharks teeth bordering the nose.

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## 23. Vison Tom Groholski



Illustrator Or Designer: Tom Groholski & Bernie Tostenson Year: 1984 Skater: Tom Groholski

This graphic almost didn't get made because it was so badly drawn by Tom Groholski himself. And that is why we love it so much. He had to fight to get them to make it, getting them to concede with a little touching up by Tostenson. It is terribly amazing.

### **Notch Nose**



#### 22. Blockhead Notch Nose

Illustrator Or Designer: Dave Bergthold & Ron Cameron Year: 1986 Skater: N/A

Again, simple effective graphics are sometimes the best. This use of reflective imagery helps balance this graphic out a lot.

#### Folmer



#### **21. Sims Mike Folmer**

#### Illustrator Or Designer: Unknown

**Year:** 1983 **Skater:** Mike Folmer

Simple can be the best route sometimes. In this case, a nicely balanced UFO attack. Skateboarders have always been skeptical of the ways of the world, so conspiracy theories and the extraterrestrial were always appropriate.

#### Harris





### 20. Powell Peralta Kevin Harris

Illustrator Or Designer: V. Courtlandt Johnson Year: 1986 Skater: Kevin Harris

Here is another instance of VCJ using humor in his otherwise straightforward graphics. Again, it is through ethnic stereotypes. You can't get more Canadian than a mountie using a beaver as a telephone...

#### Knucklehead



#### **19. Brand-X Knucklehead**

#### Illustrator Or Designer: Bernie Tostenson Year: 1983 Skater: N/A

This graphic straddles both sides of skateboarding graphics from the 80s: neon fun and grim destruction.

# Johnson





# 18. Zorlac Craig Johnson

#### Illustrator Or Designer: Pushead

Year: 1986 Skater: Craig Johnson More death and destruction from Pushead. His art lead the way for Thrasher and the anti-system, pro-destruction mindset of rebel skateboarders.

#### Seewaldt





#### 17. Titus Christian Seewaldt

Illustrator Or Designer: Unknown Year: 1987 Skater: Christian Seewaldt

This is where skateboard art started leveraging pop culture. While that become much more standard in the 90s, this use of Silver Surfer doing pogos was a sign of things to come.

## Kendall





#### 16. Santa Cruz Jeff Kendall

**Illustrator Or Designer**: Jim Phillips **Year**: 1986 **Skater**: Jeff Kendall Inspired by the novel *Brave New World*, this graphic is supposed to represent the hands of technology ripping apart the world. The novel is from 1932, this graphic is from 1986, yet it all is still relevant in 2012.

#### Saiz



#### **15. Powell Peralta Steve** Saiz

Illustrator Or Designer: Sean Cliver Year: 1989 Skater: Steve Saiz

Native American art in skateboarding graphics has been done many times, but as one of the earlier instances, this is one of the best. The feathers really make this graphic.

#### Cab



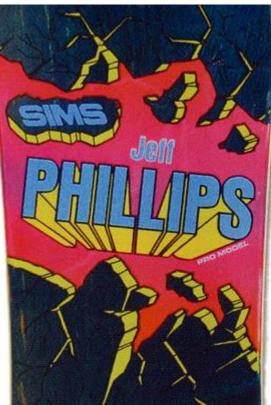
#### 14. Powell Peralta Steve Caballero

Illustrator Or Designer: Craig Stecyk III Year: 1989 Skater: Steve Caballero

This tribal mask drawn in a technical, yet cartoon-ish fashion may not be one of Steve Caballero's best selling graphics, but it is easily one of the most aesthetically superior ones he's put out to date.







# 13. Sims Jeff Phillips

Illustrator Or Designer: Greg Evans Year: 1986 Skater: Jeff Phillips

Another "that's so 80s" graphic. While there have been many color ways of this graphic, our favorite is the one that utilizes stained wood grain as the negative space.

#### GSD



#### 12. Tracker GSD

Illustrator Or Designer: Garry S. Davis Year: 1988 Skater: Garry Davis

While simple in subject matter, GSD's rendering of a fish for his own board graphic turned out amazing aesthetically. It was done in a way that (unknowingly) it could be from any decade of skateboard, including the present.

#### Slasher





#### **11. Santa Cruz Slasher**

<mark>Illustrator Or Designer</mark>: Jim Phillips <mark>Year:</mark> 1986 <mark>Skater: N/A</mark>

In a head nod to Ed Roth's Rat Fink, Jim Phillip's Slasher graphic for Santa Cruz was the Rat Fink for us skateboarders.

## Per Welinder



#### **10. Powell Peralta Per** Welinder

#### Illustrator Or Designer: V. Courtlandt Johnson

**Year:** 1984 **Skater:** Per Welinder

VCJ made so many amazing graphics for Powell in the 80s and was probably the most influential skateboard artist of the decade. This Viking skull he did for a Per Welinder graphic was our favorite for his rare comedic application (in this case the ethnic stereotyping).

# 9. Vison Tom Groholski



Illustrator Or Designer: Tom Groholski & Marty Jimenez

**Year:** 1986

Skater: Tom Groholski

Graphically, this is all over the place, but as with the Brand-X Weirdo graphic, it just works...especially for the 80s. If all-over-print shirts come back in fashion, could someone go ahead and make this into one?





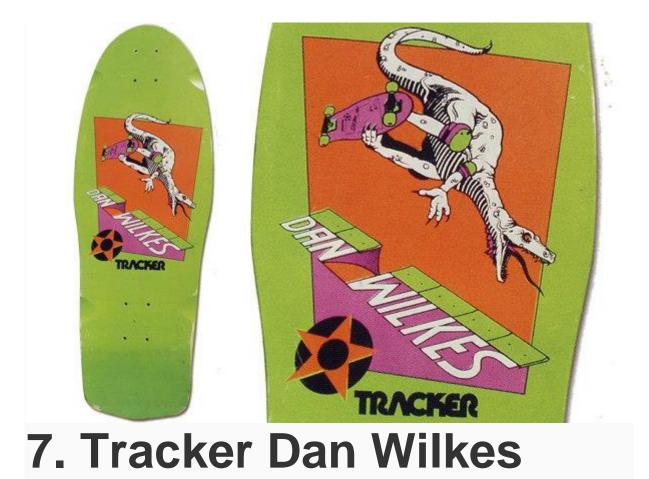


#### 8. Santa Monica Airlines Natas Kaupas

Illustrator Or Designer: Chri Buchinsky Year: 1987 Skater: Natas Kaupas

There were many memorable Natas graphics in the '80s (and even '90s), but this was done so classy and bowie-esque that it stands out amongst the rest.





#### Illustrator Or Designer: Garry S. Davis

**Year**: 1986

Skater: Dan Wilkes

A skateboarding raptor?! This is the wet dream of any 3rd grader, and the 3rd grader in all of us not-so-3rd-graders. GSD was killing the graphic game.

## Weirdo



#### 6. Brand-X Weirdo

Illustrator Or Designer: Bernie Tostenson Year: 1984 Skater: N/A

Brand-X rarely missed the mark with graphics, mostly due to Bernie Tostenson being on board (so to speak). This graphic is almost as 80s as you can get with so much going on, that it just works.

#### **Misfits**





## 5. Plan 9 Misfits

Illustrator Or Designer: Glenn Danzig Year: 1986 Skater: N/A

While it isn't hard to find coffin shaped boards these days, this was an early creative approach to experimenting with shapes to compliment graphics. Even though many other bands (Suicide Tendencies, Metallica, Black Flag, JFA, etc.) were also putting out band board, this Misfits graphic was the best of them all.

### 4. Santa Monica Airlines Natas Kaupas



Illustrator Or Designer: Jimbo Phillips Year: 1989 Skater: Natas Kaupas

The Natas panther graphic has had many reimaginations. Originally created by Kevin Ancell in 1985, he did some updated version, then Jim Phillips did a couple versions, but our favorite was done by Jim's son, Jimbo Phillips. He was ahead of the kitty curve, cute-ifying the graphic 20 years before kitties were all the rage.

# **Big Boys**



## 3. Zorlac Big Boys

Illustrator Or Designer: Pushead, Tim Kerr, & Randy "Biscuit" Turner

**Year:** 1984

Skater: N/A

On the flipside of all the happy, neon, party-esque graphics that defined the 80s, there was Pushead. He was holding down the dark side with macabre imagery such as this epic two-headed kid skeleton.

# Roskopp



#### <mark>2. Santa Cruz Rob</mark> Roskopp

Illustrator Or Designer: Jim Phillips

<mark>Year:</mark> 1984

<mark>Skater:</mark> Rob Roskopp

This is one of the most iconic skateboard graphics of all time and one of our all time favorites. With Jim Phillips cartoon/comic style, this graphic turned into a series with 7 progressions of the monster coming out of the target.

#### Pharoah



## 1. Sims Pharaoh

#### Illustrator Or Designer: Andy Takakjian

**Year:** 1987

Skater: N/A

While this board may not have the celebrity status of some of the others on this list, it is our favorite for pure execution. This looks like something that could be made today and still hold it's weight. Great illustration and complimentary board shape.

https://www.complex.com/sports/2012/10/the-25-best-skateboard-decks-from-the-80s/sims-pharoah

#### The 50 Greatest Skate Logos



BYDON PENDLETON

- AUG 03, 2011
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Written by Don Pendleton

Skateboard graphics have been written about endlessly for the past ten years, but the skateboard logo is often overlooked. So, it's ironic that in 2011, the skateboard logo has become the skateboard graphic in many ways. But the two aren't the same.

The logo is the powerful icon that represents the company's legacy, while graphic styles tend to ebb and flow. Just as skateboarding has evolved and changed over the decades, the skateboard logo has as well, for better and for worse. Picking out the top 50 logos in skateboarding isn't an easy task. Do you separate the logo from the company and base it on visual appeal? I think that's impossible given the nature of skating. Ultimately, these are logos from companies that built the landscape of skateboarding from the ground up. So you have to take into consideration the impact of the brand as well as the logo it represents. If a logo has personal importance to you, then that's all that matters. My list is only one opinion and forged from jumping into skateboarding in 1984.

The logos you grow up with always mean more to you than the ones that came before or after. I'm not even going to suggest that I can be unbiased about something that means so much to me; but I also like to think that as a skater who has worked within the industry as an artist and a skate rat that grew up in the Midwest, I can separate my love of the activity from my personal feelings about the industry and companies. These are important logos for many reasons. Some are more powerful and meaningful than others but what I'm addressing are icons that have come to represent skateboarding in a lot of ways... succinctly and graphically.

Click the thumbnails above to check out the **50 Greatest Skate Logos**.

# 50. Gullwing



Gullwing trucks had a kooky little groove notched into them that would keep you on the coping or curb better than your traditional hanger but even with Matt Hensley on their team, the company kind of slid off into obscurity. I know this is tattooed on at least one person, I suspect more than that. So Gullwing will always live on in our hearts and on our skin.

# 49. Crailtap



Crailtap became a hub of online skateboarding in the era when the internet became more accessible. Kind of like the original Berrics with the Girl family brands. I'm not exaggerating when I say this site has something for everyone and an identity to match. Though I do miss the two-headed goat.

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# 48. Tracker Trucks



Another logo that scores with simplicity and with relevance to the era when it was visible everywhere. Tracker is still around after all these years and that counts for something.

# 47. Solitary Arts



A young company to be sure but the logo has the feel of a classic brand. Designed by Geoff McFetridge, (an amazing artist who isn't new to skateboarding by any stretch of the imagination) this is one of those logos that doesn't even need the name of the company tied to it. It stands on its own and the company has established itself as a substantial brand in skateboarding with fun shapes and unique products.

#### 46. Krooked



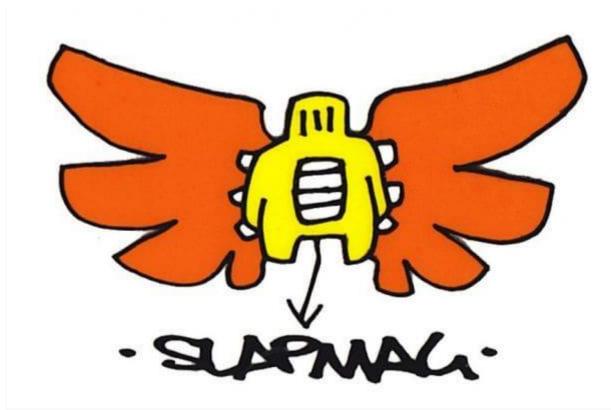
Mark Gonzales did this logo and that's good enough for me. Unique company based around Gonz's art and personality backed by a solid team and original graphics. Krooked is one of the few companies from the past decade that has visually stepped out front of the pack.

## 45. G&S



G&S was one of the early surf companies that successfully crossed over into skateboarding and brought some surf swag with it. A lot of the credit goes to riders like Neil Blender, Billy Ruff, Jim Gray and Chris Miller for making this logo as important as it is in the history of skateboarding.

# 44. Slap Magazine Angel



Slap is online only these days, but it still comes in hot and its importance in skateboarding can't be denied. They may have been Thrasher's little brother but they eventually stood on their own and its forum is still a gathering place for shit talkers and lovers of skateboarding alike.

# 43. Baker Skateboards



About the time Baker came onto the scene, skateboarding needed something to shake things up and the Piss Drunks definitely pulled that off. The reason I like this logo so much is because it's another one that represents the team and the brand so well visually.

# 42. Sims



Sims kind of had one leg in skateboarding and the other in snowboarding back in the early days. But they also had Jeff Phillips and some other heavy hitters, which made them a major player in skateboarding. The brand is historically relevant if nothing else.

# 41. Habitat Skateboards



I was able to witness the birth of this logo but the reason I like it is because it captures what the company is about, kind of an urban landscape with an organic edge to it. Like doing a backside tailslide on a low tree branch. Joe Castrucci has done some of the best graphics in skateboarding over the past 10 years and handles logos just as well.

## 40. Shorty's



Chad Muska led the charge with Shorty's and it ushered in a new generation of street rats who seemed to fear no gap and no rail. At the time, owning a Shorty's t-shirt was almost mandatory. From humble beginnings as a hardware company to world dominance, Shorty's eventually faded into obscurity.

## 39. Zero



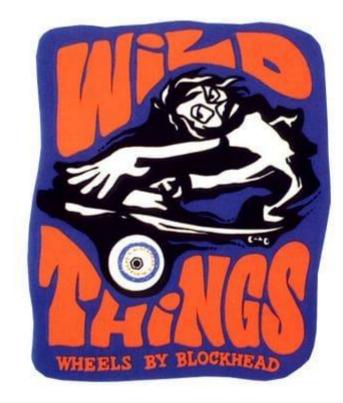
I have to be honest here: This logo didn't break down any walls of design but Zero is an important company so it would be criminal to leave them out. For kids of today, this is the 'Skull & Sword' of their generation and JT has built a formidable and respectable team and brand from the ground up.

# 38. Black Label Elephant



Any time a seasoned pro started a new company you had to respect it. Take out the business dude, replace him with someone who has lived it and there's a certain level of instant credit. John Lucero is still the captain of this ship and it's still sailing strong with the original icon.

## 37. Blockhead Wild Things Wheels



Blockhead was a fun company that always had a solid team and awesome graphics. Ron Cameron was the genius behind most of their graphics and it's easy to see he put this together as well. It's a great use of an original font and a cool character. Cameron knocked this one out of the skatepark.

#### 36. Transworld Skateboarding Aggro Zone



This was one of the regular departments of TWS and probably one of the most popular during the 80s. I'm not sure who designed this but it kind of summed up the attitude of skating during that era.

# 35. Small Room



I love this logo because it was during the era when smaller companies were coming out of the woodwork and making a go at it. It represented what skateboarding can be at its best: less of a business and more of an art project. But the decks were solid and the logos were cool. Clearly they weren't in it for the long haul but they left a solid impression on skateboarding before bowing out.

#### **34. SHUT SKATES**



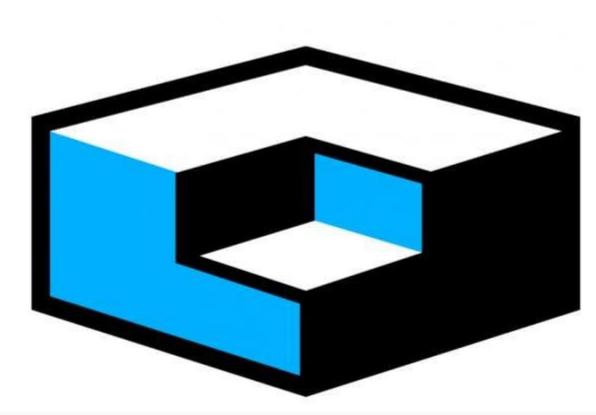
Shut was the first company to make a legitimate run on the East Coast and skaters stood up and took note. The team was historically good and the graphics fit comfortably into the landscape of NYC. Shut proved that you could create a company far away from the surf and sand of southern California and give it some local style.

#### 33. Speed Wheels Slimeballs



Just as Powell Peralta deserves its own chapter in skateboard logos, so does the work Jim Phillips did for Speed Wheels and Santa Cruz. Not surprisingly, this one still has a cult following almost 30 years after it was introduced.

#### 32. Consolidated



Consolidated has been embroiled in its share of controversy, but I'm pretty sure that's how Birdo likes it. Love them or hate them, what they do is still as relevant as ever and they've kept skateboarding fun and interesting over the years while staying true to their ideals.

## 31. Alien Workshop Believe



This logo was important because it added some personality to an industry of often-lifeless logos. Kind of like a mascot, if you will. Years later, Blind would introduce the Reaper that looked suspiciously similar to the OG alien head

# **30. Toy Machine**



What can you say about Ed Templeton that hasn't already been said? This logo has stood the test of time. Anytime you involve the devil in skateboarding it seems to work. I've seen this tattooed on more than a few people. Toy Machine has a deep history of rad art so it should shock no one that they've had a fair share of great logos as well.

## 29. Chocolate



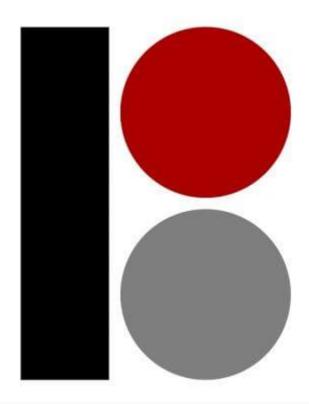
Designed by Evan Hecox, another icon that represented the company and team equally well. Still around almost two decades later, the logo is as relevant and respected today as it was back then.

## 28. H-Street



Another company that ushered in a paradigm shift from the bigger brands with an army of amazing skaters and some cool graphics. Mike Carrol, Brian Lotti, Sheffey, Donger, Hensley, D. Way...this company kicked down doors with important videos and a young team of street rippers. After watching Shackle Me Not, you were left wondering which way was up. So this logo proved to be fitting.

#### 27. Plan B



Plan B arguably put together the most important team in modern skateboarding back in the early 90s. After a bit of a hiatus, it's back and still hosts and impressive team.

## 26. 101



This was a company under Rocco's expansive empire that was headed up by Natas Kaupas. With a team as impressive as the ads and graphics, it didn't take 101 long to forge itself into a historically relevant brand within skateboarding. The logo was simple and powerful.

# 25. Girl Skateboards OG Logo



I know what you're thinking: This is an icon from the women's restroom. And maybe you're right, but taking something from mainstream and redefining it within skateboarding is harder than it sounds. Admit it: when you see this, you're not thinking about women, you're thinking about Eric Koston and Guy Mariano.

# 24. Foundation



Tod Swank was on of those rare guys who both art directed and managed his own company at an early age. And he's always been comfortable with scribbling something out and calling it a day. Fortunately for us, those kinds of logos remind us that skateboarding was about fun way before it was about cash.

#### 23. New Deal



Another company that emerged from the dust of major companies falling. Great team and amazing graphics (thanks to Andy Howell and Ed Templeton). It screams 90s but that's not a bad thing. In its early days, New Deal got it right. They also ushered in the new style (at the time) of graffiti and 'street art.' Way ahead of its time.

# 22. SMA Rocco Division



Another icon of change in the early 90s. Not to be confused with the original Santa Monica Airlines, this was the vehicle that gave Rocco the wings that eventually became the World Industries empire (Blind and Big Brother and 101, etc, etc.) This one says, 'Fuck you' and I really think Rocco meant it at the time. It may look like it was designed by a lunatic but there was clearly a method to Rocco's madness that only time would reveal.

## 21. Vans "Off the Wall"



Vans doesn't make skateboards but they did make the original skateboard shoe and that's good enough for me. One of the first logos I was exposed to when I fell in love with skateboarding and one that still demands respect and has withstood the test of time and trends

# 20. Skull Skates



I don't know how people felt about this logo outside of the Midwest, but where I grew up you made a stencil out of this thing and spray painted it all over town. At the time they were kind of like the older stoner brother company. We all loved skulls back then and Skull Skates was the original DIY mosh pit explosion.

# 19. Anti Hero Eagle



I know the guy who designed this and I've held the original artwork in my hands. I also witnessed it get stolen in London and then subsequently returned. Todd Francis is one hell of an artist and this logo represents the best of skateboarding in my opinion, past and present. There are some places in the U.S. where if you aren't riding an Anti Hero board, you aren't even allowed to skate. That says it all.

## 18. Real



Can't fade Real. Between the team, the iconic early graphics and imagery associated with it, Real came in hard with Tommy G. and Jim Theibaud as the original San Francisco board company. Not only are they still around, they're still doing it right. If you don't have massive amounts of respect for this logo, I'm guessing you haven't been on a skateboard lately.

# 17. Alien Workshop OG Logo



Not all companies survived the aftermath of the early 90s boom but the ones that did eventually became the leaders. Not just important in what it represents in terms of creativity and a shift from southern California surf influence, but for what it eventually became. I know the story behind the creation of this logo (Mike Hill designed it) but I'm sworn to secrecy. Fortunately, it speaks for itself.

## 16. Santa Monica Airlines



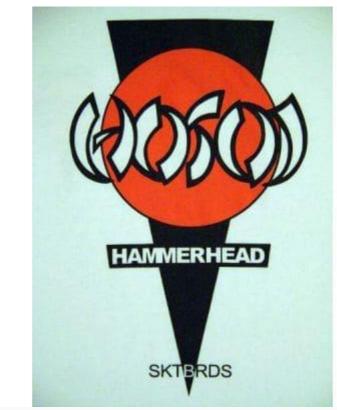
For my generation, Natas Kaupas was the guy who propelled this image into the spotlight and gave it importance. It came to represent a smaller company that broke through to compete with the heavy hitters. One of those logos that just demands respect for the history, the team, the quality and the company it represents.

# **15. Vision Street Wear**



This is one of those logos that spawned a generation of knock-offs because of how synonymous it became to skateboarding in the 80s. There's nothing particularly amazing about this but what it represents is likely more important than how it looks visually. And in terms of 'streetwear,' it was about 25 years ahead of its time.

# 14. Hosoi Hammerhead



Not unlike the Alva logo, this image didn't just represent a company it also represented a skateboarder. The skateboarder's skateboarder, the hardest working dude in the industry during his hey day. The design is simple, iconic and solid. And like the logo, Christian is still going strong.

# 13. Zoriac Shut Up and Skate



Zorlac was a unique company in that it seemed to take the best of Texas and roll it all up into one. This was one of those Texas battle cries I imagine. It's also a legendary contest series that's still going strong to this day. A lot of skaters loved Zorlac for Pushead's art but this little image as a sticker really got around during the 80s.

#### <mark>12. Santa Cruz OJ2</mark> Wheels



Original, simple and powerful. It didn't hurt that the OJ team hosted some of the best skateboarders of that time but the images stand on their own. More proof of genius from the legendary Jim Phillips.



Honestly, I could probably give the top 10 logos in skateboarding to Powell Peralta and call it a day. From a scholarly standpoint, this is everything a logo should be: compact with some movement, immediately identifiable, equally powerful at all sizes, just playful enough to not feel corporate, but fun enough to fit well into the identity they forged as a skateboard company

#### 10. Santa Cruz Dot



This logo succeeds in its simplicity. The text, the shape, the era it represents there's more going on here than the sum of its parts. Designed way before computers became the standard approach to logos, even more proof that original fonts and basic shapes can create a timeless logo that is solid and original.

## 9. Alva



It's tough to separate the history and importance of Alva from the logo. Not that you'd want to, but my point is that the name is as respectable as the logo and the legacy Tony Alva has created. Block out the importance of what the logo represents and it's still a very solid logo that has stood the test of time.

# 8. Blind



This logo represented the changing of the guard in skateboarding in the early 90s. We went from expertly drawn skulls, swords and talons to hand-scribbled letters but it still worked. This logo is important because it stands for the idea that you can put something together without a lot of money and still speak to the masses as long as your team is solid.

# 7. Thrasher Magazine



Like all good skateboard logos, this one represents skateboarding. Period. Thrasher isn't just a magazine anymore, it became a legitimate brand long ago and most of that is thanks to this logo and what it stands for.

# 6. Spitfire



Kind of tough, kind of simple, it's another logo that's successfully recognized outside of skateboarding and with good reason. Kevin Ancell designed the OG Spitfire head.

#### 5. Powell Peralta Rat Bones



Brought to you by the original Craig Stecyk, this was one of the first logos I fell in love with in the early days. Simple lines, great shape and you could spray paint it on a wall in under 40 seconds with a little bit of practice. This icon is brilliant and was one of those designed when skateboarding culture didn't take itself too seriously.

## 4. Dogtown Cross



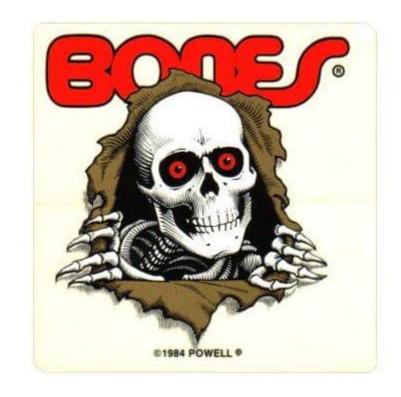
Another icon that draws immediate respect from skateboarders of all ages. Not only a very important company but a logo that captured the best part of skateboarding as it went from backyard pools and headed into the streets. Classic, tough and timeless—just like skateboarding itself. This is just one version of many rad styles of this logo, all equally well done.

#### 3. Santa Cruz Screaming Hand



This logo was designed by Jim Phillips back in the early 80s. It, too, is an image that solidly represents that era of skateboarding. I think people were drawn to it because it was creepy and whimsical at the same time. From the overall shape to the concept and original color scheme, it's brilliant in its simplicity and interesting enough to have been tattooed onto countless thousands of skaters and non-skaters alike.

## 2. Powell Peralta Ripper



VCJ (*Vernon Courtlandt Johnson*) was the genius behind this classic logo and a lot of the early Powell Peralta images. I'm not fond of skulls particularly but this is a seminal skateboard image that doesn't just represent the company it was designed for, it represents skateboarding in the era where it was omnipresent. If you've ever tried to draw this thing on your notebook in study hall, your respect for VCJ shoots through the roof.

#### 1. Independent Iron Cross Logo



You've seen this logo everywhere and there's a reason for that. A great logo should stand the test of time and that's exactly what Independent has done. It's equally at home as a decal, a t-shirt, a tattoo on your shoulder or spray-painted at the local ditch. Regardless of how you feel about the iron cross, this icon has come to represent skateboarding, skateboarders, and quality.

https://www.nhsfunfactory.com/slime-balls-wheels/wheels

