

# NYJAH HUSTON

## 2015 X-GAMES GOLD MEDALIST

+ 2011 // 2013 // 2014

## ESPY AWARD WINNER

**BEST MALE ACTION SPORTS ATHLETE**

2013 // 2014

## STREET LEAGUE CHAMPION

2012 // 2013 // 2014 // 2015



### › PARTNERS

NIKE SB  
MONSTER ENERGY  
ELEMENT  
MOB GRIP  
DIAMOND SUPPLY CO.  
RICTA  
ADAPT TECHNOLOGY  
LIQUIPEL

### › PRESS CONTACT

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# Bio

**Appropriately deemed “The X-Factor” by ESPN Magazine as the sole pro-skater who will change the course of the sport over the next decade, pro streetskating phenom and newest addition to the Nike SB team, NYJAH HUSTON has monopolized the world of action sports. Bringing home six X-Games gold medals and winning the “Best Male Action Sports Athlete” award at the 2013 and 2014 ESPY Awards consecutively, he aptly remains the face of skateboarding worldwide.**



Well on his way to eclipsing the iconic careers of his predecessors, 21-year-old Huston stands supported by no accomplishments but his own. The record youngest X-Games competitor since the age of 11 has collected back-to-back Street League championships (the inaugural crown included), and remains the coveted Trans-world title holder for “Best Street,” “Reader’s Choice,” and “Best Video Part” for “Rise & Shine”—only the second time in the 14-year history of the awards that a skater has won three categories.

A household name to any fan of action sports, Huston has utilized his fan base and social following of nearly 2M to ride the money rails straight into a branded empire, joining the Nike SB team in December 2015. Huston’s success has seen no shortage in sponsorships either, as his list of past and present partners reads more like a teenage boy’s Christmas list than a brand resume (Nike SB, Monster, DC, Element Skateboards, Monster, Asphalt Yacht Club, Diamond Supply Co., Ricta, Mob Grip, Stance, and Adapt Technology).

Born “Nyjah Imani Huston” in Davis, CA in 1994, the now near-six-foot Huston began skateboarding at the ripe age of five, under the scholarship and discipline of his father. While other 5-year-olds were eating pizza and coloring outside the lines, the goofy-footed, middle of four siblings (two older brothers, younger brother and sister) was maintaining a strict vegan diet and learning how to land a kick flip—eating habits he credits for having never broken a bone in his life. By seven years old, he was skating with his first sponsor (Element Skateboards) and distinguishing himself as the “One to Watch.” Accolades poured in while public interest in Huston peaked until 2008, when his father, and then manager, forced an abrupt uproot, moving Nyjah and his family to Puerto Rico. This new island location ultimately proved detrimental to Nyjah’s career as his isolation from the industry caused him to fall off the face of skateboarding Earth. His mother’s attempts to move the family back to California were unsuccessful, which resulted in the family getting separated for two years during a rigorous legal battle. While his father’s motives are unclear to this day, Nyjah’s story ends happily. Huston’s mother won back custody of her children in 2010, and committed to helping Huston reclaim skateboarding notoriety.



With her last paycheck in hand, Kelle purchased flights for Huston to compete in the first-ever Street League championship tournament, leaving less than \$100 to her name. As documented in the critically-acclaimed Tribeca Film Festival entry, "The Motivation," the rest is history. As Huston went on to win the inaugural Street League crown, he brought home the \$150,000 prize, stabilizing his family's finances and reinstating his elite status in the sport. He was also the first and only skater to do a backside 270 noseblunt-slide earning a score of 9.9, setting the record for the highest-scoring trick in Street League history. But the defending Street champ is just getting started. His rivals and role models alike attest to his almost alien skill with which he "ticks off tricks as if controlled by a joystick," and "lands tricks the first time he tries them." Huston is on an untouchable streak with an agenda to make skateboarding bigger than what it is and shed the sport of its disenfranchised stigma.

Upon first glance, Huston appears to be an average, good looking boy from a Southern California beach town—big brown eyes, the swagger of rap star, and a smile and demeanor so disarming one would never guess that the young man in front of them with his pants held up by a red shoestring (a Huston

trademark) is in the ranks of the world's elite. When he's not on a skateboard, Nyjah devotes his free time to his personal charity, Let It Flow, a growing non-profit organization bringing clean water and sanitation to communities in need all over the world. Having not always had access to running water as a child, Huston has made it his personal mission to make a global impact in the fight for clean water, most recently restoring 15 water wells in Ethiopia and constructing the first-ever cement skate park in the country, servicing thousands of men, women and children.

While Huston's road to glory has not been without its twists and turns, he only continues to gain momentum as he approaches 2016. Proving himself resolute in the most high pressure of predicaments time and time again, the prodigy, entrepreneur, philanthropist and born risk-taker shows us what living life, seemingly void of all fear, looks like, as he continues to capitalize on his technically precise and unique ability to deliver on demand on any rail, down any staircase, in any skate park.

**@Nyjah\_Huston**

**Facebook.com/NyjahHustonSkate**





# HOW TO RIP THE RUNWAY

High fashion may be priced for lottery winners and Saudi sultans, but the big secret is that you can get the same look for, oh, a twentieth of the cost. (Hey! Now you can dress sharp *and* afford food and shelter!) Here, pro skate phenom **Nyjah Huston** reinterprets our five favorite fall runway looks at a (way) saner price point

BY PEGGY SIROTA



#### OUR WAY \$454

##### THE HUNT FOR AFFORDABLE STYLE

"This look made us think,  
'Not every man should dress  
like he can handle a wine  
cup and a shotgun.' Then we

vest \$100  
S.L. Bean  
signature  
jacket \$130  
AllSaints  
shirt \$10  
Barry Kline  
socks \$10  
Palladium  
gloves \$10  
S.L. Bean  
sunglasses  
Kenworth Cals  
New York

> **PUBLICATION**  
GQ

> **CIRCULATION**  
1,938,359 Readership

> **IMPRESSIONS**  
5,979,904 Unique  
monthly visitors

> **DATE**  
October 1, 2013



FROM THE RUNWAY

**HERMÈS**

**\$2,850**



\*\*\*  
**OUR WAY**  
**\$239**

**NINETY PERCENT  
OFF—WITHOUT  
WAITING FOR A SALE**

Only, like, a highfalutin fashion photographer would split hairs about the difference between these two looks. With the \$2,600 you'll save, you can buy a sick camera and take his job.

sweater \$72  
Izod  
turtleneck (beneath)  
\$34  
American Apparel  
jeans \$58  
Levi's  
sneakers \$75  
DC



The trick to making affordable retail fit like high fashion is to **size everything down a step.** If you usually look impeccably tailored in a large, you need a medium to get that effect.



\*\*\*

OUR WAY  
**\$641**

**ARE YOU FLIPPING  
OUT YET?**

• Even if you buy your clothes for silly-cheap, you can still take your styling cues from the runway's best moments. So follow the lead of Dsquared2 by cuffing your denim and wearing your topcoat like a blazer.

coat \$199

H&M

sweater \$129

Tommy Hilfiger

tie \$15

The Tie Bar

jeans \$98

Guess

boots \$200

Timberland

bag

Blk Pine Workshop

glasses

Moscot

where to buy it?

go to [gq.com/go](http://gq.com/go)

/fashiondirectories



FROM THE RUNWAY  
**DSQUARED2**  
**\$3,455**



## WHEELS UP!

• EIGHTEEN-YEAR-OLD NYJAH HUSTON was raised vegan by Rastafarian parents who owned a California skate park, and his father pushed him as hard as any Texas QB's booster daddy. He went pro at 11, and the footage of him skateboarding even back then is so depressingly good you want to quit everything.

In the years that followed, Huston cut off his dreads, ate meat, listened to Weezy, won event after event. He should be easy to hate, just another rich child star who is cyborg precise and preternaturally elegant: "I think it's true that I've won more prize money than anyone in skateboarding." Who likes his European cars fast: "I have a Mercedes CLS 63 AMG and an Audi R8; I end up getting into street races." And likes his clothes a certain way: "I'm super picky."

But Huston is actually more worldly, more philosophical, more, well, Rasta-raised Cali-skateboarder, than all that: "My upbringing makes me more experimental. Do what you want, wear what you want. Look, you can pull off whatever you think you can." —MARY H.K. CHOI



### \*\*\* OUR WAY \$422

#### ROCK-STAR FASHION ON A GARAGE-BAND BUDGET

• Saint Laurent designer Hedi Slimane channeled the grunge era for his fall runway look. And now you can channel 1991 prices when you cop your back-in-style toggle coat and ripped jeans.

coat \$130  
Gap  
sweater \$100  
United Colors of  
Benetton  
jeans \$40  
American Eagle  
Outfitters  
boots \$152  
Selected Homme  
on ASOS



FROM THE RUNWAY  
**SAINT LAURENT**  
**\$5,015**



FROM THE RUNWAY  
**LOUIS VUITTON**  
**\$7,660**



OUR WAY  
**\$405**

**FORMALWEAR, EASY  
ON THE "FORMAL"**

• Thank you, Louis Vuitton,  
for continuing to break black  
tie out of its too-staid box.  
Thank you, ASOS, for making  
it cost less than a car.

tuxedo jacket \$161  
and pants \$68  
**ASOS**

shirt \$56  
and bow tie \$20  
**Topman**

shoes \$100  
**Zara**

grooming by johnny  
hernandez for fierro  
agency, produced  
by steve bauerfeind  
for bauerfeind  
productions-west.

where to buy it?  
go to [gq.com/go/fashiondirectories](http://gq.com/go/fashiondirectories)



SHOP↓



SEE PAGE 32 FOR  
INSTRUCTIONS



THE

# Hot List

—| 2015 |—

What's new,  
what's next,  
what's nuts:  
the most badass  
garage band,  
a subversive  
superhero, viral  
dance crazes  
and much,  
much more

Hot Blond girl:  
Léa Seydoux

## > PUBLICATION

Rolling Stone

## > CIRCULATION

1,468,236 Readership

## > IMPRESSIONS

5,873,052 Unique monthly  
visitors

## > DATE

December 3, 2015





Huston at his skate park in San Clemente, California

# Hot Skater Nyjah Huston

How an X Games prodigy escaped a remote farm and went on to rule his sport

**T**HINK OF 21-YEAR-OLD NYJAH Huston as the LeBron James of skateboarding – if LeBron James had entered the NBA draft when he was in third grade. In 2005, at age 10, Huston won the prestigious Tampa Am championship, competing against “dudes who were twice my age and size,” he says. At 11, he was the youngest athlete ever invited to the X Games, and soon he began earning \$300,000 a year in sponsorships and endorsements. But just as he was “starting to get into girls and partying a little,” his father, a devout Rastafarian, moved the Huston family from Davis, California, to a remote farm in the mountains of Puerto Rico. “He wanted to keep his family isolated,” Huston says. “My brothers and me would go down to a

stream to collect water. It was definitely not easy to carry.”

Eventually, Huston’s parents divorced and his mom relocated the family to Orange County, California. Huston returned to the circuit, is now the biggest money-winning skateboarder in history, and holds nine X Games titles. Inspired by his time in Puerto Rico, he also co-founded Let It Flow, a charitable organization that helps bring clean water to impoverished areas worldwide – recently it subsidized construction of its first freshwater sanitation station in Ethiopia. “Life is too easy here,” he says. “I have a massive home, a collection of cars and my own private skate park. It’s cool to be able to help people.” While in Ethiopia, Huston and fellow skate legend Tony Hawk decided to address another pressing social issue. “They had the worst pavement to ride on and the shittiest ramps you could imagine,” Huston says. “So we built them a proper skate ramp.”

ERIC HENDRIKX

HOT MEDICINE SHOW THERANOS // HOT BEIRDO DAVID LETTERMAN //

# PAPER

Stylist: Jenny Ricker @jennyricker  
Groomer: David Stanwell @davestanwell  
at Solo Artists @soloartists

Sweatshirt, pants and shoes  
**Nike** @nike  
Hat **Monster**  
@monsterenergy

> **PUBLICATION**  
PAPER MAGAZINE

> **CIRCULATION**  
125,673 Readership

> **IMPRESSIONS**  
1,101,670 Unique  
monthly visitors

> **DATE**  
April 16, 2016

GUEST EDITOR NYJAH HUSTON

## PASSION PROJECT

@nyjah

The pro-skater tells us about his greatest passion off the ramp, Let It Flow, a nonprofit whose mission is to repair wells and bring clean water to underserved communities around the world.



Before turning 21, Nyjah Huston had already changed the course of skateboarding — at 11, he became the youngest skater to ever compete in The X Games and has since racked up back-to-back Street League championships, won numerous ESPYs, and appeared as a fashion icon in *GQ* and *Rolling Stone*. But it's his Let It Flow charity, which seeks to repair wells and supply clean water wherever it's needed in the world (they've recently gone to countries like the Philippines, Haiti, Kenya, India and Chad), that may be his most enduring accomplishment.

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My mom came up with the idea for Let It Flow from our experience living in Puerto Rico. For a couple of years, we lived on this farm that was 30 minutes from the city. We were pretty far away from everything, and the water would go out every now and again. When the water was out, my brother and I would go down with these big jugs for carrying water. What people don't realize is that water's really heavy. We lived near this little stream that was probably about 300 yards away from the house, and having to carry that little amount is not easy. It's gnarly to think people all over the world have to do that every day, and carry it for miles and miles. It really makes you appreciate how easy we have it on the daily and makes you want to reach out and help make other people's lives easier.

Let It Flow has a repair team that travels out to the locations; if it were just me, I'm sure I couldn't hack it. We've built so many wells in the past few years, but the majority of the project is repairing the wells. We've done over 50 repairs now and each one provides clean water for a couple thousand people. Eighty percent of clean water wells throughout the world were not working, and it's because of simple stuff breaking and the people not having the right parts or tools to fix it.



On our first actual trip, we went out to Ethiopia. I was there, Tony Hawk came out, my mom did too, other friends came along as well. We were able to see firsthand the process of fixing the wells and we fixed 15 of them. You have to go down and basically lift up the whole well to figure out which pipe broke, so you can fix it and put it back together. The first one was a four-hour process. But seeing the clean water come out and seeing the houses nearby have their first clean water in a long time was really cool. It made me appreciate everything we've done and made me so much more stoked on our future.

I'd love to go back to Ethiopia. We brought California Skateparks to build their first ramp out there. We took a bunch of skateboards

as well, and the kids were so stoked. I'm sure they're still rippin' it right now.

I want to be a great role model for all the kids out there who are gonna be in my position in 10 years. I want them to do things like Let It Flow that will be great for the world. I still look up to all the guys I skate against in competitions; they're awesome inspirations, and I still want to be shredding in 10 years. Tony Hawk has always done so much charity work and I think that's awesome. I'm so grateful that I'm starting to do it at a young age and that my mom has led me in the right direction. She's always taught me to be mindful about caring for other people out there in the world.

*As told to Ian Cohen @iancohen*





























# Forbes<sup>®</sup>

Nyjah Huston: Raising Skateboarding's Bar



## > PUBLICATION

Forbes.com

## > IMPRESSIONS

60,229,000 Unique  
monthly visitors

## > DATE

April 16, 2016

When you are a 21-year-old professional skateboarder life comes with a few obstacles – being labeled as a nuisance or disruptive often comes with the skateboarding territory.

However, for **Nyjah Huston**, one of the biggest names in the sport, his personal challenges pale in comparison to his life just a decade ago.

Growing up with a devout Rastafarian father, Adeyemi Huston, who was his former manager, Huston recalls living in a strict and isolated environment. In 2008, Huston's mother, Kelle Huston, his current manager, found that her marriage was crumbling, and she did not agree with how her children were being raised.

Eventually, she packed up and fled with her children in tow – expect Huston was left behind. In a [video produced by ESPN](#), Kelle described the chilling ordeal and how in 2010 a judge ultimately granted her sole legal custody of Huston and his siblings.

As a skateboarding prodigy, who at 11-years-old was the youngest participant in X Games history, Huston has evolved into an accomplished professional who is credited for earning more prize money than any other skater in history. His combined Street League Skateboarding and X Games earnings are well over \$2 million.

Not to mention his endorsement deal with [Nike](#) NKE -0.02% SB signed in 2015, pairing the best contest skater with the \$15.9 billion athletic apparel maker.

I caught up with **Huston** shortly after his skateboard street gold medal performance at X Games Oslo. He discussed his clean water charity, *Let it Flow*, inspired by his experience of living without running water, riding for Nike SB, and navigating the business of skateboarding. The following conversation has been edited for length and clarity.



**Alana Glass: Tell me about Let it Flow. What is going on right now with your work?**

*Continued from page 1*

Nyjah Huston: Let it Flow is a water charity that my mom and I started back in 2011. We focus mostly on building and the majority of the time, repairing wells because of the insane amount of the number of wells out there in the world just need to be repaired by simple parts. People around the areas don't have the means or tools to fix. So, we have done over 50 projects so far all around the world. Every time I hear that we're doing new projects, I'm always so stoked to hear that more people out there in the world are getting easy access to clean water.

**Glass: In addition to what you are doing socially, on the commercial side, you have corporate sponsors behind you. One of your newest sponsors is Nike SB. Tell me about your collaboration with Nike SB.**

Huston: Nike is the prime shoe sponsor in sports in general but definitely in skateboarding. I couldn't think of a better company I'd rather ride for. I've always thought they were such an amazing team. They've always had the best gears on their team; their product is insanely good. I couldn't be more stoked to start this relationship with them.

**Glass: Are there any discussions of a signature shoe?**

Huston: There will definitely be a signature shoe in the works. It will take some time; the whole process of designing a shoe and production side of things, all that takes forever with a big company. I will have the signature shoe and I can't wait for it.

**Glass: You are not just Nyjah the athlete but also the businessman. What are some lessons that you've learned about the business of skateboarding, especially as it relates to working with your sponsors or building your brand?**

Huston: I have learned to spend money wisely. Obviously, have good people behind you looking out for you. I have always been so fortunate on with my mom basically being my manager and helping me out with all the business side of things and [making] the right choices for my future. Be as smart as possible with your money but at the same time, enjoy it.

**Glass: What's next for you? What are goals that you hope to accomplish?**

*Continued from page 2*

Huston: As I get older in my skateboarding career, I would like to get more into the business side of things – starting my own company or investing. As far as the next years go, I want to stay focused on skateboarding and try to keep my body as healthy. That is the thing with skateboarding; it is not easy to keep the body how you want it to. My knees are already so sore from skating over the years. I've been jumping down big stair steps and whatnot since I've been like seven, eight years old. That all catches up to you. So, I try to do a ton of physical therapy and keep my body in good condition. Ten years from now, I would love to still be skating on a professional level and at the top of my game.

**Glass: What do you hope for the future of skateboarding? If there's anyone who can perhaps guide the future of the sport, you are someone who is in a position to do that.**

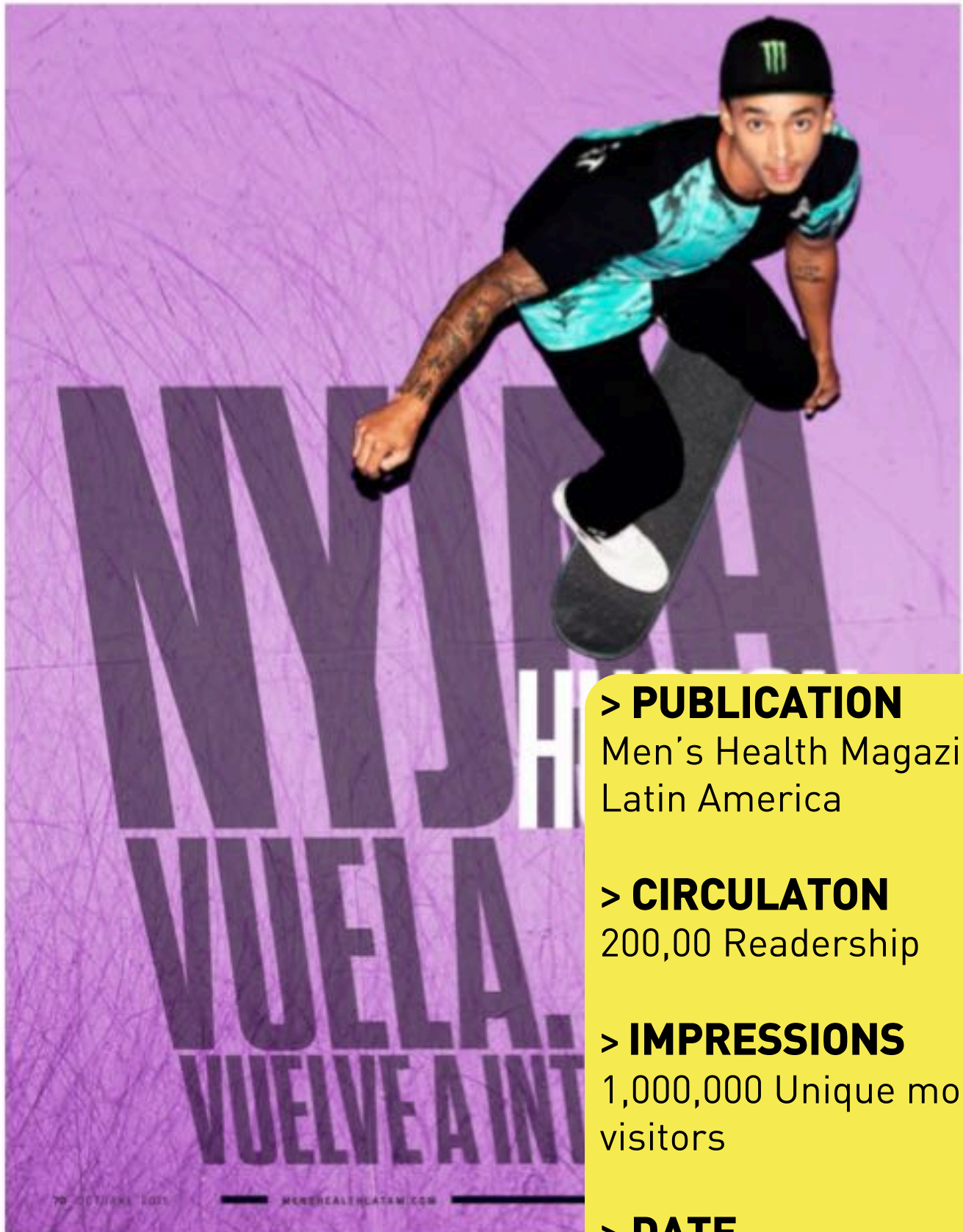
Huston: For the future of skateboarding, I want to see it keep growing as much as possible like it has been in the past five, ten years. From when I first started skating, I'd say I have seen skateboarding as a sport grow with all the contests and street league. Now, everyone is working on getting [skateboarding] in the Olympics for 2020, which I hope happens. I want to see more kids out there getting good at skating, having fun with skating. It's growing so much and people realize you can make a living off of skateboarding.

*For more information about Nyjah Huston and his charity – Let it Flow – [click here](#).*





# Men's Health



## > PUBLICATION

Men's Health Magazine  
Latin America

## > CIRCULATION

200,00 Readership

## > IMPRESSIONS

1,000,000 Unique monthly  
visitors

## > DATE

October 2015

...  
Texto: Gabriel Gutiérrez  
...  
Fotografías: Frankie Battista  
...  
Asistente de foto: Alan Belling  
...  
Producción Creativa: Ben Bass  
...  
Coordinación de moda: Kyle E. Blackman  
...  
Grooming: Daniela Grassi  
...  
Producción: Ricardo Montoya

QUIZÁ SE VE SENCILLO, PERO ES UN DEPORTE MUY COMPLICADO. SIN EMBARGO, **NYJAH** NO SOLO LO HA DOMINADO, SINO QUE HACE MAGIA SOBRE SU PATINETA. "SI LO PRACTICAS DESDE PEQUEÑO, SERÁ ALGO NATURAL PARA TI", ASEGURA. ASÍ LO LOGRO EL.

**NYJAH HUSTON PARECE DEMASIADO JOVEN** como para siquiera tener una licencia de manejo. Sin embargo, a sus 21 años, parece que toda su vida la ha pasado sobre ruedas. Es el primero que viene a la mente, cuando se le va arriba de su skateboard. Y, aunque parece que nació con la patineta bajo los pies, practica todos los días. Es por eso que no debe extrañar que sea una de las figuras más importantes y más prometedoras del skateboarding profesional. Ha ganado múltiples medallas de oro en los X Games y ha sido campeón en varias ocasiones de la Street League Skateboarding, la liga más importante del mundo para profesionales de la patineta.

Nos encontramos en su casa en California, en donde cuenta con las instalaciones ideales para entrenar. Y, mientras el staff de Men's Health en español se prepara para la sesión de fotos, él se encampera sobre la patineta y, de pronto, parece volar... Sin embargo, estamos ante alguien que tiene los pies muy bien plantados en el suelo. Aunque ha sido señalado como uno de los skateboarders que más dinero han hecho en la historia de la disciplina —gracias a sus triunfos y a patrocinios de marcas como DC Shoes, Monster Energy, etc.—, Nyjah no puede fallar a sus responsabilidades: además de entrenar todos los días, de abre espacios para los medios y ceder compromisos con los patrocinadores, debe ir a la Universidad y hacer tareas. Y, quizá, aquí radique la primera diferencia entre los simples ídolos del skateboarding y los verdaderos campeones: estos últimos se lo toman todo muy en serio...

Nyjah asegura que es mejor comenzar desde niño: "Empecé a patinar cuando tenía cinco años, desde ese momento comencé a pensar que quería estar sobre la patineta toda mi vida", dice Nyjah. "Además, vivía de la escuela y salía a patinar durante tres horas, solo por el gusto de hacerlo".

No todos los deportistas tienen esa ventaja. Al empezar tan pequeño, patinaba porque le divertía, no tenía un adulto diciéndole cómo o cuánto debía entrenar. "El apoyo de mi padre fue esencial. Siempre me entendió porque en su adolescencia él fue skater y mis abuelos nunca lo aceptaron. En mi caso, él y mi madre siempre han sido incondicionales".





**"MI PADRE FUE  
'SKATER' DURANTE SU  
ADOLESCENCIA; POR ESA  
RAZÓN SIEMPRE ME HA  
DADO SU APOYO  
INCONDICIONAL".**



EN TÉRMINOS SIMPLISTAS, EL SKATEBOARDING SE REFIERE A DESLIZARSE PARADO SOBRE UNA PATINETA Y REALIZAR TRUCOS CON ELLA, COMO SALTOS O PIRUETAS SIN PERDER LA VERTICAL. EN EL MUNDO REAL SE TRATA DE UN DEPORTE QUE TE EXIGE AGILIDAD, DESTREZA, FUERZA EN EL TORSO, DOMINIO DE TU CUERPO Y HORAS, DÍAS, MESES Y AÑOS DE PRÁCTICA DIARIA PARA DOMINAR ESA PEQUEÑA TABLA. TE CAERÁS INNUMERABLES VECES; QUIZA TE LESIONES MUCHAS MÁS, PERO TU VOLUNTAD DEBERÁ SER FERREA PARA VENCER EL MIEDO Y HACER DE ESA TABLA UNA EXTENSION DE TU CUERPO Y ASÍ DESAFIAR LA GRAVEDAD.

ESTE DEPORTE SURTIÓ EN LOS SESENTA en California, justo cuando el surfing era la sensación de los jóvenes y se buscaba una manera de surfear pero en el pavimento. Los primeros patinetas tenían diseños primitivos que consistían en un pedazo de madera empotrado a ruedas de patines. Fue a mediados de los setenta cuando se hicieron verdaderos diseños para patinetas con tecnología desarrollada para este fin, era una manera de satisfacer las necesidades de los nuevos adeptos a este deporte. Los primeros materiales empleados en su fabricación eran hierro suave de poca resistencia, arcilla y caucho. Luego, se usaron materiales como fibra de vidrio, plástico de alta resistencia y madera. En la década siguiente, ya era un deporte muy popular en muchos países. Los jóvenes se reunían en espacios públicos para practicar. Debido a la demanda de los "patinetos", se crearon parques especiales con subidas, bajadas, rampas y barriles.

En 2002 la American Sports Data publicó estadísticas sobre este deporte y determinó que había unos 13.5 millones de skaters en mundo; y 84 por ciento de ellos eran menores de 18 años (74 por ciento hombres; el resto, mujeres). En la última década este deporte, tan solo en Estados Unidos, ha crecido 128 por ciento y actualmente hay 11 millones de patinadores en ese país.

"Empecé a patinar porque me encantaba el reto que significaba viajar sobre la tabla y aprender un truco nuevo cada día", dice Nyañ mientras se prepara para posar ante la lente de nuestro fotógrafo. "No fue sino hasta que tenía 13 años cuando me di cuenta que el skateboarding iba a ser mi futuro y podría ser mi profesión", explica mientras se ata los DC Shoes, la marca que lo patrocina desde hace unos años.

#### EL NUMERO UNO

Contrariamente a como ha sucedido con otros jóvenes que triunfan a temprana edad, pierden el piso y se vuelven inaccesibles, Nyañ combina su carrera con la Universidad, no falta a clases ni a sus compromisos de trabajo. Ha ganado múltiples premios sobre su patineta, sin perder su esencia. Se desenvuelve bien frente a las cámaras de video o foto y está dispuesto a hacer una toma más, de la misma manera a como intenta una y otra vez el mismo truco sobre ruedas.

"En verdad no sé cuántos premios he ganado en este deporte... [Ríe] Ha habido un montón, pero mi mayor logro fue triunfar en el concurso de aficionados 'Tampa AM' cuando tenía 10 años de edad. Este constituye un trampolín para la carrera de los skaters", dice.



Algo que también le ha permitido a Nyjah triunfar en el skateboarding es que se ha mantenido alejado de las lesiones. "Afortunadamente no he sufrido ninguna grave que me haga pensar en el retiro. He sido muy afortunado al no quebrarme ningún hueso importante", dice. La clave es siempre estar en buena forma. "Trato de mantener mi cuerpo sano y me alimento bien. Tengo un gimnasio en mi casa y entreno todos los días. También tengo una bicicleta fija para desarrollar cardío, y fortalecen la parte superior del cuerpo cuando patino una más las piernas, pero con la fuerza del tronco mantienes el equilibrio y puedes realizar saltos y vueltas, la fuerza del tronco te ayuda a caer de la manera correcta", dice.

Adicional al trabajo de gimnasio, Huston entrena con la patineta cerca de dos horas al día. "Podría parecer poco, pero el skateboarding es duro para el cuerpo. Cuando practicas un truco nuevo, puedes caer muchas veces. Por ello, debes aprender a caer y tener músculos resistentes para poder patinar todos los días", dice. Y si, Nyjah vuelve, cae, vuelve a intentarlo. Y ésa es posiblemente una más de las características que lo vuelven un verdadero campeón.

Con el éxito sobre ruedas, han llegado la fama y los patrocinios. ¿Cuál ha sido tu experiencia con DC Shoes? "Significa mucho para mí. Siempre me ha gustado esa empresa y me han brindado apoyo incondicional. Es un honor formar parte de su equipo de deportistas y es 'super cool' cuando vamos de viaje juntos; siempre tenemos un buen tiempo para divertirnos". **MAX**

**"COMENCÉ A PATINAR A LOS CINCO AÑOS; ME DIVERTÍA MUCHO. DESDE ESE MOMENTO SUPE QUE ME GUSTARÍA HACERLO TODA LA VIDA".**



## ÁGIL SOBRE RUEDAS

EL SKATEBOARDING ES UN DEPORTE COMPLETO QUE APORTA BENEFICIOS INTEGRALES AL ORGANISMO.

**1 Flexibilidad:** se debe desarrollar flexibilidad en músculos y articulaciones para realizar este deporte. Mientras más tenso estés, más difícil será ejecutarlo.

**2 Resistencia:** la mayoría de los skaters deben desarrollar resistencia cardiovascular para soportar las horas diarias de entrenamiento.

**3 Precisión:** para realizar un truco, muchos movimientos deben alinearse perfectamente. Y, cuando fallas, lo intentas de nuevo. Cada vez que realizas ajustes, colocas los pies de manera diferente en la tabla, cambias el impulso, ajustas la velocidad y aterrizas de manera diferente. Por eso, hasta que los movimientos y tiempos no sean exactos, no saldrá bien el truco.

**4 Coordinación:** el skateboarding precisa mucha coordinación entre ojos, piernas, pies y brazos. Cuanto más se patea, mayor coordinación habrá y además serás más apto para hacer todo tipo de actividades en tu vida diaria.

**5 Eliminas calorías:** el deportista promedio elimina entre 150-500 calorías por hora.

**6 Aprendes a caer:** esto funciona como una manera de prevenir lesiones cuando tropiezas. Al patinar, debes aprender cómo evitar caer y, para cuando la caída sea inminente, también debes saber caer correctamente.





**EXKLUSIV**

GROSSER ABENTEUER-GUIDE **KALIFORNIEN**

**MEN'S FITNESS**

**MEN'S FITNESS**

BIG PICS

## der überflieger

■ Was haben (fast) alle Skateboarding-Wettbewerbe gemeinsam? Genau, Nyjah Huston gewinnt sie. Der 20-Jährige ist ein Phänomen und gilt derzeit als der beste Skateboarder der Welt. Wunderkind, Skate-Sensation, Überflieger. Der Kalifornier hat sie alle schon gehört, die Hymnen, die angestimmt werden, wenn sein Name fällt. Geht das doch seit fast zehn Jahren so. Solange ist Nyjah schon Skateboard-Profi. Seit seinem X Games-Debüt mit elf Jahren (!) hat er bereits zehn Medaillen bei der größten Extremsport-Meisterschaft der Welt gewonnen und mehr Preisgeld verdient als jemals ein Skater zuvor (knapp zwei Millionen Euro). Sein bester Trick: „Das war wohl der

„Backside 360 Kickflip“ League Skateboarding bekannt“, sagt Nyjah. Das Brett im Sprung um die Längsachse und in die Luft. Ein spektakulärer, fast unmöglicher Trick. Hat er es auch schon geschafft? „Ja“, sagt Nyjah. „Zum Glück habe ich noch viele Tricks zu entdecken. Ich möchte noch mehr Tricks lernen.“ Fragt man ihn, was er als nächstes machen möchte, ist die Antwort denkbar

### > PUBLICATION

Men's Fitness Magazine  
Germany

### > CIRCULATION

627,352 Readership

### > IMPRESSIONS

2,509,408 Unique monthly  
visitors

### > DATE

November 2015

**MEN'S FITNESS**  
**Momente**



Photo: Mike K. / Getty Images



# Interview

*15 Faces of 2015*

Nyjah Huston

THE CHAMPION  
SKATEBOARDER



> **PUBLICATION**

InterviewMagazine.com

> **IMPRESSIONS**

1,033,975 Unique  
monthly visitors

> **DATE**

January 5, 2015





ABOVE: NYJAH HUSTON IN LOS ANGELES, DECEMBER 2014. PHOTOGRAPHY: [BRIAN HIGBEE](#). STYLING: [SEAN KNIGHT](#). GROOMING: DAVE STANWELL/SOLO ARTISTS.

"People were definitely surprised," Nyjah Huston remembers of his skateboarding start as a six-year-old in Davis, California. "It was cool, but I just had to be careful not to get run over out there as a little kid."

Instantly recognizable by his Rastafarian T-shirts, long dreadlocks (he cut them off in 2011), and lithe frame, Huston first gained notoriety as a skateboarding wunderkind, who at age 11 became the youngest competitor in X Games history. Four years later, Huston won the first-ever Street League Skateboarding competition, beating out riders twice his age for the inaugural title and \$150,000 prize.

Now 20, Huston is a skateboarding veteran, who has made the leap from kid star to top adult competitor look as seamless as his 360 kick flips. For proof, look no further than this past year in which he clinched the 2014 X Games Championship, won every competition he entered, and earned more prize money than any other skateboarder *ever*. Though he may not be a household name outside of skating circles just yet, Huston—who bears a large script tattoo on his forearm that reads "ambition"—is poised to land a pop culture crossover soon.

AGE: 20

HOMETOWN: Davis, California

CURRENT LOCATION: San Juan Capistrano, California

SEEING STARS: I first started skating pro contests when I was 11 years old. That's when I skated my first X Games. I'd say the experience was a mixture of being star struck and being intimidated because those guys weren't just twice as old as me, they were also twice as big as me.

ROLE MODELS: I was such a little skate nerd. I watched every single skate video and read every skate magazine. I looked up to Paul Rodriguez and Chris Cole a lot. I skate with them now and it's still a trip to be out there and to actually be friends with them.



**COPING WITH ATTENTION:** I was so young that I didn't really realize the position that I was in. At the time, I didn't really think, "Oh man, I'm already skating pro contests, so I have a good chance of making a living off skateboarding." It was more just being stoked about the situation I was in. All I wanted to do at the time was keep skating because I loved it so much. Literally, I didn't think about the money or the fame part of it at all. I'm really into the progression side of the sport, going down to my local skatepark and working on a trick for two hours and then finally landing it. That feeling will never get old.

**NERVES:** I've been skating contests for over 10 years now and I still get nervous out there. I don't really see how you can't when you're on live TV, skating for a bunch of money, and there are a ton of people watching you. I take contests pretty seriously in general. I'm a competitive person no matter what it is, so I'm always trying to do my best.

**PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT:** I definitely try to skate every day as long as I'm not too sore or hurt, but at the same time, skateboarding isn't really something you can practice all day because it takes a big toll on your body.

**WIPE OUTS:** I actually haven't broken anything. I've taken some insane falls where I've thought I'm going to break something or die, but somehow I've gotten lucky with that.

**CRITICS:** People always say "Do you fall? Do you fall? You look like a robot." I mean, yeah, of course I fall. I'd say on the daily, I probably fall more than I land tricks because I'm always trying to work on more stuff. I'm always trying to challenge myself by trying new stuff. That's how I keep it fun.

**SKATER OF THE YEAR:** For the past couple years that I've been up for Thrasher Magazine's "Skater of the Year," I've been super stoked for the guys who have ended up getting it. I think I personally haven't really dedicated one year to really trying to get it, but I think I'm planning on doing that soon. I'm sure I'll make it happen one of these years.

**ADVICE:** I would say the main thing a good skater needs is to try to be as different as possible. There are so many skaters out there and it's good to have your own style and try to do different tricks that other people aren't doing. At the same time, just work hard and try to push the progression.

**SKATING'S MAINSTREAM APPEAL:** There are a lot of people out there who want skating to stick to the "core" side and stick to where it came from and all that. Me personally? I'm always down for whatever is going to help skateboarding grow. When Street League started up a few years ago, there were so many people who were hating on it. When it comes down to it, there are people coming out to the contests or watching it who have never seen skateboarding before. It might be parents who are watching it and then might want to sign their kid up for it. I think it's helping a new generation of kids to get it into skateboarding.



WHAT'S NEXT: I recently got my own private skate park about 10 minutes from my house. I'm actually filming a video there right now for something called "The World of X Games," which Monster Energy is putting out. I've also been working on a lot of stuff for my signature clothing line with Asphalt, my clothing sponsor. Also, look out for me in the next contest season. Hopefully 2015 will go like this year did. I'm just going to keep shredding.



## The Impossible Rise of Nyjah Huston



### > **PUBLICATION**

Rolling Stone Online

### > **IMPRESSIONS**

11,418,000 Unique  
monthly visitors

### > **DATE**

October 1, 2015

Born into a strict Rastafarian family and raised in isolation, Huston's skating journey continues at the Super Crown World Championship

Nyjah Huston is arguably the most consistent and dominant competitive street skater in the world – and he's been that way almost since birth.

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## SIDEBAR



Luan Oliveira: Skate or Die »

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Growing up in a Rastafarian family, Huston took up skateboarding with his brothers at age four. It was an activity that his father – who skated as a teen – chose for him, and one he quickly excelled at. In 2004, the Huston family purchased a skate park in their hometown of Davis, California, where Nyjah spent every single day mimicking his older

brothers and becoming prolific in his newfound passion. By age seven, Huston was recognizable by his long dreadlocks and advanced abilities on his skateboard. At age ten, Huston won first place at the Tampa Am, competing against guys twice his age and size. By age 11, he was skating X Games, sponsored by Element Skateboards and supporting his family.

“I was just trying not to get run over,” he laughs.

But in 2006, his life took a dramatic turn when his father abruptly moved the family to Puerto Rico, where they lived on a farm in the mountains – a 26-acre property purchased with Nyjah’s earnings. **The Huston family lived under strict conditions**, being home-schooled by their mother, adhering to a stringent vegan diet and spending their days working on the farm. Over the next few years, the Hustons lived off the grid, and Nyjah became increasingly disconnected from his sponsors and skate events – at risk of being dropped for his lack of appearances and participation.



The family lived in seclusion until Nyjah's mother, Kelle, decided to make a change. While her husband and Nyjah went to Barcelona for a contest, Kelle packed up and moved with her other four children back to California.

Huston remained with his father in Puerto Rico for nearly two years until 2010, when a judge ordered Nyjah to be placed in his mother's custody. The newly freed family eventually took up residence in Orange County, a move that breathed life back into Nyjah's career. But his struggle wasn't over.

Nyjah's earnings had been misappropriated by his father, leaving the family flat broke.

In August 2010, Nyjah was invited to compete in the first ever Street League skate competition in Glendale, Arizona. His mother knew she needed to get Nyjah onto the circuit, but didn't have enough money to fund the trip. On a prayer, she drove to Arizona anyway. And her prayer was answered, when Street League founder Rob Dyrdek offered to foot the bill for their hotel during the competition, well aware that Nyjah had the talent and drive to win – and he did. Nyjah took first place and won \$150,000. "That was *the* most important and best feeling I've ever had in a contest. It saved our lives," Huston says.

With a new lease on life and a revived career, Huston thrived. By 2013, he had won more prize money than any skater in history. In 2014, Huston swept the year, taking first place at Tampa Pro, X Games and all four Street League competitions, including the Super Crown championship. Now, he's back to defend his title at the 2015 Super Crown, set for October 4 in Chicago.



Just before leaving for the Windy City, Nyjah invited *Rolling Stone* to his San Juan Capistrano home to talk about this year's contest, growing up in isolation and fending off his toughest competition in years.

### **How do you feel going into the Super Crown this weekend?**

I feel really good about it. It's going to be gnarly. It's a sick contest because it's only the top eight dudes from the year. There are no qualifiers, which is definitely a plus. Qualifying in Street League is not easy at all. And the championship is cool because you get to go out there on the course and skate with only a few guys. That allows you to really concentrate on the gnarliest tricks that you are going to need for the finals.

I've been going over renderings of the course design and working on some tricks I might want to try on it. From what I can tell by the design and from past Super Crown contests, there are bigger obstacles out there. The main stair set and handrail are usually bigger at Super Crown. I like skating big stuff and I think it only makes it more exciting for the crowd and everyone watching on television. Bigger stairs are also good because the competitors don't have to do the gnarliest tricks to be able to score high points. If it were up to me, there would always be a 12- or 13-stair set and rail so that people could do tricks, like kickflip back lip or kickflip back smith, instead of having to do a switch flip back lip.



**You've been skating in Street League since it began in 2010. How has the format and competition evolved over the years?**

I'm honestly not the biggest fan of the new format this year. They changed it a lot. They shortened and simplified the entire contest, making it more like a best trick contest, rather than a competition based on consistency. It's weird, because Street League started out where every single trick you did counted toward your score. So every time you fell, it would hurt your score. That caused all the riders to do easier tricks and be more consistent to win. But everyone wanted to see gnarlier stuff. The third and fourth years of the contest were perfect. You could take risks and fall once or twice, and still had the opportunity get yourself back up in the rankings. I feel like they're still looking for that perfect balance.

**Last year, you predicted that Luan Oliveira was going to be your greatest competition this year. And you were right. Do you feel like it's down to you or him in the Super Crown Championship?**

Yeah, I honestly can't believe that Luan didn't win a contest sooner than he did. I don't think his winning two contests this year is a surprise to anyone at all, because I've seen so many opportunities for him to win in the past; where he was within one trick from winning. But it's like that for a lot of guys. Shane O'Neill won a contest the first year of Street League, and hasn't won since – and that dude is one of the best skaters ever. The bottom line is, it's hard to win in Street League. You have to land a lot of tricks in the moment, with tons of pressure from the crowd and the stress of performing for live television. There's also a huge purse on the line. It's not easy to land tricks under those circumstances, and I feel like that's something that Luan has learned to deal with really well.



I would say with me winning one contest this year and Luan winning two, it's definitely a head-to-head thing. It's funny because I think all the kids out there think that we are rivals. But the reality is that we are all just bros having fun shredding with each other. Obviously each of us wants to win and we are going to try our best to do that. But if we see someone doing well, we're going to be stoked for him.

**You grew up in a family of skateboarders and had your own skate park?**

Yeah, I started skating when I was about four years old. My dad got me into it, along with my older brothers. We all shredded together every day and had an awesome time. I was the youngest and always trying to get up to their level. My oldest brother was two years older than me, and a really awesome skater. We skated the same contests and all that. Then, when I was around eight, my family opened our own skate park. When kids ask me how I got to be so good and such a young age, that's my main answer. Any kid who loves skating as much as I did and has a perfect indoor skate park to skate every day, I'm pretty sure they're going to get pretty good at it, as long as they have the drive. I skated there every day until I was 11.



### **Is that when your family moved to Puerto Rico?**

Yeah, and to this day, I still don't really understand why my dad moved us all there. It felt super random. I would say my dad wanted to keep his kids isolated from social influences like going to school and making friends. We had just started to get into girls and partying a little. But kids have to grow up someday. We actually lived in a normal neighborhood for the first year and then my dad bought this farm up in the mountains.

He built me a few things to skate, thank God. He built a little three-foot mini ramp inside one of the farmhouses – it was pretty sick. Then he built this covered deck thing with a gap and a few little ledges. I had some stuff to skate there, but it was a completely different lifestyle than we had been used to in Davis.

### **What was your life like in the mountains?**

We didn't have friends. It was just our family. We were probably 30 minutes from the nearest town, and everything was very simple. We were way up in the mountains and sometimes we had no electricity or water. My brothers and I would go down to a stream to collect water for our house. We lived like that for a few years, and then my parents separated and divorced. I eventually moved back to California with my mom, my little brother and sister and one of my older brothers. Since then, I haven't really had much contact with my dad, but I'm still very thankful for everything he did for me. He was very strict, but that helped me stay disciplined and get to where I'm at today.



**Did living in Puerto Rico inspire you to start [Let It Flow](#), which provides clean water solutions for communities around the world?**

My mom and I started Let It Flow a few years ago. We came up with the idea together, after visiting places where people don't have access to clean water. We've completed a lot of projects where we've built and repaired broken water wells. A huge percentage of wells in poor countries are just broken and need to be repaired. When they build the wells, they never give the people the parts, tools or training to repair them. So if something goes wrong, the wells get abandoned. And those wells provide clean water for thousands of people. It's a really cool thing and a good feeling to be able to help so many people. Everyone deserves to have clean water.

**Where is the majority of your work taking place?**

Mostly in Africa. At the end of last year, we did our first big trip to Ethiopia. Tony Hawk and some of my Asphalt Yacht Club teammates came out. We all helped repair broken wells. It was awesome to see water coming out of those wells and the joy it brought to the village or community. It really makes you appreciate life so much more.

We also did some skating around the city. Ethiopia is beautiful. The people are so positive. Our guide in the city was also caretaker of about 40 orphans. All those kids love skateboarding, but they don't have the means or a decent park. They had the shittiest ramps you could imagine and the worst pavement to ride on. So we got [California Skateparks](#) out there and we built them a proper concrete skate ramp. All those kids were so stoked and psyched. It's so cool to see how happy you can make a bunch of kids with something so simple as a skateboard and some smooth concrete to ride on.





SEPTEMBER 2013

not for girls.

guys

METAL HEALTH  
LARS ULRICH:  
FUELED  
BY VEGGIES

NYJAH HUSTON  
SKATE SAVIOR

BREAKING BAD'S

AARON  
PAUL  
IS REALLY COOKIN'

DIANNA  
AGRON  
KNOCKS  
US OUT



FRANZ FERDINAND  
ROBERT RODRIGUEZ  
VINCENT PIAZZA  
ANTHONY JESEJNIK

> **PUBLICATION**

Nylon Guys

> **CIRCULATION**

110,000 Readership

> **IMPRESSIONS**

1,501,000 Unique monthly  
visitors

> **DATE**

September 2013





grooming:  
jeffrey\_oak  
at exclusive  
artists.

California. "It was awesome of my mom to do that," he says—but he was also penniless. When his family learned of the inaugural Street League event in Arizona, they hit the road. Arriving at the hotel, they had less than \$100 to their name, but Rob Dyrdek, league founder and star of MTV's *Rob & Big*, recognized Huston. Dyrdek paid for the family's rooms, and Huston won the event, walking away with \$150,000. Skateboarding's prodigal son had returned. A year later, he cut off his dreads.

"It was time for a change," he says. And he's been unstoppable ever since. To date, he's won more money than any other skateboarder in history, including Tony Hawk. His skating is more fluid, powerful, and technically advanced than ever, and for the first time in his life, he looks like he's having fun on his board.

To watch him skate now is to see the intensity of his ambition and the complexity of his experience, but there's also an innocent excitement that he can't quite conceal, like a kid who's just learned his favorite movie is playing nearby and if he skates really fast, he'll get there in time.

who'd never had a haircut; thick dreadlocks hung to his knees and swung like tentacles when he skated. He was supporting his family by age 11 and at the top of the skateboarding world by 12, when his father abruptly moved the family to a 26-acre Puerto Rican farm that he'd bought with his son's money. "Things pretty much started to suck from there," Huston says. One major sponsor dropped him because he was rarely allowed to travel to contests, and the others quickly followed suit. Then, just before one of the trips his father did allow, his mother fled Puerto Rico with Huston's younger siblings and filed for divorce in California. Huston hardly saw her or his brothers for the following two years. Despite a boundless talent that outshined the top-ranked pros, Huston was a has-been at 14.

Then, in May of 2010, after years of petitioning the court, Huston's mother was granted full custody and he returned to

**NYJAH HUSTON**, one of the greatest skateboarders in the world, can't decide which of the three *Iron Man* movies he likes most, and it's really stressing him out. He sits on a leather couch in the bowels of the Sprint Center in Kansas City, Missouri, taking his Monster Energy Drink hat on and off. He sighs, drags his hand over his face. "Man," he says, "I just don't know. They're all so rad."

Huston is 18, and at first glance, he looks like every skater you've seen lurking around a shopping mall: skinny jeans, shoelace belt, DC sneakers, and a loose tank top. There, though, the similarities end. His one-karat diamond earrings catch and throw the overhead light, and a tattoo of the word "Ambition" stretches from his elbow to wrist. His DC shoes are legitimately called "The Nyjah," and he's flown in from California for the third contest in the 2013 Street League series. He's undefeated and, spoiler alert, no one's going to come close to beating him this weekend. The reason he looks

like the skaters at the mall is because they're aping his style. He's a god to them.

"Maybe *Iron Man 3*?" he says, sounding unsure. "I mean, I liked that one so much that I bought that Audi R8. But I don't know. The first one was really good. It's a tough decision!"

That naming his favorite movie is Huston's biggest problem epitomizes how much life has changed for the skater whose X Games debut eight years ago made him the contest's youngest competitor ever. Raised Rastafarian by a domineering father, Huston entered the sport as a shy, sad-eyed prodigy

# huston, we have liftoff

THINGS ARE LOOKING UP—WAY UP—FOR STAR STREET LEAGUE SKATEBOARDING PRO **NYJAH HUSTON**. BY BRET ANTHONY JOHNSTON. PHOTOGRAPHED BY ELIZABETH WEINBERG





# People

Pro-Skateboarder Nyjah Huston Brings Clean Water and First-Ever Skate Park to Ethiopia (with Help from Tony Hawk!)



> **PUBLICATION**  
People Online

> **IMPRESSIONS**  
18,187,000 Unique  
monthly visitors

> **DATE**  
July 9, 2015

Israel Dejene, Nyjah Huston, Joe Ciaglia, Aaron "Jaws" Homoki and Tony Hawk repairing a well

COURTESY JONATHAN MEHRING



Professional skateboarder Nyjah Huston knows the importance of access to clean water – because he's lived without it himself.

"When I was 13 years old, my family and I lived on a farm in Puerto Rico that didn't have clean, running water all the time," the 20-year-old tells PEOPLE. "So my brothers and I would have to walk to the river to get the water we needed for the day – water is not the easiest thing to carry for miles and miles when you're a little kid."

After making a name for himself in the world of street skating, Huston founded Let It Flow – a foundation that aims to build and repair wells that provide those in need with access to clean water.

"I consider myself really lucky to have had such a good life," Huston says. "Drawing from personal experience and also knowing that so many people – kids – are still living without sanitary water makes you want to make it easier for them."



In January, Huston invited a group of pro-skater friends to Ethiopia to help repair wells and build the country's first-ever skate park. When he and his mom, Kelli Huston, told skateboarding legend Tony Hawk about their plans, Hawk decided to come along.

"We were all so excited that he wanted to be a part of what we were doing," Huston says. "He was a huge help and his passion and warmth for people is unlike anything I've seen."



Together, the group repaired 15 wells and helped build a skate park that will be used by hundreds of kids in Addis Ababa and its neighboring villages.

"When we were finally done and the wells started working, the kids ran up to the gushing water," Huston says. "They had never seen that before."



Huston calls the experience "a dream come true."

"I had seen some photos of kids skating in Ethiopia, so I knew there was a love for skateboarding [there], they just didn't have any ramps or anything," Huston tells PEOPLE. "To go and build them their first official cement ramp was an honor."

Huston says he hopes skateboarding will impact the kids in "all the positive ways the sport has impacted me."



"It's going to keep them out of trouble, keep them busy during the day, and the best part is that the sport is challenging," Huston says. "The challenge builds determination and encourages perseverance. Also, it's a group sport, so it's community-driven. I just hope it becomes one more way to bring happiness to them." A documentary about the trip called Dream Big will air on ESPN and ABC on Saturday, July 11.





## 50 Most Influential People in Action Sports

### > PUBLICATION

ESPN.COM

### > IMPRESSIONS

109,823,000 Unique  
monthly visitors

### > DATE

November 29, 2012

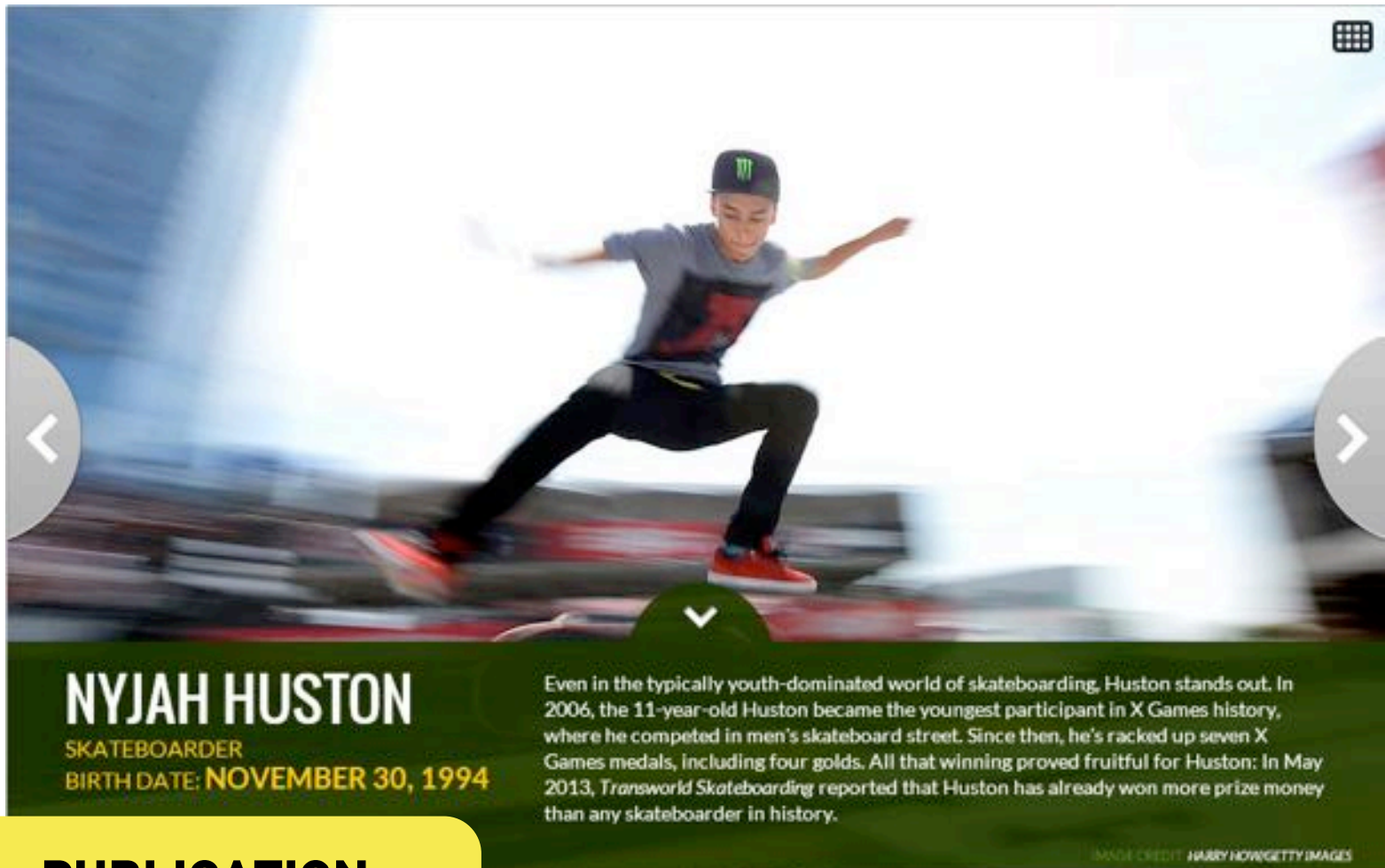


### 9: Nyjah Huston

Brian Gaberman

There are a few examples of skateboarders making the transition from child prodigy to full-fledged superstar: Tony Hawk, Steve Caballero, Ryan Sheckler and now Nyjah Huston. Huston, 18, has racked up more Street League and X Games victories over the past few years than most could dream of winning in a lifetime -- and there's no end in sight.

# Sports Illustrated TWENTY-FIVE UNDER 25



## NYJAH HUSTON

SKATEBOARDER

BIRTH DATE: NOVEMBER 30, 1994

Even in the typically youth-dominated world of skateboarding, Huston stands out. In 2006, the 11-year-old Huston became the youngest participant in X Games history, where he competed in men's skateboard street. Since then, he's racked up seven X Games medals, including four golds. All that winning proved fruitful for Huston: In May 2013, *Transworld Skateboarding* reported that Huston has already won more prize money than any skateboarder in history.

IMAGE CREDIT: HARRY HOW/GETTY IMAGES

### > PUBLICATION

SportsIllustrated.com

### > IMPRESSIONS

3,204,945 Unique  
monthly visitors

### > DATE

November 5, 2013



# ESPN

the MAGAZINE

ROBERT GRIFFIN III  
KOBE BRYANT  
BLAKE GRIFFIN  
**BRYCE HARPER**  
TOM BRADY  
RONDA ROUSEY  
**NYJAH HUSTON**  
SLUANE STEPHENS

**THE  
ANNIVERSARY  
ISSUE**  
**15 YEARS AND  
COUNTING**

**PLUS**  
HOW  
SPORTS  
WILL BE  
PLAYED,  
WATCHED  
AND

DOUBLE ISSUE MAY 13, 2013 \$5.99

## >PUBLICATION

ESPN Magazine

## >CIRCULATION

2,132,897 Readership

## > IMPRESSIONS

6,398,691 Unique  
monthly visitors

## > DATE

May 13, 2013



### **NYJAH HUSTON, 18 PRO SKATEBOARDER THE X-FACTOR**

His breakout 2011 video was called "Rise & Shine," but even that turned out to be an understatement. At age 11 in 2006, he became the youngest-ever X Games athlete, and now the goofy footed phenom has developed a cult following that includes even his competitors. "He's probably the best I've ever seen," says pro Mike Mo capaldi. "he does everything in, like, two tries." Last year he won his second Street League championship, and he earned his second X Games street gold in Foz do Iguacu in April. Now Huston is riding the rail to a profile that may someday rival Tony Hawk's.





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# 18

## AT LAST

NOW THAT HE'S HIS OWN MAN, STREET SKATER **NYJAH HUSTON** DOESN'T WANT TO PUT HIS PAST BEHIND HIM. HE JUST WANTS HIS FATHER, WHO MADE HIM AND NEARLY BROKE HIM, TO MOVE FORWARD.

by ELENA BERGERON

**NYJAH HAS SLID** the back of his board on the concrete, inches from the drop-off—his expression reads that he has surprised even himself. He pats the air with his hands as if asking the Barcelona crowd for a minute. No one has seen this from the skater with nerves of steel. Certainly not a pacing P-Rod or the commentator who wonders aloud whether Nyjah is rattled.

The crowd encourages the do-or-die drama, raining down high-pitched whistles. And P-Rod looks as though he can't handle much more of the tension. Even as the other skaters pat his back and hug him, he shakes them off and twice reminds them: "This guy is very good."

**AT 10**, Nyjah did the unthinkable. He won first place in street at the Tampa Am, the top competition for amateurs—beating out skaters as old as 30. He followed that by becoming the youngest-ever X Games athlete at 11 years, 246 days. (Skateboarder Jagger Eaton now holds that record at 11 years, 129 days.) Adeyemi cleared away any distraction to Nyjah's singular approach, and his devotion rocketed the kid's development to the point where Nyjah held his own against pro skaters twice his age. "That's the best thing he could've done for me," Nyjah says, "keeping me concentrated on skating at such a young age. That's obviously what I'm meant to do in life. The worst thing was just not being able to let go."

Nyjah's talent, age and look—those dreads now draped down to his knees—made him stand out to more and more endorsers, who all got filtered through Adeyemi. At first, it made sense that the parent who incubated Nyjah's gift would also sort out the deals. But soon internal conflict flickered between Adeyemi's religion and his son's burgeoning success. "It stemmed from being caught up in that whole Rastafarian belief system," Kelle says, "where you kind of are trying to isolate yourself from society. But then at the same time, we had a son who was on his way to becoming a superstar and needed to be part of society."

In some respects, Adeyemi (who did not respond to interview requests for this story) proved to be a shrewd manager, bumping up a \$15,000-a-month deal with Element to

\$20,000 monthly and licensing Nyjah's image for Tony Hawk's video game. But he proved difficult in other ways. Contracts required Nyjah to go to signings and on foreign tours, obligations that Adeyemi often refused to uphold. Then, shortly after visiting Puerto Rico for a contest, Adeyemi bought a 26-acre farm on the island valued at \$400,000. "He wanted to move there, I would say, to keep me and my brothers away from going to school in California and getting girlfriends or whatever," Nyjah says. "He was always so against that part of life."

The remote farm was outfitted so crudely that the plumbing system would fail during most hard rains. This left the children trekking 1,000 yards to haul heavy buckets of clean water from a reserve tank to wash dishes and clothes or to flush the toilet. They rarely interacted with other kids, and Nyjah didn't even bother to learn Spanish.

Life in Puerto Rico was far from the one the family had loved at Frontline, but Adeyemi wouldn't compromise on where he thought they should live. "That was the beginning of the end of our marriage, because we couldn't agree on what was best for our family," Kelle says. And it didn't make life easier professionally either. When a sponsor, frustrated by a potential breach of contract, called Kelle, she says Adeyemi flew into a rage over being circumnavigated.

To get a reprieve from the isolation, Kelle left for California with the rest of the kids while Nyjah and Adeyemi were in Barcelona in April 2008. "Because my dad was my manager, I was kind of the one child out of all my brothers and sisters who didn't kind of have a choice," he

Nyjah's path from phenom (above left, standing next to his dad, Adeyemi) to superstar (in T-shirt at right, next to his mom, Kelle), required him to break away from his Rastafarian roots.

FOR MORE PHOTOS ONLINE,  
GO TO [es.pn/nyjah18](http://es.pn/nyjah18)



says. "I was forced to live with my dad, so that was really unfortunate."

**NYJAH TUGS** at his black jeans, then jumps up and down again, tapping that board. A deep breath later, he pushes off, gliding to and over the drop-off.

He's sure to have landed his planned trick—a nollie handflip over the Hubba feature—a thousand times in his head. But he has landed it only once in practice at Barcelona, three days earlier. No one knows what to make of his nervous pause—whether he'll land his trick or maybe even change the script.

**KELLE PLEADED** with Adeyemi to split the year between California and Puerto Rico. She wanted the kids to be around peers, and she wanted Nyjah to be able to fulfill his contracts. Adeyemi wouldn't budge. And when Nyjah's 9-year-old sister, Isha, came for a visit, she stayed longer than Kelle had expected.

Over the next two years, Nyjah and Isha had little contact with Kelle. She says it was nearly impossible to reach the two because the phone had been shut off. So she resorted to showing up at skate contests just to catch a glimpse of her son. In 2009, because of Nyjah's unreliability, he lost all his deals and his income was halved (from \$374,425 in 2008 to \$158,612 in 2009). Adeyemi took the perceived underhandedness of big-money brands to the extreme and started his own board company, I&I Skateboards, with Nyjah's earnings.

Nyjah had grown to believe that his mom, who had filed for divorce, had effectively



## TOP-PAID ATHLETES BY COUNTRY

They make as little as \$5K and as much as \$52M. They compete in everything from baseball to squash, boxing to sumo, cricket to soccer. They are the top-paid athletes from 203 different countries and territories, including these six standouts.



abandoned him. While he quietly questioned his father's influence, he still followed him to major competitions, including in Southern California, where Adeyemi had rented an apartment without telling Kelle the address.

Nyjah was working as hard as ever, compiling endless hours of footage showing new tricks and progressions. "Because my dad was controlling and he made me skate every single day, there would be some situations where I would be sick and he would still want me to go out and skate," Nyjah says. "I would be like, Damn, I don't feel like skating, but f—, I guess."

The skate footage became a pawn in the divorce proceedings. Kelle finally got custody of Nyjah and Isha in 2010—and Nyjah warmed up to her within days—but Adeyemi refused to give Nyjah the film. Devastated, Nyjah wrote a letter to the judge, detailing each trick: "My footage means a lot to me because it's hundreds of hours of hard work and pain I've dedicated to my skateboarding career, so it would be a shame if it all went to waste. If somehow I'm not able to get my footage from my dad, then my relationship with him will be completely ruined."

Nyjah never got the footage back.

Despondent about the videos and the family drama, he quit skating. That lasted about a month. When the 2010 summer competition

season came around, Nyjah once again wanted to get back to what was familiar. Despite the layoff and with a professional agency repping him, he placed second in X Games Los Angeles and in the Maloof Money Cup, then won the very first SLS contest and its \$150,000 prize. Element also welcomed him back. It was the first time he'd done anything in skating without Adeyemi.

The second step 16-year-old Nyjah wanted to take on his own was to sever a symbolic tie with his past. As he was preparing for a new skate video, he figured it was time to cut his hair. "I didn't want to be known as that kid who had dreads," he says. "I wanted to be known as myself, Nyjah Huston, the skateboarder."

**NYJAH LAUNCHES** from the drop-off, pressing hard on his back foot, flipping his board as he is up and over the Hubba feature. His front foot catches first, his back foot follows, and he lands clean, with command.

Before Nyjah can make it back to the other skaters, P-Rod meets him halfway with a hug. A real one, not some back-slapping bro-hug. One long enough to show the genuine respect between the two.

The judges award Nyjah an 8.5. Other skaters try to fool him into thinking it's a tie, shouting out "One more trick! One more trick!"

But there are no more tricks, no more fools. Nyjah has won gold by one-tenth of a point.

**NYJAH HUSTON** is on his own now, and that's evident in ways beyond his haircut. He is choosing his own business partnerships based on how they line up with his interests, many of which he's still figuring out, and he's deciding how to spend his earnings. (He made \$1.58 million in 2012.) He's found out that his favorite food is sushi, tasted ice cream for the first time and dated—and then dumped—a girlfriend. He's moved into his own Huntington Beach two-story house that's pretty immaculate, considering his best friends crash there too. They're five kids he's known from his CASL days, back when things seemed to be lining up for the Rasta family.

Nyjah and his dad haven't spoken in a couple of years. Last November Nyjah got a birthday card from him, unsigned. The envelope listed his grandmother's home in Merced as the return address, even though Nyjah knows Adeyemi doesn't live there.

"I still have respect for him and everything that he did for me," Nyjah says. "But you have to let your son have his freedom and figure out the game himself. If he did decide to call me any time soon, I would completely accept him back into my life." ■



## THE 10 BEST DRESSED MEN of the WEEK:

Our weekly roundup of GQ-approved standout looks from every red carpet, paparazzo spotting, and big ticket event across the globe



**WHO**

Nyah Huston

**WHAT**

Calvin Klein Collection

**WHERE**

GQ Men of the Year party, Los Angeles

**WHEN**

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# Sports Illustrated

## Nyjah Huston Q&A: Talking X Games, shredding with Paul Rodriguez, more

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Sports Illustrated

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In 2006, Nyjah Huston placed No. 8 in his X Games debut in the street skating practice. In 2009, the California native won a medal for the first time in the discipline, finishing second. Since then, he's been a consistent presence near the top of the podium, amassing six gold medals, a bronze and a second silver, all in street skating. Huston will drop in this weekend as the defending street skate champion; his mission: capture number 10.

**Sl.com: Why is street the skateboard practice for you?**

**Nyjah Huston:** I'd say street skating is the most fun of the six skateboarding events for me personally. It's also because you can do it anywhere. You don't need a specific ramp or competition; you can just go shred anywhere around your hometown and have a blast with it. That's the best part about street skating.

**What's your pre-competition ritual?**

**NH:** I just try to get a good practice in, eat a good meal to make sure I'm physically and mentally prepared. When I do that I go in feeling confident. I try to stay away from rituals or superstitions because if they aren't able to happen for whatever reason, that's when you can begin to freak your mind out. I do my best just to stay calm and keep it mellow.

**You've been the defending street skater at X Games since 2012. What it's like to be the man to beat?**

**NH:** It's crazy to think that back when I was 11 years old I was skating X Games. I think that is what's even crazier than winning a few medals here recently. I have so many memories of X Games; it's unreal that it's already been so long. It's tight though. It makes me want to keep pushing forward. That's what really matters to me. As long as I feel like

I'm consistently progressing and moving forward, that's truly what is most important to me.



**Who did you grow up watching as a kid?**

**NH:** I grew up watching PRod and Chris Cole. To be able to skate with them in competition is an honor. It's been a wild feeling ever since I met those guys. I feel like I'm in a special position to be so young and to be an idol to all these kids out here. It's something I take seriously because I've definitely been in their shoes.

**Which has been your favorite X Games venue and why?**

**NH:** I would say my favorite X Games event had to be the one in Spain [in 2013] because the skate course was really, really good, and the fans out there were awesome. Also, for anyone who remembers that event, it was a really close one between me and PRod and it came down to me winning by like a tenth of a point on the last trick. That's definitely one of the best wins of my career.



*Photo: Ryan Wallerson for Sports Illustrated*

But we all always love X Games being in L.A. It's basically my hometown and where I do all of my skating. It'd be cool to bring all of my friends out to a local X Games again so hopefully it goes back there one year.

**What's your relationship like with Paul Rodriguez, the incumbent street skate king?**

**NH:** Me and PRod and really cool. Whenever we see each other, we always vibe. We shred together all the time. I think that's one of the best things about skateboarding. We're all competitors out there, but no one dislikes each other. We are all homies, one tight community of shredders. It's tight. I've been watching him so long and learned so much from him over the years, it's just awesome to be able to know him as I do now.

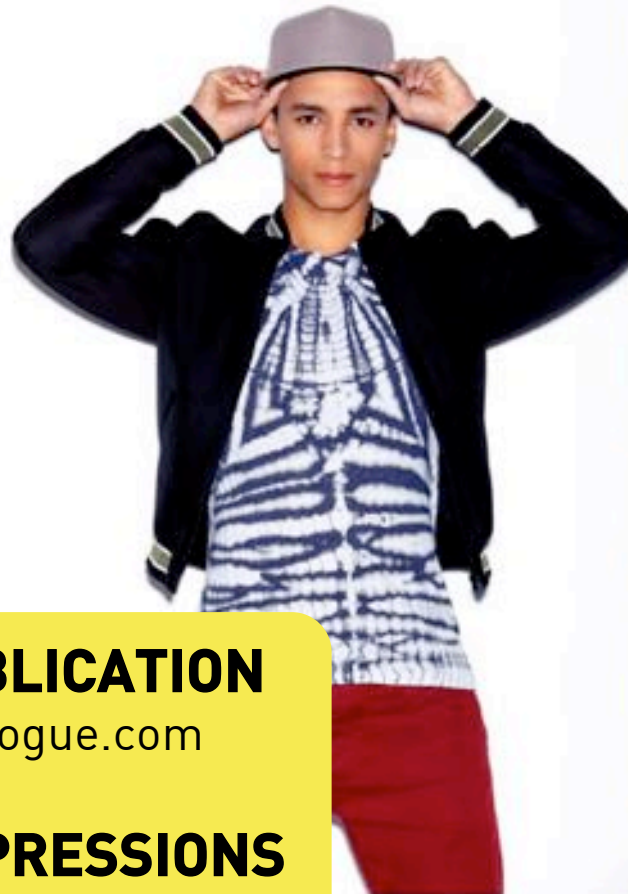


# teenVOGUE

## *Pro-skater Nyjah Huston on Social Responsibility and His Tribeca Film Festival Debut*

The street skating phenom tells us all about winning gold medals and giving back.

by Marianne Dabir



You may not have heard of Nyjah Huston yet if you're not plugged into the pro-skating scene, but that's all about to change. The 18-year-old just brought home his second X-Games gold medal from Brazil, and ESPN just named him as the athlete who will change the course of the sport over the next decade. He's sponsored by eight different brands, is about to launch a signature sneaker with DC Shoes, and has just made his feature film debut at this year's Tribeca Film Festival.

As if his impressive career weren't enough, the street league champion has co-founded a charity with his mother: Let It Flow brings water and sanitation facilities to communities that lack access to clean water, a cause that Nyjah can relate to due to the hardships he faced during his own upbringing. While living in rural Puerto Rico, he and his family often went days or weeks with limited access to usable, running water. On May 4th, he'll host Flowfest at the exclusive indoor skate facility, The Berries, to benefit the cause. If you're in LA and want to hang with the pros, you can pick up tickets at [letitflow.org](http://letitflow.org).

We caught up with the busy skate star to get the scoop on what's next for his white-hot career.

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**How did you get your start? What was it like being sponsored at such a young age?**

When I was around 4 or 5 years old, my dad got my two older brothers and me into skateboarding. I stepped on one and I absolutely loved it, and that's all I ever wanted to do as a kid. I was home-schooled my entire life because I traveled so much, and my family owned their own skatepark, so naturally I got really good. By the time I was 11, I was skating my first X-Games and had a few good sponsors.

**Your skating peers were much older than you. What was it like growing up with them?**

It was really cool; and intimidating at the same time. I was skating contests with everyone else being around the age of 25 or older, but those were the skaters that I looked up to at the time. It was awesome because I saw them in magazines every single day, so competing with them was a dream come true.

**What's the worst injury you've gotten from skating?**

Honestly, I've never broken a bone before, and I would say that mainly comes from being raised as a vegan! I grew up eating very healthy food, and I never drank any soda.

**What's your skating career like right now?**

Better than ever. The last two years have been really strong, the contest seasons have been going awesome, and this year I feel really good. Skateboarding is starting to evolve into a bigger sport, which makes me really happy. The more contests there are, the more I can get out there to do what I love.

**You just won the X-Games! That's huge for a skater at any age. What was that like for you?**

This was the first year the X-Games has gone international, so I actually just got back from Brazil. I won gold! The crowd out there was insane—so different from being at a contest here in the States, because they're not used to seeing skaters out there doing what we do, so they were super hyped-up. Actually winning an X-Games gold medal felt really special to me, because it took about six years to accomplish that. It felt like I finally deserved it.

**What's your favorite trick?**

The 360 flip!

**You are one of eight pro skaters in the documentary film *The Motivation*. Tell us about your feature film debut.**

It's a really cool film that profiles what we do on and off our skateboards, how we prepare for contests, and how we get through injuries. Basically, it's about what motivates us, because skateboarding isn't a team sport—you choose how much you're going to go out there and practice. But the great thing about the sport is that when you're practicing, you're having fun—I never have to feel like I'm "training" or "working", it's just all a good time. I'm very honored to be in a movie like this. When I was being filmed for it, I had no idea that it was going to turn out to be such a big deal, and premiere in a place like the Tribeca Film Festival.



**Speaking of motivation, what's yours?**

I do come from a very humble background. Right now, showing that you're not too young to make a difference like that is a huge motivating factor for me, which is why my mom and I founded Let It Flow, and the goal is to build wells and sanitation facilities for people around the world who aren't fortunate enough to have access to clean water. You can Google how many people in the world don't have clean water, and the numbers are insane—I think the statistic is one in three deaths are caused from unsanitary water. We're still in our first year, but we've already done a few projects in Ethiopia, which is awesome. One well can service an entire community of 1,000 people, and costs about \$4,000 to build. So, if we hold an event and are able to raise \$12,000, we're impacting 3,000 people.

**What advice would you give to teens who are trying to make their mark as an athlete?**

Never think that you're not good enough, or that you're too young for something. As long as you're working hard for what you love doing, you'll have a good chance of getting somewhere with it. A lot of kids out there come from humble backgrounds like mine, and I'd say that they all have a chance of doing something as I did. And, if you're skateboarding, take it slow! You'll definitely get hurt trying stuff you're not ready for.



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### The Real-Life Diet of Pro Skater Nyjah Huston, Reformed Vegan

Professional athletes don't get to the top by accident. It takes superhuman levels of time, dedication, and focus—and that includes paying attention to what they put in their bellies. In this series, **GQ** takes a look at what **pro athletes in different sports** eat on a daily basis to perform at their best. Here's a look at the daily diet of pro skater Nyjah Huston.

.....



"I think skateboarding is finally getting to that point where people take it seriously. I feel like five or 10 years ago a lot of parents and everyone would be worried about their kid wanting to be a pro skater because they would think you just want to ride your board all day like a little toy or hobby."

So says Nyjah Huston, who is well-equipped to talk about the professional side of skateboarding despite the fact that on Monday he turned 21 (happy birthday, Nyjah!), which means that 10 years ago he himself was barely 11. But he isn't your average skater kid: At the age of 10 he had already won his first competition. Out of 36 major competitions since 2010, he's placed first in 25, including five X Games, racking up four Street League Skateboarding championships and, as of two years ago, more prize money than any other skater. *Ever*.

Huston brings a level of discipline to skateboarding that would surprise people only passingly familiar with it as a sport. He grew up in a family of skateboarders, and they had a lot of time to practice together, living on an isolated farm in Puerto Rico, where his rigorously Rastafarian father moved them in 2006.

**"My dad didn't allow me or any of my siblings to eat any meat, no cheese, no candy even. He was super strict about that sort of stuff. I think that's one of the reasons I manage to be so healthy and take all these gnarly slams without breaking any bones."**

"I grew up very strict vegan," he says. "My dad didn't allow me or any of my siblings to eat any meat, no cheese, no candy even. He was super strict about that sort of stuff. I think that's one of the reasons I manage to be so healthy and take all these gnarly slams without breaking any bones: I think the main thing is being raised without drinking any soda. Every one of my friends who skates has broken a ton of bones before."

But veganism doesn't have to be ascetic. A cheese-less life can be just as satisfying and savory. "Anything you think of that isn't vegan, my mom would make vegan." He continues: "When a lot of people think about eating vegan, they think of it as not being healthy because it's hard to get protein. I think I managed to be even healthier than someone with a non-vegan diet. It's helped me out too now that I'm on my own and living by myself—I'm careful about what I eat and I want to eat healthy."

Today Huston is a reformed vegan, but he believes that his diet (growing up and now) give him a competitive edge.

"Once I had the freedom to be able to eat whatever I wanted it took about a year or two before I tried meat. To this day I don't eat red meat—it's something that was so foreign and weird to me that I couldn't get used to it. I stick with turkey and chicken and fish. I don't like eggs because I couldn't get used to it after not growing up with them. I still drink soy milk instead of regular milk, and that's about it. I'm used to everything else now."



While more people recognize skateboarding as a sport, fewer give it credit for its athleticism. To be fair, most of the blame for that lies with skateboarders themselves. "The majority of skateboarders out there are kind of lazy, and everyone thinks that working out doesn't help much. But I have a gym set up at my house, and I normally try to do a quick, harsh workout for a half hour at least four times a week. Most of it is upper body because with skating you don't get much of an upper body workout. I actually think having that extra strength helps out a lot, especially with any 360 tricks, and it helps with falling the right way and preventing injury."

While fitness may not be a giant concern for most skateboarders, they do share a common priority: not getting fat. Extra weight doesn't just slow you down, it also makes balancing harder. Luckily for Huston, for now, that doesn't seem to be an issue. "Honestly, I have the quickest metabolism ever, I can eat as much as I want and barely gain any weight. So I just try to eat as much as I can every day."

#### **Breakfast, pre-workout**

Protein shake with coffee-flavored protein powder, banana, and soy milk

#### **Post-workout**

Fruit shake with banana, mango, pineapple, papaya, and berries

#### **Lunch**

Turkey sandwich with avocado

#### **Dinner**

Chow mein with chicken and vegetables



## Nyjah Huston: Innovating On And Off The Board



### > PUBLICATION

Sports Illustrated Kids Online

### > IMPRESSIONS

101,079 Unique monthly visitors

### > DATE

August 28, 2015

When most people think of Nyjah Huston, they think about his amazing skateboarding skills. Huston is a 20-year old professional skateboarding phenom who has won six Men's Skateboard Street gold medals at the X Games and has enjoyed considerable success on the pro circuit. When he made his debut at the X Games in 2006, at 11 years old, he was the youngest athlete to ever compete at the event.

What people may not know is that Huston's personal charity, Let It Flow (LIF), is helping bring clean water to people around the world. I recently spoke with him to learn more about what motivates him to do great things on and off the board.

### **How long have you been skating?**

I started skating at four or five. Once I started, it was all I ever wanted to do. I had big love for it. The main thing is just have fun with it. If you love it, the progression will come. I'd tell parents to start your kids early.

### **Who are your skating heroes?**

Chris Cole is definitely one. It has been an honor to skate with him and my other heroes. The first time I skated with some of them at the X Games when I was 11, I was blown away.



### **Tell me a little bit about your charity.**

Let it Flow is a non-profit charity that helps raise money to build and repair clean water wells around the world. Everyone in the world needs clean water, but many people have to walk miles and miles to get it or can't get it all. We recently traveled to Ethiopia and repaired 15 wells first hand and helped build the country's first skate park. It was amazing to see the whole process. Once the clean water started coming out of the well, it was really cool to see how happy the kids were. I think the best part about the whole thing is that it really makes you appreciate things back home so much more when you see kids being so happy over such simple things.



**I understand you experienced living without clean water as a kid. What was that like?**

It's gnarly, dude. Clean water is definitely something that is very necessary in life. That's one of the main reasons why my mom and I chose to focus our charity on water. It's something that everyone needs in the world...We put our minds together to raise money, and take time to create fun giveaways, to give people chances to go to the contests, and just make kids happy.

**What's in store for the future of LIF?**

We are going to keep working to raise as much awareness and money as possible to help solve this issue. As long as we can just keep moving forward and help out as much as possible – that's the main goal. We have a campaign right now where people can donate \$20 to LIF and be entered to win a VIP trip to the Street League Championships in Chicago on October 4. It's going to be a really good one. Our goal is to raise \$20,000, so we can help even more people.

**Visit the [Let it Flow website](#) to learn more about Huston's fundraising efforts!**

*Photos: Rick Kern/Getty Images (action), Jonathan Mehring (fundraising trip)*



**USA  
TODAY  
SPORTS™**

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USA Today Sports

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September 2014



# Nyjah Huston, Rob Dyrdek and the quest for a national skateboarding league

Nyjah Huston is, it would appear, the best skateboarder alive right now.



Huston just completed a never-before-seen undefeated regular season on the 2014 Street League Skateboarding Nike SB World Tour. Street League is the brainchild of Rob Dyrdek, who became one of the country's most famous skateboarders thanks to his multiple shows on MTV. The league brings together some of the best skaters alive to compete in a street competition at arenas around the country. Unlike traditional skateboard contests, the pacing of Street League is frenetic, with scores on tricks showing up on the jumbotron almost immediately after they are performed.

The Street League Super Crown World Championship, the final event of the 2014 season, was held late on August 24 at the Prudential Center in Newark, televised on Fox Sports and attended by thousands of skateboard fans. Huston was undefeated entering the championship, but any of the eight skateboarders had a fair shot to win the trophy. Prior rankings meant nothing going into the final. Just like the organizers of Street League designed it, the whole season came down to just one night.



The walk to the Prudential Center from the PATH train was littered by young men in their late teens and early 20s, all on skateboards. They rode noisily and aggressively through the people walking, decked in ratty t-shirts and ripped shorts. Skate fashion hasn't changed all that much in the last decade.

One skater, who appeared to be in his mid-20s, exited the PATH train holding a bag of Doritos, and then, as he was exiting, threw the empty bag of Doritos on the ground *demonstratively* before riding away, a rebellious gesture so tiny it was almost adorable.

The energy was palpable, and everyone was there to see if one young man could complete the first ever undefeated Street League season. They were there to see Nyjah.





Nyjah Huston is just 19 years old but has already been a professional skater for nearly a decade. He first made his mark when he became the youngest competitor in X-Games history at age 11, a spindly kid with long dreads and a bright smile. He was already known around the competitive circuit for tearing apart courses better than kids twice his age. His father was always there with him at these competitions, pushing him on from the sidelines.

"My dad was really controlling and he did want me to skate every single day," Huston said in a **video produced by ESPN**. "I would say he did it in a little bit of a strict way, which probably wasn't necessary because bottom line I loved skateboarding and that's all I wanted to do anyway."

Huston's backstory reads like fiction: His father, Adeyemi Huston, was a devout Rastafarian who pushed his son to greatness at a young age, before moving his entire family to a 26-acre farm in Puerto Rico in 2006. He purchased the property with his son's winnings, according to ESPN. From there, Adeyemi could pick what contests his son could enter, autograph sessions he would attend, when and for what he could leave their home.

"I think [my dad] wanted to keep me and my brothers as far as possible away from having friends and being a normal kid," Huston said.

Eventually Huston's mother, Kelle Huston, who is now his manager, packed up Huston's brothers and sisters and fled when Adeyemi and Huston were on a skateboarding trip. Two years later, his mother filed for divorce, and it took a judge's order in May 2010 for Huston Sr. to eventually relinquish control of his son.

It's a horrifying story, and one Huston has only recently been willing to discuss. But he got through it, and Huston rejoined the skateboarding world, eager to get back on the competitive circuit. He hasn't lost much since. This has made many people happy, but none more so than his sponsors.



Skateboarding may be a niche sport, but it is a big business, and Huston is a big part of the business.

He has one signature shoe already with DC Shoes, The Nyjah S, and a second shoe just coming out, The Nyjah Vulc, that is marketed for casual wear. The S and the Vulc are both relatively traditional shoes, suede uppers, solid colors. The shoes are Huston's way of paying homage to the tradition of skateboarding, but DC says he's willing to push the style of the sport going forward.

"It's great working with a guy like Nyjah, who's not one of the older guys," said Kevin Becker, who designed the Nyjah Vulc for DC. "He's willing to try stuff. We have a great opportunity to push product. Not just push it in the performance direction, but have more aspiration in the aesthetic of the product as well." Translation: Huston is OK if the shoes look a little crazy.





Huston is also sponsored by Element Skateboards and has been since before he hit puberty. He's the darling of the sport, the next young star who has a chance to become the next Rob Dyrdek or, some people even dare to say, the next Tony Hawk.

Huston is a marketer's dream: young and handsome, careful with his words, eager to succeed. He's not as charismatic or as funny as Dyrdek, but he is more driven, more competitive, more put together. While many of the other Street League competitors acted a lot like you'd imagine teenage skateboarders to act, Huston is polished.

"I think he's come so long in just a few years in terms of handling the media, handling the pressure," said Brian Atlas, president and co-founder of Street League. "I mean, he won two ESPY awards, his competition dominance...it's quite miraculous to see him rise through and evolve into a young, but obviously elite, competent pro."

Huston also wins, a lot, all the time. Unlike some other skaters, Huston doesn't have a problem with winning.

"There's definitely a lot of people out there in the industry who feel that skateboarding shouldn't be a competitive sport," said Huston on a phone call. "Or be a sport in general at all. Those are the people who want to keep skateboarding at the core side of things. But me personally, I love seeing the sport of skateboarding grow in general. It's just going to naturally happen. There are so many skateboarders in the world and they want to see skateboarding on TV."

That last sentence seems to be what Street League is trying to accomplish — to make skateboarding into something that can be brought into TVs around the country. Atlas said the goal of the league was not only to "create an infrastructure for the competition side of the sport," but also to "create a great televised product." Street League is bringing skateboarding to television, and Nyjah is its biggest star.

He's such a star, that before the finals, many of the fans inside the Prudential Center thought the competition was over before it began.

"Nyjah's gonna win," slurred a guy in the crowd who declined to give his name but said he'd been drinking since 10 a.m. "It's rigged, probably. He always wins these things. They want him to win."





It was hard for anyone to disprove the young man's theory because no one in the crowd really had any idea how the judges were scoring each trick. By keeping the pace of the events so fast for television, the judges and announcers had no time to explain what move was just executed, how difficult it was, or how a score was arrived at. A guy did a trick, and seconds later he got a score.

"It's fast because we score every trick as it happens, unlike in snowboarding or something where you're judging like an entire 40-second halfpipe run," said head judge Scott Pfaff, who is Dyrdek's cousin. "With us, with all these scores coming in, it has to be quick, because of TV time."

Pfaff leads a team of five judges, all former skaters or industry guys, who use an instant-scoring technology called ISX. Dyrdek is a spokesman for the company.

Pfaff admits that scores come in fast and can be difficult for a casual fan to understand completely, but he laughs off any idea that the events are rigged for Huston.

"People try to say, fans try to say, 'oh you guys favor Nyjah,'" said Pfaff. "To me, thinking it's rigged for Nyjah, it doesn't make any sense. If anything, the contest is sponsored by Nike. [Huston is not sponsored by Nike.] What benefit is there to rig it for Nyjah and have it be, 'Oh, it's the same dude again.'"

Even to a total layperson, it's clear how much more athletically gifted Huston is than the other competitors. Other competitors are more stylish in their execution, but it's clear the rules of gravity apply to them. They pop up, and then they come down. Huston seems beyond gravity — when he takes off, it feels like he's just going to sail away.

"Nyjah wins fair and square," said Matt Berger, a Street League rookie who Nyjah called one of his best friends on the tour. "The caliber of tricks I see him do to win, the strategy involved where he's done specific tricks to build up on and then go to newer tricks, I mean it's all a strategic process. He has the game figured out, and he has the consistency he needs to win. I don't question the judging on it."

Fans are right to be curious, though. Street League is a business, and for its business to succeed, it needs to have stars. Huston has been dominant throughout the year, but it was also clear in the promotion of the event and during the event itself the skateboarders were divided into Nyjah and Everyone Else. Huston, by all accounts, is beating these other skaters fair and square...but Street League is just fine that that's the case.





Inside the Prudential Center, things were heating up before the big event. The crowd was amped, to use a word I kept hearing. There were the 12-year-old skater kids with their disheveled looking fathers (on one trip to the bathroom a middle-aged man was leaning against a sink, broken, staring into the middle distance as two young boys screamed at him to hurry up already), but there were also a huge amount of 20-somethings, skater kids who grew up and never gave up their decks.

The event had a 9 p.m. start time for West Coast television purposes, and it appeared that many in the crowd had been drinking for much of the day. Backstage, which was accessible by skaters, media, sponsors, and friends (each group oh whom had its own specially colored wristband), was just as insane as the crowd. The Prudential Center staff struggled to identify which of the six or so different colored wristbands meant what, so people were running around all over the place.

In all the backstage rooms there was no water. Just Monster Energy Drink and beer. The line for the beer was long, the line for the Monster not so long, and all this led up to a very *aggressive* vibe in the arena before the event even began.

And then the lights went out, and the music kicked up, and everyone howled.

### Highlights: Street League Skateboarding Super Crown



ISHOD  
WAIR

CONTROL SECTION

ATTEMPT 2 OF 6

8.0 | | |

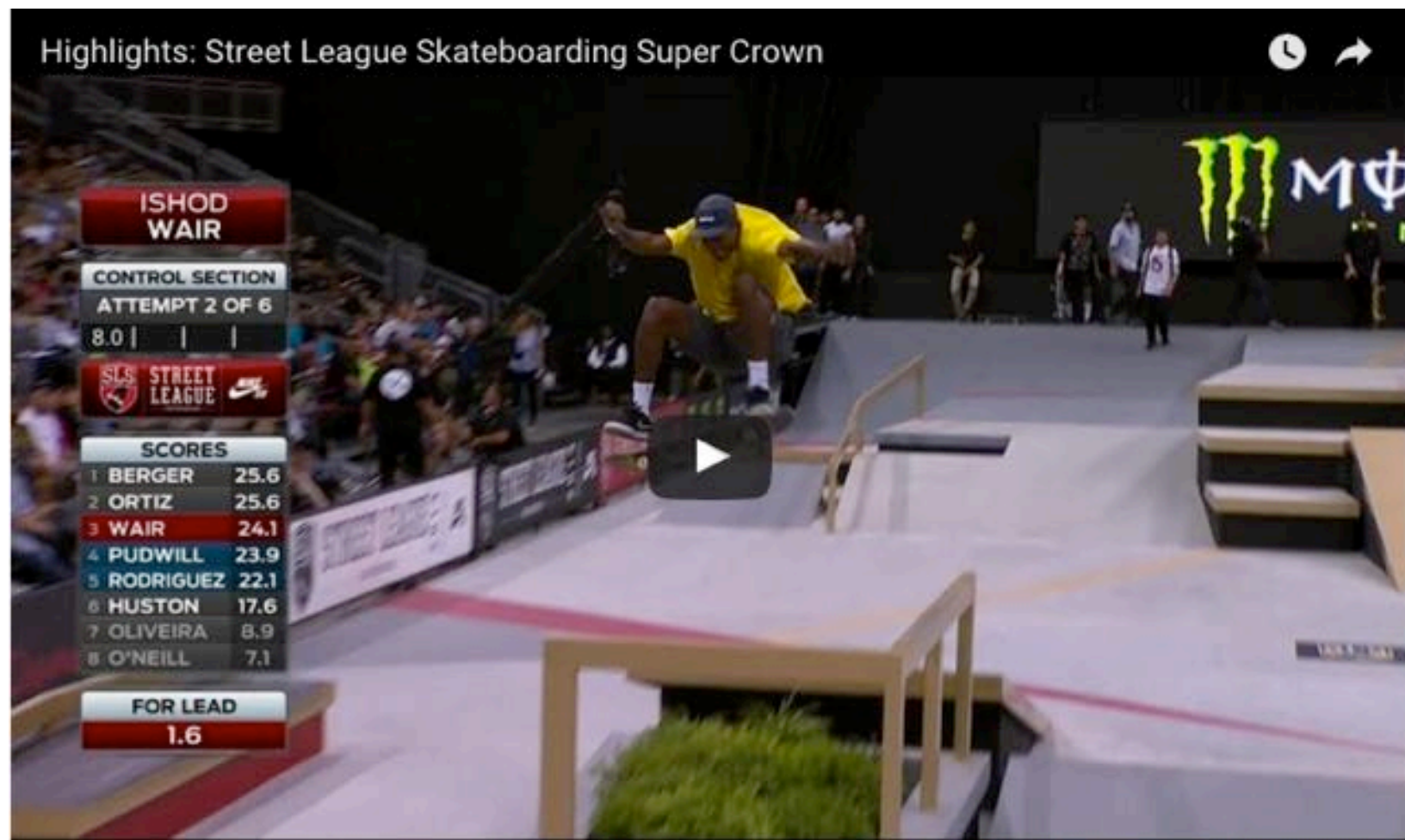


SCORES

1	BERGER	25.6
2	ORTIZ	25.6
3	WAIR	24.1
4	PUDWILL	23.9
5	RODRIGUEZ	22.1
6	HUSTON	17.6
7	OLIVEIRA	8.9
8	O'NEILL	7.1

FOR LEAD

1.6





The Super Crown World Championship, and all of the events in the tour, are broken down into three sections. The first is called the Flow section, where each competitor is given one minute to express himself on the course in whatever way he sees fit. Next is the Impact section, where everyone gets a few chances to do one trick upon which he is judged. The last section is the Control section, which seemed to be the exact same thing as the Impact section, just with more tricks that were added up.

No one in the crowd was adequately able to explain the difference between the Impact and the Control section. Not that anyone cared. They were there to see skateboarders, and the celebrities in the crowd.

Did I mention the celebrities? Chum Lee, he of the TV show *Pawn Stars*, was there, wearing a flat brim hat and a comically large gold watch. Every time he walked by, dozens of fans in the crowd would scream "Chum Lee!" and he'd point at them dramatically.





Members of Floyd Mayweather's The Money Team were there, but not Mayweather himself. All Money Team members wore t-shirts emblazoned with "TMT" on the front. They also had with them a very young boy with long hair who rode a skateboard around the edges of the competitive area for the entire evening. The boy, who couldn't have been older than 10, was unsupervised for much of the event, and it wasn't clear just how he was involved with TMT, Mayweather, etc. A request to interview him was denied by an older TMT member.

Lil Wayne was also there! The rapper did a brief interview with the sideline reporter at the event (yes, there was a sideline reporter) and the crowd tried its best to understand what he was saying. It wasn't clear if it was Wayne's garbled Louisiana twang or poor acoustics from the arena speakers, but the entire interview was more or less unintelligible.



During all this madness, Huston was off to a solid start. After an early fall, he recovered well and had the lead with a Flow score of 8.2. (The score is an average of the five judges, thus the decimal places.) The crowd wasn't really behind him, though, as most people there were pulling for hometown kid Ishod Wair or Berger.

Berger is different than the other skaters in how he got to this event. The native of Canada got into Street League by winning the Street League Pro Open, a competition that invited a host of skateboarders to earn a spot in the 2014 tour.

"For me, it's like, I'm OK not winning because I shouldn't even *be here*, you know?" he said on a phone call.

His rookie status endears him to the crowd, as well as his appearance — Berger is a lot taller than any of the other skaters, and wears a black button down shirt buttoned all the way up when he skates. He smiled often during the competition, seemingly stunned by the raucous applause from the crowd.





As the competition progressed, and the scores flashed along the screen, Huston kept nabbing high scores, and the crowd kept reacting coldly. There were cheers, but not nearly as loud as those for the other competitors.

“Someone was telling me that it was very similar to Tony Hawk back in the day,” said Pfaff. “When he just won every vert contest that happened, and it got to the point that people would root against him.”

Each skater had his own distinct style. Wair and Huston were high flyers, Luan Oliveira and Paul Rodriguez more technical and stylish. Torey Pudwill, another fan favorite, had a fun manic energy to his tricks — he flailed his arms a bit during grinds, giving the impression that every trick was being done just at the edge of control. When he landed a trick, the crowd roared.



After runs, all of the skateboarders usually congratulated each other. Some were obviously closer to each other than others — for Huston, he usually was cordial with the other skaters, but saved his biggest celebrations for Berger.

“I think Berger skated absolutely amazing tonight,” said Huston after the event. “I’m so hyped he was out there killing it. He’s one of my good friends and we skate together all the time back home.”

In the end, it all came down to three skaters: Huston, Wair and Pudwill. The crowd, by then even drunker and cranky with exhaustion, made it clear who they wanted to win: anyone but Nyjah.

The tricks kept coming, and the announcers kept calling out things, and it was all on the verge of being lost until there was a brief break in the action and it became clear: Pudwill was in first place, but Huston had one chance to beat him. He needed a 5.3 on the final trick to win. It all came down to this, the perfect end that was just what Street League wanted.

“The vision for Street League in terms of the instant scoring and what we’re trying to create with the experience, it’s all about that buzzer beater final trick moment,” said Atlas. “Where even if you don’t understand what’s happening with the tricks, you understand the stakes at hand. And that Nyjah had to literally land his last trick to become the champion.”

With a smattering of boos echoing through the arena, Huston went up and nailed his final trick. He received a 7.8 and finished the first undefeated season in Street League history. When he landed the trick, the crowd cheered. Then, a few seconds later, the boos came.

The boos continued, mostly concentrated in one small section, while Huston stepped up on the podium and received his trophy.





Ever a gentleman, he acknowledged “the haters” and gave them a big thumbs up as he took his award. Afterward, he admitted he was surprised by it.

“The crowd was good, aside from the left section at the end there,” said Huston after the event. “You know what? Haters come along. Personally, I don’t understand it too much. I mean, skaters, we’re all out there trying to win. I don’t know if people expect me to mess up on purpose or something? I don’t know.”

After a brief interview in the press room, Huston was whisked off by a Street League representative. An extra event out on the course was going on, and fans stuck around to see the competitors and other skaters who happened to be in the crowd skate the course. Huston had to make an appearance.

Well after midnight, it was time to head home. There was a shuttle from the arena to a bar in Manhattan where an after party was being held.

Well after midnight, it was time to head home. There was a shuttle from the arena to a bar in Manhattan where an after party was being held.

A parade of exhausted skateboarders and media members shuffled through the guts of the Prudential Center, then streamed out to find two shuttle buses waiting. Most went to the back bus, but a few of us made our way to the bus up front.

"You can't go in that one," said a young man walking with Oliveira. "That's Nyjah's bus."

We changed course, and all packed into the second bus until it was over capacity. I was sitting next to Berger, who sat shirtless, still sweating from the competition, staring out the window.

As Huston got to ride a private bus with friends, rookies like Berger were crammed back there with the media folks and PR reps. But without competitors like Berger, no matter how good Huston is, the league can't grow into the massive skateboarding league and televised event it hopes to become.

As we pulled out of the parking lot, Berger asked the guys sitting behind him what the deal with the after party was.

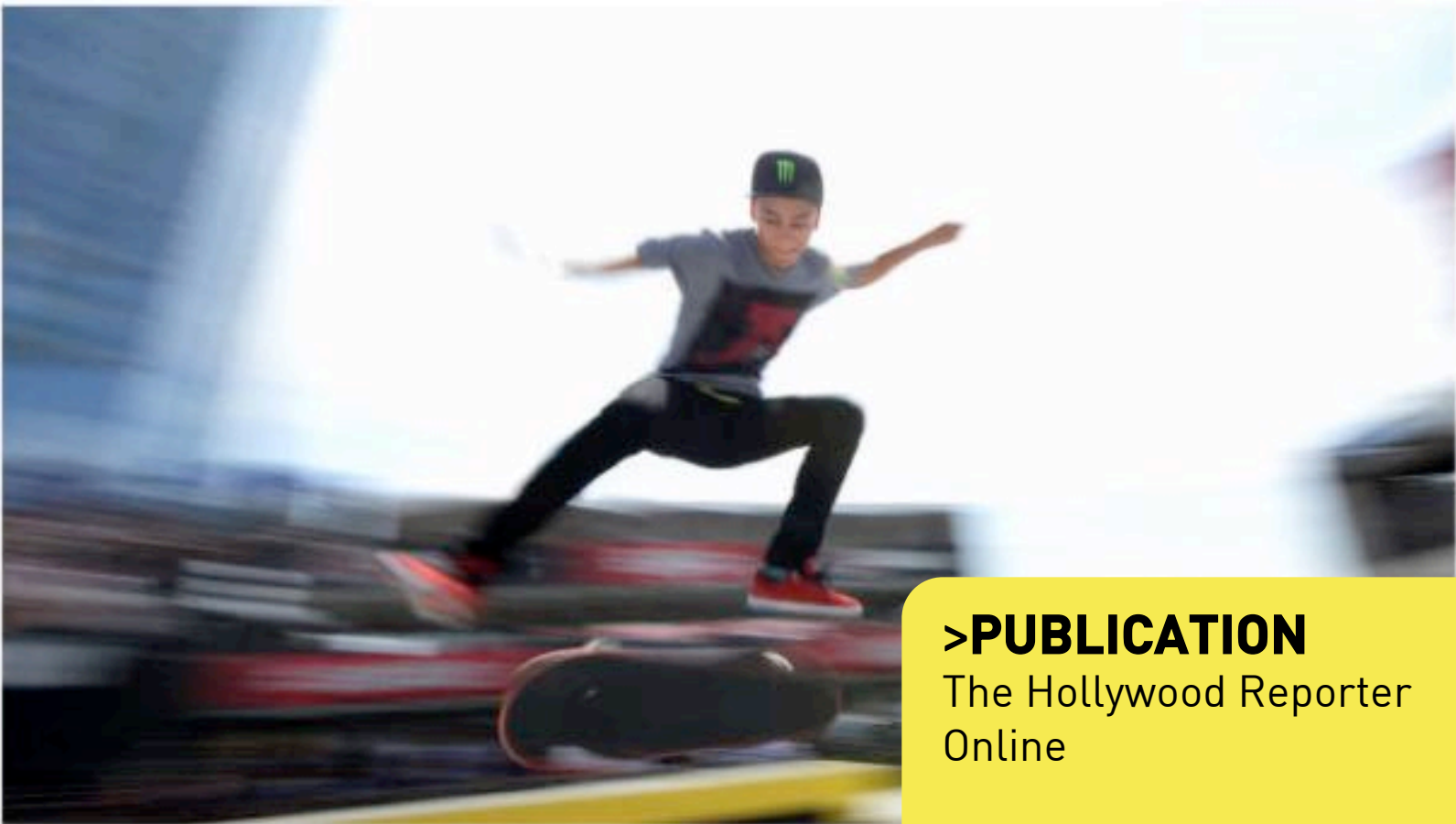
"Don't worry," one of them said. "You're a competitor. You're in at the party."

"I don't need a wristband?" Berger asked. They told him no.

Berger thought about this for a second. "But how will anyone know who I am?"



# How the X-Games Could Pave the Way for Action Sports in the Olympics (Guest Column)



*Nyjah Huston competing at this month's X-Games in Los Angeles.*

## > **PUBLICATION**

The Hollywood Reporter Online

## > **IMPRESSIONS**

6,202,000 Unique monthly visitors

## > **DATE**

August 8, 2013

**Fresh off his gold medal win at this month's X-Games, skateboarder Nyjah Huston argues that the Olympics are ripe for new sports -- especially one that is showing so much growth.**

*At age 10, skateboarder **Nyjah Huston** became the youngest X-Games competitor ever; in 2011, he won his first gold medal at the event. In addition to numerous other awards, the 18-year-old is said to have earned more **prize** money than any other skateboarder in history. Fresh off his second gold medal win at this month's X-Games in Los Angeles -- the last time the city hosts the event before it moves to Austin, Texas, next year -- Huston pens a guest column for **The Hollywood Reporter** about the future of his sport and how its popularity and growth could pave the way for action sports in the Olympics.*

Skateboarding is not what it used to be, and we're not OK with that.

Only recently has skateboarding shed its reputation as a sport for the disenfranchised: the reckless, the uneducated. The biases of skateboarding date back to its inception, further amplified by the portrayal of the skateboarding community in popular media: trespassing teenagers from low-income neighborhoods occupying alleyways and school grounds after dark, being disrespectful and leaving destruction in their wake. Local law enforcement were seemingly trained to target skateboarders, and while society worked overtime to meet petitions for local skate parks with wild opposition, they overlooked **one** factor in the skate community—the community.

**PHOTOS: 26 of Hollywood's Most Popular Athletes-Turned-Actors**



## Games » »

While the pre-skateboarding generation spent countless hours lobbying to city councils for “safer” neighborhoods for their kids, their kids went out and started to, well, skateboard — a sport that they would find is truly indicative of its own athletes. Skateboarding motivates from within, suggestive in its essence to attempt the impossible, building and cultivating the values we were taught as children: patience, hard work, perseverance, accomplishment. It can take upwards of 50 attempts to land your first kick-flip, the same way you can go to bat 50 times and never hit that home run. You will inevitably experience more mental and physical failures than successes in skateboarding, but such is the par for the course in building character.

With the help of trends in music, fashion, and celebrity, skateboarding built momentum as a grassroots movement, and started making some headway. A sport that was once associated with the graffiti’ed parkways of neglected neighborhoods has become a phenomenon, tendering grand prizes in the six-figures at pro-level [competitions](#) while running a laundry list of corporate sponsors that tap into allotments of hundreds of millions of dollars a year to sponsor the next best skateboarder in the game.

### **PHOTOS: Life After the Olympics: How 15 Athletes Made Their Way to Hollywood**

Now, action sports is commanding an audience that is not only respectable in size, but can rival traditional sports on their biggest days, boasting ratings in the millions since the inception of the X-Games by ESPN nearly two decades ago. With the X-Games fan engaged to the “extreme,” they are compelled to do more, see more, buy more, share more, changing the landscape of sports in the mainstream. Thriving on community support and holstered by its fan base, skateboarding remains a movement led and perpetuated by its fans — a fandom that encompasses the pillars of sports culture at its finest: camaraderie, belonging, self-worth, triumph, pillars harmoniously reminiscent of the Olympics. And if there’s anything we know about skate fans, it’s that they won’t rest until the Olympic committee goes to a vote.

So, we’re not OK with the future of skateboarding. We’re f---ing stoked.



TODAY

TODAY | August 27, 2013

## Young X Games skateboarder shows off moves

Nyjah Huston, 18, was recently named the best male action athlete at the ESPYs and has won in the X Games around the world. He shares advice on skateboarding and demonstrates a couple of basic moves on the TODAY plaza.

### > PUBLICATION

Today.com

### > IMPRESSIONS

8,115,016 Unique  
monthly visitors

### > DATE

August 27, 2013



# NYLON



## > PUBLICATION

Nylon Magazine

## > CIRCULATION

216,466 Readership

## > IMPRESSIONS

1,501,000 Unique  
monthly visitors

## > DATE

October 2012

Nyjah Huston isn't even 18, but the Element Skateboards pro could retire today and go down in history as a legend. His ability to land the most difficult tricks on the most intimidating obstacles in a picture-perfect way has earned him over a million dollars from Street League competitions and gold and silver medals at the last two X Games. Remarkably, despite the ridiculous sports car, the endorsements, and the bank balance, he's humble. "I would never say I expect to win, but I still have to feel confident knowing that I have a good chance to win," he says. Lately, Huston has had but one problem: a desire to prevail that's on the verge of addiction. "I'm a naturally competitive person," he says. "It makes you take things seriously, which I think is important in a contest like Street League, where you have to focus and try your absolute hardest to win." As much success as he's had, he's also experienced hard times. First sponsored by Element as a seven-year-old prodigy with dreadlocks that became his signature, Huston says that a lot of his accomplishments are due to his dad, even though his unyielding manner and financial mismanagement cost Nyjah all his pro sponsorship deals and left him penniless by the time he was 15. But he doesn't hate his father for it. "Some things, like the way he pushed me so hard to skate when I wasn't feeling it, I would never want a father to do that to his son. But everything he did made me who I am today, so I wouldn't change a thing," he says.

REGGIE ALTEMA

# THE PLAYERS' TRIBUNE

## Let It Flow

SEP 1 2015

> **PUBLICATION**  
The Players' Tribune

> **IMPRESSIONS**  
893,600 Unique  
monthly visitors

> **DATE**  
September 1, 2015

NYJAH HUSTON  
CONTRIBUTOR

**D**o you know how much five gallons of water weigh? Almost 42 pounds. By itself, that doesn't seem like a lot – the same way 200 yards, by itself, doesn't seem like such a long distance. It's just a couple of football fields.

But it's all about context.

I've always been relatively small in frame. Even today, at 20 years old, I'm about 5'10" and 155 pounds. It can be an advantage when I'm out shredding a street course somewhere, but it hasn't always worked in my favor.



When I was 13 years old living in Puerto Rico, I might have been around 100 pounds. So if you take those five gallons (42 pounds) of water and ask my 100-pound frame to haul them 200 yards uphill to our house multiple times a day – sometimes for as many as seven days in a row – so we could have clean water, it gets pretty gnarly. That 42 pounds (almost half my weight) gets a lot heavier, and those 200 yards starts to feel like miles. My back would ache so much, sometimes that I didn't even want to go out and skate.



I'd look at my mom, ready to complain, but if I did, I'd always get the same response.

She'd tell me about the kids out there who had it worse than us. Those kids out there who were walking two miles, not 200 yards, to get water, and they weren't getting it from a filtered holding tank like we were. They were getting water from a stream somewhere – filthy water that could make them sick – because that's all the water they had. So I wasn't allowed to complain because there were people out there who had it worse than us, and they *had* to live that way. They didn't have a choice.

This is what confused me more than anything, because we *did* have a choice, and I couldn't understand why we were *choosing* to live like that in the first place. All I wanted to do was skate, and San Lorenzo, Puerto Rico was a long way from the skateboarding life I'd left in California.

My parents always did things a little bit differently. My three brothers, my sister and I didn't go to normal public schools – we were home-schooled. We didn't play Little League or other team sports. We were a skateboarding family. I was raised a vegan until I was a teenager. I was too young to really remember it, but at one time, my family lived in Hawaii and Fiji because my parents wanted us to be exposed to different cultures and alternative lifestyles.

After Hawaii and Fiji, we moved to California, where I basically lived every kid's dream. My family owned a skatepark near our home in Davis, so every day I would wake up, go to the skatepark and skate all day and into the evening. It was a pretty gnarly setup. I had it made. And because I was practicing so much and I was getting really good, I started to make a name for myself on the skateboarding scene in California. Things were moving pretty fast for me. I was only 11 years old and I already had a sponsor. I got invited to skate at the X-Games. I was taking off. Everything was perfect.

So when my dad got this idea to pack up the family and move to a rural farm in the hills of Puerto Rico, I was like, *Wait ... what?* I thought it was crazy.





My dad got the idea when we traveled to Puerto Rico for a skateboarding contest. I don't know if he wanted to go back to that alternative lifestyle or if he wanted to protect me and the family from the media attention and everything else that was going on, but the bottom line was this: I didn't want to go. I loved my life in California. Like I said, it was a legit setup – a skateboarder's dream.

But I was 11 years old, so I really didn't have a choice. My mom tried to talk my dad out of it, but it didn't work.

We sold the skatepark and moved to Puerto Rico.

Our house in Puerto Rico was on a 26-acre farm about 30 minutes up the hill outside the city of San Lorenzo. All in all, it was a really nice place. The island was beautiful. It just wasn't the best place to grow up if you're a skateboarder. There's still stuff to skate out there, but it's definitely not California.

We basically lived off the grid and in isolation. It was a tough adjustment after the lifestyle we lived in California, and for a lot of reasons, it was the most tumultuous time in my life and in my family's life. Day-to-day life was much tougher, but it was also difficult for me to maintain and grow my skateboarding career. I was young, so I didn't really know what was going on behind the scenes or why. I just knew that all I wanted to do was skate, and living in Puerto Rico was making that a lot harder.

That's why carrying those five-gallon buckets of water up that hill still stays with me. It represents the extreme opposite of the life I'd left in California.



Let me explain: Like I said, we were basically living off the grid. So during periods of heavy rainfall – which was pretty often, it's a tropical climate – the water would go out. Either a pipe would break or a storm would bring debris that would clog a water line, and when it did, my older brothers Jahmai and Ahbi and I would have to walk down to the holding tank to get clean water until the water line was repaired or until it rained enough for the water line to unclog itself.

Sometimes it lasted one day, sometimes a week. Either way, carrying those 42 pounds of water up the hill was backbreaking work for a little dude like me.

If I took clean water away from you, the first thing you'd think about is not having water to drink. And you'd be right. That's important, for obvious reasons. But it doesn't stop there. There are so many other things we use clean water for on a daily basis that we just don't even think about. And you'd be surprised at how much water each person actually uses.

You need water to flush the toilet. You need clean water to shower. To do laundry. To do dishes. And in a house of seven people – me, my parents, my two older brothers and my younger brother and sister, Kiade and Isha – one five-gallon bucket didn't go a long way. Seven people meant a lot of laundry and dishes. A lot of showers. A lot of water.

Which meant a lot of trips to the holding tank.

Going from one extreme to the other was eye-opening. Like I said, it was a tumultuous time, but in what were very formative years for me, it was also a learning experience. My mom, Kelle, made sure of that.

Every opportunity she got, she would remind us of how lucky we were. I still remember what she used to say when we'd complain. She'd talk about the kids all over the world who had it worse than us. She'd always say, "One day, we're going to do something to help those people."





I was still traveling to skateboarding tournaments and other events from Puerto Rico, but the isolation and the lifestyle change wasn't working for my family, so my mom decided to take my brothers and sister back to California. My dad wasn't happy about it. He wanted to stay in Puerto Rico. And since he was managing my skateboarding career, I stayed with him.

Being away from my mom and my brothers and sister was probably the hardest thing I've done in my life. Living in Puerto Rico was already a really weird and confusing time for me, and now having to do it without them was even more difficult, especially since California was where I wanted to be, and I was the only one that didn't get to be there.

In total, I spent about three years in Puerto Rico before my parents eventually divorced and I finally moved back to California. I was so stoked to be home in California with my mom and my brothers and sister again, but I was also stoked to get back to the life I'd left a few years earlier, the life where the only things that mattered were my family and my skateboard.

I picked up right where I left off, too. At 15 years old I won my first Street League event in Arizona. After that, the wins and the Top 3 finishes just kept coming, and I was having a lot of success – the kind of success I was headed for before we left California.

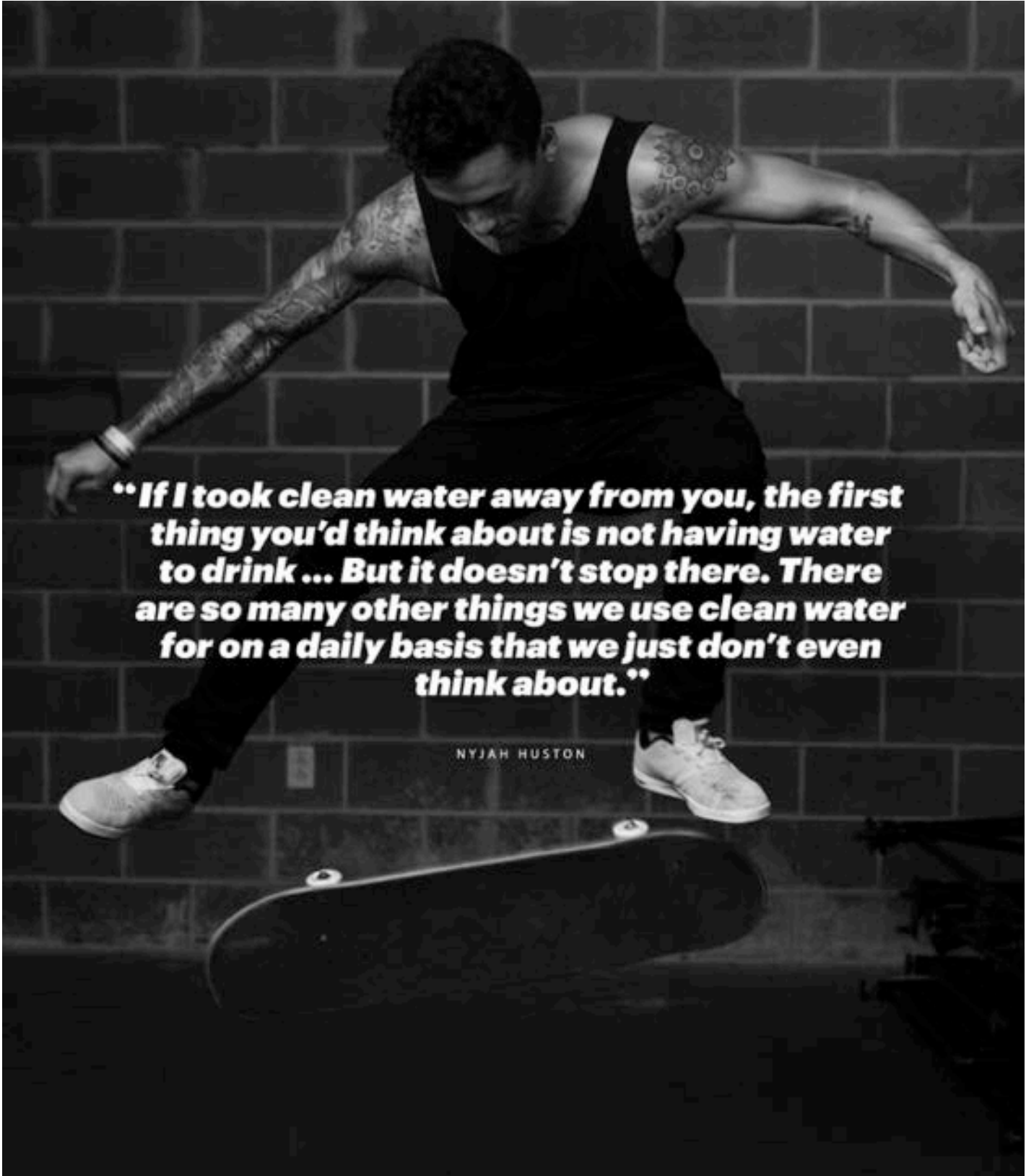
With every Top 3 finish and every new endorsement, my platform started getting bigger and bigger. And as it did, I remembered what my mom always used to say back in Puerto Rico, about those who had it worse than we did.

“One day, we’re going to do something to help those people.”

I thought about those five-gallon buckets, the 200-yard climb and the kids all over the world who are carrying more and walking farther and climbing higher than I’d ever had to. I thought about the nasty water they were pulling from polluted rivers and streams and the waterborne diseases that were killing them because they had no choice but to drink that gross water.

And suddenly I realized what my mom had told me all along – how lucky I really was. I get to be a pro skateboarder. I get to do what I love. And the way I see it is, you gotta spread the wealth. When you get to the point where you’re having success and you’re doing what you love, the natural next step in life should be to do whatever you can to help make other people’s lives better. Because of skateboarding, I get to travel all over and skate the sickest spots in the world. But most recently, I skated the rawest streets in the world and had some of the most amazing experiences of my life, and as weird as it sounds, I have Puerto Rico to thank for it.





**“If I took clean water away from you, the first thing you’d think about is not having water to drink ... But it doesn’t stop there. There are so many other things we use clean water for on a daily basis that we just don’t even think about.”**

NYJAH HUSTON

As unlikely of a place as Puerto Rico was for my family to find itself at one point, the village of Debra Brehan in Ethiopia is probably an even more unlikely setting for the next part of my story. But in terms of impact, it might be the most important.

My mom and I always kind of had this dream to help bring clean water to the millions of people all over the world who don't have access to it – those people she'd always reminded me about if I started to complain. So early in 2015, my mom and I teamed up with Tony Hawk and a couple of other skateboarders and sponsors and headed to Ethiopia.

Debra Brehan is home to about 900 people. It's also the place where my mom and I – through our foundation, Let It Flow – fixed our first clean water well and restored clean running water to an entire community.

It's one thing to build a new clean water well, but the reality is that in most places around the world, the wells already exist. The communities just don't have the tools or the infrastructure to properly maintain them, so the wells break, and when they do, the villages don't have the means to fix them, so they lose the access to running water they once had.

We repaired 15 wells in Ethiopia on that trip.

I've had some pretty cool moments in my life. I've stood on podiums and received medals and traveled the world. But the moment when those kids from Debra Brehan ran up to that well that was pouring out clean, fresh water – something they'd never seen before – it was on a whole different level. They were super stoked. It made me look back to Puerto Rico and the struggles we faced and think, *That was nothing. These are the people who really struggle. These are the people who need our help.*



And we didn't stop there.

There's a guy in Ethiopia named Israel Dejene. We call him Izzy. He takes care of about 40-50 kids out there. Most of them are orphans, and they all absolutely love skateboarding, and that's mostly because Izzy brought skateboarding to them and to his city of Addis Ababa. Izzy came out to Debra Brehan, which is a couple hours down the road from Addis Ababa, to help us repair our first well. He's an amazing dude, and we figured, since we're in Ethiopia anyway and these kids love skateboarding, why not give those kids a gnarly place to skate?

So in addition to repairing wells, we also built the first-ever cement skateboard ramp in Ethiopia for Izzy and his kids.

When they saw us out there building the ramp, they were so stoked. I just hope they can take even a fraction from skateboarding of what it's given to me.



My mom always says, “You can’t help everybody everywhere, but you can always help somebody, somewhere.” There are millions of people in the world who don’t have access to clean water. The unfortunate reality is that my mom’s right: We can’t help all of them. But as long as we’re helping one village at a time and we’re making progress, we’re gonna keep going and help as many people as humanly possible.

I don’t know if I’ll ever really understand why my dad decided to move us to Puerto Rico. I hated it at the time, but it’s given me a perspective that I don’t think I would have had otherwise, and it ultimately inspired my mom and me to do what we do with Let It Flow, which has brought so many other great experiences and memories to other people’s lives as well as our own.

Things have a funny way of working out. When you’re a kid, you never really understand why things are happening when they happen. If you pay attention and experience things and learn and grown from them, it’s pretty gnarly when later on down the road, you can look at some of those challenging times in your life and think, *Yeah, I’m pretty glad it went down like that.*

*Nyjah Huston and his mother, Kelle, are the founders of Let It Flow, a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing clean running water to the millions of people across the globe who don’t have access to it. Right now, select donors will receive an autographed photo of Nyjah and a chance to win a VIP trip for two to the Street League Championships in Chicago. To learn more, visit [letitflow.org](https://letitflow.org).*

**NYJAH HUSTON**  
CONTRIBUTOR



## Nyjah Huston: 'Flow Fest' Charity Event This Weekend!



Pro Skateboarder [Nyjah Huston](#) is set to host his own charity event called **Flow Fest** this Saturday, May 4th!

Last week, the 18-year-old skater won the gold medal at *The X-Games* in Brazil and now, he's enlisted the exclusive indoor skate facility The Berrics to open its doors in support of his charity *Let it Flow*, which brings water and sanitation facilities to communities in need.

"I am so grateful to The Berrics for standing behind my charity," **Nyjah** tells JJJ. "This will be the first time in history that they are allowing the public into their exclusive skate park,

and it means a lot. Having access to clean water is a necessity, not a luxury, but unfortunately unsanitary water remains one of the top killers across the world. I didn't always have it, so I cherish it every day."

**Nyjah**'s documentary *The Motivation* recently premiered at the [2013 Tribeca Film Festival](#) and he even has his own shoe line with DC Shoes coming out May 31st.

More info can be found on [LetItFlow.org](#) and [Nyjah's Twitter!](#)

### > PUBLICATION

JustJaredJr.com

### > IMPRESSIONS

4,200,000 Unique  
monthly visitors

### > DATE

May 2, 2013

# DAILYSHOT<sup>on YAHOO!</sup> with ALI WENTWORTH

The earliest late-night show

## The Secret to Teen's Skateboarding Success



1 hour 25 minutes ago, Daily Shot

Nyjah Huston, fresh off a gold medal win at the X Games in Brazil, tells Ali that he grew up vegan and never drank soda. The 18-year-old is one of the top skateboarders in the world, and the subject of the new documentary, *The Motivation*. But what we all want to know is: can he teach Ali to do an Ollie? Nyjah has also started a charity with his mom called Let It Flow, which raises money to build wells and sanitation facilities for communities who need better access to clean water.

### > PUBLICATION

Yahoo!'s Daily Shot with Ali Wentworth

### > IMPRESSIONS

1,471,079 Unique monthly visitors

### > DATE

May 6, 2013



# Good Day New York

Nyjah Huston



MYFOXNY.COM - The life of skating phenom **Nyjah Huston** and the eight all-time best street skateboarders is the subject of the new documentary *The Motivation*. Huston made a pit stop at the Good Day studios to talk about the film and show viewers some of his tricks.

*The Motivation* is playing at the Tribeca Film Festival.

<http://nyjah.com/>

Posted: Apr 24, 2013 10:22 AM PDT  
Updated: Apr 25, 2013 6:52 AM PDT

## > PUBLICATION

Good Day New York

## > VIEWERSHIP

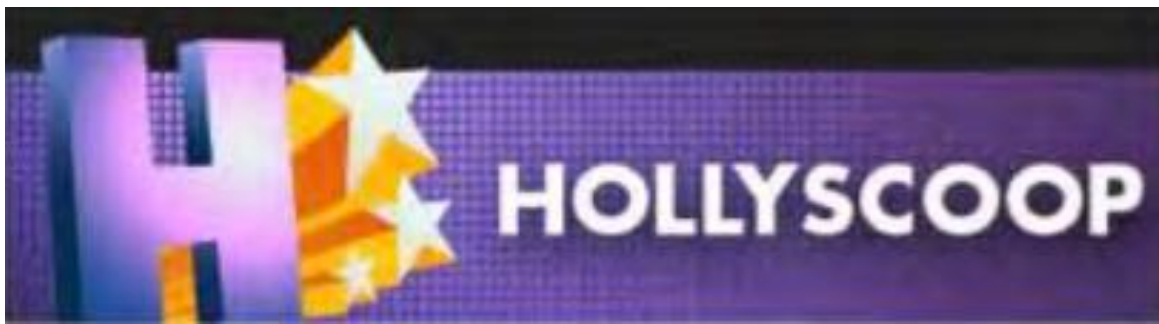
1,200,000 Views

## > IMPRESSIONS

1,802,400 Unique monthly visitors

## > DATE

April 24, 2013



## > **PUBLICATION**

HollyScoop.com

## > **IMPRESSIONS**

2,364,552 Unique  
monthly visitors

## > **DATE**

June 8, 2013

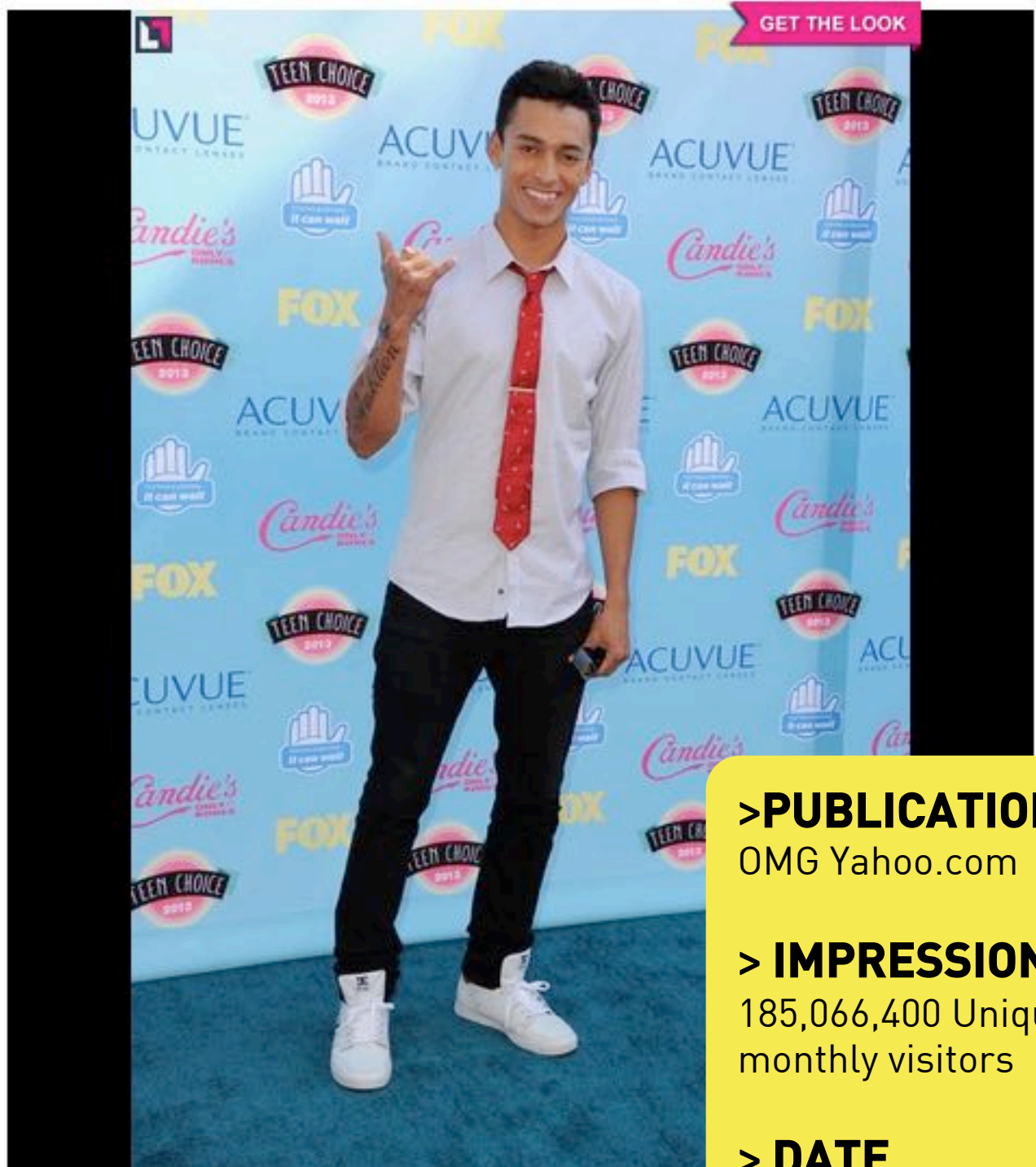


# Yahoo!

omg!

## 2013 Teen Choice Awards Red Carpet

Selena Gomez, One Direction, and other hot young stars hit the blue carpet for the 2013 Teen Choice Awards, held at the Gibson Amphitheatre in Los Angeles.



### > PUBLICATION

OMG Yahoo.com

### > IMPRESSIONS

185,066,400 Unique  
monthly visitors

### > DATE

August 11, 2013

# First Look: Rob Dyrdek, Ryan Sheckler, Nyjah Huston Skateboarding Doc 'The Motivation' (Exclusive Video)



## > PUBLICATION

The Hollywood Reporter Online

## > IMPRESSIONS

6,202,000 Unique monthly visitors

## > DATE

July 9, 2013

Adam Bhala Lough's film, which screened at Tribeca earlier this year, gets a teaser trailer.

Tensions are high in the teaser trailer for Adam Bhala Lough's skateboarding doc, *The Motivation*.



Rob Dyrdek, Ryan Sheckler, **Nyjah Huston**, Chris Cole, Paul Rodriguez, Bastien Salabanzi, Chaz Ortiz, Luan Oliveira and Sean Malto are featured in the film, which screened at the Tribeca Film Festival earlier this year.

### **STORY: David LaChapelle Designs Beastie Boys Skateboard for Charity**

*The Motivation* follows eight of the world's best skateboarders as they prepare for the annual street league competition, founded by Dyrdek, in New York City, battling family pressures, injuries, money issues and fame, among other internal struggles.

“Becoming a street league champion is the most prestigious thing that could happen in all of competitive skateboarding,” says Dyrdek in the trailer. “Eight guys make it to the championship and it’s a winner take all. It doesn’t matter how good you’ve done all year, can you be the best on this day? And if you are, you are the champion forever.”

*The Motivation* will receive a limited theatrical release on July 30 and will be available on iTunes and On Demand beginning Aug. 6.









# Nyjah Huston's Perfect Skate Shoe

Written by Georgina Langford

Posted 10/07/2013



18-year-old [pro skater](#) Nyjah Huston is world famous for his championship-level street stunts, but he's also an expert on what makes the perfect skate shoe. As he releases his signature Nyjah Huston sneakers with DC, Nyjah spoke to District MTV about the holy trinity of look, feel and protection that he aims for in a skate shoe.

## > PUBLICATION

District MTV Online

## > IMPRESSIONS

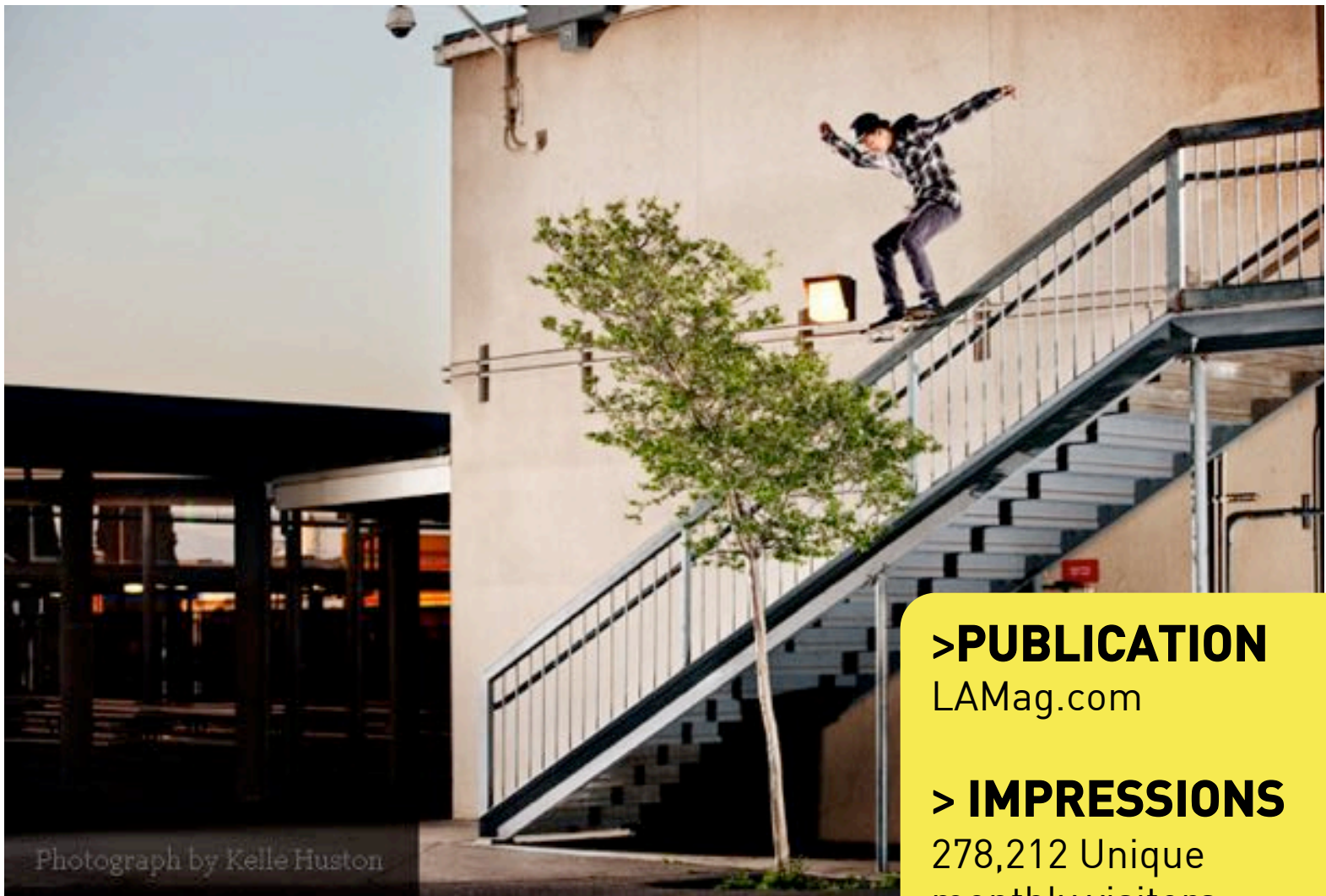
76,200 Unique monthly visitors

## > DATE

July 10, 2013

## My LA to Z: Nyjah Huston

The 18-year-old skateboarding prodigy, who's nominated for Best Male Action Sports Athlete at this year's ESPYs (find a link to vote below), grinds out a list of his top spots in town. Read on to see where this X Games gold medalist goes to practice his tricks, get freshly inked, and soup up his car



Photograph by Kelle Huston

### > PUBLICATION

LAMag.com

### > IMPRESSIONS

278,212 Unique  
monthly visitors

### > DATE

July 3, 2013





## Nyjah Huston sweeps 2014 Street League



### > PUBLICATION

XGames/ ESPN Online

### > IMPRESSIONS

109,823,000 Unique  
monthly visitors

### > DATE

August 25, 2014

Mike Blabac

"Obviously I'm super stoked on this year, it was really ideal," Nyjah Huston said after claiming the win. "Having a straight sweep is something you cannot expect or set a goal for, but this season really just went well. I have been practicing a lot and added a lot of new tricks," he added, including this backside flip.

Nyjah Huston completed his clean sweep of every event on the 2014 SLS Nike SB World Tour on Sunday with a down-to-the-wire win at the 2014 Super Crown World Championship at the Prudential Center in Newark, New Jersey, beating out Torey Pudwill and Ishod Wair -- Thrasher Magazine's reigning Skater of the Year -- for the top spot.



"This whole year has just been pretty on point for me," Huston said after the win, a massive understatement in a year that has included wins at every major contest he has entered, from Tampa Pro in March and X Games Austin in June to all four SLS World Tour events. "I think it was just a mixture of a lot of hard work in practice and a lot of lucky situations," he said. He was more exuberant later, posting to social media: "This year has been unreal. Couldn't be any more stoked. The win tonight was one of the best moments of my life!"

Huston was the odds-on-favorite heading into the Super Crown, but the night was still full of surprises. Shane O'Neill, another favorite and this season's highest scorer with a 9.8 at the SLS event in Chicago, was bumped out of the competition after finishing last in the Flow section, the first of three portions of the contest. Perpetual crowd favorite Luan Oliveira led after the Flow section, then bumped all the way to last and was eliminated after falling on all four attempts in the the Impact section.

It was Huston's turn to shine in the Impact section, posting the first of many scores in the 9-plus range for the night with a Cab backside noseblunt to fakie, earning a 9.0 and taking the overall lead.

## 2014 Street League Super Crown



Mike Blabac

## Street League Super Crown World Champs





SLS rookie Matt Berger earned a 9.0 of his own, his first entry in the SLS 9 Club, with a tailslide to fakie in the first of six attempts in the final Control section, which is judged on each skater's top four tricks. Wair answered with a 9.1 for a huge frontside kickflip in his second attempt, and Huston posted another 9.0 for a backside flip over a closeout rail feature on the course, followed by a 9.1 for a nollie backside noseblunt slide on the same rail. Pudwill scored a 9.0 with a kickflip backside lipslide to tailslide combo in his fifth attempt, while Huston fell on a Cab flip attempt, leaving the podium spots open for the taking.

Pudwill briefly took the lead after a backside 5-0 grind on the closeout rail, while Wair blew his chance to win after a sketchy kickflip crooked grind that didn't go the way he'd planned left him with a 2.8 on his final attempt. Chaz Ortiz found his way into the 9 Club with a 9.0 for a crooked grind to nollie heelflip out, but it was too little too late after falling on three previous attempts. Huston dropped last and only needed a 5.5 to take the win, but went all out anyway, landing the Cab flip and making history as the first skater to sweep a Street League season.

"The final trick, I was so nervous, nervous as can be," Huston admitted afterward, before addressing some haters in the crowd who had been rooting for Wair, the local favorite, and fanning out on Wair and Pudwill himself. "Shoutout to all the boo-ers over there, you guys are killing it. But it was a really great contest. Torey and Ishod killed it, gave me such a good run for my money, and those guys are some of my favorite skaters so I'm just psyched to be out here with them."

The respect from his peers, if not from the crowd, was mutual.

"This is a win for me," Pudwill said, holding his second-place trophy aloft. "I'm so psyched. Nyjah deserves the win ... I'm just very happy to be sitting here with all these boys, being able to skate with all my homies in this contest."

SLS founder Rob Dyrdek was effusive in his praise as he presented the 2014 SLS Super Crown World Championship trophy to Huston.

"This guy has won every single contest this entire year: it's never happened in the history of skateboarding, Tampa Pro to everything, and the very first time to win all the Street Leagues," Dyrdek said. "And the way to do it is when you have to do it when it matters most on your absolute final trick. He asked me, he said, 'Should I try an easy trick?' I said, 'Naw, I don't want to give you advice because if you mess up you can blame me.' And he went for the Cab flip into that bank to prove that, 'Look, I can do the hardest tricks when it matters most.' Someone who's very deserving to call themselves a Street League champion, the one and only Nyjah Huston."



## Skate star Huston hosts local contest

### > PUBLICATION

Orange County Register

### > IMPRESSIONS

1,822,100 Unique  
Monthly visitors

### > DATE

August 13, 2015



Maurio McCoy (center), holds his first-place trophies with, from left, Brandon Westgate, Chris Colbourn, Evan Smith (back), Nyjah Huston and Madars Apse. Colbourn and Apse are Element pro skaters, while Westgate, Smith and Huston served as the contest's judges.

COURTESY OF ELEMENT BRAND , COURTESY OF ELEMENT BRAND



Nyjah Huston's Private Park in San Clemente hosted 25 of the best up-and-coming international skaters as part of Element Brand's Make It Count Series finals last weekend.

Element Pro Team members Huston, of San Juan Capistrano, Brandon Westgate and Evan Smith served as judges for the event and deemed Mauricio McCoy, of Reading, Pa., the overall winner after intense competition.

Collin Hale of Underhill, Vt., and Thomas Turner of Gilbert, Ariz., took second and third, respectively.

The Make It Count series gave 25 international contest winners a chance to skate with the Element Pro Team while visiting California skateparks, including the Element Skate Camp, The Berrics and Nyjah's Private Park.

The 25 competitors spent a week on the road together, culminating with finals in San Clemente.

With the win, McCoy gets a shot at an Element sponsorship.

The Make It Count Series is facilitated by Element's nonprofit, the Elemental Awareness Foundation, which connects kids to nature through skateboarding.

The series also serves as a mentorship trip for the best skateboarder from each local community. The brand says that giving these riders a positive influence through the trip will translate to positivity in their respective communities.



**> PUBLICATION**

ESPN.com

**> IMPRESSIONS**

22,907,062 Unique  
monthly visitors

**> DATE**

June 28, 2013

01:43 / 01:57

**ALL-ACCESS -- NYJAH HUSTON AT ESPN**

Join Nyjah Huston as he spends a day at ESPN.





## Nyjah Huston's Growing Pains

### > PUBLICATION

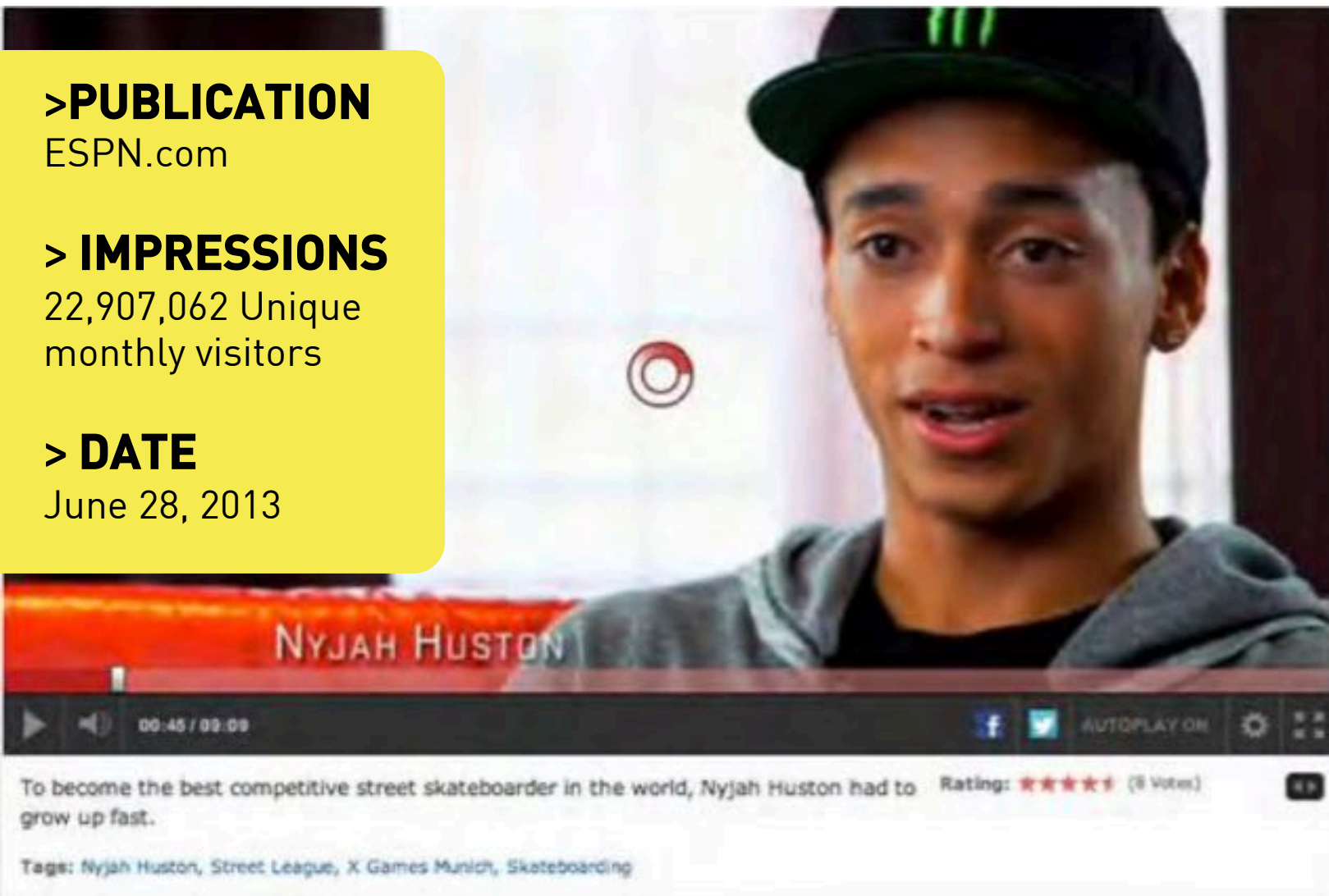
ESPN.com

### > IMPRESSIONS

22,907,062 Unique  
monthly visitors

### > DATE

June 28, 2013





## > PUBLICATION

XGames/ ESPN Online

## > IMPRESSIONS

109,823,000 Unique  
monthly visitors

## > DATE

June 17, 2013



## CATCHING UP WITH NYJAH HUSTON

X Games gold medalist Nyjah Huston reflects on his memories of participating in the X Games at the age of 11, winning gold in Street League Skateboarding in Barcelona and his motivation to keep progressing.





von  
Steven Jörgensen

Nyjah Huston gilt als bester Skateboarder der Welt. Jetzt startet er in München bei den X Games. Der Amerikaner mag deutsche Autos

Der Amerikaner Nyjah Huston schließt mit seinem Skateboard über ein Hindernis. Er sagte 2013 bereits bei den X Games in Brasilien und Barcelona in der Disziplin Street League

# »Skateboard sollte olympisch sein«

X Games-Zyklus

INTERVIEW »Skateboard sollte olympisch sein«

Von Steven Jörgensen

SPURT BILD: Wie oft haben Sie schon an Olympischen Spielen teilgenommen? **Ich habe noch nie an Olympischen Spielen teilgenommen.**

Wie oft haben Sie schon an X Games teilgenommen? **Ich habe noch nie an X Games teilgenommen.**

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Nyjah Huston ist einer der besten Skateboarder der Welt. Er ist 21 Jahre alt und hat schon viele Erfolge erzielt.

INTERVIEW »Skateboard sollte olympisch sein«

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Nyjah Huston ist einer der besten Skateboarder der Welt. Er ist 21 Jahre alt und hat schon viele Erfolge erzielt.

INTERVIEW »Skateboard sollte olympisch sein«

»Skateboard sollte olympisch sein«

Krankenversicherung?

Nicht, dass ich wusste. Aber ich wollte, dass es die gäbe.

Sind Sie schon einmal von der Riesen-Rampe gefahren, auf der Ihre Kollegen im Big Air-Wettbewerb fahren? Die Mega-Rampe ist 26 Meter hoch.

Ich habe das noch nie probiert, würde es aber gern einmal tun. Allerdings müsste ich viel Zeit investieren, um mich darauf zu konzentrieren. Es ist unglaublich, so hoch durch die Luft zu fliegen und dann wieder auf den Füßen zu landen.

Sie waren mit 17 Jahren das erste Mal bei den X Games am Start. Wie hat sich der Sport verändert?

Skateboarding hat sich unheimlich gut weiterentwickelt. Ich bin stolz, dass ich

ein Teil des Ganzen bin. Ich wünsche, die nächsten Jahre fit und gesund zu bleiben. Ich will von den älteren Fahrern jedes Jahr etwas Neues lernen.

Sind Sie durch Skateboarding schon zum Multi-Millionär geworden?

Der Sport zahlt sich aus, und das weiß ich zu schätzen. Ich würde nicht sagen, dass ich schon Multi-Millionär bin. Die Leute denken, dass wir mehr verdienen, als wir



Nyjah Huston ist einer der besten Skateboarder der Welt. Er ist 21 Jahre alt und hat schon viele Erfolge erzielt.

es am Ende wirklich tun. Aber ich bin dankbar für alles.

Sie haben seit Kurzem auf dem Arm das Wort »Ambition« zu Deutsch »Ehrgeiz«, tätowiert. Es ist Ihr zweites Tattoo. Was ist das andere, und was bedeuten die beiden?

Beim ersten steht Destroy – also zerstören. Ich habe das Wort »Ambition« ausgewählt, weil es mich sehr gut beschreibt. Ich will viel erreichen und der Beste sein.

Sie haben seit Kurzem auf dem Arm das Wort »Ambition« zu Deutsch »Ehrgeiz«, tätowiert. Es ist Ihr zweites Tattoo. Was ist das andere, und was bedeuten die beiden?

»PUBLICATION  
SPORTBILD.DE

»IMPRESSIONS  
479,058 unique  
visitors

»DATE  
JUNE 28, 2013



## FIVE WITH NYJAH HUSTON



### > PUBLICATION

XGames.com

### > IMPRESSIONS

109,823,000 Unique  
monthly visitors

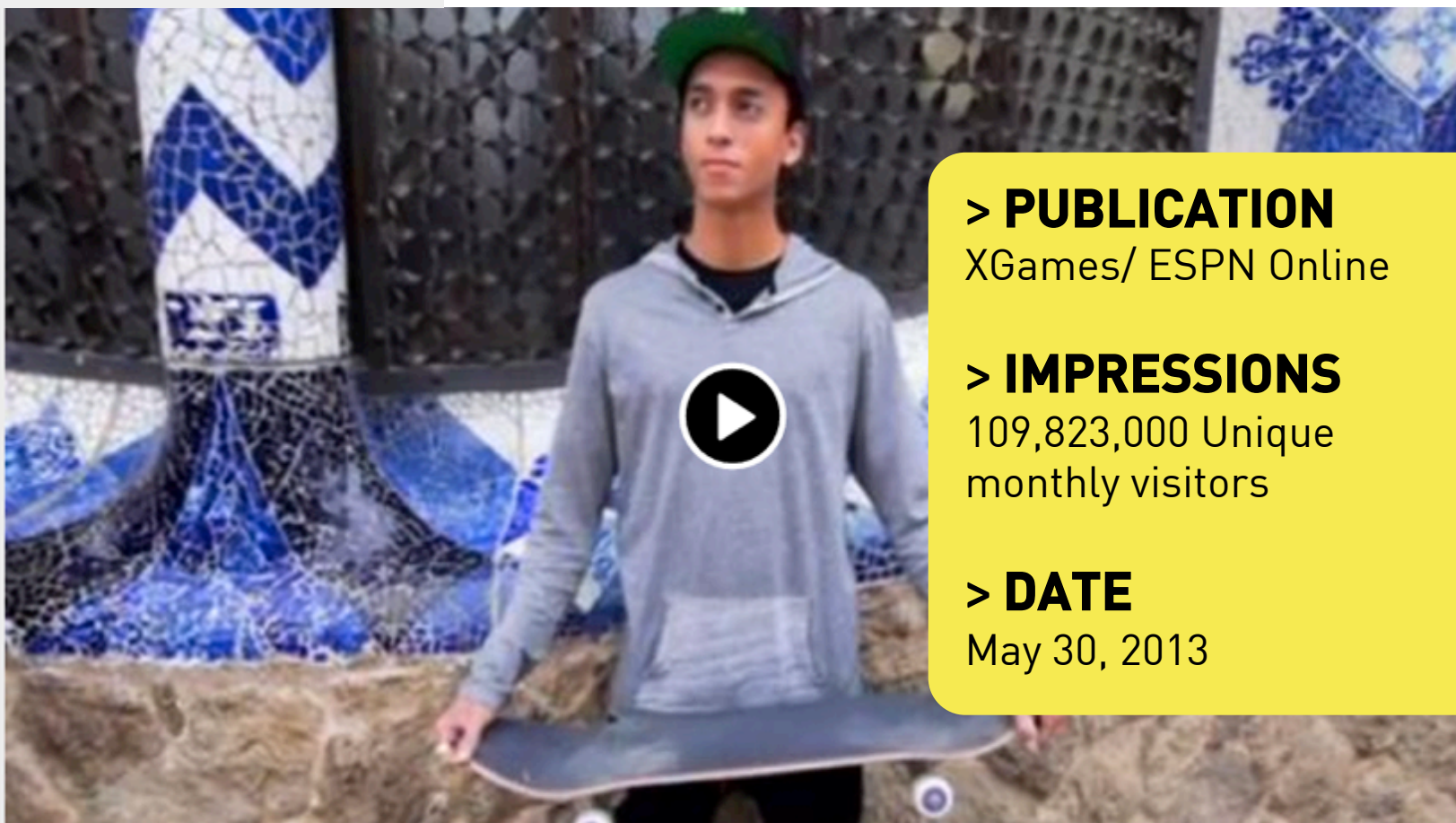
### > DATE

June 22, 2013





18 at last



> **PUBLICATION**

XGames/ ESPN Online

> **IMPRESSIONS**

109,823,000 Unique  
monthly visitors

> **DATE**

May 30, 2013

Nyjah Huston, the most dominant street skater in the X Games, reflects on the pressures of having his father as a manager growing up.

Nyjah Huston was planning to defend his Street League Skateboarding gold at X Games Munich this week. But on Tuesday, he [withdrew from the competition](#) due to a rib injury. This story appears in ESPN The Magazine's June 24 Money issue. [Subscribe today!](#)

**SKATEBOARDER NYJAH HUSTON** is jumping up and down at the top of the course, rapping his board on the concrete: blap-blap-blap. The Street League Skateboarding final at X Games Barcelona was already delayed by May rains, and now wind at the mountaintop site isn't making it any easier for the two skaters left in competition. Paul Rodriguez already aced his closing trick, so Huston's last-ditch attempt must be near perfect to win.

Huston doesn't do nervous. His methodical style gets into rivals' heads, makes them cave; folks call the 18-year-old Soul Crusher. He won X Games gold at Foz do Iguacu a month ago, and before the SLS series and X Games partnered this year, he'd won seven of the past 11 SLS events and two overall titles since 2010.

Now Nyjah is the last skater in the start area. Rodriguez, barely hanging on to first place, watches from the course-side area, bro-ing it up with eliminated skaters. P-Rod's final run got them on their feet, and Nyjah's nervous display has amped their anticipation. Are they finally going to see Nyjah crack? One more blap-blap and Nyjah's on his board, charging toward the drop-off. And then he ... stops.

**THIS ISN'T** Nyjah Huston's first time in Barcelona. He came here five years ago on a sponsor trip with his dad, Adeyemi, only to return home to Puerto Rico to find that his mom, Kelle, his three brothers and his sister weren't coming home after a trip to California. For better or worse, the 13-year-old was now alone with his dad.



Matt Morning for ESPN

Huston has only one superstition: "I always wear red boxers in the final." It worked for him in Barcelona.

A middle child, Nyjah grew up in a family that was progressively adherent to the Rastafarian religion. His parents met in junior high in Merced, Calif., and by the time they graduated from high school, the Bob Marley-loving couple were listening closer to his lyrics. Rastafarianism made sense: living close to nature, eating vegan and seeking independence from capitalism.



The individuality of skateboarding fit right in with Adeyemi's interpretation of the religion. Team sports were too codependent, so skating was the one sport that the father, a skater in high school, could share with Nyjah and his older brothers, Ahbi and Jahmai. By the time Nyjah was 6 years old, he'd been skating for one year and had sprung dreads like his dad. He and his brothers started winning every contest in the California Amateur Skateboard League.

Like an alterna-Partridge Family, the Hustons bought a motor home to travel to skating events, where they'd roll up seven-deep with a meatless picnic. Adeyemi nurtured Nyjah's obsession, building ramps in their backyard and a small course on the side of their house. With cash from Adeyemi's mom, they soon bought the dilapidated Boardwild skatepark, renaming it Frontline, 20 minutes from their house in Davis, Calif. Dad rebuilt the indoor course and Mom home-schooled the kids there, letting them skate daily after work was done. But as the older brothers casually skated with friends, Nyjah regimented his sessions. He would start with a list of tricks in his head and wouldn't move on until he'd landed the progression in seamless order. "That's where it all started," Nyjah says. "If you're in an environment where you have a perfect skatepark every single day, you're naturally gonna get good if you love to do it."

At age 7, Nyjah was so good that Adeyemi's videotapes of the boy skating his line got a sponsorship from Element. "In any family, when a kid gets that good, everyone gets excited, and it was clear that he had a gift," says Element founder Johnny Schillereff. "For a long time, it was good. It was a good relationship with the Huston family and Nyjah. It wasn't always dysfunctional."

**NYJAH HAS SLID** *the back of his board on the concrete, inches from the drop-off -- his expression reads that he has surprised even himself. He pats the air with his hands as if asking the Barcelona crowd for a minute. No one has seen this from the skater with nerves of steel. Certainly not a pacing P-Rod or the commentator who wonders aloud whether Nyjah is rattled.*

*The crowd encourages the do-or-die drama, raining down high-pitched whistles. And P-Rod looks as though he can't handle much more of the tension. Even as the other skaters pat his back and hug him, he shakes them off and twice reminds them: "This guy is very good."*





Kelle Huston (courtesy)

At 2 years old, Nyjah Huston used to commandeer dad Adeyemi's old skateboard. The meticulous toddler would line up his toys the same way every day and push it around dump-truck style until he was big enough to ride. "I was, apparently, a very specific, motivated kid," Nyjah says.

**AT 10**, Nyjah did the unthinkable. He won first place in street at the Tampa Am, the top competition for amateurs -- beating out skaters as old as 30. He followed that by becoming the youngest-ever X Games athlete at 11 years, 246 days. (Skateboarder Jagger Eaton now holds that record at 11 years, 129 days.) Adeyemi cleared away any distraction to Nyjah's singular approach, and his devotion rocketed the kid's development to the point where Nyjah held his own against pro skaters twice his age. "That's the best thing he could've done for me," Nyjah says, "keeping me concentrated on skating at such a young age. That's obviously what I'm meant to do in life. The worst thing was just not being able to let go."

Nyjah's talent, age and look -- those dreads now draped down to his knees -- made him stand out to more and more endorsers, who all got filtered through Adeyemi. At first, it made sense that the parent who incubated Nyjah's gift would also sort out the deals. But soon internal conflict flickered between Adeyemi's religion and his son's burgeoning success. "It stemmed from being caught up in that whole Rastafarian belief system," Kelle says, "where you kind of are trying to isolate yourself from society. But then at the same time, we had a son who was on his way to becoming a superstar and needed to be part of society."

In some respects, Adeyemi (who did not respond to interview requests for this story) proved to be a shrewd manager, bumping up a \$15,000-a-month deal with Element to \$20,000 monthly and licensing Nyjah's image for Tony Hawk's video game. But he proved difficult in other ways. Contracts required Nyjah to go to signings and on foreign tours, obligations that Adeyemi often refused to uphold. Then, shortly after visiting Puerto Rico for a contest, Adeyemi bought a 26-acre farm on the island valued at \$400,000. "He wanted to move there, I would say, to keep me and my brothers away from going to school in California and getting girlfriends or whatever," Nyjah says. "He was always so against that part of life."

The remote farm was outfitted so crudely that the plumbing system would fail during most hard rains. This left the children trekking 1,000 yards to haul heavy buckets of clean water from a reserve tank to wash dishes and clothes or to flush the toilet. They rarely interacted with other kids, and Nyjah didn't even bother to learn Spanish.

Life in Puerto Rico was far from the one the family had loved at Frontline, but Adeyemi wouldn't compromise on where he thought they should live. "That was the beginning of the end of our marriage, because we couldn't agree on what was best for our family," Kelle says. And it didn't make life easier professionally either. When a sponsor, frustrated by a potential breach of contract, called Kelle, she says Adeyemi flew into a rage over being circumnavigated.

To get a reprieve from the isolation, Kelle left for California with the rest of the kids while Nyjah and Adeyemi were in Barcelona in April 2008. "Because my dad was my manager, I was kind of the one child out of all my brothers and sisters who didn't kind of have a choice," he says. "I was forced to live with my dad, so that was really unfortunate."

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**NYJAH TUGS** *at his black jeans, then jumps up and down again, tapping that board. A deep breath later, he pushes off, gliding to and over the drop-off.*

*He's sure to have landed his planned trick -- a nollie hardflip over the Hubba feature -- a thousand times in his head. But he has landed it only once in practice at Barcelona, three days earlier. No one knows what to make of his nervous pause -- whether he'll land his trick or maybe even change the script.*

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**KELLE PLEADED** with Adeyemi to split the year between California and Puerto Rico. She wanted the kids to be around peers, and she wanted Nyjah to be able to fulfill his contracts. Adeyemi wouldn't budge. And when Nyjah's 9-year-old sister, Isha, came for a visit, she stayed longer than Kelle had expected.



Over the next two years, Nyjah and Isha had little contact with Kelle. She says it was nearly impossible to reach the two because the phone had been shut off. So she resorted to showing up at skate contests just to catch a glimpse of her son. In 2009, because of Nyjah's unreliability, he lost all his deals and his income was halved (from \$374,425 in 2008 to \$158,612 in 2009). Adeyemi took the perceived underhandedness of big-money brands to the extreme and started his own board company, I&I Skateboards, with Nyjah's earnings.

Nyjah had grown to believe that his mom, who had filed for divorce, had effectively abandoned him. While he quietly questioned his father's influence, he still followed him to major competitions, including in Southern California, where Adeyemi had rented an apartment without telling Kelle the address.

Nyjah was working as hard as ever, compiling endless hours of footage showing new tricks and progressions. "Because my dad was controlling and he made me skate every single day, there would be some situations where I would be sick and he would still want me to go out and skate," Nyjah says. "I would be like, Damn, I don't feel like skating, but f---, I guess."

The skate footage became a pawn in the divorce proceedings. Kelle finally got custody of Nyjah and Isha in 2010 -- and Nyjah warmed up to her within days -- but Adeyemi refused to give Nyjah the film. Devastated, Nyjah wrote a letter to the judge, detailing each trick: "My footage means a lot to me because it's hundreds of hours of hard work and pain I've dedicated to my skateboarding career, so it would be a shame if it all went to waste. If somehow I'm not able to get my footage from my dad, then my relationship with him will be completely ruined."

Nyjah never got the footage back.

Despondent about the videos and the family drama, he quit skating. That lasted about a month. When the 2010 summer competition season came around, Nyjah once again wanted to get back to what was familiar. Despite the layoff and with a professional agency repping him, he placed second in X Games Los Angeles and in the Maloof Money Cup, then won the very first SLS contest and its \$150,000 prize. Element also welcomed him back. It was the first time he'd done anything in skating without Adeyemi.

The second step 16-year-old Nyjah wanted to take on his own was to sever a symbolic tie with his past. As he was preparing for a new skate video, he figured it was time to cut his hair. "I didn't want to be known as that kid who had dreads," he says. "I wanted to be known as myself, Nyjah Huston, the skateboarder."



Courtesy Kelle Huston

Huston's path from phenom to superstar required him to break away from his Rastafarian roots.

**NYJAH LAUNCHES** *from the drop-off, pressing hard on his back foot, flipping his board as he is up and over the Hubba feature. His front foot catches first, his back foot follows, and he lands clean, with command.*

*Before Nyjah can make it back to the other skaters, P-Rod meets him halfway with a hug. A real one, not some back-slapping bro-hug. One long enough to show the genuine respect between the two.*

*The judges award Nyjah an 8.5. Other skaters try to fool him into thinking it's a tie, shouting out "One more trick! One more trick!" But there are no more tricks, no more fools. Nyjah has won gold by one-tenth of a point.*



**Nyjah Huston**



**NYJAH HUSTON** is on his own now, and that's evident in ways beyond his haircut. He is choosing his own business partnerships based on how they line up with his interests, many of which he's still figuring out, and he's deciding how to spend his earnings. (He made \$1.58 million in 2012.) He's found out that his favorite food is sushi, tasted ice cream for the first time and dated -- and then dumped -- a girlfriend. He's moved into his own Huntington Beach two-story house that's pretty immaculate, considering his best friends crash there too. They're five kids he's known from his CASL days, back when things seemed to be lining up for the Rasta family.

Nyjah and his dad haven't spoken in a couple of years. Last November Nyjah got a birthday card from him, unsigned. The envelope listed his grandmother's home in Merced as the return address, even though Nyjah knows Adeyemi doesn't live there.

"I still have respect for him and everything that he did for me," Nyjah says. "But you have to let your son have his freedom and figure out the game himself. If he did decide to call me any time soon, I would completely accept him back into my life."



# TRANSWORLD SKATEboarding

## THE RETURN OF NYJAH

TWO YEARS AGO  
HE LOST EVERYTHING.  
NOW AT AGE 16, HE'S  
EARNING IT ALL BACK.

**HIGH OLLIE**  
NEW WORLD RECORD!

**EXPOSING**  
THE UNDERGROUND  
4 UP-AND-COMERS  
BREAK THE SURFACE

### > PUBLICATION

Transworld  
Skateboarding

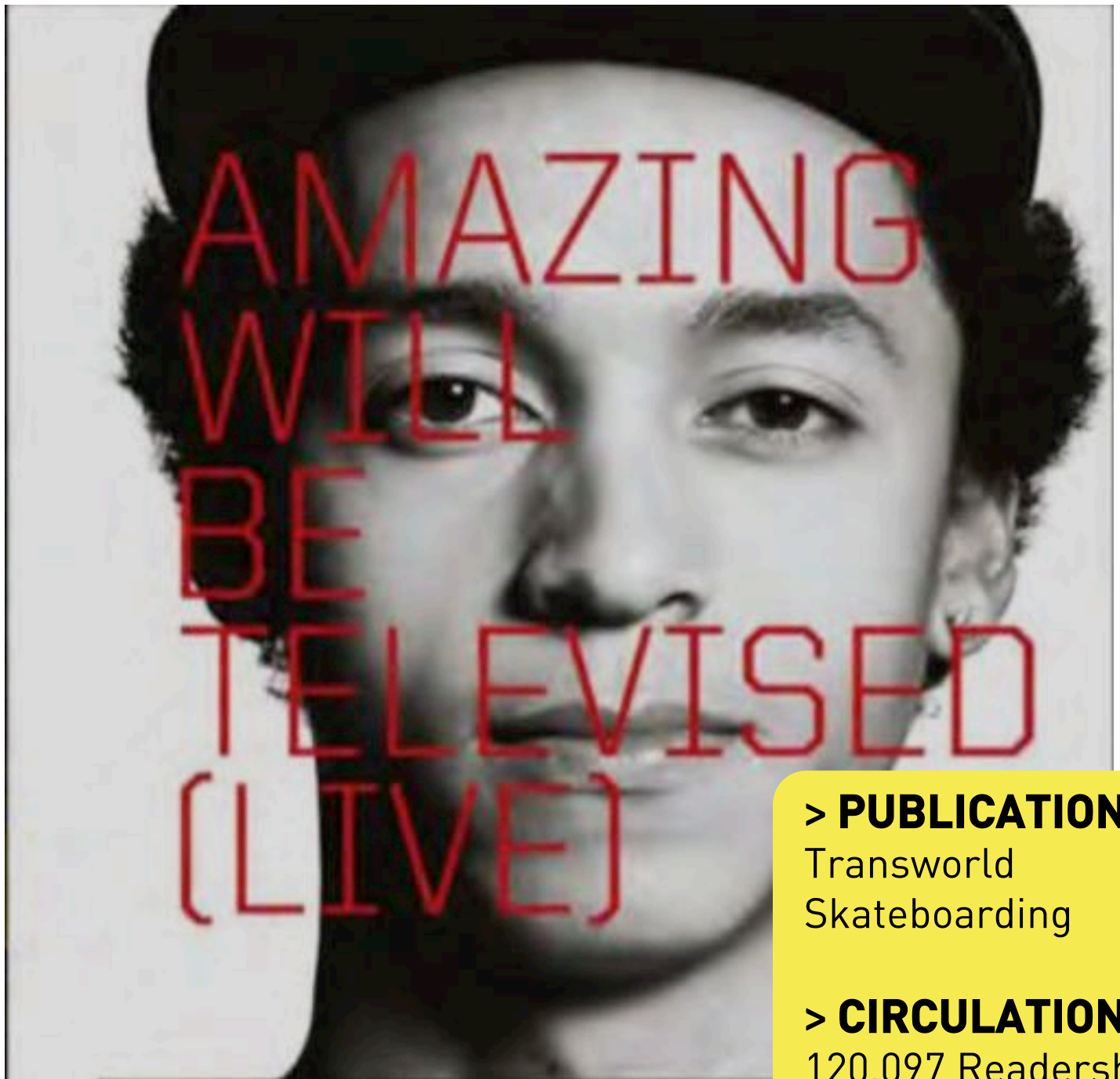
### > CIRCULATION

120,097 Relationship

### > DATE

May 2011





**> PUBLICATION**

Transworld  
Skateboarding

**> CIRCULATION**

120,097 Readership

**> DATE**

July 2012





> **PUBLICATION**

Thrasher Magazine

> **CIRCULATION**

250,000 Readership

> **DATE**

May 2012



## PLAYBOOK 360



### Playbook 360: Nyjah Huston: Staying On Top

Skateboarding prodigy Nyjah Huston discusses when he realized he was a top skater, the difference between contest and street skating and the strategy behind best trick competitions.

#### > PUBLICATION

Spike TV Online

#### > IMPRESSIONS

85,739,000 Unique  
monthly visitors

#### > DATE

December 3, 2013





von  
Steven Jörgensen



Nyjah Huston gilt als bester Skateboarder der Welt. Jetzt startet er in München bei den X Games. Der Amerikaner mag deutsche Autos

Der Amerikaner Nyjah Huston schlittert mit seinem Skateboard über ein Hindernis. Er siegte 2013 bereits bei den X-Games-Etappen in Brasilien und Barcelona in der Disziplin Street League

# »Skateboard sollte olympisch sein«

13

## > PUBLICATION

SportBild.de

## > IMPRESSIONS

479,058 Unique  
monthly visitors

## > DATE

June 28, 2013

Von Steven Jörgensen

**SPORT BILD:** *Mister Huston, Sie gelten derzeit als bester Skateboarder der Welt. Ab Donnerstag starten Sie bei den X Games in München. Waren Sie überhaupt schon einmal in Deutschland?*

**Nyjah Huston (18):** Nein, ich war noch nie dort. Doch ich kenne die Region und freue mich unheimlich darauf. Ich habe schon reichlich Anfragen, dort auszugehen.

»Vor anderthalb Jahren habe ich mir einen Knochen in meiner linken Knie-  
scheibe gebrochen.«

**Auf Twitter zeigen Sie Ihren neuen Audi R8-Sportwagen. Mögen Sie deutsche Autos?**

Ich habe noch meinen Mercedes, den ich vor ein paar Jahren gekauft habe. Es war jetzt Zeit für etwas Neues, und der R8 ist eines meiner Lieblingsautos. Ich habe viel Spaß damit.

**Was ist für Sie das verrückteste**

**Event bei den X Games?**

Das ist wohl Skateboarding, weil es nur ein kleines Stück Holz ist, auf dem wir durch die Luft fliegen. Rallye ist aber für mich als Auto-Narr meine Lieblingssportart.

**In München fanden 1972 die Olympischen Spiele statt. Sollte Skateboarding bei Olympia dabel sein?**

Auf jeden Fall sollte der Sport olympisch sein. Das wäre großartig. Ich wünsche, dass der Sport weiter wächst.

**Bei der Skateboard Street League zeigen Sie spektakuläre Sprünge und rutschen über Eisengeländer. Wie lange brauchen Sie, um einen neuen Trick zu entwickeln?**

Das kommt darauf an, wie schwer das Manöver ist. An einigen Tricks arbeitet man viele Stunden und macht ihn nur ein einziges Mal. Es geht darum, Tricks zu finden, die gut im Wettbewerb funktionieren.

**Welchen Trick halten Sie derzeit für Ihren besten?**

Schwer zu sagen. Jedes Manöver ist auf seine Weise so unterschied-



Nyjah Huston posiert mit seinem Skateboard. Er wurde am 30. November 1994 geboren. Er lebt in Davis im US-Bundesstaat Kalifornien.



lich. Man kann einen leichteren Trick auf einem großen Hindernis machen oder einen technisch sehr anspruchsvollen auf einem kleinen Hindernis. Mein bester war wohl der »Caballerial kickflip backside lipslide to fakie« (Dabei dreht er sich und das Brett im Sprung um die eigene Achse, schlittert ein Geländer herunter und landet rückwärts; d. Red.), für den ich 9,8 von 10 Punkten bekam.

**Wie viele Bretter machen Sie pro Jahr kaputt?**

Zwei oder drei. Ich schaffe es, dass kaum welche kaputt gehen. Ich habe es gelernt, auf den Füßen zu landen und keine Boards vor Wut zu zerschmettern.

**Was war Ihre schwerste Verletzung?**

Vor anderthalb Jahren habe ich mir einen Knochen in meiner linken Kniescheibe gebrochen. Es dauerte lange, bis das verheilt war. Ich musste einige Monate pausieren. Das bereitet mir keine Schwierigkeiten mehr, manchmal merke ich es aber noch.

**Gibt es eigentlich besondere Konditionen bei der**



Street League besteht aus den Abschnitten Flow, Control und Impact. Bei Flow zeigt der Skater in 45 Sekunden auf einem Parcours so viele Tricks wie möglich. In Control wird ein einzelner Trick bewertet. Bei Impact werden die vier besten Tricks dieser Session gewertet. Pro Flow-Runde bzw. Trick gibt es null bis zehn Punkte. Maximal kann man also 60 Zähler erreichen.



### **Krankenversicherung?**

Nicht, dass ich wüsste. Aber ich wünschte, dass es die gäbe.

**Sind Sie schon einmal von der Riesen-Rampe gefahren, auf der Ihre Kollegen im Big-Air-Wettbewerb fahren? Die Mega-Ramp ist 26 Meter hoch.**

Ich habe das noch nie probiert, würde es aber gern einmal tun. Allerdings müsste ich viel Zeit investieren, um mich darauf zu konzentrieren. Es ist unglaublich, so hoch durch die Luft zu fliegen und dann wieder auf den Füßen zu landen.



Nyjah Huston ließ sich kürzlich eine Tätowierung mit dem Wort »Ambition«, also »Ehrgeiz«, stechen. Dies zeigte er stolz bei Twitter.

**Sie waren mit elf Jahren das erste Mal bei den X Games am Start. Wie hat sich der Sport verändert?**

Skateboarding hat sich unheimlich gut weiterentwickelt. Ich bin stolz, dass ich



Bereits mit elf Jahren war Nyjah Huston erstmals bei den X Games am Start. Auf diesem Foto ist er 13 Jahre alt. Damals trug der Amerikaner noch Dreadlocks.

ein Teil des Ganzen bin. Ich versuche, die nächsten Jahre fit und gesund zu bleiben. Ich will von den älteren Fahrern jedes Jahr etwas Neues lernen.

**Sind Sie durch Skateboarding schon zum Multi-Millionär geworden?**

Der Sport zahlt sich aus, und das weiß ich zu schätzen. Ich würde nicht sagen, dass ich schon Multi-Millionär bin. Die Leute denken, dass wir mehr verdienen, als wir

es am Ende wirklich tun. Aber ich bin dankbar für alles.

**Sie haben seit Kurzem auf dem Arm das Wort »Ambition«, zu Deutsch »Ehrgeiz«, tätowiert. Es ist Ihr zweites Tattoo. Was ist das andere, und was bedeuten die beiden?**

Beim ersten steht Destroy – also zerstören. Ich habe das Wort »Ambition« ausgewählt, weil es mich sehr gut beschreibt. Ich will viel erreichen und der Beste sein.