

SOUP GRAPHIX IS A DESIGN AGENCY THAT IS OF A PARTICULAR INSPIRATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE TO TRUNK JUNK QUARTERLY. HAVING A STYLE THAT HAS RISEN FROM THE ARTY INFLUENCES OF THE 'GOLDEN STATE' OF THE US OF A, THEY SURE DO FLY THE SKATEBOARD DESIGN FLAG HIGH. HAVING GROWN THEIR BRAND AND THEMSELVES IN THIS POOL OF CALIFORNIAN DECK ART HERITAGE, FOLLOWING IN A PATH OF GREAT FOOTSTEPS, THEY'VE RISEN TO THE SELF IMPLIED CHALLENGE AND HAVE TODAY BECOME THEIR OWN DISTINGUISHABLE AND VERY IN DEMAND STYLE THAT HAS SENT NOT ONLY THE SKATEBOARD INDUSTRY IN A FRENZY, BUT ALSO OTHER FIELDS SUCH AS MOTOCROSS AND SNOW... WITH EVEN THE 'BIRD MAN' GETTING IN ON THE DEAL.

YO SG, WHAT ESSENTIALS ARE A MUST FOR YOUR TRUNK?

A shovel, a bag of lime and an extra big sex toy... joking. Nothing far from the basics: CS3, 4, 5, Manga Studio, Dreamweaver, Fireworks and we all work on large Wacom tablets. I have to say that when we all switched over to tablets and dropped the mice, life got a lot better.

COULD YOU PLEASE INTRODUCE US TO YOUR TEAM?

Dan is our Graphic Design Mastermind. He is the Chuck Norris of design. **Hill** is the guy to go to for a roundabout of skills such as, web, print and a bucket of off-the-wall creative ideas. **Brandon** is our illustrator heavy weight. You said you want a zombie ripping his brain out of his own skull? Done. **Tyson** is the design ninja with a bag full of deadly accurate design tricks. Lastly, **Chris** is an Intern, also known as the 'Whipping Boy', and happens to smoke a lot of cigarettes.

SO HOW LONG HAVE YOU GUYS BEEN AROUND?

Good question. The topic of when we started our company is a blurry one. We never really had a day or time when we said, "OK, today is our first day of business." However, if I were to put a year on it I would say in 2000-2001.

HOW DID YOU GO ABOUT GETTING YOUR FOOT IN THE DOOR AS A COMPANY?

We didn't initially start out as an action sports graphic design studio. Our humble beginnings began at the very bottom, doing all the stuff students and freelancers scratch at. We did generic graphic design projects like simple logos, business cards, flyers, stickers, web banner designs, etc... All our projects came from friends, neighbours, small mom and pop business owners. Basically projects you do a lot of work for and get paid shit for. But, it was these projects that really taught us the process of graphic design and how to run a business. We quickly learned that there's a fine line of being considered a design studio and a freelancer. Being considered a freelance company was one term we wanted to shake, so we started doing things like making invoices with our logo on it and putting due dates on our project and sticking to them. You'd be surprised on how much those little details count. Things like showing your work when you say you will... Genius! Right? Now getting projects was a whole different story. We had to hustle for every little project and from each little project we did, we put that little bit of profit in the bank. Pretty discouraging when you have huge hopes and dreams and your design jobs pay very little. All rivers start out as a trickle somewhere.

WHY, WHAT AND HOW DID SOUPGRAPHIX COME ABOUT? WHAT WAS THE SINGLE IDEA BEHIND IT ALL?

SoupGraphix all started as a goofy web design company that was conceived back when we were in college around 1998. Initially we had two designers, two computer geeks and one financial guy. Seemed like a good mix of people to start a web design company, right? Yeah, that didn't last long. We all then graduated college and got real jobs. The idea was still there, but nothing ever really happened with it until we decided that in order for us to become a real company, we had to dedicate some real time to it. So we all decided to start slow, 1 hour a week at a local bar. We would talk about our business plan and what our roles would be. We all pitched in a couple bucks to get some business cards made and that made it official. Ha! As the weeks went on, team members started to flake. You can tell who is really serious when starting a company by the amount of effort they pitch in. Asking someone to show up for 1 hour is a lot for most. As the weeks went by, the attendance dropped off. It got to a point where the serious ones had to start kicking the flaky members out. Try telling your friend he's a flake. It didn't go over well with some members. But after it was all said and done, we were down to two people, Dan and Hilary.



Then came along the big Internet bust of 2001. Hill (Hilary) got laid off from his downtown SD multi-media firm and that's when we made a real go at it. Dan worked at DC Shoes at the time and would work on Soup projects at night and on the weekends. About two years later Hill was able to get the company up on it's feet with a little bit of money in the bank and some recurring accounts. With burnout setting in, Dan took a huge leap of faith, quitting his job and started full time for SoupGraphix. Now we had two full time employees (Dan and Hilary). With Dan having a new family to support, let's just say the following year was pretty sketchy, with a lot of unknowns ahead of us.

WE GET THIS QUESTION ALL THE TIME, BUT EVERY NOW AND THEN WE DO FIND OURSELVES ASKING IT, HOW DID YOUR NAME COME ABOUT?

When the company was still just an idea, all of us guys who were initially in it would meet for lunch at an all-you-can-eat salad bar called, 'Souplantation'. It was a perfect food joint for starving students. You paid eight dollars and you'd get to eat as much as you wanted. So one night we were finally committed to doing this business idea and had to come up with a name. We came up with all kinds of really lame names, like 'This and That Associates' and 'Cool Guy Design Studio'. They were all really bad, generic names. So our friend Dustin said, "Well... what about 'Soup' or 'Soup Graphics'? We eat at Soup Plantation all the time, why don't we name it 'Soup'?" And that's where we came up with the name; an all you can eat salad bar. The 'X' replaced the 'ics' part later. It made it more extreme ha ha.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR WAY OF GOING ABOUT THINGS?

We conduct our business in a very matter-of-fact way. We do what we say and we ask our clients to do the same. We feel the clients should respect the way we do business, just as much as we respect you as a business owner. We don't do much 'ass-kissing' and don't expect any in return. It's fun to hear when our clients are stoked on our work, but in general we are all very modest and it makes us uneasy when somebody starts to give us too much praise. Basically we like what we do and we like the clients and projects that we work on.

WHAT IS YOUR WORK PLACE LIKE? WOULD WE FIND A MINI-RAMP HIDING ANYWHERE?

It's pretty relaxed. No mini-ramp, but we do have a brand new fitty sitting on a bike stand in the corner of the office. We got it on a trade out job. Pulled the thing out of the crate and set it up without any tools or anything. All the bars and bolts are put in hand tight. It's never been run or had any gas through it. It's a real shame for a bike to be sitting in the corner like that. Hell, maybe at one of our drunken Christmas parties, we'll get it going or something.

In addition, we do have a shit ton of skate decks hanging from the walls and other various finished projects we put here and there. We just moved into a much larger studio so it's been really nice to stretch out a bit and have some area to walk around. When we were remodelling our new space, we wanted it to be pretty open,

but in the process found out that some of the old weight bearing walls had to stay, so we had to get creative with our new space layout. A lot of people get kind of lost in our space when they come for the first time. It's actually funny to watch people get lost because of all of the angled walls and roundabout walkways.

SO THERE IS CLEARLY A LOVE FOR STAND-UP BOARD SPORTS GOING ON WITH YOU GUYS, IS THIS THE RESULT OF TURNING A PASSION INTO A FULL TIME JOB?

Oh yeah... So true. Dan and I both went to the same grad school together. We didn't really hang out in the same crowds, but knew each other. He hung out with the skaters and I was considered a 'biker' (We all had bikes, but everyone had BMX bikes back then). Anyway, as we moved into high school, Dan was the first to get his drivers license and a truck. Him and his friends started surfing a lot. I had always wanted to surf, so I started hanging out with them. We surfed and skated up and down the coast from LA to San Diego. We were making morning runs to Blacks beach and Trestles sitting in the back of a truck in the middle of winter. Good times (when you're 16). Then we moved into snowboarding and when we could, we'd go to the river for wakeboarding. We also grew up in an area where dirt bikes and the desert was a way of life, so off-roading has always surrounded us.

We knew we needed to pick an industry to focus on that our company would be known for and so we decided to pick the action sports and motorsports industries. We figured we would know how to talk the talk and it would give us somewhere to start.

IS THERE ANY TYPE OF MINIMUM SERVICE TO BOARD SPORTS PRE-REQUISITE IN ORDER TO BE PART OF THE TEAM AT SOUPGRAPHIX?

Ha ha... Yes and No. I mean it's not like you're going to see any of us drop in on the mega ramp or out surfing Waimea, but it does help to at least do something that relates to the companies we deal with. For example, Billabong's tag line, "Only a Surfer Knows the Feeling", isn't just a catchy t-shirt phrase. There is totally a truth to that. You just don't know what it feels like to ride a wave unless you ride waves. All action sports and motorsports have something about them that unless you do it, you're never going to understand the mentality around. Almost everybody in his or her lifetime gets exposed to soccer, baseball, basketball or football. We all played those sports too, but not until you surf, snowboard or go ride a dirt bike do you understand why people get so addicted. Those types of sports engrave something into your soul and you never forget the feeling.

WHAT ARE THE MOST POPULAR BOARD SPORTS AMONGST THE TEAM AT SOUPGRAPHIX? I'D HOPE WE WOULDN'T FIND ANY SCOOTERS LYING AROUND THE OFFICE...

Oh yeah... We all "blade" into work in the morning. Yeah right... I would say that skateboarding is probably the biggest, followed by both snowboarding and riding dirt bikes in a close second place. We try to get out and go wakeboarding when we can, but

it all depends on our friends who have boats to throw out the invite. It's tragic, but surfing has had to be put on hold for a long time while we have been building up our company. So I can't say any of us really surf any more, but trust me we'll be back in the line up when our studio gets a bit bigger and the time requirements loosen up a bit.

YOU HAVE A VERY IMPRESSIVE LIST OF CLIENTELE TO SAY THE LEAST. COULD YOU HAVE SEEN YOURSELF EXPANDING TO MEET THE NEEDS OF SUCH BIG NAMES WHEN YOU WERE JUST STARTING OFF?

No way... We weren't even ready to be contacting any of the clients we have currently. These companies wouldn't have even blinked an eye in our direction if we tried contacting them when we were just starting out. I guess we should be really impressed with our current client list. It's hard to look back because the change in clientele is such an organic and slow moving change. We do still get shocked sometimes when people email us from companies that we would love to work for and they want us to start something. It's a good feeling and I don't think it will ever get old.

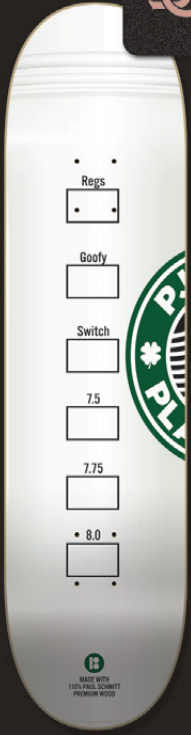
WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO BE CAPABLE OF WORKING FOR CLIENTS SUCH AS NIKE, Z-FLEX, BIRDHOUSE, BILLABONG, FOX AND ETNIES, TO NAME A FEW?

I think it helps to know whom you are working for and what makes them unique. Each company has their own way of doing business and a mentality that sets them apart from their competitors. If you can capture a sense of their spirit and create artwork that meshes well within that flow, you're going to stoke them out. It's not an easy thing to do, but if you can do it well these companies will make you one of their go-to guys for life. Trust me, we've been in this industry for a while now and finding artists that are good, punctual and understand these life styles is a very hard thing to do.

SKATEBOARD DESIGN SEEMS TO BE A LARGE PART OF WHO YOU ARE AND IS ACTUALLY WHAT CAUGHT OUR ATTENTION, THAT LEAD TO THIS INTERVIEW BEING CONDUCTED. IS THERE ANY DIFFERENCE IN APPROACHING A SKATEBOARD DESIGN THAN ANY OTHER DESIGN?

Right on. Yeah, we are pretty proud of the decks that we have designed. We get a little overwhelmed ourselves sometimes, to think we've done so many in the past and it just keeps growing.

There's not really a difference though. A deck design is a lot like a t-shirt design, but there's something about holding a board in your hands. It's a pretty good feeling compared to a t-shirt or something else. Skateboards are a pretty unique art medium because they are made to be ridden, but some times they look too damn cool to fuck up. You'll notice some of the guys here ride some boards that have shitty graphics on them. It's not that they don't have money for a sick looking board, it's because they don't want to mess up the graphic on their deck. Hang the nice one and ride on the shitty looking one.







IS IT JUST YOU GUYS BACK AT SOUPGRAPHIX WHO WORK ON THE DESIGNS, OR DO YOU TEND TO CONTRACT FREELANCE ARTISTS FROM TIME TO TIME TO GET SPECIFIC PROJECTS COMPLETED?

We do contract work out sometimes. It's not that we can't handle the type of work... for the most part we can't handle the volume at times. Having a well rounded crew here gives us the ability to pull off just about any style requested, but some times we just get too much work coming through and need to pull from our pool of equally talented freelancers. Again finding talented graphic artists in this genre of design is tough. Most of them either smoke too much weed or surf/snowboard too much to ever really be a reliable source of creative work. Some people who want to get into this industry can't define the line of work and play. It is still work and it has to get done on time.

HOW WOULD YOU SAY HAVING YOUR BUSINESS GROW UP IN SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA HAS INFLUENCED THE SKATE DECK SIDE OF THINGS AND WHO SOUPGRAPHIX IS TODAY?

Quite definitely! San Diego is a very unique place to live if you love sunshine and action sports. It's one of the only places I've been where you can pick and choose what sports you want to do any given weekend. You could surf trip to Mexico, skateboard the boardwalk in Pacific Beach, ride your dirt bike in the desert or dunes, do river trips to go wakeboarding all weekend, or do a snowboard trip only a few hours away. So you can see how we lucked out that San Diego is a kind of hub or a mecca for these kinds of sports and this kind of lifestyle. L.A. is very much the same. We just have less traffic, less smog and Native San Diegans don't bring a shitty attitude.

JUST TO GIVE READERS AN IDEA, COULD YOU PLEASE DESCRIBE THE SKATE AND ART CULTURE OF CALIFORNIA?

I'm not sure if we can speak for all of Cali, but down in Southern California the two go hand in hand. The skate culture is very much an influence on art and art is very much an influence on skate. The very act of skateboarding is very much an art form. Think about it. Why do you think skateboarding never gets old or outdated? It's because it is always changing. The spots change. The boards change. The tricks change. The players change. The clothing changes. Skateboarding is always about pushing the limits on every level and there are so many levels to push it on. Most sports push it on one or two levels, like going faster or performing better, but skateboarding is a culmination of performance, attitude and art. To be a good skateboarder you need all of that. To be a good artist or studio you need to be the same way. Hopefully you can inspire another artist or skater to push you to another level beyond where you thought you could go.

SO, COMING FROM A COMMUNITY THAT IS RICH IN HISTORY, WHO WOULD YOU SAY ARE YOUR BIGGEST INFLUENCES AND SOURCES OF INSPIRATION IN THE SKATE DECK DESIGN INDUSTRY?

There are too many to list. We get inspiration from a lot of things like movies, magazines and the web, but if we really had to name a couple guys I would say Ben Horton (Slave Skateboards) and Joe King are killing it right now.

WHAT WAS IT LIKE DOING WORK FOR TONY HAWK AND BIRDHOUSE? WERE YOU GUYS LIKE, "MAN WE'VE PLAYED ALL YOUR GAMES ON CONSOLE, WE'LL WORK FOR YOU FOR SURE!"

Ha ha... Well sort of, but I think our intern is the only one that really has time to play video games anymore. We were pretty stoked to finally meet 'the man', but at the same time we didn't want to be going into the meeting with our shirts off asking him to sign our chest or anything. We kept it chilled, got through our meetings, and after that went down and skated the Huck Jam ramp that they store in the back of their warehouse. The cool thing is, is that their main conference room has glass windows that overlook the ramp so you can watch these guys practice the whole time. Pretty dope really.

WHAT'S YOUR PROUDEST SKATE DECK BASED PROJECT AND WHY?

I'm not sure if we have any one skate deck project that stands out from the rest, but I know working with ZERO was always really cool. At the time we were doing a lot of work for them and they had an art vision that we were locked into. It really let us flex our graphic and illustration muscles. We meshed with those guys' art style really well. Right now we're doing a handful of deck designs for Darkstar, which have turned out super nice.

SO, ANY FUTURE PLANS?

We're going to keep doing what we're doing. We're a design company that goes with the flow without compromise. We've been around for a while and plan on sticking around. I don't think we really know where this path is leading us, but we can't wait to see. We still can't wait to see how our art progresses in the future because we still manage to shock ourselves from time to time.

WHAT'S THE NEXT BEST THING FOR SOUP?

Well we're in the process of creating a comic/cartoon right now. It's been a huge learning experience to see what it takes just to make a comic. There's a lot more production than I think most people can understand, but just talking about it gets our juices flowing.

TO ROUND THINGS OFF, WHAT IS THE WORST CASE OF 'CRAPPING WHERE YOU EAT' THAT SOUPGRAPHIX HAS EVER EXPERIENCED?

We've been pretty lucky in our years of business that we haven't run into many companies that crapped in their own draws. But once upon a time we did work with a snowboard company (which I won't name) one time that decided that they didn't need to pay up. Excuse after excuse. Phone call after phone call was made. Some serious threats and at one point a, "Dude, I'm going to kick your ass," comment was made. Finally after about a year of hounding we were able to get them to pay up something. The payment ended up being a handful of their shitty boards. We were able to sell off some of them on Craigslist for like \$25-\$50 each, but the rest are sitting in some closet in the back of our office somewhere. The thing that sucked about that whole situation was that if they were just straight up about their situation, we would have been cool with them and figured something out. However, they lied and acted shady. Be straight up and honest. People can see through bullshit.



