

Skateboarding loses rebel image

Skate parks welcomed by parents across York Region

BY PATRICK MANGION
Staff Writer

Part of skateboarding's appeal has always been a steadfast reluctance to conform.

As depicted in the documentary *Dogtown and Z-Boys*, the inspiration for the *Lords of Dogtown* — a film chronicling the early days of the sport — skateboarding emerged as a counter culture.

Thanks in part to skateboarders' insatiable appetite for making public buildings and spaces their playground, it has remained just that for the better part of three decades: a rebuke at the mainstream.

But things are changing.

Six of York Region's nine municipalities have a skateboarding facility.

In Vaughan, The Sports Village on Rutherford Road is the venue for what many skaters consider York's mecca of skateboarding facilities, complete with a towering half pipe.

Once considered punks aboard road rockets, raising the collective ire of residents and local officials, skateboarders are being welcomed into the fold by many towns and cities.

Skateboarding shed some of its anti-establishment foundations by entering the domain of video games, movies and made-for-TV events, such as the X-Games.

You might even say municipalities anteing up public money to build skate-board parks was inevitable.

Over the past few years, Newmarket, Whitchurch-Stouffville, Markham and Georgina have all built public skateboarding parks.

A brand new outdoor facility, combined with warm sunny days, has brought out the region's north end skateboarders in droves.

The park at Georgina's Ice Palace, in the Woodbine Avenue/Wexford Drive area, has been a youth hot spot for months, the town's manager of facilities and parks development Brock MacDonald said.

"We changed the way we look at skateboarding. Everybody thought it was a fad that would go away. But it hasn't. It's here to stay," Mr. MacDonald said.

"We need to provide an outlet for youth activities."

Despite the sweltering weather, Newmarket's indoor park remains abuzz during its under-12 weekday skate.

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Georgina parks manager

Davis McMaster, a 20-year-old Aurora resident and a staff member at the Newmarket park, said skateboarders will always take to the street. "But (the indoor park) keeps us from dealing with security guards."

The park draws hundreds of skateboarders from around the region, Mr. McMaster said.

During the winter, it often reaches its 90-person capacity.

Parent Tamara Pugh likes knowing 11-year-old son Sam is in a safe, controlled environment while enjoying his favourite sport.

"It's a supportive environment. There's no intimidation," she said, as Sam pleads for her attention attempting a manoeuvre on one of several ramps at the gutted movie theatre.

"I think it's neat that the kids work here," she said.

SKATE PARKS IN YORK

Over the Edge Skatepark, Whitchurch-Stouffville

- Park Drive, across from Lacham Hall;
- Free of charge, outdoor;
- Park unsupervised, it is recommended children under 10 are accompanied by an adult;
- Helmets mandatory, bikes and skateboarding only;
- 20 pieces of equipment total, including three quarter pipes and pyramid ramps, boxes, benches and rails;
- Open daily from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. July and August 2 p.m. to 10 p.m. weekdays and 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. weekends. Fall, daily 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.;
- For more information, call 905-640-1910.

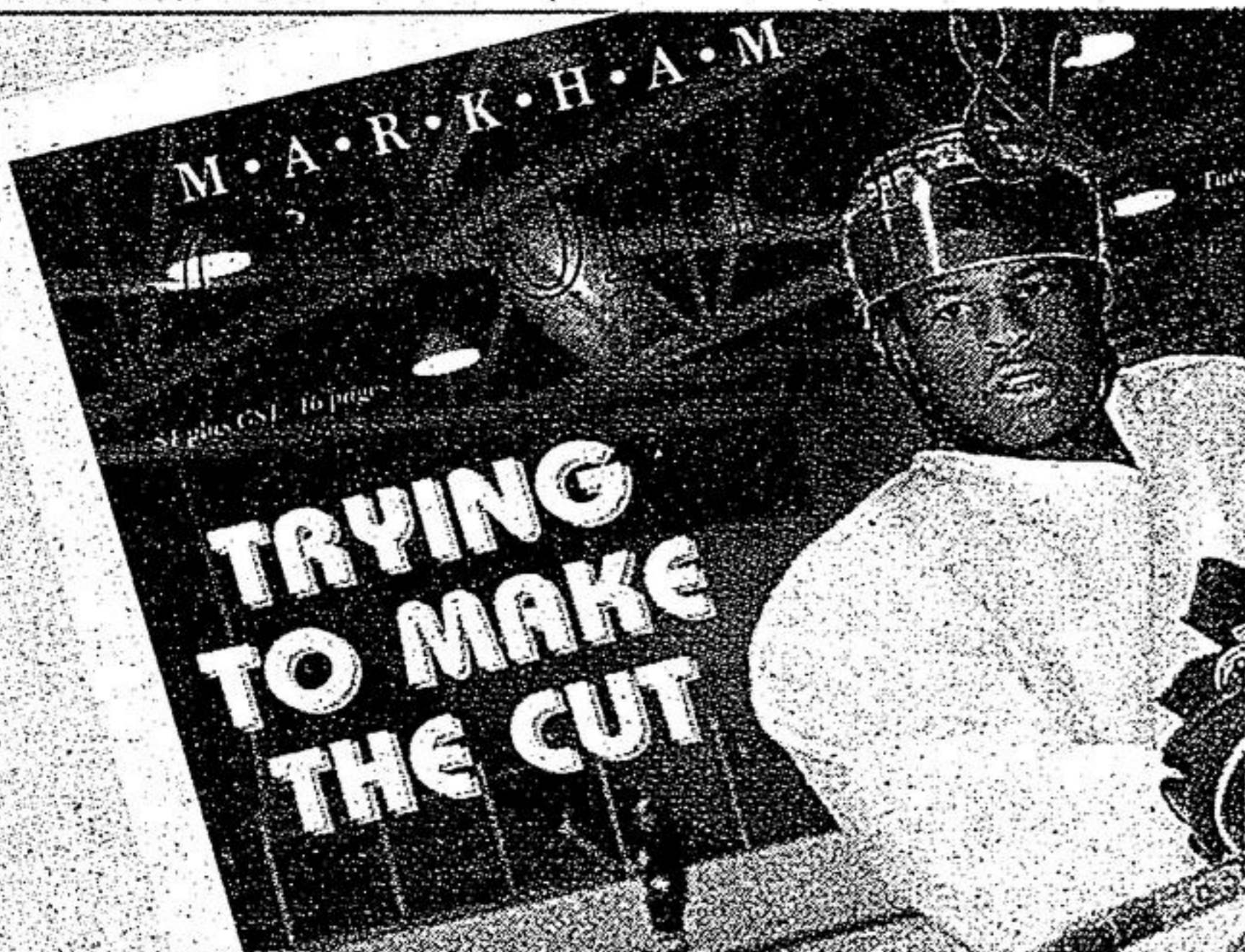
Centennial Skatepark, Markham Centennial Community Centre

- Bullock Drive and McCowan Road;
- Free of charge, outdoor;
- Open daylight hours;
- Helmets mandatory, park is unsupervised; It is recommended children are accompanied by an adult;
- Inline skaters and skateboarders only;
- For more information call 905-294-6111

Evolution, The Sports Village, Vaughan

- Rutherford Road, east of Jane Street;
- \$7, outdoor;
- Helmets mandatory;
- Half pipe, series of smaller ramps and rails;
- Open Monday to Friday from 5 to 9 p.m., weekends and holidays from 1 to 9 p.m.; Summer hours (starting in July) weekdays 1 to 9 p.m.
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