

Anthony Costa

THE COM-RAIDER

By Frank The Butcher

I can't front and neither can you, we rock certain brands because of the hype, the colorway, or because of the dead rapper on the front. If a brand does feel the need to incorporate some type of message in their graphics, it seems overdone and less than sincere. Com-Raid is different. Anthony Costa actually comes from a political background and doesn't feel the need to force his message down your throat. Located on the largest island on earth, Com-Raid is ready to show what the "Land Down Under" has to offer.

Having a background in politics, there is an obvious message in your t-shirt graphics and artwork. What overall message do you want the Com-Raid consumer to walk away with?

You know, everyone talks about peace. We all say we want it. But it's not something that's out there and has to be found. True peace is in each and every one of us, and it's there to be shared. Peace ain't a fist. You don't enforce it or impose it with politics, philosophy, faith, sure these things are important, but in the end they're all just words which people too often just use to prove how right they are and why everyone else is wrong. Sure, stand true to your words. Make them your words, things that you live by so others can believe in them and be inspired by them. But you can't get peace without first accepting others for who they say they are. You make peace when you accept it's ok for different people to think and live in different ways.

You are based out of Australia, a country not known for its streetwear contributions (Coogi doesn't count!). How has the American and Asian streetwear markets affected how you do things?

(Ha, Coogi! Shearing sheep to make that shit is animal cruelty. Who wants to look like a Huxtable that badly anyway)?

In terms of marketing, the rise of the whole independent scene in the US is obviously a big influence. Just being able to see that you can exist as an independent, creative entity in the real business world is a positive thing. As for the Asian market, I've lived in Japan for a year, so the whole idea of brand integrity based on uncompromised quality and careful detail was a huge lesson for me.

What are some of your influences?

Music. Pop, metal, country, hip-hop, electro, whatever. Anything that moves me. I guess PE and KRS were the earli-

est touchstones in terms of the attitude behind what I do. Japan's been a fascination for mine for a long time. Graphically, I'm drawn to visceral ink visionaries like Gerald Scarfe, Frank Miller and Otomo Katsuhiko.

Your Nelson Mandela "Terror Threat?" / Adidas parody was an interesting design. What was the motivation behind that graphic?

The tee made light of the fact that Dick Cheney voted against a non-binding bill in the House of Representatives in '86 that called for the freedom of Nelson Mandela. Cheney's reasoning? That the ANC, and by implication Mandela, were terrorists. So you see, the blanket use of the "terrorist" word today is no accident. It has a history. It's a label that is deliberately used by the extreme right to further marginalize minorities and to exclude them from the peace and prosperous dignity we enjoy in the so-called "developed" world.

This season your theme is "Unlimited Sedition." Please explain.

Came up with the line when thinking of a cool thing to print in the neck tag of my tees. It pokes a bit of fun at the hype-trend of making clothes so exclusive no one can buy them. You look at a brand like, say, Stussy. To me that label is great precisely because people do wear it and can easily make it part of their everyday lives.

Also, "unlimited sedition" gets to the idea that real sedition, real radicalism comes not so much from indoctrinated discipline to a cause, but in having the self awareness to escape self definition. Sometimes people are so anxious to justify their lives they cling to all kinds of reasons that conveniently explain why things have to be as they currently appear. Often these stories just excuse our complacency and obscure us from realizing all that we can possibly become.

I understand you take pride in the fact that your clothing is manufactured by unionized workers. Why is this important to you?

A lot of people talk about "family" in this business. If you're a label, shouldn't your family start on the factory floor? I like being able to know the people who make my clothes, and to know that they're looking after themselves. Sure, with more of the textile industry moving offshore I probably won't be able to get everything I want made locally. But you do what you can, hey? Fact is, my local unionized shop just makes a better product. It costs me

a bit more, but getting what you want is always worth paying for, right?

You're a contributing writer for Slam X Hype. How was that connection made?

Purely random thing. It was around the time that Adam had moved Slam to a full website format way back when I was in Japan. I emailed him out of nowhere about something or other. He asked straight up if I wanted to try doing some writing, and I've been posting, doing interviews and features as K Moto ever since. I think Adam's been real open in the way he's let lots of creative people come into Slam and use it to represent themselves and what they do in an unmediated way. Sites like Slam are assets that are there to get more people more deeply involved in this industry, so overall that's gotta be a good thing.

In between the clothing company and the writing gig you also help organize the "No Comply" festival in Melbourne. Touch on that.

No Comply is a big international underground art festival held annually here in Melbourne by Koan, a friend of mine. This year we've got solo shows by London Police and Flying Fortress, the big "Plastic Pimps" show with Singapore's Play Imaginative (of Play Times mag fame) showcasing their Trexi toys, plus heaps of other exhibitions, including 150 custom skate decks by the likes of 123 Klan, Cope 2, Daim, Logan Hicks and many more. Look out for big things from No Comply '08 when it comes round next February.

What can we expect from Com-Raid in the future?

Few warm winter pieces late this year. There'll be more emphasis on raw, free-hand inked art, which you can just begin to see this season. Basically just letting the ideas and the business grow naturally, as and when they need to grow.

Any shouts?

Big shout to the crew at World on Chrystie Street NY, who were down from day one. Chris and Mel at Provider footwear. Alex at Niceproduce.com. All of the Above in Fitzroy. Josh at Evolve. Shin Tanaka. Bossman holding down Vans in London. Paul, along with Woody and the whole Sneaker Freaking crew down here. Masa (look out for "Very Masa" very soon...). Adam and the Slam crew. Kirsty, always. Eamon, Shannon and all my friends all round the world who've made this happen.