



 SKATEISTAN


AFGHANISTAN
**THE SKATE
RUNNER**
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Children during the lesson.

Roughly 10 years ago, a low-profile, unusual and incredibly visionary initiative was born in Kabul, Afghanistan. Every day at five in the afternoon, a group of children would gather in a downtown street and wait for "Mister Olly". When his van arrived, they greeted him joyfully: their daily skateboard lesson was about to begin.

Mister Olly, - his real name is Oliver Percovich, born in Australia and ended up in Afghanistan by chance - would unload a dozen skateboards which the children eagerly grabbed. Astonished passers-by stopped to watch this sport, totally unknown to them.

In the next decade, Skateistan, the open-air skate school founded by Percovich for fun, would become a roaring success, with the whole city talking about it. It would also show its tremendous social role, helping to keep children away from a destiny of beggary on the capital's streets (or at least giving them a few hours of fun and oblivion) and attracting interest and significant investments from abroad.

So much so that a documentary about Skateistan has just been awarded the Oscar. These pictures show what the open-air skate school looked like in its very first months, when the first courageous kids began attending it on the street.



A girl's foot on her skateboard.



Oliver Percovich (in the black T-shirt) and his assistant unload the skateboards for the daily lesson.



A soldier watches the daily skate lesson.



Percovich with a pupil's brother.



One of Percovich's assistants carrying the skateboards before the lesson.



A girl during the lesson.



Children practising during the daily lesson.



Oliver Percovich collects the skateboards at the end of the daily lesson.



A girl gets ready for the lesson: she was a beggar, Percovich trained her as a skate instructor and convinced her to leave the streets and return to school in exchange for a salary.



Children practising during the daily lesson.



A boy during the lesson.



A boy practices under the gaze of a passer-by.



A boy pretends to be dead after bumping into another pupil on a skateboard.



A girl's foot on her skateboard.



Oliver Percovich.



A girl awaits her turn during the daily skate lesson.



A boy during the lesson.



Oliver Percovich helps a girl get to grips with her skateboard.



Oliver Percovich's hand squeezes that of a small pupil.



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