

**MEDIA** / WORDS BY JOE JACKSON

# JUST FOR THE LIFE-THREATENING FUN OF IT

New film highlights carnage and personality

IN 1998, *BIG BROTHER SKATEBOARDING* magazine launched its second video, titled "Number Two." Although it never broke from the skateboarding niche, the footage did propel a nobody named Johnny Knoxville into infamy with a couple-minute clip showing him testing mace and a taser on, well, himself.

Ten years later, *Big Brother's* seed of self-flagellation coupled with professional athleticism

has sprouted into kayak porn through Tao Berman's production debut, *Pulse*.

After becoming a fixture in skateboarding and dirtbiking videos alike, the novelty of masochistic scenes has eroded. Not so with Berman's film. And the reason for that is authenticity.

Eric Link, editor of *Pulse* and producer of the *Twitch* series, chose dialogue and interaction that presented Berman, Josh Bechtel, and Eric Boomer like pre-teens with A.D.D. trying to squeeze the fun out of a few precious minutes left of recess.

Throughout the film, they argue briefly, laugh at, and worry for, each other. You almost forget that the trio are, indeed, professional extreme kayakers, and their playground happens



to be some of the most impressive whitewater in Washington, Michigan, and Chile.

BZ Falls, for example, is less than 10 miles from Berman's house. The liquid tornado churning at the base of the 16-foot drop has, over the years, tinkered with the macabre side of his imagination. How badly can that thing trash you, he has often wondered.

Pretty badly, we find out, while watching Berman, then Boomer, then Bechtel intentionally drop into its meat.

"We always do this dumb stuff," says Berman. "We just usually don't film it."

Yes, it's dangerous and probably irresponsible. But *Pulse* reminds us of the primary reason we run whitewater—to have fun.

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