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**BEN
LEWIS
INTERVIEW**

17TH ANNUAL RIDE BMX

NORA CUP AWARDS

INTERVIEWS WITH THE 2013 WINNERS:

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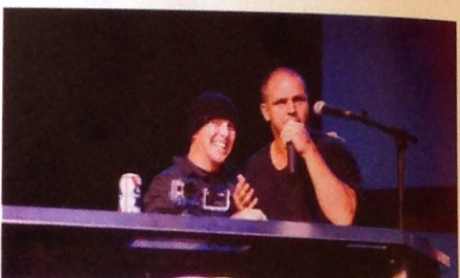


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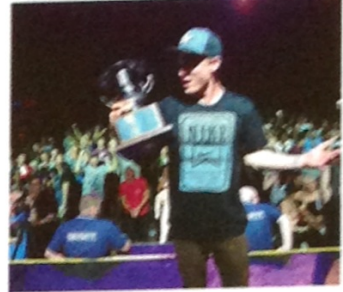
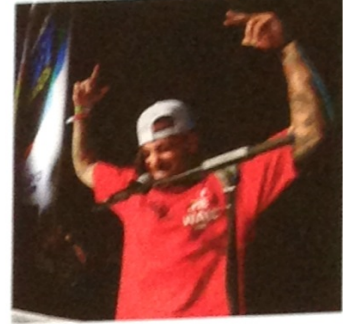
INTRO BY KEITH MULLIGAN & PHOTOS BY MULLIGAN & ZIELINSKI (UNLESS NOTED)

#1 STREET RIDER #1 RAMP RIDER
 #1 RACER #1 READERS' CHOICE DIRT JUMPER
 #1 FLATLANDER BEST VIDEO PART



NORA CUP HAS BECOME SUCH AN ANTICIPATED AND CELEBRATED NIGHT IN BMX, AND SUCH AN IMPORTANT AWARD TO THOSE WHO VOTE, THE INDUSTRY, THE NOMINEES, AND OF COURSE, THE WINNERS. It's really hard for us to describe, but you can definitely get a taste of it through the winner's interviews. For us, NORA Cup is a glorious pat on the back to the dudes who push boundaries, put in work, and just do their thing—their way—being badass bike riders. It's our giveback to the BMX community and industry. And it's the pros' and readers' way of saying these are the ones who should be recognized as the best of the year, hands down, plain and simple.

We moved the party to Emo's in Austin this year



VIKI GOMEZ

INTERVIEW BY KEITH MULLIGAN

#1 FLATLANDER



With close to two decades of riding under his belt, Viki wasn't afraid to switch up his style and reinvent his riding this past year—something

every rider can take inspiration from. A year brakeless, plus never-ending events and travel, and a couple of insane edits, helped the flatland community take notice and crown Viki as the **#1 Flatlander** for 2013.

Congrats! I saw you post that winning a NORA Cup has been a dream of yours since you started riding flat and it's the highlight of your career. That's pretty awesome, Viki! Why does it mean so much to you?

Since I started riding 17 years [ago] I subscribed to *Ride BMX* magazine. Then it was the only source of information about BMX that we had in Spain. It was so amazing to receive the new magazine every month! Then I saw the photos of riders doing tricks and I had to use my imagination to understand what tricks they were doing. I think because of this fact I came up with new ideas and my way of originality. Receiving the

NORA Cup in Austin after all these years riding, is by far the best accomplishment I could ever had dreamed of—in front of all the creators of BMX and all the new generations! Definitely a dream that became true, which is giving me more motivation to ride BMX every day of my life!

Did you think you'd win?

As I was only amongst the nominees for the very first time in 2012, and for the second time this year 2013, I felt the dream getting closer of winning the NORA Cup. I knew that it would only be possible with progression. And this is something you cannot predict, but work hard and wish for it. Magic started to happen—I was learning new tricks all the time, so I chose to film them at my spot in case I never do them again. Then after receiving the NORA Cup voting email, I realized I had a lot of footage and one year passed since I took my brakes off. So I decided to put all the footage together in a 10-minute clip compilation. I got so much credits for it, but for some reason I thought it wasn't enough. Ten days after I posted that video I came up with two new edits with so many new tricks, I couldn't believe the level of progression I was having, so I posted them online, and I think they were just in time before people started to vote. I couldn't guess I was going to get NORA Cup. I was so satisfied with my riding and just wanted to share it. Plus, the other nominees have been killin' it during the whole year, but then I realized I was the only one putting more new edits out constantly with new tricks and different styles. More variety. For me, NORA Cup is the award of the "Boat of Progression," and I think this

year I was the captain of this boat. Just wanna keep on sailing to new unknown worlds!

This year was filled with contest wins, Red Bull projects, and some rad new combos for you. What did you put the most effort into?

This year has been the busiest year of my life! I have been in 53 events already since January, and still many more events are coming before the end of the year! I started to take more care of my health since last year, and it really helped me in my riding and my career. I have been able to ride better and combine it with all the travelling. So many good projects of videos and photo sessions came up. Plus, good placing in contests, and the best in some contests I didn't win was to make new tricks, and being able to pull them! I felt like a victory every time! I guess being in good balance with myself helped me to perform the best I could in every moment. Motivation and gratitude for every day is the main key of success.

You rode this past year brakeless. Why that switch and how did your riding change from it?

I chose to change and take the brakes off to challenge myself. After winning for the third time Red Bull Circle of Balance last year in Japan, I thought I had accomplished everything I wanted in BMX. But life had another plan for me! I took my

brakes off and realized a new way of riding where I was feeling more free than ever! This, together with a new technique used by the Japanese based on having the foot on the top of the peg as if I was gonna pivot, made the magic start to happen! Every single day I learned at least two new tricks. Some days were even better and I learned up to eight new tricks in one session. Riding became magic, free and so much fun. More than ever!

How was this year different for you than years past? Any highlights?

This year my dream to have a complete BMX bike in stores became true. Orbea is a Spanish company specialized in Road Bike and MTB. Pretty big internationally, and really high quality. I got the chance to meet the owner and he got pretty interested about BMX, and me being a Spanish rider in the sport representing since long time. Then I designed a bike that can be used for street and flatland so riders can do freestyle and choose what discipline they want to go to, if not all. It's amazing to be part of Orbea family, the bike is so good quality. Many riders of street and flat loved it, and it has been the best bike I ever had in my life. I guess it changed my riding and lead me where I am today. Thanks to this I am so connected with BMX street and flatland. I want riders to be more open-minded and try both disciplines. I come from the "freestyle" times and my dream is to bring back those roots. So this, together with winning NORA Cup, riding a Orbea bike, is definitely the biggest highlight of this year and my whole life now!

How's living in Luxembourg? Is it a lot different than Spain?

Living in Luxembourg, a capital city, and still pretty small, surrounded by forest, helped my mind to stay more in contact with nature, and therefore myself. Coming from Madrid with seven million habitants, cars, hectic, and now living in Luxembourg made a big change in my life. I am more motivated to ride and work hard every day! My mind is clearer and it helps me in my riding and life a lot. All the riders here are street riders, amazing good people, and I love to ride with them at the same spots. Since I moved to Luxembourg, I am going to Spain more often for shows and projects, so I am getting to know my own country better than ever.

How has your style evolved over the years and what's your style now?

My style has changed every year. I always came up with new tricks and sometimes these tricks were not well understood by the judges and community as they should be. Maybe these tricks were just a part of an evolution. It's like art—sometimes something revolutionary needs some time to be digested. I always came up with new stuff and that's what matters for me. My style now is better than ever, I found my real style of riding since I started to ride brakeless.

What are you working on trick-wise right now?

At the moment I just keep learning new stuff all the time, so tricks are changing constantly. I am the type of rider who likes

"NORA CUP IS THE AWARD OF THE 'BOAT OF PROGRESSION,' AND I THINK THIS YEAR I WAS THE CAPTAIN OF THIS BOAT. JUST WANNA KEEP ON SAILING TO NEW UNKNOWN WORLDS!"

to do new tricks all the time, therefore it's hard to just focus on one style. I love back wheel riding a lot, kickflips and tailwhips, links from front wheel to back wheel. I let it flow with an open mind every day and new concepts are coming all the time.

There's always been respect for flatland, but it seems like a lot of non-flat riders are paying more attention these days. And of course, tricks are merging between flat and street more than ever. It must feel good to see this evolution.

This is amazing! Nowadays I get my biggest inspiration to ride from park and street riders. We have the same mindset, we just ride different disciplines, but our riding is based on progression to the next level. At the moment it looks like street and park are evolving more than flatland since there are many more riders. I feel so connected with these riders and I look up to them to get inspired. Getting the respect from them is amazing! BMX is freestyle, so I love every single trick out there. Wish I could do some street, but I am too obsessed to

ride flatland that I hardly find time to do anything else. At least my bike is a hybrid street/flat, so when I pedal to the city I can feel a bit of the street culture!

Who is your biggest inspiration right now?

Riders like Uccie [Yohei Uchino], [Alex] Jumelin, Matthias, Hotoke [Yoshiki Uchino], Dub [Jean-William Prevost], and many others inspire me! And I could say that most of the pro street riders out there are a huge inspiration in riding, style, and fashion! Martti Kuoppa is one of my best friends, and still the rider I look up to the most. His level is untouchable and I just wish one day I could reach that level! He has been my master and he gave me all his tips to ride. I am glad to be one of the riders who inspired him the most!

What can we expect to see from you in 2014?

I think in 2014 I would have mastered more of my brakeless riding, so I'm looking for bangers and new, longer combos. Front and back wheel. I want to help flatland contests and

inspire more riders to understand what is originality, support underground riders so they can go and kill it in the comps, have fun, keep travelling, and making the BMX Orbea team of street and flatland bigger.

Would you like to thank anyone?

I want to thank my parents for letting me be and support me since the first day I started riding. I want to thank all my friends who have been part of my life 'til today. I want to thank Martti Kuoppa for being a best friend, a master and my biggest motivation. Thanks to all the riders who voted for me for NORA Cup! Thanks to all my sponsors: Red Bull, Orbea, G-Shock, Arnette, Freegun, Suelo and Flybikes, DC Shoes, Le Fix and Motobicycles. And last but not least, my girlfriend Alexa who came to my life four years ago to bring back all the motivation I needed to keep on riding and becoming a better person. Love can change your life and makes you feel that everything is possible. Thanks to *Ride BMX* for this amazing interview and the NORA Cup awards!

✓ "The trick is a steamroller 360 barspin sort of kickflip." That makes perfect sense, but we're still a little confused about Viki's pedals. PHOTO: ROBINSON

