



# Vans for



# all seasons



Its grippy 'waffle' sole made it an instant hit with skateboarders. *Ian Burrell* travels to Amsterdam to meet the Vans frontman, Steve Van Doren, and the kids who still won't ride in anything else

**C**arrying an air of studied nonchalance, Nassim Guammaz, a teenaged Dutch-Moroccan with a towering Afro hairstyle that gives him presence beyond his slight stature, climbs to the top of a high ramp and presses his right foot on to the tail of his Element skateboard, raising its nose to a 45-degree angle.

At this signal, his fellow skaters respectfully shuffle back an inch or two on the ramp to give him space and a hush of anticipation descends. With a slam of his left foot on the front of the board, Guammaz departs his perch like an eagle

descending its eyrie, hurtling forth towards a giant wooden obstacle crafted in the shape of an Amsterdam barge. He sails over the barge, flips into the air while simultaneously turning about-face, lands on a wooden hand rail which he slides along before dropping back to terra firma still on the board but without so much of a hint of a smile to acknowledge his achievement.

Guammaz, aged 18 and a skating prodigy, is happy to leave the cheesy grins to the man who supplies him with his footwear. And that's Steve Van Doren, the flag-bearer of the family dynasty that created Vans – the shoe brand that →