

Edited by Olivia Lai

Rock n' Roller
From left: Milanie Bekker, Roscherr Maritz, Snooky Wong and Sarah Throwe

LGBTI

Quad Goals

Two members of Hong Kong's most LGBTI-friendly team, the Hong Kong Roller Derby, venture off the track and into the business world with a skate shop slash social space for the city's outsiders. By Carla Thomas

REMEMBER THE 2009 movie *Whip It?* Milanie Bekker definitely does. "I joined Hong Kong Roller Derby because I saw that movie," Bekker states, "and Ellen Page was such a queer icon of mine. I think [she is for] a lot of lesbians, actually!"

It's fitting that it was this lead role, played by Page, which has drawn so many women in the LGBTI community of late to the contact sport of roller derby, a game that puts inclusivity at the forefront of its rulebook. As a result, it's become something of a subculture worldwide that's now adjacent with the queer community.

Bekker, who identifies as a gay woman, joined Hong Kong's own roller derby team back in 2017, and it fast became more than a pastime – it's her community. "I think for [HKRD], it's really just about embracing everybody for who they are and looking beyond sexuality and just really finding the true person, seeing if we can rouse that passion and get them into this lifestyle that we call skating," she says.

Bekker's passion for the game is so undeniable that she and HKRD president Snooky Wong launched a roller derby brand and business, Madame Quad, in 2017. Last May, they opened a brick-and-mortar shop in Causeway Bay, selling everything from accessories like helmets, pads and toe stops to build-your-own quad skates, available in – appropriately – a rainbow of colours. It's also widely used as a hangout

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space, where HKRD members, or anyone for that matter, are welcome to drop by for a drink and a chat and to meet new people.

The two envision it being an addendum to the tightknit roller derby community they've worked to build. "There are so many areas where HKRD and Madame Quad bleed into each other," says Bekker. "It's really all about the community spirit. I feel like Madame Quad is definitely an extension, if not a little twin, mutated sister, that grew out of HKRD."

More than just a retail space for skaters, though, the pair believe the shop will also serve as a safe space and a much-needed pillar of the city's queer community – something they're proud to have had a hand in. "I never knew what I was missing until I found Madame Quad, or helped create her," Bekker explains. "She's really just part of the community. She is the community spirit. Whether it's the LGBTI or the HKRD community, or anyone that thinks they're queer, a little bit outside the box and a little bit freaky – we are totally there for you."

→ Madame Quad, 2C, Po Foo Bldg, 1-5 Foo Ming St, Causeway Bay. Mon-Tue, Thu-Sun 11am-7pm; madamequad.com.

