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LIVING



Roller-skating surges in popularity during the coronavirus pandemic





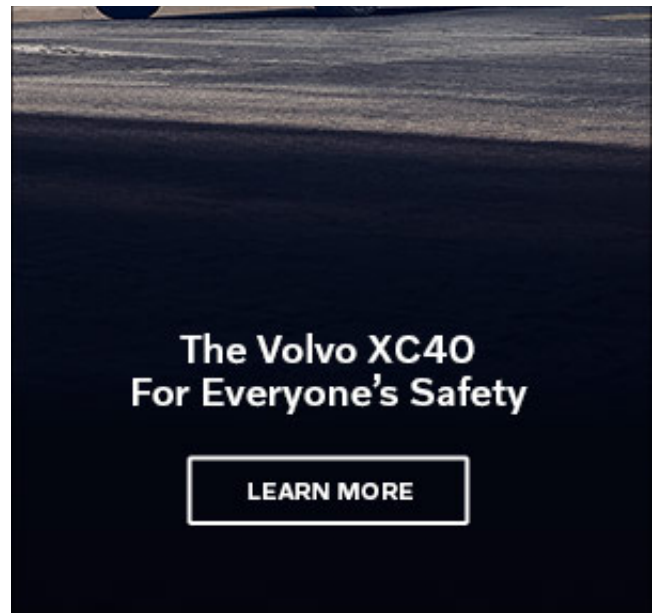
Ana Coto
Jesse Balmer

At the beginning of the pandemic, Mykaela took her last bit of cash and splurged on some roller skates.

“I’d go to roller rinks as a kid, but I never had my own pair,” says the 20-year-old NYC resident. “I had \$100 in my account, and thought, ‘You know what? Why not?’”

She was inspired by Ana Coto, a 29-year old actress from Southern California who **has gone viral on TikTok** for infectiously fun videos of herself skating (often backward) while basking in sunshine.

“She just made me want to do it,” says Mykaela. “Quarantine started, and I was looking for a new hobby, because we can’t go anywhere or do anything.”



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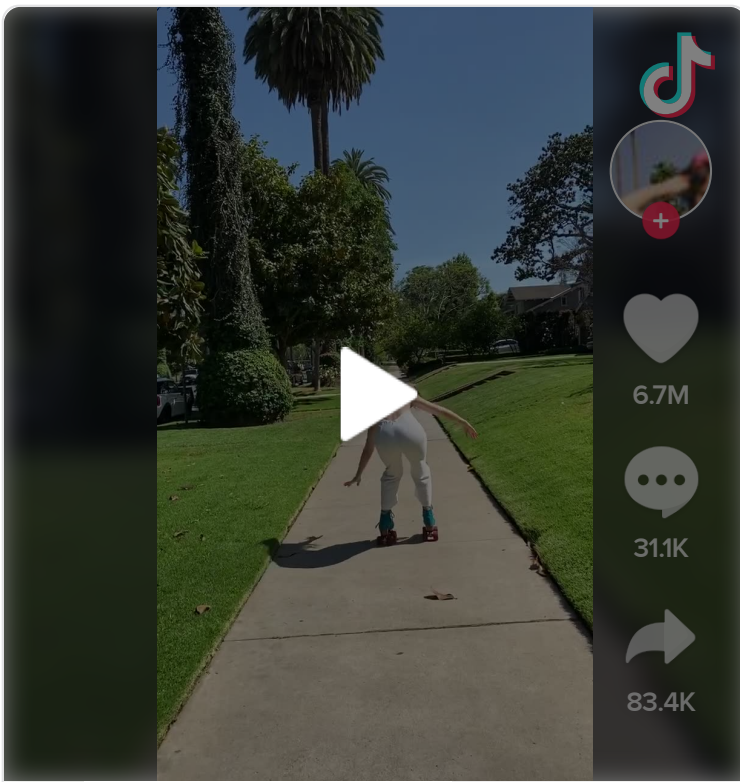
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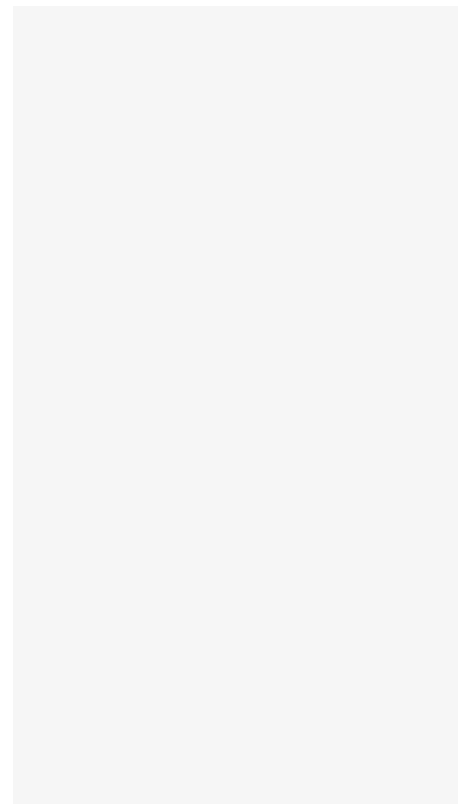
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Along empty streets, inside vacant parking lots and even through **the ghost town that is Times Square**, roller skaters rule again.

Google search interest for the retro footwear started picking up in March and **rocketed to a five-year high in early May** — about the time lockdown



doldrums also started peaking. A pastime that dates to the Great Depression and was revived again in the disco-loving '70s, roller-skating means gliding with each foot balanced atop two sets of wheels, like a car. That's in contrast to inline skates, or blades, whose wheels are set in a straight line.

Coto tells The Post that she's been trying to get friends to take up roller-skating for years. When COVID-19 hit, they finally listened.

"Lots of those people are coming out of the woodwork like, 'OK, you convinced me,'" says Coto, a former dancer who now lives in Los Angeles. "You can do it alone and have fun, and it's exercise."

It's no coincidence roller-skating, blading and skateboarding — all solo sports that also double as transportation alternatives — have taken off during the coronavirus pandemic. Biking has seen a similar renaissance, with long lines **spilling out of shops in New York City**. Akin to the run on bikes, snatched up by city dwellers eager to get outside safely, throwback "quad" skates are in high demand. **One TikTok video** shows a teen taping her sneakers to a skateboard and attempting to groove like Coto, with a caption that laments "roller skates sold out everywhere, so we had to

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VIDEO



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improvise.”

Mykaela originally opted for a pair of \$94.95 skates from 2-year-old Australian brand Impala, but recently upgraded to wheels from Moxi, a company Coto and other pros love. Moxi’s site, along with that of other roller-skate retailers Riedell Skates, Planet Roller Skate and Roller Skate Nation, were among the e-commerce websites that experienced the most traffic growth in May.

The Big Apple’s veteran hobbyists are happy to share the asphalt with newcomers.



Lola Starr

Stefano Giovannini

Longtime practitioner Lola Starr says lately she’s seen “a big comeback” in the “quad skating” that she’s been doing since she was 11.

“The retro quality, and the fashion sense of it, attracts a younger generation discovering skating for the first time,” says Starr, a Ditmas Park resident who runs Dreamland Roller Disco, which hosts themed skating parties at the rink in

Prospect Park. “The popularity has increased tremendously. So many people have been asking me where to get skates because they want to skate outside. It’s exercise, but it’s also therapeutic and healing.”

A new generation is discovering a lively leisure sport elders have long waxed nostalgic for.

“Your grandparents, parents, they all have history with [skating],” Coto tells *The Post*. “Lots of young people are seeing that it’s a connective thing now . . . Especially in quarantine, everyone’s feeling a little more aware of how important human connection is.”

A pro tip from Starr: Invest in the proper wheels. Popular Brooklyn shop **Five Stride** is reopening Tuesday and taking orders for curbside pickup.

“Skates with hard wheels that are marketed for both indoor and outdoor skating will make your ride bumpy,” Starr says. “Soft outdoor wheels will make skating much more fun.”

If you can get your hands on a pair of skates, there are plenty of open roads to practice on, even though indoor rinks are off-limits for now.

Browne, for instance has kept close to her neighborhood, practicing in her apartment building’s basement garage, her hallway and in a nearby park.

“Skating is really calming,” says Mykaela, adding that the quieter-than-normal streets allow her to take in the cityscape sans pedestrians, traffic and general hubbub. Posting mood-boosting videos of



Mykaela

Mykaela Browne

her new tricks — on her new Instagram account, [@urskatebae](#), to chart her progress — help “lift her spirits.”

“I’m mainly focusing on jam-skating, which combines skating and dancing,” says Mykaela. “I like to focus on transition and footwork tricks, and when you add it all together it looks like a dance, and you can add in your own flavor.”

Mykaela adds that she also laced up in the hopes of losing some weight, and says constant rolling “stretches out my limbs.”

However, the newbie balks about commuting to work on skates until she has honed her skills a bit

more.

Says Mykaela, "It's uphill, and I don't want to hurt myself."

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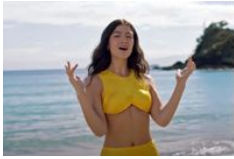
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