



voice for the universality of youth sub-culture,' says Smith. At 38, he now looks more like a media mogul than a countercultural hipster. In just over a decade *Vice* has gone from little more than a fanzine to a magazine with 900,000 readers in 22 countries and an international brand which takes in clothing, TV, book publishing, music (Bloc Party has released an album in the US through Vice Records) and now film.

'Vice' is practically a definition of the magazine's content. All off-kilter life is here. Skaters feature alongside interviews with the likes of Abu Hamza. And its take-no-prisoners approach has captured the imagination of what marketing people call 'trendsetting metropolitans' aged 21 to 34. The *Cassandra*

*Report*, the influential consumer guide, named the magazine the number-one tastemaker in this crucial demographic for the past five years.

The magazine's roster of photographers includes Terry Richardson, Ryan McGinley, Richard Kern, Dash Snow and *Observer* contributors Jamie-James Medina, Alex Sturrock and Danielle Levitt. Richardson is famed for his point-and-shoot style and has shot campaigns for Gucci, Levi's and American Apparel. McGinley, a former photo editor for the magazine who still contributes cover shots, was the youngest person ever to have a solo show at the Whitney in New York.

'I first saw *Vice* in my local video store,' McGinley tells me from his Manhattan studio. 'I hadn't seen anything like it before.'

As one of a group of young, up-and-coming photographers and writers, McGinley recorded the fast life of the magazine and its friends in New York's Lower East Side. 'Things back then were crazy,' McGinley concedes, 'but these images were just a part of my life. When you group all the images together though, as they were in *Vice*, it creates a myth.'

These images are now included in a lavish coffee-table album, *The Vice Photo Book*, which reveals the magazine's strikingly broad range of photography, from serious photojournalism to party snapshots to nudes. '*Vice* runs everything,' says McGinley. 'It happily runs full-frontal nudity, which is pretty ballsy.'

Jamie-James Medina, 25, who started working for the magazine when he was 19

and made his name photographing London's burgeoning grime scene, agrees. Now focusing more on photojournalism, Medina has travelled to Tokyo, Bangkok, Jamaica, Sudan, China and North Korea with *Vice*. 'I love the fact Terry Richardson can shoot girls, Ryan McGinley can shoot this beautiful art photography and I can sneak in there with a bit of photojournalism,' he says.

The magazine's range has broadened enormously in recent years. As Medina puts it: 'Hipsters grow up. It's just not cool to be dumb any more.' Later, at dinner in a Twenties-style Berlin *bierhaus*, Smith appears, sporting a Kim Jong-Il lapel badge he was given by a general he befriended in North Korea while making an undercover documentary. I ask him about ▶

Making a stand (clockwise from top) a Michael Rababy shot from *Vice*'s regular photo-gallery feature; Enrique Melinedes captures the action after a Mexican bank robbery in which three policemen were killed; a Tim Barber mushroom picture graces the cover of a special drugs issue; and *Vice*'s publisher, Erik Lavoie, takes the strain in a Danielle Levitt portrait