

APR/MAY 16

WELCOME TO THE FUTURE...

Welcome to issue 41 of the World's Number One Online Mountain Bike Magazine! In this issue Ewen Turner takes a look at the booming female enduro scene, these girls can shred! Steve Shannon heads to Nepal to do

some serious bike trekking on the trip of a lifetime and we feature Commencal in our Behind the Brand feature! We've also got technique with Richard Kelly, bike tests and a feature on Crankworx Rotorua, there is plenty more inside too...

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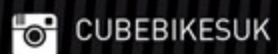
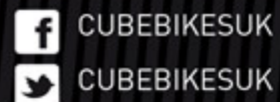
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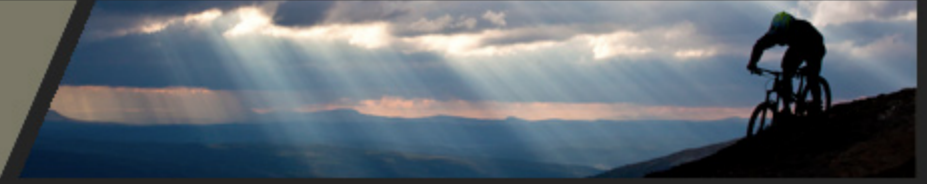
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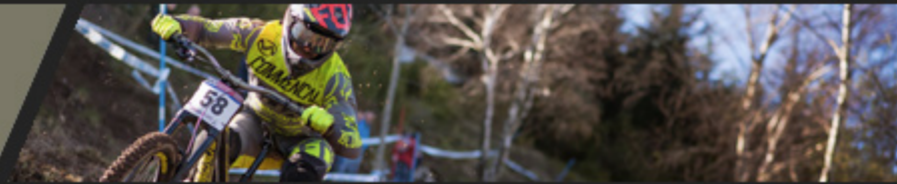
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IT'S ALMOST TIME TO GET OUT TO THE ALPS!
PHOTO RONNY KIAULEHN

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issue 41

There is something about the DH World Cup that you just can't beat, for sure Rampage is incredible, and the Crankworx and FMB events have their place. For me though, the excitement of watching so many riders pile down the same track is unsurpassed. There are no judges to decide who wins or loses, or what trick is harder than another. It's just the rider and their bike against the relentless passage of time as they pick their line down the course. Talking of bikes, we saw one of the biggest shake-ups we've ever seen over the winter. The Atherton's on Trek, GT with a whole new team, Bruni and his crew moving to Specialized and Aaron heading to YT to name just a few. With so many new teams and new bikes at the first event in Lourdes my anticipation and excitement was reaching fever pitch.

Away from the teams and the bikes however, there is another element to these weekends that I love. The fans on the track really make it for me, fancy dress, vuvuzelas, old bike frames and hammers, I can't think of another sport where the fans go quite so mental. Kudos to the crew of Smurfs at Lourdes, you epitomise what makes the series so great to me; it's all about the passion.

The heady combination of the most beautiful, technically advanced bikes, with some of the most talented athletes on the planet coupled with some of the most passionate fans around, makes these weekends truly what they are. In addition to that, for all those people who couldn't be trackside on that weekend, we have Red Bull to thank for giving Rob Warner and Claudio Caluori a mouthpiece to showcase their talents. Watching the Live Stream from the comfort of your sofa is almost as good as being there these days.

Hats off to the teams, the riders, the fans and the crew for bringing us some of the best entertainment the world has to offer...I can't wait to see how this season unfolds!

Rou Chater

Publishing Editor

PHOTOS BARTEK WOLINSKI/RED BULL CONTENT POOL

EDITORIAL

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WORDS EWEN TURNER

THE TIMES THEY ARE A CHANGIN'

With more and more women entering the Enduro World Series, and Tracy Moseley and Ann-Caroline Chausson leaving the field wide open for 2016, we're going to be seeing some different faces on the podium. Ewen Turner chats to the girls involved and finds out what the future holds...



BIG LANDSCAPES AND DRY TRAILS IN SOUTH AMERICA
PHOTO LAPIERRE JÉRÉMIE REUILLER



THE EYES SAY IT ALL. CECILE IS AFTER ONE THING.
PHOTO COMMENCAL

" BIKES ARE STILL VERY MUCH AT THE HEART OF EVERYTHING, INCLUDING FILM AND MEDIA EVENTS "

As the racing came to a close on the 2015 Enduro World Series in Finale Ligure, there was once more an almost permanent fixture on the top step of the women's podium. Tracy Moseley had yet again crushed the competition and was standing where everyone expected her to be, taking another

win, and with it the overall title. Her triumph of a third consecutive overall win was followed by an announcement that certainly wasn't expected, and rumours of her retirement were greatly exaggerated.

I asked Tracy about how her announcement was received, "Yeah, the good old media slightly misinterpreted what I said in Finale", and although she is doing less racing, she is definitely still competing in 2016, just not

defending her title. This point was further underlined when she took the win at the Andes Pacifico in February this year. With extra time to play with, she plans to get involved with more events and "a number of local and national enduro races" and also the BC bike race.

Bikes are still very much at the heart of everything, including film and media events for Trek, "I'll still be busy, giving back to the sport and still giving my sponsors some great coverage too". So with Tracy not defending her EWS title in 2016, what would this mean for the competition? To step down whilst obviously able to continue winning may have been a shock, but more interestingly it gave rise to questions as to what the women's race would look like in 2016.

No longer would it be a race for second place, but with that top spot free, who would take up the mantle? With further news that Ann-Caroline Chausson would not be competing, the women's competition was suddenly clear for the taking. Before it all kicked off, I asked Tracy what she thought 2016 would bring for the racers, "I actually think it will be an exciting year for the EWS series and for the women's field", explaining that with the new influx of riders there should be "a good group of girls battling for those three spots on the podium".

And the standard, will this move forward? I ask, "It will only help increase the standard as they will push each other on, all of the time. I can't wait to watch!" We are now two rounds in and no longer have to speculate, the results are in and from the dust has emerged a new world order. We can't know for sure if the standard is faster or slower without the Tracy benchmark, but the field is certainly unrecognisable from last year, yet strangely a pattern looks familiar.



Cecile Ravanel has taken a clean sweep so far, winning the first two rounds and most of the stages, with a Moseley-like dominance, firstly at Corral in Chile, then at Cerro Catedral in Argentina.

I caught up with some of the riders to get their thoughts on the riding and racing so far, and what is still to come.

CECILE RAVANEL

How does it feel to have won the first two rounds of the EWS?

I'm really happy to have won these first two innings, it's not easy to estimate the physical form of the other riders during the first run, it is extra pressure because we do not know where we are in our preparation.

CELEBRATIONS ON THE PODIUM IN CORRAL PHOTO ENDURO WORLD SERIES (DUNCAN PHILPOTT)

"IT'S NOT EASY TO ESTIMATE THE PHYSICAL FORM OF THE OTHER RIDERS"



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"EVEN WITHOUT THEM, ANY TROUBLE AND I COULD FIND MYSELF OUTSIDE THE TOP 5."

Without Tracy Moseley this year it looked like it might be wide open, but you seem to have taken up her position. Were you worried about the pressure?

Now that I have won two, I feel more relaxed!

Do you feel the racing is more or less competitive this year?

The level of girls in the top 10 has really increased, there is no place to make mistakes otherwise the podium escapes us. Before there was Tracy, Anne-Caroline Chausson and me behind, so I could ride with my brain "switched off" to try to beat them and even if I fell on one or more stage I knew my 3rd place was assured, now even without them, any trouble and I could find myself outside the top 5.

How important is your relationship with your team for your racing?

This is my second season with Commencal and what is important is to have a team behind me, which continues to develop the bike and help us with our settings. We come many times a year to the office in Andorra and all those who work there are involved and follow the riders.

How would you describe the first two rounds?

Looks like there was a lot of dust!

Ha ha! It was worse than dust, I've never seen and never rode in such circumstances in Argentina, but it was really fun. The stages were a downhill profile, with great speed and when we arrived in some parts, especially in turns, we were never sure of being able to ride out as there was so much sand.

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AMAURY PIERRON

HE LOVES RACING

"LOOKING AT HER TIME ON SPECIAL 5, WHICH WAS PHYSICAL, AND KNOWING HER TALENT AS A DOWNHILLER, SHE MAY BE A RIVAL TO ME."

Who do you feel are the main threats going into the rest of the season?

I think that Anneke Beerten, and maybe Casey Brown.

What do you think of newcomer Casey Brown? She looks set to apply some pressure to the competition this year.

Casey proved in Argentina that she has the potential to play-to-win in the EWS. When looking at her time on special 5, which was physical, and knowing her talent as a downhiller, she may be a rival to me.

How do you see the women's EWS competition developing? Generally there are approximately 30 women competitors per round; do you see this number increasing this year? Would you like to see more women racing at the EWS level?

Enduro is attracting more and more riders of all disciplines: XC, DH and now we see appearing a real generation of pure endure riders. For me it is the discipline of MTB 'par excellence', the one that everyone can practice. This is even truer for women who love the technical control but feel downhill remains reserved for the elite difficulty of tracks. For sure, I would like to see more participants on the EWS and when looking at Whistler, participation is much higher than in Europe.

CECILE DROPS IN TO ANOTHER AWESOME STAGE
PHOTO COMMENCAL





KATY WINTON APPROACHING WARP SPEED IN CORRAL
PHOTO: ENDURO WORLD SERIES (DUNCAN PHILPOTT)

"IT IS A LONG SEASON AND THESE TOUGH WEEKENDS ARE THE ONES YOU TAKE THE MOST FROM."

Which round are you most looking forward to this year and why?

My preferred race is Whistler as this is the paradise of mountain biking. Outside the race we enjoy the bike park, perfectly shaped trails and the atmosphere is one hundred percent MTB.

KATY WINTON

How has the racing changed since last season?

I think it's more competitive; it was always

really competitive just behind Tracy and ACC as we were all trying to break these two dominant forces! I'm so pleased to see Anne back on a bike again though, she'll be back racing soon I have no doubt! We'll have T-Mo back for Ireland too, so the battles aren't over!

How would you describe the first two rounds?

Hot, flat out and boats for the first round, massive sand pit for the second round!

Are you happy with your results?

Honestly, no I'm not, but I'm pleased with the progression from last year at the first round, I had some good stage times but I still have

a lot to learn. I am pretty disappointed with my second round, being ill and not riding like I know I can made for a frustrating weekend, but it is a long season and these tough weekends are the ones you take the most from.

Your team mate Casey Brown was straight in there with a podium. How much of a threat do you think she will be this year?

That was so awesome to see Casey killing it, how much of a threat for the rest of the season though I have no idea! Every race is so different you can go well at one then the format changes and it's a whole new ball game. At this point Casey is just planning to do the two North American rounds, but after that performance maybe we will see her at more - I hope so!



What are the main differences between your set up this year and last? You're all factory now, eh?

So factory, ha ha! Last year I had a some funding and all the equipment I needed for races which meant I could train full time all winter. That was, of course, brilliant and a big step forward, but at the races I was still doing everything myself. It was the perfect stepping-stone of more support from what I had even the year before that! Riding for Trek now, man I don't know myself!! It is so different! Someone books my flights and accommodation, Ray my team manager sorts so much out, deals with so much stress and keeps my bike tip top. We also have James who does some massage and cooks food and snacks, really it couldn't be more different, but in such a positive way. It's just a matter of getting used to those luxuries and utilising them to get the best out of myself.

KATY WINTON MEANS BUSINESS.

PHOTO ENDURO WORLD SERIES (DUNCAN PHILPOTT)

"IT'S JUST A MATTER OF GETTING USED TO THOSE LUXURIES AND UTILISING THEM TO GET THE BEST OUT OF MYSELF."

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" I HOPE OTHER TEAMS START HAVING REPRESENTATION ON THE FEMALE SIDE TOO "

Are there any barriers for women competing at this level?

Only their own personal barriers of whether they think they can or can't do it, or do or don't want to. I think that is the biggest barrier for women getting into racing. If you are fit it makes a big difference to the enjoyment of the day, then just learn. You don't have to be able to ride all of the tracks, some girls the last two weekends were walking down parts. There is no shame in that; you have to start somewhere.

Many teams have no women, is this due to a lack of female racers, or should teams be supporting female athletes more?

Well, the EWS has women earning 100 less points for their results (female winner 400 pts, vs. male winner 500 etc.) so we are devalued straight away. Spend your budget on two top males and you'll do better in the team rankings because they get more points. To be fair to a lot of teams though, the situation in Enduro vs. DH is much better. We have more opportunities with teams in Enduro than in DH, most of the top 10 have great support from teams. GT have two girls, Trek have three, Ibis have two; it was usually unheard of to have more than one girl. It's great to see and I hope other teams start having representation on the female side too; it's a huge market to represent!

Which of this year's rounds are you most looking forward to and why?

Ireland, it's the closest to home and I had a lot of fun there last year. The Irish love it; it will be a great weekend.

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RAE MORRISON LOOKS HAPPY SAT IN 5TH OVERALL.
PHOTO LAPIERRE JÉRÉMIE REUILLER



RAE SHOWING ONCE AGAIN SHE HAS THE SPEED
TO BE THREATEN THE PODIUM
PHOTO LAPIERRE JÉRÉMIE REUILLER



"THE DIFFERENCE IS INCREDIBLE. IT IS ABSOLUTELY AMAZING TO BE ON THE BEST EQUIPMENT"

RAE MORRISON

How has the competition changed for this year?

It is definitely different and sad to not have Tracy and Ann CC on the circuit this year, but I would say it is still an extremely competitive field of women. There is the younger generation stepping up, gaining experience and improving with every race. It will hopefully be an exciting season to watch with closer racing for the podium and a

continually growing field of fast ladies.

How would you describe the tracks from the first 2 rounds of the EWS?

The tracks were so unique. With Chile having super fun fresh cut tracks and a huge variety of terrain from rocks and roots to dusty steep switchbacks. Where as the dry and dusty tracks in Argentina were unlike anywhere else. It was fast paced, axle deep sandy ruts and holes that were forever changing. It was challenging and rewarded the best all-round riders; requiring physical strength to hold on, excellent bike handling skills and the ability to read the ever-changing and deteriorating track.

How are things on the new bike and with the new team this year?

The difference is incredible. It is absolutely amazing to be on the best equipment, with an amazing team full of awesome people and to have the support to be able to focus on racing rather than just surviving on a non-existent budget as a privateer. It's a dream come true to be riding with the Lapierre Gravity Republic team.

How do you feel the women's side of the EWS will develop? Are we going to see more competitors? Will the times get tighter?

The times will definitely get tighter as an increasing number of women are stepping up their game as we gain more experience. It is great to see more even media coverage and more teams supporting women.



" I HAVE NEVER RIDDEN ANYTHING LIKE IT, LITERALLY ROTOR DEEP DUST! "

I believe this is a huge step forward for competitive female participation at world-class events. The level of competition will continue to grow with this.

Who are the biggest threats to the podium this year?

Cecile is currently dominating the podium. However, as the season progresses any of the top 10 women could be a contender.

Which round are you most looking forward to this year and why?

I am really looking forward to Wicklow, Ireland and Finale Ligure, Italy. The tracks were amazing last year, but the spectators were next level. It created an incredible atmosphere to be a part of.

BEX BARAONA

Have you raced any previous EWS rounds?

In 2014 I did the Scottish round at the Tweed Love festival. Before that race I had never done such a long day in the saddle, I think we did about 60km each day. I never got a chance to practice half of the stages because I was at university, it was an exciting event though!

How would you describe the level of competition at world level? As a new comer did the national level races you've competed in prepare you?

I don't think you can prepare for that aspect of world level racing, all you can do is expose yourself to it (another reason to do the full series).

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NEPALESE DREAMS

TRAIL GUIDE

ANNAPURNA & MUSTANG

Nepal has long been an adventurous travel destination. Home to the highest mountains in the world, people have travelled from around the globe to hike and climb in the Himalayas. In recent years, mountain biking has slowly been gaining popularity amongst tourists and for good reason: it's the perfect way to experience Nepal. Two of the more popular areas to mountain bike are the Annapurna circuit and Mustang region.

WORDS & PHOTOS STEVE SHANNON



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Getting There

Kathmandu is the capital of Nepal and its Tribhuvan airport is well serviced by a number of airlines. From North America, it's easy to connect through China and India, and from Europe, there are plenty of connections. Kathmandu is well worth visiting for a few days on its own. The Thamel district is the hub of tourist activity and accommodation, but there's plenty of exploring to be had in other areas of town including two UNESCO World Heritage sites.

The Boudhanath Stupa is the largest stupa in Nepal and also the holiest Tibetan Buddhist temple outside of Tibet. Unfortunately, the 2015 earthquake destroyed part of the stupa, but it's still an incredible sight. Swayambhunath, known as the monkey temple, sits on a hillside overlooking the Kathmandu Valley. The view is stunning, with prayer flags framing the skyline, monkeys running around the trees and buildings, and the eyes of Buddha staring down from the temple. In addition to the tourist attractions, there are some trails in the area that would serve as a great warm up if time allows.

Logistics

Biking in Nepal is best done in the spring or fall when the weather patterns are settled and temperatures are moderate. Summer brings the monsoons, with torrential rain and the mountains hidden by clouds, while winter is far too cold to venture into the highlands. The spring is the most active climbing season and can also be suitable for trekking and



" IT IS MUCH MORE ENJOYABLE HAVING A LOCAL SHOWING THE WAY TO THE BEST TRAILS."

biking, but autumn is the best time to visit, specifically October after the monsoon season is finished.

Though it is possible to bike around Nepal without assistance, it is certainly an advantage and good value to hire a guide. The navigation isn't overly complicated, but it is much more enjoyable having a local showing the way to the best trails, translating with the locals and helping arrange meals and accommodation. The Annapurna circuit is extremely

popular and accommodation can quickly become full if you're not at your night's destination early.

In addition to being extremely useful, hiring a guide is an excellent way to make a new friend and help support the economy in Nepal. Though commercial tours through companies like Sacred Rides are available, hiring a private guide for you and a few friends is the ultimate way to bike in Nepal. For visiting the restricted upper Mustang region, a guide is mandatory.



" GOING SELF-SUPPORTED
ISN'T FOR EVERYONE,
BUT THE REWARDS ARE
WELL WORTH THE EFFORT. "

There are also a couple of different ways to bike around Nepal. If using a commercial tour service, the chances are you'll have porters carrying a lot of your gear. Though this makes it a little easier physically, it also limits your daily mileage to that which a porter can walk. Going self-supported isn't for everyone, but the rewards are well worth the effort.

While gaining the respect of the locals, you'll also have the freedom to explore more and the satisfaction of earning your trip. As bike-packing

gains popularity, more and more companies are making great bags to carry your stuff. Revelate Designs makes excellent bags that will fit onto full suspension mountain bikes without affecting the performance of your ride.

For bikes, many riders prefer a lightweight hardtail for grinding out the miles. Though this is more efficient for climbing, it's an absolute shame not to be able to shred the downhills due to a lack of performance. Modern 120-150mm full suspension bikes climb

very well, and you'll appreciate having full suspension on the downhill sections.

Careful consideration should be given to gearing as having an extremely low granny gear will help on the endless climbs. Using a One-Up components extended cassette is highly recommended. A dropper seat post is handy, but not a must for this trip. For brakes Shimano brakes are preferred for their adaptability to high altitudes. Tubeless tires work well but bring tubes and patches in case of significant damage.



Spare parts are few and far between, especially higher end components. Bring a spare derailleur, length of chain and quick links, brake pads, brake fluid, tubes and patches at a minimum. Also, if you're using a dropper post consider getting a clamp to hold the post up in case it fails. In addition to the above, a handful of zip ties, some bailing wire, cable ends and a good multi-tool are all beneficial to have.

" SPARE PARTS ARE FEW AND FAR BETWEEN, ESPECIALLY HIGHER END COMPONENTS."

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" NEPAL IS VERY DIVERSE,
WITH THE LOWLANDS BEING
DOWNRIGHT TROPICAL."

Annapurna

The Annapurna circuit has been a classic trekking route for decades. It starts in Besi Sahar at 760 metres above sea level and follows the Marsyangdi river to Manang, at which point it turns northward towards Thorung La, the 5416-metre mountain pass that must be crossed to reach the Kali Gandaki Gorge. The route descends to Muktinath, and from there you can either head down to Kagbeni and exit down the valley or turn north into the restricted Mustang region.

To reach the starting point in Besi Sahar, it's best to hire a van from Kathmandu. Public transportation is available as well but will take significantly longer and risk damaging your bikes (which will most likely be tied to the roof and have people sitting on them). Hiring a private van costs around \$200 US and takes between 5 and 8 hours to make the 180-kilometre drive. Traffic in Nepal is somewhat chaotic so expect everything to take longer than anticipated.

Though most people have visions of cold, snowy mountains and barren alpine tundra, Nepal is very diverse, with the lowlands being downright tropical. Lush forests of rhododendron and terraced rice paddies litter the hillsides, and sweltering heat and humidity await at the start in Besi Sahar. Though it used to be just a small trail suitable for humans and animals, modern times have brought development and a rough dirt road now extends almost all the way to Manang at the base of Gangapurna (el. 7455m).



For biking, this means relatively fast travel and it's all rideable. The traditional trekking trail still parallels much of the road, with parts of it being fun riding, but other parts are littered with stairs making for a miserable climb with a loaded bike. Fear not as the road is still fun riding, and on the easier sections, you won't be bored as it gives time to look up and enjoy the scenery.

" YOU WON'T BE BORED AS IT GIVES TIME TO LOOK UP AND ENJOY THE SCENERY. "



The Cullin - Isle of Skye, Scotland

At Endura, being Danny's choice of cycling kit isn't always easy. If he's not 100% happy we have to do it again. And again. And again...

But that's why we like to work with him.

RENEGADE PROGRESS



ENDURA

From Besi Sahar, it is recommended to take the road most of the way to Manang. It's at least a three-day ride to Manang depending on your fitness level. Popular spots to spend the night are Tal and Chame, making each day 30-40 kilometres with between 1000 and 2000 metres of elevation gain between stops. The days can be crushing, but it is a beautiful ride. The landscape varies from the sub-tropical forest at the start, into pine forest around Chame, to arid highlands as you approach Manang. If you have the time, there are plenty of side trips and places to see along the way. The sky is the limit.

Manang is the capital of the region and a bustling hub of activity. At 3500 metres above sea level, it is a great place to take a rest day and get acclimatized to the higher elevations. After the sweltering heat and humidity of the lowlands the brisk mountain air flowing off the glaciers high above is a welcome change. During the autumn, the locals are harvesting wheat to get through the winter. This is the last place to get many supplies before climbing over the high passes to Muktinath. From Manang there are various side trips including Kicho Tal (Ice Lake), hiking up the slopes below Gangapurna and the multi-day trip to Tilicho Lake.

The Tilicho Lake trip is a spectacular side trip taking a few days and highly recommended. From Manang, the trail is faint but can be found with a little looking around. The trail intertwines with a road as far as Khangsar, after which it's mostly singletrack as it climbs over 4000 metres. Eventually, the trail reaches the infamous landslide section just before Tilicho Base Camp.



" THE DAYS CAN BE
CRUSHING, BUT IT IS A
BEAUTIFUL RIDE. "



There are a few route options here depending on conditions. With a bike it's best to cross the landslide on the main path, avoiding the long climb up and around. The trail is narrow and may require some walking depending on your comfort level with narrow trails and large exposure. The drop to the river below is intimidating, to say the least. It's best to pre-arrange accommodation at Tilicho Base Camp, or at the very least get there fairly early in the day as



" THE TRAIL IS STUNNING, BUT WILL BE A FULL ON HIKE-A-BIKE UP AT THAT ALTITUDE "

there aren't many rooms and it is frequently full. Spend a night here acclimatising to the altitude before continuing up to Tilicho Lake. From the base camp at 4150 metres, it's another 900 metres of climbing up to the high point before the lake. The trail is stunning, but will be a full on hike-a-bike up at that altitude. One of the world's highest ridgelines towers overhead with Khangsar Kang (aka Roc Noir, el. 7485m) and Tilicho Peak (7134m) hiding

Annapurna I (8091m) from view.

Reaching the high point at 5000 metres is a huge relief, and a small tea house awaits above the shores of Tilicho Lake. Tilicho Lake, at 4920 metres above sea level, is one of the highest lakes in the world and stunningly beautiful. It's possible to continue around the lake in good weather and descend all the way to Jomsom in the lower Mustang, but the descent back to base camp and then Manang is equally sweet.



From Manang, the main trail to Thorung La continues up through Yak Kharka, Ledar, Thorung Phedi and Thorung High Camp before finally reaching the pass at 5416 metres above sea level. It's best to spend at least three days getting to the pass as it's easy to get altitude sickness if you climb too fast. High Camp is 500 metres higher than Thorung Phedi, leaving just 500 metres to climb up to the pass, making for a bit of an easier day getting to Thorung La. The trade-off is sleeping at higher altitude, which is fitful at best.

" IT'S EASY TO GET ALTITUDE SICKNESS IF YOU CLIMB TOO FAST. "



SURFING ELEMENTS

" THE HARSH DESERT LANDSCAPE FRAMED BY THE HIGH PEAKS OF ANNAPURNA I AND DHAULAGIRI COMPLEMENTS THE UNIQUE CULTURE "



Thorung La is a major highlight of the trip. At 5416 metres above sea level, it's a grunt getting up there, but the ride down the other side to Muktinath rewards your efforts. Dropping 1700 metres, the continuous ride down is a brake boiler. The trail starts off flowing through glacial moraines, then descends into a series of steep switchbacks to the valley far below.

Though it was built by centuries of foot traffic, it feels like it's made for a bike. Lower down the trail drops down stairs onto tea house patios before following goat paths towards the Muktinath temple. Riding down the stairs from the temple into town past tourists and pilgrims is priceless for the look on their faces alone. In Muktinath, the place to stay is the Hotel Bob Marley. It's the hot spot for activity with funky decor, hot showers and great food. Muktinath marks the end of the Annapurna region and a distinct change in both landscape and culture. The west side of the pass is arid and has a much more Tibetan/Buddhist feel to it.

The Mustang Region

The Upper Mustang region is a unique area of Nepal. Formerly its own kingdom, the area was closed to tourists until 1991 and presently requires an expensive \$500 US permit to visit for ten days. The money is well spent, however, as the region is incredible and in addition to the permit, it is also required to travel with a guide. The harsh desert landscape framed by the high peaks of Annapurna I and Dhaulagiri complements the unique culture of the former Kingdom of Lo.

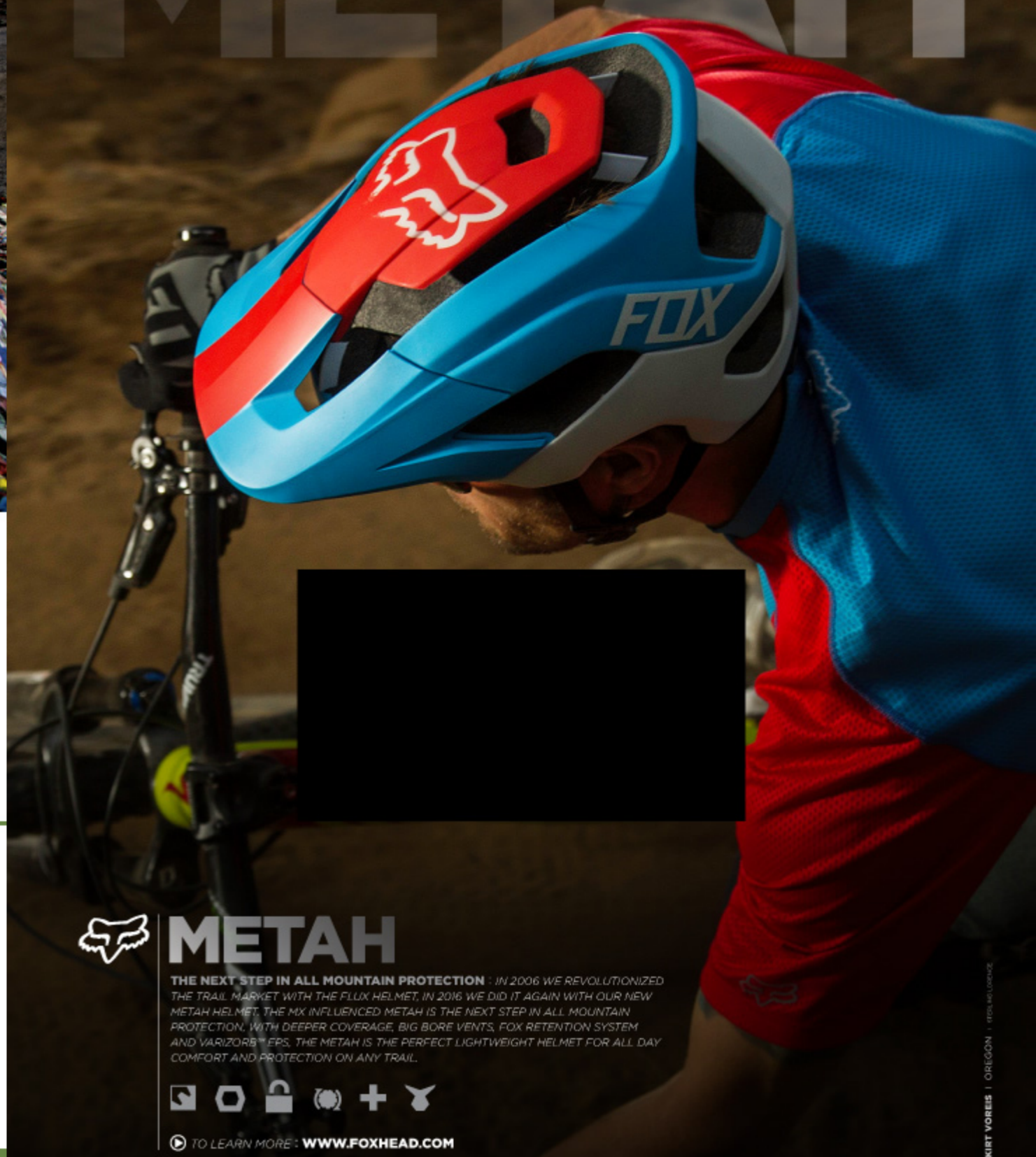


The usual entrance to the upper Mustang is through Kagbeni, but if you get your permits in order, it's possible to enter the Mustang region directly from Muktinath. The route heads north out of town, starting as two track then turning into a singletrack trail. It crosses Gyu La (4077m) with a stunning panorama view of the Annapurna range and Dhaulagiri then drops over 1000 metres all the way to Chhusang (2980m).

The descent is fun singletrack in a beautiful remote environment. The desert landscape includes sheer cliffs, deep gorges, hoodoos and more. The change in culture is immediately noticeable in the Mustang. The people are less used to tourists, speak a different language and the majority are Buddhist instead of Hindu.

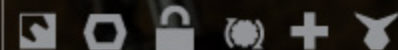
" THE DESERT LANDSCAPE INCLUDES SHEER CLIFFS, DEEP GORGES, HOODOOS AND MORE "

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" MOUNTAIN BIKING IN THE ANNAPURNA AND MUSTANG REGIONS IS A SUPERB WAY TO SEE THIS AMAZING PART OF THE WORLD. "

From Chhusang, there are a few ways to get to the capital city of Lo Manthang. There is now a road extending all the way up the valley, which is the most efficient way, taking 2 or 3 days to reach Lo Manthang. The road climbs sharply up from the Kali Gandaki River just outside of Chhusang, passing through apple groves at Chele before snaking its way up desert canyons to a series of passes around 3700 to 4000 metres.

Singletrack side adventures are abundant, but if you need to get some miles under your belt, then the road is the fastest way. Teahouses are available in some towns along the way, so it's fairly easy to ride until you're tired and find a place to stay. Highlights on the way to Lo Manthang are the longest Mani Wall in Mustang, just outside of Ghami, and one of the largest Buddhist monasteries in Tsarang.

From Tsarang, it's a half day to Lo Manthang on the road. The final descent into the walled city is fun, and it's immediately apparent that Lo Manthang is a very special place. Riding through the ancient cobblestone streets, you'll find locals going about daily life intertwined with three different monasteries. From Lo Manthang, there are plenty of options for day rides to neighbouring towns and abundant singletrack in the hillsides. The Garphu Caves near Choser are an excellent day trip.

[CLICK OR TAP TO READ MORE](#)

BEHIND THE BRAND COMMENCAL

Continuing our series that takes a peek behind the scenes, we head to Andorra and catch up with Max Commencal and find out more about his namesake brand. We discuss carbon, racing, kids bikes and how a small company punches above its weight in the big business world of mountain bikes.

WORDS EWEN TURNER PHOTO COMMENCAL



THIBAUT RUFFIN RACING AT THE WORLD CUP IN LOURDES.



REMY METAILLER RIDING THE RIDGE AT THE RED BULL RAMPAGE IN UTAH
PHOTO DEAN TREML/RED BULL CONTENT POOL

" WE RIDE TOGETHER, AND WE SUPPORT OUR RIDERS TOGETHER. "

Tell us a bit about the history of the company, how did it begin and who started it?

I created COMMENCAL in 1999 and our first bikes were launched in 2000. Previously I had created SUNN in 1982.

How big is COMMENCAL?

Currently, there are about forty of us, and we produce about 15,000 bikes per year.

We are located in Andorra where we have our R&D, Sales, E-Commerce, Communication, Marketing and Accounting departments.

Does it still feel like a small business and part of the local community and economy?

We are a small company indeed! 40 people is not a lot compared to the big names in the bike industry. We work as a family. We all know each other, love to talk about bikes, we ride together, and we support our riders together. There's a good atmosphere in the office, and that's important.

Furthermore, we have a very good relationship with Vallnord ski and mountain bike resort. They are a dynamic company, always trying to improve and never afraid to invest and move forward. It's a good combination, and it helps us as much as it helps them.

What's it like to run a bike company from a small principality? What are the advantages and disadvantages?

Being established in a small principality is an advantage. Everything is simpler with public administrations and local authorities. It's easier to speak directly to the people who make the decisions,



and that saves us time. It's a very business-oriented country with easier administration processes.

However, for a lot of things it doesn't make a difference, our bikes are in the European Community. We pay all European taxes and like many other companies, our production is in Asia while our logistics are in Europe.

The biggest advantage is being at the foothills of a ski resort, which becomes a mountain bike resort from March onwards. It's really a huge bonus for our employees and for the company, let alone for the advantage it gives us to test and set up our bikes.

MAX COMMENCAL AND THE TEAM CHECKING OUT THE FINISHED PRODUCTS.
PHOTO COMMENCAL

" IT'S REALLY A HUGE BONUS FOR OUR EMPLOYEES AND FOR THE COMPANY "



How would you describe the ethos and culture behind COMMENCAL? There are no carbon hardtails and cross-country racers associated with the brand, is it all gravity riding?

Good question. We are not purely "gravity", but we are not cyclists in the general sense either. We love the fun and playful side of bikes, not the pain!

Regarding carbon, it's a cyclist thing. Whether you like it or not, the production of carbon is a polluting process, it can't be fixed; it doesn't take impacts efficiently, and it's not recyclable. The behaviour of carbon is worse than that of a good, top-quality aluminium frame! We are not going to follow a fashion we don't agree with.

" FOR NOW, WE'LL KEEP ON DOING WHAT WE LIKE THE MOST AND WILL WORK ON OUR KIDS MTB RANGE "

Cross-country is closer to road cycling than to mountain biking in our opinion. It's not in our DNA. So, for now, we'll keep on doing what we like the most and will work on our kids MTB range rather than on a road bike range.

Recently you have started a direct-sales model, how has this come about and what impact has it had on your business?

I have been working with shops for years and years. It's not easy. They always want lower prices and bigger margins... It becomes unsustainable!





In France many shops unified in purchasing groups and it became even worse, they demanded even lower prices! It was difficult for us to fight against big generalist brands, which offer very complete ranges and want to take lots of room in shops. Our only option was to become the third or fourth brand in a shop while continuing to become more expensive (to the consumer) because of the enormous margins.

FRESHLY PAINTED FRAMES
IN THE FACTORY!
PHOTO COMMENCAL

" IT WAS
DIFFICULT FOR
US TO FIGHT
AGAINST BIG
GENERALIST
BRANDS "



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REMI THIRION WINTER TESTING IN CALIFORNIA
PHOTO COMMENCAL



MAX COMMENCAL RUNNING THE NUMBERS...
PHOTO COMMENCAL

" THEY LOVE TO DEAL WITH US WITHOUT THE MIDDLEMEN "

So I decided to turn it all upside down and start this new direct sales challenge! Today, I'm very glad I made that decision. Riders love that direct relationship with the brand; they love to deal with us without the middlemen, and it's a pleasure to work this way. On top of that, we can offer much better prices. In three years, our total revenue has doubled!

As well as frames, you also manufacture parts under the Ride Alpha brand. With so many great components to choose from, why start making your own?

We have engineers and designers in our company, and when you are able to create top-end frames, you can design handlebars, stems, saddles, etc. We made the decision to launch a high-quality brand of components, and we sell them on our website at very competitive prices. We choose to mount

these components on our bikes, and that's also working very well.

Where are your bikes designed, built and assembled?

All the bikes are designed in Andorra. Then we build some prototypes in our workshop, and finally, we test them in Andorra or out of our office in the USA.

We work with different factories, depending on the models (hard tail or full suspension, CRMO or aluminium, etc.)

FRESHLY WELDED FRAMES AT THE FACTORY!
PHOTO COMMENCAL



2016 could well be the year of E-bikes and long travel 29ers. Will we be seeing any exciting developments from you this year?

We've been working on an E-bike for three years. It's obviously a joy to lessen the pain of pedalling uphill, and the whole ride becomes more fun. Our primary goal here is to have reliable mountain bike products and an efficient customer service worldwide (including our branches in the USA and Canada). We came across some disappointing materials and components in the past, but it's not the case anymore, and we should be able to create our first bikes by the end of the year.

" IT'S
OBVIOUSLY A
JOY TO
LESSEN THE
PAIN OF
PEDALLING
UPHILL "



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Regarding the 29" format, it's a path we've been interested in, but a path we cannot take on our own as we need rims, tyres and suspension manufacturers to follow. Anyway, it's work in progress, and that's a good thing, as long as it takes us towards better performing, fun and reassuring bikes.

" IT'S BETTER TO HAVE A GOOD HARDTAIL THAN A BAD FULL-SUSPENSION BIKE. THAT IS OUR MOTTO. "

You are starting to develop a reputation for making 'British style' hardtails, with long, slack, low geometry combined with a big travel fork. This is relatively unusual for Europe with hardtails generally being reserved for XC racing. Is there a culture of thrashing hardtails in Andorra?

It's better to have a good hardtail than a bad full-suspension bike. That is our motto. I think there is nothing worse than a bad full-suspension bike. Imagine bad geometry, poor quality components...it's terrible. On the other hand, a well-built, solid and playful hardtail really is the best.

It might not be the quickest on a World Cup downhill track, but it definitely is on many singletrack trails around the world. It's our vision of what we think a bike should be for anyone from beginners to people who can't afford a top quality full-suspension bike, for young people, or simply for those who like hardtails. We really try our hardest when it comes to this range!

PIERRE CHARLES GEORGES RACING AT LOURDES THIS YEAR.
PHOTO COMMENCAL





2016 sees a range of purple bikes in the COMMENCAL line-up. What is it about purple?

In the world of bikes and MTB in particular, the look of a competition bike has a big impact. Everyone likes to look like a World Cup rider, we really relate to champions, but it's not always true for everybody. Our Purple Series is different; it plays by its own rules, and it's meant for riders who like beautiful equipment but who aren't necessarily all about competing. It's for those who ride with their own personality and want to show their difference in another way.

COMMENCAL ARE NOW MAKING WAVES IN NORTH AMERICA!
PHOTO COMMENCAL

" WE REALLY RELATE TO CHAMPIONS, BUT IT'S NOT ALWAYS TRUE FOR EVERYBODY. "



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" WE LIKE TO BUILD OUR OWN TRAILS, THERE ARE A LOT OF THEM ALL OVER THE PLACE! "

Earlier this year we published a trail guide to Andorra, what is it about your local trails that makes them so good?

We are very lucky to live in the mountains; our trails can be easily more than 1000 vertical metres. That's a good starting point. Also, we are on the Spanish side of the

Pyrenees, less rain, better weather - it's often dry and sunny. Then there's also the fact that we like to build our own trails, there are a lot of them all over the place!

You have some great children's bikes in the range, why have you decided to develop such a comprehensive range of kids bikes?

In my opinion, the best thing about mountain biking is sharing the experience. Amongst friends of course, but also within

your family! Riding with your partner or your kids is marvellous. A bit like skiing. So we developed some prototype bikes with our own kids and then created standard models.

Everybody thought we were crazy because expensive bikes for kids seemed absurd. It's partly true, especially business-wise as it's not easy to buy tools and moulds to produce frames in small quantities. But it's a choice we made. Like I was saying earlier, I would rather invest in bicycles for kids than in road bikes for pensioners!

You have some very strong enduro and downhill racers on your books. What are your team goals in enduro and downhill?

We have always been fans of racing and competition. If we take part, it's to try and have the best possible results and to win as many times as possible that's for sure. On the other hand, we know the racing world very well, but we can't win every time, every year!

" THERE ARE BIG TEAMS KNOWN BY EVERYBODY IN OTHER SPORTS, AND IT'S THE SAME FOR MTB. "

Our goal is to be one of the big teams, always to be seen as top competitors. There are big teams known by everybody in other sports, and it's the same for MTB. This year, let's say we win an Enduro World Series title and some World Cup downhill, we'd be over the moon! And also, why not hope for the title of best team in the DH World Cup?!

Cheers Max, thanks so much for taking the time to talk to us!





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WORDS RICHARD KELLY
PHOTOS JACK GILL / VISUAL ELEMENT

TECH

GET OVER IT

We all love the flowing feel of gliding down trails, effortlessly zipping along, experiencing Mother Nature at high speed. 'Flow' is not a given and you'll often hear riders praising a trails flow or bemoaning its lack of it. The reality is that, although 'flow' can be engineered into a trail - with swooping smooth transitions and bermed corners all playing their part - better riders find 'flow' even on trails where Mother Nature (or the trail designer) has other ideas.



One of the most common features that can interrupt the holy grail of 'flow' is the good ol' 'up and over'. Whether this is a smooth roller, rocky outcrop or fallen tree, there are ways and means to ensure that we progress smoothly as a rider even when the trail ahead offers more than a little in the way of resistance. Whether it's a super smooth transition, the up then down of a crafted roller, or a more jagged, potentially stall-inducing outcrop of rocks or fallen tree, as a rider there are common skills that we can apply to keep the wheels turning. With the right technique, you can roll smoothly, stay in control and of course importantly, not have to dab a foot down, come to a halt or get disengaged entirely from our two-wheeled steed.

" SEVERAL ISSUES CAN ARISE WHEN YOU ARE VISUALLY SUCKERED BY 'UP AND OVERS'. "

Although the physical nature of up and overs may vary considerably, the core skills that we need to polish are more constant.

Visual Impairment - One of the easiest things to correct, but often the one that lets us down first, is what we do (or don't do) with our eyes. Transitions, rough or smooth, can create a tantalisingly attractive focal point and induce us to look to the wrong place. The upside presents us with a face - and we all like to look at one of these. Down to flat transitions on the downslope can be equally compelling. Several issues can arise when you are visually suckered by 'up and overs'. That is not to say you will never get sucked into looking to the wrong point, but we need to recognise when it is happening and deal with it sooner rather than later.





Reducing 'dwell time' is the key to success. Reducing how often and how long we drop our focal vision into the area our peripheral vision covers is the goal. Ideally, we want to look over the high point to further high points as far down the trail as we can see at our eye-line. The reality is the unsighted nature of the downslope (we can not see it as we approach, but will as we crest) or the potential threat of a far from smooth upslope can play tricks on both our mind and body. Looking to not through, can contribute to the bike stalling on the upslope. Simply dropping the head as we look down will transfer more weight forwards and lead to a heavier front wheel that on an uneven upslope will offer up more rolling resistance.

“ THE
POTENTIAL
THREAT OF A
FAR FROM
SMOOTH
UPSLOPE ”

The logo for B1KE, featuring the word "B1KE" in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The number "1" is stylized in red and white, with a white outline and a red fill. The logo is set against a white background with a black border.



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As you roll over the top, looking into the down to flat transition once you have crested the 'up and over' can lead to the rider becoming the accelerating mass and starting to overtake the bike. At best you will get a bit of a push forward and cause an increased level of stall, at worst the front wheel will snag and as the rider, you may overtake it. The trick is to ignore the urge to dwell (or even look at all) into the upslope or the downslope. Raising your eye-line will positively affect your body position, especially if combined with good footwork

" A FAR MORE IMPORTANT SKILL TO APPLY IS YOUR ABILITY TO 'PUMP' THE BIKE."

and energy management. It will help you not only keep mentally ahead of the bike but keep your body weight as the under-rotating mass and drive the bike through the transitions, even if they are far from smooth.

Energy Management - Pedalling over 'up and over' sections may be possible in some cases, but can lead to pedal strikes, loss of

traction and getting 'pushed' as the rider. A far more important skill to apply is your ability to 'pump' the bike. Generating speed in this way will give you the acceleration you need through the entry point and up the upside transition, into the section and carry you to the high point. For added speed, pumping the down slope transition will offer acceleration out through the exit. The smoother the trail surface and the more uniform the curve of the transition the easier it is to pump all the way through the transition. If the 'up and over' has a less than uniform surface at first glance you may struggle to commit to pumping into the upslope and fail to utilise the transition that is there.



For sure, you will need to refine how you apply the pressure and be sensitive to how, when and where you deliver the energy through the bike. Too heavy on the front and you risk the front wheel stalling against any protrusions, too quick in transferring weight rearwards and you'll lose control of the front wheel as it lightens and rises from the trail surface. Get the balance right and you can pump through even the roughest of upslopes. This will help you generate the necessary momentum to accelerate the bike up relatively uneven and steep transitions. Once cresting the high point, it's important to centre up ready to deal with the bike's forward rotation into the downslope. Too far behind the centre line at this point and you won't be able to pump the downslope and 'looping out' can become an issue. Too far forwards and you will likely rotate too much as the bike pitches down the downslope.

" THE BALANCE BETWEEN WHEN TO WEIGHT THE BIKE AND WHEN TO ALLOW IT TO RISE CAN BE HARDER TO FIND, BUT THERE IS A TRANSITION TO BE WORKED. "

As the videos show even the most uneven of surfaces still offer up opportunity to pump for acceleration. Working smooth rollers is simpler, there are fewer inputs to deal with and less chance of the bike stalling. That said, even the most rugged of surfaces provides an opportunity to pump your way to success. The balance between when to weight the bike and when to allow it to rise can be harder to find, but there is a transition to be worked. Fine tuning your pumping will allow you to breeze up and over without losing momentum or confidence.



Body Position – it's easy to think of big forward and rearward movement of your body around the bike to deal with changes in gradient; however this is not, strictly speaking, the case. Think more of staying in a uniform position just rear of the bikes centre line (the 'pocket'), rather than you rotating letting the bike rotate below you.

Lunging your weight forward into the upslope then driving your backside rearwards on the down slope will not serve you well. We want to drive the bike, but do it from a relatively stable platform and keep our weight in what we refer to as the 'pocket'. Bending and straightening should be done more from the knee than the waist.

" WE WANT TO DRIVE THE BIKE, BUT DO IT FROM A RELATIVELY STABLE PLATFORM "

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" THEY SURE AS HELL WON'T CATCH YOU IF YOU HAVE GAINED TOO MUCH FORWARD MOMENTUM AT THE PEAK."

Driving energy through the bike at the right time can be achieved best by using the levers of the heel and wrist. Dropping heels and wrists creates down and through force, which can drive the bike through the upslope then the downslope without violently altering your overall body position. Controlling the lower half of the body is easy once you set yourself up correctly, but it is

the upper body control that can more commonly let a rider down. Try and keep a relatively uniform position in terms of shoulders and hips rather than being flung back then forwards as the bike rotates one way then the other. When showing the trail ahead some respect, think curtsey, not bow.

Footwork - As alluded to above, good footwork can optimise your performance. Heels should drop progressively as you ride the upside. At the crest, your heels may rise a little, but remember as your toes drop you

accelerate, whereas as your heels drop the bike does. Getting toe heavy at the crest can set your body mass on a trajectory where you start to overtake the bike as it falls away from you into the downslope. Your forks are there to help but are by no means a 'catch all' and they sure as hell won't catch you if you have gained too much forward momentum at the peak. That said, hanging way out the back as the bike levels at the top will lose your directional control and can lead to issues as you descend the other side of the hump. Once descending and rolling through the downslope transition, heels dropping will accelerate the bike, aid traction and help you maintain a high level of control.



Once again, it's dropping the heel more than rotating the whole body mass too far rear of the centre line. Opening up the lever of the ankle and bending the knee in combination will lead to better overall control.

" BE POSITIVE IN YOUR APPROACH DON'T JUST THINK TO THE HIGH POINT, BUT THROUGH IT TO THE EXIT AND BEYOND. "

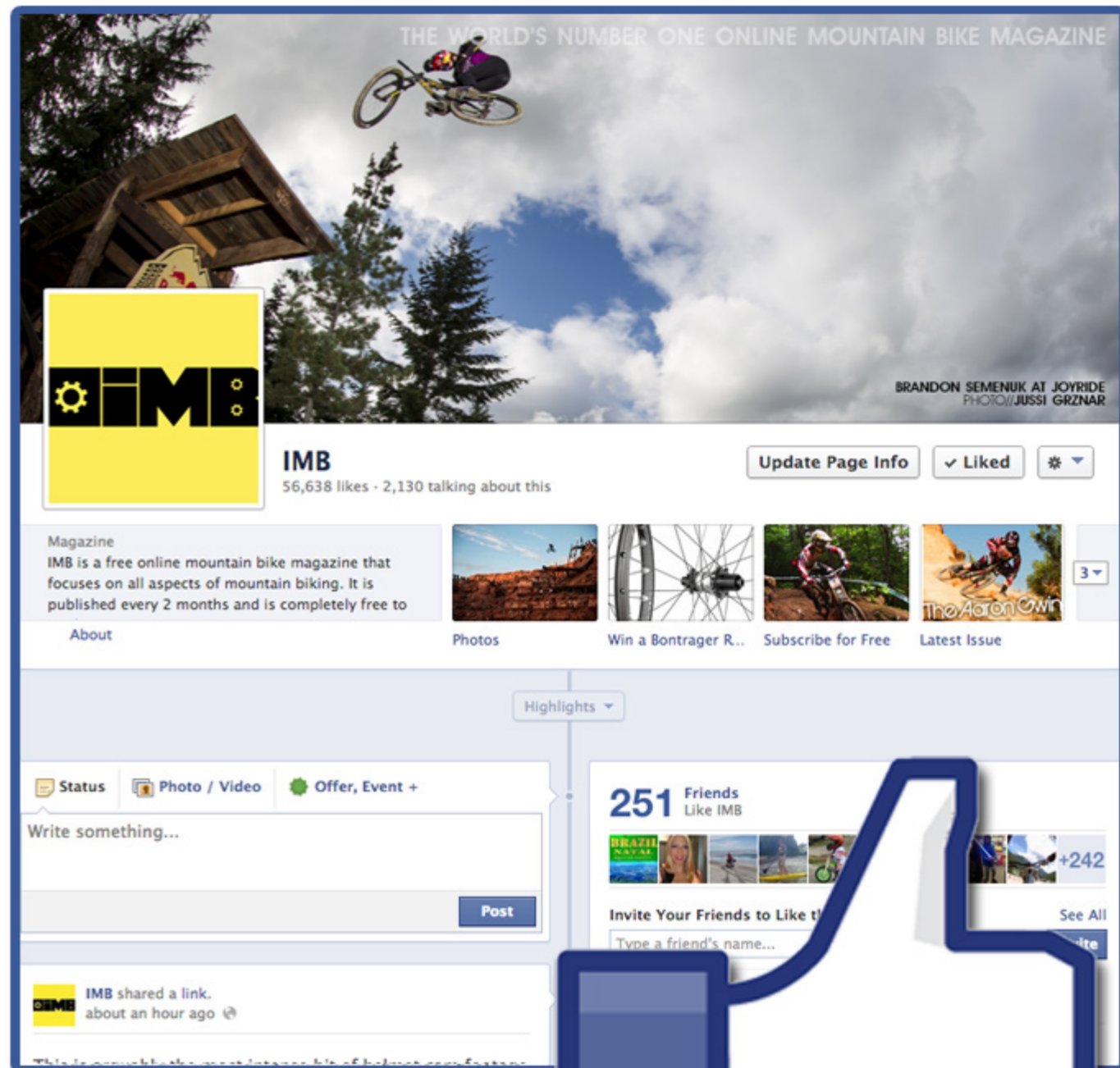
Mind Games - Commitment is a big factor to riding any section and it is no different when it comes to getting up and over things. Don't forget we are committing to both the section itself and our own skill set. Be positive in your approach don't just think to the high point, but through it to the exit and beyond. With the exit unsighted as you approach it can be hard to do this. It is natural that what the eyes can't see the body might fear. If you don't commit on the upside, you may not make the crest or if you do you come to a complete halt at the top. Balance can then become an issue as you come to an unexpected halt, teetering at the top of the downside. As a result, you will need to react quickly to the downslope phase of the section, and you may well feel the need to glance down and check the trail that is only just ahead. If you do so, quickly bounce your eyes back up and look for that next high point ahead. If you keep your head level, you are of course more likely to stay, well, level-headed!

The anticipation as you approach the entry point, if left unchecked, can easily lead to common flight and fight responses of tensing and holding your breath. This will not help smooth passage of either bike or rider. Control is about keeping emotional control and not succumbing to these primeval responses.



Breathe out through the entry and stay supple (although not floppy like a rag doll). The bike needs to move smoothly below you. Ideally, you need to pressure the bike through the transitions rather than hanging on with a death grip and being just a passenger. In terms of concentration, it's about staying high up what we refer to as the 'concentration ladder'. We should not be thinking 'where am I, what am I doing?' or 'where am I going and how do I get there?' We should be thinking beyond that to 'what is next'. Keep the brain as far ahead of the bike as possible at all times and avoid, if possible, thinking in the 'now'. Thinking in the 'now' will dump you to the bottom of the ladder.

" KEEP THE BRAIN AS FAR AHEAD OF THE BIKE AS POSSIBLE AT ALL TIMES "



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Speed Control - It is always important to consider this as a factor, but especially when dealing with 'up and overs'. There is a balance between overcoming and overshooting. You neither want to fail to get up or have the bike accelerate away from you uncontrollably on the way down. Get used to adding any acceleration through pumping once in the section, not pedalling. You might need some should you have approached too slowly or the bike slowed more rapidly than you expected. Having some pump in your pocket to rely on when it is needed is a valuable asset. If you pump rather than pedal, then you will not suffer a loss of traction or risk your body being pushed forward and unweighting the back wheel as you turn the cranks.

" SMOOTHER TRANSITIONS WILL HELP YOU QUICKLY PROGRESS AND APPROACH EVEN THE MOST JAGGED OF ROCKY OUTCROPS "

'Up and overs' are a standard trail feature that with a little practice and application of certain core skills are less likely to phase you. Understanding the basics and applying them on less technical, smoother transitions will help you quickly progress and approach even the most jagged of rocky outcrops with the same confidence and gusto you would a series of rollers on a pump track. Don't let these lumps disrupt your flow. If 'up and overs' stop you in your tracks keep it simple, commit, look through, think through, pump through, and most of all...get over it!

A mixed bag of bikes this issue, with hardtails, trail bikes and XC machines getting a look in, plus a stabilised action camera that might just transform your MTB videos!

WORDS AND PHOTOS THE IMB TEST TEAM
PHOTO THIS PAGE ERIC MULDER

TRIED AND TESTED

BIKES

Merida One Twenty 8000

Ragley Blue Pig

Trek Top Fuel 9

CAMERA

DJI Osmo



" THE BIKE DOES A GREAT JOB OF DEALING WITH TECHNICAL SECTIONS "



At A Glance

The Merida 120 sits in that middle ground of bikes that have become collectively known as "trail", which covers seemingly everything from around 110mm-150mm of travel in a wide variety of combinations and indeed wheel sizes. Being neither cross-country nor enduro machines, they are realistically intended to do the sort of riding most people do, most of the time.

Like other models in the Merida line-up the One Twenty comes in different wheel sizes throughout the size range with 27.5' wheels up to a size medium and 29' above that. The bike comes as a neat, whilst not particularly flashy looking, package with a carbon front end and aluminium rear. 140mm of travel up front is taken care of by the now ubiquitous Rockshox Pike, and 120mm at the rear courtesy of a Monarch RT3, both well known and proven units doing exactly as expected, but still allowing tuning for anyone who feels the need.

Gearing is taken care of with SRAM X1 throughout with a 10-42 cassette out back,

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TO VISIT THEIR WEBSITE, CLICK HERE



"A QUALITY TRAIL BIKE THAT MAKES YOUR LIFE EASY."

TO VISIT THEIR WEBSITE, CLICK HERE



At A Glance

Ragley have been through a few changes behind the scenes in recent years, but at their core has always been the desire to make hardtails of a very British persuasion. Originally from Yorkshire and the brainchild of Brant Richards, they were some of the original "hardcore hardtails". Times have moved on, people and locations have changed (they're now based in Belfast), but the bikes remain. 2016 sees all the familiar names and models, although with some tweaks to bring them bang up-to-date. This issue we have the large wheeled Big Wig, which sits somewhat apart from the other bikes in the range as the only 29er. That said, a quick look at the numbers show that it shares more than a little DNA with its smaller sibling, the Piglet. The 130mm Yari Fork suggests that the Big Wig might like to be pushed hard, and along with a dropper post and some decent rubber, the overall package looks good.

760mm bars and 50mm stem show this is definitely more towards the hardcore category of hardtails. Shimano take care of brakes in the form of SLX units, and the same is found on the drivetrain.

[CLICK OR TAP TO READ MORE](#)

" A GREAT BIKE FOR ANYONE WANTING TO GO FAST "



TO VISIT THEIR WEBSITE, CLCK HERE



At A Glance

Trek's previous incarnation of the Top Fuel was retired in 2012 with the appearance of the Superfly, pretty much as Trek ditched the 26" wheel size on its cross-country line-up in favour of the 29" rolling stock we have become used to in the last few years. 2015 saw Trek launch a new XC range, the Procaliber hardtail and the return of the 100mm Top Fuel, full suspension, which we have on test. The bikes geometry and style has a racing focus, designed to fit the more technical cross-country courses that are around these days and longer stage racing where full suspension pays dividends in minimising fatigue.

The range consists of two alloy versions, the Top Fuel 8 and 9 (with a women's specific 8) and 2 carbon versions: the 9.8 and range-topping 9.9. Boost hubs front and back, clever cable routing named 'Control Freak Routing' is able to accommodate pretty much any set up required, 1x, 2x, dropper post etc. The Mino Link allows the user to alter the ride geometry and a single combined lockout for front/rear suspension is controlled from the bars.

[CLICK OR TAP TO READ MORE](#)



" I WAS BLOWN AWAY BY ITS CAPABILITY "

TO VISIT THEIR WEBSITE, CLICK HERE



BRAND DJI MODEL OSMO
YEAR 2016

AT A GLANCE

DJI are probably best known for their Phantom Drones, and are a major player in the flying camera market. Based on this pedigree, DJI have produced a pretty special handheld camera in the form of the Osmo. The DJI Osmo is a stabilised camera and a seriously exciting piece of kit, not just in its sci-fi form and robotic movements, but the potential it brings to the enthusiast's filmmaking world.

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Updated daily with news and videos. You'll also find easy access to all of our content with searchable databases for all the reviews, technique and travel, plus every back issue available for free.



THIMAS GENON ROTATES IT IN ROTORUA
PHOTO MEAD NORTON

The events of February 2016 shocked the entire mountain bike world, and those shockwaves were felt deeper in New Zealand than anywhere else. How appropriate then that this year's Crankworx in Rotorua Slopestyle event paid tribute to one of the biggest legends this sport has ever seen.

IN MEMORY OF MCGAZZA

WORDS EWEN TURNER AND MEAD NORTON

" HIS EFFORTLESS STYLE AND WILLINGNESS TO 'GO BIG' MADE HIM A FAN FAVOURITE "

Foreword by Ewen Turner

Born in New Zealand on the 17th of April 1982, Kelly McGarry was one of the very few who have legitimately gained the status of legend within their lifetime. Kelly was inspired by the BMX and motocross riders of the day when he was growing up, and the 'go big or go home' attitude of those guys certainly had a huge influence on his riding.

Riding was an obsession, and BMX was the sport of choice during his early teenage years before he started his upward growth spurt. His stature, along with his personable charm, eventually earned him the moniker of 'gentle giant' among those that met him. This increase in height, eventually finishing at 6 foot 5 inches saw him move on from BMX to mountain bikes and he never looked back.

Taking the skills and attitudes learnt from BMX and motocross, McGarry applied this to his mountain biking and in 2006 travelled to Crankworx. Back then the Slopestyle contest was an open entry, and he walked away with eighteenth place, not a bad start for a newcomer. Following this Kelly followed the sun, and the competition circuit around the world, gaining recognition and improving results. His effortless style and willingness to 'go big' made him a fan favourite and his following and reputation grew. He would always find time for people, and his easy-going style and generous spirit was admired by other riders and fans alike.



KELLY MCGARRY SHREDDING THE COURSE IN ROTORUA HE HELPED TO CREATE.
PHOTO GRAEME MURRAY/RED BULL CONTENT POOL



" WHAT BETTER WAY TO REMEMBER HIM THAN DOING WHAT HE LOVED TO DO, AND THIS IS EXACTLY WHAT HAPPENED AT THE 2016 CRANKWORX ROTORUA "

A regular at Red Bull Rampage, McGarry had a run of bad luck with injuries keeping him out of contention for several years, but in 2013, he would seal the deal on his legendary status and send YouTube into overdrive. That year a 72 foot canyon gap appeared on the Rampage course and had riders and viewers puzzling over what might be possible, or even survivable.

Kelly rose to the challenge, laying down a backflip and with it securing himself second place and winning the Viewer's Choice award. The footage from the flip, which has now had nearly thirty million views, made it into national press around the world, cementing his status in the mountain biking world.

More recently, Kelly, putting more back into the sport he loved, built the slopestyle course for the 2015 Crankworx Rotorua, which was exceptionally well received. On 1st February 2016, Kelly suffered a cardiac arrest while riding at Fernhill Loop Track in Central Otago. Tributes have been innumerable for such a legend, and what better way to remember him than doing what he loved to do, and this is exactly what happened at the 2016 Crankworx Rotorua Slopestyle competition.

At The Event - Mead Norton

Kelly McGarry, better known as McGazza, was one of the best known and well liked riders in the slopestyle world, his premature death in February hit the whole freestyle riding community hard. The impact on his passing was particularly felt at this year's Crankworx Rotorua event.

SAM REYNOLDS STYLES ONE OUT OVER THE LAST SENDER!
PHOTO MEAD NORTON



THE WHOLE CREW GATHER TO CELEBRATE THE BIG MANS LIFE.
PHOTO MEAD NORTON



**" HE JUST SEEMED TO MAKE FRIENDS WITH EVERYONE.
I HAVEN'T MET A PRO-MOUNTAIN BIKER QUITE LIKE HIM "**

As Takurua Mutu, one of the people behind getting Crankworx to Rotorua put it, "Kelly was an absolute inspiration, and I don't use those words lightly and probably not in the context that you think either. He was a quality rider, no doubt, but more than that, he was just an all round good bugger."

He went on saying, "It didn't matter who you were or where you came from, he just seemed to make friends with everyone. I haven't met

a pro-mountain biker quite like him. The fact that he would just get stopped everywhere we went, asked for pictures and stuff taken of him, and not only comply but absolutely and genuinely engage with those people. He was such a rad person. We truly miss him."

When Conor Macfarlane, one of New Zealand's top freestyle riders was asked about McGazza's influence on him and his career, he explained, "In the earlier days when I was still at school, he was one of the top riders I looked up to. I had a poster of him on my wall, so he was definitely an inspiration from a young age."

And now Macfarlane sees how groundbreaking McGazza was in terms of opening the door to other New Zealand riders to the world of professional mountain biking. "In more recent years I have begun to respect more and more what he has done, more so the side of being a professional biker from NZ, which no-one really thinks of until you are in that situation yourself. Spending five to six months a year away from home, living out of a suitcase, away from family and friends, and constantly on the road. From the outside, it looks like the dream, but I can tell you it's not easy, so for Kelly to have done that for so many years I have huge respect for that! So yeah, he definitely influenced me."



BRETT RHEEDER THROWS DOWN A HUGE FLIP!
PHOTO MEAD NORTON

" THE COURSE WAS SUPER FAST MEANING THAT THE RIDERS COULD HIT ALL THE JUMPS AS HARD AS THEY WANTED."

The Crankworx Rotorua Slopestyle 2016 competition opened with all eighteen riders doing a train in McGazza's honour, riding back-to-back down the course that will be his legacy. Following a moment of silence, an announcement was made that the competition will be known as the Crankworx Rotorua Slopestyle in Memory of McGazza moving forward, and the riders met the occasion by raising the competition to the highest level.

McGarry's vision and skills, not only a top freestyle rider, but also top course builder, helped shape the side of Mt Ngongotaha into what was described as, "the best (slopestyle) course I have ever ridden in my life" by Sam Pilgrim, one of the top FMB riders in the world. McGarry was both the designer and builder of the Rotorua Slopestyle course, with Elevate business partner Tom Hey.

McGarry spent about three months last year living in Rotorua as he shaped the course out of nothing into a spectacular track that has become an iconic part of Crankworx Rotorua. Unfortunately, the weather did not cooperate for last year's event and though the competition was eventually held, the rain made it a bit too slow and slippery for the riders to push the limits. With a full year for the jumps and, more importantly, the landings to settle and get packed down, the course was super fast meaning that the riders could hit all the jumps as hard as they wanted.



BRANDON SEMENUK WAS AS CLINICAL AS EVER!
PHOTO: MEAD NORTON



THE RIDERS TAKE A MOMENT TO REMEMBER KELLY...
PHOTO BARTEK WOLINSKI/RED BULL CONTENT POOL



KELLY'S GIRLFRIEND SAMANTHA HITCHCOCK BRAVELY GAVE OUT THE TROPHIES. IT WAS EMOTIONAL FOR EVERYONE.
PHOTO MEAD NORTON

" HE TOOK THE WIN WITH A SUPER SMOOTH FIRST RUN AND WAS ABLE TO USE HIS SECOND RUN AS A VICTORY LAP. "

The flow and quality of the jumps really made the course special and was why riders were able to really push the envelope during this event. This included Nicholi Rogatkin landing the first ever 1080 spin called 'The Twister' in competition, and we also saw riders doing super technical tricks, that they pulled out only for the final jump last year, on the first feature this time round.

Brandon Semenuk was keen for redemption after his disappointment from last year's crash that put him out of contention for a podium finish. He took the win with a super smooth first run and was able to use his second run as a victory lap. "I'm so excited to come back and get a good run on the course. The track's been awesome. Last year I had a big crash and didn't get to do my second run, which was a bummer, so it's nice to be able to come back and walk away unscathed," said Semenuk. His winning run consisted of

a 360 tail whip, backflip tuck no hander, 360 downside tail whip and a cork 720 bar spin to finish. Most of the fans watching live and online thought for sure that Rogatkin landing 'The Twister' had sealed his victory, despite its shaky landing. Rogatkin's second run featured a cork 720, cash roll (a 720 off-axis spin), front flip tuck no hander, bar spin up, flat plant 360 and the first ever landing of 'The Twister' (1080 spin) in competition. But Rogatkin was left to wonder what would have happened if he had not blown out his back tire on the first jump of his initial run.



" IT WAS AS IF ALL THE RIDERS TAPPED INTO A BIT OF MCGAZZA'S SPIRIT "

In an interview after the competition, the judges indicated it was Semenuk's consistency and grace, which secured the win over the phenomenal single hit. "One guy had absolutely perfect execution, but one had some trick difficulty – being Rogatkin – with a little inconsistency. Tough, tough fight between the judges, between first and second, but once it came down to it, trick for trick, it was Semenuk," said Paul Rak, head judge.

Brett Rheeder came into this year's event as the defending champion from last year and the overall leader from 2015 season. His highest scoring run included: a backflip tuck no hander, cork 720, triple bar spin, opposite 360 bar spin, back flip one footed can-can and a backflip double tailwhip. Even though he was smooth on all his landings, it was only good enough for third place, but it was a very close call with only a point between his run and Rogatkin's run.

As exciting as the top runs were, there were also some hair-raising moments, like Louis Reboul blowing out his rear tire and just making it up to the top of the platform jump without his bike. Also, Sam Reynold's casing a cork 720 on the McGazza 'Money Maker' finishing jump by only three inches.

Overall, the fans, who were packed in three deep along both sides of the course, were treated to a truly special afternoon of riding, and the people who were tuning in to watch the event live online also got to witness some of the best freeriding tricks in the world. It was as if all the riders tapped into a bit of McGazza's spirit and I am sure that he was looking down at the event with his iconic smile lighting up his face.

EVENTUAL WINNER BRANDON SEMENUK GETS HIS WHIP ON...
PHOTO BARTEK WOLINSKI/RED BULL CONTENT POOL

NICHOLAI ROGATKIN GETS TWISTED AS HE GOES FOR A 1080...
PHOTO BARTEK WOLINSKI/RED BULL CONTENT POOL



IN MEMORY OF MCGAZZA

IMBIKEMAG.COM

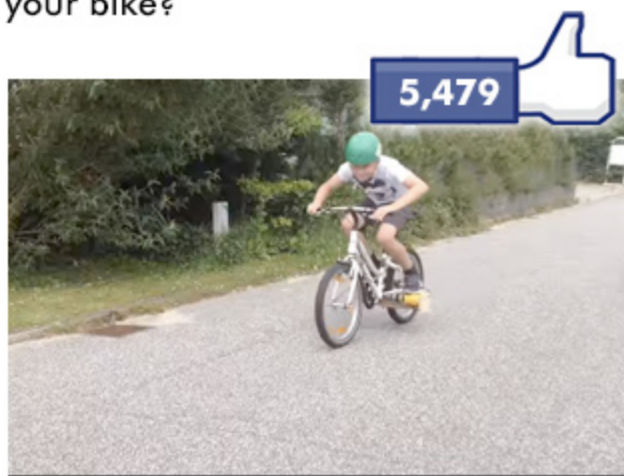
The IMB website is crammed with news and videos every day, we only show the best videos, so to make it onto the site is an achievement in itself.

These are the 4 most popular videos that have been viewed on the site as voted for by you with your thumbs up likes in the last 2 months! Check out the full list [HERE](#), and if you see a video you like on the site, give it the thumbs up, it might just help to push it onto this page!

MOVIE NIGHT

#1 HOW TO MAKE AN ELECTRIC BIKE - EASY

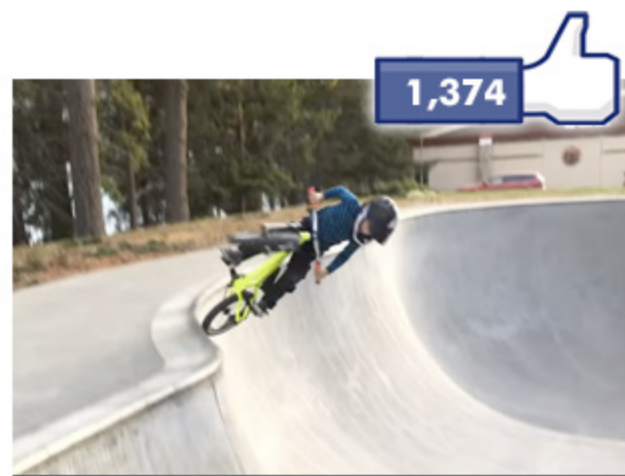
How to get in on 'Mechanical Doping' and convert your old bike into an E-Bike in an easy how-to guide. Some great ingenuity from this young lad who shows what's possible with a borrowed power tool and a bit of imagination. Could the hardware store contain the next upgrade for your bike?



[CLICK HERE FOR VIDEO](#)

#2 6 YEAR OLD BIKE TWINS

Yet another awesome video of tiny kids doing amazing things on bikes, and in the process making us all feel inferior and a bit rubbish! Six year old twins, Jake and Theo Riddle from Queenstown, New Zealand show us what's possible if you start young, and keep getting back up for another go. Inspiring to watch!



[CLICK HERE FOR VIDEO](#)

#3 AUDI E-BIKE

Now and again car manufacturers get involved in making bikes, and this time it's Audi getting in on the electric bike game. Time for futuristic concept designs and bikes that talk to your phone. Take a cruise round the city, hop over everything in sight, or stop for a Red Bull and forget to do your helmet up!



[CLICK HERE FOR VIDEO](#)

#4 KINVER CHILLS

Tom Herriott and Ben Proctor give us a classic display of how to shred downhill bikes in the woods. With big gaps and committing lines, this sort of riding just makes you want to grab your bike and get out and play in the forest. Some great angles and shots along with solid riding make this a great edit.



[CLICK HERE FOR VIDEO](#)

LIGHTBOX

PHOTO ALE DI LULLO
THE JAGGED MOUNTAINS OF THE DOLOMITES PROVIDE AN AWESOME BACKDROP
AND CONTRAST TO THE ROLLING SINGLETRACK.



Lightbox More shots with no particular place
to go this issue, feast your eyes!

LIGHTBOX

PHOTO ADAM KLIMEK
THE TREK FARLEY WAS THE WEAPON OF CHOICE FOR AN
ADVENTURE TRIP IN BIESZCZADY POLAND IN MARCH.



Lightbox

PHOTO STERLING LORENCE
FINDING FUN IN THE TRAIL IS WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT.



Lightbox

LIGHTBOX

PHOTO KAROLINE KLAUSMANN
MARCUS KLAUSMANN HAMMERING THE TRAILS IN THE SAN REMO AREA OF ITALY



Lightbox



Lightbox



Lightbox

Lightbox

PHOTO RONNY KIAULEHN;
E-BIKES MAY MAKE THE CLIMBS FASTER, BUT GETTING OFF THE GROUND IS ALL DOWN TO THE RIDER.



LIGHTBOX

Lightbox

PHOTO TREY CLAY - WORLD BIKE PARKS
CRAIG HARVEY ON AN AWESOME LOOKING TRAIL - MIRACLE MILE AT SNOW SUMMIT IN CALIFORNIA!

PHOTO IRMO KEIZER
THIS IS HOW STYLISH WE WISH WE LOOK IN THE AIR! WE CAN DREAM.



Lightbox

LIGHTBOX

PHOTO IRMO KEIZER
GREG MINNAAR HAD AN AMAZING SEASON LAST YEAR BUT
HIS FIRST OUTING AT LOURDES DIDN'T QUITE GO TO PLAN!



Lightbox

LIGHTBOX

PHOTO NUKEPROOF
MIKE JONES TRAINING DURING THE WINTER MONTHS
ON THE NEW NUKEPROOF SLED!

Lightbox

LIGHTBOX

PHOTO SEBASTIAN DOERK
JULIA HOFMANN RIPPING ALONG SOME SLICK LOOKING TRAILS...



Lightbox

LIGHTBOX

PHOTO ENDURA
SUMMER IS ALMOST HERE, WHICH MEANS IT'S ALMOST
TIME TO DITCH THE WINTER JACKET!

Lightbox



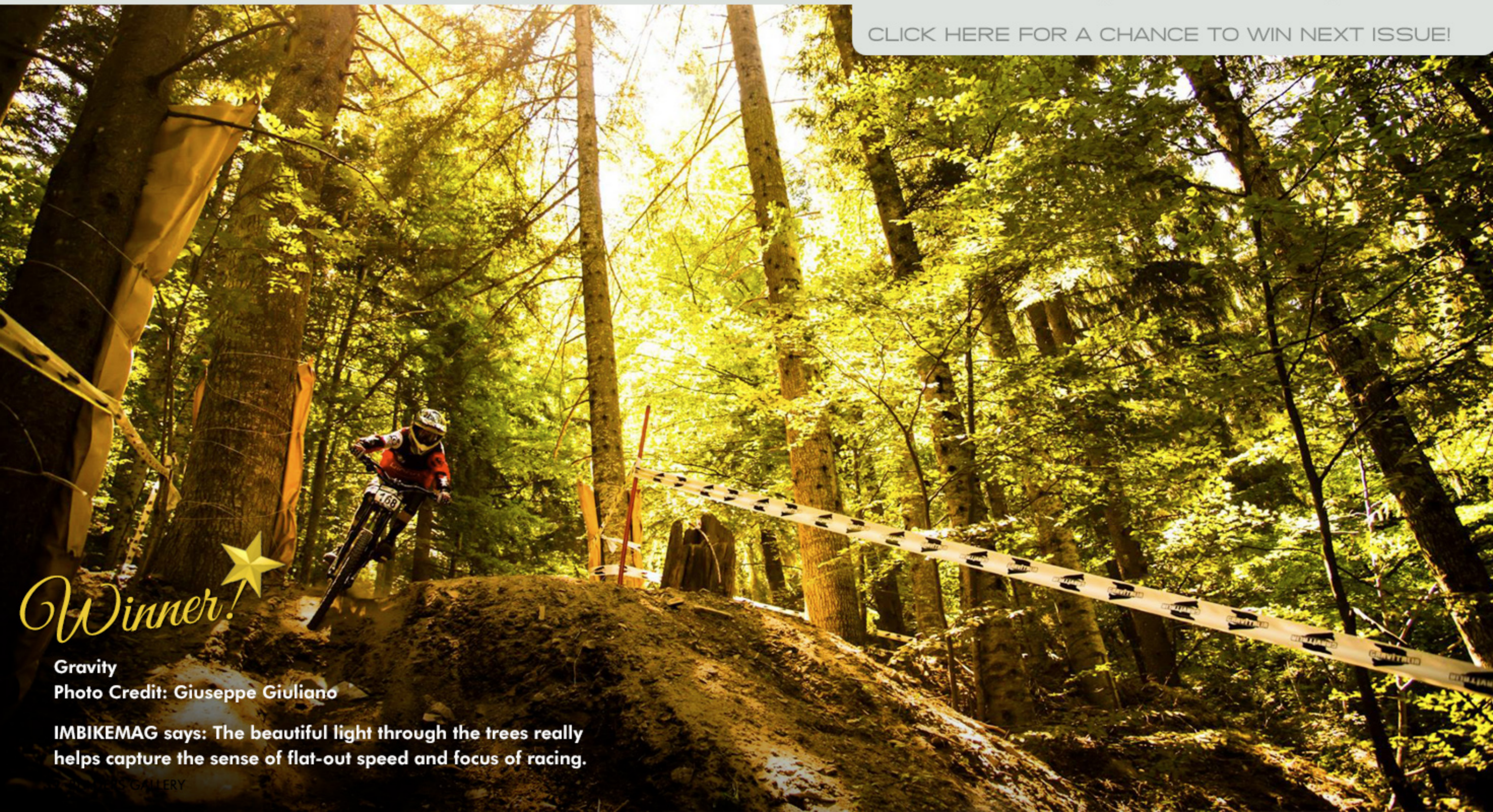
READERS GALLERY

Thanks for all your contributions to the Facebook page these last two months. Once again we were inundated with pictures, so if we didn't pick yours we are very sorry, but thanks for sending it to us...

Turn the pages though maybe we made you famous?

This issues winner is Giuseppe Giuliano. Well done Giuseppe, get in touch and we'll send you the t-shirt!

[CLICK HERE FOR A CHANCE TO WIN NEXT ISSUE!](#)



Winner! ★

Gravity
Photo Credit: Giuseppe Giuliano

IMBIKEMAG says: The beautiful light through the trees really helps capture the sense of flat-out speed and focus of racing.



Photo: Duncan Codd

My lovely wife Helen took this snap of me leaning into a corner at Bedgebury in Kent; I may be small, but I am well framed! She's a much better photographer than I am; my shots of her were terrible!

IMBIKEMAG says: Always great to have personal photographer with you on every ride!

Photo: Giulio Bisio

Wyn Masters racing at the UCI World Cup at Val di Sole in 2015.

IMBIKEMAG says: The wild man Wyn Master is always awesome to watch race. We look forward to watching the action unfold in 2016.





Photo: Paul Tomkinson

Taking a break at Cannock Chase.

IMBIKEMAG says: Bikes, trails, trees and blue skies, what more can you ask for. We're dreaming of summer!

Rider: Dan Stafford Photo: Adam Sherratt

Picture of me at round 1 of the PMBA Enduro at Gisburn in Hully Gully.

IMBIKEMAG says: We've ridden that trail and it's a corker, it must have been fun to race it!





Photo: Danny O'Callaghan

A bike and a view!

IMBIKEMAG says: What a place to prop your bike, and just a dusting of snow. Epic!

Photo: Stuart Taylor

Getting up high in Yorkshire on the Fatty.

IMBIKEMAG says: Not just for the snow and sand, fat bikes can take you anywhere!



DAVID CACHON MAKING THE MOST OF THE DYING LIGHT!
PHOTO ISMAEL IBANEZ RUIZ

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