

APR/MAY 17

WELCOME TO THE FUTURE...

Welcome to issue 47 of the World's Number One Online Mountain Bike Magazine! It's another cracking edition with loads of fantastic stories, images and videos to keep you entertained! Inside we chat to one of mountain biking's most

entertaining characters, Yoann Barelli tells his incredible story! Ewen Turner spends an unhealthy amount of time investigating the modern hardtail, and James Swann heads to Tasmania to sample the stunning trails there!

ENJOY THE LATEST ISSUE!



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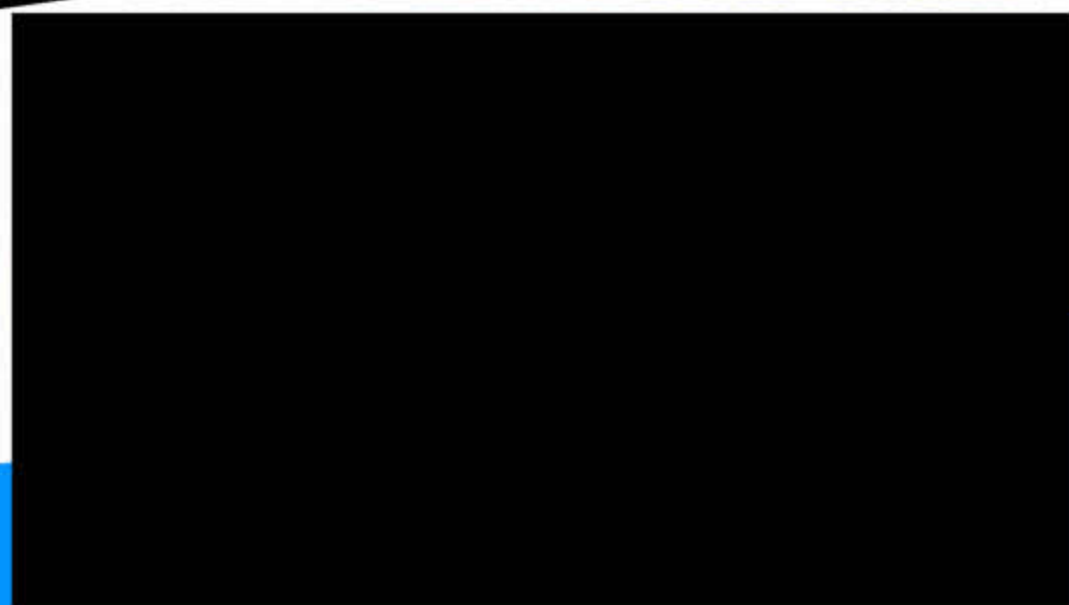
INTERVIEW - YOANN BARELLI
HARDTAIL HEROES // TRAIL GUIDE: TASMANIA
TECHNIQUE, TESTS AND MUCH MUCH MORE INSIDE!

RIDING LIKE ÓISIN O'CALLAGHAN

OISIN O'CALLAGHAN IS A 13 YEAR-OLD DOWNHILL & ENDURO RIDER FROM ARDPATRICK IN THE BALLYHOURAS, IRELAND.

He has just started his second season as a competitive racer - and has already produced some impressive results with his CUBE STEREO 160.

Óisín O'Callaghan shredding the trails in Ballyhoura



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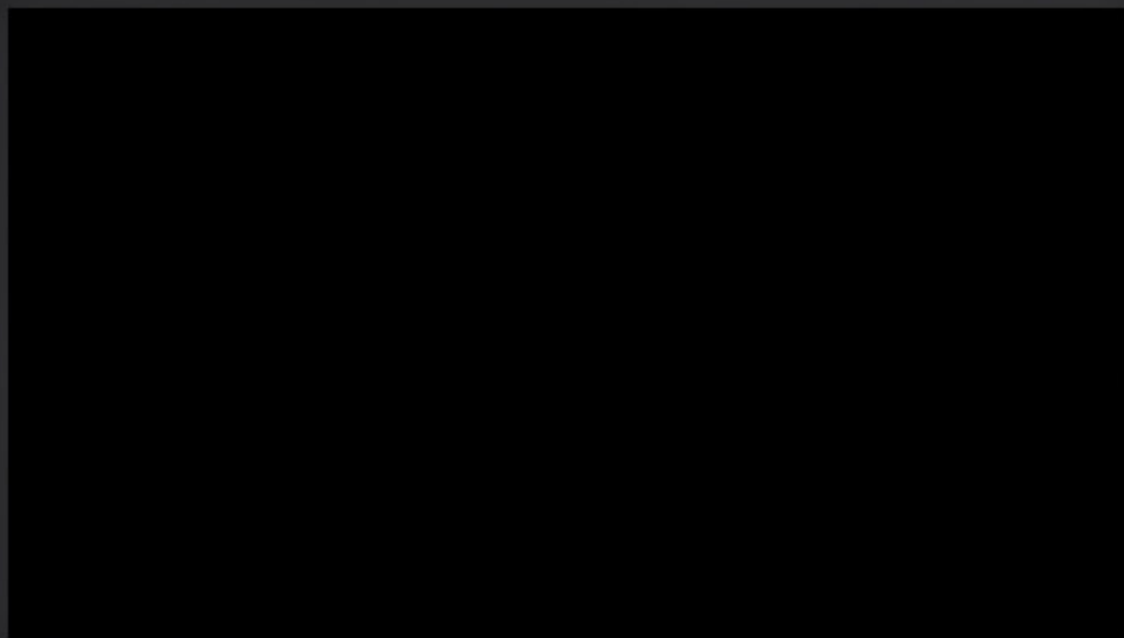
Rider: Mason Bond / Photo: Dane Peterson



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MIKE JONES TESTING THE NEW NUKEPROOF IN SAN REMO!
PHOTO FRASER BRITTON

WIN

A COMPLETE RIDING OUTFIT FROM VAUDE!

We've teamed up with our friends over at Vaude this issue to offer this fantastic prize to one of our lucky subscribers. There is a male and female outfit option, so be sure to enter for a chance to win! The prize includes a pair of shorts, riding top, waterproof jacket (summer isn't quite here yet) and a trail pack!

Vaude have been making some incredibly technical riding gear for years. Their packs are "packed" with technology, and the clothing is both comfortable and stylish with some really well thought out details. It's the perfect look for going from the trail to the pub or coffee shop, and it will keep you comfortable and dry whatever the weather!

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BROOK MCDONALD RIDING OUT THE WINTER IN THE SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE!
PHOTO MILES HOLDEN/RED BULL CONTENT POOL

EDITORIAL

ISSUE 47

It's been a long time coming, but the first signs of summer's imminent arrival seem to be appearing outside the office. It's been a reasonably dry winter for us in the south of England, our editorial and test team up in the Lake District have endured a rather wetter affair, but then it always rains in the Lakes, even in the height of summer.

It's one of my favourite times of the year; the MTB season starts to ramp up with events happening almost every weekend for the next four or five months. Come October I am usually looking forward to a break from the madness. This winter, it seems like I've blinked and we're suddenly back to a full schedule of packed weekends, long drives and hopefully plenty of riding.

It won't be long before those heady days of dust are upon us and the 2017 season is in full swing. It's usually a good time of year to set a few goals for your own level of riding. Where do you want to be by the end of summer, beating your PB's on Strava? Perhaps just riding your bike a little more regularly, or maybe this is the year you take your kids out into the woods for their first experiences of this fantastic sport that we all love.

Personally, this summer will be about rekindling a love affair with mountain biking. Just like you, I'm susceptible to all manner of influences that seemed to conspire last year to keep me off the trails as much as I would have liked! Work commitments, weddings, family affairs, they all meant less time in the saddle than I had envisaged.

My goal for 2017 will be to beat my paltry total mileage count on the bike last year. To be honest, that's an easy target to achieve, so perhaps I'll add in a trip to the Alps to cement my commitment. Make a goal, write it down and see what you can do this summer, most of all, enjoy it while you can, if you blink you might miss it!

Rou Chater
Publishing Editor



NEW

EVOLVE

AVAILABLE WORLDWIDE



COMMENCAL

ONLINE WORLDWIDE

YOANN BARRELLI INTERVIEW

WORDS EWEN TURNER PHOTO JB LIAUTARD

A new year, a new team, we catch up with one of the most entertaining riders on the world circuit before the season starts to find out what makes him tick. With a huge social media presence, and fantastic racing results, how does the rider who likes to play the fool manage to balance professional riding with entertaining his fans?





" JUST ME, NATURE, SOME GOOD TRAILS, AND I BECAME THE HAPPIEST THAT I'VE NEVER BEEN. "

Who is Yoann Barelli? Where are you from and how did you get into mountain biking?

I'm a mountain biker, a very jovial person, I love being a professional athlete, and I know it is a huge chance that I have to do what I love the most as a living. I'm from the south of France, Nice, I grew up chasing My brother Nicolas Filippi (ex-junior XC world champ) but also Nico Vouilloz and Fabien Barel. They inspired me a lot when I was a kid,

and I now live in Whistler, I am lucky enough to live my dream.

You burst onto the enduro scene in 2013 and haven't looked back, how did that happen? Were you racing already?

When I started to race enduro in 2013, I just fell in love with this sport. I was loving the idea of taking my bike and going for a bike ride anywhere, no shuttle, no worries, just me, nature, some good trails, and I became the happiest that I've never been. When I started to race the EWS in 2013, I was still working as a Cycle Manager in a big sports

was taking time off work to attend the races, and when I saw the Giant Factory Off-Road Team at the races, I made a promise to myself "next season, I'll be with them, and this will be my job!"

Mid season I quit my job and put everything aside so I could train and reach my goal, and at the end of the season, I signed my first professional contract with them after 15 years of racing! I will never be thankful enough to them for giving me that tremendous opportunity and to have believed in me more than anyone else. Thank you, Joe Staub, and thank-you An Le.

Now I'm just following my way, and loving mountain biking every day a little bit more!!

" THE EWS CREW IS DOING AN AMAZING JOB TAKING US TO MANY DIFFERENT PLACES AROUND THE WORLD, IT'S AWESOME. "

We are seeing a huge range of Enduro World Series events, with different styles, formats, etc. Which type of racing do you like best? What was your favourite event of 2017 and why?

I like long or short descents, very technical, gnarly or high-speed terrain. I like to feel the adrenaline growing in me. I'm not a huge fan of easy, flowy trails for racing as I get bored! But we need a bit of everything to make everyone happy. The EWS crew is doing a fantastic job taking us to many different places around the world; it's awesome.

I love the mass start format like the Megavalanche, I love the blind racing format like the Andes Pacifico or all the trance races, and I love the intensity of a full week during an EWS. The event I liked the most last year was the urban DH in Taxco! The vibe at this event was just insane; I can still feel it, I'm coming back this year for sure.

What do you feel are your strengths and weaknesses for Enduro racing?

Well, here is the thing, I'm gonna be honest with you. It's been four years that I've been racing the full EWS circuit and all the time when there are some long uphill or long flat during a stage; I'm a bit behind the fast guys. When there are some short sprints during a stage, I can hold the intensity of the effort and be at the front. If it's a long stage, gnarly and mainly descending I'm at the front. If it's a short stage technical and descending, I'm at the front. But unfortunately for me, the difference is mainly made in those long uphill or long flat sections!



PHOTO NATHAN CHILCOTT



" RIGHT NOW YOU CAN CHOOSE IN BETWEEN A HUGE RANGE OF DIFFERENT FORMATS AND IT'S AWESOME. "

I'm training to reinforce this weakness, but also to enhance my strengths, so we will see this year. At the end of the day I think it's better to have a very sharp V6 than a lazy V12, don't you think so? I'm also very good at reading a terrain, finding lines (not French lines haha) and making my own plans. There is lots of strategy involved when you race at the EWS, and I'm good at that.

What does the future of Enduro look like to you? Bigger stages? More days? Lifts or pedalling? Should they all be the same format?

I think the future of enduro is pretty bright as long as all the different forms of racing keep their own entities. Right now you can choose in between a huge range of different formats, and it's awesome. If you want to race a multi-day, blind and adventure oriented event, you have the choice of maybe 20 races around the world with the Andes Pacifico, Trans Provence, Trans NZ, Trans BC, etc.. If you want to race a mass start event and experience something crazy, then you have the Megavalanche and Maxi Avalanche. If you want something cool and relaxed, then there are thousands of local events that are pretty rad. If you want to race an EWS and experience the intensity of these events, then you can...

You can basically experience everything in one season if you want, that's what I do, and I love it.

What are your goals for 2017? Win the EWS overall? Have you planned for any other races other than EWS?

PHOTO JIB LIAUTARD



PHOTO JONATHA JUNGE

Everyone wants to win the EWS, and I do too, trust me! My goal is more about putting all the check marks in the "positive" category during the whole season. Racing the EWS takes a bit more than just disconnecting your brain at the start of a stage, that everyone can do it. For me it's more about getting to the start of a stage, confident, relaxed, and ready to do what I do the best, riding my bike full gas. But to get there, to get to this feeling, to put yourself in this autopilot mode, there is a lot of work to do before that.

Things you do every day, gym, interval training, rest, sleep, hydration, nutrition. Things you do at the races, practice, track walk, watching GoPro footage, hydration, nutrition, sleep. If I can have all these check marks all year long, then I'll be ready at every stage, I'll be ready to do what I do best, riding my bike as quickly as I can, and when I ride my bike totally unlocked, I go fast no matter the terrain! This is my goal!!

" I'LL BE READY TO DO WHAT I DO THE BEST, RIDING MY BIKE FULL GAS "

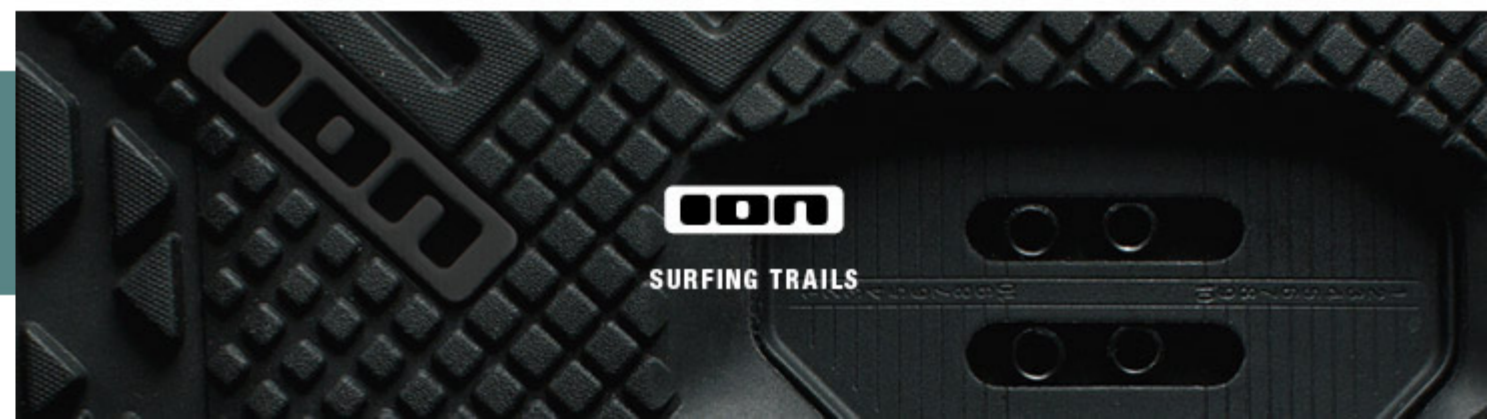
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SURFING TRAILS



" I AM PRETTY EASY IN FRONT OF A CAMERA, I HAVE LOTS AND LOTS OF FUN RIDING MY BIKE "

Your videos are hugely entertaining, and you have a massive social media following, is this something you aimed for? Or did it just happen?

Thanks! I just realised a few years ago that I wasn't good enough on the bike to make millions of views with a video. However, on the other hand, I am pretty easy going in front of a camera, I have lots and lots of fun riding my bike, I love being a clown and make people

laugh. This was (and still is) my cocktail, and this is what brought me where I am today. By doing that, I've found my way, I became a better rider, I became professional, and I'm now racing a world-class circuit and fighting for the top spots. I've realised that there aren't any limits in life, we can do anything and change our destiny at any time. Every day I live my life open to see where this positive, fun and light way of playing with life is going to take me.

This is also what I want to give to the people that are following me; I want to show them that by following their dreams, by taking a

few risks sometimes, and by doing things with passion, life will always reward them and we end up doing what we want.

Is the image of enduro too serious? Do riders and racers take themselves too seriously? Should racers all be having more fun like you?

I think that everyone is having lots of fun doing this you know. It's true that if you come to an EWS event, you could believe that the racers are too serious, but everything is so intense that you can't really waste your time by being a goof, you have to be focused if you want to perform. Being focused and doing a serious job doesn't mean that you are not having fun.

" I TRAIN PRETTY HARD, LIKE EVERYONE I THINK. BUT I'M NOT THE TYPE OF GUY THAT IS GOING TO BE CRAZY ABOUT HIS TRAINING. "

There is a place and a time for everything; I'm not always full gas, I'm not always joking around, I also like to do the job.

Your image is one of a laid back guy who likes a joke. When the camera is off, how much do you train and what do you do?

I train pretty hard, like everyone I think. But I'm not the type of guy that is going to be crazy about his training. Let say that I train 10 to 12 hours very intensely (gym, workout, interval training) per week, the rest of the time; I play, I'm on my bike or on skis in winter, I'm outside adventuring. A normal week would be in between 20 and 25 hours of activities.

What do you get up to when you're not riding your bike? You mentioned skiing, that must be pretty great to have access to such great terrain in Whistler.

It's been my third winter in Whistler now; it's rad. You get up in the morning, check the snow forecast, go for a few laps, a good ski tour, then go back home, lunch, plan videos, train... This year we went to Europe for a month in December/January with Katrina, to get some sun, some good weather, to see my family and to do a bunch of riding.

I also like to chill; I like to go in my garage, just to check how my bikes are doing haha, to measure stuff, test different things, work on the bikes ready for the summer. It's a good life.



PHOTO JONATHA JUNGE



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" IT'S A PERFECT FIT FOR ME, WE ARE GOING TO DO SOME GREAT THINGS TOGETHER. "

How did your move to Commencal come about? Did you seek Commencal out, or did they come looking for you?

I've known Max (Commencal) for quite a long time now, and during the last few years we've been in touch, talking about working together and it was just at the end of the last season that I made up my mind. I'm very happy to work with them, the vibe at Commencal is awesome. This winter we went for a visit at the Commencal HQ, and I was stoked to see how everyone works together in a big open space, everyone is mixed, even the boss, it's awesome really. It's a very dynamic brand, and everyone in the company is motivated to move forward. It's a perfect fit for me; we are going to do some great things together.

How have you adapted to the new bike? Does it take a while to settle into a new ride, do you just hit the trails and see what happens, or is it more scientific than that?

It takes a bit of time for sure, especially in my situation; I changed all my sponsors except SRAM/Rockshox. Just imagine, riding for four years with the same bike, same handlebars, same grips, same shoes, same goggles, the same everything then, suddenly you change it all! It feels very strange at first, and I felt like a stranger on my bike! But after hours and hours of riding you start to learn, your body starts to adapt itself to everything; the feeling comes back. Commencal has been very close to me during this process, I've been in touch with the engineers regularly, and we still are,

PHOTO JIB LIAUTARD



PHOTO JB LIAUTARD

we talk about what I feel on the bike, they give me new things to test, they tell me different set up to try. So I ride, I'm gaining confidence, there is no stress, it's just rad.

The power of Commencal is that they listen to us, the racers, but also a lot of the consumers, we all work together. They make you feel engaged with the brand; you feel like at home when you ride a Commencal!

So you'll be racing the new Meta V4.2? What set-up are you running? Stock or custom? Size? Coil or air? How do you set your bikes up, is it different for every race? Are there any special touches?

Yes, Meta AM V4.2 size L completely stock except for the paint that will be custom soon.

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" SOME OF THEM ARE MORE ABOUT THE ADVENTURE, HAVING A GREAT TIME WITH THE FRIENDS "

During the last few months, I've been testing a bunch of different things on the bike, caps in the head tube to make the bike longer or shorter, angle set from $+1^\circ$ to -1.5° , a swing arm welded together to check out if more rigidity would improve anything. All of that, to come out to the conclusion that the bike is great and works amazingly well the way it is! All this data isn't wasted; we will use it for the future.

I'll run an air shock for the first two EWS, then I'll see, I need to test the coil on the Meta. My bike is a bit different from one race to another; I'll change tires, handlebars, rotors, air shock or coil, and maybe the wheels. It depends on of the terrain; I adapt myself to it.

You caused a stir with your Cyclocross riding in Whistler, showing what can be done on skinny wheels. Commencal doesn't make a Cross bike, do they? How will you manage?

Well f\$£k, that's what everyone says! I think we "seriously" have to do something about

that, and quickly. Don't you worry Whistler bike park, I'm coming for you again hahaha!

Will we see some more videos and #tutotuesdays this year, or is it all about the racing?

Of course, you'll see some more #tutotuesday, of course, you'll see a Barrelli goofing around and having a hell of a time on his bike and off the bike. Racing only happens at the races, and only the important ones, not all of them have to be taken seriously in my opinion; otherwise, you can burn out! Some of them are more about the adventure, having a great time with the friends, and the story that you are going to tell about them.

" I'M FEELING REALLY CONFIDENT ON THE BIKE, I CAN LET IT GO, I JUST LET THE BIKE DO ITS JOB, IT'S PRETTY AMAZING TO FEEL ALREADY THAT GOOD ON MY BIKE THAT EARLY IN THE SEASON "

Well done on your result at the Andes Pacifico. 6th Place! Were you happy with your result and did you enjoy the race?

Thank you, yeah 6th place, I'm very happy with the result. Andes Pacifico was for me the best way to see where I was at and to see if my good feelings on the bike were right or not and also to see my state of fitness.

There are a lot of positive things coming out of this race, when it goes downhill I'm feeling confident on the bike, I can let it go, I just let the bike do its job. It's pretty amazing to feel already that good on my bike that early in the season. In terms of fitness, I wasn't as ready as the other fast guys, but that's ok, the race was now a month ago, there is a huge step forward that has been done during this month ;).

Did I enjoy the race? I loved it; I'll come back next year for sure. Everything about this race was rad, from the organisation to the unique terrain they made us ride!! It's an adventure, a unique experience, I recommend it to everyone!

Was this your first time at the Andes Pacifico? Tell us about the event; what makes it so good and unique, how about the anti-grip?

Yes, it was my first time, and man, what a rad event. It was just so cool to leave winter for two weeks and be in full on summer for a bit and to see all my friends again. Even if we race "against" each other,



we are all friends, and when we are all together for an event like Andes Pacifico, without pressure, it's like summer camp for adults.

They say at the Andes Pacifico that it's "the experience of a lifetime", they are right. From the beautiful landscape to the gnarly long stages, to the fantastic

food they give us, from the free and unlimited draft and delicious beers to the gnarly long 4x4 transfers on really sketchy roads, plus the smiles and the good vibe of all the organisation staff. To finish at the beach with a crazy party, this race is unique and rad, I think everyone loved it.



" WE MET A LOT OF COOL AND INTERESTING PEOPLE AND I SAY A BIG THANK YOU TO EVERYONE INVOLVED TO MAKE THIS RACE HAPPEN. "

Anti-grip, yes, of course, haha, but that's ok, you just start to learn how to ride on it on day 5 stage 4 (the last stage of the race) haha!

We shared a lot of amazing moments, we met a lot of cool and interesting people, and I say a big thank you to everyone involved to make this race happen. Also very special Thank you to Pablo, who simply took care of me like if we were the best friends since forever! Thanks, bud.

Who are your other sponsors for this season?

I ride with the support of Commencal, Dakine, Sram/Rockshox, Vallnord Andorra, Hutchinson Tires, American Classic, Smith, Tioga, Renthal, Northwave, T9 Boeshield, HuckNorris, Crankbrother, E-thirteen, On energy organic, Effeto Mariposa, Pulse Session, Aerozine, SB3, IceToolz

I'm racing in the Commencal Vallnord Enduro Team, managed by Cedric Ravanel.

I'm racing in the Commencal Vallnord Enduro Team, managed by Cedric Ravanel.

Any shout outs and thanks?

A big thank you to you first, for these rad questions, also to all my partners of course, but also to all my ex-partners, without them I wouldn't be here today :).

A big thanks to everyone that's following me, pushing me and supporting me no matter what. You guys are awesome; I love you!

Thanks for taking the time to chat with us!



WORDS EWEN TURNER
PHOTO BEN GERRISH

HARD TAIL HEROS

Ewen Turner emerges from a wet winter of hardtail shredding, sits by the fire and reminisces about back in the day when bikes were bikes, had 400 gears, weighed as much as a cow, and never broke.

He gets together with some of the big players in the hardtail world and asks if there is still room for hardtails in the modern, carbon blinged-up world of mountain biking.



**" STEP AWAY FROM THE ROCKING CHAIR GRANDPA,
HARDTAILS ARE STILL HERE AND BIGGER AND BETTER
THAN EVER. "**

The Origin of the Species

It occurred to me recently that it is now entirely possible, and pretty likely, that there are riders out there who may not have ridden a hardtail. Those of us who started riding before the turn of the century had little option for full bounce bikes, and a rigid bike was pretty commonplace, let alone one with front suspension. I could now go misty eyed and wax lyrical about my first proper mountain bike, with its rigid steel frame, V-brakes, 21 gears, but no, this is a modern article on modern bikes. Step away from the rocking chair grandpa, hardtails are still here and bigger and better than ever.

Other than the development of the suspension fork, have hardtails really come that far from the original off-road clunkers and hack bikes that those intrepid cyclists first took off road? Essentially the diamond shape frame is the same; two wheels are still one of the few mountain bike standards and hell, we now have fewer gears than 20 years ago. It's progress, just perhaps not so obvious to the casual observer. Damian Mason of DMR knows a thing or two about hardtails, being the 'D' in DMR and responsible for some iconic machines. 'I think Hardtails are in the British DNA, 'we (the British)' did refine the design of the original bicycle with James Starley's (Born in Sussex about 5 miles from our office!) 'Safety Bicycle' design in 1877 and it's still in that form today pretty much.'

So while technology has moved on, there are those of us who still like to cherry pick our technology,





mixing the modern with the traditional. Dropper posts, air suspension, one-by drivetrains, all strapped onto a steel hardtail to create a thoroughly modern machine with a nod to the past, when riding was real, or something like that...

The Current Evolution

So what of this new breed of hardtails? Are they really new, or just a continuation of the development of the humble bike frame? How difficult is it to develop a modern hardtail, surely it has all been worked out? Given that DMR has just produced a new full suspension bike (The Sled), I ask Damian about the development of a hardtail over a full suspension frame, 'It's definitely a simpler task than a full suspension frame, and quicker to develop.

" IT'S DEFINITELY A SIMPLER TASK THAN A FULL SUSPENSION FRAME, AND QUICKER TO DEVELOP "



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" WE KNEW WERE ON THE RIGHT TRACK AS SOON AS WE TESTED OUR FIRST PROTOTYPE. "

Working with steel (or aluminium) means we can sample and adjust the design relatively quickly. We always go through a cycle of ride-testing and refinement with our frames'.

The DMR Trailstar is a redesigned classic, undoubtedly a challenging makeover for an iconic machine? Damian's approach to the new Trailstar was quite an 'open' style design, intended to be built up and used for all sorts of things and not be too niche. It's all about balance and goes on to explain,

'getting the geometry and componentry choice fit right, etc. is tricky to allow this work without too much compromise'. The argument of versatility regularly comes from the hardtail rider, and this is backed up by DMR, 'We have people who race very competitively at Four Cross on it, others race hardtail downhill, most use it as a trail bike. Making a good all rounder is something a hardtail can still do well – it's much harder to do that with a full suss bike design for sure.'

One brand that represents modern hardcore hardtails better than any is Ragley, born in 2009 they have always focussed their efforts

on hardtails to great acclaim. Steven Jamieson is a man who understands the winning formula, and it turns out their bikes take more than a nod from modern trail bikes. 'The blueprint for these came from looking at modern aggressive full suspension trail bike geometry when sagged. We wanted to emulate the way that these bikes ride, but without the suspension on the rear,' Steve explains. This wasn't just based on a bit of maths, 'We knew were on the right track as soon as we tested our first prototype. Revision after revision just got better and better until you have what is on sale today'. It would seem that modern hardtails are taking a few leaves from the enduro book of geometry numbers, bringing head angles back to somewhere around 64 degrees,



" THE 'SPRINGY' PROPERTY OF STEEL GIVES SOME COMFORT AND ALLOWS THE BIKE TO TRACK AND PING THROUGH TWISTY TRAILS IN A SATISFYING WAY. "

lengthening reach numbers and dropping bottom brackets. Frames may look not too different from a classic bike from 30 years ago, but I guarantee they ride a lot better.

And what about steel? I hear you shout, nearly spilling your flat white and getting froth on your moustache! With consumers falling over themselves to get hold of the latest carbon frames, there are still bikes being welded out of metal, and not just aluminium, but that chromoly stuff. The 'real stuff'. DMR, a brand built of steel, do they feel it is still a relevant material in the world of carbon? 'Yes! We think so; steel is a good material for a hardtail for its ride quality and toughness. The 'springy' property of steel gives some comfort and allows the bike to track and ping through twisty trails in a satisfying way. It's difficult to describe in text, but if you've owned a steel bike you'll know what I mean'.

For Ragley, starting in 2009, that was a tough time to be bringing out steel hardtails amidst the sea of full suss bikes. Can these bikes cut it against the trail bikes? Steven thinks so, 'In most situations and in the hands of the right rider, a modern steel hardtail can be just as fast as a full suspension bike. There is nothing more satisfying than being just as fast as your mates that on full sussers. As you are directly connected to the trail underneath, there is better feedback, and it feels more natural on a hardtail.'

The blueprint is there, a modern hardtail needs to take some of that trail/enduro hype and be long,





low and slack, and probably be made out of a material that works, and doesn't cost the earth, both literally and figurative. These bikes aren't attempting to win cross country medals; it's all about hitting trails hard and putting smiles on faces, and being able to do that repeatedly without buying shares in your local bike shop.

What's the point?

Having spent a winter on hardtails, I know why I love them, it's the direct connection to the trail, taking every hit with your legs and feeling every undulation beneath the tyres. It's about being able to pump the backside of every roller-shaped trail obstacle and always know where the back end is tracking, or not... A hardtail is a reliable steed, always ready to be pulled out the garage and put a smile on your face, eschewing the many knobs and buttons, just grab and go.

**" ALWAYS READY TO
BE PULLED OUT THE
GARAGE AND PUT
A SMILE ON YOUR
FACE "**

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 **Formula**



" I DON'T WANT TO GO ALL PREACHY HERE, BUT IT DOES MAKE YOU A BETTER-SKILLED RIDER TO LEARN ON HARDTAIL "

So why would anyone buy a hardtail? With so many brands offering full-suspension bikes at lower and lower prices, why not get more bounce to the ounce and smooth out the ride? Commencal has been keeping it real for some time now and who else to extol the virtues of the rigid rear than the man himself, Max Commencal, does he still feel they can cut it? 'We've always said that in terms of budget, it is better to buy a good hardtail than a bad full-suspension bike.'

That sums up our philosophy with this bike, and that's why we've been giving it special treatment for many years. There is a diverse interest in this category of bikes, ranging from the complete beginner to the very experienced rider, everyone for their different reasons.'

A bike for the masses, at a price that many might be able to afford. The spec on a hardtail will always be better than a full suspension equivalent, but what about ride feel? And will they make us better riders? Many riders would agree, and Damian from DMR certainly thinks so, telling me straight,

'I don't want to go all preachy here, but it does make you a better-skilled rider to learn on hardtail, you read the terrain better, pick the best line, pump the humps and bumps to keep your speed, etc..' And the direct connection to the trail? What does he think of that? 'You get a lot of 'feedback' on a hardtail; it's more direct, predictable and immediate which does make it more rewarding in a way. It makes for a fun singletrack or 'woods' bike I think, it has its place for sure.' You'd think he might be pretty anti-suspension, but for a man who recently released 'The Sled' he still has plenty of room in his life for a big bike concluding, 'Full suss bikes are awesome as well, just in a different way, they certainly don't make hardtails irrelevant.'



Over the Atlantic, Marin is quietly and strategically working their way through their range, starting with the hardtails with several new models out this year with classic looks, but futuristic handling capabilities. With hardtail and full suspension bikes now occupying the same price points and competing for our pocket money, are trail focussed hardtails still relevant in modern mountain biking? Matt Cipes is the mastermind behind the shift at Marin, 'Different folks, different strokes. At the end of the day, everyone lives in different areas and has different needs as a rider. There will always be a place for both hardtail and full suss rigs in the global market.'

Interestingly Matt feels a shift in the attitudes of riders, 'There is a big change in the way people are riding. It is much less cross-country oriented and well, more what I like to call soul riding.'

" EVERYONE LIVES IN DIFFERENT AREAS AND HAS DIFFERENT NEEDS AS A RIDER. "



Chris Smith Preparing To Drop In

Chris Smith has little time to reflect on the adrenaline highs or the injury-enforced lows that have marked his professional freeride career over the last 20 years. Despite near-death experiences, he has never had a problem facing up to risk, even if now his first priority is coming home to his kids in the evening relatively unscathed.

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RENEGADE PROGRESS



ENDURA

" PEOPLE ARE GETTING BACK TO RIDING FOR RIDING, EITHER DIGGING TRAILS IN THE WOODS, BIKE PACKING INTO THE WILDERNESS OR JUST 'GOING FOR A RIDE'. "

The trail bike hardtail suits this evolution of the mountain bike and if the trails aren't too nasty they are a blast to ride on a hardtail'. This shift in riding style is perhaps the counter culture to the enduro boom that has been everywhere in mountain biking recently, but that boom is over, people are getting back to riding for riding, either digging trails in the woods, bike packing into the wilderness or just 'going for a ride'. Hardtails work for these folks, no marketing hype, just a solid, reliable and fun bicycle.

So, hardtails are good for the soul, potentially cheaper, more reliable and make you a better rider. Does this match up with the wise words of Max Commencal? 'When it comes to those with a lower ability level, the advantages are numerous. Having a lighter, more manageable bike and of course at an equally fair price, with better forks and wheels is a definite bonus over having a poor quality full suspension bike'. Max goes on to explain it's not just beginners who can benefit, 'For more experienced riders, a hardtail is often their 2nd or 3rd bike in the garage. It may be used as part of a training program/ pedalling or for pump track for example. For downhillers, a hardtail bike is more demanding and is less forgiving. This allows for technical and physical progression before taking those skills back to the DH bike'.

A Peculiarly British Thing?

We've heard from brands from the UK, Europe and the States, but is this hardcore/trail/fun (delete as appropriate) hardtail thing a weirdly British thing?





" THE VERSATILITY OF A HARDTAIL IN THESE SITUATIONS MAKES A LOT OF SENSE AS PEOPLE CAN RIDE VIRTUALLY ANY RIDING DISCIPLINE, ALL ON ONE BIKE! "

Or just for places with terrible weather and quirky riders who shun technology for something perceived to be more real?

Ragley know a thing or two about the minds of hardtail riders, specifically in the UK, why does Steven Jamieson think that is? 'Maybe it's because a lot of the UK is relatively flat with limited access to proper big hills. The versatility of a hardtail in these situations makes a lot of sense as people can ride virtually any riding discipline, all on one bike! He goes on to add that it may just be 'because everyone grew up riding Azonic DS1's and Spooky Bandwagons back in the day. By now the idea of life without a hardcore hardtail to hand just seems strange!' Like Damian mentioned, perhaps it's in the DNA.

Do American riders get the whole 'hardcore/fun hardtail' thing? Marin's hardtails aren't wildly extreme but they are certainly a bike you can shred on, so what does Matt Cipes think? 'Oh, heck yea! We get it, but I do feel that USA media can either portray hardtails in more of an XC light or only focus on full suss bikes. I have a couple of buddies who regularly pull out a 66-degree steel 29er HT and crush really steep, nasty trails. These riders are more few and far between than what you see in the UK, but if you look for it in the USA, you will see it.'

What about the rest of Europe, where the general idea of a hardtail is a lightweight XC bike, why do Commencal think differently? 'This general idea in Europe can also apply to full-suspension bikes,



and our range is almost exclusively gravity orientated. It's simple really, the descent is what gets the adrenaline pumping' says Max, 'Obviously, all of our bikes are designed to be as versatile as possible but if there is a criterion on which we make no concessions, it has to be the smile that going downhill can provide on a good bike. So when we started working on our first hardtails, we wanted them to perform first and foremost, from this point of view'. This clear focus on priorities is what gives brands like Commencal its identity throughout the range and a loyal following of customers and riders.

The Future

The future is looking pretty bright for the hardtail riders of the world, with plenty of choices and forward thinking brands pushing the development of their bikes.

**" ALL OF OUR BIKES ARE
DESIGNED TO BE AS
VERSATILE AS POSSIBLE "**



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TERRAIN IS NOT YOUR
BIGGEST PROBLEM**

It's your mind.

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LEATT

OVER TO YOU



" THE IMPORTANT WORD HERE IS 'RAD', WHETHER LIKE THE TERM OR NOT, IT'S ABOUT GOOD TIMES ON TWO WHEELS. "

With enduro and downhill races in the UK regularly having hardtail categories, it's clear there are plenty of folks out there wanting to ride and race rigid frames.

What of the future for brands, will we see hardtails gradually sidelined in favour of trickle-down technology from above? In ten years time will those new to mountain biking

be swinging a leg over a carbon 160mm bike with change from \$1000? Marin don't think so, 'I think HTs will always have a place in this world and Marin will continue to do our best to make rad ones to rip on' says Matt Cipes, and the important word here is 'rad', whether like the term or not, it's about good times on two wheels. 'Marin feels that mountain bikes are vehicles for fun and adventure. A hardtail can be many things to many people, and Marin wants to deliver trail hardtails that live up to the legend of

the mountain bike'.

With DMR sneakily dropping a new 160mm bike this year, surely there is a temptation for Ragley to get on board the bounce-train? 'Yes, we had some prototype Full Suspension bikes back in 2012. They never made it to production, though. Going forward we would never say never, but if we were to do it, we would want it to be something really special. Watch this space!'

I don't really need to ask Commencal, as a brand so well rooted in gravity riding, they are bound to be pushing hardtails for the foreseeable future.



" WE THINK THAT HARDTAILS WILL STILL EVOLVE AND CONTINUE TO BE IMPORTANT ESPECIALLY WITH THE ARRIVAL OF WIDER RIMS AND TYRES. "

Max tells me, 'We think that hardtails will still evolve and continue to be important especially with the arrival of wider rims and tyres. These factors will eliminate the most obvious disadvantage of this type of bike, discomfort! Furthermore, it also allows the bike to grip better while cornering and braking. Good news for beginners and experts alike'. Good news too as he tells me, 'We are currently working on a new platform that will replace the current Meta HT AM which we'll be able to say more about in a few months'.

Thanks to Damian Mason (DMR), Matt Cipes (Marin), Max Commencal (Commencal) and Steven Jamieson (Ragley) for their input and helping me fly the flag for hardtails across the globe!



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TRAIL GUIDE

Something big is happening down under. No, let's be more specific; something big is happening down under, down under.

WORDS JAMES SWANN
PHOTOS NATHAN CHILCOTT



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A new mountain biking super power has suddenly appeared in the Southern Hemisphere, sending ripples through the Tasman Sea that are being felt as far away as the shores of New Zealand and across the Pacific to British Columbia. Mountain biking bastions of old are sitting up and taking notice of this quietly confident and good looking newcomer; the island of Tasmania.

An island off an island on the far side of the Earth, Tasmania has probably never even registered on most people's radar as a mountain biking destination. Yet, as if it had been sprinkled overnight with a truckload of fairy dust this Antipodean outlier has sprung up trails and biking destinations of the standard that would make Northern Hemisphere riders blush with childlike excitement.

Once home to tin miners and farmers, North West Tasmania is evolving into a world-class destination for mountain bikers and has seen its fortunes change dramatically, as boarded up shops and empty pubs have been replaced with a boom in tourism since the feted Blue Derby trail centre opened in 2015. Where before there were only leftover hunks of mining equipment, relics of a forgotten era, there are now over 50km of biking trails that in complete honesty are good enough to rival similar riding in the French and Swiss Alps.

As recently as 2011 Tasmania was deemed to be 'currently not at the standard available at other competing MTB destinations in Australia and



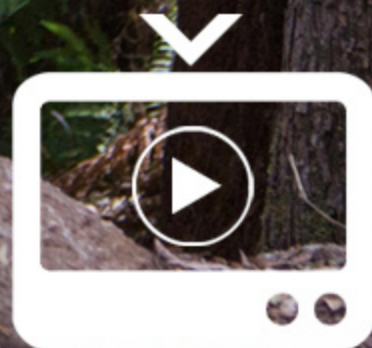
New Zealand', but since work was given the go ahead just a few years ago to develop sites like Derby the change has been nothing short of phenomenal.

Derby

The jewel in the crown of Tassie's trails is undoubtedly the Blue Derby network at Derby (Brits, you'll see a lot of familiar place names crop up down under, though not always pronounced the way you'd expect them to be). It's here that Tasmanian mountain biking has been put on the map.

With over 50km of some of the finest trail available anywhere on the planet - and more trails being added all the time - this is the place to be for riding bikes right now. At first glance, this old town doesn't give away its secret, but on closer inspection, the numerous new cafes, a bike shop, bike washing facilities and accommodation venues reveal a town fully geared towards riders and riding. This is a place on the up, and it's all down to the trails that have been hewn from the surrounding hills. It's nothing short of excellent.

" THE HIGH LEVEL OF DETAIL AND QUALITY THAT'S BEEN POURED INTO THESE TRAILS IS EVIDENT RIGHT FROM THE OFF. "



From short, sharp descents down to the valley bottom on black diamond runs Black Dragon and Shearpin Lower, to long, meandering trail endeavours on the endlessly flowing Atlas, and the berm capital of the world on the peerless and grin-inducing Big Chuck - this place will not disappoint. Whether you like your trails smooth, fast and tightly packed with turns or your style favours more challenging rock-strewn technical lines, Derby has you covered. Trails such as the black rated Shearpin sharpen the senses with a barrage of off camber slabs, drops onto wheel eating ruts and overhangs into the abyss of the forest below. It certainly focuses the mind and gets the adrenaline flowing.

The high level of detail and quality that's been poured into these trails is evident right from the off. Swing a leg over your bike, stamp on the pedals, and you'll soon be enjoying a plentiful dose of the incredible flow that has been built into these trails straight out of the car park. No immediate energy-sapping climbs for lucky riders here, just a rollercoaster of singletrack leading you from steady switchback climbs to grin inducing descents. A sign of considered planning and talented trail building mixed with a dash of typical Aussie good humour as natural wall rides and exposed rock slabs pop into view to keep you on your toes.

With uplifts on offer from the excellent Bus 2 Berms guys, we were able to pack in a good chunk of the rides on offer here, the local knowledge of the drivers ensuring we didn't miss any of the venue's best action.



" THAT'S WHAT BRINGS PEOPLE BACK, THE FLOW; IT'S SO SCENIC, IT'S UTOPIA! "

Out on the trails, it's easy to become immersed in the true isolation of Tasmania. A feeling of real adventure and a disconnect from the rest of the world takes over, almost as though you were travelling around a eucalyptus infused Jurassic Park, minus the velociraptors. Riding through temperate rainforest, passing beneath giant ferns and picking our way across huge swathes of exposed bedrock, all of the rides we did had the perfect blend of technicality, speed and flow, without ever becoming too rough or pushing us way out of our comfort zones.

The impeccable use of the altitude at Derby is

perhaps what makes it stand out that little bit more from other trail centres across the world. The planning and building crews have clearly done their homework and made sure to get every last ounce of fun and flow from the terrain, without ever sticking riders on a straight line descent or climb. It was on the already legendary Big Chuck trail that this was most evident, with easily half an hour of continuously rolling, twisting downhill singletrack rushing under our front wheels as though it would never end. Riders of all abilities will be able to achieve the zen-like state of 'flow' here.

"The trails are truly amazing; you feel like you're in a dream swirling through the forests. That's what brings people back, the flow; it's so scenic, it's utopia!"
- Michelle Rowe, Owner, Crank it Cafe, Derby.

Given the location of the trail head at Derby and the aspects of the trails, it's not necessary to carry a sack load of kit on your back; food, mechanics and supplies are never too far away. But this being Australia it can get crazy hot, so don't ditch the fluids and make sure you're well sun lubed, particularly since the ozone layer over this part of the world seems to be on a permanent vacation.



The overriding feeling that we left the Blue Derby trails with was one of total and profound satisfaction. Satisfaction at having made the effort to get here, satisfaction at the mind blowing trails and infinite switchbacks - how could there have been so many, how could they have been that good, where had our arms and calf muscles gone? And finally, satisfaction at feeling so utterly exhausted after an incredible day of riding; the body pleading to stop as the mind urged us on to 'just one more trail'.

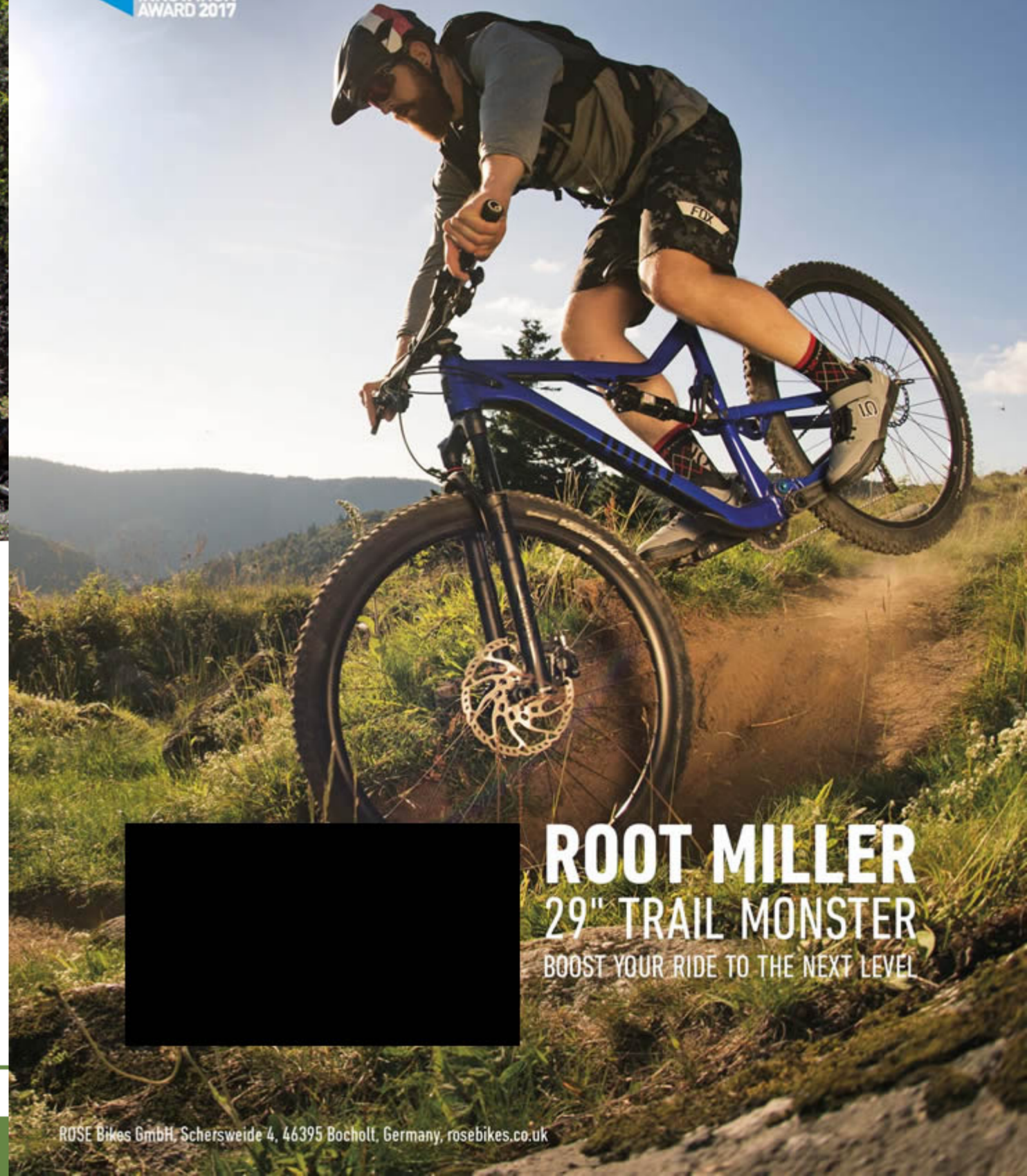
If we still wanted more to do after all that, then the Juggernaut at Hollybank Reserve near Launceston, offers a 10km descent of epic proportions.

" SATISFACTION
AT FEELING
SO UTTERLY
EXHAUSTED
AFTER AN
INCRECIBLE
DAY OF RIDING "



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Maydena Bike Park

Not wishing to get left behind by the boom in tourism and distinct socio-economic benefits that mountain biking has brought to Derby, the island's south is the next target for Tasmania's talented trail builders, with a new bike park already under construction in Maydena, just over an hour north-west of Hobart. Developed by renowned Aussie trail builders, Dirt Art, Maydena Bike Park is due to be completed in early 2018. It will offer absolutely everything you could ever ask of a trail centre, with a regular uplift service, bike hire, cafe, bar, gear shop, and that's before we even mention the trails!

With over 800m of vertical elevation on tap, Maydena will primarily cater to the island's gravity fans. Packing in over 60km of trails across four runs, ranging from blue to double black, and incorporating flowing berms, jumps and technical features - there'll be something for every rider and all abilities, with a 60km XC trail also on the cards for the near future, as if you needed another excuse to visit!

Hobart

The first thing you notice as you fly into Hobart is the diversity of terrain surrounding this historic city. Situated on the coast nestled amongst many bays, rivers and lagoons to the south and east, and beneath the dominant presence of the 1271m Mount Wellington (or Kunanyi, to the indigenous locals) to the west, Hobart looks and feels like the kind of place that mountain bikers will just love.

Perhaps unsurprisingly it's on 'the mountain' that you'll find some of the area's best riding in the shape of the North South Track, an 11km bi-directional,

" IT'S A FAST PACED UPPER BODY WORKOUT AS THE TRAIL SNAKES ITS WAY ABRUPTLY BETWEEN TIGHTLY BUNCHED TREES "



multi-use route open to walkers and mountain bikers. The trail plummets along almost 600m of vertical descent back towards the north end of the city from well-marked parking areas, taking in jumps, berms and log rides along the way.

As at Derby this trail is best accessed with an uplift so you can enjoy the incredible flow and views on offer without having to worry about riding back up the fairly busy main road from Hobart.

The best way to describe this run is as being 'dynamic'. It's a fast paced upper body workout as the trail snakes its way abruptly between tightly

bunched trees, demanding that riders stay over the front wheel in the turns and pump the trail for maximum speed. Flowing over, along and under huge fallen trees and across cobbled rock gardens the trail runs out at Glenorchy Mountain Bike Park where a dirt jump park awaits those with the necessary skills.

Our route took us back into central Hobart via a well-maintained commuter cycle path. Not the most scenic or challenging of routes home but a decent price to pay for a couple of hours of slaloming down the mountain.

Despite being a multi-use trail, it's still a hoot on two wheels and as long as care is taken on blind bends riders will have a blast. The North South track also features a popular sunspot for snakes - and yep, they're still poisonous even though you're on a different island - so has an interesting gauntlet to run on hot days!

Hobart's second biking destination is across the impressive Tasman Bridge on the east side of the Derwent River. The Meehan Ranges and Clarence Bike Park offer riders a healthy choice of short rides on a mixture of fire roads and trails, all of which can be explored and linked up to make a day of it.



Enduro World Series

It didn't take very long for these Tassie trails to get the global recognition they so richly deserve, with the Shimano Enduro Tasmania having taken part as Round 2 of the EWS from 8th-9th April in Derby. This has further boosted the area's stock, and it's clear that the years of hard work and planning are now reaping the rewards for this old mining town. Could this be a template for post-industrial and rural towns across the world? Let's hope so!

" THE YEARS OF
HARD WORK
AND PLANNING
ARE NOW
REAPING THE
REWARDS "

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" THIS IS AN ISLAND THAT DOESN'T JUST PUNCH WAY ABOVE ITS WEIGHT WHEN IT COMES TO MOUNTAIN BIKING "

The Land Down Under 'The Land Down Under.'

So, what's the catch? Well, it's clearly a bloody long way to come to ride your bike if you live in Europe, Canada or the US, but can the long haul down here be justified? I'd say so because with Tasmania you're not just getting the great riding. This is an island that doesn't just punch way above its weight when it comes to mountain biking but can run even its nearest neighbours close with its hearty offering of stunning tourist destinations, food and exquisite wild scenery.

As with the rest of Australia, there's the consideration for the climate and the wildlife to think about, as there are snakes and spiders on the island. In our experience, however, (we stumbled over a few snakes, literally in one case) they're far more scared of you than you are of them and they would rather get the F out of Dodge than bite or attack and risk getting injured themselves. The consensus is to stop, remain still and let the snakes slink off as their eyesight is pretty bad. That said, it's recommended that a compression bandage is carried just on the off chance. Luckily, bites are extremely rare and fatalities even more so. Spiders? We didn't see any, so you're on your own there! Just don't go ferreting around inside tree hollows. The sea? Sharks. Nah.

Climate wise, Tasmania can blow hot and cold. The winter can present water-based challenges to riders attempting river and stream bed riding and even the mid-summer evenings can get pretty chilly quite quickly, even after a scorching day. Luckily, plenty of natural sun protection is offered by the cool, shaded woodland in which most of the trails are situated, but it's still strongly advisable to slap on plenty of factor 50.



Just don't allow your sweat-drenched brow to get it in your eyes! Few things will spoil your fun as fast as not being able to see while wanting to scratch your eyes out.

Travel considerations within Tasmania, as for mainland Australia, centre around planning for fuel and water stops. The conveniently fuel-stationed Europe this is not, and making sure you're aware of fuel stops and their opening times on your route will save you a night in the back seat (no, we didn't). Unlike the excellently signposted biking trails, the road signs can be pretty mystifying, often signing junctions after the turn. Go figure. Nail that, and you're just left with the stunning scenery and beautiful evening sunlight to enjoy.

" YOU'RE JUST LEFT WITH THE STUNNING SCENERY AND BEAUTIFUL EVENING SUNLIGHT "



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" THE ISLAND IS YOUR OYSTER, WITH THE MAJOR TRAILS BEING SITUATED WITHIN A FEW HOURS DRIVE OF EACH OTHER. "

The 'island off an island' packs so much into its shores with vineyards, incredible seafood, fishing and whale watching trips available at every turn. Add to this Tasmania's amazing number of distilleries producing some of the finest whisky and gin; then there's the beaches and the views! Not too shabby to say the least. Like the forgotten love child of New Zealand and Australia unceremoniously cast into the sea, this southern rock is a truly unique place.

Once you've made the long pilgrimage down there, the island is your oyster, with the major trails being situated within a few hours drive of each other. If you're thinking of heading over, then it's worth allowing an absolute minimum of two weeks to make sure you cover all the trails and still find time to enjoy the beautiful coastline and best of the views on offer from the island's incredible national parks.



THANKS TO:

Huge thanks to Damo and Jacob at Bus 2 Berms for sorting us out with uplifts, route advice and beers. You won't get better guides: bus2berms.net.au

Eternal thanks also to Nathan at Nathan Chilcott Visual for beers, riding and fun. He takes pretty good photos too!

As well as hugely helpful and friendly staff, you'll find great trail food, bike hire, bike wash, accommodation and the strange sounding but oh-so-good beetroot chocolate brownie at Crank It Cafe, Derby: crankitcafederby.com

Want to know more about the trails? Check out these sites for microscopic levels of detail into riding Tasmania:

www.ridetassie.com

www.ridebluederby.com.au

www.tassietrails.org



TECHNIQUE

**STOP RIDING TRAILS AND START
RIDING YOUR BIKE**

THE ART OF GOING SLOW TO GO FAST

IMB would like to give a warm welcome to our new Skills and Technique guru Mr Clive Forth. We'd also like to say a huge thanks to Richard Kelly who has been in that role since Issue 2! Richard is now really busy with his B1KE business, which is growing very quickly, sadly for us he's not going to be writing the regular technique features, but he has promised to drop by from time to time in the future!

Clive Forth is a rider who has been there, done that, got the t-shirt and cleaned his bike with it. He has grown with the UK scene and technological developments for the last 30 years and has competed at all levels in all disciplines riding for some prestigious brands along the way.

He brought enduro racing to the UK and has contributed to and created professional qualifications within the sport.

Not only has Clive competed and ridden at the top of the game he has also developed athletes in all disciplines. His no compromise attitude has seen him at the fore; it's also seen him on the sharp end of things on more than one occasion. Always looking for that extra edge with endless passion and drive he is geared up to bring you the inside line on all aspects of mountain biking skills and technique.

" I THOUGHT I'D OPEN WITH A REITERATION ON SOME OF THE LANGUAGE USED BY COACHES "

Part One - Lingo

First up a huge thank you to the team at IMB for this fantastic opportunity, it's an honour to take up the spot and join you all.

So down to business, after getting the call, I've been brimming with ideas for the features. I know Richard has laid down some fantastic groundwork to build on and with this, in mind, I thought I'd open with a reiteration on some of the language used by coaches and tutors as well as giving you some food for thought before we kick off proper in the next edition.





For some of you, this may be familiar territory, particularly if you have been an avid reader since day one, for others it may be a little overwhelming to consider both how you progress your riding while trying to digest the lingo used. For industry professionals in all sectors, acronyms and specific terms used on a daily basis can easily be taken for granted. Not wanting to over egg the cake I'll be mindful to keep it simple.

I'll never forget those late nights and long road trips when I embarked upon the mission of breaking down what it was I was doing on the bike in order to convey that message and get the most out of a rider. Be it a prospective customer visiting me for a skills session or a seasoned racer trying to get one over on the competition. Let me assure you it's not the easiest of tasks.

" NOT WANTING
TO OVER EGG
THE CAKE I'LL
BE MINDFUL TO
KEEP IT SIMPLE."

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" I WILL DIVULGE THE ART OF FLIGHT,
HELP YOU BEAT THE FEAR AND RIDE
FURTHER FASTER WITH ADDED STYLE. "

Different institutions across the globe (and within a territory) may use different terms for the same thing; this is just a case of same meat different gravy. We have to accept that 'local dialect', and colloquial terms may differ. However, all good tutors and coaches

are trying (I sincerely hope) to convey the same message, unfortunately, though sometimes things just get lost in translation.

Mountain biking is a sensory experience, from watching the scenery fly by to hearing the rip of a tyre on a rock, our senses are everything. Our centre of balance is 'offset' by us being elevated with our torso bent forwards. Our space/time perception is altered by the incredible efficiency of the bicycle and its capability of propelling us

forwards quicker than we can achieve by pure leg power alone. And our fears are heightened by the threat of skin loss and broken bones.

To minimise the latter and maximise the former the slang based lingo of the extreme generation has been dragged through the Oxford English to speak (and be understood) by a broader market, hopefully helping them on their way to becoming the next sick dude or RAD lass.

Beyond this intro, I will divulge the art of flight, help you beat the fear and ride further faster with added style.



But before then let's have a pause for thought.

Know Your Limits

There are a few factors that will inhibit your ability to maintain a rhythm through a trail and be proficient with technical skills; we have to consider the self, the environment and the equipment.

If you grew up (or were a grown up) in the 80's riding full rigid bikes, then you would probably agree with the following statement (please remember there will be some tongue in cheek humour contained within these features, so here goes). Most of us (myself included on many trail kilometres) are way over biked.

" JUST REMEMBER THE OLD SAYING "A BAD WORKMAN BLAMES HIS TOOLS" "

With this in mind, the equipment can rarely take the blame for the near death experiences and skin loss, which comes down to the pilot. Nor can we shun the responsibility on Mother Nature, even if someone has crafted her into a bike specific trail. Just remember the old saying "a bad workman blames his tools".

The limiting factors we humans have, vary; the most obvious ones are fitness, flexibility and coordination. You have to be incredibly strong, supple and coordinated to truly reign supreme on the trails. Few riders started young enough, and few have the time to bag the hours in the saddle (which is why you are sat on the net reading this and not doing skids in a car park somewhere). It's a progressive sport, and no matter what level you're at there is room for improvement, we will all reach plateaus, and only marginal gains can be had before that big leap forward comes and we experience that eureka moment.



To maintain focus, have both strength and stamina to operate at our highest levels we need to mix up our riding and bring some attention to the time spent on the bike, developing our fitness as well as our skill set. We need the talent to match the fitness; it's no use being able to haul along the trail if we can't manoeuvre the bike quick enough to deal with the undulations and direction changes required. Likewise, it's no use having the ability to manoeuvre the bike if we don't have the lungs and legs to propel it forward for more than a few hundred meters at a time.

You may want to adapt your approach, this could mean you ride easier trails on occasion and rack up some distance, or it could be that you ride shorter but more demanding trails to develop your confidence and skill set.

" THIS COULD
MEAN YOU RIDE
EASIER TRAILS
ON OCCASION
AND RACK UP
SOME
DISTANCE. "

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Maybe you just go and session a particular trail or section of trail, for some of you, it could mean taking up Yoga or Tai Chi to help with core strength and flexibility. I'm a fan of pushing large gears up steep gradients on particular rides as a kind of 'on the bike' weight training session. I match this by spinning fast on other rides or even through certain sections of trails on the same ride.

" THERE ARE A PLETHORA OF BIKES FOR A MULTITUDE OF DISCIPLINES. "

Your Bike

This sport is full of compromise; there are a plethora of bikes for a multitude of disciplines. We are now at a point far beyond ridiculous when it comes to the variety of trail bikes. Sure, it's obvious that at the opposite ends of the spectrum for Down Hill and Cross Country racing we have the need and requirement for very specific machines tailored for the task. However, for the purposes of recreational trail riding the definable difference and justifications for the multitude of wheel/tyre size combos and varying travel options with the Plus this and Boost that thingy is just pure madness.

That said I am a firm believer of what is right for you is right for you and no one can or will convince you otherwise. Ride what you like and like what you ride, but please be aware that whatever your chosen steed it will have its pro's and its con's, its limitations and preferred climate.

Good riders can make most setups work, the gift of being able to make the bike move. However, the feeling or the onlooker's view is not as sweet as it could be if given the right tool for the job!





" I WILL DIVULGE THE ART OF FLIGHT,
HELP YOU BEAT THE FEAR AND RIDE
FURTHER FASTER WITH ADDED STYLE. "

Steep geometry finds its limitations in steep terrain; slack geometry will fall short on the flat. Hard tyres and or suspension will be twitchy and unforgiving, yet it will take the big hits and support the rider's weight better. A soft saggy set up will feel plush and eat up the noise, but it will soak up forward

momentum and wallow in the hollows. Everything we do with bike choice and set up is a compromise, and unfortunately, it can be an expensive learning curve to discover that your Swiss Army Knife is useless in a gunfight.

Terrain

The one thing that hinders forward progression of any vehicle no matter how large its wheels are or how many horse powers it has is the process of stalling out and fighting gravity. Mother Nature has crafted

the perfect wheel size hole, hill, lump, bump, ditch, log, bog, root, rock for every wheel size on earth.

The severity of the terrain in front of you 'vs.' your speed (both travelling forwards and reaction time) combined with the ability to lift wheels up onto and over obstacles is one of the most fundamental ways we can visualise what is going on in a technical terrain situation.

All wheel sizes given a small bit of momentum will roll up square edges that sit at a height ranging from .1% to 25% of the diameter of the wheel in question.



When an obstacle moves between the 25% and 50% of the diameter (the impending doom of the axle height hit) we will have to start to increase speed and or lift (unweight) the wheel to catch the lower part of the radii in order for the wheel to roll up onto or over the obstacle.

Holes in the terrain just need levelling out by using technique to either be suspended independently from the bike allowing the bike to drop into and rise back up out of the hole or by the process of unweighting body and bike to enable rider and vehicle to float over the hollow. The depth of hole and distance from near side to far side of a low point (hole) in the trail require the same considerations just from an upside down perspective.

TELL TALE MARKS ON THE ROCKS SHOW PREVIOUS RIDERS MISTAKES...

" HOLES IN THE TERRAIN JUST NEED LEVELLING OUT BY USING TECHNIQUE "

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Just take a side on look at your wheel then look at the trail, and you can instantly eliminate the vast majority of what you are seeing as being 'significant' and requiring your attention. Sure hits are hits, and the millions of micro hits your tyre is absorbing are adding to the calories consumed column as you are forced to drive the cranks round in order to keep the bike moving. It's a given that the line of least resistance is the most efficient line, it just may not be the fastest or feel the best given your ability and bike choice!

On the note of energy consumed, grip levels will vary, and that ugly head of compromises rears up once again as we take a moment to consider set up. Slip sliding away may be your groove but the un-nerving feeling is not most people's brew, nor is it progressive as energy (particularly forwards momentum) is lost in going sideways. Or worse still, sitting there having what I call a turbo trainer moment, spinning out the rear wheel while desperately seeking traction in that seemingly insignificant gradient.

" WE DRIVE AND RIDE ON SNAPSHOT VIEW CAPTURED AND MEMORISED IN THESE MOMENTS "

Match Three Out Of Four, And You'll Be All Right For Sure...

1: Vision - Tricks of the Shade.

Where we look we shall go, it's quite simply put but sometimes quite hard to convey the real meaning here and therefore put into practice. This is because teaching a sense requires more than a few hundred words.





As those of you, that drive will know there are many moments where we relax and take our eye off the road ahead while spotting for traffic, downshifting gears and indicating onto the roundabout along a section of dual carriageway. We drive and ride on snapshot view captured and memorised in these moments; there is also that element of feeling coming into play that helps us gauge forwards progression and direction of travel.

" BRING YOUR FOCUS ONTO KEY SIGNIFICANT POINTS ON THE TRAIL WHERE YOU WANT TO BE. "

The problem with looking, for those with binocular vision (the vast majority of people), is the classic thousand yard stare. Target fixation and failing to monitor one's preferred course can wreak havoc on your rhythm through a trail. Where to look and what to look at are key, many things that can be highlighted on a trail area are actually insignificant and can be simply stared through and rolled over, even if you're just plonked on your bike like a sack of spuds.

They are so small in scale that they will have no impact on your desired direction of travel and certainly with even the slightest momentum will not stall (stop) the bike below you. With this in mind bring your focus onto key significant points on the trail where you want to be.

Let your eyes scan ahead plotting your route reading the bigger picture up to the trail horizon (the furthest point you can see at any time) and back again towards your front wheel (but not directly at your wheel) to check if you are still on target.

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More 2017 bikes on test this issue, we have rides from Cube, Ragley, Giant, Pivot and Marin, and we check out SRAM's top-notch brakes and some finely tuned wheels from Stan's.

TRIED AND TESTED

BIKES

Cube Stereo 140 HPA SL 27.5

Giant Trance 1

Marin Nail Trail 7

Pivot Firebird Pro XT/XTR 1X

Propain Spindrift Trail

Ragley Blue Pig

COMPONENTS

SRAM Guide Ultimate Brakes

Stan's NoTubes Arch MK3 Wheelset



WORDS AND PHOTOS THE IMB TEST TEAM
PHOTOS BEN GERRISH

BRAND CUBE MODEL STEREO 140 HPA SL 27.5 YEAR 2017

"TAKES THE BEST OF WHAT IS ON THE MARKET AT THE MOMENT."



At A Glance

The Stereo range is broad and is a name applied to lots of bikes in the Cube range. They all feature the same suspension platform but come in 4 different travel sizes, 120mm, 140mm, 150mm and 160mm. They are available in aluminium or carbon (in some models), 27.5 or 29er and the 150mm version is now with Plus size tyres. This gives more than enough choice, and I challenge a rider not to find a bike they wouldn't like in the Stereo range.

So what do we have here? This is the Stereo 140 HPA SL 27.5 featuring 140mm of travel, an aluminium frame and 27.5-inch wheels. The suspension system as mentioned travels across the range and is a tried and tested four bar design with a chainstay pivot, removing much of the braking input from the system to keep it active. Up front, this is matched with a set of Pikes at 150mm to give a balanced set up all round.

The equipment is a mixture of tried and tested quality kit, with SRAM X1 handling the shifting with an addition of a set of RaceFace Aeffect cranks to finish it off. The braking is again by SRAM and this time in the shape of the reliable Guide Rs.

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TO VISIT THEIR WEBSITE, CLICK HERE



"THE TRANCE FELT LIKE IT WANTED TO GO EVERYWHERE FAST."

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At A Glance

Giant's Trance has been around for a long while now in many different guises but has essentially stayed true to its original design as a versatile trail bike. It has had big wheels and small but is still focused around a mid-travel machine capable of riding all day, taking in both the ups and downs in equal measure.

What we have on test here is the Trance 1, the top model in the range of aluminium Trance range. The frame features the time-proven Maestro suspension platform, delivering 140mm of travel. The system uses two linkages to drive the shock, a main pivot link around the bottom bracket and a rocker link to drive the shock. This system aims to minimise pedal feedback, eliminate braking interference and provide a plush ride.

Keeping the frame up to date are Boost spacing's front and rear, allowing for some extra stiffness in the wheels and making it future compatible. 150mm of travel up front is handled by Fox in the form of their 34 forks, and the rear 140mm is controlled by a Fox Float shock.

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" FAR MORE
EXCITING THAN
A CASUAL
GLANCE WOULD
SUGGEST. "

TO VISIT THEIR
WEBSITE, CLICK HERE



At A Glance

Marin are gradually re-vamping their range of bikes, and this year we see the new Hawkhill, the Pine Mountain, and this, the Nail Trail. Available in 2 models, this is the Nail Trail 7 and sees a few key upgrades over the lower spec 6 including a dropper post, SLX shifting, but most notably a Yari fork to dish out 120mm of RockShox travel.

Both models in the range use Marin's Right Size philosophy, which increases wheel size as the frame size grows. Small sizes get 27.5 wheels, big sizes (up to XXL!) get 29 wheels, and if you're lucky enough to be medium, you get the difficult choice of either size.

As mentioned the most notable component on the Nail Trail is the powerful and reliable Yari Fork, and although the bike only has 120mm, it's great to see a stiff and solid fork to keep the big wheels pointing forwards. The use of SLX for shifting is great, and now with 11speed it gives plenty of gears, but interestingly Marin uses their chainset to push it all around. Another cost cutting measure is the brakes, which are Shimano's Deore brakes,

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BRAND PIVOT MODEL FIREBIRD PRO XT/XTR 1X YEAR 2017

"AN EXQUISITE BIKE, CAPABLE OF THE HARDEST TERRAIN AVAILABLE"



At A Glance

For Pivot, there are two big bikes of the year, the Switchblade, tested recently, and the Firebird seen here. Both obviously share the same genes, but more than that, they represent a step forward in the evolution of Pivot bikes. Boost, refined rear ends, and longer geometry bring them to the forefront of modern mountain bike design as some of the most desirable machines around.

Where the Switchblade is, as the name would suggest a multifaceted trail slicing weapon, the Firebird is an altogether bigger piece of armoury. With 29ers taking up a lot of room in the trail and enduro category, 650b wheels have been looking for more travel and in this case, we have a hefty 170mm front and rear. As usual, this is controlled via a DW link and aims to give plenty of small bump compliance and big travel safety margin while still being good on the pedals. Now that's a tall order!

This is a serious bike, for serious riding, it's taken aspects from the Phoenix downhill bike and packaged them into an all-day pedal machine. With Enduro racetracks getting rougher and tougher,

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TO VISIT THEIR WEBSITE, CLICK HERE



" THIS REALLY IS A BIKE THAT WANTS TO TURN YOUR RIDING UP TO ELEVEN. "

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At A Glance

I still haven't decided what to call bikes like the Spindrift. Propain have a few suggestions including such terms as SuperEnduro, Bike Park Enduro, or even Trail Freeride... Whatever you call them, these bikes are the new wave of long travel bikes with, for want of a better term, pedal-ability.

As suspension has developed, riders have demanded more and more versatility in their bikes, and where once 120mm may have seemed like a lot of travel to pedal up a hill, we now consider 180mm to be 'big'. So is it possible to tame all that suspension into a bike, which can travel both with and against gravity?

Propain think so, and the Spindrift is their biggest bike (except their downhill bike) in the lineup. 180mm travel front and rear delivered by a Rockshox Lyric and a Super Deluxe RC3 Debonair shock give this a lot of capacity. We opted to run an air shock on the 'Trail' model to keep weight down and see what it could really do as a trail bike. The Propain website gives plenty of options for configuration if you are that way inclined.

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"THE BLUE PIG CAN BATTER ITS WAY THROUGH A ROCK GARDEN IF NEEDED!"

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At A Glance

The UK is the home of hardcore hardtails, and Ragley's offering in the form of the Blue Pig stays faithful to that with this beast of a steel hardtail. For those that don't know them, Ragley Bikes are a UK company who specialise in the gnarlier end of the hardtail market, and the Blue Pig sits at the top of their range as the burliest.

Ragley has made some bold claims regarding this bike, suggesting that it's an "All Mountain/Enduro Race friendly bike" and, 'is built for those who want to go faster, jump bigger or play harder'. The sales pitch here is that this is a true do-it-all hardtail, which can take you anywhere and whatever you can throw at it!

With a super slack 64-degree head angle, long top tube, low bottom bracket, short chainstays and 650b wheels they seem to be on the right track to back that up! These numbers are becoming quite common in today's bike geometry, and if you didn't know any better you'd think I was describing a modern full suspension bike! Even if I was, I was describing a full bounce enduro bike; some might still believe that the Ragley's 64-degree head angle could be a touch extreme!

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"THEY MAKE YOU
RIDE BETTER AND
IN MORE
CONTROL."



At A Glance

The Guide range of brakes from SRAM are their most well know stoppers in the trail and enduro world. The current versions offer more power and more features than ever in a sleek package. Other than the 'R' model they are based on the same SwingLink technology, but they come in various levels and features. The base level is the 'R' which uses an older DirectLink system with toolless reach adjustment on the lever. On from there, we see the RS which gains the SwingLink and some better bearings. The RSC goes up a notch to add a contact point adjustment and gets a shiny silver finish, then finally we get to these, the 'Ultimate' which as the name might suggest, are top of the pile. Featuring everything from the lower models plus some weight saving Carbon levers and titanium hardware to make these truly top end brakes.

This all comes at a price, but with the whole range to choose from, there is a brake for most budgets. These are very shiny, super powerful and with all the adjustments required to make even the fussiest decelerator happy.

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WEBSITE, CLCK HERE



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"WELL UP TO THE JOB OF SURVIVING ENDURO LEVELS OF ABUSE."

TO VISIT THEIR WEBSITE, CLICK HERE



At A Glance

Stan's have been doing the tubeless thing for some time now, and their range of products for keeping air in tyres without tubes is well developed and widely used. Their wheelsets have been well received and used throughout mountain biking, from XC to downhill and everything in between, always being ahead of the curve.

We are in a period of rapid change in the world of mountain bike tyres and rims, with new widths, depths and profiles coming at us left right and centre. With the advent of plus sized tyres, and now with the addition of 2.6 coming fast this year, rubber is getting complicated. Add into all this a desire for wider and wider rims; we now have a complex combination of tyre and rim sizes.

When I first spoke to Stan's about a set of wheels I was convinced I needed a set of Flows, as I have used these previously and thought them to be the most robust for my rocky trails and occasional lack of finesse. As always Stan's had been developing the new Mk3 range of their popular wheelsets and had other ideas about what I should be running.

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WORDS & PHOTOS FABIAN GLEITSMANN

PISCO SOURS

One part lemon juice, one part sugar syrup and three parts Pisco. Add an egg white, shake and you get a Pisco Sour, Chile's national drink. It may be incredibly tasty, but not without its side effects, as we learn during our first evening in Santiago.





" THE ROAD IS NOT THE ONLY WAY; THERE'S A FUNICULAR TAKING PEOPLE UP, AS WELL AS A GONDOLA! "

Yesterday, everything was looking entirely different: wearing thick winter coats, we were standing at Munich Airport, trying to convince the lady at the check-in that the costs for bike transport should already be included in our ticket price – without any luck, unfortunately. At least, however, we manage to negotiate for the seats at the emergency exit...

Sixteen hours of flight and a 30°C shift later, we touch down in Santiago, the capital city of Chile. Situated 500m above sea level and within close proximity of the enormous 6000m high peaks of the Andes, Santiago is one of South America's top spots for mountain biking – but for us, it's only the start to a three-week road trip.

With a little Pisco-induced delay, we start our first ride the next morning. Our destination: Cerro San Cristobal, a small bump 300m above downtown Santiago and a popular viewpoint. To make the climb a little easier, an endless road, seemingly without any inclination, leads to the summit. The road is not the only way; there's a funicular taking people up, as well as a gondola! If you don't want to, there's absolutely no need to do any kind of exercise to make it to the summit.

Not surprisingly, the summit is full of tourists, and we quickly hit the trails after a long glance at the impressive mountain panorama. A number of official trails lead the way back down to Santiago, all good fun and well maintained. This was all a good start, but Chile still had much more to offer.



" WE SET UP CAMP RIGHT NEXT TO THE OCEAN, GET THE BIKES READY AND OFF WE GO! "

Bowie's In Space

Meet Bowie: our transport for the next few weeks. Only 30.000 km old, but without all the comforts of a modern car: no central locking, no air conditioning, no radio. But: a cooking area, a bed, and enough space for all our gear. And on the outside: David Bowie. Ziggy Stardust, Rebel Rebel, Heroes – our van shows the greatest hits of David Bowie, and we are looking for the best hits

that Chile has to offer for mountain bikers. 120 km/h is the speed limit on Chile's highways, and it's also the speed limit of Bowie, and so we take our time cruising south. We leave the desert-like area around Santiago behind, driving through hills that make us feel like we're cruising through Tuscany. We continue on through endless forests until we arrive in Valdivia. Not far from here German emigrants started brewing beer 150 years ago, making us feel right at home. The next morning, we move on to our first real biking destination: Corral.

The rain is drizzling as we take the ferry to cross over to the little village where the time has seemingly stood still for years. We set up camp right next to the ocean, get the bikes ready and off we go! Spending most of our time riding in the Alps, a start at sea level is something special. But even more special are the hills, only a few hundred meters high, and with no point of reference as we cycle upwards.

Fortunately, the Enduro World Series kicked off the 2016 season here just a couple of months ago. The result: no shortage of trails, and due to GPS-tracks, those are also easy to find. Relying only on a map. However, there's no chance of discovering those trails.



Following random tire tracks? Fatal. We don't meet any bikers, and overall it's hard to believe that just a couple of months ago, hundreds of racers were on the hunt for seconds. The coastal forest is regaining its territory; trails that are not used and maintained regularly become overgrown instantly.

Rain Plus Forest

After a couple of days on the coast, our trip takes us further south. We get excited by the roughness of the northern Carretera Austral: 100 kilometres of gravel road is just not something that we can find at home. Narrow bridges, deep holes and Chilean pickups that pass us at what feels like supersonic speed make the trip seem endless and we're glad to manoeuvre Bowie over the whole distance without any mechanicals.

" WE GET EXCITED BY THE ROUGHNESS OF THE NORTHERN CARRETERA AUSTRAL "

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Tried and Tested

2017 is looking to be a stellar year for new bikes for all budgets and technologies. Here we have a budget bouncer from Marin, Merida's top end e-bike, the latest Nokeproof Mega, and a keep-it-real hardtail from Commencal. We've also got the excellent Formula 35's on test too!

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" LOCAL BIKERS HAVE BUILT COUNTLESS FANTASTIC TRAILS ON THE FLANKS OF THE VILLARRICA VOLCANO, BUT GOOD LUCK FINDING THEM WITHOUT A GUIDE "

Our attempt at a little bike trip ends quickly, as we discover the definition of "Rainforest": rain plus forest. So much rain that within a minute we're wet to the bones, and such thick forest that we haven't progressed one inch. We're more lucky in Pucon, at least concerning the riding: local bikers have built countless fantastic trails on the flanks of the Villarrica volcano, but good luck finding them without a guide or at least a GPS.

The rain, however, is still on our tails, and we learn one more thing about the weather in Chile: sunshine is an unmistakable sign that it's going to pour like buckets within 15 minutes.

Border Crossing

It's time to cross over to the other side of the Andes; we're heading to Bariloche. After some difficulties getting out of Chile and into Argentina (Which documents do I have to sign? Which stamp do I get where? Am I in the right line? Does anybody understand what I'm saying?), things quickly change.

The rain stops, the forest disappears, and soon we find ourselves in a steppe-like terrain. In winter, Bariloche is one of South America's most popular skiing resorts, in summer it's a well-known destination for hikers and bikers. There are a bunch of official trails, and during a very short two weeks, bikers can even use the lifts for getting to the top.

Naturally, we arrive just a couple of days before those two weeks and need to tackle the climb on our bikes... The trails themselves are in perfect condition.





" THE TRAILS MAKE PERFECT USE OF THE TERRAIN; THERE ARE FUN WOODEN OBSTACLES, THE SOIL IS SOFT AND LOAMY. FANTASTIC! "

However, we don't meet any other riders. During the EWS-race, Bariloche was (in)famous for the deep dust on the trails, and we get our fair share of it. A strange feeling at first, but overall great fun and addictive once we get used to it, as long as you are out in front!

We're impressed by the length of the trails, especially in relation to the limited amount of vert, braking is not required, we just cruise down, make use of the berms and can't get the grin out of our faces. Speaking of the grin on our faces: Argentinean steaks. At first, we couldn't believe it, but what we found on our plates really exceeded all expectations not just in terms of quality, but also quantity. A dream, just not for the vegetarians.

Next stop: San Martin de Los Andes. A spot that we didn't have on our list, but the advice of friends and locals convinced us to make the trip. We're again closer to the Andes, which also shows in the weather: the mountains around us are all hidden in clouds. However, we still cruise across dry and dusty trails. We ride some laps with Maxi, the bike park's manager. Maxi shows us the best lines in his park and is always curious, how the park compares to bike parks in the Alps, how we like it. And yes, we do! Very much! The trails make perfect use of the terrain; there are fun wooden obstacles, the soil is soft and loamy. Fantastic!

Surfing Dust

Back in Chile, even though we're already on our way back to Santiago, there's one thing that we mustn't leave out: Nevados de Chillan. A skiing resort,





Surfing Dust

Back in Chile, even though we're already on our way back to Santiago, there's one thing that we mustn't leave out: Nevados de Chillan. A skiing resort, five hours south of Santiago in the midst of an active volcanic landscape. The lifts are open for bikers in summer, and we see tonnes of riders hitting the trails. Together with a group of bikers from Santiago, we stick to the trails of the Enduro World Series once more and are rewarded with fantastic descents.

" WITH A GROUP OF BIKERS FROM SANTIAGO, WE STICK TO THE TRAILS OF THE ENDURO WORLD SERIES "

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PHOTO TROY LEE DESIGNS

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" IF YOU TRAVEL THE WORLD WITH OPEN EYES, ARE OPEN TO ADVENTURE, YOU'LL SEE: THAT'S ONLY ONE-HALF OF THE STORY. "

Even though not all of these trails can be accessed by lift, they're worth every drop of sweat. We're surfing on the deep black sand, under age-old trees, past hot sulphur springs that make us remember the volcanoes around us. It's a hiking path, but corners, slopes and obstacles just make it the perfect trail for bikes.

After a amazing three weeks, our trip on Bowie has come to an end. Why Chile? There are longer trails, higher mountains, bigger bike parks. But if you travel the world with open eyes, are open to adventure, you'll see: that's only one-half of the story. Because in Chile, everything seems familiar, but still is somehow different: roads are only marked as roads on maps, in reality, they're gravel roads of the worst kind. People speak Spanish, but you don't understand a word. And stress? Nobody's even aware of that, except when the bike races come to town!

LIGHTBOX

SLAPPING TURNS IN THE DUST AND GETTING SIDEWAYS, IS THERE ANYTHING BETTER?
PHOTO FOX HEAD



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

LIGHTBOX



Lightbox

ANTIONE BIZET GETS UP SIDE DOWN AS PART OF THE ROSE 2017 FREERIDE TEAM
PHOTO ROSE

LIGHTBOX

JULIA HOFMANN LOOKING PINNED AND STYLISH AS ALWAYS
PHOTO BARTOSZ WOLINSKI



Lightbox

LIGHTBOX

MYRIAM NICOLE WITH HER EYES ON THE PRIZE.
WHAT WILL THE 2017 SEASON BRING FOR HER?
PHOTO COMMENCAL



Lightbox

LIGHTBOX

NICO VOUILLOZ BRINGS HIS INIMITABLE STYLE TO THE PEDAL-ASSIST PARTY
PHOTO MANU MOLLE/LAPIERRE

Lightbox

LIGHTBOX

GRAUBÜNDEN IN SWITZERLAND IS APPARENTLY THE PLACE TO BE,
A WORLD OF 'ENDLESS TRAILS' FOR ALL MOUNTAIN BIKERS
PHOTO MANFRED STROMBERG



Lightbox

LIGHTBOX

CRANKWORXS ROTORUA WAS OFF THE HOOK, AND THE EVER POPULAR PUMPTACK CHALLENGE WAS A HOTLY CONTESTED RACE THIS YEAR
PHOTO NEIL KERR / ARROWSMITH MEDIA



Lightbox

LIGHTBOX



Lightbox

CRANKWORX WOULDN'T BE WHAT IT IS WITHOUT BIKERS LAUNCHING THEMSELVES INTO ORBIT.
MATT JONES LAYS IT FLAT ON THE SLOPESTYLE COURSE
PHOTO GRAEME MURRAY / RED BULL CONTENT POOL

LIGHTBOX



Lightbox

THIS YEAR'S VALPARAISO CERRO ABAJO LOOKED IMMENSE,
DOWNHILL RACING THROUGH THE STREETS IS SOMETHING ELSE!
PHOTO ALFRED JÜRGEN WESTERMEYER / RED BULL CONTENT POOL

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 BIKE LANE HERO

The Internet is a simple place sometimes. A man singing a rather catchy tune attempts to navigate a bike lane to hilarious effect. I'm sure we can all relate to his problems with sharing trails, fortunately mountain bikers are wise enough to spend their time in more sparsely populated areas!



[CLICK HERE FOR VIDEO](#)

#2 MOUNTAIN BIKE VS FOOTBALL: VOL. 2

It's back again for volume 2, bigger, badder and with more ouch! Watch the heroic footballers take the biggest hits and just laugh it off with a quick shrug whilst the mtbers whinge and whine at the merest hint of a chance to wimp out to the medics... Hang on, that doesn't sound right does it?



[CLICK HERE FOR VIDEO](#)

#3 BIKEPACKING THE SCOTTISH HEBRIDES

Join Barry Godin on a trip into the wild west coast of Scotland on a huge bike packing trip. Expect wildlife, scenery of epic proportions and plenty of chat from our talkative tour guide as he leads us through his fanatatic trip on two wheels.



[CLICK HERE FOR VIDEO](#)

#4 THE PERFECT SEASON: RACHEL ATHERTON

This achievement is so great it cannot be just added to the history books and left for posterity. Let's just remind ourselves that Rachel won every race from the World Cup in 2016 and the World Champs to create the ultimate year.



[CLICK HERE FOR VIDEO](#)

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...

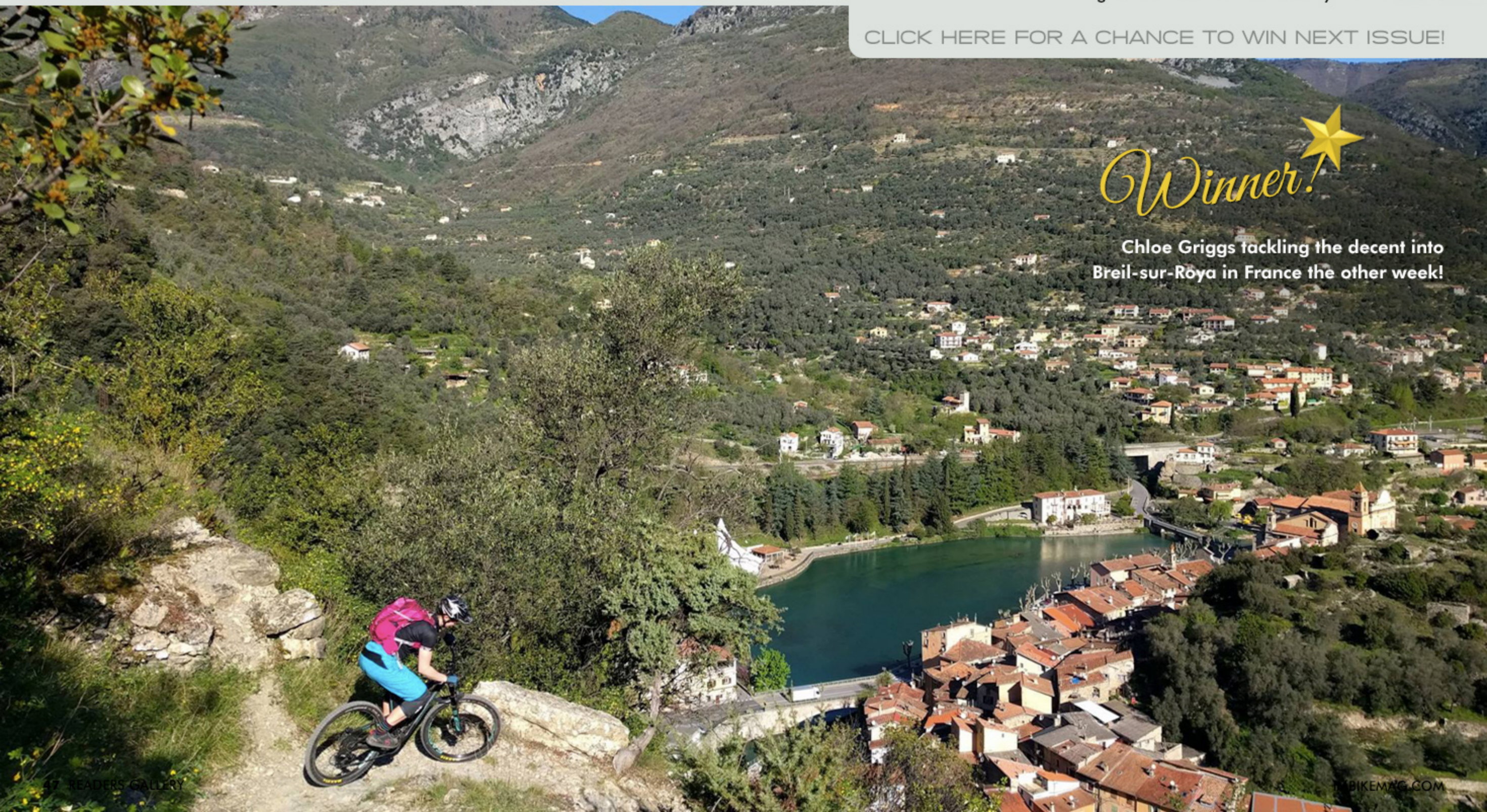
Turn the pages though maybe we made you famous?

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

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

Winner! 

Chloe Griggs tackling the decent into Breil-sur-Roya in France the other week!





▼
Scott Robbins - Railing berms in the sunshine down under!
Apparently this was taken 30min before a rather bad crash on
a kids BMX track! Heal up quick John.

Rachael Rodgers - Always stay close to the guy with the throw bag!
Loving the bell too!



Dan Smith - Winter, a time for riding muddy ruts and dreaming of spring.



Dan Alberg - Enjoying the last of the winters snow as spring gets going in the northern hemisphere.





Callie Leach - It's great to see bikes on top of mountains, exactly where they should be.



Piotr Szwed Szwedowski - Dropping into the steeps, looking calm and controlled. This is how we all wish we looked!

TOMAS SLAVIK RIDING AT THE NEVADOS DE CHILLAN IN CHILE
PHOTO JAN KASL / RED BULL CONTENT POOL

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