

APRIL / MAY 19

WELCOME TO THE FUTURE...

Welcome to issue 58 of the World's Number One Online Mountain Bike Magazine! Spring is here in the Northern hemisphere, and the trails are drying out nicely. This issue we get adventurous and head to the French and Slovenian Alps for some epic journeys through the mountains,

Ewen Turner talks to Darrell Voss, the man behind Naild and team IMB head to New Zealand to compete in The Pioneer. Testing features the new bikes from Cannondale, Cube, Ghost, Greyp, Haibike and Merida as well kit from Hope, Lake, Leatt, SRAM and Box.

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- NAILD IT -

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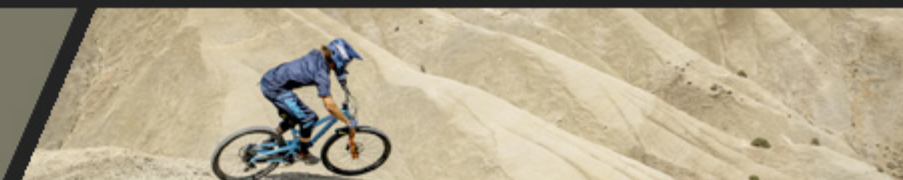
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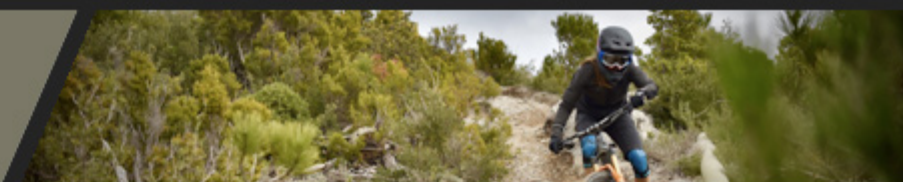
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PUBLISHING EDITOR

Rou Chater
rou@nextelement.co.uk

TECHNIQUE EDITOR

Clive Forth
clive@mtbskills.co.uk

TEST TEAM

testteam@imbikemag.com

FEATURES EDITOR

Ewen Turner
ewen@imbikemag.com

WEB EDITOR

James Swann
james.swann@imbikemag.com

STAFF PHOTOGRAPHERS

Irmo Keizer
Ben Gerrish

DESIGN

Karen Gardner Creative
hello@karengardnercreative.co.uk

ADVERTISING SALES

Mary Booth
mary@imbikemag.com

IT DIRECTOR

Alex Chater
alex@nextelement.co.uk

CONTRIBUTORS

Charley Oldrid, Emily Horridge,
Rachael Walker, Roo Fowler,
Peg Leyland, Darrell Voss,
Matt Cipes, Pete Archer.

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ADAM BRAYTON PICKING A LINE OUT OF NOWHERE!
PHOTO LAURENCE CROSSMAN-EMMS

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RIDER BRENDAN HOWEY
PHOTO JB LIAUTARD

ISSUE 58 I'm Back – Almost!

If you follow these editorials and my musings on the MTB scene, then you'll only be too away that on the 8th of August last year I had a bit of a bike crash in Les Arcs. It was the last time I swung a leg over a bike, which nearly eight months on, seems kinda crazy! I don't think I've ever had that long off a bike in my life! At first, the prognosis wasn't good; "maybe you will have to get used to it" were the words of the seemingly flapped French surgeon when surveying the damage. It's always reassuring to hear "yeah we can fix that no problem" in these situations, and sadly that wasn't the case with me.

Anyway, two long months of sitting with my leg in the air and moving only to go to the bathroom and I was given the all clear to start learning to walk again. Fast forward a few more months, and I was given the all clear to start riding a push bike again, albeit on the road to reduce the risk of falling off.

That first ride on a bike after six months of not feeling the wind on my face was incredible. A big thanks to Carola at Cube who helped with a hybrid bike for me to whizz around on. As John F Kennedy once said, "nothing compares to the simple pleasure of a bike ride." You can't argue with that and the endorphins that ran through my brain while I was spinning pedals after so long away felt incredible.

A week later against the orders of my physio, "whatever you do don't fall off", I was rolling rubber in Croatia at the Grayp G6 launch. Aside from the first five minutes on the rough stuff, which felt terrifying, the next five hours in the saddle were incredible. I'm sure I was slow, but I felt fast, any fear I thought I might have wasn't there and it was a great experience.

A day later my body reminded me it wasn't ready yet and the metalwork in my leg treated me to three days of severe pain. Back to the hybrid bike, it was for me! I've not had my first proper MTB ride yet, but I can sense it is near, and I have a feeling it will deliver on so many levels.

Aren't we lucky to be part of this marvellous group of people who ride mountain bikes?

Rou Chater
Publishing Editor



ROU'S NEW RIDE,
THE CUBE HYDE RACE



5 HOURS OF MTB AND THE
ANKLE WASN'T HAPPY!

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PHOTO CLAUS WACHSMANN

EDITORIAL

— FROM — BEGIN NING — TO — END LESS

— Whistler, Canada —



P: Robin O'Neill



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 **WHISTLER**
CANADA

When I was invited out to Italy a few years back to a Marin bike launch, I was expecting a pretty standard event, with a pretty standard bike. Mountain bikes these days sometimes feel like they are on a convergence course, as they all start to look the same, pivots gradually moving into more and more familiar positions and quirky designs fall by the wayside. Identifying a bike from its silhouette becomes harder and harder, as the similarities grow. Perhaps mountain bike design is done and dusted, completed, and we can put our feet up and relax, this is as good as it gets?



NAILED IT





PHOTO TRISTAN TINN

"IT WAS DIFFERENT AND STILL IS DIFFERENT. NOT JUST IN THE LOOK OF THE DESIGN, BUT WHAT IT PROMISED TO DO."

What emerged from Marin, and at around the same time Polygon was something new. Very new. It was different and still is different. Not just in the look of the design, but what it promised to do. We were told we could have our travel and pedal it too. Long travel bikes, with exceptional pedalling characteristics with no switches or levers.

With these bikes having being raced at World Cups, the EWS, launched from cliffs at Rampage and now with another new bike just launched from Marin, has NailD's R3act 2 Play (yeah it's a mouthful) system finally arrived?

The R3act2Play platform is unique, both in the way it looks and the way it functions. It works with an elevated mono-stay and looks essentially like a single pivot bike at first glance. What is different is that attached to the main pivot is a stanchion, or slider, or strut, (call it what you will), which rotates and

allows the swing arm to move in a very specific way, sliding along the stanchion as the shock compresses. There are then two other linkages, which drive the shock, and these look more conventional and familiar. The aim of all this is to control the kinematics of the rear suspension with the mechanics of the system and not rely on shock damping as much.

The system promises to balance out the rider forces and provide a 'ground tracing' bike that will allow for efficient pedalling, maximum traction and a huge depth of supportive travel. It's a lot to promise, and in a world where mountain bike suspension systems seem to be 'worked out', it's a lot for consumers to take in.



SHUTTLE

GO FURTHER, RIDE HARDER.

" DESPITE BEING UNMISSABLE WITH HIS EXTREMELY TALL FRAME, HE'S NOT ONE TO SHOUT ABOUT HIMSELF OR HIS ACHIEVEMENTS FROM THE ROOFTOPS. "

Couple that with the, shall we say 'striking' looks; it has certainly made an entrance.

So the story starts with Darrell Voss, the man behind what is now Naild, but the idea stems from long before that. Despite being unmissable with his extremely tall frame, he's not one to shout about himself or his achievements from the rooftops. Despite having his fingerprints on many aspects of modern mountain bike and suspension design, his name is relatively unknown by consumers.

With a background in Engineering and business, he grew up in the bike industry, first in bike shops and then pretty early on started working for brands. 'My first job through high school was with Koolstop, it was an afterschool job, and I made the moulds for the pad and rebuilt equipment and product development'.

Darrell soon ended up working with Gary Klien, and developing some of their most iconic bikes of that era and working on hydroforming tubes and their shaping. Gary asked him to come and work for him and take over the engineering department, as he needed a bike-focused engineer, so Voss joined late 1989, but they had been working together since 1984. That move to work for Klien got him into the bike business 'properly', but still staying behind the scenes explaining, 'I just haven't been a figure out in front of everybody's nose. I'm not a guy to push to the stage front and say I've arrived'.



PHOTO BEN WINDER



" IT WAS A TIME WHEN SUSPENSION BIKES WERE ARRIVING AND STARTING TO PROVE THEMSELVES TO BE VIABLE. "

Changes in the bike world led to Trek buying Klein, and although Darrell stayed on for a bit, he left wanting to stay on the product evolution side of the industry. A series of projects and involvements throughout the bike world has been the progression since. Then, in 1999, he started working for Suntour and now sits on their product steering committee, a relationship that continues to this day and sits alongside and separate from his other projects, most notably Naild.

So when I ask when the idea for R3act-2-Play first came about he is very clear, 'that would be in 1991'. This was the point at which Voss realised he was unhappy with the state of suspension, 'shock tech was horrible, spring curves were limited' he tells me, and it was obviously a hard world to be making suspension bikes. It was a time when suspension bikes were arriving and starting to prove themselves to be viable.

At this time Darrell's thoughts turned to damping, and discussions with certain physicists from other industries led to some important conclusions, that 'damping is energy loss' and 'should be used for control but not for the performance side'. This seed was planted in 1993 July he remembers, 'I was going; what the hell does that mean? And why are we doing what we are doing as an industry?' Things were getting complicated, and at the time the technology was not the greatest with 'shocks that would leak oil with the best seals and tolerances you could get at the time'.



PHOTO TRISTAN TINN



'We are spoilt today' Darrell explains, 'riders on our system don't have to touch anything, maybe change the pressure to slightly adjust the sag, that would be unfathomable back then.'

The real concept of Naild was born in 2002. 'I wasn't under pressure at that point, the bikes weren't awesome back then, and the construction wasn't there'. This wasn't the time for prototypes, 'I didn't care about the construction method, I cared about energy in and energy out'. I'm left imagining wild scribbling on a blackboard and a shout of Eureka, and it turns out that wasn't far from the truth, 'yeah there was some of that for sure, this stuff was different, and still is different, people still don't know what we are doing differently today, they think its hocus pocus'.

**" I DIDN'T CARE
ABOUT THE
CONSTRUCTION
METHOD, I CARED
ABOUT ENERGY IN
AND ENERGY OUT "**

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PHOTO ROO FOWLER

"THE BIKE STAYS HIGHER IN ITS TRAVEL UNDER ACCELERATION YET STILL ALLOWS THE SUSPENSION TO MOVE UNDERNEATH AND 'TRACE THE GROUND'"

The prototypes did finally get built, but he 'didn't want to build bikes' and was looking for the right partnership to come along. In 2011 he started thinking about making a prototype again for the first time since 2002. There were obvious barriers to this, mainly in costs and for Darrel he hadn't found a brand he wanted to work with up to that point.

Working with Marin, Darrell looked into producing prototypes and got one out for a test with the team. 'We went out riding on the first prototype, with the test team including some big names who know about pedalling and pushing bikes hard. The giggle factor kicked in, and although the prototype weighted 45lbs everyone was fighting over the test bike to pedal back up the hill, it was more efficient than all the other bikes'.

Describing how the system works apparently is best done with some complex physics, but my brain certainly won't manage that.

Darrell describes it thus, 'we are stabilising the acceleration of mass, so $f=ma$, other bikes collapse, ours doesn't collapse there is a problem in using anti-squat values to reference what our bikes do. The high anti-squat values on the Naild system don't make the bike lockout (as would be the case with high anti-squat on a traditional system), but allow the bike to trace the ground. Our system doesn't lock out when you're tracing the ground but does provide support so that the front and rear frame member doesn't collapse under the mass acceleration'. This means the bike stays higher in its travel under acceleration yet still allows the suspension to move underneath and 'trace the ground'.

" THE QUEST HERE IS TO ACHIEVE EVERYTHING, TO HAVE YOUR CAKE AND EAT IT, AND IF THERE ARE 10 BOXES TO TICK, DARRELL WANTS TO TICK ALL 10 "

This is different from the classic ideas of suspension where Darrell explains, 'there are two ways to support the system, either with high anti-squat or flipping a switch'. This can have a knock-on effect, such as losing traction, tyres spinning and destabilise the rider's mass.

For me, there is a strange, but reassuring familiarity with all the Naild bikes I've ridden. Set the sag, hop on and go, hit the pedals hard and the power comes, pedal up something steep, loose, slippery, and the wheel tracks the ground while you do your worst on the pedals. Firm from the top down, supple from the bottom up. It really seems like the best of both worlds, and it feels strange but good strange.

The quest here is to achieve everything, to have your cake and eat it, and if there are 10 boxes to tick, Darrell wants to tick all 10, and more. The system is way beyond the drawing board and it's out there getting proven, as Voss reminded me 'Kurt Sorge does the biggest jump rampage has probably ever seen, on this technology', that's a serious bit of testing.

Matt Cipes is the guy at Marin tasked with bringing Naild technology to their bikes. When he started at Marin the Wolf Ridge was underway, and he saw it through to the finish, but the latest version, the Mount Vision has far more of his fingerprints all over it. 'I started with Marin in June 2015, and they were already three-quarters of the way through the Wolf Ridge, a lot of it was good to go, so just finishing the finer details and taking the last step', 'The Mount Vision is the sharpening of the tool'.



DARRELL VOSS AND MATT VANENKEVORT DISCUSSING THE FINER POINTS OF SUSPENSION PHYSICS
PHOTO BEN WINDER



Cynically, I wonder if he's just paid to make it work, would he be working with this system if he could choose anything? The answer is unequivocal, 'absolutely, everyone is looking for an edge, and with the Naild system it truly does bring a unique perspective and a more advanced way of thinking about how a bike system works and in that way is groundbreaking and I would still be working with it in'. Matt is clearly fully committed to this new way of doing things; 'I talk now about standard suspension system and the R3act system, it has different tuning and different kinematics, you can't talk about it in the same way as it's not limited by the same fundamental principles'.

**" IT TRULY DOES
BRING A UNIQUE
PERSPECTIVE AND
A MORE ADVANCED
WAY OF THINKING "**



PHOTOGRAPHER: RO FOWLER • RIDER: VERONIQUE SANDLER

RULE THE RIDE



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" 'IT'S MORE EFFICIENT THAN A HARDTAIL WITH ALL THE BENEFITS OF SUSPENSION', WHICH HAS TO BE A GOOD THING. "

So putting a new suspension system into a frame has to be pretty challenging, Matt's job is to, work with Darrell the 'Mad scientist/genius' and as he puts it and 'take the magic and distil it down into a product that people want and will be excited about'. What about the look? How much can a designer do with the R3act system? Apparently, it's all open for discussion, but the elevated chainstay remains the same. 'Ultimately we have control over the front triangle and the look as we do on any bike, the trick is to get the positioning and the strengths and function with the different pivot positions and the geometry we are looking for'.

There are reasons for everything, as you might expect, with Matt telling me 'the large downtube is for strength and comes down further than most for the water bottle. The belly is forward and has the overhanging bottom bracket as there is a nice carbon beam down the centre for extra strength and then the moto skid plate on the front to protect it. We feel we've done a good job with this bike, at least it doesn't look like a Session'.

It's clear Matt loves these bikes and the benefits they bring; 'I think the main benefit is that we're here to ride bikes not flip switches' explaining that the simplicity of the system allows for easy setup and no need to adjust out on the trails. Further to this, he adds, 'it's more efficient than a hardtail with all the benefits of suspension', which has to be a good thing.



PHOTO ROO FOWLER
IMBIKEMAG.COM



PHOTO TRISTAN TINN

"THE MORE WE EMBRACE IT WITH CURIOSITY AND POSITIVE INTENT, THEN WE STAND THE BEST CHANCE OF MOVING THINGS FORWARD."

I ask Matt about Polygon, and there has been plenty of chatter in the internet-world about them using the same system and the similarities. Taking this topic further I ask Matt how much contact they have with one another 'well, no more than anyone else. Take VPP, would you say Intense and Santa Cruz are the same thing? Well no. What is important, he tells me is that 'brands dictate to Naild what they want,

not the other way round.'

So what's next? Is this a flash in the pan or are we going to see more? 'Yeah absolutely' is the response from Matt, but will there be a trickle down to lower level bikes? 'Definitely something we're pushing, but it has its challenges, and we're looking at lots of different things'.

And what of shorter travel bikes? Matt again is pretty excited, 'pedal efficiency benefits all bikes, regardless of suspension travel, imagine racing on a 120mm bike against those on a 100mm but being more efficient, that's pretty interesting, but that's not to say we're gonna go there.'

Darrell's philosophy is to 'build a better bike at the best price' and poses the question that 'shouldn't we be seeking how to we get people down faster, safer and with more fun?' and this is the essence of what he is trying to achieve, creating suspension technology aimed at making life better for every rider.

There was a time when URT suspension was the best we could do, but things have moved on, and that always come with change. I love technology, progression and change, and the more we embrace it with curiosity and positive intent, then we stand the best chance of moving things forward. We've learnt to understand what we have, but perhaps not question what could be, or what should be. Voss is happy to ask these questions, and what's more, deliver on it...



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DAKINE

WORDS PEG LEYLAND
PHOTOS TIM BARDSLEY SMITH - WWW.TBSPHOTOGRAPHY.COM.AU

Peg Leyland and Kath Kelly take on the daunting XC race down under known as The Pioneer a hugely gruelling six-day stage race that covers 424km with a mere 15,124m of climbing!

THE PIONEER



"THE NEW COURSE FEATURES A LOT MORE SINGLE TRACK THAN THE ORIGINAL, AND IT CERTAINLY REWARDS SKILL AS WELL AS FITNESS."

In terms of tempting mountain bikers to visit, New Zealand really has its bases covered. From the single track mecca of Rotorua (not to mention Nelson, Queenstown, Wellington, Christchurch...) to the great rides dotted all over the place; the Tour Aotearoa bike-packing route from top to bottom springs to mind, not to mention Crankworx – what more could you want? Well, the mountain bikers' smorgasbord at the bottom of the globe now includes a cross country stage race to rival the best in the world. The Pioneer takes place in the magnificent Southern Alps and covers 424km and a massive 15,124m of climbing over 6 days.

Kath Kelly and I teamed up to race in the masters' women's category as Team IMB. We both raced the first Pioneer in 2016 and were tempted back by the new course. The original started with a prologue in Christchurch, followed by a point to point route from Geraldine to Queenstown. The logistics have been simplified, and riders now start and finish in Queenstown, and there are just two race villages in Alexandra and Bannockburn. The new course features a lot more single track than the original, and it certainly rewards skill as well as fitness.

In the lead up to the race we spent a bit of time in Central Otago, and there was still a worrying amount of snow on the tops. In September, at the same altitude as the highest points on the course,





RUDE ROCK – FLOWY AS BRO!

"THOUGHTS OF SLOGGING THROUGH MUD, WRECKED GEAR AND MISERABLE CAMPSITES WERE HARD TO SUPPRESS"

we were able to ride over the top of a 5-bar gate submerged in snow. A week before the race, the Queenstown long-range weather forecast showed a full-house of rain icons for the first 4 days of the event. Thoughts of slogging through mud, wrecked gear and miserable campsites were hard to suppress, and an impending sense of doom gathered, reinforced by images appearing on social

media feeds of Coronet Peak base station, the start of the prologue, with a foot of snow on the picnic tables. However, as Kath likes to point out, in Central even when it rains it shines. As Prologue day dawned, most of the snow had melted, and things weren't nearly as bad as they might have been, though the start line was definitely inside a cloud. Snow damage to the upper tracks meant that the course was modified, but the new course retained similar stats to the original with 21km and nearly 1000m climbing.

A downhill start on the famously flowy Rude

Rock track took riders out of the clouds and swooping along the ridgeline. The challenge of negotiating the mudslides on Skippers Pack Track was increased by picking our way around struggling roadies*. We made it unscathed, if mud-coated, to the beautiful climb out of Skippers Canyon. Time for the lungs to recover on Zoot Track, before the climb back to the Coronet Peak base station.

*For the purposes of this article, "roadies" refers to anyone who is faster than us on non-technical sections, particularly climbing, and slower than us on technical sections, particularly descending. I hope it is safe to mention this in the present company!



I wasn't feeling 100%, with a niggling sore throat and a flu-ey feeling. Despite preloading on anti-inflammatories, the legs just didn't have much for the climbs, and I chugged uphill like a big slow diesel engine with an empty tank. Inevitably with pairs racing, there are days and even parts of days, when one person feels good and the other one struggles. Managing that discrepancy is crucial to success in this race format where teammates must stay within 2 minutes of each other.

Suffice to say, we discovered that we had plenty more to learn about teamwork by the end of the prologue! Racing with your life partner has numerous benefits, especially the adventures we have had being able to train together. On the downside, it is too easy to tell your partner where to go when the going gets tough.

"I CHUGGED UPHILL LIKE A BIG SLOW DIESEL ENGINE WITH AN EMPTY TANK"

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" THE MOONLIGHT TRACK TOOK NO PRISONERS WITH A SHEER DROP HUNDREDS OF METRES INTO THE RIVER BELOW FOR ANYONE WHO VENTURED TO THE RIGHT OF THE TRAIL."

Anyway, after a somewhat rocky start, we managed to sort ourselves out, and made it to the start line for Stage 1 on speaking terms!

After the prologue, we were the 5th placed female team, 1st masters women, and had earned ourselves a place in the second start wave.

Trying to get a good night's sleep before the first "proper" stage was thwarted when I woke from a gear-paranoia nightmare at 1am, worried that I had forgotten to change my everyday Ardent tyres to Ardent Race tyres and therefore wouldn't be able to keep up on the fast Queenstown trail bunch ride that awaited us the next morning. Kath managed to settle me down with a plan to get them changed the following afternoon, though in the light of day my paranoia (and my sore throat) had disappeared, and I took comfort in the decreased likelihood of a side-wall slash while I was hooning down the rocky descents.

Stage 1 was a 69km loop starting and finishing in Queenstown. After a fast (though not so fast that my Ardents were a burden) start on the Queenstown trails, the Moonlight Track took no prisoners with a sheer drop hundreds of metres into the river below for anyone who ventured to the right of the trail. Legend has it that one rider took a tumble and lost his bike, which had to be retrieved by abseilers. A long but lucky walk home for him!

THE CLIMB OUT OF SKIPPERS CANYON. BRUTAL AND IMPRESSIVE.

" THE WIDE BERMS AND TABLE-TOPS OF THUNDER GOAT, USUALLY ACCESSED BY GONDOLA, WERE ALL THE MORE FUN HAVING BEEN SO WELL-EARNED. "

In typical Pioneer style, the backdrops were impressive enough to distract from the climbs. We circumnavigated Queenstown Hill and Ben Lomond, passing along the shores of Moke Lake and Lake Dispute (still managing to stay friends), to be rewarded with a final helping of single track. The wide berms and table-tops of Thunder Goat, usually accessed by gondola, were all the more fun having been so well-earned.

After the morning's racing, riders, bikes and enormous kit bags were transported to the race village in Alexandra. Being part-local, we used our own transport and stayed with friends instead of risking a deflated airbed. Some might call this cheating, but troubled consciences didn't seem to interrupt our sleep.

After a slight hiccup which found the Masters Women's category AWOL at the Prologue prize-giving, the organisers found out that hell hath no fury like 40+ women scorned, and if they were going to advertise a master's women's category, then they had better have one. Our division was reinstated, and we earned a pair of leaders' jerseys, simplifying kit decisions for the following morning.

Stage 2 was the Queen Stage, being the longest in distance at 101km, though later stages were anticipated to be tougher in terms of climbing. We woke to a perfect Central Otago day and slapped on sunscreen under our arm warmers.





The course started on the world-famous Otago Rail Trail, the perfect warm-up for a loop of rocky Alexandra single track, allowing us to pass some roadies (at least until the time trial up the Roxburgh Gorge). We gained ground again as the tracks became more technical on Flat Top Hill, and Kath tried to coach a rider down a steep rocky chute until her patience ran out, "It's totally rideable, heels down...ok, get out of the way now!". Spectacular backdrops, the smell of thyme, and fun techy rocky single track – we were loving it!

We kept up a steady pace for the first half of the stage and found ourselves third women's team. Seventy kilometres took us to the bottom of a 7km climb with a very steep section at the top. As we started climbing, we could see our good friends Erin Greene and Hannah Miller (Team Madison NZ, third-placed open women) nipping at our heels and so the pressure was on to try and beat them to the finish line.

"SPECTACULAR BACKDROPS, THE SMELL OF THYME, AND FUN TECHY ROCKY SINGLE TRACK – WE WERE LOVING IT!"

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" I USED ALL OF THE CRAMP REMEDY THAT I WAS TRIALLING, WHICH SEEMED TO WORK AT LEAST IN THE SHORT-TERM "

We just managed to hold them off through the climb, a fun descent down the Clyde enduro track, a time trial along the road and rail trail and more single track to finish. In the process, I used all of the cramp remedy that I was trialling, which seemed to work at least in the short-term, though the smell convinced me that is a very expensive way to buy vinegar. Next time, I might grab some sachets from McDonald's.

Stage 3, was Hump Day taking us over halfway through the race. The course had been modified due to an excess of water in the Fraser dam, and we started with a 12km warm up along the Clyde River Trail back to the bottom of the descent of the previous day, where we were directed up the adjacent 4WD track. One of the signs of encouragement on the side of the track had an inflated full-arm plastic glove bobbing above it. We had no doubt this one was for us, a horse vet and an artificial insemination technician! We continued over the Cairnmuir Range

towards Bannockburn old-school cross-country style with big grunty climbs on gravel and farm tracks. In one very steep rough section that had been "built" to connect two farm tracks, one of Kath's strengths as a teammate became clear. She is afflicted by "queue blindness" which means she can walk straight to the front of a queue utterly oblivious to its existence, totally incomprehensible to my English sensibilities. This gained us a few places when we arrived at a traffic jam of people walking, and somehow Kath managed to skirt past them all, and I just had to tuck in behind, mindful of the 2-minute rule and muttering embarrassed apologies like a true Pom.

" DESPITE HISTORICAL DISTRACTIONS, THE CLIMB SEEMED ENDLESS, AND THE PROMISED AID STATION TOOK FOREVER TO ARRIVE. "

The relief of being over halfway through the race was tempered by the expectation that Stage 4 was likely to be the hardest day with 3563m of climbing in 70km. An atmosphere of apprehension pervaded the prize-giving that night, and riders were even more keen than usual to get a nice early night.

The following morning we were relieved that the weather didn't warrant mandatory extra gear, less to carry up the enormous number of metres we were expecting to climb. The bunch start was a lot more subdued than normal, people seemed to be trying not to burn matches as we set off back the way we had come the previous day for the first part of the stage, experiencing yesterday's descents as climbs and vice versa.

After 25kms, we reached the bottom of the Carricktown climb, from 200m above sea level to over 1200m, a solid hour and a half climbing for us. At the peak of the gold rush in the 1860s, there were dozens of mines in the Carrick Range. A fortuitous look back towards the valley revealed a huge waterwheel that had powered the stamper battery to crush quartz back in the gold rush days. Despite historical distractions, the climb seemed endless, and the promised aid station took forever to arrive.

Although the profile stickers on our handlebars still showed another major climb up Mount Difficulty, it was gradually becoming apparent that there was a mismatch between the total ascent on our Garmins and the advertised elevation gain for the stage.



We couldn't believe our luck and kept looking for the missing climb as we shot down a steep grassy descent in a fraction of the time it had taken to get up there, brake pads smoking. The final elevation gain for the day was about 1000m less than anticipated, but strangely, no-one seemed to be complaining, it was as if mentioning the discrepancy might mean we would be sent back out to correct it.

The final day kicked off with a short downhill road section which funnelled into a singletrack pinch, a recipe for a pile up if ever there was one! We used our magic Leader Jerseys to full advantage to start at the front of the bunch and avoid the carnage. The Kawarau River Track was fun while it lasted, but we soon found ourselves on the slopes of Mount Michael, the biggest climb of the race with over a kilometre of vertical gain in 12 kilometres.

"WE USED OUR
MAGIC LEADER
JERSEYS TO
FULL ADVANTAGE
TO START AT
THE FRONT OF THE
BUNCH AND AVOID
THE CARNAGE"



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" EVERY LAST CALORIE WAS SPENT BY THE TIME WE REACHED THE NEUTRAL ZONE OF THE JET BOAT RIDE ACROSS THE KAWARAU RIVER. "

It was like climbing into the heavens as we rode through the clouds to the misty tor-scattered tussock landscape of the tops.

The atmosphere was surreal (or I was hypoglycaemic), and it felt almost as if we were looking down on the snow-capped Remarkables in the distance. After traversing a few bogs, and gaining on some roadies in the process, the arms got a good workout on the sink-hole riddled descent high above the Roaring Meg River. At times it felt as though the course had been designed by walking along the Central Otago Pinot Noir shelf at the local supermarket.

Another serving of punchy pinch climbs made sure that every last calorie was spent by the time we reached the neutral zone of the jet boat ride across the Kawarau River. For some reason, I had anticipated a longer boat trip and had just settled myself down for a mid-ride siesta when we pulled up at the opposite bank. We scrambled up it and onto the Queenstown trail, now definitely on the home straight.

The clouds had well and truly burnt off, and we had run out of water, having failed to do the smart thing and fill up at the river. We worked with one of the mixed teams and made it to the final aid station to replenish our fluids, fuel and senses of humour enough to keep the legs turning for the last few kilometres back along the trail we had ridden at the start of Stage 1. We kept ticking past ever more familiar landmarks until we found ourselves in the finishing chute, joining hands to cross the line.

MOUNT DIFFICULTY, THE FINAL CLIMB OF STAGE 5, LOOMING IN THE DISTANCE.





" I AM NOT THE ONLY ONE THAT RELIES ON HAVING A GOAL TO AIM TOWARDS TO KEEP ME SANE, AND TALK SOON TURNED TO WHAT NEW CHALLENGES LAY AHEAD "

We mingled around the finish for a while, the relief and sense of achievement mixed with a little disappointment that it was all over, and the dawning feeling that all those things that I had been putting off until "after The Pioneer" would have to be dealt with soon. Judging by the post-race conversation, I am not the only one that relies on having a goal to aim towards to keep me sane, and talk soon turned to what new challenges lay ahead.

If you are looking for your next big goal, The Pioneer could well be it: seriously tough, enough challenging technical riding to keep things interesting, a well-run professional event, all set within the massive and impressive landscapes of Otago. You could do worse!



WORDS RACHAEL WALKER PHOTOS ROO FOWLER

TRAIL GUIDE

ALPS TO SEA - SLOVENIA

It's 12 years since my good friend Jonny invited me to join him on a trip down to Slovenia, Jonny had visited with his father back in 2006 and bought an old house in Luce, a small sleepy village around 10 miles off the border of Austria. Jonny returned from his 2006 trip describing Slovenia as "epic" and the mountain biking and snowboarding opportunities as "endless" and asked would I like to go down and help him renovate the house. Ever the one for an adventure I didn't hesitate, so January 2007 we loaded up and started the long drive down to the Balkans. The winter months passed with us doing one part renovations to nine parts snowboarding and exploring; we spent hours climbing mountains and getting lost, and boarding at every opportunity.



The snow finally melted, the anticipation to ride was high. The ski resorts turned into bike parks. As pure downhill kids back then, first up on our hit list was the infamous Maribor Pohorje bike park. Home to one of the most popular downhill tracks on the World Cup circuit. We rode park day after day, shuttled old disused walkers paths and soon discovered a very healthy and strong mountain bike scene. As we met and talked to more riders, it was apparent Slovenia was littered in both man-made and natural tracks, the opportunities to ride were indeed endless.

In the years since 2007, Jonny remained in Slovenia discovering that Slovenia offers diversity in abundance. From the steep and technical tracks in the Alps bordering Austria, moving south to the more roaming terrain which surrounds the capital city Ljubljana, to the loose and rocky hills in the more Mediterranean southern area of Slovenia bordering Italy and Croatia. In 2012 the doors to Ride Slovenia were opened. With his vast knowledge, Jonny started guiding the surrounding trails but quickly thought of piecing together trails from the border of Austria through to Ljubljana and on to the coast. With a population of just over 2 million, Slovenia is pretty small. It's possible to drive from the north of the country to the south in only a few hours, but If you can drive it, why not ride it! Hence the Ride Slovenia Alps to Sea trips was born.

Over the years, I've moved from downhill racing to adventure stage racing to pure adventures. Many of these trips have been shared with fellow adventurer, mountain guide and great friend Julia Hobson.



" SLOVENIA WAS LITTERED IN BOTH
MAN-MADE AND NATURAL TRACKS.
THE OPPORTUNITIES TO RIDE WERE
INDEED ENDLESS "



When the opportunity arose to head to Slovenia with Julia to ride Alps to Sea, there was no doubt, we had to make it happen.

Day 1 of the Alps to Sea and we started in Koroska, in the Savinja Valley region of Slovenia just next to the Austrian border. A few may have heard of the area after the Enduro World Series stopped off here for round 4 of the 2018 series. It's one of the higher, more alpine regions of Slovenia offering steep, technical trails in the dense pine forests. This area is famous for mining and as a result of its past has countless numbers of mining paths which are hundreds of years old. These old paths conveniently now make great mountain biking trails. The beauty of the Alps to Sea trip is that it can be tailored to each specific group. As a group we opted for loam with a bit of tech and not a crazy amount of climbing, we really wanted to maximise the descents.

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STEEP,
TECHNICAL
TRAILS IN
THE DENSE
PINE
FORESTS "

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" SOME TRAILS WERE TAKING YOU RIGHT DOWN TO THE RIVER'S EDGE, WHILE OTHERS TWIST AND WORK THEIR WAY THROUGH THE WOODS. "

As our shuttle dropped us off at the start of the first trail that sense of excitement built. At over 1500m in height, the air crisp and cold, the sky a bright strong blue, we stood taking in the first glimpse of what was around us. Peak after peak in one direction, thick forests beaming with incredible crazy autumnal colours in the other.

Julia and I had opted for Juliana Roubion bikes. With 150mm of travel, it seemed like the perfect choice for the terrain we hoped to be riding over the next five days. As we lined up at the trailhead, Jonny gave us a little brief of the trails ahead. Half listening and half still gaping at the colours, all I heard was "steep", "tech", "could be slippery". Julia and I gave each other

a nervous look. Perhaps it's a girl thing, but despite the fact we are both good technical riders and capable of riding pretty much most things well, apart from 50ft gap jumps, we both always have that doubt and nerves about what lies ahead, "can we ride it", "how hard is it going to be", "you go first", "no you go first", then we set off, start shredding and smiling and the nerves are soon forgotten. That was the exact script in this case.

We dropped in, trying to make our way through the waves of leaves they seemed to be spraying as they carved the long flowing corners leading us further into the multi-coloured forest. The ground was covered with a sea of oranges, reds and yellows

making it hard to see the trail, but also adding to the excitement that you had no idea of the terrain or grip underneath your wheels. The flowy trail turned into a walker's path and soon increased in gradient. Before we knew it, we were into steep switchbacks with swarms of roots pulling your eye into the corner instead of out of it. After years of guiding in the French Alps, Julia is somewhat a maestro on the switchbacks, she had the lines dialled through the tight, exposed testing sections. Time to breathe for a second then, before the terrain changed again! We landed ourselves into a high-speed gully with little drop offs and natural wall rides to pop off along the way, it was too much fun.



We regrouped at the bottom of the trail, all out of breath, all a little gob-smacked by what we'd just ridden. My experiences of Slovenia have always been filled with surprises, surprises at what this tiny hidden country offers. That trail on day one took us the best part of 40 minutes to descend and set the tone for everything we would ride and experience over the next five days; diversity. We ended the day traversing a dramatic ridgeline trail dropping over 1000m of vertical descent in what took us around 30mins to pick our way down. The trail offered little windows out to the sun setting behind the distant mountain layers. Arriving at the van in darkness and ready for a few well-earned beers, there was no doubt it was a mind-blowing start to the trip.

" THERE WAS
NO DOUBT IT
WAS A MIND-
BLOWING
START TO
THE TRIP "

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" THAT MOMENTARY UNCOMFORTABLENESS
IS ALWAYS WORTH IT WHEN GOLDEN RAYS
LIGHT UP THE MOUNTAINS "

Day 2 would take us slightly south out of the alpine region and into the open mountains above the capital city, Ljubljana. We all voted for a sunrise mission, and as the 4.30am alarm went off, it soon became a race against the sun. By 6am we'd beaten the sun to the top of the plain, although it did mean we had to seek shelter from the sub-zero conditions while waiting for it to appear. In these moments when the feeling in your hands and feet is disappearing, it doesn't seem such a good idea. However, the feeling will come back, and that momentary uncomfortableness is always worth it when golden rays light up the mountains, and you descend with a smugness knowing everyone is still in bed, and you're already shredding and have a full day of it ahead.

In the space of less than 12 hours, we'd moved from loamy alpine forests to wide open plains with rocky traversing trails spiralling off in all directions. We spent the rest of the day on a roller coaster ride up and down from the top of our sunrise plateau along to its neighbours and finally down through the woods dropping into the sleepy village of Luce. Filled with the excitement of what the next few days had in store, we happily retired for the evening to rest our bodies after another packed day of mountains, trails, laughs, view after view and more laughs.

Over the next three days, our Alps to Sea journey would lead us from the towering mountains to the north of Ljubljana gradually down towards the small coastal town of Izola. Along the way, we were treated to more ridges and more mind-blowing trails. However, what stood out for both of us was the change. In such a short space of time,



we'd moved from steep loamy trails, and high open plateau's where riding in a few layers and a down jacket was essential, to loose rocky fast tracks in a distinctly different Mediterranean climate.

In just one day the trails changed from being surround by pine trees to olive trees, the culture changed from rural and mountainous to Italian and chic with gelato cafes galore. The week built in intensity and anticipation but let us down gradually. As we neared the small Slovenian coast at the end of the week, the trails mellowed and gave us time to reflect on the crazy last few days of riding. With the trip ending at the Adriatic Sea, those brave enough had the opportunity to dip into the fresh water, an almost cleansing process bringing you back to reality after a somewhat surreal few days traversing from one side of the country to another on two wheels.

" THOSE
BRAVE
ENOUGH
HAD THE
OPPORTUNITY
TO DIP INTO
THE FRESH
WATER "



Sonya Looney

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"SLOVENIA IS SO UNIQUE AND SPECIAL,
THOUGH, IT WOULD BE A SHAME FOR
OTHERS NOT TO EXPERIENCE "

Our Alps to Sea trip was five days instead of the usual six. The trails and the route we rode from one end of the country to the other were tailored to us, what we liked to ride and how much climbing and descending we preferred to do. In five days we'd covered just under 200km on two wheels, with almost 14,000m of descending. It almost feels like a double-edged sword writing this article. While both Julia and I would happily tell everyone about the fantastic trails, culture and nature the country can offer, you almost have a feeling of wanted to keep it a closely guarded secret. Slovenia is so unique and special, though, it would be a shame for others not to experience.

HOW TO GET THERE/WHEN TO GO:

Slovenia is an alpine country, so winters are cold and snowy, summers are warm/hot. The best time to visit is late summer/autumn when the colours are at their best, there aren't many tourists about, and the trails have a bit of moisture in them! Aside from that, spring and summer are also perfectly good times to visit. Flights are to Ljubljana, which is only a few miles from a mountain resort and chairlift, so unless you are already in Europe with a car, flying is the best option, with Easy Jet offering the most choice.



ROUND THE BEND

Curvaceous, bodacious

Have you a craving for carving cool curves and cruising through trails with uninterrupted flow? Well if so stay tuned and read on as we embark on a crusade of cornering bliss with this edition of our core technique.



Demanding trails are filled with technical features, of which, some of the most innocuous can cause the most harm to our flow and flesh. Corner speed is everything for a racer who's up against the clock and the same principals of efficiency and 'flow' are equally important to any rider, whether they are wanting to save thousands of a second or just hang onto their mates wheel there is huge saving or loss to be had in the turns. One of our biggest energy expulsions on the bike is when turning the cranks from zero; think of the fuel efficiency in a car. Combustion engines burn lots of fuel when accelerating from a standstill and so do we.

However, it's not all about speed, proper cornering technique can be the difference between making it through a corner or not, demanding conditions including excess speed require a rider to be on their 'A' game. To get the grip and traction in a multitude of conditions and surfaces tip-top technique is required and I'm here to show you how it's done.

" I'M TALKING VISION, SPEED CONTROL, BODY POSITION AND FOOTWORK "

THE NITTY GRITTY

Cornering really does pull on the key lingo we bang on about all the time in these features; I'm talking vision, speed control, body position and footwork. All this has to be spot on at the extreme, but thanks to the forgiving nature of modern tyres and bikes somewhere close will often suffice for average scenarios. On the trail, we are applying these elements to the entry, section and exit to each corner, through multiple corners the final exit point is overlapped with the entry to the next corner.



Let's walk through these parts step by step.

On the entry to the corner, we are looking ahead spotting our line, try and get on the outside edge of the trail to enable you to look 'deep' through the corner, sometimes this is not possible due to trail 'furniture', trees, stumps, boulders etc. In the entry, we need to be running cranks level stood tall and proud with relaxed limbs.

All of our deceleration braking (if required) needs to be done on the approach and preferably while the bike is straight and upright (this, however, is where we start to defy the textbook style and cheat the system when you're getting a move on).

" TRY AND GET
ON THE
OUTSIDE EDGE
OF THE TRAIL "

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ROSE

We can use excess braking force (front brake to lighten the rear wheel and rear brake to induce slide) and bring our hips and legs into the equation to drift the bike on the way in. Not a skid in the kid sense of the term (grabbing a massive handful of back brake) but a 'trail braking' manoeuvre reminiscent of the type deployed in front wheel drive racing cars.

The braking force is sufficient to get the wheel to lock momentarily but gentle enough that the skid isn't hard and abrupt. We can add a 'scandi flick' (Scandinavian flick) from the rally world to further induce drift. We do this by making a little "S" curve on the way into a corner, the momentum gathered from this pendulum-like motion/movement really helps to get the back of the bike around. You may also find cambers, roots and lips in the trail surface to play with. Some will offer support for added traction and others (those off-camber opposing shapes) will help enable drifts and slides.

" BE MINDFUL OF THE OUTER EDGE OF THE TRAIL AND INNER EDGE OF THE TRIAL. "

BACK TO OUR BODY POSITION

We may want to push the elbows out and lower our back (by pivoting at the hips) to become slightly more front weight bias to get additional front wheel traction on the turn in, this becomes more important, and the difference is noticeable on bikes with slacker head angles and longer front centres. With the head up looking through the corner be mindful of the outer edge of the trail and inner edge of the trail. Try and visualise these as solid painted lines. If they converge, then the corner has not finished/is tightening up.





You will need to maintain speed (or introduce some control braking in a steep descending situation). When these virtual lines are parting you can then get off the brakes and back on the gas. The key points with vision and the head's position is that the head remains up and pointing the eye sockets in the direction you want to go, the eyeballs can wonder to spot down on the trail surface to monitor the 'am I on target lines' in more detail. These are the features and line selections that are more immediately in front of us. The eyes then track the trail and line back up centred in the eye socket to look up and as far down the trail as possible. The eyes can then wonder back scanning the ground to somewhere closer to the front wheel for the detail before this process repeats again. However, IT IS KEY THAT THE HEAD REMAINS UP AND POINTING WHERE YOU WANT TO GO!

" POINTING
THE EYE
SOCKETS
IN THE
DIRECTION
YOU WANT
TO GO "

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ADAM BRAYTON LOOKING THROUGH THE TURN
PHOTO LAURENCE CROSSMAN-EMMS

Shallow turns can be mostly ridden with cranks level, the head moves less accordingly, and the bike isn't leant over as much. The tighter corners may require the outside foot to drop to the bottom of the pedal stroke for added traction and to allow room to lean the bike (dropper posts also enable us to move the bike below the body far better in these situations). Remember to lean the bike and not move the torso across, our steering input comes from a combo of leaning the bike (to get the tyre on edge) with some input from the arms to 'turn' and steer the bars.

" THE EYE SOCKETS END UP LOOKING AT THE GROUND BELOW YOU WHERE YOU OFTEN FIND YOURSELF LAYING "

Push on the outer part of the bar (away from the body) and avoid pulling towards the torso on the inside edge. This drops the elbow and consequently pulls the torso downwards to the inside edge, the head follows, and the eye sockets end up looking at the ground below you where you often find yourself laying shortly after, with the added possibility of skin loss and associated suffering. Obviously sharp corners (slow speeds) and tight switchbacks require more bar/steering input and less leaning, you will still need to tip or drop the bike in towards the direction of travel by leaning it to make the corner but just not as pronounced.

Fast and open corners are more about leaning and less about 'steering'.

If we go back a few features and look at pumping technique, we can get some added traction by pumping turns. Unweighting on the entry allows us to then compress and load up in the corner,



" YOU CAN ALSO USE THE HIPS BY TWISTING AND ROTATING THEM IN THE DESIRED DIRECTION OF TRAVEL "

get the timing right so this dropping down and loading up happens where all the direction change and requirement for grip is needed. You can spring up out of the corner using your compression and rebound from the un-weighted part transitioning into the next corner, squashing down and weighting the bike again.

More can come into play from the body, the outer foot can roll in towards the crank arm (big toe), if you add to this a dropped heel on that outer foot grip levels will go through the roof (or trail). You can also use the hips by twisting and rotating them in the desired direction of travel (around the corner). Bring that pumping shape in by accelerating the bike below you driving it through under the body as you pass the apex of the corner. This technique is clearly evident in many of the latest video edits where riders are slamming rutted turns in

wet or loamy ground. They appear to steer from the rear as they use their legs to turn, making a shape more reminiscent of doing a manual than carving a corner.

FOOT OUT, FLAT OUT

Anticipating the drift and the front wheel slide are all part of pushing the limits of your ability and available grip. If you are suspecting a slide, then there is no harm in getting that inside foot off the pedal and pointing forwards like the MX riders do (if you have not witnessed this then go search some MX action on a popular search engine).



In this stance, you can still transfer the majority of your bodies mass through the outside pedal (it actually really forces you to do so) while counterbalancing the lean of the bike with your outstretched leg. Keep the toes pointing up away from the trail to avoid stubbing toes and be prepared to 'scooter' and touch the foot down to kick away from the ground should the front wheel want to tuck under or the rear wash out.

If the front does want to slide or wash out then straighten the handlebar (ease up on the steering input) then lean the bike back in and start turning the bar in again. Small movements forwards or pushing the elbows out to get that chest low can also help find some front traction. If the back end steps out counter steer in the opposite direction and let it slide.

" BE PREPARED
TO
'SCOOTER'
AND TOUCH
THE FOOT
DOWN "

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To keep the bike drifting at a constant speed you need to be mindful of the 'high side', this is where the rear wheel digs in and pitches you up and over. Ultimately to slide and drift you will either need some slippery or loose surfaces and a certain amount of speed, the more grip on offer the faster you will have to hit the turns.

" GET OUT AND FIND SOME CORNERS TO PLAY ON AND BUILD YOUR CONFIDENCE AND GRIP LEVELS. "

Tyre choice is crucial, and we are all faced with that inevitable compromise between traction, weight and rolling resistance. Tyres with an even number of shoulder and side knobs will offer consistent feel; blocks that are low and or off-set have a tendency to be less supportive when the bike is banked over on its side. The downside to a tyre with a blocky square edge is that when they let go (lose traction), it happens very suddenly. Tyre pressure can make a significant difference, low pressures work well in loose and soft ground at slow speeds, but the forces generated in higher speed corners (especially berms) mean that the tyre deforms and the bike yaws. This can also lead to tubeless systems 'burping'.

With all our core skills practice makes permanent, get out and find some corners to play on and build your confidence and grip levels. Next issue we conclude our core skills by looking at jumps. Stay tuned and keep it upright.

Clive Forth

TRIED AND TESTED

We've got lots of bikes and bits on test this issue with new rides from Cannondale, Cube, Ghost, Greyp, Haibike and Merida as well kit from Hope, Lake, Leatt, SRAM and Box.



BIKES

Cannondale Habit 2

Cube Hyde Race

Ghost FR AMR 8.7 AL

Greyp G6.2

Haibike Xduro AllMtn 3.0

Merida E160 M#RIDA

BITS

BOX Two 11S Drivetrain

Hope Carbon Handlebar and AM/Freeride Stem

Lake MX241 Ednurance Shoes

Leatt Velocity 6.5 Goggles

SRAM NX Eagle Drivetrain

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AT A GLANCE

Cannondale has undergone somewhat of a transformation of late. New riders, new style and new bikes, most notably the acquisition of Rat Boy and the latest incarnation of the Habit. Usually renowned for one-sided forks and quirky technology, they clearly have moved on from old habits in more ways than one.

No Lefty, no switches and no special shock, this is an exceptionally normal looking bike. 130mm front and rear (you get 140mm forks on the Habit 1 for some reason) delivered by a rather familiar looking Horst Link. The angles suggest a thoroughly modern trail bike with a long 490 reach on the XL and a 66 head angle. The 435mm chainstays are middle of the road, and it's all pretty standard stuff. Seat tube length is slightly long, with 520mm on the XL, meaning sizing up is out of the question for most and rules out an extra long dropper for me at 195cm tall. There is a flip chip if you want things a little steeper, but access to a 66 head angle is a real bonus on a bike of this travel.

CLICK OR TAP TO READ MORE



BRAND CUBE MODEL HYDE RACE YEAR 2019

"IT'S A
GAME-CHANGER
IN THE REAL
WORLD"

TO VISIT THEIR
WEBSITE, CLICK HERE



AT A GLANCE

A bit of an odd bike for an MTB magazine you might say, but bear with us, and of course the N+1 rule always applies. When Rou broke his leg and ankle, last year biking was off the cards, however as soon as he felt he could ride a bike again the urge was to stick to the roads, rather than risk another crash off road while he was still healing.

Enter the Cube Hyde Race; if you don't want to be a roadie, and wear all the Lycra and paraphernalia that goes with it, a hybrid bike is just the ticket. Equally, if you want a town bike that feels and rides like a nippy XC bike this ride fits the bill perfectly.

Finally, you'll notice the Shimano Alfine and Gates Carbon Drive, this chainless system offers you 8-speed shifting with a range of over 300%, plenty for most applications. The beauty of this set up is that it is almost totally maintenance free. No chain to lube, no parts to scrub and clean and these hubs are good for a few thousand miles these days before they need any attention.

CLICK OR TAP TO READ MORE



BRAND GHOST MODEL FR AMR 8.7 AL YEAR 2019

"COMES TO LIFE
ON THE MOST
DEMANDING
TERRAIN AND
THRIVES IN
THE AIR"

TO VISIT THEIR
WEBSITE, CLICK HERE



AT A GLANCE

25-year-old Bavarian bike manufacturer Ghost Bikes has a diverse list of bikes aimed at those who love to ride hard, and their latest revamped FR AMR sits proudly at the top of the list. What we have here is a mini-DH bike, freeride park toy and enduro weapon all rolled into one. The frame has been revised from its predecessor by using additional bracing and bigger tube cross sections to create a significantly stiffer rear end.

This yellow rig is the 8.7, which offers the highest spec of the 3 in the range. All models are built around a fairly heavy aluminium frame and show their intent by sporting 165mm coil shocks on the rear and 170mm forks up front. Each of the three build options also come with a chain-guide from E-Thirteen and a pair of Maxxis Minion 27.5 DHF 2.5 and DHR 2.4 shoes, ready to race or ride anything you want to throw it down.

This top-shelf yellow build is equipped with the awesome Cane Creek's Helm fork and DB Coil CS shock, mixed SRAM GX/X01 Eagle 12-speed drivetrain, SRAM Code RSC 4 brakes, a Syntace cockpit, and Syntace 33mm wide (internal) rims.

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BRAND GREYP MODEL G6 FIRST RIDE YEAR 2019

"THE GREYP G6 SHOWS US JUST WHAT IS POSSIBLE WITH AN EBIKE"

TO VISIT THEIR WEBSITE, CLICK HERE



AT A GLANCE

It's not often you get to go to Croatia, but that was the location for the launch of Greyp's new G6. Greyp is part of the famous car company Rimac, launched by Mate Rimac in 2006 they have a large operation in Croatia specialising in electric vehicles. From hydrofoil boats to supercars and everything in between Mate and the team at Rimac and Greyp have extensive knowledge of all things EV.

To give you an idea of what they are capable of, every single component of the Rimac Concept One supercar and soon to be launched C Two hypercar is built and assembled on site in Croatia. We were treated to a tour of the factory by Mate himself, and it was impressive, to say the least. Greyp as a project has been around for a long time, Zvonimir Sučić was working on electric bikes before he met Mate and before Rimac was even founded. In fact, it was the coupling of these two engineers that formed the basis for the launch of the Croatian car industry, which is Rimac.

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BRAND HAIBIKE MODEL XDURO ALLMTN 3.0 YEAR 2019

"IT'S A LOT OF
FUN AS A JACK
OF ALL TRADES
MILE MUNCHER"

TO VISIT THEIR
WEBSITE, CLICK HERE



AT A GLANCE

Haibike is an eMTB specific brand founded in Germany, which has been banging the eBike drum since 1995, long before some modern bike brands even had their first 'traditional' bikes out the front door.

The XDURO AllMtn 3.0 fills the slot between Trail and Enduro bike in the rich and varied menu of Haibike's offering. Packing 150mm of rear travel, a 160mm Rockshox Yari fork, and rolling on 27.5" wheels the XDURO AllMtn 3.0 cuts an interesting silhouette, which may not be to everyone's taste.

The geometry certainly leans towards this being a trail bike over and above the suggestions from the fairly hefty travel numbers and the AllMtn tag. A 66-degree head angle is firmly in modern trail bike territory while the seat angle sits at a fraction over 75 degrees to aid pedalling efficiency on the climbs.

465mm chainstays put the rear wheel far back enough that climbing and straight-line performance should both be very good, but a short reach - at 481mm on an XL frame - makes for a cramped looking cockpit.

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"THE E160 KEEPS ALL THOSE CHARACTERISTICS OF A FUN AND PLAYFUL TRAIL BIKE"

TO VISIT THEIR WEBSITE, CLICK HERE



AT A GLANCE

Having spent time on the 900e model last year, it was clear that Merida had a particularly strong grasp on the ebike market with a fantastic bike. The major issue for myself was that their sizing only went up to large. Roll into 2019 and low and behold we have an XL e160, and I really wanted to spend some time on it.

Rather than the higher spec model, this year I was aboard the M#RIDA model, which although cheaper, is still a great build. With Rockshox covering the bounce using a Lyric RC and a Super Deluxe R, the bike floats on some fine suspension. The motor is the tried and tested Shimano E8000 but has the new low profile control on the handlebar rather than the Di2 inspired shifter. The wheels are 650b plus and run Maxxis Minions in 2.8 sizes, and these are strapped to a set of Fulcrum E-Fire 500 wheels.

SRAM codes are a welcome sight and the mixture of NX Eagle and GX Eagle balance durability, price and performance. Notably, the heavy NX cassette is used to good effect here as is the 'single click' version of the GX shifter.

CLICK OR TAP TO READ MORE



BRAND BOX MODEL BOX TWO 11S DRIVETRAIN [WIDE] YEAR 2019

"A ROBUST AND
SOLID
PERFORMER,
WHICH HOLDS
ITS OWN"

TO VISIT THEIR
WEBSITE, CLICK HERE



AT A GLANCE

The man behind Box Components, Toby Henderson, became a racing legend on downhill bikes and BMX's and is now well on track to legendary status in the world of bike components. Still a fairly small and fresh company, Box isn't afraid to take on some formidable competition and are impressively confident that there is room for a third player in the drivetrain game. Taking on the dominant duo of SRAM and Shimano in a patent filled minefield is an admirable move for sure.

After a respectable first effort with the Box One derailleur and shifter combo, it hasn't taken them long to hit back after what must have been a steep learning curve with an affordable 11-speed drivetrain, the Box Two. At a price point of \$269.99 for the 11-46 cassette with derailleur, shifter and chain, the Box Two drivetrain package sits somewhere close the SRAM NX and Shimano SLX offerings.

The rear derailleur is available in two options, the medium length 'wide' for use with the 11-46 cassette and the long caged 'extra wide' for use with their 11-50 cassette. It uses 3-D forged aluminium for

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"UK MADE
COMPONENTS AT
THEIR BEST"

TO VISIT THEIR
WEBSITE, CLICK HERE



AT A GLANCE

Hope has been pushing into new territory over the past few years, experimenting with new materials and new products. Not only have they got their heads around carbon manufacturing, but also they've made entire bikes from it, and all this designed, tested and manufactured in Barnoldswick, UK. As well as bike creation, they've been busy making their carbon handlebars, which we have here.

Aptly named, the 'Carbon Handlebar' takes Hopes reputation and hangs it from a shapely and refined piece of carbon. Measuring up at 780mm wide and with a 31.8mm clamp, these bars will suit many riders. With 7 degrees back sweep and 5 degrees upsweep, they are reasonably 'straight' and feature a 20mm rise. All this comes in at 225g and these are the only numbers you need to know as this is the only option available.

The bars are instantly recognisable due to the bulging nature of the bars just before they rapidly taper to a smaller diameter. This bulge is all about strength but creates a distinctive look.

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"A SUPERBLY
COMFORTABLE
AND WELL
FITTING SHOE
FOR LONG DAYS
IN THE SADDLE"

TO VISIT THEIR
WEBSITE, CLICK HERE



AT A GLANCE

Lake has been making shoes for a long time, they are one of those brands synonymous with one product, and that is cycling shoes. Furthermore, they are intensely focused on fit and having developed their craft over the years, Lake is keen to make sure riders have the best fitting shoes possible.

Choosing shoes by the 'Last' shape is the start, a last being essentially the mould on which a shoe is shaped around. With Comfort, Sport, Competition and Race lasts, each with their own defining shape, riders can choose a shoe that best fits them and their intentions. Variations in the toe box, width and heel shape all change how the shoe will fit a certain foot.

Lakes range extended over road, cyclocross and mountain biking, but many of their shoes share technology across the models. The MX241 Endurance shoe uses all of Lakes technology to create the ultimate shoe for performance riding, or anything where putting down the power is crucial over a long period of time.

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"IT WAS HARD TO
FIND FAULT
WITH THEM
WHEN RIDING "

TO VISIT THEIR
WEBSITE, CLICK HERE



AT A GLANCE

Leatt is currently on a roll at the moment having released a fantastic line-up of apparel, along with the brilliant DBX 3.0 Enduro helmet. New to their product range are these – the newly released Leatt Velocity 6.5 goggles which I have been fortunate enough to have been testing for the last couple of months.

So, where to start? Well, let's start with the obvious! Firstly, I think they look fantastic, with 13 different colour combinations too then you'll surely be able to match them up with whatever gear you ride in. Not only that, Leatt provide quite the package too. Included with every pair of goggles is a tear-off pack as well as an optional nose clip that simply slots into the base of the goggle to offer extra protection. The goggles themselves feature a chunky, silicon-backed strap as well as some pretty hefty looking outriggers at the front.

The lenses themselves all feature Leatt's 'WideVision' Anti-Fog tech, which comprises of a dual-lens setup, as well as conforming to the following standards:

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"SRAM PROVE
ONCE MORE
WHY THEY ARE
A DOMINANT
FORCE IN
DRIVETRAINS"

TO VISIT THEIR
WEBSITE, CLICK HERE



AT A GLANCE

It feels like only yesterday that the Eagle first landed amidst cries of derision that nobody needed 12 gears and that 50t cassettes were ridiculous. At the time the price was pretty ridiculous too, perhaps similar to the latest release of AXS, but over a pretty short period of time, the Eagle has landed at progressively lower price points.

The time has come for Eagle to hit the 'NX' level and with it, has brought wide range gearing to the masses. No longer the preserve of the pro racer, 12 speed is now accessible, and with the sheer number of bikes coming with NX Eagle onboard, the masses are clearly loving it.

So, for those of you living under a rock, Eagle gives us 12 gears up to 50 teeth and is a single ring only set up. Essentially, you have all the gears you need but with less faff and more reliability in a sweet package. Up till now, Eagle has come as a 10t to 50t spread of gears on a SRAM XD driver, but for the NX, it now sits upon a standard splined freehub body. This is the same sort of body that Shimano cassettes slide onto but by using that system the gearing is 11t to 50t as fitting a 10t wasn't possible.

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WORDS EMILY HORRIDGE PHOTOS DAVID BILLINGS

FROM THE FRONT DOOR

What are your plans this weekend? Perhaps you are heading out to your local trail centre for a blast with your mates? Or maybe heading out to the hills for a lap of your favourite killer loop? Or are you perchance, planning something totally new and different?





• IGNORING THE TEMPTATION TO DROOL OVER ALL THE TRAILS TO THE SOUTH OF THE HOUSE, WE FOCUSSED ON THE AREA TO THE NORTH •

It's all too easy to fall into habits. In every area of life, we have our little routines. The morning coffee, toast, marmalade, cereal and milk. They bring us comfort and even enjoyment. It's easy to go the same way when deciding where to go on your next ride too. Perhaps like us, you live in a valley, and maybe you also have the habit of always looking south on the map. It's a bit strange, but there are some seriously quality trails in that direction, so perhaps that's why. Or maybe it's because we see more of those areas bandied around on social media. What about what lies north? Isn't there some good stuff there too?

We decided to set a challenge. A twofold challenge: the first being that we should ride from the front door, or failing that, starting no more than a 30-minute drive away. The second was that the chosen route should be in a different area to our usual haunts. Getting the 1:25,000 map out, and ignoring the temptation to drool over all the trails to the south of the house, we focussed on the area to the north. Nothing really stood out – over the years, the hillside in question has had most of its trails turned into farm tracks to facilitate agricultural activities. Looking a little further north, we spotted something that looked very promising indeed: A ridgeline. It looked as though we'd have to do a 500m hike-a-bike to get to it, but that didn't seem unreasonable. Bonus – there was a mountain refuge at the top of this hike, meaning we'd be in for a slice of cake and coffee at the top – brilliant!

The route off the ridgeline was difficult to decide on. There were lots of options on the map. Well, why not just wait and see – surely we'd have a much better idea once we were up there. We could see them in the flesh and make a decision then.



' WE'D EVEN BE ABLE TO RIDE
ALMOST ALL THE WAY UP TO THE
RIDGELINE VIA A FARM TRACK '

A final check of the map also revealed that we'd even be able to ride almost all the way up to the ridgeline via a farm track we'd not previously spotted. We'd also get to ride the ridgeline in both directions which wasn't exactly a bad thing as the highest point was in the middle so no matter which way we rode it there'd be a climb and a descent along it.

The morning of Operation From the Front Door dawned bright and early. It looked like it was going to be a glorious day. Amazingly we managed to leave on time and 30 minutes later were unloading the bikes from the car. Setting off before 9am under a beautiful autumnal sky was just perfect. It was still nice and cool, and we swiftly despatched the first part of the climb, on a very rideable farm track, which zigzagged its way up the hillside gaining height very efficiently. We paused at a mountain hut to refill our Camelbaks with icy fresh water before continuing, this time pushing the bikes up steep singletrack for a short while, before re-joining another rideable farm track.

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PHOTO TROY LEE DESIGNS

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In what seemed like a very short space of time, we reached the mountain pass from which the ridgeline climbed. Shifting the bikes onto our backs for a bit of solid hike-a-bike up onto the ridge, we set off in the direction of the mountain refuge, keen for a coffee.

At this point, progress significantly slowed. The views were just breathtaking! In front of us, we could see Mont Blanc, completely clear of cloud. Plus we were way closer to it than usual, and it was just stunning. Off to the north we could see the mountains we'd usually be riding directly beneath, and it was quite impressive to see that Mont Pourri really is a lot higher than we give it credit for. Towering above the others in the chain of peaks heading off up to Tignes, including the Grand Motte glacier high above Tignes ski area. What an added bonus, we hadn't even considered the different viewpoints we'd get of the mountains we usually see all the time. Looking to the south, we got completely new views – looking towards the Grand Massif, La Clusaz and Morzine directions.

We made it to the refuge just before lunch, and to our delight, they'd cooked up some chocolate cake for the final day of their summer season. Coffee and cake despatched, it was time to jump on the bikes again. Riding back along the ridgeline in this direction meant a much shorter climb before a decent bit of descent that looked really promising on our way up. It didn't take long before we were barrelling down the side of the mountain, a tight little unit of a two-bike train, loving every minute. What an awesome trail! It was so much fun, and being able to see it stretching out ahead of you as you sped down it was fantastic...although we had to remember not to get distracted by the views beyond!

' TOWERING ABOVE THE OTHERS IN THE CHAIN OF PEAKS HEADING OFF UP TO TIGNES, INCLUDING THE GRAND MOTTE GLACIER HIGH ABOVE TIGNES SKI AREA '





' WE'D TAKEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO EYE-BALL THE TRAIL OPTIONS DESCENDING OFF IN VARIOUS DIRECTIONS.'

On the way up, we'd taken the opportunity to eye-ball the trail options descending off in various directions. We had considered continuing past the refuge to another high pass, and coming back down from there, but it didn't look too great from a distance – almost directly down the fall-line, with little opportunity to get off the brakes. The option of riding back along the ridgeline had looked much more inviting – less steep and more flowy. After putting the effort into getting up there, it seemed a much better idea to eke out the elevation by taking a mellower descent.

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' WE STARTED TO DESCEND AND ROUNDING A CORNER IT WAS AS IF WE WERE RIDING INTO A TUNNEL HEWN OUT OF THE ROCK – INCREDIBLE! '



After a quick stop for lunch, we headed off down towards another river valley. It was one of those tech-flow type trails – big rocks all over the place, with the need to execute a few trials-like moves to keep things rolling.

Reaching the valley floor, we crossed the river a couple of times, riding an undulating trail which at times was quite tricky. After the second river crossing the trail climbed up a

little and I'd spotted a scar in the cliff above us, and above the rocky river bank. Could that be the trail? We started to descend and rounding a corner it was as if we were riding into a tunnel hewn out of the rock – incredible! It wasn't actually a full tunnel, but perhaps about a three-quarter circle, with the river now a raging torrent a fair distance below us. It really was completely unexpected and quite something.

Having seen photos of these types of trails in other areas of the French Alps, we had no idea we had one of our on more or less on our doorstep. This day was just getting better and better.

Things became a little less technically exciting after the tunnel trail, but the views were still giving. We were heading down towards a reservoir that neither of us had ever been to or seen before. It reminded me of a similar (but smaller) reservoir in the Roya Valley, in the very southeastern part of France.

' THE SMALLEST OF THINGS CAN
TRANSPORT YOUR MIND TO A
COMPLETELY DIFFERENT PLACE '



We climbed up above it on a very British-feeling double track with a gentle gradient and the first leaves of autumn coating the floor. Isn't it funny how just the smallest of things can transport your mind to a completely different place?

We reached our final high point before it was time to head back to the car. We took a little detour to admire the beautiful view of the Lac de Roselend – once again from a different viewpoint than usual. After that, we were more or less done. Just a fire road descent (sadly no singletrack to ride) down to the road.

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Reflecting on the day, we both agreed it'd been absolutely brilliant. Riding in a totally different area to usual, with varying characteristics of trail, varied scenery, and new viewpoints of familiar scenery had been incredible. It was well worth the effort of looking at the map differently and trying something new. Breaking habits can be hard, but sometimes it's so worth it!

Now it's your turn. Why not get your map out or download an app such as Viewranger, and see what you could ride from your door. Maybe you are lucky enough to be able to ride from your door all the time – is there a route you could try that you've never even noticed before? Perhaps you live in a city, so you'll need to drive a little way first, but maybe you can spot something in a different direction to usual? You never know what gems you might uncover.

' IT WAS WELL WORTH THE EFFORT OF
LOOKING AT THE MAP DIFFERENTLY AND
TRYING SOMETHING NEW '



LIGHTBOX

SOFIA WIEDENROTH GETS HER WINTER TRAINING IN BEFORE HITTING
THE EWS SEASON HARD ON THE CUBE FACTORY RACING TEAM
PHOTO CUBE

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

LIGHTBOX

SAM BLENKINSOP COMING OUT OF THE NEW ZEALAND SUMMER SIDEWAYS
PHOTO CAM MACKENZIE



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LIGHTBOX



Lightbox

THE YOUTH "LIL' ROBBO" OWEN ROBINSON GOES BIG IN WOODS, THIS KID IS ONE TO WATCH OUT FOR
PHOTO LAURENCE CROSSMAN-EMMS

LIGHTBOX



Lightbox

ISABEAU COURDURIER GETS UP TO SPEED IN ROTURUA BEFORE GOING ON TO TAKE THE WIN IN FINE STYLE
PHOTO KIKE ABELLEIRA



Lightbox

WHO SAYS EBIKES CAN'T FLY? JORDIE LUNN SHOWS US WHAT CAN BE DONE WITH ON THE NEW BREED OF BIKES
PHOTO ALE DE-LULLO

LIGHTBOX



Lightbox

BRENDAN FAIRCLOUGH ON A SIDEWAYS TRIP THROUGH SOUTH AFRICA FOR SOME PRE SEASON TESTING AND TRAINING
PHOTO JACOB GIBBINS

LIGHTBOX



Lightbox

SAM HILL IS CERTAINLY AT HOME IN THE DUST, BUT WILL HE BE ABLE TO HANG ON TO HIS ENDURO WORLD SERIES TITLE THIS YEAR?
PHOTO PIERRE HENNI



LIGHTBOX

Lightbox

JORDI BAGO MAY BE INJURED FOR NOW, BUT WE KNOW HE'LL BE BACK ON TOP FORM SOON
AND GETTING BACK AT IT! HEAL UP SOON
PHOTO STEPUP_MEDIA

LIGHTBOX

Lightbox

THE SUNSHINE COAST IS ONE OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL PLACES ON THE WEST COAST OF CANADA
AND BRENDAN HOWEY SHOWS US HOW SUMMER GOES HERE
PHOTO JB LIAUTARD



Lightbox

SPRING IS HERE IN THE NORTHERN HEMISPHERE SO IT'S TIME FOR MORE OF THIS PLEASE; DRY TRAILS, SUNSHINE AND BIKES
PHOTO SALSA

LIGHTBOX

MATT JONES LAYS IT FLAT DURING SLOPESTYLE TRAINING AT CRANKWORX IN ROTORUA
PHOTO GRAEME MURRAY/RED BULL CONTENT POOL



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GRAHAM AGASSIZ SHREDDING THAT SPRING TIME VIBE
PHOTO LANE ERICKSON

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MOVIE NIGHT

#1 HE SMOKED ME! | RIDING COPPER CANYON IN MEXICO

BCPov takes us on a trip to Copper Canyon in New Mexico. Rocking up with all the gear, these guys get schooled by a local guide on a beat up old bike as he shows them the best trails around. Once again it proves you don't need the best bike to go fast.



3103


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#2 URBAN DOWNHILL MTB WITH JACKSON GOLDSTONE

At 14 years old Jackson Goldstone shows there is no sign of him slowing up as he takes on the notorious urban downhill race and mixes it up with those twice his age. Full commitment and super smooth, he's certainly one to watch for the future.



2122


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#3 TECH CLIMB CHALLENGE: SOUTH MOUNTAIN WATERFALL

Everyone loves a techy climb right? Well maybe not, but watching someone attempt one is always entertaining especially when that person is Jeff Kendall-Weed. Able to turn any trail into a playground, his skills impress yet again.

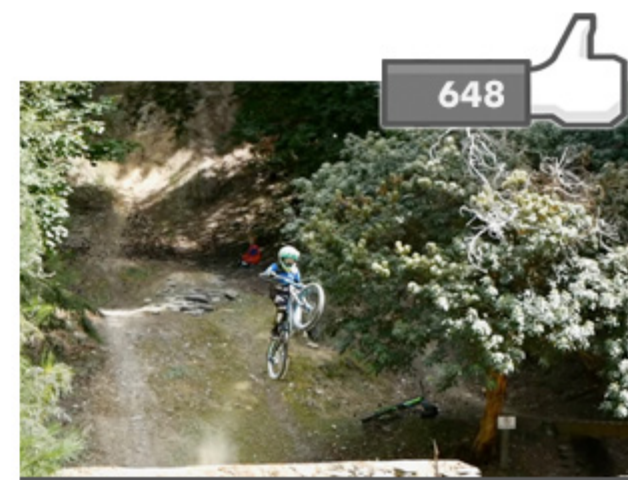


735


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#4 KIDS DOING MAD JUMPS: WYNYARD RIVER GAP

Take two kids, a couple of bikes and a massive gap jump, leave them for an afternoon and see what happens... Well it turns out they go big and get some massive air in fine style like it's a walk in the park. We can't wait to see what they get up to next.



648


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JORDI BAGO STEALING THE LAST RAYS OF SUNLIGHT
PHOTO: FELIX HENS

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