

AUGUST / SEPTEMBER 19

WELCOME TO THE FUTURE...

Welcome to issue 60 of the World's Number One Online Mountain Bike Magazine!

This issue we head to the wilderness and get rad whilst bikepacking, chat to Jasper da Seymour about the creative film making process and head to the

highest mountains you can ride in the Alps. We chat to Kilian Bron about mass start racing and talk to Dr Leatt about neck braces. On top of all this, we have bikes from Pivot, DMR and Radon on test alongside three of the best short-travel forks on the market.

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- INTO THE WILD -

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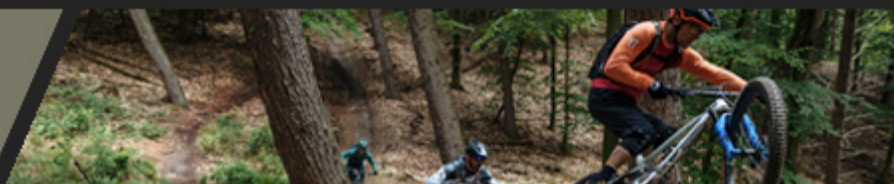
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FRONT COVER RIDERS SAM HILL AND KILIAN BRON
FRONT COVER PHOTO TOBY COWLEY

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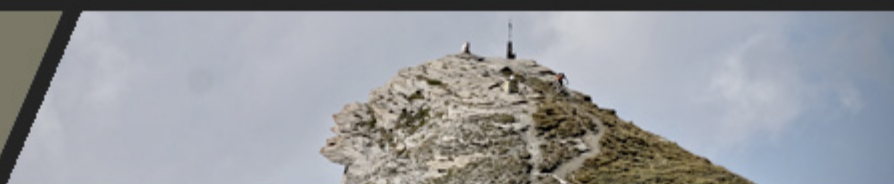
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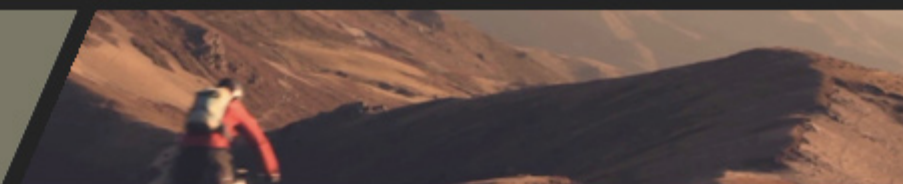
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TAHNEE SEAGRAVE GETTING WILD AT FORT WILLIAM
PHOTO DAN HEARN

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We've been working on bringing you some much-requested merchandise and we're just about to launch our new online store. However, if you fancy a free hoody and t-shirt with your favourite magazine emblazoned across the front then get subscribing for a chance to win!

Both garments are eco friendly, sustainably sourced, organic cotton and feature a white and green IMB motif. You can choose whatever size hoody and t-shirt you like and we'll have it shipped out to you as soon as the prize draw ends!

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MIRANDA MILLER PINNING IT!
PHOTO COURTESY OF KONA



It's been a long time that we have been in the game, IMB was launched back in 2008, and it's been an incredible ride since then. The magazine has changed a lot, the team has been refreshed along the way, right now I think what we are producing is one of the best magazines out there in terms of content. Although I would say that wouldn't I.

Back in December, we launched a Supporters Program, the idea was to garner support from you, our fantastic readers, to keep IMB independent. It was a simple concept with an easy interface, and you could help us keep IMB alive for less than the cost of a craft beer.

I want to give a massive thanks to those of you who took notice and have been helping us keep up the excellent work here at IMB. You know who you are, pat yourself on the back, we love you. It takes a lot of effort to put a magazine together, curate the website and keep on top of social media. Your generosity is hugely appreciated.

If you are reading this and thinking "what is all this about?" then why not click the link and see how by supporting us you can get some cool benefits, such as your name in lights in the mag, free stickers and some really cool t-shirts too. Plus of course you get our undying admiration and appreciation for being awesome, and that is worth its weight in dry, dusty days on the trail!

With your help, we can keep the IMB dream alive, keep serving up some of the best content in the world and carry on providing honest reviews for you to enjoy. A little help from you goes a long way and if you've enjoyed what we've been doing over the last eleven years, then please sign up and lend us a hand!

Thank you.

Rou Chater
Publishing Editor

MAX SCHUMAAN LEADING A TRAIN WITH CEDRIC GRACIA AND RICHIE SCHLEY, AS YOU DO...
PHOTO PIOTR STARON / @STARONPHOTO

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EDITORIAL





SHUTTLE

REDEFINE YOUR LIMITS - RIDE MORE TRAIL

INTO THE WILD

WORDS EWEN TURNER
PHOTOS TRISTAN TINN

The rain was perhaps inevitable, given that we live in the wettest place in England. That said, the forecast was promising, as was the sky, which swirled with clouds that occasionally obliged to let shafts of evening sunlight hit the mountains and valleys around us. This atmospheric evening was a distant memory as I attempted to keep myself cocooned in my bivi bag while still allowing myself the luxury of fresh oxygen through the side zip. At this point, the reality of our adventure was no longer the idyllic experience we had imagined the previous day.



" WHAT I WANTED TO TRY, WAS A TRIP INTO SOME MOUNTAINS WHERE THE TRAILS ARE UNFORGIVING, UNAPOLOGETICALLY TECHNICAL AND TRICKY TO RIDE "

PROOF OF CONCEPT

The premise was simple, can I go into the wild with my bike and sleep out without compromising the quality of my riding, my wallet or wardrobe. Cyclists love a category, exemplified by the tiny niches we create in the world of mountain bikes. Enduro, downhill, Trail, XC, gravel to name but a few, and then there is, of course, Bikepacking. Those who have watched the resurgence of camping with a bike will know all too well that to fulfil the stereotype, you supposedly need a rigid fat bike, seven types of frame/saddle/bar bags and some serious commitment to facial hair and flannel shirts.

What I wanted to try, was a trip into some mountains where the trails are unforgiving, unapologetically technical and tricky to ride, both up and down. I wanted to take my bike, my normal bike and not strap too many satchels to it and ruin its performance, but at the same time, I didn't want to carry a huge pack. I thought this would be tricky to manage; thus, a test was needed. I've seen Joey Schsullers 'Flashes of the Altai' film, and they still seemed to be having fun on their bikes, they even had pack rafts with them!

To test this, we aimed for the central and more remote parts of our local mountains with a tour around one of the largest lumps via four mountain passes, circumnavigating a big piece of mountain called Great Gable. This is a tough route, achievable in a day by the fit, but a worthy route to be split and test out the light and fast bike-bivi set up.





" ORTLIEBS ATRACK PACK WAS THE WEAPON OF CHOICE, PROVIDING A FULLY WATERPROOF HIGH VOLUME PACK, SOMETHING THAT WOULD PROVE TO BE EXCEPTIONALLY USEFUL DURING THE OVERNIGHT RAIN! "

THE KIT

For the trip, my bike was my long term Marin Alpine Trail, which I imagine was never considered as a 'bikepacking' bike when they sat around the drawing board. A 150mm enduro/trail bike designed to deal with gnarly trails. This made it ideal for the trails we would encounter but lacked

space for frame bags, rack mounts and associated survivalist bolt-ons.

Realising that one bag may prove a little tricky I resorted to asking for input from our local 2 wheeled adventure specialists Lyon Equipment. The result of this was a simple bar roll and a funky waterproof rucksack from Ortlieb. They also threw in (not literally) Tom Ukelja as a sage-like advisor of all things cycling and wilderness. He put shoes on, especially for this trip as he thought his normal riding 'sandals' might not be appropriate. Also, he was known to have a stove and could make excellent coffee. If anyone exemplifies

the no-frills approach to mountain biking and bike-based travel, this is the dude.

Although not entirely convinced I needed a 'specific' backpack, Ortlieb's Atrack pack was the weapon of choice, providing a fully waterproof high volume pack, something that would prove to be exceptionally useful during the overnight rain! This was coupled with a waterproof bar roll for my sleeping bag, and it was all sorted and ready to go.

INTO THE WILDS

Pedalling up into the hills for the night is a particularly enjoyable experience. Knowing that most folks have long since left the mountains for their homes,

" IN DUE COURSE, THE RAIN STARTS AND I DREAM OF SMALL LUXURIES SUCH AS A TENT BUT MAKE DO WITH HIDING IN MY BIVI BAG TRYING NOT TO SUFFOCATE. "



they are deserted and left undisturbed. Without a rush to get back before nightfall, we could cruise gently to our camp spot and enjoy the evening. Climbing through the old slate mines and spoil heaps we gradually leave the industry behind before dropping down to the head of the valley for a night under the stars. We were keen to see how our planning would fair, would we have the right kit, would the food suffice?

With dehydrated food and a lightweight stove, the cooking process is simple and surprisingly tasty. As usual for a night out in the mountains, from each of our packs, we reveal our secret booze supply. This explains why everyone's bag isn't looking as 'fast and light' as I thought they would be! However, the evening soon lightened the load and our selection of craft beer, whiskey and something strange Tom brought in a hip flask...

Our perch for the night overlooked the valley below and is genuinely idyllic with a view right out to the sea. Finding a flat patch of grass between the rocks defines our beds for the night, and as clouds gather in the not-so-dark- night of midsummer, it's clear we may be in for some precipitation. In due course, the rain starts and I dream of small luxuries such as a tent but make do with hiding in my bivi bag trying not to suffocate. Bivis may be light, but in the wet, they lack a little sophistication.



The morning dawns and is thankfully dry as we emerge from our chrysalis of mildly damp warmth. Coffee is the top priority before more dehydrated goodness in the form of breakfast. Given our high camp, the first part of the day is a descent into Buttermere down a notoriously sketchy trail. Attacking this bleary-eyed, with a bar rolls attached was slightly alarming, but I was surprised how quickly I got used to having this lump of material attached to the front of my bike.

THE RIDING

Part of this trip was all about proving, or disproving that you needn't compromise on the technicality of your trails just because you're carrying a bed with you.

"THE FIRST PART OF THE DAY IS A DESCENT INTO BUTTERMERE DOWN A NOTORIOUSLY SKETCHY TRAIL"



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" HAVING MOST OF THE BULK ALREADY ON MY BACK WAS A BLESSING, AS LIFTING A WELL-LOADED BIKE ON YOUR SHOULDERS ISN'T MUCH FUN. "

The proof was condensed into a particularly steep bedrock challenge only minutes after breakfast which sharpened up the mind for the day ahead and quickly proved that the bike does still work as a bike despite the bar roll. With the steering feeling only a little heavier than usual, the bike retained its feel nicely, even popping the front end up was surprisingly straightforward. I chose the lightest and bulkiest items for the front, and this worked well as a tactic.

The early start from a high point in the mountains set us up well for the day ahead, and after the initial bonkers rocky descent, things had to point up once more. The climb from the previous night had all been pedalled, but this route was going to get chunky, and we would certainly not escape some hike-a-bike. Having most of the bulk already on my back was a blessing, as lifting a well-loaded bike on your shoulders isn't much fun. The bar bag again didn't interfere and hiking with the bike was just like usual, only a bit heavier.

By the next descent, I was starting to believe the bar bag was helping to keep the front wheel planted and I'd stopped worrying about not being able to see my mudguard. Why I was concerned about this is unknown, but just having something different in your field of view was initially disconcerting.

A stop outside England's most remote Youth Hostel offered a pleasant respite and allowed us to do our most adventurous posing before travelling down the valley and back towards the more remote pass of Black Sail.



"AN EDUCATION IN ALL FORMS OF ROCK,
FROM BOULDER TO GRAVEL, IT'S A TEST OF
BIKE AND BODY."





" THE INEVITABLE FINAL CLIMB WAS LOOMING AND DEMANDING ATTENTION FROM WEARY LEGS. "

Scottish-Esque, this represents about as wild as you can get around here, but not so wild as to not have a truly impressive descent down the next valley. An education in all forms of rock, from boulder to gravel, it's a test of bike and body. By this point, I'm pretty comfy with the extra kit on my back and bike, and although I'm probably not quite as agile, the riding feels great and uncompromised.

Now adventurous we may be, but we know how to plan a route, and a drop-down from Black Sail Pass drops us at Wasdale Head and a conveniently placed pub. The pub is another pro-tip, to reduce your pack weight, replacing your packed lunch with a credit card saves significant weight and can be highly recommended. While sitting in the sun, it dawns on us that we could happily dry out the slightly damp kit in our packs and restock from the tiny shop before heading out again for another night. The crucial part of this is that for a multiday trip we wouldn't have to carry much more kit providing we

could resupply each day. At this point, plans started to form for future trips, but the inevitable final climb was looming and demanding attention from weary legs.

Skirting under Gable, you can look up to what is considered the birthplace of Mountaineering in the form of Napes Needle. First climbed by WP Haskett Smith in June 1886 with a large pole and a handkerchief for assistance. The hike takes us up and over Styhead Pass and a classic trail lies in wait for us to descend and finish the trip. While on a historical note this pass was first reportedly travelled by bike sometime before 1928, turns out mountain biking has been around for a lot longer than we thought!

"THE RIDING IS SUPERB, AND THE ABILITY TO RIDE HARD, FAST AND SAFE WHILE LOADED UP IS SURPRISING, AND I START TO GET AN URGE FOR MORE."

WHICH WAY NEXT?

Our trip over this final pass signifies the end of our round trip, but yet again, the riding is superb, and the ability to ride hard, fast and safe while loaded up is surprising, and I start to get an urge for more. More days, bigger trips and further afield. If I can ride great trails for day after day with a lightweight set up then let's go. Now I know there are plenty of riders who have gone before and we're hardly pioneering new routes, just check out the Rough Stuff Fellowship if you want to see how far behind we are. However, bikes and kit are so good these days that this type of adventure has never been easier.

Whether it's a quick overnigher or a sunrise descent from a high mountain, the art of camping with a bike is one that can be easily added to the repertoire of the mountain biker. Just a night out in the hills in its own right is worthy, but add some adventure and link up some trails on the map, and you have the makings of some great fun on a bike.

THE KIT

For this trip, we used Ortlieb's new Atrack pack to carry the majority of our kit, and this was paired with an Ortlieb bar roll. Other than this, the rest of the equipment was standard lightweight (and not so lightweight) outdoor kit.

Check out the bag here -

<https://www.ortlieb.com/uk/atrack-bp>





" PHOTOGRAPHER TRISTAN PROVED THAT DILIGENT USE OF A BLACK BIN BAG CAN ACHIEVE SOME IMPRESSIVE RESULTS. "

TOP TIPS

Get the weight on your back if you want to ride hard, Riding with a pack may feel awkward, but it's better than trying to manoeuvre a heavy bike filled with the kit.

Keep your kit dry - we had the advantage of the Ortlieb Atrack bag which allowed us to keep everything bone dry. Our Photographer Tristan proved that diligent use of a black bin bag can achieve some impressive results.

Use the current enduro trend of strapping things to your bike to save space. I used a OneUp pump and tool combo, a Fidloc Bottle cage and a Granite Design Tube strap.

Share kit across the group. No need for multiple multitools and three stoves. Spread it out and get your pack weight down.

Thanks to Lyon Equipment and Tom Ukleja

DAKINE



ERICKSON
& MALAY

GRAHAM AGASSIZ | YONAN BARELLI | CASEY BROWN | IAGO GARAY | BRENDAN HOWEY | MARCO OSBORNE | MATTHEW SLAVEN | CARSON STORCH | THOMAS VANDERHAM

IAGO GARAY

IAGO IN THE ARSENAL JACKET
SLAYER KNEE PAD VECTRA BIKE GLOVE & VECTRA BIKE SHORT

DAKINE

Known for his ingenuity behind the lens, we catch up with Jasper de Seymour and find out how an edit comes together and the challenges of producing original content in an over-saturated world of mountain bike video.

WORDS EWEN TURNER
PHOTOS & VIDEO JASPER DA SEYMOUR

SHIFT

THE MINDSET OF FILM MAKING





" I WOULD LIKE TO THINK MY STYLE IS UNIQUE, I DON'T SHOOT TO COMPETE WITH OTHERS OUT THERE"

WHO ARE YOU, AND HOW DID YOU GET INTO VIDEO AND PHOTOGRAPHY?

I work for myself full time as a freelance videographer/ editor and photographer. I contract and work with lots of businesses and brands to achieve better brand awareness by creating engaging content. I got into photo years ago through light painting, which is a whole other story... I quickly realised I couldn't justify how immersive riding was with just stills, so I used the same camera I have been taking stills on for years and a whole other bunch of gear and ventured into the bush to shoot some video with myself as the guinea pig.

HOW DO YOU DESCRIBE YOUR STYLE OF PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEO?

I would like to think my style is unique, I don't shoot to compete with others out there, I shoot to engage, so my style is generally a little left field when I'm given full creative freedom. When I'm not, I adapt to the brief I'm given and deliver the product. I like to have a laugh in some form with the video work I do and create something that you want to watch again by making it intriguing enough that one watch just isn't enough.

WITH SO MANY 'SHREDITS' RELEASED EVERY DAY, HOW DO YOU TRY AND SET YOURSELF APART FROM EVERYONE ELSE?

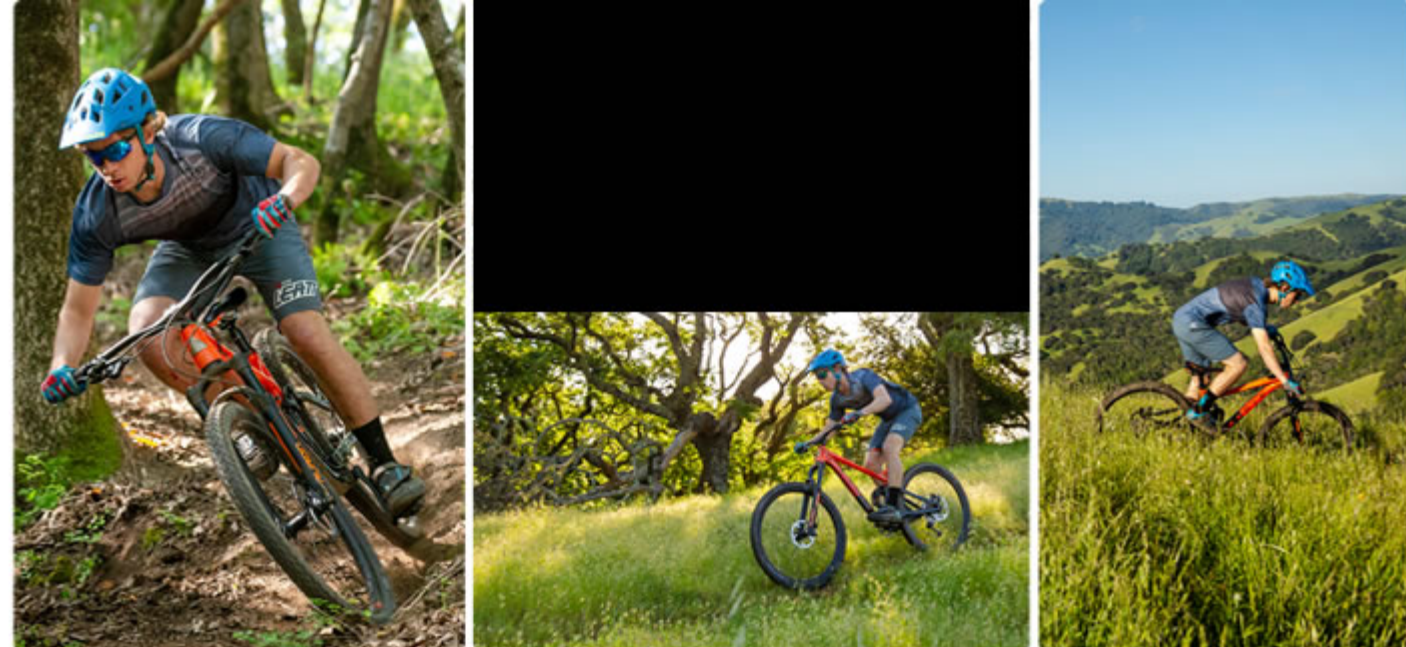
The web is saturated with shredits and general mind-blowing MTB content from all over the globe.



I tend to gravitate toward more quirky or even contemporary projects. I'm pretty self-aware, I know I'm not the best shooter, editor or have the best places to film in the world but I do know I'm pretty weird. There's a lot of things that go on in my head, and if I'm able to convey those, good things generally tend to follow when I create my videos.

My video CLOSED, which was made for a laugh, went way more viral than was anticipated for a local giggle between mates, getting featured in numerous parts of the web I didn't know existed. I guess I just don't try to compete, I just create, whatever else happens is a bonus, it's the freedom to create I'm ultimately hungry for.

"GOOD THINGS
GENERALLY TEND
TO FOLLOW
WHEN I CREATE
MY VIDEOS"



RIDER: MTT KOEN • PHOTOGRAPHER: LONG NGUYEN

"THE BEST
MOUNTAIN BIKE"

-BICYCLING MAGAZINE

HAWK HILL



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" SCOTT IS A MAD SLOPESTYLE RIDER WHO CAN PRETTY MUCH RIDE ANYTHING AS YOU CAN SEE! "

DO YOU THINK VIEWERS ARE TIRED OF THE SAME OLD MOUNTAIN BIKE FILMS AND CONCEPTS?

No they will never get tired, they will just become further disengaged from what they are seeing, it's only natural as our attention continues to diminish with the deep wash of never-ending content, that's why its important that where possible we create content that affects us on a subconscious level, like an art

piece, it might make you happy, sad, laugh or you might hate it but its essential it hits on an emotive level somehow.

WHAT IS THE PROCESS YOU GO THROUGH TO PRODUCE A FILM LIKE SHIFT?

Time is spent brainstorming with the athlete to make sure they will be happy with the type of film you intend to create with them, ensuring to work to their strengths where possible and highlight their commitment to their craft. Scouting the right kind of trail is crucial as Scott is a mad slopestyle rider who can pretty much ride anything as you can see!

If there are too many directions from outside parties pushing their agenda or stubborn heads, it can make it hard to create something meaningful. One chef in the kitchen with a sous chef (athlete) for support is the best mix! The best things happen when the athlete and shooter gel and embrace the vision of the project, that leads to something like the product of Shift.

WHAT INFLUENCE DOES THE CAMERA HAVE ON ATHLETE RIDING? ARE THEY MORE WILLING TO PUSH THEMSELVES AND WHAT PROBLEMS DOES THIS PRESENT?

Dedicated riders don't generally perform any different, but they want to deliver their best on these projects so its always in the back of my mind,

" HOW IT'S POSSIBLE TO ACHIEVE AMAZING THINGS WHEN YOU'RE ABLE TO SHIFT YOUR MINDSET TO OVERCOME OBSTACLES OR MENTAL BARRIERS "

I never ask them to do anything that they aren't 200% on.

I just don't ask, they tell me what they want to do, and I let them know that there is no pressure to perform; it usually comes from the expectations they place on themselves to deliver. I generally know what most are comfortable with, we did push the envelope a bit on Shift but thankfully not too far!

HOW DO YOU BALANCE THE RISK OF ENCOURAGING RIDERS TO PUSH THEIR LIMITS?

I feel responsible, although we both know the decisions to drop in are always theirs to make. I never push them, only ask them what they believe they can do, then talk through options.

WHAT'S THE STORY BEHIND THIS LATEST FILM?

My concept was to create a visual narrative of our ability to shift & change our state of mind through Scott's riding sequence. Obviously highlighting his broad skillset & abilities on various bikes, so we spent two days shooting one trail on both trail & DJ bike with the vision of linking the two and displaying how it's possible to achieve amazing things when you're able to shift your mindset to overcome obstacles or mental barriers, however big or small they might be.

WHO IS SCOTT THORNHILL?

Scott was the right guy for the job, his relentless drive, passion, skills & stubborn but laser-focused head made this a lot of fun to shoot and produce.





It's not often you get to work with someone who is quite literally willing to put their safety on the line. Someone who attempts things that they don't believe are possible within themselves, witnessing someone genuinely pushing themselves to the limits of what they set upon themselves & then breaking through them right there in front of you as you document it.

WHAT FUTURE PROJECTS ARE YOU WORKING ON AND WHAT SORT OF FILMS WOULD YOU LOVE TO MAKE IN THE FUTURE?

I'm currently working on a bunch of small projects,

" SOMEONE WHO
ATTEMPTS
THINGS THAT
THEY DON'T
BELIEVE ARE
POSSIBLE WITHIN
THEMSELVES "

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" CREATE A STORY WITH WHAT YOU'RE STOKED ON, DOESN'T HAVE TO BE DEEP, JUST A BEGINNING, MIDDLE AND AN END."

one I'm particularly pumped on is a short film showcasing Tasmania and some incredible remote trails. I would love to continue to create short films with some form of narrative, something we can all connect with on a certain level, whimsical and almost playful and childish but creating shorts that make you want to be there.

WHAT IS THE FUTURE OF ADVENTURE SPORTS FILM MAKING? WILL WE BE WATCHING THE SAME STUFF IN 5 OR 10 YEARS?

Honestly, I don't know, but if I took a punt I would say it's going to be a more immersive experience, 3D, VR and 360 tech is changing how we experience films and on the film making front are powerful points of difference that will change how we process information and emotions. I'm sure the same industry-driven shreds and basic content will still exist as there will always be a space for this, it will just have to adapt to what the viewers engage with more at the end of the day.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE YOUNG FILMMAKERS AND PHOTOGRAPHERS?

Whatever it is you're stoked on, go do lots of it! Then get literally any camera you have and try and create a story with what you're stoked on, doesn't have to be deep, just a beginning, middle and an end. The same process can drive and aspiring stills shooter too, there's no reason you can't create a story to engage through stills. The reason I go on about this so much is I see so much content out there that is just amazing visually, but when all piled together is just missing the heart.

" ENJOY THE PROCESS AND ALL THE CLIMBS AND DESCENTS YOU HAVE TO DEAL WITH ALONG THE WAY! "

I have seen some compelling work created with the most basic smartphones because the person behind it cares so much about what they are making, those are the videos I remember in 5 years, not the 4000FPS roost shot I saw, don't get me wrong I love these too! You will learn a lot quicker both technically and invest emotionally in what you're doing, be romantic with it, enjoy the process and all the climbs and descents you have to deal with along the way!

WHICH OTHER FILMMAKERS PHOTOGRAPHERS DO YOU ADMIRE AND WHY?

Oh, so many! Scott Seco, wow, and the 23-year-old shooter for Commencal JB Liautard. His work is so far ahead of his years both technically and conceptually, and he predominantly shoots MTB, he sets the bar with what he does, and he's nearly 10 years younger than me, unreal.

WHAT'S YOUR SET UP?

It changes from shoot to shoot but ultimately it has been my Sony FS700 with Canon glass, 70-200 F2.8 or Sigma ART 50mm 1.4 handheld, Shift was shot entirely by handheld except for the obvious drone shots, I love that setup. Mavic 2 Pro, 8stop ND, 24fps 4K full throttle.



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TRAIL GUIDE GRANDE SASSIÈRE

3747 meters above sea level. In words, that's "three thousand seven hundred forty-seven metres" and makes it seem even bigger. What we're referring to here is the Aiguille de la Grande Sassièrè, the highest rideable mountain of the Alps. For us, however, it's only part of our acclimatization process. But more on that later...

WORDS FABIAN GLEITSMANN
PHOTOS WIEBKE SRADNICK & FABIAN GLEITSMANN





" WHILE THE CLIMB IS ALWAYS TECHNICAL, ALWAYS CHALLENGING, IT REMAINS COMPLETELY RIDEABLE."

First, let's start at the beginning, and as we all know, every beginning is hard. In our case, it's especially hard because of the endless drive to reach the Western Alps, the area around Chamonix and Zermatt. But it couldn't be more worth the hassle! Firstly for once, the trails there take you really high into the alpine and into one of the most impressive bike destinations of the planet. Secondly, because it is also very close to the little town of Aosta, you can find

the best ice cream on earth. Where exactly? Just walk towards the western end of the historical city centre, turn right and on the corner, you'll find a long queue – that's the one! It is precisely for that reason that we make a stopover before hitting the first trails.

This ice cream diversion is made very briefly because we're on a mission: we're aiming high. Spending most of the year in the flatlands on the

northside of the Alps, this means acclimatization is vital. Our accommodation rests at almost two thousand metres, and every single ride will take us even higher. For example the ride from La Thuile towards the Col de la Croix: a five hundred meter uphill ride on tarmac. Followed by another 500 meters on a trail through an airy larch forest, that offers the most amazing views, once you've climbed above the treeline.

Courmayeur, the Mont Blanc mountain range, the views here are as good as they get, and while the climb is always technical, always challenging, it remains completely rideable. Another epic is the Pointe de Metz, the local mountain above Aosta which rises to more than 2600m take into account that Aosta sits at less than six hundred metres above sea level and this equals two thousand metres of uphill – but inevitably also two thousand metres of downhill on nothing but the best of trails. Pure flow, of the flowiest kind – riding just doesn't get any better than this!

Crossing the border to France gets you to Bourg-Saint-Maurice, which sits at the base of the Les Arcs mountain area. A vast network of trails covers all key areas on the mountain, suitable for all skill levels. We spend most of our time on the trails on the south side of the mountain, but also make our way towards Bozel, a tiny village situated close to Courchevel and the nearby bike park. However, we're more attracted by the traditional hiking trails and get lucky on the flanks of the Aiguille d'Aout, where absolutely surreal singletrack takes us back to the valley.

After some acclimatization, it is time for the first venture into thin air: the Aiguille de la Grande Sassi re. Thanks to Facebook's reminder, I know that I had been on that summit precisely five years ago, and I've been thinking about a repetition ever since.



" TWO THOUSAND METRES OF
DOWNHILL ON NOTHING BUT THE
BEST OF TRAILS. "





Fifteen hundred vertical meters nestle between the parking lot at the bottom, and the summit, fifty of which are rideable. For the remaining, the bike sits on your shoulders. We meet dozens of hikers that are all impressed and stoked about our project. One mountain guide explains that this tour has become somewhat of a classic ride among local bikers, and to our surprise, we can even spot some tracks in the soft soil. At three thousand metres, we make the first stop for breakfast. Croissants, baguette, and panorama – in moments like this, France is hard to beat.

" WE MEET
DOZENS OF
HIKERS THAT
ARE ALL
IMPRESSED
AND STOKED
ABOUT OUR
PROJECT. "




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" THE RIDE ALONG THE GLACIER REMAINS ONE OF THE BEST HIGH ALPINE TRAILS ACROSS THE ENTIRETY OF THE ALPS! "



A short steep section soon after turns out to be no big challenge, and soon we find ourselves next to the Glacier de la Sassièrè, that will be on our side all the way to the summit.

We climb on, but step-by-step we start to wonder if we're actually going to make it to the summit. Why? Every single climber that is coming back down from the peak carries crampons and an ice axe. For good reason: during the last days, thunderstorms have soaked the upper parts of the mountain with rain. No problem usually, but overnight the steep summit slope turns into pure ice that takes some days to melt – before it's hit by yet another storm.

We're a bit disappointed, but we still decide to call it a day around at 3500 m. Some risks just aren't worth taking – one small mistake during the climb or the ride down, and you'll find yourself (or your bike) either thirty metres below in a crevasse or thousand metres below in the valley. But even though some short sections of the trail are unrideable, the ride along the glacier remains one of the best high alpine trails across the entirety of the Alps!

And in our itinerary, it's only a means to an end. Because you can always get higher. In this case, up to 4554 meters: Punta Gnifetti. One of the highest mountains in the Alps. In 1893, a hut was built, right on the summit, and the pizza is said to be pretty good.





Up to 3200 m, a network of gondolas makes the climb easy, from there on the trail crosses a glacier and rocky terrain, leading up to the Rifugio Mantova, at 3498 m.

Eating and drinking make up the rest of our day, at 10 pm all lights are off. But they're on again at 3:30, and a crazy hustle begins: more than 100 climbers try to get up, eat their breakfast, pack their things – all at the same time. Dozens of light beams are already visible on the rock-hard glacier as we begin our climb. Slowly, step by step.

" DOZENS OF
LIGHT BEAMS
ARE ALREADY
VISIBLE ON THE
ROCK-HARD
GLACIER AS WE
BEGIN OUR
CLIMB "



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ROSE

" AN INCREDIBLE FEELING, AND AN ASTONISHING VIEW ACROSS DOZENS OF 4000M PEAKS, DOWN INTO THE ITALIAN LOWLANDS. "

Even though it's only -5°, and we're wearing warm winter gear, my fingers are quickly frozen, and I start to curse the winter – even though it's actually summer!

Step by step, we make our way towards the summit, and despite our acclimatization, I can feel a headache coming on. A steep flank just below the peak asks for our full attention for one last time, before we take the final steps to the top. An incredible feeling, and an astonishing view across dozens of 4000m peaks, down into the Italian lowlands. We'd reached the top, and with the views overwhelming us, it was time to enter the hut at the top and find out about the famous pizza. It turned out there was a little more on offer too, hot chocolate and pizza. Bon appetit!

This area of the Alps is so rich in trails it should be on the bucket list of every rider, with so many amazing places to base yourself, Chamonix, Bourg St Maurice and Aosta it's a real trifecta of MTB heaven, the mountains are big, the scenery is stunning and the trails are sublime.

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PROGRESSION SESSIONS

Save the anger and conquer the camber

Welcome back folks and thank you for joining us in the continuation of our skills and technique features, we now move on from the basic core skills covered in the previous issues, and we start to ramp it up with trail technicality as we look at progressing those core skills and techniques.



As trail technicality increases we need to be more pinpoint and razor-sharp with our technique and timings, speed is what it is in a section, and by being relaxed, we can sometimes get away with being a bit sloppy with our wheel placement. That said errors for margin may be as little as zero and it is at these key pinch points and crux zones that it all has to come together just so.

Camber often plays a significant role in these scenarios, and we ride in an environment where camber can be measured pretty much everywhere. The slope angle of the trail can be played with to unsettle the bike at point A (typically a back end nudge or drift) to make the next section easier. We start to 'bridge' sections and purposefully place the front wheel on a different line to sit the rear wheel elsewhere to either the left or right.

" HOPEFULLY THERE IS A POSITIVE CAMBER ON THE OTHER SIDE FOR YOU TO HOOK UP INTO AND GET THE TRACTION BACK "

Where trails dish or rut out we find ourselves riding in a micro toboggan run where we have both positive camber on the outside of corners (punch berm shapes) and negative or off-camber on the inside of those corners, with limited width to play with it can be easy to get the wheels on the inside edge of these corners inducing slide or drift, hopefully there is a positive camber on the other side for you to hook up into and get the traction back, in most natural trail scenarios where we are traversing hillsides this will not be the case.

When conditions are loose or slick, and we encounter off-camber we need to hang loose and pre-empt that slip and slide, as wheels fight for traction,



" IT CAN OFTEN BE BENEFICIAL TO
LOOK AT BOTH THE BIKE'S SET UP AND
YOUR OWN CONDITION. "

we need to help that rubber dig in and bite by using massive amounts of technique. This comes down to a combination of body position and footwork, hips moving, legs driving downwards and feet finishing that load transfer by further 'pressing' into the trail. The head has to remain up and looking through the section keeping the eyes aimed

on the trail ahead, any lapse in the vision and wrong move of the neck and head will start to pull you down to the deck as the wheels and bike slide around underneath you.

When finding the limits of traction and of your own ability to move the bike around below you, it can often be beneficial to look at both the bike's set up and your own condition. We need to have power in the muscles to support ourselves above the bike as we take hits and get G-forces in compressions but also supple with that strength movement. Strong endurance

(slow twitch) muscles need to be trained to deal with the faster lighter side of things and in situations where we have to move lightning fast. Fast muscle twitch fibres are required to make the bike dance below us; we also need an extensive range in the movement of the limbs with strength at the end of each part of that movement.

This means that for those of you who are not conditioned to the task and have recently taken up the sport (or made a welcome return to it) then you will benefit from some off-bike cross-training exercises. Many of you will be involved in day jobs where the dynamic range of movement isn't required,



so these responses and moves on the bike appear more learned than natural. A coaching comrade of mine used to talk about 'calm mind and dancing body', all well and good but think about how well most folk dance and we can see that just isn't enough. Sure the calm mind and simple process of only allowing the grey matter up top to deal with light flooding in through the eyes is a massive step towards lines of success and fluidity, but without the range and speed of movement from the limbs, we are only partway there.

" THINK ABOUT
HOW WELL
MOST FOLK
DANCE AND WE
CAN SEE THAT
JUST ISN'T
ENOUGH."

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We can make adjustments to the bike set up, but whatever we do here will have a knock-on effect somewhere else. Softening tyre pressure and or suspension may assist in getting hooked up and gripped up on cambers, but slower rolling speeds or reduced travel may be less welcome elsewhere in the ride. A lack of traction from tyres and suspension can and in specific scenarios has to be overcompensated by increased technique, pushing the legs/feet down into the pedals harder, swinging the hips and leaning the bike over will help regain traction on off-camber traverses and where off / negative camber lies on the inside of corners.

" LET THE EYEBALLS DROP DOWN TO CHECK THE SMALLER DETAILS IN THE TRAIL SURFACE "

Where speeds are lower, and the trail ahead is obscured by trees and vegetation there can be a temptation to look down at the ground immediately in front of the bike, you must remember that the head leads and the body follows. Keep the head up and looking through these natural features to where you believe the trail to go beyond them, let the eyeballs drop down to check the smaller details in the trail surface to help ensure you are still hooking up the sweetest line through the section.

When it comes to dealing with extreme cambers in downhill sections braking has to be kept sweet, lighter control braking is going to help maintain/scrub speed while keeping the wheels rolling cutting fresh knobby's into the trail. You may need to do some more aggressive deceleration braking, if so be mindful of where your wheels are, avoiding washing out on roots that may cross the trail by modulating braking forces and easing up on the pressure at this point.





Using pressure in and pressure out you can help the bike keep traction by going light over the rocks and roots that have off-camber faces, you may still glance them but with less pressure hitting into them the deflection will be less, and the tyre will have more chance to bite back into the hardback when it lands back on the earth. Of course, there may be occasions where that sneaky slide helps you set up for the next section.

" THE RALLYING FRATERNITY INSPIRED US OLD-SCHOOLERS MANY YEARS BACK BEFORE THAT TUBE CHANNEL "

Some off / negative cambers can actually be used to our benefit, inducing slides/drifts they can help swing the bike in a pendulum motion (the Scandinavian or Scandy flick), we take the drift from one direction and 'back it in' to the other. This rear end loose style has been popularised by a current wave of riders, but its nothing new, the rallying fraternity inspired us old-schoolers many years back before that tube channel, and other online viewing platforms made these sneaky tricks more widely known. Many modern rutted and deeply scoured trails have also helped in the deployment of this style to be flamboyantly used, for sure in these situations it is a remarkably fast way to ride but don't be tricked into trying to use this steer with the rear technique in all circumstances, it just ends up in losses momentum, worn-out tyres and eroded trails.

Obviously there are many positive cambers out there on the trail to be used, natural berm shapes that we can push and slide into will help us maintain momentum and set up for features, even small angles can be worked to our advantage allowing us to get the tyres tread spread out across the terrain for maximum traction.



" YOU ARE GOING TO END UP SLOWLY LOSING ELEVATION AS YOU TOO SLIDE DOWN THE HILL "

However equally small negative cambers can really work against us, pulling/towing the bike off line or radically slapping us in the face by whipping out the front wheel, round profiled tyres, where the side knobs are equal, sided tend to 'push' off cambered

edges and faces, tyres who's blocks are taller on the outside edge and lower nearer the centre of the tyre tend to cut in that little better, it also helps if the edge of the tyre is uniform, that is to say, the block pattern is NOT staggered. Staggered blocks allow the tyre to initiate sideways movement when hitting obstacles at an angle (typically a root or hard edge of soil poking out from an already off-cambered trail).

If you are encountering virgin terrain then

there may be little chance of getting that edge hooked up, the tyres will slip and slide, and you are going to end up slowly losing elevation as you too slide down the hill, this is where you have to pre-empt just how much slippage you are likely to have, from entry point 'A' you need to exaggerate your line choice by aiming higher up the slope so as to hit your exit point 'B'. Different surfaces will have different slippage, some surfaces will bind and give you support after just a small amount of slippage, others may take a while to bind before they provide enough support to send you on your merry way.



Trial and error are the real fixes for getting to grips with camber, reading slope angle, trail condition and rock - lock factor will enable you to build up a database to reflect upon next time you are faced with an off-camber traverse or corner. This database of real-world experience is critical and facing such situations will become less intimidating the more of it you do. Anytime it comes time to push the envelope and stick your neck out it should be done with the knowledge and understanding that there is inherent risk in what you are doing by riding mountain bikes off-road, it has to be your call and your judgement that dictates whether the risk is worth the reward.

**" THOSE WHO DARE TO FAIL MISERABLY
CAN ACHIEVE GREATLY. "**

Ultimately we all want to ride tomorrow, and the day after and so on, for some of you the penalty for failure maybe just that bit too much to face. If we are not entirely sure then that minuscule doubt can be the trigger for us to tense up, the repercussions means we may have a rough and skeet ride or we may not even make it out the other side at all, If you are not 'feeling it' and in any doubt at all then leave it, more than likely that trail, section, feature/problem will still be there to face another day. Confidence breeds confidence, know your limits and know when to quit when you are ahead.

John F Kennedy said, "Those who dare to fail miserably can achieve greatly." He'd obviously never crashed a mountain bike, on the flip side J. K Rowling said "It is our choices, that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities," and far more fitting for those of us facing camber and gravity. Keep it rubber side down, until next time.

Clive Forth

TRIED AND TESTED

We take a bit of an XC trip this issue with high end short travel forks, plus the Pivot Mach 4 SL, to keep things endure focused the Radon Swoop 8.0 gets a ride and the DMR Sect keeps us down with the kids at the skatepark! There is also a selection of other bits and pieces getting put through their paces too.

BIKES

Pivot Mach 4 SL

Radon Swoop 8.0

DMR Sect

FORKS

Fox 34 StepCast

RockShox SIDS

Suntour Axon Werx 34

BITS & PIECES

Leatt DBX 5.5 Neck Brace

Magura MT7 Brakes

Ortlieb Atrack BP Backpack

ALL WORDS AND PHOTOS THE IMB TEST TEAM

PHOTO THIS PAGE STEPHAN PETERS/PIVOT

BRAND PIVOT MODEL MACH 4 SL TEAM XTR YEAR 2019

"THE FASTEST
AND LIGHTEST
TRAIL BIKE I'VE
EVER RIDDEN."

TO VISIT THEIR
WEBSITE, CLICK HERE



AT A GLANCE

There is a lot of hype surrounding the new wave of XC bikes that have arrived in the last twelve months. These short travel, lightweight and capable bikes may yet spawn their own genre but for the time being, we are seeing a response to more taxing World Cup courses and the application of kit that can be both light and strong.

Pivot launches their new Mach 4 SL, which is their unapologetically race-focused machine with 100mm of travel. The layout is different, but the DW link remains and it's brought right in line with the current Pivot sizing spectrum. The builds available on the Mach 4 SL are many, but they range from full-xc focussed race setups with a fixed post (remember them?) and 100mm fork to marginally more relaxed approach with a dropper and a 120mm step cast fork.

In our case, we have the latter end of the spectrum with something more akin to a trail bike but would happily smash out some racing in the form of a BC bike race for example. This model is the 'Team XTR' it gets the 120mm Fox 34 Step-Cast fork and the whole system is run on Fox Live Valve,

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BRAND RADON MODEL SWOOP 8.0 YEAR 2019

"THE BIKE
DELIVERS A RIDE
THAT EASILY
RIVALS BIKES
COSTING TWICE
THE PRICE, IF
NOT MORE."

TO VISIT THEIR
WEBSITE, CLICK HERE



AT A GLANCE

The Swoop is Radon's 29 inch wheeled enduro bike, designed primarily for hitting big things, fast! There's a range of 3 models with some rather tasty prices too – this entry-level (if we can even call it that!) Swoop 8.0 on test comes in at just 2499 Euros for the full bike, which is considerably cheaper than many manufacturers frame-only prices. So, just because it's cheap, doesn't that mean it's not as good? Well in short, no. Far from it.

The Swoop 8.0 might be the entry-level Swoop in the range but it's hard to find fault with the level of kit for this money. 170mm of RockShox suspension graces each end of the bike, with the dependable Lyrik RC2 fork on the front and a Monarch Plus RC3 Debonair handling damping duties outback. A Shimano 11 speed drivetrain gives the go and the Magura MT5 brakes handle the stopping too. DT Swiss E1900 wheels are complete with the current 30mm inner rim width providing ample support for larger tyres (Schwalbe's Magic Mary and Hans Dampf come as standard) and with a mix of Race Face and SDG finishing kit to round everything off.

[CLICK OR TAP TO READ MORE](#)

"THE STYLE IS HIGH ON THE AGENDA FOR THIS LITTLE RIPPER."

TO VISIT THEIR WEBSITE, CLICK HERE



AT A GLANCE

DMR was born from the world of dirt jumps and messing about in the woods. Recent bike releases like the Trailstar and the Sled represent how far DMR has come over the past couple of decades however the Sect bridges the gap between old school and new school with a modern steel hardtail for dirt jumps, pumptracks and skatepark fun.

The Sect is their hardtail jump bike, which for 2019 we see packaged up in a wallet-friendly format for those looking to dip a toe into the delights pumptracks and beyond. Based around the classic Sect frame in 26inch wheels, the steel chassis (4130 Chromoly) features a short 390mm backend and a 69-degree head angle packaged together into a 420mm reach. It's only one size but this number should fit a fairly wide range of riders.

Other frame features include a threaded bottom bracket which is always a pleasure to see, but less common these days is a straight 1 1/8 headtube to hold the 100mm RST fork. This means upgrading forks could be an issue long term with most modern forks using a tapered steerer.

[CLICK OR TAP TO READ MORE](#)

BRAND FOX MODEL 34 STEP-CAST YEAR 2019

"THE
CONFIDENCE IT
GIVES THE
FRONT END OF
A BIKE IS
INCREDIBLE"

TO VISIT THEIR
WEBSITE, CLICK HERE



AT A GLANCE

The Step-Cast 34 is the offspring of Fox's super light Step-Cast 32 fork and their trail/all-rounder 34. Taking the 34mm stanchions of the trail fork, Fox has dropped the travel to 120mm and redesigned the lowers to shave all the weight they can without sacrificing stiffness.

This leads to a 120mm fork that is as stiff as the 34 140mm fork but has the weight saving of 0.23kg. So as far as modern XC forks go, this is one serious piece of kit, where there is very little compromise other than the price, which at £1,119.00 will help you go even faster as your wallet will be that much lighter!

If weight is your ultimate goal then the Step-Cast 32s will see you right, or if you need longer travel (130 and above) trail performance then the standard 34 range takes you right up into big travel fun. The 34 Step-Cast may seem a little niche, but it's a growing niche of hard-hitting short travel trail bikes. Although the 34 Step-Cast has been out a little while, it seems only now the bike is catching up that can use this tool to good effect.

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BRAND ROCKSHOX

MODEL SID ULTIMATE

YEAR 2020



"EXCEPTIONAL
FEEL THROUGH
THE TRAIL WITH
GLUE-LIKE
TRACTION AND
PERFECTLY
DELIVERED
TRAVEL."

TO VISIT THEIR
WEBSITE, CLICK HERE



AT A GLANCE

Synonymous with XC racing, the SID has been getting riders on podiums for as long as I can remember and this latest version is certainly continuing the tradition. For 2020 models RockShox has introduced the new Ultimate versions of its forks. These represent the highest level of technology in the range in each of the chassis available i.e. Pike, Lyric, Boxxer and of course, the SID.

The SID is RockShox' XC race fork and this latest edition aims to meet the demands of the hardest and most technical World Cup courses. Based around 32mm stanchions, the SID is available in 100mm and 120mm options in both wheel sizes (boost axles throughout). While the other forks in the Ultimate range get the Charger 2.1 damper, the SID gets the Charger 2 damper, the model here getting the RLC (rebound, Lockout and Low-speed compression) version. The air spring is courtesy of a DebonAir Spring, which is seen in other RockShox products and provides a super supple ride.

CLICK OR TAP TO READ MORE



BRAND SUNTOUR

MODEL AXON34 WERX BOOST

YEAR 2019

"A SERIOUSLY
HIGH CALIBRE
ADDITION TO
THE NEW WAVE
OF HARD-HITTING
SHORT TRAVEL
FORKS"

TO VISIT THEIR
WEBSITE, CLICK HERE



AT A GLANCE

XC has become more demanding both technically and physically and races are no longer won solely on the climbs and technical descending is becoming more prevalent. Suntour has risen to this challenge of creating the ultimate XC fork with the Axon Werx 34. Offering 34mm stanchions in a super lightweight package, and with it, the Axon aims to not compromise on weight, stiffness or performance.

The Axon range has been Suntours XC fork for some time and the Axon Werx 34 sees this fork bumped up to larger stanchions in response to more demanding tracks. The Werx model is their top-end fork and is available in 100/110/120mm options in both wheel sizes. Most notably it features a Carbon hollow crown and steerer, which keeps the weight down and is a real statement that this is a high-end fork.

Internally the Axon Werx uses their EQ (Equalizer) system to make sure positive and negative air are perfectly matched.

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"IT'S EASY TO FORGET THAT YOU'VE GOT IT ON AND YOU CAN JUST GET DOWN TO RIDING."



BRAND LEATT **MODEL** DBX 5.5 NECK BRACE
YEAR 2019

At A Glance

Leatt is synonymous with the Neck Brace. So much so that it's easy to forget they make a wealth of other mountain bike and motorbike products. With few companies making them, Leatt is certainly at the top of their game and their kit can be found around the necks of plenty of high profile downhill racers.

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"ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL AND REFINED BRAKING EXPERIENCES ON THE MARKET"



BRAND MAGURA **MODEL** MT7 PRO
YEAR 2019

At A Glance

Magura has always offered a wide range of braking solutions for your bike, ranging from lever shapes to piston combinations, brake pads to colour options. Modular adjustability is the key for Magura and their #Customiseyourbrake system allows riders all the choices to make their brake ideal for them.

For me, I was after power, and if you want 4 pot front and rear then it's the MT7s that fit the bill.

TO VISIT THEIR
WEBSITE, CLICK HERE



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"HI-TECH
BACKPACK FOR
ADVENTURES
INTO THE
WILDERNESS
OR JUST OUT
ON THE TRAILS"



BRAND ORTLIEB MODEL ATRACK BP
YEAR 2019

AT A GLANCE

Ortlieb is known as a manufacturer of the highest quality waterproof bags and kit for outdoor enthusiasts. They've been producing bags for bikes for as long as I can remember, usually in the pannier style or bar bag type. As bikepacking has become a thing, their bags have evolved to fit in more and more places on modern mountain bikes, but this is their first specific backpack for such endeavours.

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INTERVIEW BY EWEN TURNER PHOTOS PIERRE HENNI

GETTING TO KNOW KILIAN BRON





' WE ARE ALL INVOLVED IN DEVELOPING IT, IT'S LIKE A FAMILY, AND WE LIKE THIS CONCEPT! '

First up can you tell us a little bit about yourself? Where are you from, and how did you get into mountain bikes?

I'm Kilian Bron, 27, from Annecy - French Alps and professional enduro mountain bike rider. I started riding bikes fifteen years ago, riding downhill as I lived only 500 meters from a funicular, and there I met some other young riders who became my friends. For most of us, we never stopped riding and spent our years skiing in winter and

mountain biking in summer.

Who do you ride for and what bikes and equipment do you use?

We created the Intense Mavic Collective two years ago with my teammate Isabeau Courdurier and Cedric Carrez (team manager). We are all involved in developing it, it's like a family, and we like this concept!

I ride both an Intense Carbine in 29 and a Tracer in 27.5, both fully equipped by Mavic,

SRAM/RockShox, Hutchinson, Renthal, HT, San Marco components.

How do you like your bikes set up, do you have any specific things you are fussy about?

There are a lot of things to explain, we could write another article about just this subject! The main things are the geometry, I like to ride large bikes to increase stability and currently I really enjoy riding my Carbine in 29. The grip is impressive, and it's a really efficient bike to gain speed, which is essential for all the pedalling parts.



My brakes levers are horizontal to preserve my arms, and my front suspension is stiffer than my rear, but I always have the same air pressure (1,8bar front - 1,9bar rear with SLICY rim protection). I use inserts between my tires and rims to push hard in the corners without troubles.

And I mustn't forget that I'm always riding with my copilot Pedro, a little lama I found in Cusco - Peru. Since then he's stuck to my fork!

How would you describe your riding style?

I like to combine style, precision and speed. I'm pretty relaxed on the bike to try to be efficient and be able to ride a long time without stops. That's the reason why I like long mass start races!

' I LIKE TO
COMBINE
STYLE,
PRECISION
AND SPEED.'

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' WE KNOW OUR SPORT IS BRUTAL FOR OUR BODIES AND BIKES, BUT I DON'T WANT TO SEE IT LIKE THIS '



What do you do when you are not riding a bike?

Even if I want to spend most of my time outside, I also have to spend time in front of my computer or my phone. Writing emails, organizing my next trips and media projects, posting social contents... that's an integral part of my job, but I like to do it! When I'm at home, I'm with friends and girlfriend. I'm lucky to live in a fantastic place with a beautiful lake surrounding by mountains. So, there are a lot of other activities.

What do you love most about mountain biking?

Biking is definitely the easiest way to discover new areas. You can go everywhere with your bike, and I've always enjoyed getting off the beaten track and exploring beyond usual paths and peaks. I see my bike as a tool to express myself with my real addiction is to ride.

What annoys you most about mountain biking?

I hate crashes or destroying my bike and components. I like to be at 100% physically and mentally, and it's the same for my bike. We know our sport is brutal for our bodies and bikes, but I don't want to see it like this. One example, that's just beautiful to watch a good rider flying over rocks with speed and flow. You have to be extremely focused and precise to find this flow. That's what mountain biking is all about.

Which riders have most influenced you over the years, and how?

When I think about racing, it's Sam Hill. I really like his personality and charisma, he's just a fantastic athlete and a humble guy. If it's about technical performances and media vision, then Danny MacAskill. A creative and talented rider, always pushing hard to find his limits.



Best competition results on a bike?

Some weeks ago, when I tried to combine The Mountain of Hell and the Megavalanche. For the second time in a row, I won the MOH and finished the second in the Mega. It was a real goal for my race season, and you can't be relaxed at the start of a mass start. Everything around you is stressful, and that's a strange feeling! Each year, you don't know why you're at the beginning of a race like this, so it's more a mental exercise than a physical and technical performance...

' IT'S MORE A MENTAL EXERCISE THAN A PHYSICAL AND TECHNICAL PERFORMANCE '

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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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First Days of Spring

13 hours ago | 03:33

Gothenburg, Sweden looked good last spring. Hopefully spring has sprung already this year, and the trails are running this well. Anyone else want to grab t...

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The Neo-Retro Project : YYZ

19 hours ago | 3:41

All the tubes, all the style, all the... the desire? Only 3 are... the... old... Dev... your... list? A story...

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SECRET SPOT HAS 50 HALF PIPES IN A ROW...

10:21

year old half pipe, well, 50 in a row to be precise... More retro architecture exploration from Bas and the Tall Order crew. Will they get the clip? Th...

Mountain Bike in Macro Lens - Ride SOK

2 days ago | 0:27

Macro mountain bikes, an interesting perspective from Ride SOK. Big hits, and rad lines... You often overlook everything that's going on with the bike and...

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Issue #46

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TRAINING FOR DH // RIDE HONG KONG
TECHNIQUE, TESTS AND MUCH MUCH MORE INSIDE
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What's your favourite place to ride in the world and why?

I travelled to a lot of countries with my bike. Canada, NZ, Indonesia, Hawaii, Peru, Chile, China, Norway... But my home is still the best place to ride. Not only for landscapes, but you also add your friends, the mountain bike community, our projects and that's why I choose my home as the best place to ride. As a fan of the famous Lion King, I'm in love with Namibia, and you must watch MISSION - Episode 3 on my YouTube channel!

You seem to be a specialist in mass-start races on snow are these your favourite events?

Before I rode mountain bikes, I was a skier. I'm still a skier, but I learned to ride on the snow. Within a few years, I started to ride bikes on snow, and I have a good feeling on it, and it's a unique way to ride a mountain bike. I'm always searching for an edit and new challenges, and it's not common to ride on the snow. I like this ;)

Also, with a mass start, it's not only against the clock as you're not alone and you must be focused and reactive to go fast and stay on your bike. Anticipation, strategies and patience are the keywords.

Are those the critical skills required to race mass start and snow events like the Mega?

Absolutely. More than 50% of the race is in the first 20 seconds. If you lose too much time at the start, it will be tough to finish on the podium. Sometimes, it's a bit frustrating, but that's the game.

What's the best piece of advice you've been given in your mountain bike career?

Always do things with Passion, and you will stay motivated forever.

' I'M ALWAYS SEARCHING FOR AN EDIT AND NEW CHALLENGES, AND IT'S NOT COMMON TO RIDE ON THE SNOW. '





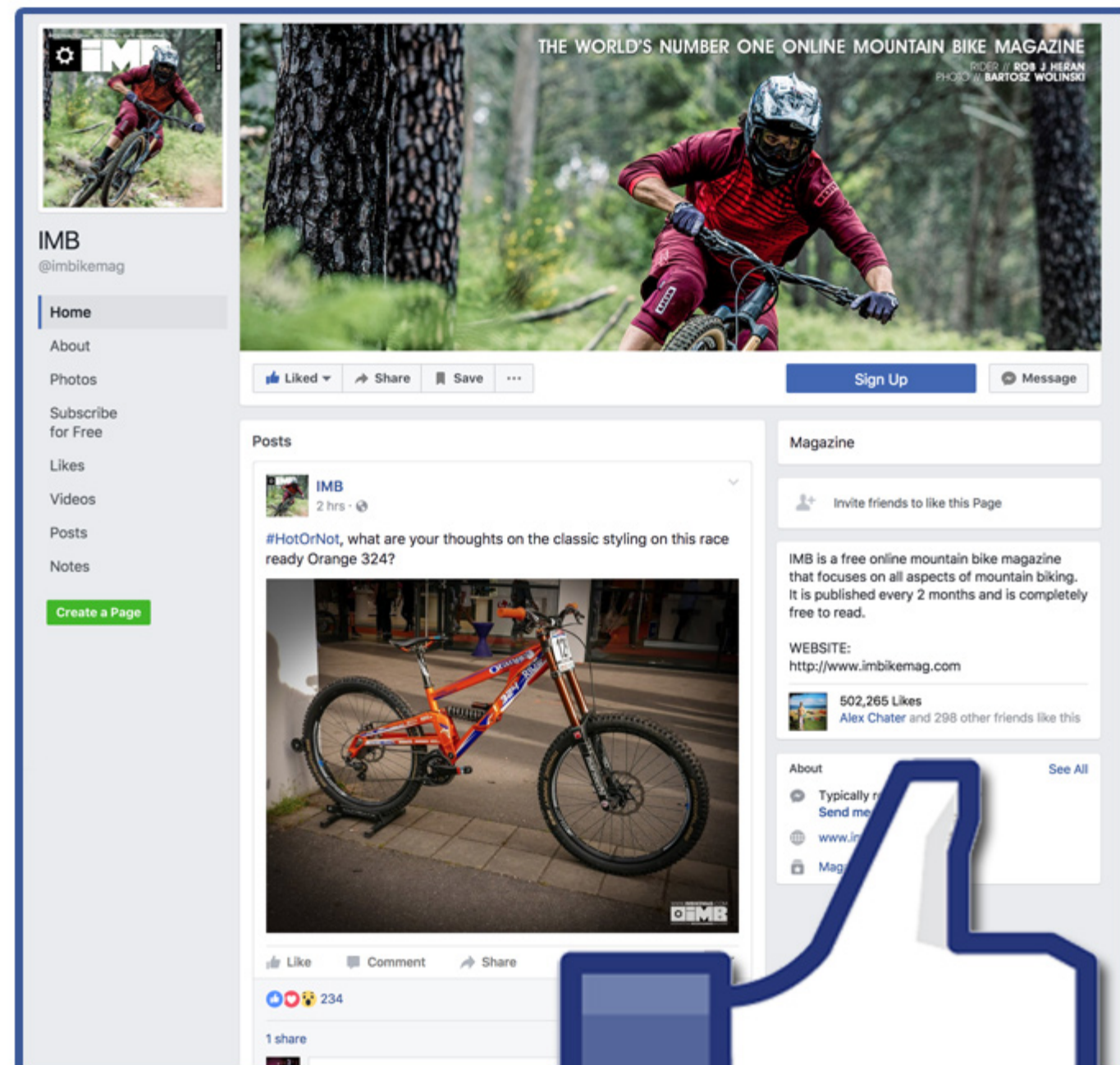
What are your plans for the rest of 2019?

I'm currently on the way for the 6th episode of my web series Mission, in the Faroe Islands. A guest will join me for this episode as in the last episode in Chile.

What is your Mission project all about?

Until now, we had concentrated on the diversity of the places, the ways in which we filmed or - for the purists - how we rode. But there was no reciprocity. We are lucky enough to travel to the four corners of the Earth, and it is often difficult to explain, in retrospect, the many life-changing moments and experiences that each destination offers.

'WE ARE LUCKY ENOUGH TO TRAVEL TO THE FOUR CORNERS OF THE EARTH'



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' IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO TRULY
EXPERIENCE A JOURNEY UNLESS
YOU MAKE IT IN REAL LIFE. '



It's not just about cycling in unusual places. Through these latest videos and photos, we can only convey the tiniest percentage of what we have experienced in real life. My eyes have been opened to this by talking about my travels with my family and close friends. I've reached a simple conclusion: it is impossible to truly experience a journey unless you make it in real life. And it's sometimes frustrating to have to keep your memories to yourself, incapable of expressing them.

What are your predictions for the future of mountain bikes and mountain bike riding?

It depends on each country and people, but most of them see the performance part through competitions and races. In France, we're like this, from school where we compete since we are 4/5 years old. So, I would like to see an open-mindedness in the future, and it's in a good way!

I'm enjoying seeing mountain biking start to be a popular sport and I hope the spirit will be the same in the future. I'm happy to see families in mountain bike/e-Mtb, trails growing everywhere, people using their bikes to go to the office, If everything is built with logic, that's positive!

TECH FOCUS

Leatt and the Neck Brace

Leatt and neck braces go hand in hand, having brought the technology to the mountain bike and motorbike world. Dr Leatt is the head of the company and studied medicine at the University of Cape Town and went on to work in neurosurgery before moving on to explore the viability of a neck protection system to be used in helmet-clad spots. Dr Leatt is an active motorcyclist and raced competitively as well as providing medical coverage for events. We asked him some questions to him about his neck brace and how it all came together.



WHAT IS A NECK BRACE, AND WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF WEARING ONE?

A neck brace is a rigid device worn around the neck which interacts with the user's helmet or head to reduce catastrophic neck injuries in case of a fall.

LEATT CREATED THE FIRST NECK BRACE, BUT WHAT WAS THE PROCESS THAT LED UP TO THE DEVELOPMENT?

Yes, before the development of the neck brace, only foam collars existed. These were not considered in the initial design process for two reasons – so as not to influence the ideal and most efficient neck brace design, as well as the fact that when your head extends over the collar in an accident, they can increase neck forces where the collar acts as a fulcrum. The HANS device was used in automobile motorsports before the invention of the Leatt-Brace®. However, this device works in neck tension (elongation) during an accident, not compression as is the case in two-wheeled sports. The process of development included a review of neck injuries, the accidents that cause them and the major forces at play during a fall onto your head. Next, the thesis of a rigid load transfer device – alternative load path technology (ALPT) was developed. This required the neck brace to interact with the underside of the helmet and sit on the body in such a way as to be in the right place at the right time and only fail if the loading dynamics were of a magnitude that would cause damage to the body structures the neck brace was resting on, whilst still removing a component of the initial load.

' THIS DEVICE WORKS IN NECK TENSION (ELONGATION) DURING AN ACCIDENT, NOT COMPRESSION AS IS THE CASE IN TWO-WHEELED SPORTS. '





' WITH A NECK BRACE IN PLACE, THE FORCE WOULD GO FROM THE GROUND TO THE HELMET WHICH ROTATES TO A POINT AND INTERACTS WITH THE BRACE '

WHAT EXACTLY DOES A BRACE DO IN THE EVENT OF A CRASH AND WHAT INJURIES DO THEY HELP TO PREVENT?

The neck brace acts as an ALPT (Alternative Load Path Technology) device to transfer load otherwise directed to the neck to other body structures. In a fall without a brace, the force in a fall (caused in part by the weight of the torso) would be transferred from the ground to helmet, then to the neck via the skull base. With a neck brace in place, the force would go from the ground to the

helmet which rotates to a point and interacts with the brace. Part of the energy is thereby directed to the brace, and not all the force goes via the skull base to the neck. In so doing, the force transmission through the neck is reduced, and the threshold required to produce a neck injury is not reached, reducing catastrophic injuries. Injuries protected against are flexion/extension and coupled axial loading injuries. In addition, brain forces are reduced – by limiting post-impact head whip and so are collarbone injuries by

shielding the clavicle from helmet rim strikes.

IS IT JUST DOWNHILL RIDERS THAT SHOULD BE WEARING THEM OR DO THEY HAVE APPLICATIONS OUTSIDE OF DOWNHILL?

Any helmeted sports or occupations where a fall on the head can result in a neck injury can benefit.

DO THEY HAVE TO WORK WITH A SPECIFIC HELMET?

Generally, the Leatt-Brace® works with all helmet types. Whether the head is stopped by the helmet rim or the chin. The sizing, fitment and adjustment are crucial to get right – just like the sizing of a helmet.

' IT MAKES SENSE TO SELECT A HELMET THAT DOES NOT HAVE A LARGE REAR LOWER HELMET PROJECTION '



When looking at a helmet/brace combination, it makes sense to select a helmet that does not have a large rear lower helmet projection, as was a design trend a few years back.

DO THEY LIMIT THE MOVEMENT OF A RIDER'S HEAD, AND HOW WOULD THAT AFFECT HOW YOU RIDE A BIKE?

When a neck brace is sized and fitted correctly, limitation in normal head movement while riding is not an issue. If anyone experiences this, it would be a good idea to ask a LEATT agent or reseller to assist you in proper fitment and set up.

LEATT DOES LOTS OF RESEARCH INTO INJURIES, DOES THE DATA SUPPORT THE USE OF NECK BRACES IN MOUNTAIN BIKING?

It does indeed – a bit of a no-brainer really, both in lab testing and clinical data.

White paper conclusions

- Reduction in cervical spine bending moments, axial and shear forces through energy transfer (alternate load-path theory), and physical reduction in the range of motion.
- Reduction in thoracic spine bending moments in extension through the use of an energy conductive (through absorption) strut that fractures at a predetermined load.
- Reduction in brain injury-associated dynamics through the correct interaction between deceleration and the time-related control of head impacts.
- No increased likelihood of clavicle fractures, due to its design of a clavicle relief area and the soft padding covering the device.

Thanks to Dr Leatt and Leatt



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

LOVE 'EM OR HATE, EBIKES CERTAINLY COME INTO THEIR OWN
ON STEEP CLIMBS AS YOU POWER YOUR WAY TO THE TOP
PHOTO MERIDA

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SUMMER ROLLS ON AND KEEPS PROMISING MORE AND MORE DRY
AND DUSTY TRAILS LIKE HERE IN SOSPEL IN SOUTHERN FRANCE
PHOTO MAGURA/PHILIP RUOPP

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KONA LET MIRANDA MILLER LOOSE ON THE NEW PROCESS 134 FOR A PACIFIC
NORTHWEST ADVENTURE AND THE RESULTS SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES
PHOTO KONA

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MARINE CABIROU ON HER WAY TO HER FIRST WORLD CUP WIN AT VAL DI SOLE
PHOTO BORIS BEYER

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VERONIQUE SANDLER SENDS IT ON THE VISION LINE AT REVOLUTION
BIKE PARK. IF YOU'VE NOT SEEN VISION GO WATCH THE MOVIE NOW
PHOTO ROO FOWLER



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FOUR CROSS WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP MEDALLIST NATASHA BRADLEY GOING HARD AT THE MEGAVALANCHE
PHOTO LAURENCE CROSSMAN- EMMS



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MANON CARPENTER RETIRED FROM PROFESSIONAL DH-RACING LAST YEAR BUT SHE NEVER STOPPED RIDING HER BIKES FURIOUSLY FAST. THIS TIME SHE CARVES HER RADON JAB THROUGH PERFECT LOAM SHOOTING WITH GEE MILNER FOR HIS RECENT DREAMBUILD VIDEO
PHOTO GEE MILNER

LIGHTBOX

CALIBRES NEW BOSSNUT BEING PUSHED HARD IN MORZINE.
NOT MANY BIKES AT THIS PRICE CAN BE PUSHED THIS HARD
PHOTO CALIBRE

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HTBOX

JOEL ANDERSON BENDS GRAVITY AT BIKE PARK SOLEDEN
PHOTO IAN LEAN/661

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RUDY CABIROU SENDING IN THE EVENING BLUES ON THIS TYEE IN SOUTH FRANCE
PHOTO NATHAN HUGHES

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JAMIE EDMONDSON ON HIS WAY TO 4TH IN JUNIORS AT LEOGANG THIS YEAR
PHOTO DAN HEARN/MUCOFF



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BLOM JOHANSEN OF THE CUBE ACTION TEAM
PHOTO CUBE

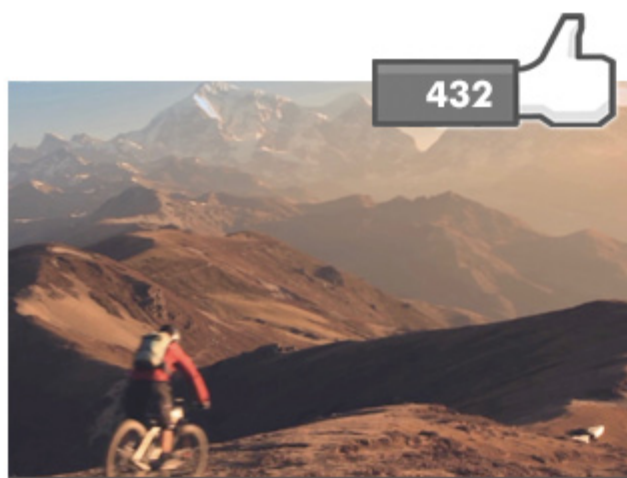
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The IMB website is crammed with news and videos every day, we only show the best videos, so to make it onto the site is an achievement in itself.

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!

#1 MEDITATE | INCREDIBLE MTB FILM FROM NEPAL

Fancy a Trip to Nepal? Join Tangi Rebours as he rides some of the best singletrack in the world, in the Solukhumbu region of Nepal. Best in the world is a bold claim, but if this video is anything to go by he's on to something with its endless flowing trails and epic landscape.



[CLICK HERE FOR VIDEO](#)

#2 KILIAN BRON'S 2019 MOUNTAIN OF HELL WINNING RUN

Elbow out! Hop on board with Kilian Bron as he takes us on his winning run down one of the craziest race tracks in the world. Mass start racing on snow at ridiculous speeds leads to some wild alpine trails as riders plummet to the valley below to be crowned champion.



[CLICK HERE FOR VIDEO](#)

#3 FEST SERIES: CRASH COMPILATION

Once again we find ourselves morbidly fascinated by the misfortune of others, but this time it's bigger ever. The Fest series is known for huge jumps, but also huge spills which are brought together here into one handy video for viewers to savour with delight.



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#4 MT.KILIMANJA RO & MT. KENYA WITH HANS REY, DANNY MACASKILL AND GERHARD CZERNER

Grab a brew and get comfy as this documentary is definitely worth a look. The team of legendary mountain bikers head to the highest mountains in Africa for an epic adventure.



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MOVIE NIGHT

PHOTO COURTESY OF MET HELMETS

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