

NO ONE
ON THE
CORNER HAS
SWAGGER
LIKE
CHAZ

BY ALYSSA ROENIGK
PHOTOGRAPHS BY TURE LILLEGRAVEN

TEENAGERS WANT TO BE HIM.
TOUR VETS WANT TO BEAT HIM.
WHAT MAKES 15-YEAR-OLD SKATER
CHAZ ORTIZ SO DARN ENVIABLE?
IMAGE IS EVERYTHING.

EXPN MAGAZINE 14





IT'S AN HOUR AFTER SKATEBOARD STREET

finals at this summer's X Games in LA, and Chaz Ortiz is locked in a game of Skate 2 in the PlayStation trailer. Ortiz, 15, repeatedly tries to land a trick he dreamed up about five minutes ago—a superdupe backflip on a megaramp. He is close, but he can't quite get the board to touch down wheels first. His opponent is Jon, a 14-year-old fan who won the chance to play Skate 2 against Ortiz, his favorite skater. Jon is a model of consistency. As time runs out, he easily tops Ortiz's high score of 2,200. Game over.

"One more run each," Ortiz says, half-asking. He misses again. A PlayStation rep walks into the trailer and announces, "It's time for an autograph signing with Chaz Ortiz!" A line begins to form in front of the trailer, but Ortiz is still at the PS3, controller in hand. "One more try," he says. Again he misses. "Okay, cool," Ortiz says. He turns to the rep, then immediately 180s to face the video screen again. "One more try," he says. "I've got this." He's not wired to give up.

That single-minded circuitry helps make Ortiz one of the best street skaters in the world. The hours spent obsessively practicing new tricks is why every movement on his board appears effortless, as if he were born knowing how to front board-slide a 12-stair rail. At only 5'4", 110 pounds, the Chicago native also goes big at contests, attacking rails and throwing himself over gaps.

Still, fans and sponsors aren't lining up simply because Ortiz is a gifted skater. It's his image that has everyone clamoring for more. Ortiz speaks the way he skates, with an air of cool confidence. He's charming and approachable. His look is equal parts East Coast hip-hop and SoCal skate rat. Kids aspire to skate and dress and talk like him. Even street-skating vet Paul Rodriguez, nine years his senior, has attached himself to Ortiz. Rodriguez has become both friend and mentor, helping Ortiz navigate life as a teen celebrity. And while Ortiz idolizes P-Rod, the veteran now finds himself looking up to his protégé: Ortiz is in position to repeat as Dew Cup champ in skate park (as of Sept. 16,

I love you, man! On tour, Rodriguez (left) mentors the teen phenom. Says Ortiz: "We're like brothers."



he led the standings with two events remaining; Rodriguez was in fourth place).

But when it comes to beating Jon at Skate 2, Ortiz has a way to go. He misses the superdupe backflip on his final try and shakes hands with Jon. "Guess I'm going to have to keep practicing," he says, smiling beneath his white, flat-brimmed DC hat, cocked to 8 o'clock. Ortiz is competitive, sure. But he also uses his failures as fuel for tomorrow.

That attitude is what kept Ortiz from spending the afternoon bummed out in his hotel room. The previous day, he missed qualifying for skateboard street finals by one spot. That meant no medal, no TV time and a

MOST KIDS WOULD HAVE FREAKED OUT IF MICHAEL JORDAN HAD COMPLIMENTED THEM. NOT ORTIZ. "HE SAYS, 'HEY, MAN, APPRECIATE IT.' HE WAS COMPLETELY UNFAZED. THE KID HAS ICE IN HIS VEINS."

skate park championship in Orlando in October, a title Ryan Sheckler owned the previous three seasons. The new champ's sponsor tally ballooned to include Zoo York, Silver Skateboard Trucks, Bones Wheels, DC Shoes and Gatorade. Suddenly Ortiz was outearning his folks (his estimated annual take hits six figures). He even attended the Super Bowl as a guest of honor. At a shoot in Chicago earlier this year for Gatorade's G Manifesto commercial, he worked with director Spike Lee and met Michael Jordan, Mia Hamm, Picabo Street and Kerri Walsh. "Jordan walks up to Chaz, says he's heard great things about him and gives him a ribbing for not wearing Nike gear," says Kenny Mitchell, Gatorade's action-sports team manager. "Most kids would have freaked out meeting an icon like Jordan, especially a Bulls fan from Chicago. Not Chaz. He says,

long wait until next year. "I did everything I could," Ortiz says. "But I'm only 15. I've got a lot of years to come to X Games and win."

He sucked up his disappointment and stood front and center as a spectator to cheer his buddy Rodriguez, who took gold. "It was cool to see Paul win," Ortiz says. "We're like brothers. I love that guy. It's even better than me winning." Ortiz's respect for his elder goes only so far, though: "All these guys better watch out next year, 'cause I'm coming in hot. I'm so motivated. I can't wait to get back on my board and skate."

Ortiz first made the jump from Chi-Town amateur to skating's wunderkind by shredding the Dew Tour in 2007. After competing for six years in amateur events, Ortiz won the Gatorade Free Flow Tour, the Dew Tour's four-month contest series for amateur skaters and BMXers. With that title, he earned a wild-card spot in the final Dew Tour stop of the 2007 season, the PlayStation Pro in Orlando. He finished sixth. Even more important, P-Rod saw him skate in person for the first time. "He had a distinct style," Rodriguez says. "A lot of kids can do fancy tricks, but they look like kids doing fancy tricks. Chaz has this grace and maturity about him. I was like, 'Damn, I'd better stay on my toes.'"

Rodriguez's premonition was right. In 2008, Ortiz finished in the top four at four Dew Tour stops, won his first pro title in Salt Lake City and clinched the overall



'Hey, man, appreciate it.' He was completely unfazed. The kid has ice in his veins."

Ortiz exudes confidence—heck, his Twitter name is steezortiz—but his head hasn't swelled along with his bank account. That's because his folks, Mark, who works at an auto parts company, and Natalia, a stay-at-home mom, taught him humility and hard work. Even back when Ortiz was 8 and a junior state wrestling champ, Mark and Natalia didn't overstress winning and taught their son to

BIO BLAST

NAME Chaz Ortiz
AGE 15
SPORT Street skating
HOMETOWN Carpentersville, Ill.
BIG WINS 2008 Dew Cup skate park champ
FAME CLAIM In January, became first skater to be sponsored by Gatorade

embrace losses as learning experiences. "Not many people know I wrestled," Ortiz says. "But I loved it. I liked getting out my anger and tossing kids around." He pauses. "That's a joke." When it came time to focus on one sport, he didn't have to think twice. "I'm better at skateboarding," he says. Today, Ortiz punishes the pavement instead of kids in singlets.

Ortiz's parents also preach the importance of schoolwork—Chaz is a sophomore at Dundee-Crown High in Carpentersville, Ill.—and last year they hired an agent and a manager so they don't lose their foothold as Mom and Dad. But Mark and Natalia aren't around all the time. That's when Rodriguez fills in. He imparts the wisdom he wishes he'd received as an up-and-coming skater. "I talk with Chaz and his pops a lot," Rodriguez says. "When he

was going through sponsor negotiations, I told them to be patient and wait for the right sponsors." Rodriguez, a new father himself, also echoed Mom and Dad's mantra of staying in school and staying in Chicago. Although Chaz's contest schedule and sponsor commitments require him to travel, often to NYC and LA, Dad makes sure the trips are quick and streamlined so that Chaz is back in Chicago as quickly as possible.

"A lot of times when guys blow up, they move out to Cali and get distracted," Rodriguez says. "Their practice schedule changes, they're not skating with the same crew they grew up with, and they become less productive." Chaz soaks up everything Rodriguez has to say. "I tell him, 'No matter what pressures people put on you, if you just focus on skating, everything will fall into place,'" Rodriguez says. " 'Don't think about pleasing people. You got here by skating with your friends, having a great time and progressing. You'll stay around that way, too.'"

Sometimes, though, Ortiz reminds Rodriguez that he should take his own advice. In mid-April, at Rodriguez's private skate warehouse in Canoga Park, Calif., four of the best street skaters in the country—Ortiz, Rodriguez, Sheckler and Greg Lutzka—were filming a commercial promoting the 2009 Dew Tour. At the call for action, each took off, one by one, and attempted to kickflip over a ramp set up in front of a white screen. The director wanted all four to land their tricks in one take. If one messed up, the group started over. First Sheckler missed, then Rodriguez, then Lutzka. Irritation mounted. No one spoke. Chaz, unaffected, kept nailing the trick. Even when he

WATCH EXCLUSIVE VIDEO OF CHAZ ORTIZ TEARING UP THE VALLEY, ON ESPN.COM/ACTION.

finally missed, landing flat and tweaking his ankle, he shrugged it off and pushed back to the start, cool swagger in check.

"Another testament to Chaz never stressing it," Rodriguez says. "I was busy being pissed off, but if I'd put it in perspective, I'd have realized we shouldn't be stressing." On days like these, the mentee becomes the mentor. "Looking at Chaz is like looking into a mirror from the past," Rodriguez says. "After awhile, you can lose sight of why you do this in the first place. He's my reality check. He helps me remember when I was his age, skating around the neighborhood with my friends and a couple bucks in my pocket. Chaz reminds me where I came from."

And P-Rod reminds Chaz where he can go. 🌐



MARIE-FRANCE ROY HAS PLENTY OF SICK MOVES ON THE SLOPES. NOW SHE'S WORKING ON HER TOUGHEST TRICK YET: MAKING WOMEN'S SNOWBOARDING HOT AGAIN.

BY TIM STRUBY

PEAK PERFORMANCE

ON A TYPICAL, BLUSTERY WINTER AFTERNOON

in Breckenridge, Colo., snowboarder Marie-France Roy casually lopes into a crowded Mexican eatery.

None of the restaurant's hungry board rats bats an eye at the skinny tomboy. Doesn't matter that she cleaned up at the Transworld Snowboarding Riders' Poll Awards. (She won Rider of the Year in 2008 and Reader's Choice and Video Part of the Year in both 2008 and 2009.) Those patrons pay her no mind. But they should. Roy, after all, is the shredder who might save women's snowboarding.

Oh wait, you didn't know women's snowboarding was in trouble? It's a bit un-PC to say, but some folks in the shredding community are admitting as much. So what's the problem? In short, the sport isn't progressing. Well, at least not as much as it could. "There are lots of good girls out there," says legend Tara Dakides. "But I question how many are really raising the bar. How many girls are aggressively pushing it?"

Not many, if slopestyle contests are any indication. At the 2009 Dew Tour event at Mount Snow, renowned Norwegian snowboarder Torstein Horgmo threw down three 900s and a switch 1260 during the men's competition. Jamie Anderson's winning run in the women's event featured a 180, a couple of 360s and a frontside 540, the same tricks women were doing five years ago. The result: NBC, which once aired the competition live, broadcast only a montage of the women's final's best moments. Why? It's simply less fun to watch.

BIO BLAST

NAME Marie-France Roy
AGE 25
SPORT Snowboarding
HOMETOWN Whistler, B.C.
BIG WIN 2008 Transworld Snowboarding Rider of the Year
FAME CLAIM More film cred than any other female rider



One trick—the 1080—certainly wasn't on that slopestyle highlight reel. Nor does it show up in any women's runs in superpipe, the premiere snowboarding event. Yet the three-rotation maneuver has become a staple of men's contests and helped Danny Kass earn an Olympic medal in pipe in 2002. By the spring of 2009, however, no female had ever landed one in competition. Kelly Clark has tried twice (including a near miss at last year's U.S. Snowboarding Grand Prix), and Ellery Hollingsworth is rumored to have landed two 1080s during a U.S. snowboarding team training camp last April. Most top female boarders, though, aren't

even attempting the trick.

It's not for lack of ability. Clark regularly soars 12 feet above the lip of the pipe. Hell, Elena Hight landed a 900 in a contest when she was just 13. In fact, there probably isn't a pro snowboarder out there who thinks women aren't capable of landing a 1080 in competition. "Women could do 1080s like us if they wanted," says Red Bull rider Eero Ettala. "They just don't have to. They win without doing it." Case in point: Back in 2003, Gretchen Bleiler took home her first X Games gold in the superpipe with her trademark "crippler" and a pair of frontside 540s.



Six years later, Torah Bright topped the 2009 X Games podium with a 360 and a pair of 720s—an improvement, to be sure, but only a slight one.

While playing it safe will likely earn medals, is a win really worth anything if it comes from holding back? In a word, yes. Winning means exposure, and in a world where your “team” is merely your equipment and apparel sponsors, exposure means cash and the ability to work as a pro rider. That said, film roles earn shredders street cred, and that’s arguably a more valuable honor. Most coveted video parts, though, still go to the men. In the late ‘90s, überprogressive riders like Dakides and Victoria Jealousie snagged serious roles in *Amp* and *Coming Down the Mountain*, respectively, but their snowboarding sisters didn’t follow them into high-profile films. With the exception of all-girl projects made by small, female-run production companies like Runway and Misschief, women have had no chance to show off their skills in starring roles for almost 10 years. So if film roles are all but nonexistent for women riders and podium spots bring happy sponsors and more incentives, why try a tough trick at the X Games

when that could mean a fall and a missed medal? For women, smaller tricks means a bigger bottom line.

Even worse, since tricks can take weeks to master, the more famous the female star the less time she has to practice. “Between the photo shoots, sponsor meetings, commercials, product testing and traveling,

with the best in the world. In 2005, she earned five podiums, including top prizes at the Nikita Chickita Snowdown (slopestyle) and the Abominable Snow Jam (slopestyle and best trick slopestyle). But Roy soon realized she was more like film star Travis Rice than like Olympian Shaun White. “I’m a hucker,” she

“MARIE-FRANCE LOOKS LIKE A GUY WHEN SHE RIDES. I MEAN THAT IN A GOOD WAY.”



I didn’t even get to see my family from Christmas to May,” says 18-year-old Hollingsworth. Not surprisingly, the toughest trick she’s pulled on her way to six half-pipe contest podiums is a 720.

Hollingsworth and her fellow boarders could be forgiven for holding back for another reason.

Perfecting the sickest trick is a risky proposition—far more so than in the past. Ten years ago, the X Games pipe was 10 feet deep; now it’s 22 feet. Slopestyle kickers—once the size of a school bus—are now the size of a school. “You could get hurt permanently,” admits Anderson. “It’s a little scary.”

But not for Marie-France Roy, who has never had a problem conquering her fear. Born and raised in Les Eboulements, Quebec, Roy learned to ride in the woods of Le Massif, a resort overlooking the St. Lawrence River. There were no halfpipes, no competitions, no dreams of medals. Roy wasn’t taught tricks by private instructors, she learned by watching her idols, her older brothers Alex and Jean-François. “It was rough learning in the woods,” she says. “I was always crying, but that toughness made me push myself.”

Roy didn’t formally compete until she was 19, when she snuck into the wild-card event at the 2004 U.S. Open. (She placed seventh in slopestyle and won the Best Trick award in the Rail Jam event.) And from the get-go, she held her own

says. “I’d rather fall going for a big trick than win conservatively. My style is not ideal for contests.”

That’s why Roy opts out of most competitions, preferring instead to go for the sickest tricks on film. But contest medals or not, Roy has the goods. “She’s the most progressive rider in snowboarding,” proclaims *Snowboarding Magazine* editor Pat Bridges. Hannah Teter calls her “a slope star.” Even the fellas give her props. “She looks like a guy when she rides,” says Ettala. “I mean that in a good way.” Need proof? Just pop in 2007’s *Any Means* or 2008’s *No Correct Way*, Roy’s films for the Rome SDS team. (She is the hard-riding snowboarding crew’s first female signee.) In the films she tears up nasty rails, huge kickers, steep gullies and deep powder with a style and confidence rarely shown by the fairer sex.

It’s Roy’s dedication to filming that really sets her apart. “The guys are unmerciful in an older-brother way,” says John Cavan, who shot *Any Means*. “MFR attempted a 270 onto the rail at Breckenridge High School and landed it on her first try. Her teammates Max Legend and Will Lavigne insisted she could do better, so she did three more takes. Guess what? It was better.” And Roy’s body of film work is more than appreciated by the snowboarding community. “We see in her the prototype,” says Bridges. “She’s the next generation of snowboarder.”

Try telling that to Roy. “I’m saving snowboarding?” she says with a sheepish laugh. “That makes me feel awkward! I’m just enjoying the ride and hoping to influence people to enjoy it too.” Expect her to wield even more power over shredders after the 2009 release of Absinthe Films’ *Neverland*, a buzzy project in which she stars alongside such icons as Rice and Gigi Rüf. In the meantime, though, Roy will hit the X Games and the Dew Tour, look for another killer film role and keep hucking tricks. Maybe even a 1080.

“If anyone’s gonna nail it, it’ll be MFR,” says Anderson. “She’s such a badass.”

CHECK OUT SOME OF MFR’S GREATEST VIDEO HITS. SEARCH “ROY CLIP REEL” ON ESPN.COM/ACTION.





TO FIND THE
SICKEST RAIL
OR THE BIGGEST
AIR, YOU HAVE
TO PUSH THE
ENVELOPE. AT
THESE SEVEN
SPOTS, THAT
MEANS AVOIDING
MORE THAN
A GNARLY
LANDING.

BY CHRIS PALMER PHOTOGRAPH BY CHAD GRIFFITH

BMXer Kevin
Little and skater
AJ Kohn rip, with
permission, at
Philly's LOVE Park.





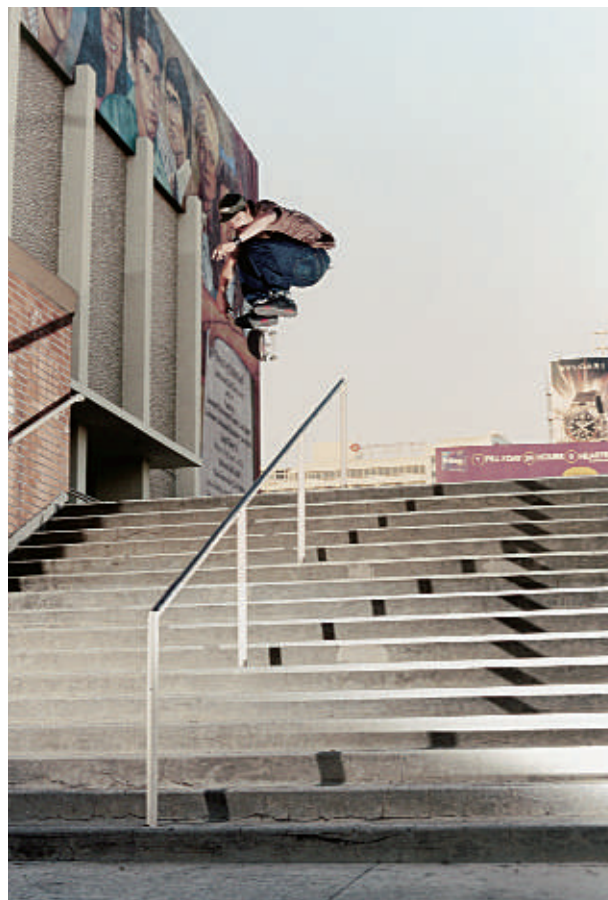
LOVE PARK PHILADELPHIA, PA.

John F. Kennedy Plaza, a.k.a. LOVE Park, was once considered a mecca in the skate world. Smack in the middle of City Center, its wide-open flat spaces, granite surfaces and long, low marble benches were ideal for nose-pick grinds. In its prime, LOVE drew as many as 200 skaters on weekends and even hosted the 2001 and 2002 X Games. "If there hadn't been a LOVE Park," says Philly legend Stevie Williams, "you would never have heard of me." Then in 2002, skating the park's famous Fountain Gap—an elongated four-set into the iconic fountain, which is emptied for the winter months—became precarious, thanks to a city ban on skateboarding in public spaces. But ban or no ban, a handful of persistent skaters still show LOVE the love.

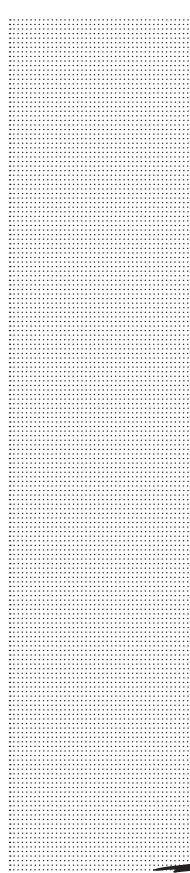
THE LAW The \$300 fine is among the nation's highest for illegal skateboarding.

RISK FACTOR High: Cops make rounds on mountain bikes and on foot. And while the interval between patrols can be as long as three hours, it can also be as short as 15 minutes.

RIP AND SLIP Dozens of entrances to the park mean cops can appear out of nowhere. Then again, those misbehavin' can disappear just as quickly.



RIP AT YOUR OWN RISK



BEAUMONT BEAUMONT, CALIF.

While many of SoCal's great riding areas have fallen victim to shiny tract homes and sprawling wineries, a hilly parcel of sandy terrain north of Temecula and west of Palm Springs has served as a training ground for countless Cali moto-Xers. "So many of us learned to ride there," says X Games gold medalist and FMXer Ronnie Renner. Case in point: Nearly every AMA Supercross champ in the '80s and '90s spent time navigating and flying over the hills of Beaumont. Says seven-time SX champ Jeremy McGrath: "This place is why SoCal riders are such good jumpers."

THE LAW The Riverside County Sheriff's Department recently assembled a crew of off-road motorcycle cops to keep up with two-wheeled trespassers. Tickets range from \$100 to \$1,000.

RISK FACTOR High: A parked car on the side of a desert road is not likely to go unnoticed.

RIP AND SLIP Farther out, the terrain becomes impassable for average riders. Good news: That includes cops. Bad news: You're that much farther from where you parked.

THE STEPS AT HOLLYWOOD HIGH LOS ANGELES, CALIF.

Hollywood High School may be known to most for its famous alumni (Laurence Fishburne, Slash, Brandy), but pro skaters like P-Rod and Eric Koston know HHS for the hours they've spent on its concrete steps. The school's stairs form a nice 12-set and 16-set combo that bookends a 40-foot manual pad, making a great runway in either direction. "You gotta skate this spot when you come to LA," says Rodriguez. Hitting the 12 can be sketchy, though. There's only 15 feet between its bottom and a steel fence.

THE LAW Strains on budgets and man power mean the LAPD has better things to worry about. But school brass fret about insurance and liability, so penalties can range from a stern warning to a \$100 fine.

RISK FACTOR Medium: School officials are more of a hassle than anything, so it's easier to rip on weekends and late evenings when class is not in session.

RIP AND SLIP Legend has it cops once summoned a helicopter to track down a pair of scofflaw skaters who ran from citations. No worries, though—you can usually just skate away.

FROM LEFT: DESIREE RONALD ASTORGA; GARTH MILAN/THE MEDIUM GROUP





RIP AT YOUR OWN RISK

THE RAIL GARDENS SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH

A spread-out succession of handrails, bleachers and ledges in and around Salt Lake City's Olympus Hills Park has drawn marauding urban snowboarders for years. The holy grail is a left-side rail on a huge 16-set, which you may have to build a lip to hit. Hot tip: get friendly with the Zamboni driver at the local ice rink. Shaved iced scraped from the 'boni packs like clay and will save you considerable building time.

THE LAW The SLC PD patrols, but it's power-tripping neighborhood security you've got to watch for. "When we're trying to get off a good session we usually have a lookout or two," says video rider Greg Frayo. Official charges of destruction of property or disturbing the peace can generate fines of up to \$299.

RISK FACTOR Medium: Urban snowboard spots can be a tough racket—nonpermanent and completely dependent on its snowing—but early morning is fairly deserted.

RIP AND SLIP When you've got a drop-in ramp, lights and a generator for shredding at night, a quick exit is out of the question.



THE GREEN RAIL PORTLAND, ORE.

It's long, green, flat and out of place. Like the statues on Easter Island, nobody quite knows how the Green Rail got where it is. "It's just always been here," says Chester Blacksmith, whose pegs have been removing green paint from the traffic barricade for the better part of 16 years. "It looks like it was meant to grind." On the corner of Burnside and Sandy, the three-and-a-half-foot-tall rail sits behind a bus stop on a gently sloping sidewalk at one of Portland's busiest intersections. Nearby Burnside Skatepark discourages bikes when it gets packed, so you're likely to see some of the city's best throwing Lucky Grinds on their way to classes at Portland State.

THE LAW Hitting Greenie from the street can draw attention. Tickets run about \$85, but unless you're dealing with bike cops, you can usually get off with a warning.

RISK FACTOR Medium: You never know when cops will roll up.

RIP AND SLIP The Rail is flanked by a park, several parking lots and side streets. In other words, plenty of getaways.

BANZAI PIPELINE NORTH SHORE OF OAHU, HAWAII

"The waves are the best in the world," says pro surfer Claire Bevilacqua. "Power, perfection and warm water." Trade winds provide extra kick for practicing airs on the pipe, and you can't beat the short paddle to the lineup. The pipeline plays host to the last event of the Triple Crown of Surfing each December, but early spring yields fewer pros in the water (thus fewer groupies), which usually means smaller crowds and less traffic along Kamehameha Highway.

THE LAW The shore is patrolled by the Wolf Pack, a tight-knit group of local surfers who've been known to use intimidation to keep the lineup from becoming chaotic. A serious beatdown was the sanction for years, but no one will cop to throwing fists anymore.

RISK FACTOR High: The Pack is very territorial, and the idea of out-of-towners (who don't respect the code) cluttering the surf will set them off.

RIP AND SLIP Ever try running in sand and carrying a surfboard while fumbling for your car keys?



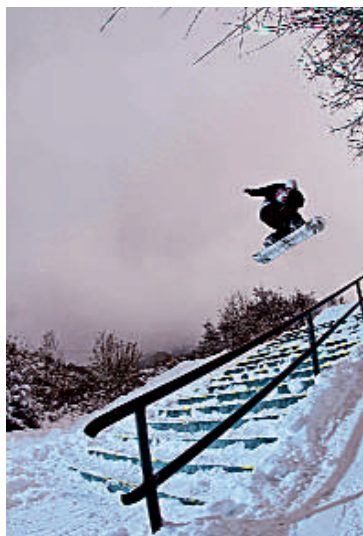
WEST YELLOWSTONE WEST YELLOWSTONE, MONT.

Hailed as the "Snowmobile Capital of the World," West Yellowstone features trails for a variety of skill levels. Along the western border of Yellowstone National Park and about 30 miles up the Big Sky Trail—13 of which are "at your own risk"—you'll hit the Upper Teepee Basin and the edge of the Lee Metcalf Wilderness. Technically, parts of it are off-limits, but the basin has some of the deepest powder and gnarliest bowls in the state. Of course, steep inclines, dangerous hangovers and changing snow conditions also provide some unpleasant surprises.

THE LAW The forest service patrols on snowmobiles and has a rep for hassling riders about registration. Noncompliance can mean a \$65 hit to your wallet, and sometimes they'll even tow your ride.

RISK FACTOR Low: Patrols have simply too much ground to cover. But off trail, authority will be the least of your worries—backcountry hazards can be deadly.

RIP AND SLIP Getting stuck in the deep stuff and running out of gas and food is a common occurrence in the basin. Then there's the threat of avalanches.



STORM DRUNK & AWAY

A BILLABONG XXL BIG WAVE AWARD MAY BE SURFING'S ULTIMATE RIDE. GETTING TO A 70-FOOT SWELL? THE ULTIMATE CHALLENGE.

BY MAX KLINGER

Handed out each April, the XXLs are literally the biggest prize in surfing. Contenders submit photographic and/or video evidence of their rides on the tallest, most formidable swells of the year. The payoff: up to \$50,000 (for Ride of the Year) and major props from the surfing world. So what's it like to drop everything and travel halfway across the globe for a crack at history? Four of the 2009 winners share secrets of the trade.



◀ GRANT "TWIGGY" BAKER

AGE 36

HOME Durban, South Africa

2009 XXL AWARD Biggest Wave

CRED 61-foot wave at Tafelberg Reef, South Africa, Aug. 9, 2008 (above)

MILES TRAVELED LAST YEAR 62,000-plus



WAVE WATCH "Besides using online weather modeling to track swells, our crew constantly discusses the latest reports with each other and with forecasters Mark Sponsler from stormsurf.com and Sean Collins from surfline.com. I also ask my girlfriend, Kate, for her input before making the final call. She's a bodyboarder. She knows her waves."

PACKING METHOD "I have my travel kit ready to go: boards, equipment, toiletries, T-shirts, jeans, beanies and Ugg boots. I just surfed in Peru and didn't even go home to Durban; I went straight to Cape Town for another swell. We're basically living out of a bag, and I wouldn't have it any other way."

INDISPENSABLE "I've gotten professional about the whole nutritional side of things. If I'm spending the whole day out on the water, then I'll take energy bars, fruit and a lot of water. Never coffee or energy drinks. Those things give you cramps. We've got enough adrenaline running through us already."

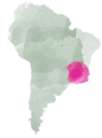
TRICKS OF THE TRADE "When I check in at the airport, I'm always way overweight with my boards and backpacks. The gear generally weighs 50 to 60 kilos [110 to 130 pounds] over. It's always a game with the girl behind the counter, trying to see how much excess you can talk her into letting you take for free. You'd be surprised what they'll let you get away with."





STOP, DROP & GO

MAYA GABEIRA



AGE 22

HOME Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

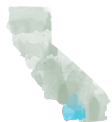
2009 XXL AWARD Women's Performance

CRED Followed her '09 XXL with a 40-plus-foot wave—biggest ever ridden by a woman—at Dungeons, South Africa, Aug. 11, 2009 (right)

MILES TRAVELED LAST YEAR 72,000-plus



GREG LONG



AGE 26

HOME San Clemente, Calif.

2009 XXL AWARD Ride of the Year
CRED 40-foot barrel at Dungeons, South Africa, July 26, 2008

MILES TRAVELED LAST YEAR 72,000-plus



INDISPENSABLE "A yoga mat. After a long trip, I set up a little space wherever I am and loosen up. Yoga's my primary training for big-wave surfing, from strength and flexibility to mentally preparing myself for strenuous situations."

TRICKS OF THE TRADE "I get made fun of, but I always lug a couple boxes of tools and spare parts with me wherever I go. Parts for the ski trailer, extra fins, that kind of stuff. Anything that can go wrong eventually does. I'm the happiest man in the world when I have what I need to get back on track."

THE CODE "If another big-wave surfer visits your area for a swell, you do everything possible to help organize stuff for him—a ride, a place to stay, a jet ski, knowledge of the break. Even though surfing can be individualistic, big-wave surfing has a lot of camaraderie. It's almost like a team sport."

HORROR STORY "I was in Nelscott Reef in Oregon when the transmission in my van went out. We got it fixed and headed to Mexico for another swell. We were driving 70 mph down I-5 with a double trailer of jet skis when a tire blew. Then the next day, in the mountains, the brakes went out. I ended up selling that car."

INDISPENSABLE "I can't go anywhere without my iPhone. I would die without it! It has my e-mail and forecasts, and it's how I contact my parents. When I'm traveling to one of these things, I don't go more than six hours without talking to my mom or my dad. It's what keeps me calm."

TRICKS OF THE TRADE "I have boards stashed at places around the world to save time and travel expenses. I have one at Mavericks in California, one in Hawaii and a couple in South Africa, ready to go."

FROM LEFT: CARLOS SERRAO/RED BULL PHOTOS; BRENTON GEACH/BILLABONG XXL

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: MURRAY/BILLABONG XXL; MURRAY/A-FRAME; GLASER/A-FRAME



Rivals? What rivals? Healey (above left) and Long track online wave models. "I always call Greg when a swell looks promising," Healey says. "He's better at forecasting than the actual weather forecasters."

MARK HEALEY

AGE 27

HOME North Shore, Oahu, Hawaii

2009 XXL AWARD Monster Tube

CRED 20-foot tube at Yeti, Ore., Sept. 24, 2008

MILES TRAVELED LAST YEAR 112,000-plus

BIGGEST HURDLE "Airline ticket prices. On a recent trip, I was looking at \$2,700 to surf a swell for two days and nab a single bomb. But there are only so many giant swells in your lifetime. In Hawaii in the past four years, we've had only two or three that hit 20 feet. Do the math."

INDISPENSABLE "Life vest. I was at Jaws in 2001—biggest wave of my life, around 70 feet—and I got smashed at the bottom. The zipper of this crappy vest I'd borrowed tore open. My eardrum blew, I lost equilibrium and the vest started to float off. I grabbed it just as it was sliding off my arm. If I hadn't, I wouldn't be alive now. Now I take my own life vest."

TRICKS OF THE TRADE "I listen to sitar music before I get in the water. I used to listen to more pump-me-up music, but now I prefer something that'll help keep my thoughts clear. Ravi Shankar works a lot better than death metal."

HORROR STORY "On a trip from Hawaii to South Africa, I had a stopover in DC. The airline wouldn't let me back on the plane because they said South African immigration required a full empty page in your passport; I had only a half-page. I showed up at the passport agency the next morning, did some talking and was on a flight that night. My bags, on the other hand, didn't make it."

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THE WILY FOLKS
AT WOODWARD
STRUCK AGAIN,
THIS TIME
TURNING SOME
TRAMPOLINES,
PLASTIC SNOW
AND 23,000
FOAM CUBES INTO
A SUPERCAMP.

BY STEVE MAZZUCCHI
PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAN MONICK

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***FOLLOWING A QUICK SIP OF AIR**, free skier Jess Cumming shoots down a slope, flies off a kicker and spins a tight-corked 720 before landing silently. But this isn't Winter X (where she snagged superpipe bronze earlier this year). It's not even winter. It's August, she's wearing mesh shorts, and a giant foam pit is what makes her landing so easy on the ears.

Welcome to Woodward at Copper, an innovative training facility housed inside a 19,000-square-foot barn and adjacent retail center at the base of Colorado's Copper Mountain. Since its opening in February, Woodward has offered skiers and boarders a whole new way to train, a place they can safely practice a trick indoors before trying it out for real on snow. Says camp director Ben Brown: "It's an improvement on the old model, which we called 'huck and hope'—huck yourself off a jump and hope you land it."

Step inside the Woodward barn, and you'll find tumbling mats, trampolines and foam pits, plus a cliff drop, jib run and big-air zones. A third of it is carpeted with Snowflex—a synthetic material that approximates the snow-riding experience. Living by

the school's slogan "Progression is inevitable," fledgling fliers master spins, flips and grabs on the tramps before hitting the Snowflex to practice with trajectory. Provided there's snow on the ground, they can then take their new tricks to the outdoor terrain park the very same day. "If you land in the same position in the foam every single time, it means you're close to nailing it on snow," says Cumming, a Copper-sponsored athlete. "You'll have a lot more confidence knowing you've stuck it a hundred times inside first."

The first Woodward program was actually a practice-makes-perfect gymnastics camp that opened in central Pennsylvania in 1970. When business was hurt by the United States' 1980 summer Olympics boycott, Woodward's founders expanded into BMX and skateboarding. About eight years ago, having noticed the similarities between gymnastics and aerial snow sports, Woodward began offering dry-land lessons to the white-stuff set. When president Gary Ream decided his organization needed a proper cold-weather home, he found in Copper a ski resort that was not only hip to his training ideas but also enthusiastic about having an educational presence. Thus was born the nation's fourth Woodward-branded training camp, the first to abut a true mountain. The barn retains the BMX, skate and in-line facilities that make up any Woodward outpost, but there's no mistaking that this is first and foremost a haven for snow folk. Everyone from TJ Schiller to Pat Moore to the Swiss national team has dialed tricks here, but the biggest beneficiaries may be everyday groms and graybeards. Woodward's various day camps and drop-in sessions insure that the Snowflexed slopes are always lined with scores of trainees who egg one another on as they learn everything from 180s to Superman front flips. "This place is epic," says Mark Martinez, who drove four hours from New Mexico with his 8-year-old son, Payton, a USASA competitor, so both could boost their snowboard steez. A few feet away at the top of the big-air slope, 13-year-old Vail telemarker Claire Baker agrees. "It's amazing," she says. "I'm trying to get my telefriends to come."

Rave reviews from opposite ends of the snow sports spectrum? That has to be Woodward's most impressive trick.

1 \ Living in a Barn

In the seven months since its opening, Woodward has attracted skiers and boarders from places as far-flung as Norway and New Zealand. This winter, Copper plans to farm enough snow to keep the terrain park running into next August.



Lofty Aspirations

Previous spread: "I want to do 900s in the pipe this year, so I'm starting with 9's from the tramp into the foam pit," Cumming says between jumps. "Then I'll do 9's entirely on the tramp. And then the slopes." As they say, progression is inevitable.



2 \ Room With a View

Cumming waits atop the 35-foot-high big-air slope as assistant program manager Rick Shimpeno sprays it with water. "Snowflex is European," he says of the faux snow, which often swipes skin from falling riders. "And like many things European, it's weird." The jib run's bent rail is to the right.

3 \ Having a Bowl

Woodward boasts a large skate bowl for those who do their riding on wheels. There's also a minipipe next to the Snowflex slopes, a small Skatelite cliff drop into a foam pit and a street-style skate area on the ground level.

4 \ Flipping Crazy

In the trampoline area, visitors bounce into sick tricks on six tramps. Suspended harnesses allow coaches to spot athletes, who can also strap small snowboards over their sneakers to get the feel of grabs and tweaks.

5 \ Soft and Steady

After landing safely among the 23,000 foam bricks, riders and skiers climb out with the help of a rope. A camera records their aerial forays, which they then review on a flat-screen monitor. On-site coaches are on hand to offer pointers.

SNOWBOARD DYNAMOS **ELLERY HOLLINGSWORTH** AND **KEVIN PEARCE** MAKE CELLULOID SIZZLE WITH THEIR SICK STUNTS. BUT THEY WERE WATCHING VIDS LONG BEFORE THEY STARRED IN 'EM. WITH THE FALL DVD SEASON IN SWING, THE DUO DISCUSS THEIR BIGGEST INFLUENCES.

PHOTOGRAPH BY EWAN BURNS



MOVIE MIXTAPE

KEVIN'S MOMENTS



● **FULL METAL EDGES** (Grenade, 2002)
"The footage of **Danny Kass** from the 2002 Olympics was memorable. It was one of the biggest contests in the sport, and it was the first time I saw Olympics footage in a cool film. He did back-to-back 1080s. That was the beginning of that trick."

STAND & DELIVER (Mack Dawg, 2001)
"Keir Dillon did like a 19-foot McTwist at the World Superpipe Championship with his shirt off. The trick was next level, and he had just fallen hard on a previous run. The image got the cover of *Transworld*, the most important magazine in snowboarding."

IT'S ALWAYS SNOWING SOMEWHERE (Burton, 2008)
"Terje Haakonsen did a backside 360 at the 2007 Arctic Challenge—it was something like 32 feet, the biggest backside air ever on a quarterpipe. We were all riding together, but everyone knew he was on this whole different level."

FOLLOW ME AROUND (Mack Dawg, 2006)
"Andreas Wiig's cliff drop, which got named after him. I heard a lot of talk about it, and then the movie came out and showed him doing a backside rodeo 720 on his first try. It was this enormous cliff drop. When I saw it, I was like, 'Damn, I need to step my game up.'"

KEVIN AND ELLERY'S FALL FLICKS PREVIEW

1 **The B** (Burton)
ELLERY "They got the whole team together at the end of the season, which they'd never done before, and came up with this cool concept involving the letter B"
KEVIN "They built what I think is a world record for the biggest pile of snow in the shape of a B, and the team went out to Tahoe and rode it at the same time."

2 **Neverland** (Absinthe)
KEVIN "I got to go on a couple of trips to film this. It's going to be a really cool movie, with a lot of high-quality snowboarding by Travis Rice, Nicolas Muller and the top powder guys."

ELLERY'S MOMENTS



● **DECADE** (Mack Dawg, 1998)
"If you watch it now, the filming is nothing special. But back then, the way they used all the cameras was insane. I remember **Peter Line's** doing cork-screw 900s. Nobody was doing that at the time. It was the first film where you could really see the progression of riding."

TOTALLY BOARD (Standard Films, 1990)
"Shawn Farmer's road gap was an important moment. The run was sketchy because it was through the trees and windy. The gap was sketchy because it was over Mount Baker's highway, and the landing had tons of obstacles. It was cool and inspirational."

THE HARD, THE HUNGRY AND THE HOMELESS (Mack Dawg, 1992)
"Sean Johnson's back 1080 triple grab was a trick that hadn't been done before, much less caught on film. When you see something like this, you're surprised and psyched. Nobody was doing 1080s in those days, let alone backside."

STOMPING GROUNDS (Mack Dawg, 1996)
"Ingemar Backman's backside air in the opening was crazy. It was a huge 20-foot method on a really sketchy quarterpipe. That was a really big deal: All this took place in 1996, when the conditions weren't as good as they are now. You were just kind of eyeing it."

