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THE RED

BULLETIN

BEYOND THE ORDINARY

HARD AND FAST

How sprinting phenoms
ELIJAH HALL and
Cameron Burrell are ready
to hit the world stage

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EDITOR'S NOTE

SQUAD GOALS

There are many ingredients to success, but one that arguably doesn't get discussed enough is community, the way that people feed on the energy of friends or collaborators to reach their full potential. Consider our cover story, "Double Quick" (page 26), which profiles elite sprinters from Houston, Cameron Burrell and Elijah Hall. These two young men have been training and racing together since they were kids, and their bonds and shared goals have helped propel them toward greatness.



Two track and field gods and two aspirants to the throne slow down to pose on a Houston track as photographer Brian Lowe memorializes the moment.

Other stories in this issue explore the value of teamwork. Like "Pop Stars" (page 50), a look at the Bike Life scene in New York, where self-expression is a communal culture. Or "Breaking Ground" (page 38), a history of competitive breaking that highlights how crews transformed an art form in an atmosphere of adversarial collaboration. Perhaps the key to finding yourself is finding your people.

CONTRIBUTORS THIS ISSUE



MAURICE BOBB

Bobb ran track in high school—"it began as a filler after basketball"—but was drawn to the drama of the sprints. Fittingly, he got to profile Cameron Burrell and Elijah Hall as they try to book a trip to Tokyo. The Houston-based writer has written for *Rolling Stone*, *Slam* and *Bleacher Report*. [Page 26](#)



MARZ LOVEJOY

The former New Yorker, now based in Copenhagen, had some direct questions before agreeing to cover Bike Life culture. "It is imperative that Black, brown and other marginalized people tell our stories our way," says Lovejoy, who has self-published a book and written for *Office*. [Page 50](#)



JEFF WEISS

"I enjoyed tracing breaking's connection to hip-hop," says the author of our survey of competitive breaking. "Both art forms remain intertwined, with each generation reimagining what can be done." Weiss founded *The LAnd* magazine and has written for *GQ* and *The Washington Post*. [Page 38](#)

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POWER SWERVE

Bike Life enthusiasts Latti Datti (left) and YourBoyFromBK show off their stylish tricks in New York.





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FAST FRIENDS

Growing up in Houston, sprinters Elijah Hall (left) and Cameron Burrell formed a bond that has continued into adulthood.

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ROYAL MOVES

In 2001, Lords of the Floor, a competitive breaking event in Seattle, changed the game forever.





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THE DEPARTURE

KILLER INSTINCTS

The dance trio Femme Fatale pushes back against rigid gender norms—and redefines their art form.

PIPER FERGUSON

Femme Fatale was shot in Los Angeles in March.



On an overpass above a bustling street in Los Angeles, Marie “Poppins” Bonnevey, Lily Frias and Inyoung “Dassy” Lee dance in formation. With flawless timing, they take turns freestyling to the bass of Ice Cube’s Cali classic “You Can Do It.” The camera shoots from above, making them appear as if they are literally on top of the world. The video captures the essence of this international dance trio—where their freestyles are as polished as choreography, their choreography is like a secret code, and all of their moves are grounded in their roots as poppers. “You Can Do It” is right.

“We somehow click without even talking,” Lee says while rewatching the 2019 video. “We’ve done so many dances together.”

For the Los Angeles-based crew, collectively known as Femme Fatale, it all started in October 2016, when they first performed together at a dance

competition in Sweden. Bonnevey had been invited to perform a choreographed piece at the event, and she asked Frias and Lee to take part. They won first place. Bonnevey remembers how enthusiastic the event organizers were about their debut, telling the group they had never seen anything like it before. “You need to push that,” the organizers said.

A month later the group went viral: A video of their winning performance at the Carnival Choreographers Ball in Los Angeles racked up more than 30 million views on social media.

Five years later it’s clear they’re in it for the long haul. Bonnevey, Frias and Lee share the experience of immigrating to America—from France, Mexico and South Korea, respectively—propelled by their love of street dance. And together they want to redefine their art form.

They chose the name Femme Fatale in an effort to

reclaim the archetype of a seductive woman and reimagine what it means to wield sexuality as a weapon. As women, they intentionally create space for their femininity within popping and its masculine origins.

“Popping automatically has a super masculine feel,” Frias says, “but we bring our own feel as super-strong women. We express our femininity and bring that into the dance, and we’re super unapologetic.” They also push back against rigid gender norms: “Popping is a very androgynous dance,” Bonnevey explains. “It has masculine and feminine energy.”

The custom costumes they design together—which mix traditional streetwear with more tailored, fashion-forward looks—stand out in a sea of sweatpants and hoodies typically worn by other street dancers.

“[Our inspiration] came out naturally over time,” Lee says.

Clockwise from top: Dassy Lee, Lily Frias and Marie Poppins.



**"WE EXPRESS OUR
FEMININITY AND WE'RE
SUPER UNAPOLOGETIC."**



"We never really thought we were going to go crazy with the outfits, but inspiration always comes."

"In the beginning we got a bit of shade for wearing tight clothing when we popped," Frias adds. Bonnevey is more candid: "I'm just going to call it out," she says. "The men were just bothered by it."

Like many live performers all around the world, the COVID-19 pandemic pushed Femme Fatale to explore virtual opportunities, outdoor performances and socially distanced teaching, including a free weekly class in the park for girls. ("We call them Fam Fatales," Bonnevey quips.)

Empathizing with young dancers who have been unable to travel to study with internationally renowned teachers, the group started offering virtual courses, which has built a community of students from around the world. "We had a girl joining from South Africa. Even though it was 2 a.m. her time, she was down to be on Zoom," Frias recounts. "It opened our eyes. We can connect to people here and to people from all over the world who want to learn from us."

Looking ahead, they envision Femme Fatale not only as a dance crew and teaching team but as a global brand. Their wish list includes making a documentary about their unique, international backstory, launching a clothing line and developing an original theater production that features all-women poppers—a dream they hope to bring to Broadway. But ultimately, they just want to encourage street dancers—especially women—to be free and be themselves.

"Express your sexuality in your dance however the hell you want," Frias says. "Dress however you want, pop in whatever you want, break in whatever you want. That is how things evolve. Cultivate the culture, but still bring yourself into it."

—Beandrea July

Jill Wheatley

MOVING MOUNTAINS

When the Canadian suffered a severe traumatic brain injury in 2014, what spelled an end to life as she knew it also marked the start of a new adventure.

Jill Wheatley doesn't like the word "accident." Instead, she describes the moment her life was altered forever as "when serendipity changed my trail." It was 2014, and she was teaching sports science at a school just outside of Munich when she was hit on the head by a baseball. Her skull fractured, her brain suffered swelling and bleeding, and damage to her optic nerves left her with just 30 percent vision—her right eye would never open again. In an instant, Wheatley, still in her early 30s, was transformed from an independent "adventurous spirit" to the survivor of a traumatic brain injury (TBI), which also triggered an eating disorder that saw her weight plummet dangerously.

It would be more than two years before the Ontario-born Wheatley left the hospital to find that her life—her job, home and German residency—no longer existed. Before "serendipity" intervened, Wheatley had spent every minute outdoors, so, despite her injuries and with nothing more to lose, she set off to ice-climb, ski and mountain-run her way around the world's most spectacular massifs, from the Eiger Ultra Trail in the Alps to Nepal's Annapurna. She has documented her journey in her blog, *Mountains of My Mind*.

Last November, after months of lockdown in Kathmandu, Wheatley was about to climb the iconic Ama Dablam when she learned that her father had

unexpectedly passed away. "I honestly feel like my life experience prepared me for it, and I was more accepting of relinquishing control," she says. "There was nothing I could do. There was a strange sensation my dad was with me, that he could see. It gave me strength." She climbed on and made it to the summit.

THE RED BULLETIN: What calls you to the mountains?

JILL WHEATLEY: I've always been drawn to mountains and the outdoors. I felt like no matter what mountain, it couldn't challenge me the way those 26 months in the hospital did. Once, when I was really sick in Colorado, a doctor came to introduce himself. I was pulling my tubes out and doing everything a patient shouldn't do. He said, "I understand you like mountains. These are your lifelines. If you're on an expedition, you're on a team. We are your team who'll help get you to your Everest." Two years ago, the first time I saw Everest, his words came back to me. No one climbs a mountain alone.

How has global travel been a challenge on your expeditions?

In Canada and the U.S., there's an assumption that every adult can drive. Why am I not running more in the Canadian Rockies? Because it's really hard to access if you're visually impaired. It's not like in Switzerland where you can hop on a train that takes you door to door. That was disheartening at first. However,

the places I choose now reflect that. I learned that Chamonix, for example, is great because I can base myself somewhere, and if I'm there a month I can do 30 different trails.

Other than your loss of vision, how does your TBI affect you?

You can see the scars from my physical falls, but you don't see the cognitive function. I have no depth perception, so I fall; I pour my water and miss the cup. Not every day, but often. Balance, coordination, concentration—all of those things needed training.

What now helps you deal with difficult moments?

Impermanence. I was introduced to Vipassana, a meditation style that starts with 10 days of silence. The root of it is basically that everything is constantly changing. I allowed myself to think deeper into that, shift my perspective and recognize that actually I'm a very good example of impermanence. I don't even like the word "recovery," because to me that means going back to something, and I don't want to go back to the person I was before. I feel like the lessons I've learned from my TBI are more than I ever would without it. The power of perspective is the most significant lesson; that shift from what I've lost to what I've gained. Adversity doesn't look the same to everyone. It might not be a TBI or vision loss, but every human can connect to adversity, to vulnerability, to being open and authentic.

How does it feel to have reached a summit?

Honestly, I feel gratitude. I look at a picture of me on a summit, and in the other half of my brain I'm lying in a hospital bed in Colorado hoping that I don't wake up. I'm so thankful that these people didn't give up on me. On top of a summit it's me standing there, but it's so many other people who have got me there. mountainsofmymind.com

**"ADVERSITY
DOESN'T LOOK
THE SAME TO
EVERYONE."**





Ancient Forest Alliance

DEEP CUTS

While photos often capture cherished memories, activist and photographer TJ Watt is using the medium to save the planet's ancient woodlands.

TJ Watt's latest photo series is a story of two halves. In the first, the nature photographer stands beside the giant ancient cedars of the Caycuse Valley in southern Vancouver Island, Canada, on a clear blue-skied day. The second half tells a darker story. We see Watt posing against the same backdrop, but now the thousand-year-old trees have been cut down to their stumps.

The Canadian began his Caycuse Before & After project

with one aim: to draw attention to the deforestation of British Columbia's oldest trees. "You can't argue with what you're seeing," says Watt. "[This is] the destruction of one of the grandest ecosystems on Earth."

An environmental activist and self-proclaimed "big tree hunter," Watt has been recording the activity of the logging industry in the Caycuse Valley for the past year, finding old-growth trees marked to be cut down and



The unkindest cut:
Watt's photo
project perfectly
illustrates the
devastation of the
old-growth forests.



TJ WATT
LOU BOYD

capturing them before and after. The project has attracted worldwide attention. “The photos hit home because you’re looking at the loss of trees upwards of a thousand years old. When a forest like that is cut down, it’s gone forever.”

The harvesting of British Columbia’s ancient forests is an urgent environmental moment. Less than 10 percent of Vancouver’s original old-growth woodland is currently protected, and an area of untouched forest equivalent to more than 10,000 football fields is cut down each year. A co-founder of nonprofit organization Ancient Forest Alliance, Watt is not only documenting this devastation but successfully fighting against it. The alliance famously saved another forest, Avatar Grove, which was marked to be cut down in 2010. “That area has become an international old-growth destination, with hundreds of

thousands of people visiting every year,” says Watt. “The community has shifted toward a green economy based on big-tree tourism. It shows that old-growth forests are worth more standing than they are on the back of a logging truck.”

All hope is not lost for the forests that remain. In the lead-up to last October’s local election, the BC government promised to implement a new era of protection for the most endangered old trees. Now that the election has been won, Watt is calling on everyone moved by his photo series to hold them accountable to their pledge. “I encourage everyone to write to and phone the politicians in BC, regardless of where you live. This is a global issue and these are some of the finest temperate rainforests left on our planet. Although we lost this forest, we may be able to save many others because of it.” ancientforestalliance.org



**Neom,
Saudi Arabia**

PORTRAIT IN DUST

Pareidolia is the name given to the imagined perception of patterns, objects or faces where they don't actually exist. Here we see Anton Shibalov, Dmitrii Nikitin and Ivan Tatarinov tracing the outline of a huge, slumbering dragon during this January's Dakar Rally. Or could it just be the Russians tearing around Neom—the site of a controversial megacity-building project in Saudi Arabia—in their Team Kamaz Master truck? Whatever the truth of the matter, French photographer Éric Vargiolu was on hand to capture both beasts for posterity.

Instagram: @eric_vargiolu

THE DEPARTURE

THE DEPARTURE





North Atlantic HEAVY BLOW

There's nothing like a pleasant sail. And the Vendée Globe—the iconic solo, nonstop, round-the-world yacht race—is nothing like a pleasant sail. Last November saw the 33 starters in the 2020/21 race battered by 55 mph gusts off the coast of Portugal. The L'Occitane en Provence boat, skippered by Armel Tripon—and photographed here by fellow Frenchman Pierre Bouras—was among the most badly damaged, necessitating a 350-mile detour for repairs. “The sea was white; it was very brutal,” said Tripon afterward. “But it’s a real gift to be able to live it and see this.” And to survive it, no doubt.

Instagram: @pierrebouras



**Chamonix,
France**

GOING WITH THE FLOW

There are two possible explanations for this arresting image, shot by Christophe Pallot in Chamonix during the 2019 Ultra-Trail du Mont-Blanc. The first is that the Frenchman chose a slow shutter speed in order to transform the runners into this long, flowing, multicolored river. The second—less feasible, but more exciting—is that Pallot somehow captured on camera the collective spirit of all those taking part in the epic 170 km ultramarathon. Either way, the results are cosmic.

Instagram: @christophepallot

Hannah Reid

SPEAKING TRUTH TO POWER

British trio London Grammar's ethereal pop songs have been streamed more than a billion times, but it's only now that their lead singer has truly found her voice.

Hannah Reid, best known as the vocalist of indie-pop trio London Grammar, casually reveals a major lockdown achievement as she chats from her West London home. "One positive is that instead of going out on the road, we've carried our creative process on," says the 31-year-old singer. "So we've been writing loads and working on a fourth album."

This is surprising news given that the long-awaited third album by the band (Reid, alongside guitarist Dan Rothman and drummer/keyboard player Dominic Major) was finally released in April. A collection of deftly woven, Balearic-flavored pop tracks, *Californian Soil* tackles toxic misogyny, the death of the American Dream and Reid's own personal growth. It demonstrates a newfound confidence she says is due to age, experience and the influence of a new generation of inspirational female artists.

THE RED BULLETIN: You found fame at quite a young age. How has that affected you?

HANNAH REID: We were signed when we were 21, and it's definitely changed me as a person. The music industry is a very tough landscape. It's completely male dominated, and it was a little bit of a shock. Also, when you experience

success you're suddenly opened up to this world of other people's opinions. You can lose your own sense of identity a bit. But I feel like on this third album I've managed to get that back. I've changed a lot as a person, and there was just a different energy in what I was writing, and in the music. It's kind of upbeat for us, but the lyrics are quite dark in places and a bit more aggressive.

Has confidence come with age?

On the first record I was actually really lost and very vulnerable, like a lot of young people at that age. As you get older, the things that you experience change you, and yeah, I found a different kind of confidence. Whereas on the second record maybe I was hiding behind a bit of a veil of poetry, [on this record] I was just like, "I'm going to say whatever I want to say."

Have you taken on more of a leadership role in the band?

In terms of dealing with the industry, yes. If people don't respect me as a leader, they won't respect me at all. Because I've had such difficulty sometimes being the only female in the room, I was like, "If you guys support me in that way, I don't think people can take advantage of us." It's an industry where you do have to have quite strong boundaries and a thick skin. It's a constant battle.

You've said that you see the new album as feminist...

It's definitely in the lyrics. I did have quite profound experiences being a woman in the music industry and then realizing that when I came home from being on tour and spoke to my girlfriends about it, they were all having the same experiences. It was disappointing and made me feel like, "Wow, the world has not moved on in the way I thought it had."

Do you find inspiration in other female artists?

I love any art that's made by women and is about being empowered. The younger generation of female artists who are leading the way, like Arlo Parks and Billie Eilish—women who are quite a lot younger than me—have helped me. You can see it in them having control over their careers and saying everything they want to say.

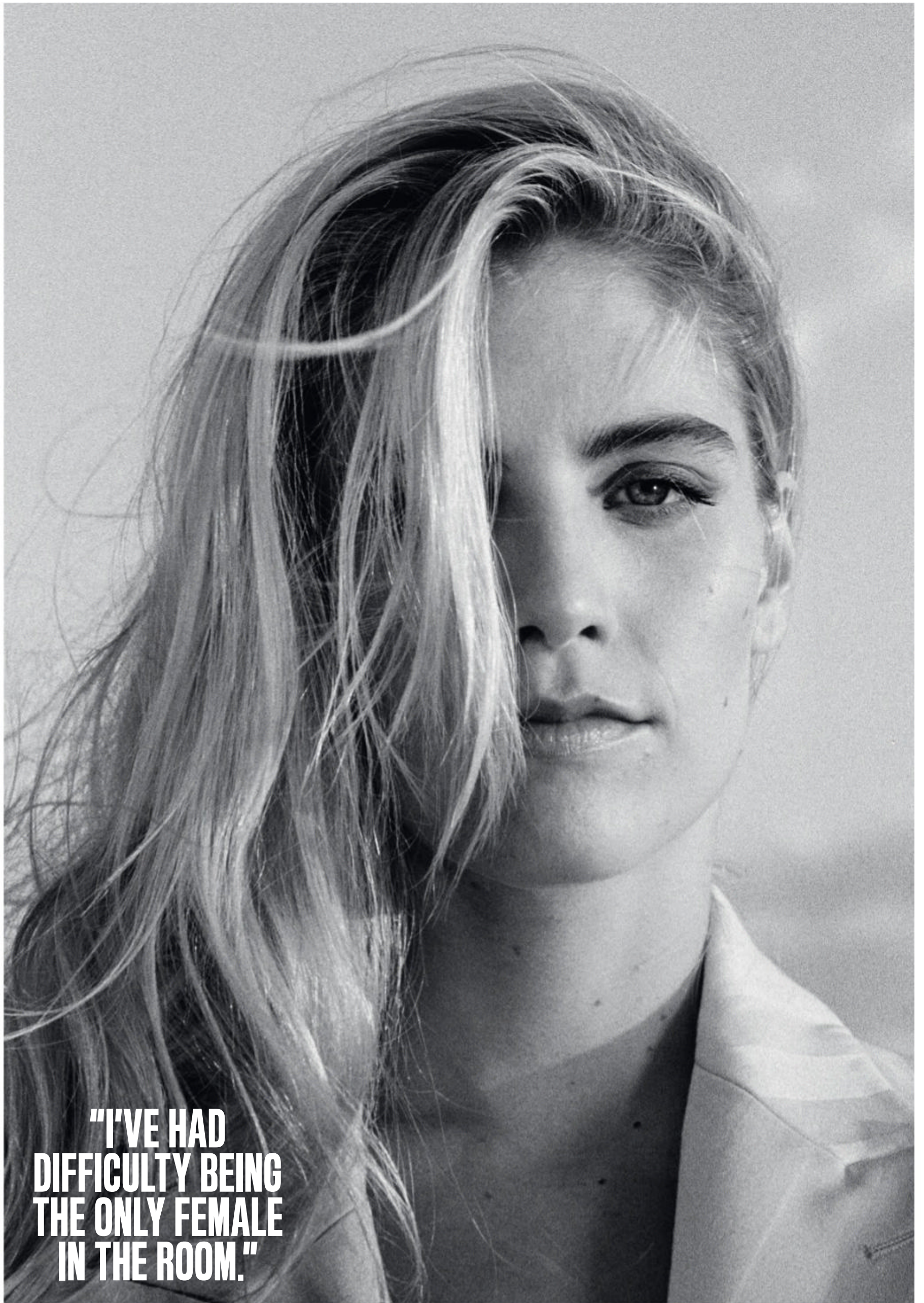
What was it that you wanted to say with this record that you couldn't before?

There are some songs where I'm speaking about those sexual politics or dynamics that go on between men and women, with men still holding that baton of power. There's more personal stuff that's just about me losing myself in that environment and regaining a sense of who I was. I think I just wanted to say "Fuck you," really.

Would you ever be tempted to go solo?

There's just a magic between us three [in the band] that I really cherish. No matter how the music changes or evolves from record to record, we've also evolved so much as a trio. It's so fascinating to be a part of that. I do have a wish to maybe write a really obscure, tragic country record that probably no one would listen to. But that's a long way off.

London Grammar's album *Californian Soil* is out now; londongrammar.com



**"I'VE HAD
DIFFICULTY BEING
THE ONLY FEMALE
IN THE ROOM."**

Playlist

SING IT LOUD

Known for his unique singing style, Awolnation's Aaron Bruno shares his picks for the most mind-blowing vocal performances in pop and rock.

To say Awolnation has had an impressive career is an understatement.

Formed in 2010 by frontman Aaron Bruno, the California rock band's chart-topping first single, "Sail," kickstarted a busy decade for the band. Across the span of four albums, the group has notched millions of sales and more than 1.5 billion streams globally. Their debut album, 2011's *Megalithic Symphony*, turns 10 this year. Bruno remembers its impact. "It was like a science experiment," he says. "I'm still blown away that people cared about it the way they did. Now, here we are a decade later celebrating its anniversary."

Here are some of the tracks that inspired Bruno along the way.

The anniversary deluxe edition of *Megalithic Symphony* is out now on Red Bull Records; awolnationmusic.com



NIRVANA "WHERE DID YOU SLEEP LAST NIGHT" (1993)

"The first time I heard this, I had stayed up to see *MTV Unplugged*. As I watched [Kurt Cobain] cover this Leadbelly song, I remember thinking, 'If he goes an octave higher and screams the melody, I don't know what I'm gonna do with myself.' Then the tension builds and he screams: *My girl, my girl, don't lie to me*. That moment changed my life forever."



DARYL HALL & JOHN OATES "SARA SMILE" (1975)

"Besides being a great song with an incredible rhythm section, this is also very challenging vocally and takes real patience to perfect. I've always loved it and felt like it was in my range, and I remember being in this park about 11 years ago, smoking blunts alone, and I was just trying to sing it over and over, every single part. I never perfected it and I never will, but it's really fun to attempt."



RAGE AGAINST THE MACHINE "FREEDOM" (1994)

"If I had to pick the best recorded scream of all time, I think it would have to be Zack [de la Rocha]'s in the final 30 seconds of this song, which is also the best part. The note he hits—the dirt on his vocal and the pure pain and, quite literally, rage—is mind blowing. It was everything for me—and I've been trying to rip it off ever since."



PRINCE AND THE REVOLUTION "KISS" (1986)

"When this came out, I had no idea who was singing it. I heard it in my dad's car when I was 8 or 9, and I loved it. Some of my friends made fun of me for singing it because it was so high, but once I realized it was Prince and just how cool and badass he was, it gave me this newfound confidence and made me realize it was OK to sing in falsetto."

NEED TO CONQUER A MOUNTAIN OF WORK?



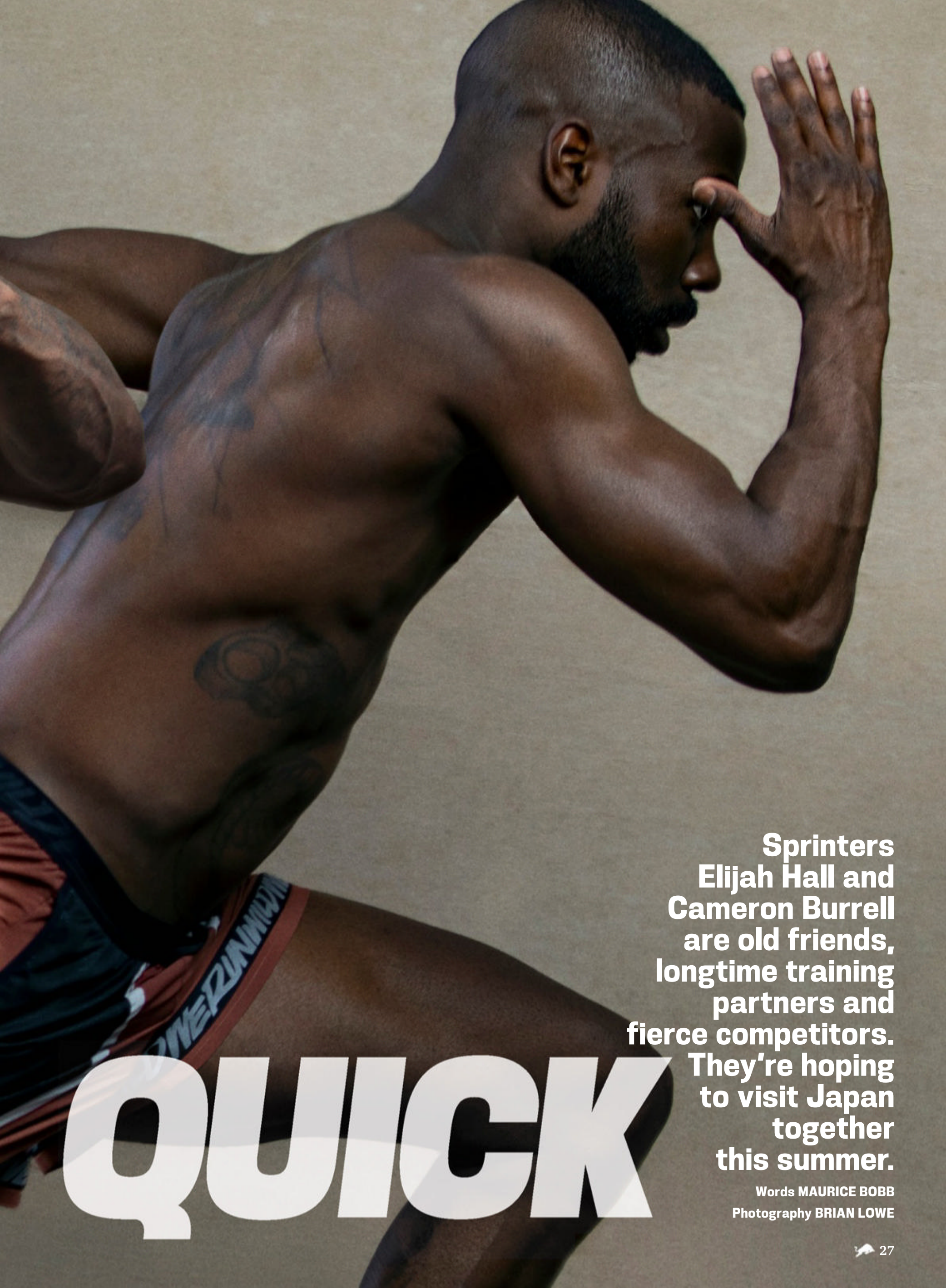
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DOUBLE



QUICK

**Sprinters
Elijah Hall and
Cameron Burrell
are old friends,
longtime training
partners and
fierce competitors.
They're hoping
to visit Japan
together
this summer.**

Words MAURICE BOBB
Photography BRIAN LOWE

CONSIDER SOME OF THE MOST ICONIC SPORTS MOMENTS IN HISTORY.

Babe Ruth's much-debated "called shot" during Game 3 of the 1932 World Series against the Chicago Cubs at Wrigley Field, for example. Joe Namath's guarantee against the heavily favored Baltimore Colts before Super Bowl III. Larry Bird's "Who's coming in second?" taunt to his fellow competitors before the Three-Point Contest in 1988. Or Anthony Joshua's "victory is written all over me" guarantee after his pubic workout at Wembley Arena before beating Wladimir Klitschko to unify the WBA and IBF boxing heavyweight titles in 2017.

Even the not-so-subtle gold cleats Michael Johnson had custom made before running the unprecedented combination of the 200 and 400 meters in the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta.

It wasn't just that they'd stepped up to win their respective championships; it was how they added to their mythology by backing up their bold predictions.

Elijah Hall, a 26-year-old professional sprinter still racing toward his own legend, remembers his own prophetic moment like it was yesterday.

It was during his senior year at the University of Houston. The men's track team was at their hotel in Eugene, Oregon, eating breakfast before the 2018 NCAA Championships, when, like a vision, Hall had the idea that he and his relay teammates would do the impossible later that day: break the collegiate record in the 4x100m.

But unlike the Sultan of Swat, Broadway Joe, Larry Legend or the Man with the Golden Shoes, there was no hubris in Hall's bold prediction. He





Elijah Hall (left) and
Cameron Burrell were
photographed in
Houston on March 22.

was simply filled with the confidence of preparation, which prompted him to write down the time 38.19 on a napkin. “This is the time we’re going to run today,” he said matter-of-factly.

His teammate and longtime friend, Cameron Burrell, understood the audacity of Hall’s statement, knowing that the Texas Christian University men’s team had held the collegiate record in the event since 1989 with a time of 38.23. “That’s fast, but ... OK,” Burrell said.

The weather that day was not optimal. It was a chilly 60 degrees and there were dark gray cumulus clouds hovering over Hayward Field bent on postponement. And then it began to rain. Not a torrential downpour, but enough precipitation to make things very uncomfortable.

“That morning we knew the weather wasn’t going to be good,” recalls Burrell, also 26. “It wasn’t record-breaking weather. “But we had something special, we had some momentum and we believed.”

They also had new uniforms, new shoes and a fresh pep talk from track and field legend Carl Lewis, who is now in his seventh season as Houston’s full-time assistant coach under head coach and fellow former world’s fastest man Leroy Burrell.

As the anchor leg, the younger Burrell was able to watch the race unfold before his eyes. He couldn’t believe what he saw unfolding. It was an electric performance by all runners.

“John Lewis ran the race of his life,” Burrell says. “Eli gets the baton, adjusting it while running, but at the

"OVER THE YEARS WE'VE BUILT A COMRADERY THAT CAN'T BE BROKEN."

same time, he's blowing people out and I'm like, this is a joke, you gotta be kidding me. He made a clean exchange to Mario Burke, and at that point I ducked down and got in my three-point stance and I just ran with the spirit and just let it go. And when I crossed the finish line and looked at the clock—it said 38.17."

"That was one of my proudest moments," Hall adds. "To run on the same team with Cam and before we both left we broke a record that stood for 29 years. We really did that, on the biggest stage in college."

Nothing bonds athletes quite like winning together. Burrell and Hall began their friendship as children, running together for the Carl Lewis Athletics Stars Track Club in Houston.

"Funny story is, at the time, Cam and I weren't the fastest kids at a young age," Hall says. "But once we got to eighth grade, we started to make that pop out. Everyone was like, 'These guys are really fast.' And when we got to high school, we were pretty much winning everything in summer track. Either I was anchor leg or he was anchor leg, but we were always on the same relay team,

and that's how Cam and I formed a bond growing up."

Burrell and Hall's alliance spilled over into high school, even though they went to schools in different divisions. "Eli and I have won at every stage of our careers," Burrell says. "We won the Junior Olympics when we were kids and in high school we were both state champions in Texas. I was the 4A state champion, because I went to a smaller school, and he was the 5A state champion. Over the years we've built a bond that instills a comradery that can't be broken. We've continuously built off of each other."



Hall's dream to compete at the University of Houston took a detour to junior college due to fatherhood, but he did the work to get back on track.



Burrell, the son of two Olympic champions, has always seemed destined for sprint greatness.

After high school, though, both sprinters charted very different paths. Burrell was heavily recruited out of Ridge Point High School but ultimately decided to run for his father at UH. “I went through the same recruiting process that every recruit goes through in this country,” says Burrell, who as a child was always aware that his parents were track and field royalty because his mother, Michelle Finn-Burrell, and father both have gold medals from the 1992 Olympics as part of the women’s and men’s 4x100m relay teams, respectively. “They came to my house, I got phone calls from rival schools, I explored. But I knew the best thing that

was going to happen for me was staying here. Not necessarily because I’d be comfortable, but because I know at the end of the day they have my best interests at heart.”

Most track and field fans would feel as if running for Houston was Burrell’s birthright, especially considering that his father and godfather ran the program, but it was about more than that. “It was more so a business decision,” Burrell says. “There’s a lot of bad coaches out there. And when I say bad, I mean if a coach’s mind is only on the NCAAs and only on the conference and that’s what they want out of these athletes, it’s bad. A lot of athletes struggle with that because

they sign with these big schools without realizing that these coaches, in the grand scheme of things, are employees trying to keep a job. And I knew at Houston it could be better for me.”

Hall was also highly sought after by the nation’s best colleges, coming out of Morton Ranch High School in Katy, but unlike Burrell, his grades weren’t up to par. So he had to take a detour.

“Out of high school, the talent was there,” says Hall. “I ran the No. 1 time in the 200 meters in the nation [20.60], but because I had three kids [Alaiya, Taliya, Elijah Jr.] by the time I finished high school, the focus in class wasn’t there. It was hard trying to overcome

growing up as a teenager with kids, and it was a struggle to make the grades I needed. So I had to go to junior college.”

Butler Community College in Kansas was a long way from home—and even farther from where Hall wanted to be. That said, he says now that it was the “do I really want this” moment he desperately needed.

“Junior college humbled me because at the time I was a young kid who wanted to be older and it really made me take a step back and settle down,” says Hall. “I had to focus in class and I had to get my grades right, so I could get into any Division 1 school I wanted, which was the University of Houston.”

Still, Hall says, he wouldn’t change anything. “I feel like that journey made me who I am today. It made me the man I am today because being in junior college is another level. You have to be built for junior college. A lot of people go into junior college and don’t make it out because it’s different. That’s why I salute everyone that goes into juco and makes it out, because I know the struggle. I know it’s hard.”

They say that those who can’t, teach. But what about those who win at the highest level and then choose to pass on that experiential knowledge to the next generation? That’s what coaches Burrell and Lewis bring to the University of Houston.

These are no ordinary talents. Burrell has one Olympic gold medal, three medals at the World Championships (two gold, one silver) and broke the world record in the 100 meters twice (9.90 in 1991, 9.85 in 1994). Meanwhile, Lewis has 10 Olympic medals (nine gold, one silver) and 10 medals at the World Championships (eight gold, one silver, one bronze). He’s also set individual world records in the 100 meters, twice (9.92 in 1988, 9.86 in 1991).

Their collective accomplishments are a repudiation of all of the tired sports adages. They did it, so now they want to make sure that the student athletes under their tutelage do it, too.

No wonder Hall worked so hard to get back to Houston. He wanted to learn



everything he could from two of the best to ever do it. “I’ve always been fast, but Coach Burrell and Coach Lewis taught me the mechanics side of running,” Hall says. “They taught me how to stay front side, how to get my arms back, how to get my arms up. The thing I learned from Coach Burrell is respect the body. If you don’t respect your body, the only person you’re going to hurt is you.”

Carl Lewis was a big influence, too. “Coach Lewis instilled in me the right way to run,” says Hall. “He was just always about doing it the right way.

Once you learn the right way to run, then training can be easier and running track meets will be easier. Everything is easier when you run the right way.”

Learning those fundamentals paid off big time for Hall. By the time he graduated from Houston, he’d made an indelible mark as a new breed of runner, with a lot of hardware in the school’s trophy case. Hall remains the school record holder for the Indoor 200m and 4x400m relay. He also won the American Athletic Conference Outdoor Championship in the 100m and 200m, as well as the 4x100m and 4x400m relays.

"THE REAL WORK IS DONE WHEN YOU'RE ALONE AND NO ONE IS LOOKING."

The former AAC Most Outstanding Track Athlete made the most of his two years at Houston, especially when it comes to life off the track. "Coach Burrell and Coach Lewis helped me grow into the man that I am today, because they were like father figures to me, too," he says. "They taught me to be more responsible about things that go on in my life on and off the track."

The younger Burrell spent five years at Houston but had the unique benefit of having had access to his father and

godfather for his whole life. He was also successful as a collegiate athlete, setting school records in the 60m, the 100m and the 4x400m relay. He also ran anchor for Houston's 4x100m relay team that won NCAA Championships in 2017 and 2018. In short, it's an early sprinting career that anyone would envy.

But that's the least of what he gained as an amateur sprinter and son of the man who broke the 100m world record twice. "My dad taught me resiliency," Burrell says. "He's been through a lot

in his life, a lot in his path as a young adult and as a coach, but he never quit on himself, he never hung his head. He still doesn't. When things get hard he gets more determined, and it's one of those things where he didn't necessarily have to teach me, he just did it and I caught along to his behavioral patterns. I was like, 'OK, this is how you operate within this world and this sport,' and I took note of that mentally when I was young, and because of that, I was able to accomplish a lot."



In separate workouts, Hall (facing page) and Burrell show a shared work ethic and hoist a lot of heavy metal.

As for the man who won four gold medals in 1984? Without a doubt, Lewis taught his godson how to be a fierce competitor. “Carl is a huge competitor, his brain is his superpower,” Burrell says. “No matter what, he was going to find a way to win. And so I get a good combination of both. I get the resiliency from my dad and the competitiveness from Carl. Carl taught me how to be a genuine life competitor and how to go out and be better than the next man.”

Every 100-meter race is divided into four different phases: start, acceleration, transition and maximum velocity. Hall trains to pursue a mastery of those phases to a point where it all ties together and becomes second nature. “When I get into the starting blocks, I visualize myself running my race,” Hall says. “I see myself running the perfect race. I get down, I take a deep breath, I zone in, look down my lane and rest on the fact that I’ve prepared for this moment and the only thing that can stop me is me.”

When the starter pistol is fired, Hall’s mind goes blank and all he can think is GO. “When that gun goes off, I’m staring that finish line down,” Hall says. “I’m not looking side to side, I’m not looking backwards, I’m not looking at anyone’s feet. I’m looking at the finish line, and I’m trying to get there before anyone else.”

In his mind, Hall’s race doesn’t begin until he’s 50 meters in. That’s when he knows where he’s at in the race and has an idea of how he’s going to place. And the last 40 meters? That’s when he focuses on his form and zeroes in on what he needs to do to finish the race strong. “My thinking is, I’m not going to let the next man beat me,” Hall says. “And if he wants to beat me, he’s going to have to break a record on me.”

Burrell sees sprinting like a chess game, thinking several moves ahead to run the perfect race. “I talk to myself when I run,” Burrell says. “I know what’s right and what’s wrong. I know what I’m doing. I know I need to gradually accelerate. I know I need to stroke my arms. I know I need to put my feet down. I know I need to open up. I know I need to turn over. I’m in a constant state of knowing what I’m doing.”

For most elite 100m runners, those 10 seconds or less can seem to stretch



Track and field royalty Carl Lewis (far left) and Leroy Burrell (far right) are coaches at the University of Houston program known as Speed City and continue to guide the young sprinters.

out to a minute. “Really, really brilliant athletes can slow things down,” Burrell says. “Your brain slows it down. It’s a powerful tool. You consciously slow time down to check your body, your posture, your positioning, your acceleration, your turnover, and it’s all happening simultaneously. It’s brilliant when executed properly.”

All of those moving parts require a level of mental acuity that few athletes possess. “I do think track is very technical,

but I also think it has a lot to do with the brain,” Burrell says. “You can get into the science and the anatomy of the body and you can get into strength, agility, explosiveness and all that stuff, but I think it starts with your brain. That’s the biggest thing my coaches instilled in me, because technique can be fixed. Arm swings can be fixed. Block starts can be fixed. Endurance can be fixed. But if you don’t have a sound mind, you’re wasting your time.”



Every four years, the Olympics have a way of capturing the world's imagination. But what about the years in between? More often than not, athletes have to toil in anonymity as they prepare to compete on the world stage for what they hope will be immortality.

"It's always been my ultimate goal to make it to the Olympics and stand on that podium," says Hall, who aspires to compete in both the 100m and 200m. "Representing my country means a lot to

me because I have family members that fought and gave their all for this country. I feel like we as athletes have a duty to represent our country the right way."

Hall understands the spirit of the games, but to make it to Tokyo, he'll have to dig deep and deliver at the U.S. Olympic Trials in June.

Luckily for him, he has a lifelong teammate and opponent in Burrell. "Eli and I have a relationship built on sheer and utter competitiveness," Burrell says.

"The way it works is interesting because we strengthen each other's weaknesses. We are each other's kryptonite."

"Eli was a very profound and excellent 200m sprinter, I was not," Burrell continues. "I had a very explosive block start and was an explosive 100m sprinter, he was not. He would beat me in the longer races and I would beat him in the shorter ones. We would run relays together; I would be first leg, he would be last leg. And just over the years, we've got better and better at each of our weaknesses and whatever one of us was lacking, the other would pick up."

One of Hall's admitted weaknesses is his start out of the blocks, so he spends countless hours shoring up his technique. "The real work is done when you're alone practicing and no one is looking," Hall says. "It's done when there is no audience and there are no cameras. That's when you get the best and the most out of yourself. I love the bright lights at the track meet because I know for sure that I put in the work at practice. Practice is when you 'get it in out the mud.' But if you are prepared and put in the right work, when it's time to race, you'll be having fun."

Like his father, Burrell has already broken the 10-second barrier for 100m, running 9.93 seconds in the prelims at the 2017 NCAA Championships. "My first time breaking the barrier was a school record at UH and then the next year, I did the same thing twice," Burrell says. "So now I know what that feels like and I know what it takes to get there."

But Burrell is hardly satisfied. "I want more, I want to get to 9.8. So now we're doing that kind of work."

With so much success between them, many observers think Burrell and Hall may both find a way to wear the red, white and blue this summer while blazing down the track to Olympic glory.

"Eli and I are both NCAA champions," Burrell says. "There is no reason why we can't do the same thing now as professionals. Eli and I have had the luxury and the privilege of being able to do this at a high level for a very long time. And over the years, we've just constantly made each other better and have found ways to inspire each other. No matter where we come from, no matter what we do, no matter what we think, we're able to push each other. It's like a Superman and Batman relationship."



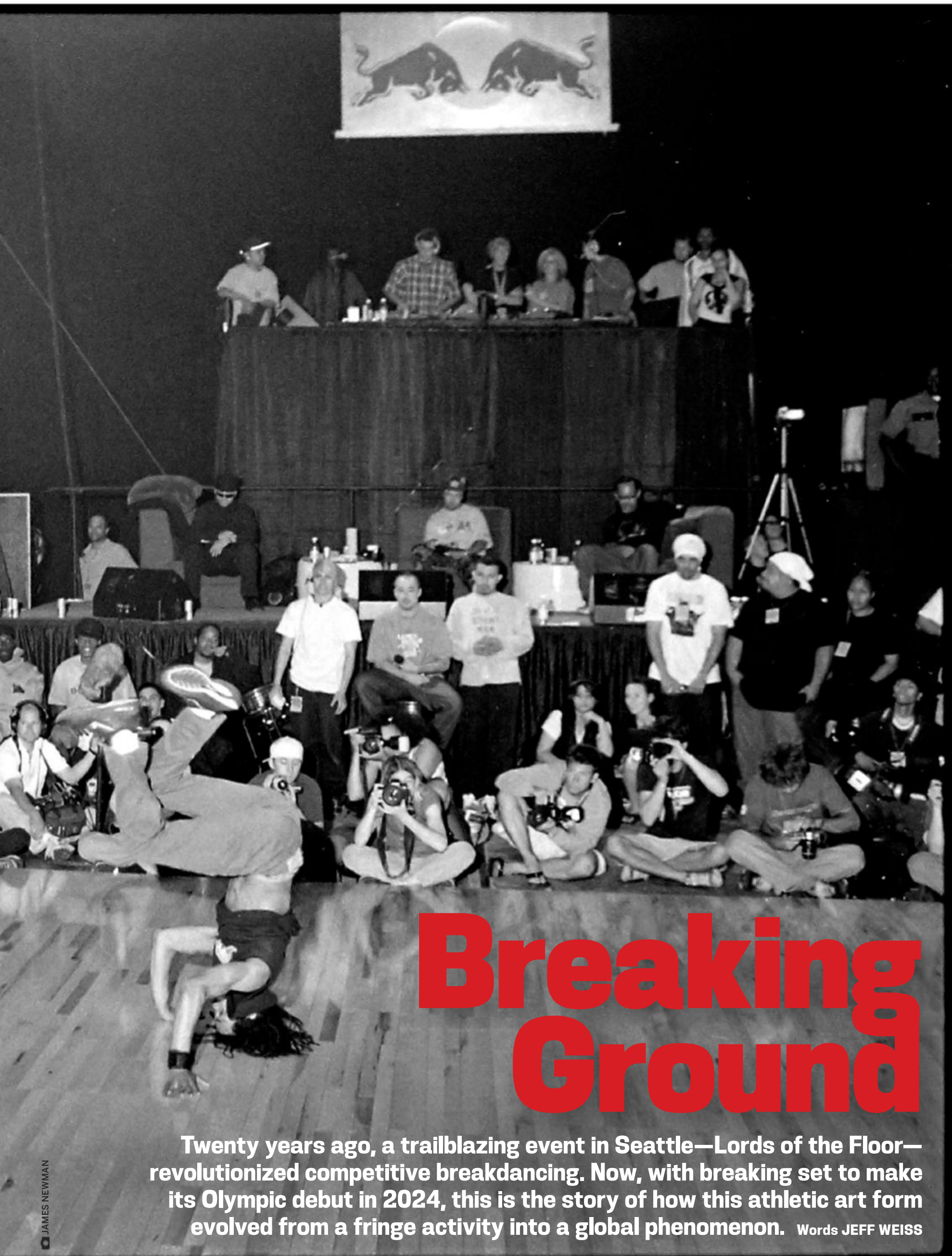
Burrell, who is particularly explosive out of the blocks, has a personal best of 9.93 seconds in the 100-meter dash.

Hall, known for his top-end speed, has clocked a best of 20.02 seconds in the 200-meter dash.



Orb from Seattle's Circle of Fire crew does a head freeze at the first Lords of the Floor event in 2001.

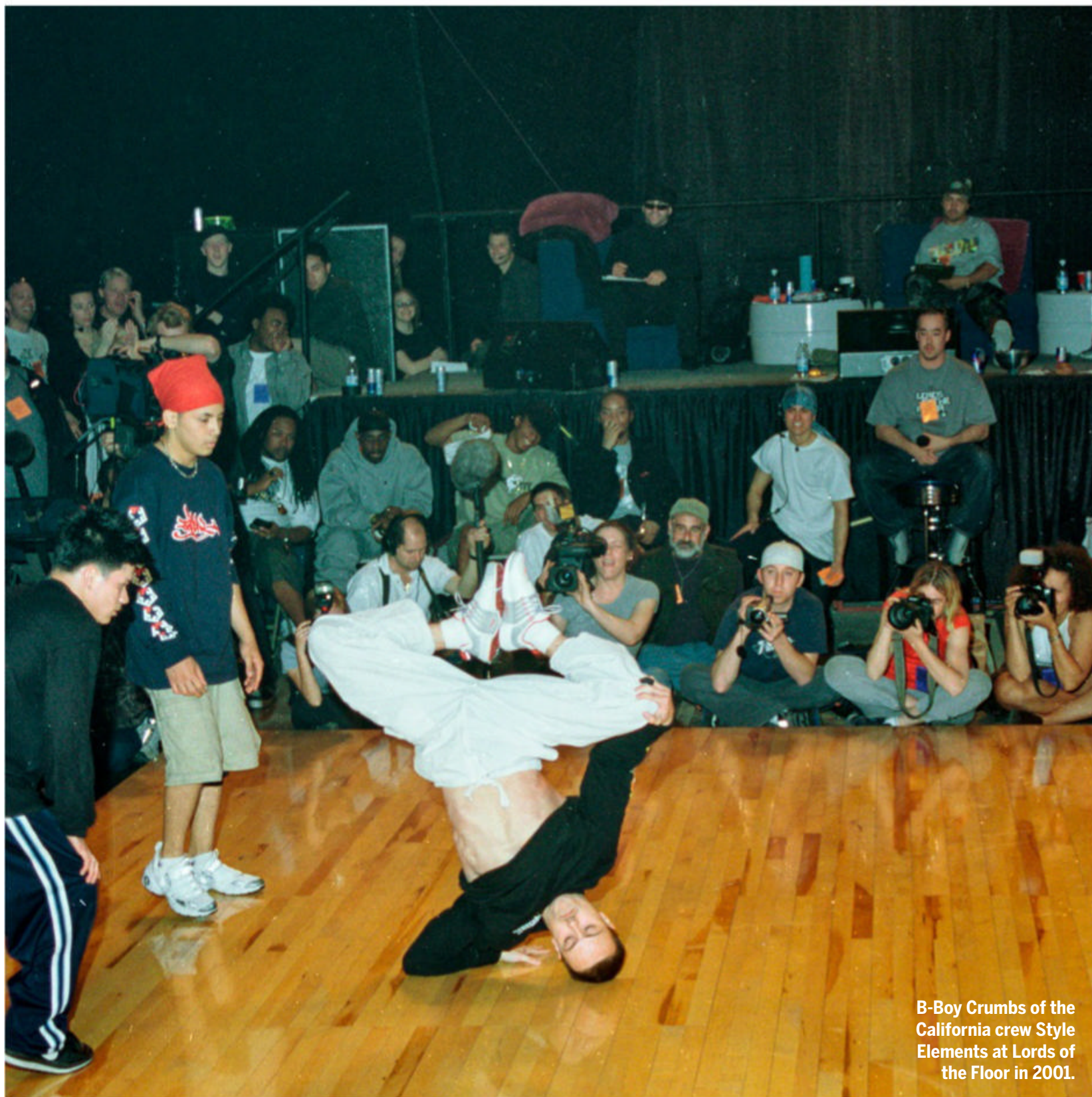




Breaking Ground

Twenty years ago, a trailblazing event in Seattle—Lords of the Floor—revolutionized competitive breakdancing. Now, with breaking set to make its Olympic debut in 2024, this is the story of how this athletic art form evolved from a fringe activity into a global phenomenon. Words JEFF WEISS

JAMES NEWMAN



B-Boy Crumbs of the California crew Style Elements at Lords of the Floor in 2001.



It began with 64 crews vying for the throne. But one by one they slowly met their fate, until only the “Great 8” remained. Flown out from all across the United States, the dancers assembled in their baggy cargo pants and basketball jerseys at Seattle’s Sand Point Naval Station. This was the B-Boy battle to end all battles, the one that everything had been building toward. It was the spring of 2001 and all the formidable cliques were there: the Skill Methodz, the Rhythm Bugs, the Massive Monkees, the L.A. Breakers, the Boogie Brats, Circle of Fire, Style Elements and HaviKoro. These were the Lords of the Floor.

Sponsored by Red Bull, the two-day tournament was the brainchild of Bob “the Balance” Foxhoven of Seattle’s Circle of Fire crew—the same one that had represented the United States in the legendary international Battle of the Year competition in 2000.

But this event somehow felt different. The U.S. might have invented hip-hop—which included breakdancing among its foundational four elements—but it had already begun to evolve into a global phenomenon. In its ancestral cradle, major events like the B-Boy Summit, the Freestyle Session and the yearly Rock Steady Anniversary remained mandatory pilgrimages for any self-respecting breaker, but no one had ever seen anything domestically that could match the scale of Lords of the Floor.

Z-Trip, the master turntablist and future mash-up pioneer, manned the decks. Ken Swift of the immortal Rock Steady Crew was a judge. The room boasted a freshly waxed and springy dance floor that allowed for some of the most athletic and jaw-dropping moves that anyone had yet unveiled. A sold-out audience packed into the crowded armory. For a rebellious subculture spawned from the scorched



Orb from Circle of Fire in 2001.



Over the years, members of Seattle's Massive Monkees crew have worked with artists such as Missy Elliott, Beyoncé, Public Enemy, 50 Cent and De La Soul.

rubble of the '70s South Bronx, the dancers were shocked to have masseuses offering them between-round treatment. The prize money totaled \$4,000. It was a leveling up that no one had foreseen.

"It was a seismic leap for breaking," says Massive Monkees member Jeromeskee, who performed while still a high school senior. After the show he headed straight to his prom. "It was the most elite event we'd ever seen. For the first time, B-Boys were treated like rock stars." And the contest was such a success that Red Bull brought it back the following year.

Rock Steady's influence and the classic '80s breakdancing films, *Breakin'* and *Beat Street*, had set the template for the first wave of breaking, but Lords of the Floor revolutionized its possibilities for the next generation. At the 2024 Paris Olympics, breaking will make its debut as an Olympic sport, entering its biggest stage to date. And you can clearly trace its rise back to those two early Lords of the Floor events, which revealed wide appeal through a blitzkrieg of agile power moves, one-handed handstands, dizzying spins and freezes. If the art had been a sacred covenant passed down via in-person tutorials or studied through grainy, hard-to-procure VHS cassettes, the Lords of the Floor DVD suddenly became a worldwide grail.



Seth Martinez of Circle of Fire shows off some athleticism at the first Lords of the Floor event.



Jeromeskee of Massive Monkees performed at Lords of the Floor while still a senior in high school. Afterward, he headed straight to his prom.



B-Boy Alexander "El Niño" Diaz (right) competes against Fouad "Lil Zoo" Ambelji of Morocco at the Red Bull BC One World Final in Rome in 2015. Diaz won the second Lords of the Floor event in 2002.

"Everyone in that lineup was a heavy hitter. Most previous events drew local and community interest, but Lords of the Floor received national attention," says B-Boy El Niño, the breaking champion who learned the art at the age of 5 and won the second Lords of the Floor event in 2002 with his crew, the Floor Brats. "Before Lords of the Floor, we had to collect and trade VHS tapes, but this made it to DVD, which changed everything. All the B-Boys in Russia told me that it was some of the first footage they'd ever seen. It completely changed the game."

Breaking traditionally centered on the crew, but as competitions helped broaden worldwide appeal, the combination art form/sport began to evolve toward two-on-two matchups and then individual battles. In this respect it mirrored hip-hop itself, which became more about solo acts than the group. During its relative infancy, the berserk innovations and pop-and-lock novelty captured short-lived mainstream attention spans in the '80s. Films, documentaries and the occasional sitcom exploited it; the average consumer saw it as a fad. But by the '90s, breaking matured in the underground. Regional battles proliferated; a standardized point system of evaluation took root. Credible judges set a serious tone without stripping it of its playfulness. Everything began to ascend.

A pivotal turning point arrived in 2004, when Red Bull picked up the mantle of Lords of the Floor to form its now venerable BC One competition. One of the few international breaking clashes without a crew component, BC One featured 16 B-Boys and one-on-one showdowns. (A B-Girl bracket was added in 2018.) Contestants from North America, Eastern Europe, Western Europe, Latin America, Asia Pacific, the Middle East and Africa battled in regional finals for the chance to dazzle on the world stage.

As the next generation of breakers emerged, they began to build on the blueprint of their predecessors, adding a level of gravity defiance that not even the



Ronnie Abaldonado, the influential founder of Full Force Crew, won the BC One World Final in 2007.



but when air flares and air power got involved, it became undeniable as both an artistic dance and athletic sport,” Ronnie adds. “Now you’re expected to be able to do everything—dance to the music and have an X factor, an original presence. Back then, if you spun around your head 10 times in a row it seemed amazing.”

The Guam native, born Ronnie Abaldonado, cites the 2007 Red Bull BC One tournament in South Africa as another integral moment in its global popularization. Held at an abandoned power station in what was formerly the Soweto township, Ronnie compares it to the Jean-Claude Van Damme martial arts film, *Bloodsport*.

“They spray-painted all the walls, and every time a competitor would lose, they’d cross their name out with the spray can,” he explains. “It was very athletic and raw; it took things back to the true essence of breaking.”

Old stereotypes about breaking began to be shattered. In their place was a new, lightning-limbed manifestation, experiencing a renaissance in plain view. The Jabbawockeez won the first season of *America’s Best Dance Crew*. Soon after, the ski-masked

“When air flares and air power got involved, breaking became both an artistic dance and athletic sport.”

iconic Rock Steady Crew could have conceived. Like its cousin, hip-hop, breaking has an omnivorous appetite that sweeps up all contemporary influences. It grew to encompass everything from new dance routines to gymnastics to martial arts like capoeira. And just like hip-hop, the art form evolved away from improvised freestyle dances to more meticulously planned routines.

“Compared to how people remember it from the ’80s, it’s gone super Saiyan,” says Las Vegas-based B-Boy Ronnie, the influential founder of Full Force Crew. The winner of the 2007 Red Bull BC One World Final, he also took home the crown on Season 2 of the hit MTV show *America’s Best Dance Crew* (with his partners in Super Cr3w).

“In the Lords of the Floor days, breakin’ was mostly about footwork and ground power moves,



Omar “RoxRite” Delgado Macias has won more one-on-one face-offs than almost any B-Boy in history. He was the first to clock 100 total wins and won the BC One World Final in 2011.

and gloved collective appeared in national Ford, Pepsi and Gatorade commercials. They appeared on *Dancing with the Stars* and *So You Think You Can Dance*. By 2010, they had their own Las Vegas show. That same year, the filmmaker Alastair Siddons released *Turn It Loose*, a documentary that followed Ronnie and some other legendary breakers—Hong 10, B-Boy Taisuke and B-Boy RoxRite.

“Before BC One came to the forefront, it was all about the crew battles, but then it became more about going one on one,” says RoxRite (aka Omar Delgado Macias), who has won more one-on-one face-offs than perhaps any B-Boy in history. The first to clock 100 total wins, he took home the top prize at the 2011 Red Bull BC One in Moscow. In his spare time, he’s taught classes on breaking and hip-hop culture at Harvard and MIT.

“By 2009 and 2010, a lot of promoters had built an international network,” RoxRite adds. “B-Boys developed an organized circuit to compete on, which led to where we are now—where it’s become an Olympic sport.”

As the art form evolved, it made strides toward greater inclusion. One of the dancers who helped pave the way is B-Girl Sunny, a former gymnast who encountered competitive breaking in 2008 while studying at the University of Pennsylvania. An on-campus crew called Freaks of the Beat invited her to a free class and she was quickly hooked.

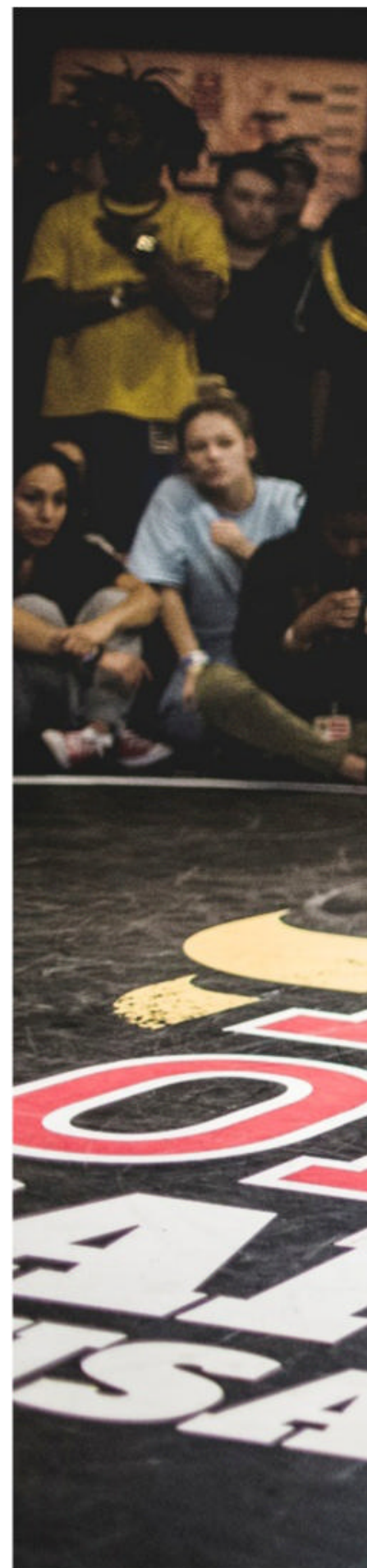


As breaking has evolved, dancers like B-Girl Sunny, a former gymnast, have paved the way for greater inclusion.

“The tension kept everyone going. As soon as you’d walk into a room, you’d feel the eyes of the other crews.”

“Back then, there was so much energy and beef between crews, states and regions,” Sunny says. “However, it was really vibrant. The tension kept everyone going. That was the motivator. As soon as you’d walk into a room, you’d feel the eyes of the other crews. ‘Oh, that’s so-and-so over there.’ And you had better put your bags down by the crew you were down with, or else it probably wasn’t safe.”

While breaking has historically been a heavily male phenomenon, female breaking crews like the Dynamic Rockers, the Lady Rockers and the Female Break Force have existed since the art form’s inception. While they never received the attention of the Zulu Kings or Rock Steady, the latter crew did prominently feature Daisy “Baby Love” Castro, the





B-Girl Sunny competes during the Red Bull BC One Camp in Houston in 2019.

first B-Girl to earn national fame. Nonetheless, the “boys club” mentality was something that B-Girl Sunny had to overcome.

“The only reason that I’ve been able to stick with it is that I don’t care what anyone says or thinks about me,” Sunny says. “I have this rebellious streak where if you say I can’t do it, I’m going to do it. That’s why I’ve stuck around and put up with all the crap.”

Despite the entrenched machismo in American B-Boy circles, Sunny achieved tremendous success over the last decade, appearing in the BC One World Finals and the finals of the 2019 WDSF World Breaking Championships in China. In 2015, she won the Outbreak Europe B-Girl solo battle, and she’s regarded as one of the favorites for the American

team at the 2024 Olympics. Her work helped set the foundation for another 2024 hopeful, California B-Girl Logistx. The youngest member of the BC One All-Stars, the 17-year old Logistx is already a veteran, having participated in competitive cyphers for nearly a decade.

“It’s still a work in progress, but over the last five years women in the scene have become more empowered, accepted and respected,” Logistx, born Logan Edra, says. Introduced to dance and hip-hop culture by her father, Logistx was already a devotee of A Tribe Called Quest, Nas and Wu-Tang by the age of 7.

“As the social climate has shifted, B-Girls have become empowered,” she continues. “As this



At 17, B-Girl Logan “Logistx” Edra is already a veteran on the scene and the youngest member of the BC One All-Stars. She has her eyes on the 2024 Summer Olympics in Paris.



For three decades, Chris “Cros 1” Wright has elevated competitive breaking with his Freestyle Sessions.

“As this generation of females reaches higher levels, it’s allowed us to speak our truth about the struggles we’ve gone through.”

generation of females reaches higher levels, it’s allowed us to get more attention, have more of a platform and speak our truth about the struggles that we’ve gone through.”

As technology has shrunk the size of the world, one of the most dramatic shifts has been the globalization of the scene. By the early ’80s, films and television appearances helped evangelize breaking in Germany, Japan and Italy. Mexican Americans in Los Angeles and Cuban Americans in Miami became obsessed with the art form. But as the 1990s became the 2000s, and rising New York rents made it increasingly difficult for artists to live there, the center of gravity drifted westward to Los Angeles and Las Vegas.

Simultaneously, the DVD explosion and the arrival of YouTube allowed breaking to reach every corner of the Earth. In Japan, breakers emerged as masters of technical ability, learning the art at rigorous breaking academies that helped them produce two of the last five BC One male champions. It wasn’t just a series of dance moves; they revered it as a tradition and a culture. Korea, France and the Netherlands have become international meccas. Russia is a powerhouse, too—having won the last two female solo BC One championships. In America, young B-Boys would often head overseas to win tournaments, and in the process, burnish their own celebrity.

Beyond the scenes, thousands of B-Boys and B-Girls played vital roles in the growth and elevation of the art form. Over the past quarter-century, few have been more impactful than Chris “Cros 1” Wright, a Johnny Appleseed of breaking, whose Freestyle Sessions have become staples connecting dancers across the globe. A San Diego native, Wright is a link between generations, having gotten his start as a breaker and graffiti artist in the ’80s after first hearing a Run-DMC cassette. In 1997 he threw the first Freestyle Session, which has become a fixture on the international circuit. The competition has taken place in over 40 countries, including Japan, South Korea, Russia, France, Turkey, Spain, Australia, Mexico, Brazil and China.

“The goal with Freestyle Session was always to elevate the platform and help connect the dots,” says Cros 1, who also co-hosted the original Lords of the Floor. “By 2010 you could really see the world opening up to breaking. There was an integration between America and the rest of the globe, and things got more professional. In the ’90s, the only crews really traveling all over were Rock Steady, Air Force and Battle Squad in Europe. Now everyone travels all over the world. It’s all about looking for that perfect event, that vibe, that journey.”

In addition to spreading the gospel of breaking through his competitions, Cros 1 has served on the board of the Youth Olympic Committee, which successfully advocated for its inclusion on the list of Olympic events.

“A lot of people say the Olympics add legitimacy, but I think we already had it,” Cros 1 adds. “It

definitely adds to the conversation, though. I did breaking events in 40 cities in 40 different countries and it wasn't a big deal to my father, but the moment I told him that it was an Olympic sport, he made a Facebook post to brag about it. The Olympics will have never seen anything like this."

Breaking's journey to become an Olympic sport is the end result of nearly a decade of public and private lobbying. It also dovetails with the International Olympic Committee's espoused goals of gender equality and youth engagement. Hence, breaking will join skateboarding, sport climbing and surfing in the games. But unlike the other competitions in Paris, breaking straddles several worlds. It is a deeply embedded part of hip-hop culture and an artistic mode of self-expression, as well as a sporting endeavor.

Despite the commercialization that has occurred over the last half-century, to watch video of this generation of Olympic hopefuls is to understand how the culture has been preserved. As with an MC searching for the right pocket to fit his bars, B-Boy Victor, the legendary 27-year-old Red Bull BC One All-Star, melds seamlessly into the beat. Instead of using words, his hands and legs become



BC One All-Star Victor Montalvo, another 2024 Olympic hopeful, won an unprecedented four world titles in 2015.



B-Boy Victor at the Red Bull BC One Cypher Central Asia in Almaty, Kazakhstan, in 2018.

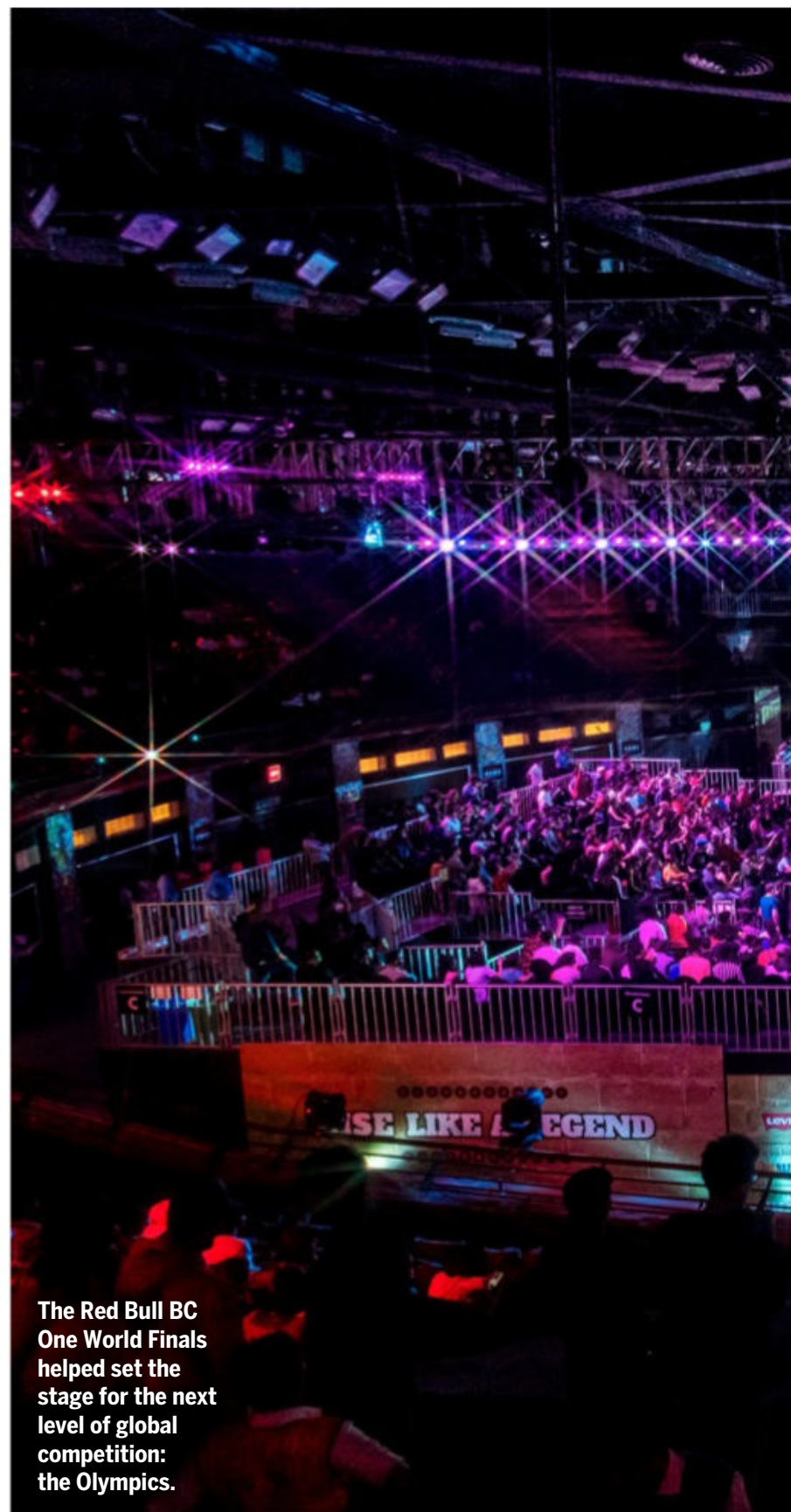
Growing up in Alaska, B-Boy Icey Ives learned the basics of breaking from elders in the local scene and by watching battles on YouTube. In 2019, the Olympic hopeful won the 2019 BC One U.S. National Final.



a spellbinding blur; he drops to the floor and bounces up as though propelled by a pogo. The breakbeats seem to reverse course and suddenly adhere to his movements.

This is hypnosis via dance. His frame seems allergic to the limitations of gravity or ligament strain, a majestic whirlwind of air flares in perfect rhythm, blisteringly fast headspins and bounces off the ground. You'd have to go frame by frame to understand exactly how Victor is doing it. Yet it's simultaneously familiar: This is the heritage of the greats, updated, renovated and still true to the spiritual essence.

"I feel like the Olympics will make breaking bigger than it ever was during the '80s," says the winner of an unprecedented four world titles in 2015, a Florida native born Victor Montalvo. He



The Red Bull BC One World Finals helped set the stage for the next level of global competition: the Olympics.

learned the art as a young child from his father, who had been a B-Boy in Mexico. "It's always a good thing for more people to know about breaking, but we have to make sure to teach the foundation. This is about finding your own identity and style. It's about being creative and trying to bring something new to the table to create a legacy."

For all the physical advances and technical breakthroughs, the notion of the wild style continues to loom large. This is the same concept that dominated the dance moves and MC salvos at '70s Bronx block parties soundtracked by "Apache" and "The Funky Drummer." Nearly a half-century after it began, the tradition is sustained by this sense of generational history. Jeremy "Icey Ives" Viray, 26, grew up in Anchorage, Alaska, about as far away from New York City as you can get in the United States. But he learned the basics from the elders of the scene, the Alaskan Assassins, who schooled him on how to be a B-Boy. He filled in the



blanks by watching battles on YouTube until the 2024 Olympic hopeful was old enough to travel to the lower 48 to compete.

“Breaking being a part of the Olympics is huge for us,” says Ives, the 2019 BC One U.S. National Champion. “There’s obviously pros and cons to everything. Some people will represent B-Boying as a sport and others will rep it as a culture; some will see it as a little bit of both. But it’s going to lead to so many future opportunities for dancers. This is a platform that will allow us to get worldwide sponsorship and endorsement deals.”

“Breaking is a way for us to step away from the negativity and the tension. It’s a form of meditation.”

What’s clear to all parties involved is that if breaking is to continue to flourish, it must stay authentic to its roots as a dance, art form and lifestyle. It’s not gymnastics or the latest X-Games crossover sport—it’s a mode of being, a set of commandments, a kinetic code passed down from the older gods. It is a solemn and skillful tradition but one created for the purpose of joy, fun and community. Ives was born in the mid-’90s but pledges allegiance to the Rock Force Crew, founded in 1983. These are the ones who taught him how to keep his ground and represent the culture to the world, to keep the torch lit.

“I hope all this leads to people coming together more in the future,” Ives says. “Breaking is a way for us to step away from the negativity and the tension. It’s a form of meditation. We dance to set ourselves free from these emotions. I want to see the younger generation and the older pioneers of the game build more and share each other’s knowledge. We all need to keep learning from each other.”



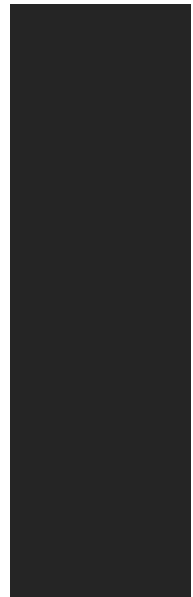
Pop Stars

How Bike Life culture has taken off in New York City.

Words MARZ LOVEJOY Photography BEN FRANKE



Jae Milez, born in the Bronx and raised in northern Manhattan, struts his stuff and the spirit of Bike Life culture in Washington Square Park.

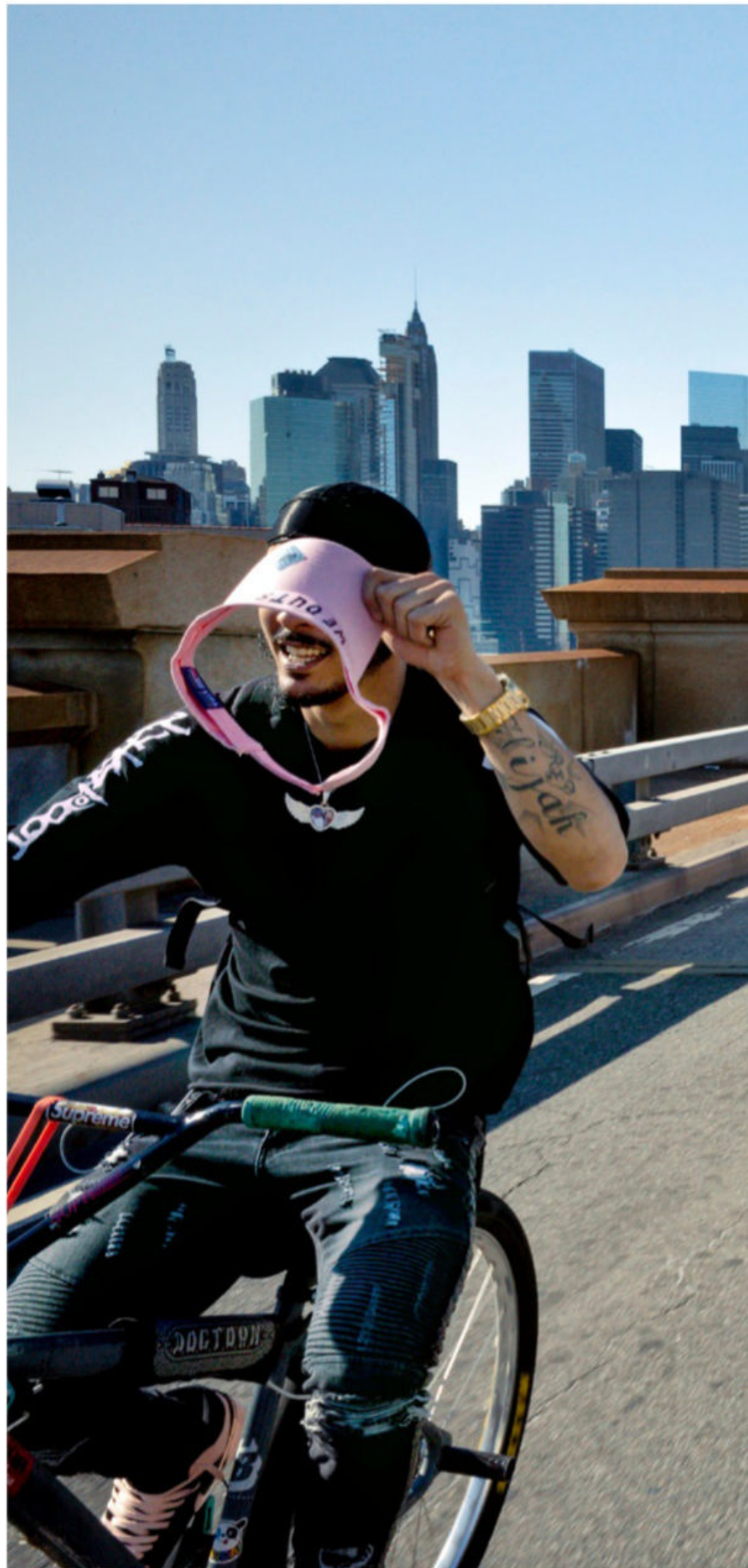


f you are from New York City, you may have experienced the thrill of being engulfed by a sea of bike riders. One minute, walking; the next, swimming in young Black and brown men on bikes. They can easily take up a few city blocks. Many of these young men are showcasing a myriad of stunts, ranging from intricate wheelies to standing on saddles. Born in the Fordham neighborhood in the Bronx and raised across the river in Dyckman, 23-year-old Jae Milez rides solely on the back tire of his one-wheel bike. It is exhilarating to witness this impromptu, free, highly entertaining show of extreme talent. As he and his fellow riders take off, you feel their freedom and joy, hear their laughter and genuine love for the athletic and artistic pursuit. You are left full and in awe. You most likely recorded them and silently wondered: Where are they all headed? Where did they come from? Can I join?

And, just like that—*poof*—they're gone! Sprinkling another part of the city with their magic.

New York is one of many American cities highlighting and elevating this niche culture. Newark, Boston, Philly, Baltimore, Oakland and Los Angeles are also making marks. Bike Life is a term that embodies both biking and living. It is a subculture born out of pain, then turned into creativity, not unlike other social and culturally related activities. Riders flaunt their talent, continually create new tricks and hone their bike skills. It's a way of life. One must be passionate about riding, maintain a positive mindset and be serious about having fun.

A small crew of riders take the lanes on the Brooklyn Bridge with the skyline of lower Manhattan looming in the background.



“Life became more fun riding around on one wheel. Every day, there’s a new face I get to put a smile on.” —JAE MILEZ



Though men dominate the Bike Life culture, they certainly are not the only ones ripping through the streets. In the past few years, more women have been joining the pack, turning out wheelies and tricks, riding out with flair and style. Take the rider who calls herself Curly. In 2017, this native Lower East Sider was outside on her block when a few boys rode past with the front tires high above their heads. “It was like destiny,” Curly says. “You know when something is meant for you. Now I’m just focused on keeping my wheel up.”

Curly admits it took a lot of hard work to craft her skills. “At first I was embarrassed, so I practiced alone in a parking lot,” she says. “But I decided to step outside of my comfort zone. This is not just a guy’s sport.”

Artistry takes time and talent. Hailing from the Bronx, Obloxxkz, also known as O, has been riding for nearly four years. In his second year of riding, O became sponsored by Throne Cycles, a Los Angeles-based street-bike company. After witnessing O’s talent, one can see why. Zigzagging through traffic, jumping on and off pedals in motion, scraping his hand on the ground while his bike is in a vertical position—Obloxxkz clearly has the skill set of a professional athlete. “People judge us from what they see,” he says. “I just wish they respected us like BMX riders.”

Bike Life is becoming more visible, commercial, politicized—and sadly, more policed. The broader issues around social justice and discriminatory policing have impacted the simple act of riding a bike on city streets. To put it bluntly, the data on how often young Black and brown riders are cited and ticketed in New York City is disturbing. According to figures from New York’s Department of Transportation, more than 86 percent of all bike riders ticketed in 2018 and 2019

in the city were Black and Hispanic. Nearly half of all citations were received by riders 24 years old or younger. And Black men got 51 percent of the tickets issued. This hostile climate underscores the need for justice and equitable practices, including those for Black and brown bikers who are women, girls, nonbinary people, in the LGBTQI community or living in impoverished neighborhoods.

I am a Black woman nearing my 30s who has been biking for 10 years.

I understand the risks, fears and trepidation I feel when riding while Black. However, this is how change must happen. Still, discrimination is real and it contaminates every aspect of a culture, and bike culture is hardly immune. In an article examining cycling’s racist, sexist and classist origins, author Taz Khatri itemizes prevalent prejudices of race, sex and socioeconomics in biking history, noting that “cycling clubs explicitly excluded African Americans, Asian Americans, the poor and Native Americans.”

The staggering facts of what it means to be a Black or brown person on a bike only amplifies the need for more accessibility; this access will inevitably equate to social acceptance. In separate interviews, Jae, Curly and O each describe the freedom, comradery and sense of purpose that riding bikes gives them.



“Bikes unify everyone,” says Milez, 23, an advocate for the Bike Life community who is more committed than average to riding wheelies.

“This is a positive outlet that is much better than any video game or virtual reality.” —JAE MILEZ



Bronx native Obloxkz has a bike sponsor, 18,000 Instagram followers and a reasonable desire to be respected for his talents.

YourBoyFromBK
provides some
complimentary action
for lunchtime patrons
in Manhattan's Soho
district.





**Bike Life is becoming more visible,
commercial, politicized—and
sadly, more policed.**



Though Bike Life culture is fueled by individuals with talents and hard-won skills, the lifeblood of the movement is the community of people who share a passion to ride.

"I've seen gang members come together without violence, all for the love of riding." —JAE MILEZ

Jae's love of Bike Life pushes him to seek change. He supports the idea of indoor bike spaces to practice freely without weather issues, disgruntled drivers or policing. Jae is also talking to the chief of police in his neighborhood, because he understands the politics of it all. "Bikes unify everybody," he says. "I've seen gang members come together with no violence, all for the love of riding. This is a positive outlet that is much better than any video game or virtual reality." He believes that once the focus is on the benefits, acceptance will show up in the application of public policy supporting biking-related initiatives. Laws and behaviors will follow.

For me, biking was for many years a solo sport. Largely because only two of my friends did it. That all changed in 2016 when I (literally) crossed paths with Q on the streets of New York. My husband and I were riding home from work when we found ourselves

swimming in the sea of bikers, willingly and happily becoming (temporarily) a part of their school. I took the opportunity to introduce myself to Q, vice president of Only The Rocketz, a New York-based bike crew. Suddenly, I had a personal connection to Bike Life.

But for everyone who rides bikes, the pandemic changed everything. With normal life disrupted—with fewer people driving, gyms closed and pandemic boredom in full effect—Americans began hopping on bikes in unprecedented numbers. Bike sales in the spring and summer of 2020 were up more than 80 percent over the previous year.

But like so much else in our society, Bike Life culture was shaped by both the virus and the nation's painful and long overdue reckoning over social justice. It turned my casual passion into something more. As a response to the heaviness of being a Black woman, contemplating police brutality and subsequent grief

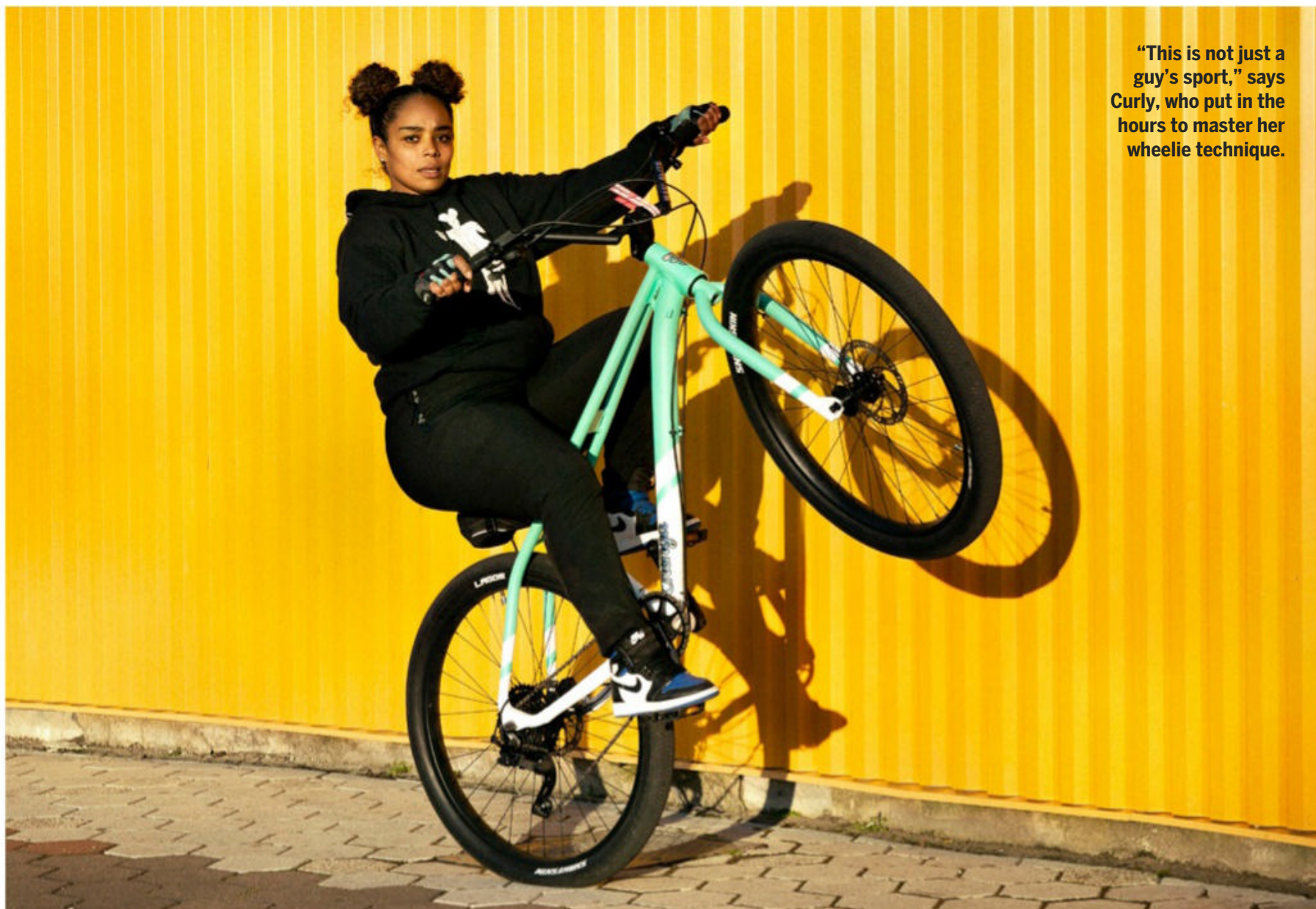
from the brutal and unjust murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and numerous other Black Americans, I helped launch the first annual ... And Still We Ride ride-out to celebrate Black women. With the help of Q and a slew of volunteers, I orchestrated a large turnout of Bike Life enthusiasts as well as those who have not been on a bike in years. Jae Milez was in attendance and rode 30 miles on one wheel.

This was one of many ride-outs across the country. Around the world, allies rode out in solidarity. The People were galvanized, united and mad as hell, taking their feelings to the streets. Using their bodies as acts of protest. Disease, murder and mayhem pushed folks to spring into action—a bitter sweetness—changing us in one way or another.

Out of tragedy came pockets of light: Budding activists with newfound voices. People turning to community. Marginalized groups mobilizing. And we are still riding out.

But, says O, many young people with little to no means of income struggle to acquire a bike to ride out on. "If I had 100 bikes right now, I'd give them out, easily," he adds, noting that a good bike can cost anywhere from \$700 to \$1,000. He enthusiastically expressed working with the private sector to hold bike

"This is not just a guy's sport," says Curly, who put in the hours to master her wheelie technique.



Bike Life is more than a sport. It's a form of expression, an act of protest and passion. For some, it's a way of life.



El Arte soars over Luis Banks as the duo messes around in New York's Chinatown.



Luis Banks injects some one-wheeled energy into an otherwise sleepy scene in a pedestrian plaza in Midtown Manhattan.

giveaways and host content-creation classes. This is not rocket science—when youth have constructive and engaging outlets, that is where their time and focus will live. But it is not only the cost of bikes keeping youth at bay; it's the infrastructure in low-income neighborhoods. It's not easy to build a cycling culture amid so many potholes, on streets without bike lanes or signage expressing the rights of riders to take the lane. Yet these dangerous conditions are the norm in many low-income neighborhoods, when quite the opposite exists in affluent areas. No wonder riders feel the need to take over the streets to feel safe.

I was born in Minneapolis, one of the most bikeable cities in America. I am currently living in Copenhagen, one of the most bikeable cities in the world. In 10 years of biking (mainly in Los Angeles and New York), I have experienced firsthand how there is much to learn from cities that have invested in cycling infrastructure. The cities of Minneapolis and Copenhagen have spent many tens of millions of dollars to improve bikeways, making large and strategic investments to encourage riding.

The investments are already delivering a payoff. In Copenhagen, for instance, residents who ride request fewer sick days, generate significantly

less CO₂ emissions and save \$1.16 in health benefits for every kilometer ridden. The athleticism and artistic expression of Bike Life are profound, but the benefits go deeper and broader than that: a physically and mentally healthier society; reduction of carbon footprints; parking cost and vehicle savings; reduced crime; economic development opportunities; social equity benefits and a focus on quality of life.

Still, so many of the most profound benefits of Bike Life are deeply personal. "To me, biking means community and family," says Obloxkz. "It's how we express ourselves. It's how we bond. Whatever you decide to do, even if it isn't biking, always dedicate yourself."

Curly sees it as a kind of active therapy, too. "It frees my mind," she says simply.

Bike Life is being in the flow of movement—a *movement*, a culture, a way of life that inspires and promotes positivity and wellness. So when you find yourself within a sea of beautiful bikers, ask yourself, Where can I fit in?

"People judge us on what they see. I just wish they respected us like BMX riders." —OBLOXKZ



**Bike Life standouts
Latti Datti (left) and
YourBoyFromBK turn
the streets of New
York into a freestyle
clinic in artistry.**

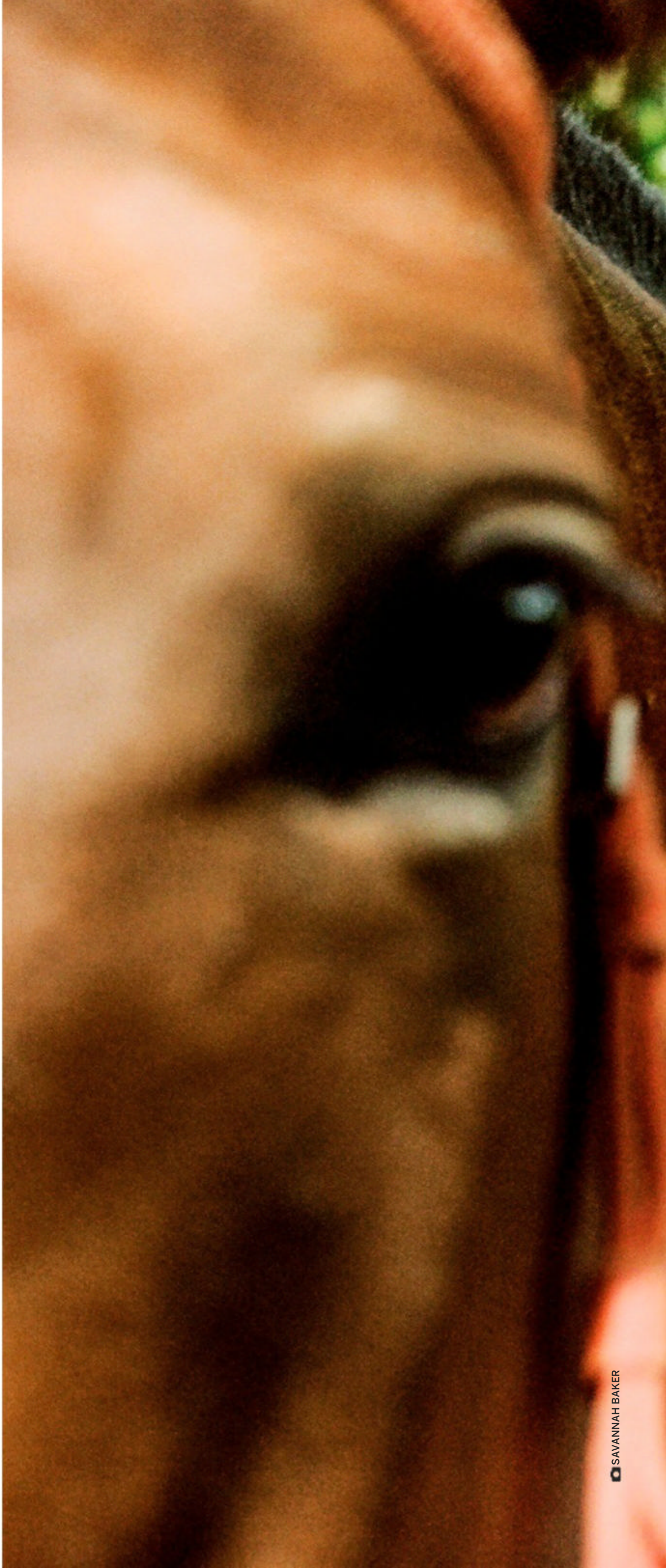



Bike Life is being in the flow of movement—a way of life that inspires and promotes positivity and wellness.

Place in the sun

Nigerian-Canadian musician Falana wrote her latest single, "Joy," two weeks before lockdown. Waiting a year for its release could have been crushing, but one thing she's learned from a life lived around the world is that things don't always go to plan, and sometimes that's OK.

Words **NATTY KASAMBALA**





Falana is ready
to make up for
lost time with the
long-overdue
release of "Joy."

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"If you realize you're a human being, you can write better music about things people can relate to."

atience, they say, is a virtue. For Falana, it's also a gift, giving her the time to travel, experiment and live life in technicolor. The 29-year-old Nigerian-Canadian artist isn't a new player in the music industry. Her debut came in 2014 with the EP *Things Fall Together*, and with each new release her mission has been to become more focused, to present something fresh but familiar that nods to those who have inspired her while transforming it entirely. It has brought her accolades from magazines such as *Wonderland* and *Complex*, and in 2017, *Vogue* hailed her as "Nigeria's coolest front-row star." But while Falana's star is rising, she's not in a rush.

"It's always positive vibes when you put music out and people are discovering it," she says on a Zoom call with *The Red Bulletin*. Adorned with her signature pom-pom braids, she's friendly, chatty and visibly laid-back as she reclines in a pristine hotel room in Lagos, Nigeria. It's 5 p.m. West Africa time and, although Falana lives in Lagos, for the last few days she's locked herself in this room for some uninterrupted writing time, penning a song for a film by a Belgian-Congolese director. It's a project that marks a new era for Falana, alongside the release of her latest single, "Joy," a self-fulfilling meditation on appreciating the blessings in your life, aptly timed for a year when giving small gratitudes is not only a desirable philosophy but a necessary one.

The song itself is a literal manifestation of that mindset. Written a few weeks before lockdown with fellow singer-songwriter Omolara Ayodele and producer KINGBNJMN at the legendary Geejam Studios in Port Antonio, Jamaica, its upbeat lyrics—"Look up, look up, oh I count my blessings, one day at a time, live my life"—resonate even more strongly now. But then, Falana's whole life fits this ethos.

Born and raised in the suburban city of Brampton in Toronto, Victoria Falana grew up listening to the traditional music of her Nigerian parents, alongside pop, hip-hop and R&B, which she'd compile as mixtapes. She played in a bucket-drumming band at school before teaching herself guitar chords via YouTube. Soon she was winning singing competitions alongside studying kinesiology at university. But it was Falana's adventures abroad that truly fed into her creativity. A six-month exchange in Denmark was followed by a trip to Cuba that produced a performance at the Canadian Embassy. Falana quickly realized she could gain more musical experience and money in Havana than she ever could back home, so she relocated there, learning Spanish and immersing herself in the salsa hip-hop fusion scene. That first EP was born from a meeting with Waldo Lavanut Nazario, a producer friend of her piano teacher's flatmate. It was recorded in Nazario's front room with a band of local musicians. But it was during a trip to her parent's hometown of Lagos five years ago that she truly found her groove.

"Everything started to make sense in my songwriting," Falana recalls. "Even down to how I express myself with my style and hair." She has lived there ever since, but that hasn't suppressed her passion for travel; in 2019 she toured

Africa to support her *Chapter One* EP, and she has recorded music in Ghana, Jamaica, Canada, Portugal, the U.S. and U.K. The past two years have seen her come into her own as an artist; the self-produced *Chapter One* features dramatic and textured Afro-infused pop, while *Teletele*—released last December in response to the End SARS movement against police brutality in Nigeria, as well as the Black Lives Matter protests—is a raw and somber plea for peace and empathy. And, following "Joy," she has a stack of new songs ready to take her into the next phase of her career.

A precise alchemy of all her influences, Falana's universal sound offers something for everyone, from the Afrobeat-like rhythms to her rich, silken soul vocals and lyrical musings on life and love. Her visual identity is just as internationally innovative, with videos shot in Jamaica laced with infectiously African choreography and a striking pop presence to rival the likes of Janelle Monáe. Even her lollipop braids are a modernist take on the traditional protective hairstyle.

With the shape-shifting experience of her nomadic years, it's only a matter of time before the world gets acquainted with Falana. "I really just can't wait to release the rest of my music," she says, showing that perhaps her patience has limits after all.

With her fresh mix of
Afro-infused pop, soul
and R&B, Falana is set
for success.



"Joy for me is those little things that bring you peace."

THE RED BULLETIN: What did you listen to growing up?

FALANA: A lot of the time, especially as immigrant children, you have the music and culture of your parents. Especially in Canada, where everyone asks where you're from and you don't say, "Oh, I'm Canadian." I'd still say, "I'm Nigerian." The first albums that made me cry were Lauryn Hill's *MTV Unplugged No. 2.0* and *The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill*. I wanted my music to transcend genres like [*The Miseducation...*] did at the time. It wasn't fully hip-hop or fully R&B; it dominated the pop charts. Those are the kinds of things I connected with, and which inspired the artist I subconsciously wanted to be.

So you'd say you're part of the 1.5 generation? Somewhere between first- and second-generation immigrants?

I'm like a 1.6793, because I've traveled all over the place. I have all these random sprinkles of cultural influences and inspirations. My parents were very new in Canada, so the food we were eating, the music we were listening to was from home. My mum would play Yoruba praise-and-worship music and King Sunny Adé videos, and my dad went to the University of Ibadan [the oldest in Nigeria], so he was one of those people who fought in unions for students. Fela Kuti was what they were jamming to. Add that to whatever was on the radio and what I could discover on my own.

And then you traveled?

It was about searching. I always feel like I'm a part of things but also on the periphery. It's a blessing, but sometimes you feel disconnected. In Toronto I was trying to make a record, and I'd taught myself guitar, but I just thought, "I need to get better at this instrument." I'd

dabbled with keys, but not enough. I was getting into the studio with people and it just didn't connect well because their reference points were totally different from mine. My solution, because I'm crazy, was to move to Havana! The level of musicianship out there is amazing. I met a professor who told me about the music culture. Sometimes you don't really know what you're looking for in life, you're just roaming. But something inside of me was like, "Maybe this is the direction you need to go in," [even though] it might not have made sense at the time. When I left Havana, I'd recorded a whole record, and a part of Cuba was in my spirit. I made music, made amazing friends and picked up a new language, just by exploring and learning.

Did your eventual move to Lagos feel like a homecoming?

It just felt like what I needed to do. I've been before—I have family here—so it wasn't as foreign or traumatizing as moving to Havana. It's helped to solidify my sound and my identity. I just feel like I know who I am now. I'm not suffering from the anxiety of the 1.5 anymore.

Creative industries in Lagos have gained global recognition in recent years.

What's it like being immersed in that? Beautiful, because my creative expression has blossomed even outside of music, like in fashion and photography. It has rekindled relationships and sparked collaborations. The funny thing is, it was all here before the recognition came. Nigeria has been here holding it down; we've been having our own industry. So to be a part of it when it's getting international recognition is great, but it's well deserved. And I also think it's gingering [a Nigerian term meaning empowering] everybody to up their level.

When it came to honing your sound, was that a challenge?

It was a process trying to find something that represents everything that I am, that's contemporary and fresh, but also nostalgic facing forward. I never felt fully like an R&B or soul singer. I want people to hear the familiarity of all those influences in my music, but also freshness, something different.

Have there been tough moments on that journey?

All the time. There was a period when I didn't doubt myself, I just went for it. Then what happens is you're in the hustle and you realize things are not playing out the way you want them to, whether that's chasing numbers or whatever. You start to doubt yourself and your talent. [At times like that] I remember artists like Sia, who's been making music, not just pop records, for a long time. I think about how much she had to push through. I'm lucky to have people who believe in me, who pull me up when I don't believe in myself.

That support system is so necessary.

We just released this documentary and there's this quote that people keep reaching out about: "Being an artist is living on the edge." You're constantly on the edge of failure or financial ruin or complete success, and it can be stressful.

Was taking that first leap to pursue a music career daunting?

I remember the decision, because it was like something literally burning inside that I couldn't deny. I told myself I'd rather try and fail than regret not trying. Have you read *Outliers* [*The Story of Success*, the 2008 pop-psychology book by Malcolm Gladwell]? That book has made me realize I can do it. Don't overthink, just commit those 10,000 hours. Worst-case scenario: I fail. Then I could just delete my Instagram and change my hair. But luckily for me, that's not what's happening. It's blooming and I'm excited about what I'm doing.

How do you overcome that stress?

I'm passionate about my music, but I also want to be a complete human being, and that takes the pressure off. Finding things I like to do, sports I enjoy playing—I do whatever [I have to] to keep myself grounded. Because even when you get to that level you aspire to, if you don't have that foundation you're going to be screwed. You'll either be trying to chase the next big record, the next number one, or you'll be overwhelmed. Learning how to live one day at a time is part of the foundation you need to be a successful, thriving artist, because it's madness in this industry sometimes.



That's a refreshing perspective: not tying your self-worth to things outside your control.

Exactly. And it makes for better music. If you realize you're a human being, you can write better music about things people can relate to, and your mental health is protected. They say an artist's first record is their most prolific because it's the accumulation of their entire life. Then you have to live the next 15 years before you can write another album. I'm still an artist, I live and breathe this shit, but it's just about remembering life.

"Learning how to live one day at a time is something you need to be a successful, thriving artist."

What are the things that bring you joy on a daily basis?

Sunlight. There's something about the sun that reminds me of possibility and starting afresh every day. To quote scripture: "This is the day that the Lord has made, we should rejoice and be glad in it." If it's a new day, there are new possibilities to meet someone, to do something different, to be a different person; you could learn something new. I can choose to be excited about those things. I started playing tennis—I even got myself a visor! Someone wrote: "Falana is always happy." But that's not true. Shit happens and life is hard. I'm not perfect—I have good days and bad days—but I don't want to be the kind of person who constantly wears their pain on their chest. I want to draw joy out of people with my energy. Joy for me is not about happiness, it's that level below, those little things that bring you peace. Today is today and tomorrow is tomorrow.

Has that mindset come in handy this past year, especially as a keen traveler?

Everything comes in waves. In terms of creativity, I don't really ascribe to writer's block; I just think, "OK, I need a new environment." To use a tennis analogy: Some days your forehand sucks. We just keep moving. The theme of the year was definitely resilience and innovation, doing what we can with what we have: virtual writing sessions, connecting in different ways, working on my patience. I made a joke to my manager about leaking my album early. He was like, "What?" I told him I was just kidding.

And "Joy" was meant to be released more than a year ago.

That was my plan. But, not to be clichéd, my plan is not better than God's plan. In the end, "Joy" came out at the perfect time. You want things to happen a certain way, but they never go how you plan. Even if they do, sometimes they still don't lead where you want to go. So, like in the song, I'm just trying to live one day at a time.

Falana's single "Joy" is out now on Red Bull Records, redbullrecords.com; Instagram: @falanamusic

RENAISSANCE RIDER

A combination of natural talent, uncommon dedication and a childlike love of bikes unabated by more than a decade of competition makes British cyclist Tom Pidcock a rare challenger in every discipline, from road racing to cyclocross. As the 21-year-old multithreat from Yorkshire gears up to begin his elite racing career, he says he's ready to take on his heroes.

Words TONY THOMAS

Photography TWILA FEDERICA MUZZI



Forging ahead:
A podium regular
on the amateur
circuit, Pidcock is
embarking on an elite
racing career with
esteemed British team
Ineos Grenadiers.

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om Pidcock isn't riding his bike. This is odd, because for the past 18 years, since swinging a short leg across his first two-wheeler, he's rarely been off it. Blame his racing-cyclist dad, who got him rolling on the footpaths around Herne Hill Velodrome in southeast London. Blame his ambition, which at the age of 10 sparked a desire to become a pro cyclist. You could also blame his mom, who tied toddler Tom's feet to his pedals to help him ride. Almost two decades on, ahead of his first season as a senior pro with Ineos Grenadiers, Pidcock is tied to his bike more than ever. But not today.

"It was biblical this morning," he says, perched at the table of his part-time racing home in Belgium and referencing the day's early downpour. "It's better now, though. I've just been out to the shops." If this sounds impossibly ordinary for one of the brightest cycling prospects on the planet, it really shouldn't, because Pidcock hails from Yorkshire—that part of northern England so proudly down-to-earth it's almost subterranean. Cycling on the hard hills of the Yorkshire Dales and the bleak North York Moors builds strength, toughness and a resilience to bitter weather. What Yorkshire lacks in alpine scale, it compensates in grit—territory not unlike the sparse acreage beyond Pidcock's Belgian base, where roads made of cobbles, and Sunday crowds for the cyclocross races, are woven into local lore.

As we speak, at just after 4 p.m. on a Wednesday in December, it's almost dark and deep-winter cold outside. The heartiest pro would be forgiven for not wanting to ride into its grip for five, six, seven hours, but only if the training schedule permits respite. For these are the days of dour kilometers that feed the flashing colors of the spring classics and the summer peloton; when the shadows have gone and racing butterflies emerge from their kit-layered cocoons.

"Yeah, there are days when none of it is good, none of it is nice, and you don't want to do it," Pidcock reflects, casting his gaze through a window into the creeping gloom. "But that's just part of it. You have to learn to manage your emotions and almost try not to have them. Just do your job. And it doesn't matter if it's not your best ride or it's not your best efforts or whatever. If you do them, that's what counts."

He speaks with a veteran's wisdom. Yet Pidcock—5-foot-7 and 128 pounds of cycling assassin—is still only 21, looking ahead to a first



Mud, sweat and gears: Pidcock at Hexia Cyclocross Gullegem in Belgium this past January. After a battle with defending world champion Mathieu van der Poel, he finished the race in second place.



Pidcock has learned how to ride tactically, flowing with the race around him before striking for the lead when rivals tire.

“Tom could be a unique cyclist—the kind we’ve never seen before.”

Kurt Bogaerts

year on the road-racing pro tour. Baby-faced and exuding youth, he nonetheless wears a shadow of exertion behind the smile, born of almost 20 years’ riding, 11 of them racing.

Those years and miles have brought results, raised his profile and taken him to the brink of the big time. Highlights include a dominant victory on last year’s under-23 Giro d’Italia and two age-grade world titles in cyclocross—the muddier, more intense cousin of road racing. Myriad other wins in both disciplines, as well as in mountain biking—including E-MTB world champion status—and track cycling litter Pidcock’s résumé like gold and silver confetti.

What’s next is tantalizing. “I’m super excited,” he says, talking with sudden animation at the prospect of a 2021 season that includes elite-level mountain-bike competition and perhaps racing the Vuelta a España—the Spanish equivalent of the Tour de France—for Ineos Grenadiers. “I haven’t been so excited about anything for a while.”

Few riders reach the point of being signed by probably the best team on the pro tour—formerly Team Sky, home of British Tour de France giants Bradley Wiggins, Chris Froome and Geraint Thomas—while still being spoken of as a shining light in ‘cross and a future Olympian in cross-country mountain biking. In years past, a rider would have been expected to specialize in a given discipline by the time he or she turned pro, and then to have found their groove as a climber, a sprinter or a one-day “Classics” ace.

Pidcock, though, has options, somewhat in the mold of the Netherlands’ Mathieu van der Poel or Belgium’s Wout van Aert, both stellar road talents in their 20s, who are also winning at the highest level of off-road competition.

There’s no hint of the Brit being awed by the scale of the challenge, nor of being overshadowed by the eminence of Grand Tour winners on his team such as Geraint Thomas and Egan Bernal. Pidcock just feels *ready*: “It’s been the long game, so I’ve been anticipating it for a while. A lot of other young guys are doing so well [he name-checks Van der Poel, Van Aert and France’s Julian Alaphilippe], so it’s quite normal nowadays. People say I’m a good rider, but waiting till I’m 21 [to race as a senior pro] is almost a long time now. In all honesty, it doesn’t seem like I’ve come far so quickly.”

Even the prospect of a three-week Grand Tour reckoned by some to be tougher, though less glitzy,

than the Tour de France doesn’t faze Pidcock. “The biggest thing for a Grand Tour is not straight-up preparing for it,” he says. “It’s more like being in full training mode. When you can see the progression and you can see your body working efficiently—that’s what you need. If I’m in that state, I don’t think there’s a problem. I recover very quickly. Obviously it’s a long time, but if I do everything right I think I can perform for three weeks.”

Such a matter-of-fact approach is not uncommon in elite competitors; their confidence is a function of repeat success layered on profound self-belief. But in Pidcock’s case there may be something more. “He could be a unique rider who does something that has never been done—possibly even a kind of cyclist we have never seen before,” says Kurt Bogaerts, Pidcock’s coach for the past three years at the Trinity Racing team that was built to further his junior career. “He has such high ability, he’s so diverse. In the proper environment, he’s right to have big dreams.”

Bogaerts is a widely respected coach and pro-team *directeur sportif*, who has lent his expertise to legends such as Ireland’s Sean Kelly, as well as latter-day hotshots like Irish sprinter Sam Bennett. “[Pidcock] is a cyclist of the new generation—very good at a young age,” says Bogaerts. “What makes Tom so good is he is an *athlete*—more of an athlete than a bike rider. He can run really well. He can ride well in any discipline. If you go skiing with him he’s a good skier, too. He clearly has good genetics, and on top of that he can handle workload. He has a good lifestyle naturally, so what’s difficult for some is quite normal for him.”

Pidcock’s response to this kind of acclaim is simply to refer back to a childhood spent on a bike, including riding to and from school every day. “Riding a bike is like a third arm,” he says. “It comes naturally. That makes it easier to go between disciplines, I think. It’s about riding the bike fast and not so much about technical aspects. It’s just what I do.”

Steep task:
Pidcock, Van der Poel and Wout van Aert running uphill at a World Cup race in December 2020.






SRAM

MAAP





“You’re only going to get better if people point out your weaknesses.”

At the UCI Cyclocross World Championships, held on January 31 in seaside Ostend, Belgium, Pidcock battled to a fourth-place finish. He finished second at Worlds the previous year.

Notions of a “lightbulb moment,” when a future path suddenly became clear, are similarly dismissed. “I never thought, ‘This is what I’m going to do when I’m older,’” he says, “because I was already doing it. I was already a cyclist, living like a cyclist. So I never thought, ‘I want to *be* one,’ because I already *was* one, if you know what I mean.”

Destiny’s child? Maybe. But Pidcock is also making sure Destiny gets a firm shove on the cranks. Bogaerts enthuses about his focus and dedication—traits emphasized by fellow pro and likely British Olympian Evie Richards, who has frequently raced at the same meetings as Pidcock and who trains with him whenever schedules permit. Richards tells how Pidcock’s festive period last year was spent in Belgium, away from his family, in order to commit to his training program, whereas she preferred to “go home and have a great Christmas.” She believes this sheer desire to be one of his greatest assets: “He just loves winning and being the best. He wants it the baddest of everyone, and he’s always dreamed of success on a bike. That probably gives him fuel to the fire, and an extra drive that maybe not everyone has.”

Pidcock’s competitive hunger makes training with him a lesson in tough love, as Richards can attest from ego-bruising experience. “Tom is very ... honest,” she confirms with a hint of nervous laughter. “If you’re going slow, he’ll say, ‘You’re absolutely shit today.’ And it’s not to be mean, because it brings you on. You’re only going to get better if people point out your weaknesses. And he’s very good at doing that.”

There’s no doubt that Pidcock brings impermeable self-assurance to his riding, though the taut line between supreme confidence and arrogance is the one on which elite athletes must teeter if they are to achieve their full potential. Should they falter, pro road cyclists are punished harder than most, for theirs is still a sport in the raw, whose protagonists risk frequent injury and even mortal danger.

Pidcock learned hard how road cycling can bite when he crashed in August 2019 on the Tour de l’Avenir—the self-styled “mini Tour de France” for under-23 riders. Carving into a fast right-hand descent on a wet road in the final kilometer of Stage 6, he lost his bike and slammed into the tarmac, before skidding at speed into a barrier. He took a heavy blow to the face, which knocked him out, broke teeth and scarred his nose, mouth and chin.

Pidcock later posted a bloody selfie to Instagram, accompanied by the message: “I don’t really remember much at the moment, but I remember enough to know what Instagram is and was also told I was going to win, which is a bit shit. Anyway I’ll live to fight another day.” He admits that since the accident he’s “not nearly as confident or as competent as before” on wet descents. But Bogaerts cites the Pidcock steel that soon had him back in the saddle for a full winter of training: “Tom dealt with the injury and it gave him the mental strength to know he can overcome it. He was very professional.”

“Tom just loves being the best. He wants it the baddest of everyone.”

Evie Richards

Bogaerts also doubts there has been any lasting dent to Pidcock’s abilities: “He’s still at a higher speed than is normal for the rest of the peloton. He can still stay near the front on descents. It’s just that, before, his speed was putting pressure on other riders. But Tom doesn’t need to rush this. He has the physical strength and talent to make it up in the climbs.”

The crash remains unexplained—“maybe it was a patch of oil”—and mystifying to Pidcock-watchers, as his bike-handling skills, honed off-road in cyclocross and mountain biking, are of the highest order. He’s as happy popping wheelies to celebrate stage wins as he is performing stoppies, hops and Superman poses—arms out front, legs straight back, belly on saddle—just for kicks.

And, for Bogaerts, Pidcock’s unbridled love of riding, and the enduring kid-like thrill he derives from being on a bike, may be a blessing beyond even his prodigious physical and technical gifts. “When you are working with a young rider,” says the Belgian, “you need to allow time for the body to develop, not to rush and maybe miss steps. Tom is still jumping on the bike every day like he is doing his hobby. Riding because he likes to be outside. Having fun.”

“He just loves being on two wheels,” echoes Richards. “I’ve tried to get him to stop for a break when we’re training in Girona, but he just wants to get back on the bike.”

It’s still too early to know what impact Pidcock will have on road racing’s pro tour, but the backwaters of life as a *domestique* (a team worker who supports the superstars) are surely not his fate. On his route to the pro tour, he has shown huge ability as a climber, a sprinter and as a time-trialist—each a key test for any rider with designs on victory. And while quite capable of winning from the front, Pidcock has also learned—on account of never being the biggest or strongest in the field—how to ride tactically, to flow with the race around him before striking for the lead, often late on when rivals have tired. Poised on the start line of his senior pro career, he appears to possess boundless potential, with few weaknesses.

“The reason I’ve stayed so long in the under-23s,” says Pidcock, “is to be in a position to win when I do move up. It dawned on me recently that the guys I’ve been looking at as my heroes are now my rivals, and I have to race them. But I want to be ready to win straight away.” Somehow that’s not in doubt. tompidcock.co.uk



In the thick of things at the iconic Tour of Flanders in early April, Pidcock initiated a key move with 50 kilometers to go and ultimately finished 41st. “I had fun,” he said afterward.



"Sometimes you need to forget you have brakes"

Thomas Pidcock recaps his own spring campaign on the road.

He has already been anointed as a cross-disciplinary revelation, but this spring marked Pidcock's debut as a road racer on the UCI WorldTour. Over five weeks, he raced the fabled spring classics in Italy and Belgium. It was a confirmation of his talent and a learning experience. Here, Pidcock offers color commentary on six big races.

KUURNE-BRUSSELS-KUURNE (February 28; 197 km)

In just his second classic, Pidcock surprised observers by sprinting to a third-place finish from a large pack.

Tom's take: "That day I was not going really good; my legs felt sluggish. But I had a teammate up the road and I was able to duck and dive, and found myself in a good position with 1 kilometer to go. Even though I'm not a sprinter, I think a sprint on a long, hard day where no one gets a chance to ease up suits me pretty well."

STRADE BIANCHE (March 6; 184 km)

On a thrilling day in Tuscany, Pidcock hung

with an all-star crew that exploded the race, ultimately finishing fifth.

Tom's take: "Honestly, it was surreal. It was two of the top one-day riders, two guys who won the Tour de France, the world champion and me. Being able to race with them to the finish gives me confidence."

MILAN SAN REMO (March 20; 299 km)

After a long day, he finished with the lead pack in 15th, taking the front on the descent of the iconic Poggio in the finale.

Tom's take: "I attacked on that descent, partly because I really didn't know where I was going. The finish in San Remo comes up really fast; you only learn by doing it."

E3 SAXO BANK CLASSIC

(March 26; 204 km)

Pidcock had an off day on a tough Flanders course. But after sitting at the back for a long stretch, he finished 25th.

Tom's take: "I was ill—I had a cold and felt quite weak. These races are hard and take a toll. Dealing with bad days is part of it."

DWARS DOOR VLAANDEREN

(March 31; 184 km)

All chances for a top finish fizzled after Pidcock got caught behind a big crash. After a long chase, he finished with the lead pack in 43rd.

Tom's take: "I crashed at the worst possible time; the real racing had just begun. But I have to accept I'm not always in control. In Belgium you sometimes need to forget you have brakes."

TOUR OF FLANDERS (April 4; 254 km)

At arguably the hardest race of the spring, Pidcock briefly led the field in a move that didn't stick. He finished 41st.

Tom's take: "I kind of raced like I want to race. I mean it wasn't the best tactic if I wanted to get results. And I ended up forgetting the basics—I didn't eat enough and I blew up. The last hour, when things are coming at you so fast, it's easy to screw up your nutrition. All these things are learning experiences." —Peter Flax



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guide

THE IRON WAY

Cables, bolts and iron ladders bring rock climbing to the masses. Safely dangle from cliffs at any of these four via ferrata experiences.

Words HEATHER BALOGH ROCHFORT

Scale an enormous slab of granite in Squaw Valley.

Do it

Harness up and get all the views of Zion's Angels Landing with a fraction of the crowds.



A Safer Angels Landing ABOVE ZION VIA FERRATA, UTAH

With 3.6 million visitors in 2020, Zion National Park is the third-most-visited national park in the country—and Angels Landing is easily the most popular hike in the park. But what if there was a way to enjoy those vertigo-inducing views with triple the safety, double the adrenaline and a fraction of the crowds? Enter the via ferrata. Popular in Europe, via ferrata (Italian for “iron way”) is a protected climbing route that uses steel ladders and cables bolted into the mountain for harnessed climbers to use. In 2004, Chris Peterson, the manager of Utah Adventure Center, created a trio of the country’s earliest via ferrata routes on some land he personally owned in Utah’s Waterfall Canyon. As via ferrata grew in the U.S., he received a phone call in 2019 about a mysterious parcel of private land that touches Zion. “The owner told me that it had a thousand-foot-deep slot canyon that shared boundaries with the park,” Peterson remembers. While he wasn’t interested in creating more via ferrata routes, Peterson drove down to southern Utah for a

full-day helicopter scouting mission. “Once I saw the land, I knew I needed to make an exception,” he says. Peterson secured a 25-year lease for all recreation rights on the land parcel. Then he got to work creating a route built for everyone. While in the design process, Peterson would sit at the main shuttle stop in Zion and watch the visitors get on

and off the bus. “I challenged myself to make a via ferrata that was super adrenaline inducing, but accessible to 80 percent of those people on the shuttle,” he explains. “And I think we did it.”

In August 2020, Utah Adventure Center opened its first guided via ferrata experience: the Above Zion Via Ferrata. Once you harness up, the half-day adventure begins with a 3-mile ATV drive that drops guests at a private ranch. Using a series of ladders bolted to the sandstone, climbers then descend 200 feet down a cliff to meet a small, 15-foot ledge. The route traverses three-quarters of a mile, with the shelf gradually narrowing until it’s no more than 2 feet wide. “The edge just gets closer and closer!” Peterson laughs. The tour then ducks into a canyon before ascending 200 feet and dropping climbers at an optional section known as Scary Rocks. “This is your chance to be cabled in and go right out to the edge,” Peterson

says. “And it’s well named.” From there it’s just a short hike back to the start. “You get all the exposure and scenery as Angels Landing, but it is safer,” Peterson says, noting that two people have already died on Zion’s legendary hike in 2021. **Make it Happen** Individual, private and open group climbs are available seven days a week through Thanksgiving weekend. All equipment is included for the guided four-hour adventure. Rates start at \$110 per person.

A Different Kind of Rocky Mountain High “KROGERATA” VIA FERRATA, COLORADO

Tucked away in the southwest corner of Colorado, Telluride is well known for its glittering ski slopes and top-notch film and bluegrass festivals. But the region’s via ferrata isn’t for the faint of heart either. Pioneered by local legend, climber and namesake Chuck Kroger, the route begins from the road up to Bridal Veil Falls.

Permission to poop your pants: Just 600 feet of air separates you from the ground below.



This is your chance to be cabled in and go right out to the edge.

Like any good roller coaster, it slowly moves east to west before tapering down to a stone ledge that eventually disappears. From there, you're headed into the main event: a sheer 300-foot cliff face speckled with bolted ladders and rungs to guide you across the abyss. While climbers are secured to the mountainside, more than 200 feet of air beneath your feet is enough to make even the most stalwart of visitors feel a little light in the head. "Telluride's via ferrata is the only time pooping your pants isn't abnormal," laughs Sarah Lamagna, a past visitor. Added bonus: Some sections are uncabled, requiring participants to use technical mountaineering skills. Don't forget your harness, carabiner and shock-absorbing leash. **Make it Happen** While the Krogerata Via Ferrata does not require guides, it is recommended (and essential if you are not familiar with the necessary gear). Guiding companies like San Juan Mountain Guides offer full-day adventures through October. Rates start at \$189 per person.

The First in the Country RED RIVER GORGE, KENTUCKY

Many European via ferrata date back more than a century. But in the United States, the origin story begins in Red River Gorge in 2001, when Mark and Kathy Meyer opened the nation's first via

Experience
Kentucky's Red
River Gorge—the via
ferrata way.



ferrata route through their guiding company, Torrent Falls Climbing Adventure (the company was renamed to Southeast Mountain Guides in 2017 when their daughter, Nicole, took over the family business). Red River Gorge has long been known as the sport-climbing mecca of the East thanks to its photogenic overhangs and sandstone filled with pockets and crimps, but the Meyer family wanted to make that thrill more accessible to everyone. Today, the three-quarter-mile route spans across six sections that increase through four levels of varying difficulty, concluding with the toughest portion, which includes a high-wire cable walk. Not ready to tackle the next level? No big deal: Exits are sprinkled throughout the course so you can bail if needed.

Make it Happen Reservations are required through Southeast Mountain Guides; guests must be 10 or older. The day starts with a 45-minute orientation, but then participants are allowed to enjoy the course unguided (yet supervised) until dusk. \$52 per person for a day pass.

Climb High Above the Olympic Valley Floor TAHOE VIA FERRATA, CALIFORNIA

Adrian Ballinger may not be able to get you up Mount Everest but he can help you scale an enormous slab of granite known as the Tram Face in California's Squaw Valley. Ballinger, an eight-time Everest summitter and one of the country's leading mountain guides, is the founder of Alpenglow Expeditions, the guiding company responsible for the four Tahoe via ferrata routes, built for beginners and experienced climbers alike. Each hike begins with a 10-minute ride in "The Beast," a truck that whisks climbers a thousand feet uphill to the beginning of the fun. From there, a short downhill hike dumps visitors at the Flamingo Buttress, the entry-level section designed for visitors to adjust to their new gear. Guests then have options: Shorter tours typically ascend "The Loophole" or "Great Escape" routes, while the longer tours tackle the "Skyline" or "Sundial" climbs that lead up to the summit of Tram Face. Fun fact: Alpenglow uses a



Routes are built for various levels of expertise in Squaw Valley.

special technology called the Continuous Lifeline System, which relies on one carabiner clipped to the cable rather than the standard two. Once clipped in, this carabiner cannot unclip until climbers have reached the end of the route, ensuring guest safety. **Make it Happen** Alpenglow Expeditions offers both 2.5- and 4-hour guided tours through November 15. All participants must be escorted by a trained Alpenglow guide. Rates start at \$99 per person.

Do it

TRAIN LIKE A PRO

"I JUST HAVE TO TRUST MYSELF"

Nikita Ducarroz reveals how she trains for the high-flying intensity of freestyle BMX.

At age 14, Nikita Ducarroz discovered freestyle BMX by watching YouTube. Intense anxiety and panic attacks had derailed her life, and she was spending many hours at home alone. Though she was a talented soccer player, her anxiety ruled out team sports. "I needed something to do on my own time and on my own terms," she says. With BMX, she found it.

After spinning around in her driveway, Ducarroz (who was born in France to an American mother and Swiss father) ventured to a nearby skatepark. Riding BMX gave her a passion and a community. Now 24, the athlete has become one of the best freestyle BMX riders in the world.

Early in 2020, she moved from California to North Carolina to train at the Daniel Diers Action Sports Complex. Each day she spends three hours on her bike, working to perfect the high-flying tricks that define her sport. And when freestyle park BMX debuts in Tokyo, Ducarroz (who will be representing Switzerland) will be ready to put it all on the line.

"The BMX community is amazing," says Ducarroz. "I've been able to meet people from so many cultures, all brought together by the love for riding."



TECHNIQUE

"I start in the foam pit"

"I start with a warm-up routine with some stretches and take a couple easy laps on the bike. Then I just jump right in. If I'm learning something new, and it's something crazy, I'll try it in the foam pit first. There, I can focus on how the trick works, and not worry about landing on my head. Once I have the trick dialed in the foam, I hit the ramp a couple times, just to get the feeling. I close my eyes to visualize myself doing the trick and think about it while I'm in the air. And then I just have to trust myself."

STRENGTH

"I need to be explosive"

"I do a mixture of power training, circuits and stabilization work. I like to do a heavy squat movement, followed by explosive work such as box jumps or hurdles. Being able to be explosive after lifting a heavy load translates well to riding. Once a week, I have a recovery workout that focuses on stretching and mobility. My hamstrings are completely not flexible, so I do stretches like pigeon stretch, frog with T-spine rotation and downward dog into lizard. My hamstrings, hips, lower back and traps—those are the main areas I stretch."

"RIDING HAS TAUGHT ME A LOT OF LIFE LESSONS"

"Some of the lessons are cliché—like getting back up after I fall. But there have been so many big wins for me, like the first time I got on a plane after not having been on one for 10 years because of my anxiety. With BMX, I found something that I was so passionate about, that when it came time to do some things I was terrified of, it made it a little easier to push past the fear."

ENDURANCE

"Bike time is the most important thing"

"I do a lot of intervals on a trainer—always shorter efforts, because when we compete, we're riding for 60 seconds. I usually have about three minutes of rest and then go again for 60 seconds. It doesn't seem like a lot, but when you're going full on and adding tricks, it gets intense. I also started doing intervals on my actual bike that simulate a contest run, alternating 60 seconds on with three minutes of rest. You can accomplish a lot in the gym, but bike time is the most important thing at the end of the day."

FUEL

"I'm trying to find healthier snacks"

"I started working with a nutritionist, because I wanted to learn how to fuel more properly. In general, I have a big sweet tooth; I'm trying to be more mindful about how I eat. We ride early in the morning and I have a hard time eating in the morning. I drink a shake with protein powder, bananas, peanut butter and almond milk. I really like Rice Krispie Treats and Reese's, but I've been working with my nutritionist to find healthier snacks that still taste good. I've been eating more trail mix, protein bars and turkey jerky."



See it



Available now

UNDERWATER EXPLORER

Earlier this year, Danish photojournalist and explorer Klaus Thymann ventured into 1,000-foot-deep underwater caves in Yucatán, Mexico, to document the discovery of one of the country's oldest prehistoric human skeletons. The exact location remains a secret to protect the remains from looters and preserve the delicate ecosystem, but Thymann detailed his exploits in the May issue of *The Red Bulletin* (read it online at redbulletin.com) and in this documentary, *Underwater Explorer: Discovering Human Bones in Mexico*. "It makes you humble in a way," he said of the experience. Watch it and you'll likely agree. redbull.com

22

May

RED BULL FOAM WRECKERS

This anti-surf surf contest has one simple requirement: You must ride a soft-top (foamie) surfboard. The rest is up to you. With the first stop in Waco, Texas, there'll be 13 locations across the country, with the format varying based on the spot as well as conditions on the day of the competition. To sign up, visit redbull.com/foamwreckers



18

June

TRACK & FIELD OLYMPIC TRIALS

The country's best runners, jumpers and throwers head to Eugene, Oregon, aka TrackTown USA, for a chance to make the U.S. team to compete in Tokyo. Two of those hopefuls include this month's cover stars, Elijah Hall (pictured left) and Cameron Burrell, who've been competing and training together since their childhood days in Houston. For this dynamic duo, the heat is on. *Thru June 27; usatf.org*



24

May

RED BULL FORMATION

Two years ago, a band of women set out to transform freeride mountain biking forever. The groundbreaking October 2019 event gave some of the world's best freeride mountain bikers the chance to shred the terrain in Virgin, Utah, made famous by another freeride event, Red Bull Rampage. But unlike its brother, Formation does not follow a competitive format. Instead, it's all about collaboration and elevating the sport. The fun returns this summer. *Thru June 1; redbull.com*



Available now

WHITE RHINO

Canadian filmmaker Brent Storm tells the parallel story of one photographer's journey to capture the waves of a lifetime and the people crazy enough to surf them. The film follows legendary surf photographer Brian Biemann, who traveled to the South Pacific in 2011 and 2012 to document three epic swells in Fiji and Tahiti. Some of the best big-wave surfers of the time—including Dave Wessel, Nathan Fletcher, Kohl Christensen and Kalani Chapman—are willing to risk it all for a chance to tame the elusive "White Rhino." redbull.com

Available
now



FAST LIFE SEASON 4

Reality TV shows often deal with turbulent relationships between the protagonists. This series, which follows the world's best riders in the UCI MTB scene, is no different, except that, alongside the main stars of this fourth season—American rider Kate Courtney, Frenchman Loïc Bruni and Canadian Finn Iles—there's one other ever-present relationship adding to the onscreen tension: their one with gravity. Following the intense and lockdown-truncated 2020 race season, these first two episodes deliver epic race action on some of the world's toughest courses, plus behind-the-scenes drama and moments of true-grit friendship. redbull.com



June

AMA PRO MOTORCROSS

After kicking off at the end of May, the championship series heats up in June with races scheduled across the country: Lakewood, Colorado (June 5); Mt. Morris, Pennsylvania (June 19); Southwick, Massachusetts (June 26). The event series will be ticketed and open to the public, with COVID safety protocols in place like required masks and social distancing. For those not ready to watch IRL, fans can watch on NBCUniversal's streaming service, Peacock. After sitting out the AMA Pro Motocross series in 2020 to recover from health issues that have hindered him in recent seasons—and to focus on the birth of his first child—bright star Ken Roczen is back. promotocross.com



GARMIN RALLY XC200 PEDALS

Garmin brings its proven power-meter-pedal tech from the road to dirt. Advanced Cycling Dynamics metrics provide insight into strengths and areas for improvement, with data visualizations that show how you're applying power. Axle-based electronics are sealed to IPX7 water resistance, with a rugged steel body that withstands mud and rock strikes. Swappable pedal bodies and a more affordable (XC100) option offer flexibility to meet your changing needs and budget. \$1,200; garmin.com



FREE-RANGE RIDING

From dirt and gravel roads to backcountry trails, here's the gear to power your two-wheeled, unpaved adventures.

Words JOE LINDSEY

GRAVEL RIDING

**HAMMERHEAD KAROO 2**

Among this computer's many strengths, the best may be its navigation features. You get detailed maps, turn-by-turn direction with audible prompts and native integration with route apps like Strava, Ride With GPS and Komoot. The user interface is intuitive, with a rich full-color display and both touchscreen and button operation. The secure mount prevents accidental ejection on rough trails, and with up to 12 hours of battery life, it will outlast any ride. \$399; hammerhead.io

**PEARL IZUMI EXPEDITION BIBS**

These comfy, size-inclusive bibs are built for the long haul. They have men's- and women's-specific chamois pads for comfort, compressive fabric panels to keep your muscles fresher for longer and laser-cut bib straps with soft edges that won't chafe or rub. The stretchy cargo pockets on the thighs and a single pocket centered on your low back offer easy-access storage. The women's version features a quick-release drop tail for easy nature breaks. \$125; pearlizumi.com

**RAPHA EXPLORE POWERWEAVE SHOES**

Say goodbye to hotspots and hot feet. The airy 3D-woven fabric upper offers a cool feel and zero-break-in fit, and a roomy toebox. Integrated Boa Li2 dials micro-adjust fit for secure hold with no heel lift. The TPU-reinforced fabric resists snags and tears during hike-a-bikes. There's just enough flex in the carbon-fiber sole for walking comfort, and the grippy lugs offer traction over wet rocks and roots. \$355; rapha.cc

SPECIALIZED DIVERGE EXPERT E5 EVO

It's not a mountain bike but you sure can ride this flat-bar gravel machine like one. With a geometry made for stability and control, this boundary-pushing bike is perfect for spicy singletrack but rolls fast on pavement, too. The Future Shock 2.0 suspension has 20 mm of bump-busting comfort, with meaty 42 mm tires for grip. And it has a full complement of accessory mounts for all-road adventures. \$2,700; specialized.com

**LIV DEVOTE ADVANCED 1**

Whether you want to race or just get rowdy, the Devote Advanced 1 is down. As one of the few truly women's-specific gravel bikes, the geometry is designed for all-day comfort and confident control. The wide-range Shimano GRX drivetrain is silent and smooth, with enough gears for any terrain. And clearance for 45 mm tires and a host of accessory mounts for bottles and racks gives it a versatility that few bikes can match. \$3,200; liv-cycling.com



The Specialized Diverge isn't (quite) a mountain bike, but you sure can ride it like one.

ADVENTURE/BIKEPACKING

**CAMELBAK HAWG PRO 20**

The redesigned HAWG improves on a classic. You still get 1,030 cubic inches of cargo capacity and a 100-ounce hydration bladder. But the new Air Support back panel keeps things less sweaty, while the vented mesh harness and hip belt offer a comfortable fit that won't shift on descents. Accessory pockets and an integrated tool roll keep things thoughtfully organized. External overflow pockets and sleeves easily carry items like jackets or helmets. \$160; camelbak.com

TREK 1120

Trek's very first bike was designed for touring, so consider this a 21st-century update: a burly off-grid bikepacker. The aluminum frame and carbon fork feature a host of accessory mounts, and the tubular-steel front and rear racks offer peace of mind with bulky loads. A wide-range Shimano SLX drivetrain tackles steep climbs even while loaded, and the 29-by-3-inch tubeless tires and four-piston disc brakes give you confidence in extreme terrain. \$2,850; trekbikes.com

**OPEN W.I.DE.**

Open helped create the gravel boom with its U.P., but this takes things to another level. This genre-busting chassis has room for mountain bike tires up to 2.4 inches wide, but the tight wheelbase, nimble steering and light carbon frame make it quite responsive. Swap to narrower rubber for spirited multisurface rides. With few accessory mounts, this isn't a bikepacking rig; but for day adventures it's up for nearly anything. \$3,200 (frameset), \$5,900 (complete); opencycle.com

**REI FLASH AIR 1**

Ultralight bivy sacks offer protection but not much creature comfort. Consider a one-person tent instead, like the Flash Air, a deal in the category. Just 1 lb 4 oz, the hybrid single-wall design features far more room than a basic bivy, including a 42-inch peak internal height for sitting up. It packs down to just 16 by 6 inches, ideal for seatbags. A modest vestibule offers protected storage, and mesh panels keep out bugs while providing ventilation. \$250; rei.com



Ortlieb's renowned drybag tech shines in a new bikepacking line.



ORTLIEB FORK-PACK BAG

Ortlieb has brought its renowned drybag technology to bikepacking. This ingenious 250-cubic-inch accessory pack is perfect for light but bulky items. The roll-top closure acts like a compression pack for jackets or sleeping bags. Waterproof, PVC-free fabric keeps everything dry, and the welded-seam construction withstands years of hard use. The bag installs with fork-cage mounts or bare fork legs in just seconds. \$60; ortlieb.com



SEA TO SUMMIT EMBER ULTRALIGHT DOWN QUILT

Swapping a sleeping bag for a quilt is a great way to save weight and bulk for bikepacking. This down quilt comes in two sizes and three temperature ratings (from 20 to 40 degrees) and features four cinch cords to anchor it securely to a sleeping pad and eliminate drafts. With 850+ fillpower down, it's light and packs down tight for storage but provides plenty of warmth on chilly nights. \$289-\$439; seatosummitusa.com



CONTINENTAL TERRA TRAIL

If you're way out there, you need to trust your tires. The Terra Trail features a multilayer puncture-resistant casing borrowed from Conti's mountain bike line to keep flats at bay. The pebbled tread pattern has taller side knobs for cornering traction with a low-height center section that rolls fast on hardpack or pavement. The 40 mm width (available in 700c and 650b diameters) strikes a balance between efficiency and comfort. \$65; continental-tires.com

Swapping a sleeping bag for a quilt is a great way to save weight and bulk for bikepacking.



TRANSITION SPUR

Cross-country? Down-country? Backcountry? The new Spur is made for enjoying any of them. It rides bigger than its 120 mm of front- and rear-wheel travel suggest. That's due partly to a geometry that allows confident downhills and comfortable climbing. Quality RockShox suspension and 2.4-inch Maxxis tires keep you rooted, and the solid build is good for the long haul. \$2,999 (frame and shock), complete bikes from \$4,999; transitionbikes.com

MOUNTAIN BIKING

**FIVE TEN TRAILCROSS MID PRO**

Most skate-style shoes made for flat pedals have one drawback: no ankle support. The Trailcross Mid Pro takes Five Ten's class-leading fit and comfort and adds a mid-height upper for full coverage. Strategically placed padding protects from frame bumps and rock strikes. The Stealth rubber outsole grips secure on everything from pedal pegs to hike-a-bikes. The sock-like liner and lace closure provide comfortable, slip-free fit and keep out mud and grit. \$170; [adidas.com](https://www.adidas.com)

**POC VPD SYSTEM LITE PADS**

Heavy, hot hardshell armor or light pads that may not protect? Avoid compromises with POC's most ventilated pads, which use 3D-molded VPD armor for top protection, with big channels and a mesh sleeve for optimal ventilation. VPD warms to the body for uninhibited movement on the bike but hardens on impact to deflect big slams. Lightweight, they won't slip or slide while riding, but are easily removed and stowed for climbs. \$130 (knee), \$110 (elbow); [pocsports.com](https://www.pocsports.com)

**FOX FLEXAIR SHORTS**

These are made for hot rides where you can't sacrifice coverage and protection. The lightweight, four-way stretch fabric is fast drying and has ventilated airflow zones. A removable liner with a dual-density chamois offers comfort on big rides. The ratchet waist closure allows quick adjustment and won't interfere with hydration-pack hip belts. Zip pockets secure valuables, and the 13-inch inseam matches perfectly with pads. \$130; [foxracing.com](https://www.foxracing.com)

YETI SB140

SB stands for Super Bike. It isn't hyperbole: Whatever you want to do, the SB140 is capable. The light, stiff carbon frame and acclaimed Switch Infinity suspension handle long climbs and descents with aplomb. Stable handling and 140 mm of travel encourage zesty descending or a day of lift-served fun. And clearance for 2.6-inch rubber provides traction and confidence on the gnarliest trails. \$3,600 (frame and shock), complete bikes from \$5,200; [yeticycles.com](https://www.yeticycles.com)

**JAMIS KOMODO**

Hardtails aren't just for racing; modern trail bikes feature progressive geometry, lots of suspension travel and big tires for all-day fun. Plus, they're affordable. The Komodo has a light aluminum frame, a 12-speed Shimano drivetrain for efficient climbing and a RockShox suspension fork with 35 mm uppers for precise, flex-free steering and 140 mm of bump-eating travel. Wide tires and four-piston hydraulic brakes keep you in control on any trail. \$1,900; [jamisbikes.com](https://www.jamisbikes.com)



SB stands for Super Bike. With Yeti's SB140, that's the farthest thing from hyperbole.

ANATOMY OF GEAR

Two innovative off-road cycling products, deconstructed.

Words JOE LINDSEY

CANYON GRAIL:ON
CF 8 ETAP\$6,999;
canyon.comTHAT
HANDLEBAR!

The biplane-style carbon-fiber handlebar offers multiple hand positions for comfort and better absorbs high-frequency vibration.

CUT THE CORD

SRAM's wireless electronic eTap shifting offers ultra-fast gear changes, with no cables to wear out or go out of adjustment.

EXTRA JUICE

The 500 Wh battery lasts up to 68 miles (depending on terrain and assist mode) for big adventures with no range anxiety.

POWER BOOST

Bosch's sportiest motor, the Performance Line CX, automatically adjusts output to match your pedaling for a smooth, natural feel, up to 28 mph.

RUBBER SOUL

The 50 mm wide Schwalbe G-One Bite tubeless tires roll fast on hardpack, grip fast on technical trails and float over rocks and bumps.

YOU CAN GO LONGER AND STAY
FRESHER ON A TECHNICAL GRAVEL
RIDE WITH THIS NIMBLE BEAST.

COMFORT ZONE

The safest helmet is the one you'll wear—with features like antimicrobial padding and slimline webbing, the Spherical is comfortable on long days.



BRAIN SAVER

MIPS' latest tech features a ball-and-socket design that lets the outer shell slide against the inner upon impact, reducing rotational energy thought to cause concussions.

PERFECT FIT

Available in three sizes, the Manifest's Roc Loc Trail Air retention system micro-adjusts in seconds with one hand for a secure, stable fit.

COOLER HEADS PREVAIL

With 19 spacious vents and internal channeling to move air, the Manifest keeps you cool even when working hard at low speeds, like on climbs.



DOUBLE PROTECTION

Dual-density foam (softer on the outside, harder on the inner shell) absorbs impact energy from both high- and low-speed crash situations.

GIRO MANIFEST
SPHERICAL

\$260;
giro.com

THE RED BULLETIN WORLDWIDE



 *The Red Bulletin* is published in six countries. The cover of this month's French edition features Formula One driver Pierre Gasly, who currently races for Scuderia AlphaTauri. For more stories beyond the ordinary, go to redbulletin.com.

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Anything you can do...

Refashioning the traditional skateboarding contest of SKATE—one player sets a trick, then the other has to land it—from an altitude of 10,000 feet brings unique challenges. (For starters, gravity rules out the use of a skateboard.) But this didn't deter skydiver Maya Kuczynska and air-racing pilot Lucasz Czepiel back in March of this year. The two Poles created their own version—a game of AIR—in the skies above Bovec, Slovenia, dueling with daring moves including front flips, knife-edge turns and low flybys. To find out who won, watch the video at redbull.com.

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