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Radical Film's newest creation, *The Cackle Factor-Kranked 7*, features a breathtaking segment filmed in the rugged Alaskan Mountains with the sweet riding of Mike Hopkins and James Doerfling. To prepare for the filming, a crew descended onto the Alaskan landscape to design and build one of the most challenging and epic lines in the film, lovingly coined 'A1 - the dream line', and hailed as the first major freeride trail in Alaska.

"Mountain biking in Alaska is mainly limited to helicopter drops or epic cross country climbs for any downhill rip as there are no logging roads for access", explains photographer, John Wellburn. This changed last summer with the design of the A1 trail."

The crew rolled into Girdwood, Alaska at three in the morning after driving all night in the light (their first experience with 20 plus hours of daylight) and checked into the incredible Ayeska Resort, situated in the middle of a valley about 45 minutes south of Anchorage. Ayeska is a four-season resort offering world class skiing, touring, cycling and hiking; highlighting the incomparable Alaskan experience. It overlooks the Turnagain Arm of the Pacific Ocean, a narrow extension of the Cook Inlet.

"The scenery blew us away", recalls Wellburn. "The glaciers on the top of the mountains splay out into these crazy boulder fields, which then transition into the greenest slopes before they disappear into the tree line."

The potential for trail building was almost overwhelming with natural lines everywhere. "There were so many sick transfers right alongside the looming glacier", says Wellburn, "gaps everywhere".

A rough line had already been scouted. "Ben Walker, a World Cup trail designer, had come over from Switzerland and laid out an insane downhill test-piece on an upper mountain moraine", explains Rich Eidem, of Ayeska Resorts. "I thought it was a beautiful, flowing route that really featured our unique Ayeska terrain. Ben recommended that Bjorn Enga with Radical Films get involved."

Mich Cheek, (trail visionary) established the final line for the segment. Cheek mapped out a mind-blowing trail, situated 3,000 vertical feet directly above the ocean with the intense exposure of the Turnagain Arm below.

Kranked 7

BUILDING THE ALASKAN DREAM LINE

WORDS BY KELLY FOLEY AND JOHN WELLBURN PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHN WELLBURN KRANKED





JAMES DOERFLING



"It is one of the most epic, most exposed, picturesque lines of all time", says Wellburn. "The terrain transitions very fast from high alpine, rock and ice, to rolling mounds of age-old glacial moraine that have become carpeted in the most vibrant green. There is something very intriguing about the fact that these mountains just dump right into the sea".

With the line layout established, it was now the task of the crew to build the trail, utilising the natural environment to create the stunts and props required. "I wanted to use as much natural terrain as possible in the design and building of the trail", says Cheek. "Not

only is it efficient, it is also the purest form of biking."

Local rider and trail builder, Warren Rowe was a very key resource in the building of the line. His knowledge of the local terrain was paramount. We were given the challenge of building everything out of rock", says Wellburn. "We started stacking. Some rocks we packed from hundreds of feet away - love was getting put into these jumps".

James Doerfling spent almost a month up in Alaska helping to design and build his own trail. "I always prefer to work on my own line", explains Doerfling. "you feel more confident about it. Once it's completed and you've hit it, there is a big sigh of relief. It's

sweet."

Many professional riders are closely involved in the design and building of their trails. "Definitely there is an advantage for a rider to build his own trail", says Cheek. "you are visualising the whole line as you build, which gives you more preparation. The more time you spend visualising, the more confident you are to ride."

For the trail designer, it is important to take into account the rider's technical style. "Most of the time you get a rider's input", says Cheek, "but you also have to think about what the rider's strengths are and go for the line

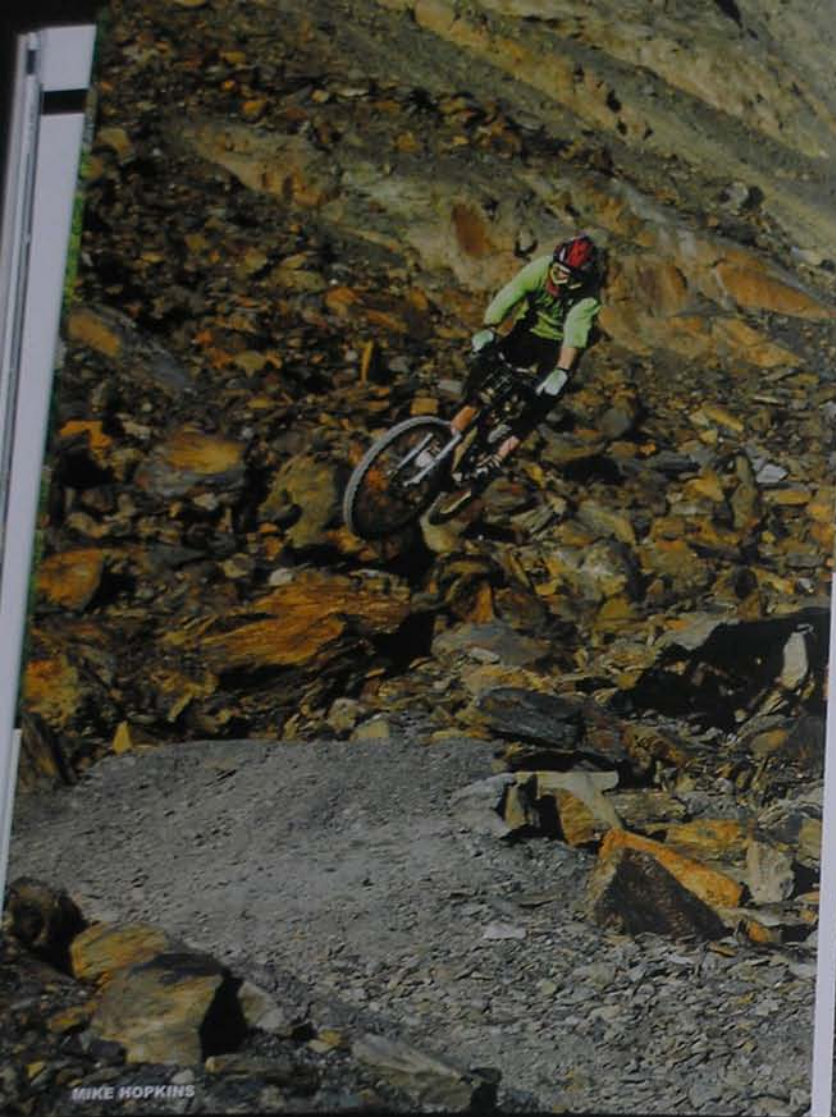
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MIKE HOPKINS

looking for those lines or moves. If you know the rider's style then you have two heads looking for the right shot, making it more creative and productive."

The line came together brilliantly, as the crew struggled through some epic weather and were able to experience how truly nasty it can be on the top of a mountain in one of the most northerly inhabited places on earth.

"Mists would come in while we were hard at work," says Wellburn. "They were so wet and thick that you could barely see your hand in front of your face as you stumbled up the hill with a giant boulder precariously perched on your shoulder. On those

days, the only thing that would keep us going was the thought of dissolving into the hotel hot tub and of course, the chance that one of us might get a date with one of the hot Russian chambermaids!"

The builders were putting the finishing touches to the trail when the film crew arrived. "They created this outrageous downhill trail that had nothing to do with what I had envisioned", recalls Rich Eidem. "I immediately began deploying evacuation procedures, trauma kits, EMT's and triple checked all the waivers! I watched as the Scott pros were nailing it in jeans and t-shirts. Needless to say I was blown away."

During the filming, Doertling and Hopkins were



THE CACKLE FACTOR: KRANKED 7
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