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RIDERS  
SPECIAL**

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208 pages of routes, tests & advice

**RIDING SKILLS SCHOOL**  
Learn how to tackle basic trail obstacles

# mbr

**MOUNTAIN BIKE RIDER**

## NEW RIDERS

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- ✓ Workshop guide

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**HUGE  
12 BIKE  
TEST**

## The **DIRTY DOZEN**

Which £500 hardtail wins our

**TRAILS**

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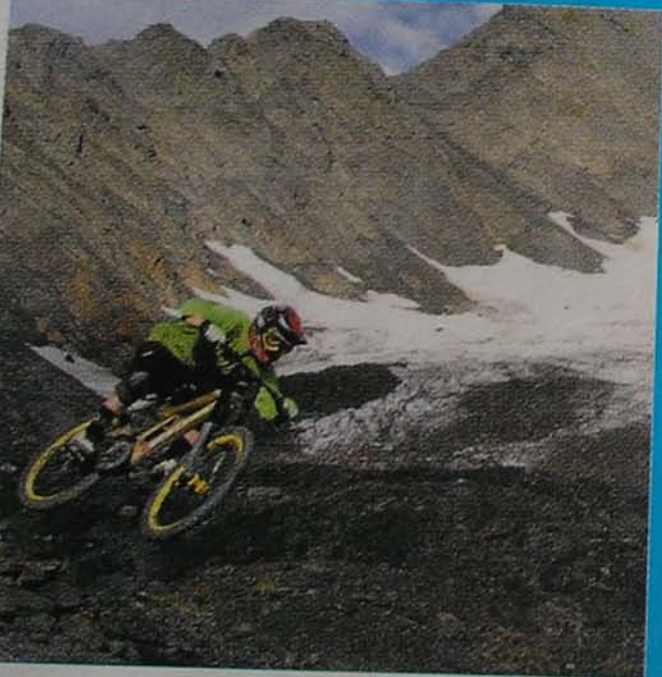
# ride guide

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Our experts share their wisdom so you can "just get out and ride"

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Our mechanic shows you how to replace a chain without the pain



## 164 OVERSEAS ALASKA

We all know what goes on in Alaska stays in Alaska, but no one told the Kranked 7 Krew

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## 182 NEW RIDERS TRAIL CENTRE SKILLS

Chris Ball gives a masterclass in trail skills — things like keepy-uppies and riding through cones, that sort of stuff



# Alaskan

## Dream Line

The new film from the Kranked team promises to be bigger and better than anything they've ever produced. Here **mbr** gets a sneak behind-the-scenes look at the production

■ Kranked Team ■ Kelly Foley & John Wellburn





**R**adical Films' 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 on the Alaskan landscape to design and build one of the most challenging and epic lines in the film, 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," explained photographer John Wellburn. "This changed last summer with the design of the A1 trail."

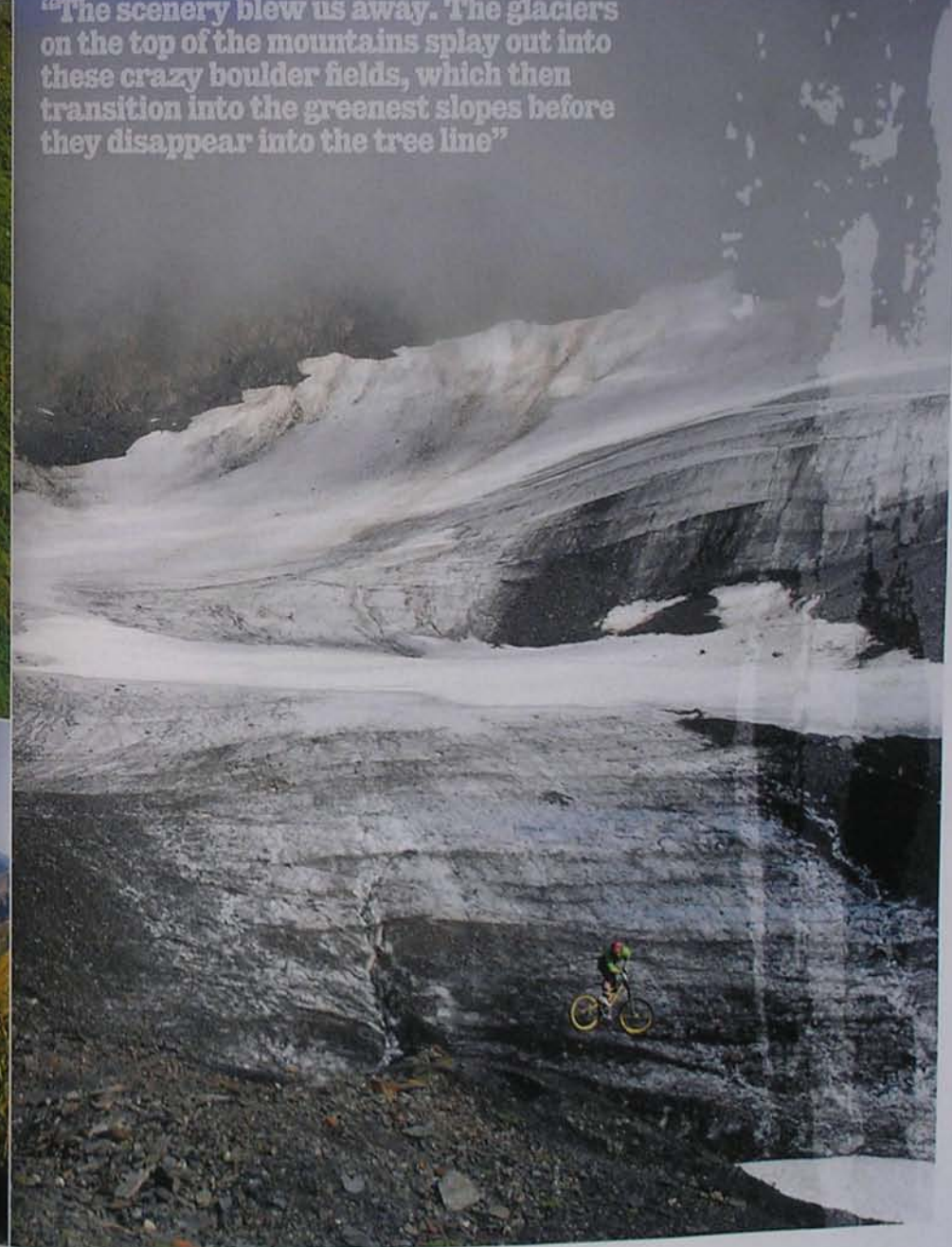
The crew rolled into Girdwood, Alaska, at three in the morning after driving all night in the light (their first experience with 20 plus hours of daylight!) and checked into the incredible Alyeska Resort, situated in the middle of a valley about 45 minutes south of Anchorage. Alyeska is a four-season 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," recalled 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 Alyeska resort offers year-round bike fun

"The scenery blew us away. 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"



It is one of the most epic, most exposed, picturesque lines of all time. The terrain transitions very fast”



Mike Hopkins and James Doerfling scout the trails



The potential for trail building was almost overwhelming with natural lines everywhere. “There were so many sick transfers right alongside the looming glacier,” said 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,” explained Rich Eidem of Alyeska Resorts. “I thought it was a beautiful, flowing route that really featured our unique Alyeska terrain. Ben recommended that Bjørn Enga with Radical Films get involved.”

#### ON THE RIGHT LINES

Mitch 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.

“It is one of the most epic, most exposed, picturesque lines of all time,” said 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, using the natural environment to create the stunts and props required. “I want to use as much natural terrain as possible in the design and building of the trail,” said Cheek. “Not only is it efficient, it is also the purest form of biking.”

Local rider and trail builder Warren Rowe was a 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,” said 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,” explained 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. “I definitely think there is an advantage for a rider to build his own line,” said Cheek. “You are visualizing the whole time you build, which gives you more preparation. The more time that you spend visualizing, the more confident you are to ride.”

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"Mists would come in while we were at work, so wet and thick you could barely see your hand in front of your face as you stumbled up the hill with a giant boulder"

#### ROUGH AND READY

For the trail designer, it is important to keep in mind the rider's technical style. "Most of the time you get riders' input," said Cheek, "but you also have to know what the rider's strengths are and go into the zone 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," said Wellborn. "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," recalled Rich Eiden.

"I immediately began deploying evacuation procedures, trauma kits, EMTs and triple checked all the waivers! I watched as the best pits were nailed

The ultimate reward: being the first to ride the line



it in jeans and T-shirts. Needless to say I was blown away."

During the filming, Doerfling and Hopkins were on fire, feeding off of each other as they devoured the trail. The A1 Line was sick, tasty, and absolutely stunning to watch.

"What inspired the design?" Cheek reflected. "It's about being creative and trying to come up with fresh trails and stunts to ride. When it all comes down to it, I love riding! I want to ride something new all the time and I want to inspire people to wish they were there on their bikes having as much fun as we do!"

The Cackle Factor-Kranked 7 will hit the stores in May 2008. For additional info, contact [www.radical-films.com](http://www.radical-films.com).

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