



CORY RICHARDS (RIGHT); JEFF MOTTERSHEAD (BELOW RIGHT)

Majka Burhardt on P2 of *Europa* (5.8), Squamish, a 3,000-hour labor of love.

MANUFACTURED DESIRE

Europa – the world’s priciest rock climb?

WHEN HUNTING FAs, most seek splitter cracks, edgy arêtes, or overhanging waves. Not Jeff Mottershead, 29, a Vancouverite and physics doctoral student. The obscure object of Mottershead’s desire was a tree-choked, dirt-filled gully on the rainy Squamish Chief. Today, after 1.5 years of Herculean toil and \$14,000 spent, Mottershead et al. have unveiled what might be the most notable (and controversial) example of vertical reclamation ever: *Europa*, a seven-pitch 5.8.

Hankering for a more-moderate “experience” up the Chief – whose hundreds of multi-pitch routes range from 5.10 to 5.13 – Mottershead and a crew from the University of British Columbia’s Varsity Outdoor Club started work in November 2006. Between then and April 20, 2008, they labored 3,000 hours, employing an air compressor to blast mud and foliage from cracks, and three come-alongs to uproot trees. Once, Mottershead spent an entire night pulling out a single, behemoth pine halfway up. He did much of the work during winter’s rain and sleet, his efforts verified by the 12-foot-tall debris cone below the route.

Europa might seem a bit, well, “industrial,”

he realized that with monumental effort, he could create a new Squamish experience. He quickly dispensed with the *Crap Crag* moniker, since “*Europa* seemed to go over better when applying for funding from the Mountain Equipment Co-Op [Canada’s version of REI],” Mottershead says.

Europa is just one example of Squamish climbers’ ongoing battle with vegetation. In the “Northwet,” climbing – especially on moderates – would be nothing but lichen smearing and tree-root tie-offs if not for regular cleaning efforts. What’s more, over the last few decades, the Chief’s become greener. “If you look at pictures from the 1970s and compare them to today, one thing is clear: the trees are taking over,” Mottershead says. Reasons might include fire-suppression practices and the nearby highway kicking up organic particulates and dust, which settle on the walls.

Although most Squamish locals support Mottershead’s vision, many outside the Pacific Northwest have hotly debated the FA tactics on various Web forums. As one critic put it, “I have cleaned thousands of feet of dirty, vegetated cracks in El Potrero Chico

until you consider how much rain (95 inches) Squamish sees annually and its effect on cliff vegetation.

The Chief looms 2,300-plus feet above Howe Sound. Fred Beckey climbed it first, in 1959 via Squamish Buttress. Three years later, Hamish Mutch and Dick Culbert climbed their *Crap Crag*s, nearly the same line as *Europa*. However, the route soon grew over with trees and shrubs. Kevin McLane’s 1999 Squamish guide described *Crap Crag*s thusly: “If this climb was...restored to its original condition of, say, 9,000 years ago, it would be the most popular long route on the Chief.”

After Mottershead in 2006 climbed *Crap Crag*s,

[Mexico] with nothing but a pruning saw, a crowbar, some brushes, and lots of elbow grease. Methinks 10,000 bucks could have been better spent elsewhere.” All but one of *Europa*’s pitches, which still have some loose rock, are trad, and the only bolted rap station is at P4’s optional exit.

The big question is how much we as climbers should interfere with nature. Keep in mind this is Squamish, where each season, locals must choose various climbs to scrub, to keep them passable. One thing not disputed, though, is Mottershead’s tenacity: as of last summer, *Europa* is a clean stripe up one of North America’s great granite faces. Pitch two – the 5.8 crux – has a beautiful layback corner in which you hand-jam next to root balls and pockets of moist dirt (see photo at left). However, the seedlings are already returning, and only time will tell if *Europa* merited the effort or will go the way of *Crap Crag*s. —Majka Burhardt



Europa travels bottom left to upper right.

Europa, by the numbers:

MANY PIECES OF GEAR met their maker on *Europa*. Says Mottershead, “Some of the grit in the upper chimney was so abrasive, it could devastate a regular rappel setup in a single pitch.” The final tally:

- Ropes: \$6,500
- Lifting hardware: \$3,000
- Air compressor: \$1,500
- Steel rappel hardware: \$2,000
- Hand tools: \$1,000

Scariest Near-Miss:

The day a six-ton chain puller snapped and its 15-pound hook careened across the granite, swinging between a cleaner’s legs and narrowly missing his nether regions. —MB

Point.
Click.
Send.



Layton Kor and his slide of Standing Rock, Monument Basin, Utah.

CODY BLAIR

American climbing organization has officially recognized the "importance and legitimacy of bouldering." Also, Dave Turner, a solo big-wall climber, scored the AAC's Bates Award for outstanding accomplishment by a young climber, for his 2007/2008 *Taste the Paine* (VII; 4,000 feet), on the

A GATHERING OF NATIONS

Two AAC inaugural climbing galas draw 1,000s

OCTOBER 3: THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL CLIMBERS' MEET kicked off at Indian Creek, Utah, courtesy of the American Alpine Club (AAC). Thirty Americans, plus nearly 50 climbers from 23 countries from China to Brazil, converged on the world's high-desert crack capital for six days of jamming, camping, and camaraderie. AAC President Jim Donini took the idea from the British Mountaineering Council, which has held similar meets in Wales for several years. Donini says the AAC event reinforced that no matter their country, religion, or culture, climbers "are all members of one tribe." The meet also dovetailed with the AAC's first annual Craggin' Classic, held October 9 to 12 in Boulder and Golden (the club's headquarters), Colorado.

The Classic opened with a slideshow from Layton Kor, who established untold FAs in the Southwest from the 1960s onward. The initial small venue sold out in minutes, so organizers moved the show to a 1,200-seat auditorium, which quickly sold out, too. Climbers from all walks enjoyed three hours and a lifetime of photos with Kor that evening.

The AAC also gave a big nod to boulderers at a Friday night reception when they awarded John Gill the Underhill Achievement Award for outstanding mountaineering achievement. According to Gill, it's the first time a major

east face of Cerro Escudo, Patagonia.

The rest of the weekend packed in the events—yoga, dinners, dancing—but heavy rain washed out the one activity you'd expect: outdoor climbing. For this component, 100 participants were to receive small-group coaching from such top climbers as Jonny Copp, Heidi Wirtz, and Josh Wharton. Undeterred, the clinics retreated to indoor gyms. "At first, I thought, 'These pros regularly endure sufferfests beyond comprehension, and we're going inside because of rain!'" says Brendan Oldham, a local participant who was paired with Copp. "But they didn't let us down. Jonny taught us great techniques, and I'll never forget hearing about his adventures."

The overall goal of the Craggin' Classic was to connect climbers of all ages, disciplines, and ability levels. It was "a grassroots event designed to get climbers together and promote community involvement," says Dana Richardson, the AAC outreach manager. Based on the huge turnout and positive feedback, the Classic succeeded—especially (on a personal note) with my 5-year-old daughter, Giulia, who was mesmerized by it all. I'm a little worried, however, about bringing Giulia to the event next year: after one of the climbing shows, she asked me to take her *ice* climbing. Oh, boy. ...

—Craig Luebben

Overheard

"I'd like to see you send this one second go. [Then, looking at his watch] On second thought, we don't have time—you'd better flash it!" —Jeff Elison to Elizabeth Dansie, right before she TR-flashed Bastard Stepchild (5.12d), Wailing Wall, Utah.

"The world's best climber is the king of the inconsequential." —"Kentucky" Joe Haynes to fellow climber Anthony Riske.