

Mountain Biking WORLD

FEB
2006
ISSUE
20

THE BEST BIKE MAG



SAM HILL
FABIEN BAREL
GUNN-RITA DAHLE
LIAM KILLEEN
BRIAN LOPES
TIMO PRITZEL
JOSH BENDER
JOHN COWAN
JEFF LENOSKY
ANNE-CAROLINE CHAUSSON

STEVE PEAT
DARREN BERRE CLOTH
GEE ATHERTON
CEDRIC GRACIA
AARON CHASE
NATHAN RENNIE
ERIC CARTER
GREG MINNAAR
CHRIS AKRIGG
THOMAS VANDERHAM

COLLECTOR'S EDITION

LEGENDS

**THE WORLD'S GREATEST MTB HEROES
AND WHAT YOU CAN LEARN FROM THEM**
■ PROFILES ■ INTERVIEWS ■ EXCLUSIVE TIPS ■ KILLER MOVES ■ UNSEEN PICS

£3.95 **ME6RPE** www.mbiuk.com

Future
MEDIA WITH A PURPOSE



9 770954 869114 02 >

Josh Bender

CURRENTLY OUT OF ACTION AFTER
A POSSIBLE CAREER-ENDING CRASH,
THE 'GO BIG OR GO HOME' FREERIDER
HAS EARN'T HIS PLACE ON THE MBUK
LEGENDS LIST TENFOLD

WORDS: ROBERT REBHOLZ PICS: SIMEON SCHATZ AND JOHN GIBSON



If in doubt, bail out

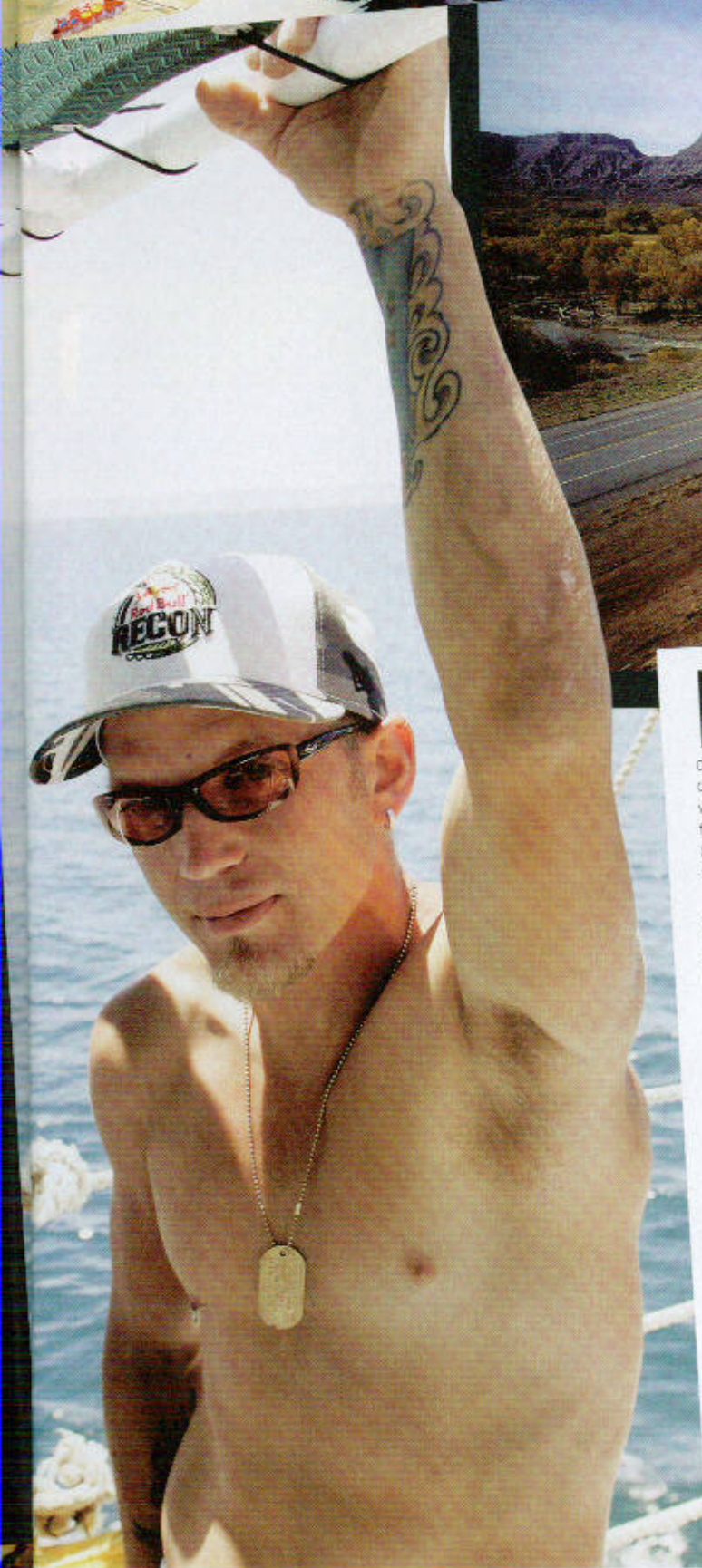
What can we learn from Josh

"To be a good rider, you must first be a good crasher," is a famous Wade Simmons adage, and it rings true, especially when you're considering Bender. Josh is among the finest crashers the world has ever seen.

His Jedi senses are sharp — he knows when to hold 'em and when to fold 'em. Bender ejected over a 60ft step-down gap at the 2004 Red Bull Rampage and to the amazement of the crowd, walked away from it. "Josh keeps a fit body and a fit mind," Sim explains. "It has allowed him to walk away from things that most people would have been carried away from."



Josh also likes being a human cannonball



Bender's philosophy is simple: go big or go home

In freeride's short history few have risen to the mythical status that Josh Bender has. His name alone brings visions of insane cliff drops, big canyons and even bigger carnage. "Before Bender, the industry wouldn't touch freeride," his lifelong friend and photographer Simeon 'Sim' Schatz states. "They just didn't have the vision."

Vision is exactly what Bender has had his entire life. Born in the far reaches of Alaska, Bender lived the extreme lifestyle long before it was a tool of corporate advertising. He was a sponsored monoskiier who revolutionised what could be done on one ski, and then he transferred this knowledge of steep terrain and massive drops to the medium of mountain bike and changed the world's view of our sport forever.

Not that it came easily – the early days were a rough road. "Josh broke the world record for the highest drop and his sponsors rewarded him by asking for their equipment back," Sim explains. "All they saw was a liability."

His attitude was sometimes a liability to his health as well. "Josh came to Moab with his photographer Sim and wanted to shoot the biggest jumps we had," TJ Cowern of Poison Spider Bikes recalls. "The gap was about 25ft and Bender didn't quite make it. He floored his front wheel, jumped up and started stomping it straight. It took

the whole group of us to talk him out of riding it again on that wheel."

This 'go big or go home' mentality became Josh's trademark throughout his career. But why risk life and limb hucking off a 60ft cliff? "This is Josh's way to show people that they can push their own personal limits in whatever they do," Sim comments. "He risks himself to inspire other people to push themselves."

Cheating death

Bender has shown his resilience time and time again, trying the 55ft Jaw Drop outside of Kamloops, British Columbia, four times without success. Having seen this behemoth in person, I can't imagine anyone believing they could ride a bicycle off it and expect to live. Just how does Bender walk away time and time again from these horrific crashes? "Bender is part of the millennium club," Sim explains. "He does 1,000 sit-ups, push-ups and pull-ups daily. Muscle is the best body armour you can have."

Josh Bender stands among the legends of mountain biking for his vision of what is possible on a mountain bike and having the courage to try it. Unfortunately, at the time of writing, he has sustained possible career-ending injuries (broken back and ankles), ones that would have killed a lesser man. He's already out of hospital though. Godspeed you, Josh Bender.