

▣ HIGH ROLLERS

TRIALS RIDING LEGEND HANS REY and World Champion downhill rider Steve Peat negotiate the Cliffs of Moher, which shoot 200 vertical metres straight up from the Atlantic Ocean on the wild west coast of Ireland.

"My dream was to ride along the small narrow ledge that was between six feet to six inches wide, and looked like a long curvy balcony without a handrail," recounts Hans. "Upon arrival at the cliffs we had to postpone those plans rapidly. The weather was getting worse and herds of tourists were all over the place, plus the security guy wouldn't let anybody near the edge of the cliffs. So we did a pub-crawl instead, hoping for better conditions and luck in the early morning, before anybody else would get there. In the pub locals warned us of the upward drafts that blow people off the cliffs."

And the next morning... "Even though the conditions and weather were less than good, this was our one and only chance to ride the cliffs, so we did. It was a rad feeling to ride along the exposed edges and jump over some of the gaps. As time went on we started to feel more and more comfortable and daring. Shortly after we finished it started pouring rain, nonetheless we continued the trail on top of the cliffs, which was one of the more spectacular trails I have ridden."

Well, at least they were wearing helmets eh? This edgy adventure took place some time ago (2006), but for some of Hans and Steve's more recent antics, check out the feature on page 66 of this edition, where they meet up with urban trials trickster and YouTube superstar Danny MacAskill and explore the Scottish Highlands and islands.

▣ Photographer Victor Lucas



IMAGE FROM | THE EDGE



SKYE RIDERS



Pick the three most charismatic and well-known mountain bike riders in the world, put them in a helicopter with some bikes and send them into the welcoming arms of Scotland's Highlands and islands on a search (for exciting stuff to ride over) and deploy (their amazing and diverse box full of tricks) mission, and what do you get? A right shindig of an adventure...

STORY Hans Rey **IMAGES** Andy McCandlish



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**STEVE PEAT**

2010 World DH Champion
and all-round legend

DANNY MACASKILL

Urban trials rider extraordinaire
and YouTube sensation

HANS REY

Trials riding pioneer
and MTB-based adventurer

Steve Peat and I had been planning a trip to the Scottish Isle of Skye for a long time, and when things finally started falling into place it would have seemed almost rude not to invite Skye native and YouTube sensation Danny MacAskill to join us.

In whirlwind fashion, Danny has been living the dream of every kid in the world since a film clip starring him and his bike hopped up onto the internet a couple of years ago. The beautifully edited short, featuring Danny pulling off a series of audacious urban trial riding stunts on the streets of Edinburgh, has since become the most watched sports-clip on YouTube of all time, with nearly 22 million

fans having feasted their eyes on it at the time of writing.

Peaty had not long been crowned downhill mountain bike World Champion when we set off, but this was far from my first time travelling and riding with this character.

Our team was made complete with the addition of photographer Andy McCandlish, cameramen Rob Summers from Pro Active TV, Mark Huskisson from Reset Films and our guide, local tour operator Euan Wilson from H and I Adventures (mtbholidayscotland.com).

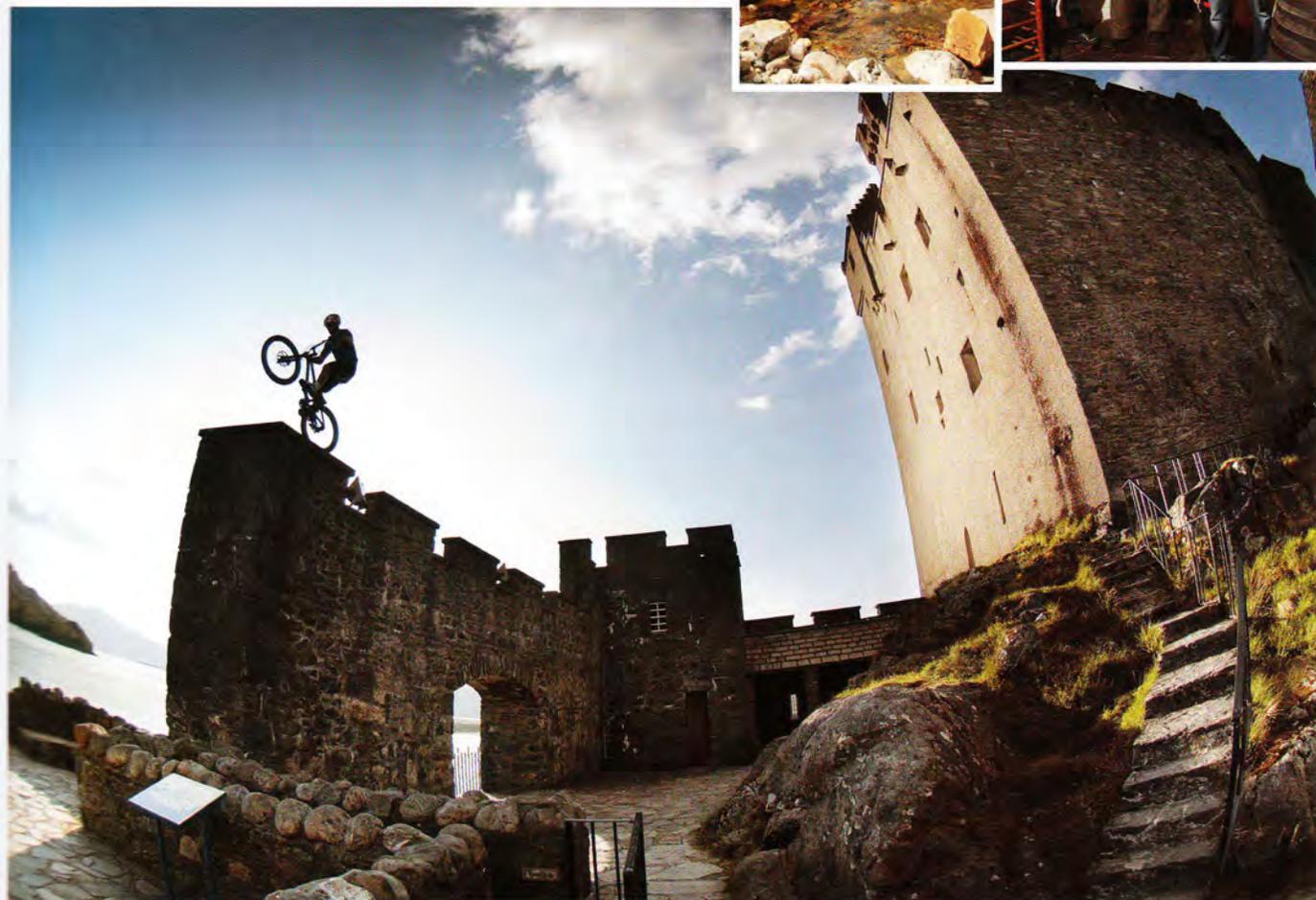
WITH MUCH LUCK I managed to land in Glasgow, dodging the volcanic ash cloud that stopped air traffic all across Europe. Danny picked me up from the airport with the crew and we drove into the rolling countryside.

First stop was the famous and much-filmed fairytale-style castle of Eilean Donan, where we had a special permit for a trials session. Unfortunately my Trials bike was in Peaty's van, and he was delayed, but while I was a bit limited, this at least gave me the opportunity to get an up-close eyeful of Danny's exquisite riding skills.

Scotland's infamously temperamental weather was in a benevolent mood this particular afternoon and we were able to enjoy our ancient playground under clear skies until after sunset, which is not until around 10.30pm during summer months that far north. The encroaching evening added ink to our vast blue ceiling until darkness finally won out and we retreated inside to wait for Peaty, who arrived late that night.



“ IN PREPARATION FOR ANY STYLE OF RIDING, EACH OF US HAD BROUGHT SEVERAL DIFFERENT BIKES FOR THE TRIP. ”



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FIRST LIGHT SAW US ROLLING ACROSS THE bridge to the Island of Skye, and setting off on the hunt for some cross-country trails. Unlike many places around the world – including Australia – cyclists are tolerated on all paths in Scotland and we had high hopes of discovering mountain biking gold in those hills. We weren't to be disappointed.

Immediately the scenery, landscape and trails were phenomenal. From the mountain vistas to the ocean views, Skye epitomises the oft-spoken-about synergy between Highlands and islands that gives northern Scotland its gruff charm.

We soon found ourselves beneath the Quiraing – a massive, fragmented and craggy rock face that towers over lush meadows and is surrounded by breathtaking views. It's accessible only by an ancient track, which became our first cross-country trail of the trip.

There are endless trails here, and very few people using them. We didn't have to share the tracks with anyone all week, unless you count some sheep and shaggy Scottish Highland cattle.

In preparation for any style of riding, each of us had brought several different bikes for the trip. I had my GT Force Carbon all-mountain bike, a Ruckus 7 Freerider, and my trials bike; Peaty was Santa Cruz equipped and, alongside his Inspired bike, Danny rode some Orange rigs.

On this, our first day, we challenged one other to little trials riding problems as we wound along the trail, and it was good to see how much fun everybody had, even though we were 'just' cross-country riding.

The Talisker Whisky Distillery was our next stop – it would have been churlish not to drop in after all – and here we were treated to a private tour, a sampling session and an education about whisky etiquette. Aptly enough, the holy water from Skye has a unique peaty flavour, but some might say that it is an acquired taste.

Plenty of people have clearly acquired it just fine, however, and the local pub, where we spent the night, had over 300 different whiskies on offer. We didn't manage to try them all though, preserving our heads for the morning's riding, so instead I gave the guys a private screening of the new *Wheels 4 Life* film.

DANNY HAD TOLD US ABOUT ONE OF HIS ANCESTORS, GIANT ANGUS MACASKILL, who lived some 150 years ago and, according to the 1981 Guinness Book of World Records, was the largest true giant (big bloke, perfectly in proportion) that ever lived.

Angus measured an impressive 7'9" (2.36cm) in his socks, and we were shown a life-sized statue of him in a tiny local museum run by Danny's parents. Angus spent time touring with



a circus and was widely known for his public demonstrations of enormous strength, such as lifting anchors. (People even claimed to have seen him lift a full-grown horse over a four-foot fence.)

It was a pleasure meeting the MacAskills and listening to their stories about Angus and Danny and the similarities they saw between their son and his sudden success and the experiences of his famous forebear: one a freakish talent, the other a natural wonder.

Clouds and a downpour of rain arrived overnight, but the deluge didn't hold us back from doing another, very wet and technical cross-country ride through Glen Sligachan and along the shores of the beautiful loch. If anything, the weather actually added to the drama and mystery of the landscape, creating an almost medieval atmosphere.

We'd all been wondering why Peaty had brought such a large backpack and at lunch we found out. Instead of the usual stuff you'd expect someone to pack for a long ride, he



grill, sausages, beers and some firework rockets. This was trademark Peaty – who needs a rain jacket when you can have a beer?

TORRIDON WAS OUR NEXT DESTINATION, an area to the north of Skye, on the mainland in the Scottish Highlands. We were staying at a ultra-remote fishing cabin on Loch Damh, a very peaceful and beautiful place...that is, at least until we got there. We had a helicopter chartered to take us to some isolated mountain ridges, where we dropped in on our big bikes.

It's always exciting to slice through the air in a chopper and we had big-kid grins on our faces as we took off. In MTB terms we had three generations of riders on this trip, which

have different skills but we're influenced by each other and share a common denominator: riding technical terrain.

Many things have changed since I started freeriding. Compared to the bikes I used during my early trials exploits, the technology has improved vastly and the limits of possibility have expanded to a level that I could have not have dreamt of 20 years ago. Boundaries are constantly being exploded and that inspires us all.

I'm thrilled, after all these years, to still be a part of the mountain biking movement and to have the opportunity

to see and experience it first hand with one of the fastest and one of the most progressive riders ever. It was a delight to follow Steve and Danny – even though I sometimes had to really put the hammer down to catch up – and it was with sheer amazement that I tried to comprehend some of Danny's lines and moves.

I reflected on this as a gigantic bonfire at our hut burned late into the night. The boys constantly dragged wood out from the hills and fireworks frequently shattered the silence of the night.

The last day served up some more downhill trails, before we ended up in Aviemore, a Scottish mountain resort in the Cairngorms and the town where Danny lived for a few years. At last I got to ride my trials bike around Danny's old stomping grounds. Old School meets New School, and let me tell you this is not the last we've heard of Danny; he has many plans and goals, and he definitely has not reached his limits yet. Even Peaty busted out some trials moves before we raised a final glass of fine Scottish malt to toast a week of discovery. 🍷

For more about Hans Rey's *Wheels 4 Life* project, see

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A ROUGH RIDE AROUND SCOTLAND

BY Pat Kinsella



AS MENTIONED IN MY LAST EDITOR'S NOTE, Scotland is a country that has recently experienced an epiphany in terms of its self image. With figures showing that visiting walkers alone annually contribute over 200 million quid to the local economy, the tourism bods took a fresh look at Scotland's natural attributes and the realization finally dawned that the country has far more to offer than whisky castles and golf. Now

VisitScotland's declared mission for this year is to make Scotland the 'Adventure Capital of Europe'.

Late last year, I spent a week exploring some of Scotland's outdoor riches, and I was blown away by what I saw. Years ago, when I lived in the UK, I spent a fair bit of time walking in Scotland, so I knew what a beautifully rugged and wild place it was. What I wasn't prepared for was the extent that the country has been developed for other adventure pursuits, and nowhere was this more evident than in the mountain biking facilities.

And I don't think I was alone in my ignorance. Even many mountain biking locals seemed to have been caught by surprise by the extent of Scotland's relatively new-found fame as an MTB Mecca within the UK over the last decade. The trails are so plentiful and jaw-droppingly good, that in 2005 and 2006, the Report Card produced by the International Mountain Bike Association (IMBA) awarded Scotland back-to-back honours for excellence in its MTB trails – a first in IMBA's Report Card's eight-year history. The trail development was being lauded even over trail building in places such as BC in Canada and Rotorua in New Zealand.

Fort William (the 'Adventure Capital of Britain' and proud of it) has been hosting World Cup events since 2002, and in 2007 the town scored the fat-tyre equivalent of the Olympics and the Tour de France rolled into one: the UCI Mountain Bike and Trials World Championships.

World Champ Steve Peat rates Fort William as his favourite place to compete, and when the world's best aren't tearing them up the tracks are open to the pedalling public. For downhill devotees there's a track in Fort William, right under the eyes of Britain's highest peak, Ben Nevis, which serves up a vertical drop of 525 metres over 2.66km of rocky, bum-clenching trail. See www.fortwilliam.co.uk for more.

A relatively new network of MTB tracks – the Highland Wildcat Trails – have recently been carved into the flanks of Ben Bhraggie, with one 7km option taking riders right from the peak of the mountain down to the village of Golspie, making it the longest singletrack descent in the UK. For, check out highlandwildcat.com.

For cross-country riders, Scottish trails are many and varied, and they're all extremely well serviced and maintained. Around Fort William, those who prefer to put in some grunt instead of relying on gravity and big kahoonas to get them along a track can explore sensational XC trails all around the Lochaber region, from short circuits around the MTB centre to longer distance routes out across the surrounding peaks, through the woodlands and along the lochs.

During my trip I was treated to a spin around the purpose-built trails at Laggan Wolfrax Mountain Bike Park in the Cairngorm National Park, Scottish Highlands.

Under an hour's drive from the centres of Aviemore and Fort William, Wolfrax has a myriad of trails with challenges that range from rough and rugged rock gardens and challenging drop-offs through to beautifully groomed sweeping berms. Routes are graded from green through to black, and the tougher ones have features such as the 40-metre-long Devil's Chessboard, the Rib Rattler, the Slab and the infamous Two-ton Drop. See more here: basecampmtb.com.

The mountain biking action is by no means confined to the Highlands and islands either, with southern Scotland boasting many excellent tracks including the Seven Stanes, or 7stanes.

The 7stanes are seven MTB centres spread across the south of Scotland, from the Scottish Borders region to Dumfries and Galloway. Stane is the Scottish Gaelic word for stone, and at each of the seven locations riders will find a stone sculpture representing a local myth or legend.

The centres all offer a range of cross-country trails – graded from green (easy) through to black (severe), featuring primarily singletrack with some firetrail – but there are also various freeride and downhill options, which vary in their fill-your-baggy pants terrifyingness.

The trails are Glentool: The Giant Axe Head; Kirroughtree: The Gem Stane; Dalbeattie: The

Heart Cleft Stane; Mabie: The Ghost Stane; Ae: The Talking Head Stane; Glentress: The Meteorite; Newcastleton: The Border Stane.

The trails have been developed on Forestry Commission land, an innovative use of terrain that has been logged that has also been experimented with in Wales and is being heralded by many as the benchmark by which further trails in the UK should be developed.

For more information on all the Stanes, go to www.7stanes.gov.uk. For some Youtube action, head to www.youtube.com/watch?v=DJJ9i2e79SE

For a comprehensive wrap of everything from mountain bike hire, equipment, trail info and accommodation around the 7stanes and other mountain bike venues in southern Scotland check out www.7stanes.com.

There's no shortage of local professional mountain biking guidance to the trails either, with outfits such as H and I Adventures (handiadvntures.co.uk), Wilderness Scotland (wildernessscotland.com), Go-Where (go-where.co.uk) and Glenmore Lodge (glenmorelodge.org.uk) offering a range of services from courses to single and multiday trips with tailor-made itineraries that will allow you to explore the Scottish wilderness on two wheels and discover the riding riches it offers.

SEEK AND YOU SHALL FIND

In 2009 a guy called Rob Lee set out to ride all seven Stanes on his mountain bike in 24 hours, including covering the distance in between the Stanes on his road bike. His support team estimate that this was a total round trip of around 255 miles (408km), taking in some very technical terrain, and of course, the Scottish weather. He nailed it in 23:13:03. To see Rob on his mission, and also to see footage of Hans, Danny and Peaty on their Highland fling, check out Find, a film about mountain biking in the UK made by Reset films: resetfilms.co.uk.



WHEELS 4 LIFE...

Some people use them to get fit, others as a way of getting to work, and for many more they are the weapon of choice for a dose of weekend adrenaline on the forest trails – but for a percentage of the world's population, bikes are an essential tool for survival.

A bicycle can really change a person's life. It can be the difference between having a job or not, going to school or not, seeing a doctor or not...

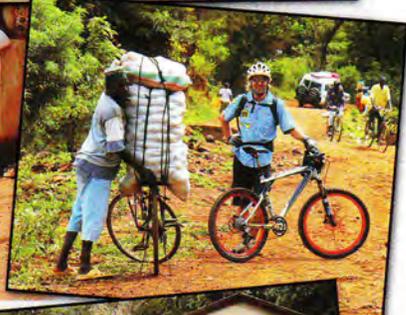
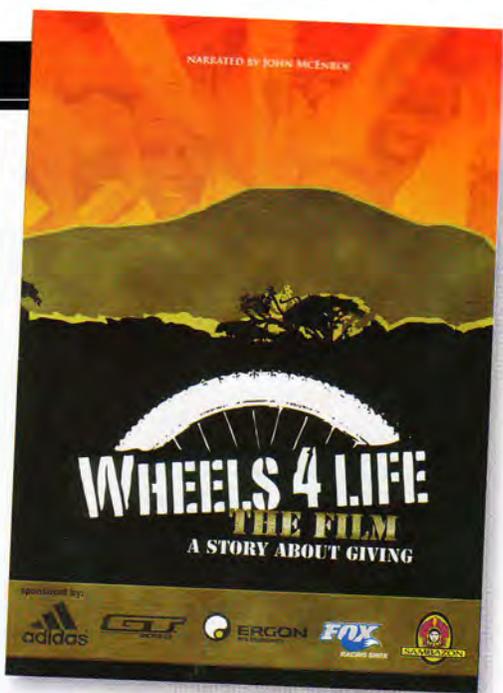
Many people in the developing world live in primitive and remote areas with no access to public transportation. In remote areas where the closest school, doctor or workplace might be 30km away, children use bicycles to get to school, adults use them to get to work, and health care workers use them to access their patients.

Wheels4Life is a non-profit organization set up by trial-riding legend Hans Rey that provides bikes for people in developing countries who really need them.

Wheels4Life partners with local institutions, individuals and organisations to help identify people who need a bike to be able to go to school or to work. The bicycles are typically purchased in the country where they're needed, helping the local economy, making it easier to find replacement parts, and saving on shipping and handling costs, import taxes, duties, and storage.

Administrative costs and overheads are kept as low as possible, with 90-95 per cent of the funds received going towards buying bikes. Everybody in the charity works for free and Hans Rey pays for all of his charity-related travel expenses out of his own pocket. Keeping the costs down to a minimum allows Wheels4Life to buy and distribute even more bikes and to change more lives in return.

See wheels4life.org and order the DVD for more. Images of Hans in Tanzania by Carmen Freeman



Outer Edge caught up with Hans Rey to find out more about the Wheels 4 Life revolution...

When did the idea for Wheels for Life enter your brain?

In early 2005, I did a seminar called Landmark Education. Part of the program for each participant was to create a small community-based project and mine was to give 50 bikes to people in need of transportation. Soon after I realised that it wouldn't end with that.

The DVD focuses Tanzania, are there similar projects being rolled out elsewhere?

We've given grants to over 80 projects in 20 different countries around the world, Tanzania was just one projects.

In the way that you're using them, bikes are a powerful symbol for freedom and empowerment - has riding liberated you in any sense?

Bikes have liberated me in every possible way... they are my life. If it wasn't for bikes, I would probably have an ordinary job somewhere back in Germany. Bikes are not only my love and passion, but also my job and my key to travelling and living my dreams. Of course bikes have a very different meaning in developing countries – but they're just as life-changing... often a thousand-fold more so.

Some big companies and big names within the industry have jumped on board – why do you think this charity has struck such a chord?

I think bikes have been good to all of us and everybody has some great memories connected

to bikes, it reminds us how fortunate we are. I think people are also inspired by the way we work without middlemen – we are small, with virtually no overheads and we try to be effective. It's all about giving something back and feeling good about it.

Who else would you like to get involved?

I like to see the big charities of the world realise and understand how important bicycles are in the developing countries. As important as it is to provide food and medicine, if you give a person a bike they will have a chance to provide these things for themselves. Having a bike can mean access to healthcare or education, or it might provide a way to make a living, enabling them to transport goods to the market or to get to work. There are literally millions of people who could greatly benefit from a bicycle.

What can us mere mortals do to help?

We don't deal with used bikes, preferring to buy bikes in the countries where we give them away, but cash donations are gratefully received. Alternatively people can throw a fundraiser – no occasion or event is too small for us – or help us spread the word through a link on a website.

Who are you aiming the DVD at?

Anybody who wants to see what we do, how we do it and why we do it. Hopefully the film will inspire others to lend a hand or encourage other charities to distribute bikes as well.

When you visit developing countries and show people your skills on a bike, what kind of reception do you typically get?

It's a real icebreaker and it opens doors and leads to smiles. Everyone can relate to a bike, but often they have never seen somebody use in such a way.

What's the most innovative bush repair job you've seen yet during a return trip to a country where you've donated bikes?

I've seen bike parts like pedals, racks or bars that have been replaced by wooden sticks, rubber pieces wrapped around tyres and rims to fix a sliced tyre and tyres stuffed with grass. I've also seen homemade wooden pushbikes, with solid wooden wheels.

All money raised through DVD sales goes to the charity. Order the DVD from the website: wheels4life.org

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REVISITING THE

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