

BY  
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# THE PERFORMERS TAKE TWO

Bleached dreadlocks and pierced eyebrows have replaced red bandanas and long hair, but K2's new generation of Performers shares the same passion as the original group that set the ski world on fire 25 years ago.

In January 1971, five hot young skiers and a filmmaker piled into a motor home and began an adventure that would inspire a generation and forever change skiing in America. The resulting movie by Dick Barrymore, *The Performers*, traced the tracks of the K2 Demonstration Team—Pat Bauman, John Clendenin, Bob Griswold, Charlie McWilliams and Jim Stelling—as they covered 15,000 miles and two dozen ski resorts in three months. Along the way, the spirit of freestyle skiing was born and thousands of ski bums were spawned.

"That movie has ruined the lives of more people—or straightened them out, depending on how you look at it," says Clendenin, now 49 and an instructor in Aspen, Colo. "People still come up to me and say, 'I was in law school, but then I saw that film and I moved to a ski resort to be a ski bum.'"

I was living in Vail, Colo., in the early Eighties when I saw *The Performers* for the first time. As I watched Clendenin and his buddies float through bottomless powder at Snowbird, Utah, and bang the bumps at Aspen, my passion

for skiing was reaffirmed. And in subsequent years, every time I saw the movie in a ski town bar or hotel room, I felt the magic again.

Last spring, K2 celebrated the 25th anniversary of *The Performers* by putting together another group of radical young skiers and sending them out on the road. This tour would only cover five Western resorts in three weeks, culminating in Sun Valley, Idaho, where the New Performers would meet with the five originals. Could it—and the subsequent new film—have an impact? Could these New Performers invigorate a new generation of teenagers and twentysomethings that have defected to snowboarding? Could they show kids that it's still cool to ski? Or, if nothing else, could they at least have a blast trying?

**A**près-ski is in full swing on an early April afternoon at Snowbird, Utah. The massive hot tub and pool on the Cliff Lodge rooftop deck are packed with partiers, drinking and bragging about how well they skied that day. Suddenly, Kent Kreitler appears on the deck. The sun reflects off his bleached-white hair, which he wears in short dreadlocks.

Without warning, Kreitler sprints toward the pool and dives in headfirst, grabbing both feet behind him with his hands in what's known as a Flying Squirrel. Only Kreitler has

THE ORIGINALS







**Kent Kreidler abandons the "Flying Squirrel" and opts here to use the skyrocket technique for better trajectory.**

misjudged the depth of the pool. Badly. He smacks his head against the pool's bottom and when he surfaces, blood is pouring down his face from a gash above his left eye. But for 25-year-old Kreidler, who recently finished second in the World Extreme Ski Championships in Alaska, it's all part of the fun. Six stitches later he's as good as new.

Kreidler is one of the New Performers, whose personalities are as fiercely individual as their skiing styles:

Darian Boyle, 28, is a stunning 5-foot-10-inch blonde model from New York City via Vermont, Aspen and Squaw Valley, Calif. Boyle, though she calls herself the "token chick" on the trip, also throws huge air and skis bumps like the pro mogul skier she used to be.

Kreidler is a former racer from Sun Valley, Idaho, who trained with the likes of Picabo Street but "used to straddle the last gate on purpose on powder days so I could free ski." He now lives near Squaw Valley, when he's not ski modeling, appearing in ski films or diving into shallow pools.

Jason Moore, 27, is a long-haired Californian from Mammoth, Calif., who has skied out from the shadow of buddy Glen Plake to be a film star in his own right. Whether he's surfing the waves near his native Santa Barbara or skiing the frozen kind, Moore is always silky smooth and in control.

Jimbo Morgan, 32, is a sometimes-outrageous speed skier from Tahoe City, Calif.

On his back, he sports a huge tattoo of the Olympic rings in honor of the Albertville games, where his speed of

139 mph made him the 10th fastest skier ever. Morgan is clearly the ringleader of the New Performers.

Seth Morrison is a 23-year-old who spent his childhood racing in Vail, but discovered his calling as a free skier, finishing runner-up three times in the U.S. Extreme Ski Championships and starring in a half-dozen ski films. His hair color of choice at the moment is purple and his eyebrow is pierced with a large ring.

"People think we're snowboarders because of the way we look," Morrison tells me the next morning at breakfast. But we're skiers first and we're trying to tell the kids that it's OK to ski."

Filmmaker Steve Winter hasn't scheduled any shooting today at Snowbird, so several of the New Performers take the day off to nurse various ailments. After breakfast, I head up the tram with Morgan and Boyle, who have remained injury-free in the pool and on the hill.

We spend the day making high-speed runs, and up to a half-dozen skiers join our express train at different times. We wear huge grins as we follow Morgan's and Boyle's tracks down 3,100 vertical feet of snowy playground.

Morgan makes new friends on every run, even trades a pair of sunglasses to a local cook for a sushi dinner later that night. Nothing's organized, nothing's formal. But the infectious spirit of the New Performers fills the tram and spills down the mountain, as people watch and join in.





"The original Performers movie brought freedom of expression to skiing," says filmmaker Dick Barrymore, who considers *The Performers* his favorite of the nearly 100 ski films he made. "It helped end the regimentation of European-type skiing and racing. There was so much excitement in the way the Performers skied—going straight down the fall line, sucking up the bumps, and throwing big air."

The next day we're supposed to leave early for Sun Valley, but we're all moving a little slowly thanks to the two bottles of Jack Daniels we polished off last night in Kreitler's hotel room, before heading off to really party.

We finally board the New Performers' antiquated yellow school bus at about noon. The puke-green interior seems especially appropriate today. Six seats, a few benches, one crude table and a futon mattress serve as furniture.

As we roll north on Highway 15 with a boom box blasting punk rock, a routine settles in. Kreitler and Morgan play cards with filmmaker Winter. Morrison and Moore read magazines. Boyle curls up on the futon and uses her bright orange ski jacket as a pillow. Matt the Bus Driver drives.

"When we started about 10 days ago at the K2 factory in Seattle, I made Matt watch the original Performers movie," says Morgan. "That movie affected the lives of so many people—I know I must have watched it 50 times growing up. I wanted Matt to have some historical perspective of what we're doing."

The highlight of the trip so far, everyone agrees, was a day at Jackson Hole, Wyo., skiing with a dozen kids, ages 8 to 13, from the local ski team.

"We were supposed to make one run with them, but we wound up spending the whole day," says Boyle. "They had so much energy and they showed us all their secret jumps on the mountain. It was cool to see kids psyched about skiing. One little girl kept grabbing my leg and hugging me."

Kreitler and Morgan also gave two of the boys some beauty tips—first bleaching and then dyeing their hair blue. The kids loved their new look and even their parents didn't mind too much. "We saw a bunch of parents the next day," says Kreitler, "and they said the kids had called everyone they knew to tell them they had skied with us."

"We were quite a sensation in 1971," remembers Charlie McWilliams. "We'd pull into a ski area parking lot in our

motor home with the huge 'K2' on the side, and everyone wanted to ski with us and be a part of our group."

After six hours on the road, we pull up in front of the historic, slightly stuffy Sun Valley Lodge. The sleepy-eyed New Performers straggle off the bus. With their funky haircuts, pierced body parts and hip clothing, they look more like a rock band than world-class skiers. It's ironic that we're staying at such a traditional bastion of elitism—the same elitism that some Performers think is killing skiing. "This sport has been marketed only to the rich and elite for too long," says Moore.

His point is illustrated the next day in the lifeline at the Warm Springs base area. The couple in front of us, in their 50s and wearing matching one-piece ski suits, are demoing the new K2 Four skis. "How do you like those Fours?" asks Morgan, politely. "We don't," replies the woman icily, giving Morgan the once over.

"Maybe you should try the K2 Three—it's a little softer," Morgan offers helpfully. "I don't think so," the woman says, and turns away. Considering Morgan's mainstream look of the moment, with no visible tattoos or pierced body parts, her reaction is surprising, though the chilly exclusivity is a far too common part of the sport. "That's what I hate about skiing sometimes—the snobs like that," Morgan tells me on the lift. "I'm just trying to be friendly and courteous, and turn people on to skiing."

The New Performers may be disdainful of skiing's elite, but they embrace the sport's traditions, especially the spirit shown by the original Performers. Each New Performer



**Back on the not-so-magic bus, the road warriors slip into their routine.**

watched the original film dozens of times while growing up. Kreitler even had one of the original Performers, Pat Bauman, as his junior racing coach in Sun Valley. "I have so much respect for the Performers film and for that era in skiing," says Kreitler. "It was such a cool, rowdy scene."

"We had a wet T-shirt contest in Aspen's Red Onion in March of 1971 and it was unbelievable," remembers Barrymore. "There were hundreds of people in the street trying to get in. I had to call the Red Onion manager from a pay phone and he led me through a side door so I could get in."

Word has spread quickly that the New Performers are hosting their own wet T-shirt contest tonight at The Beach, a popular Sun Valley bar and restaurant decorated



with surfboards. By 10 pm, the place is jammed with tourists and locals. Kreitler, who has quickly earned a reputation as the charmer in the group, has been buying shots for potential contestants.

Morgan hosts the festivities. The other New Performers, including Boyle, are celebrity judges and they stand on chairs, holding scorecards, numbered 1 to 10, above their heads. I immediately discover why Morgan volunteered to be host—he gets to pour water on the chests of the eight young women who are wearing K2 T-shirts. This shows off the, uh, T-shirts better. In the end, one woman bares her breasts to the cheers of the crowd and takes home a new pair of skis.

Next morning, we're up early. It's a big day. Today the New Performers will ski with the original Performers. Several of the New Performers admit to being nervous. "These guys are like my idols," says Morgan, himself an Olympic athlete.

We meet the original Performers at the summit—Bauman, Griswold, McWilliams and Stelling, who all live at least part-time in Sun Valley. Clendenin was unable to make the trip from his home in Colorado. The meeting is awkward at first. These 50-year-old guys are old enough to be the New Performers' fathers. But once they start talking—and especially when they ski—the years that separate the two generations are stripped away.

"We had all kinds of problems in 1971 with our motor home," remembers Bauman. "Nothing changes," replies Morgan, thinking of the antiquated school bus. Then Griswold mentions something about how the guys used to smoke pot in the back of the motor home. "Nothing changes," says Morgan again, and everyone laughs.

Now it's showtime. Filmmaker Winter has set up his

camera on a ridge below. "Age before beauty," says McWilliams, and then leads the nine skiers—the Originals before the New—in big swooping turns toward Winter's camera. Except for their hair, the Performers have lost nothing in 25 years, and their impact on the New Performers is similarly preserved. "These guys can still rip," Moore and Boyle agree excitedly on the lift ride to the top. They ski with the same confidence and power, and their technique is so unchanged that the New Performers, who had just followed them downhill at full-tilt, recognize their individual styles from the original movie.

For the next run, Winter crouches below a 10-foot cornice with his super-slow-motion camera. One by one, the New Performers soar off the lip, landing maybe 30 feet down the slope. When it's McWilliams' turn, he launches off the cornice, catches big air, and lands 50 feet down the hill. The New Performers know they've been out-performed by a master, and they cheer loudly for McWilliams.

It's a sweet moment. The New Performers have been indelibly inspired by the energy and enthusiasm of 52-year-old McWilliams—the same way they had inspired those little kids at Jackson Hole. I think in particular of the little girl who had clung to Boyle so gratefully. And I know that for the New Performers, their applause for McWilliams is like a great big bear hug.

*To order the Performers Now video, which includes the 1971 Performers movie, call (800) 769-4013. Cost: \$14.95.*

*At 34, Reade Bailey considers himself to be Middle School, just between the New Performers and the Originals.*



## THE 1971 PERFORMERS: WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Whatever happened to "five of the wildest, zaniest guys to ever come out of Sun Valley"?

Pat Bauman, 52, spent the last 25 years coaching the Sun Valley Ski Team. He still lives in Sun Valley where he runs a landscaping business full-time.

John Clendenin, 49, won two world freestyle championships in the mid-Seventies. He teaches skiing on indoor decks and on snow at Aspen.

Bob Griswold, 50, has worked in the restaurant and commercial fishing businesses. He recently moved to Seattle, but lives part-time in Sun Valley and teaches private ski lessons.

Charlie McWilliams, 52, worked for several ski industry companies, then started the contracting business that he runs in Sun Valley.

Jim Stelling, 51, made about 20 more films with Dick Barrymore and competed in freestyle during the Seventies. Stelling operates his own house painting business in Sun Valley.

Filmmaker Dick Barrymore, who made nearly 100 ski films during a 30-year career, moved to Mexico in 1987, where he does real estate development. The 63-year-old's autobiography, *Breaking Even*, is scheduled to be published this spring. —R.B.