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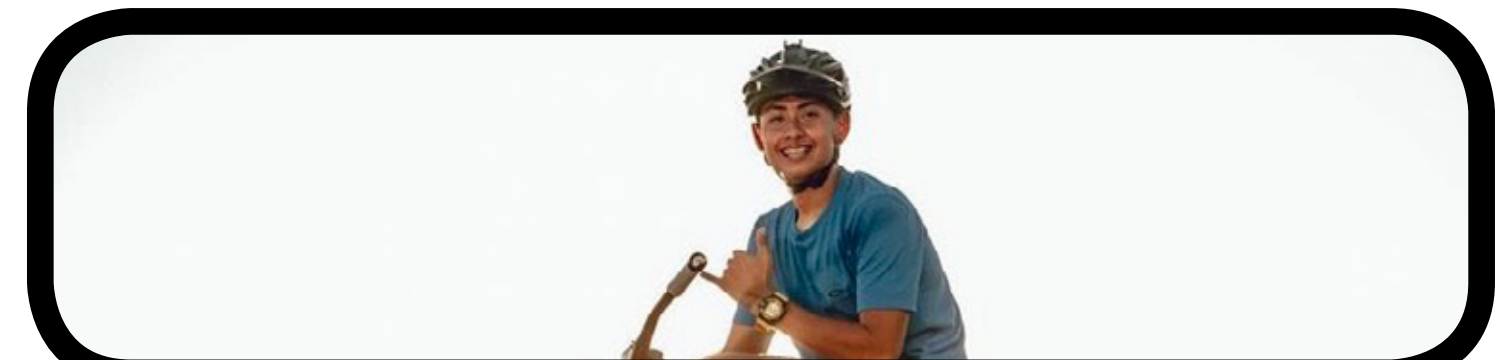
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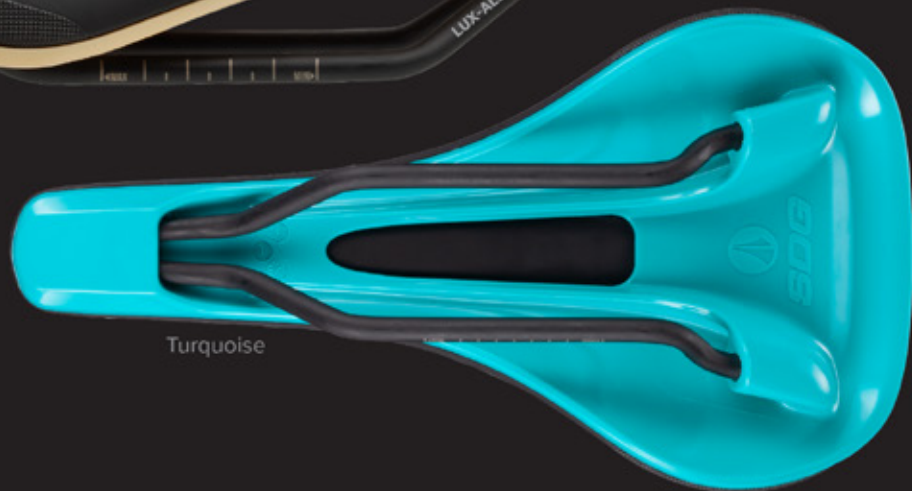
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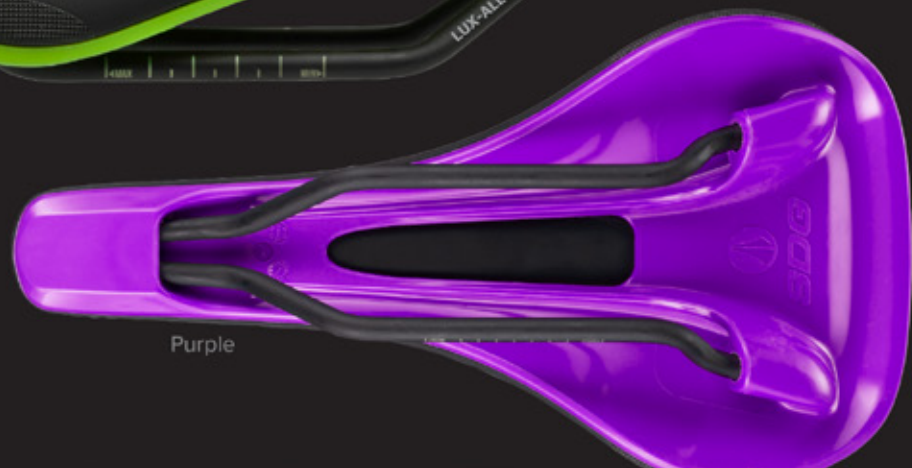
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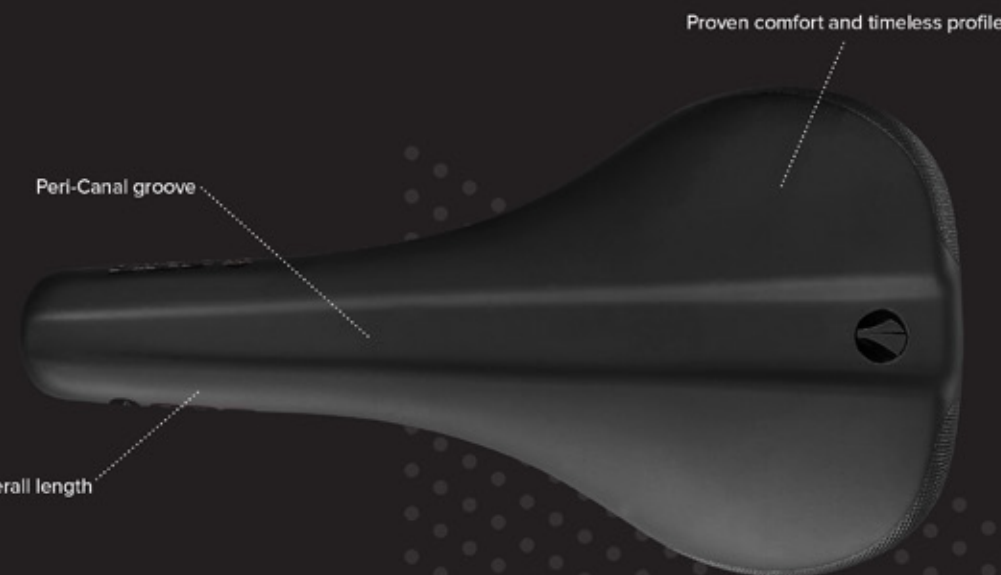


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Summer in Zaskar

PHOTOS SHEKHOO RAJA

WORDS MESUM VERMA

If you browse through Instagram you can see that still some people travel, mostly in their own country, which is probably a bit easier than travelling internationally.

It's good to see riders still going for rides. Vikas Aanand got my attention seeing his picture riding in front of the Mt. Gonbo Rangjon. As I'd been there in 2008, first with a Redbull athlete (read here & here) and a year later with „normal“ mountain bikers, I was curious how things are now, with a road and a decade later (read here). We will talk about his summer on the bike, riding in the Zaskar Valley and out from Padum to Kargil (we did the trails from Padum over Lingshed to Lamayuru).

གངས་ཅན་ལྗེས་
سلسلہ کوہ ہمالیہ

Zaskar Valley; in front of Gumburanjon



After Darsha towards Shingo La pass (Shinku La)



Hi Vikas! Could you introduce yourself to us? Where are you from? What's your age, where do you live and what you are doing for a living?

Hello. I am Vikas Aanand and I've been working in adventure tourism since 2012. I started working as an office boy in an adventure company in Manali. In 2015 I started going outdoors on motorcycle tours, doing all the paper- and ground-work to organise bicycle,

motorcycle and trekking tours in the Indian Himalayas and Rajasthan. Basically I'm from Lahaul & Spiti district but settled in Manali. And I'm 31 years old. I live in Manali and sometimes in my orchard, which is 20km from Manali. Currently I'm working with an Adventure Company www.omghimalaya.com specializing in inbound and outbound adventure tours.

Soon we are at the top of Shingo La pass (5091 m.a.s.l.)



When and how did you get infected with riding a mountain bike? Beside mountain biking, do you do any other sports? If you are not on tour, how often do you ride your bike per week?

All the time I'm working on itineraries for cycling tours in the Indian Himalayas and Rajasthan. In the year 2016 I bought my first MTB which is Merida matt 6•15.

Beside mountain biking, I work as a motorcycle tour escort in the Himalayas. I did a trip in Indonesia to East Java in 2019. I play billiards and badminton. We ride almost every day. Every day around 40km / 1 to 2 hours. I use my MTB for my daily commute.



Downhill into the Zanskar Valley

How did you get the idea to do the Zanskar Valley with the mtb? Can you tell us how you prepared for doing such an immense tour in the Indian Himalayas? Where did you start the journey and where was the finish line? How long you were in the saddle?

Last year (2020) we were in lockdown. We tried to reach the top of Shinkula in the month of October. It was so tough and cold to reach there, but the view was awesome. I

went a little bit to the upside towards Zanskar and had a great view towards Zanskar, so I decided to do this in the summer.

So just before starting to Zanskar we rode every day to make ourself comfortable with our ride. I studied lots of bike packing stuff on YouTube and Instagram and chose the best gear for this trip. I was clear to take only important and necessary things on this trip.





Zaskar Valley

We started our ride from Keylong and finished at Kargil. I was six days on the saddle. We did two back-to-back 100km-plus rides from 1. Padum to Rangdum, and 2. Rangdum to Kargil.

What did you carry on your bike? How heavy was your bike in total with all the luggage on it? How was the fire road to ride? Did you always follow the road or did you sometimes also ride on the hiking path?

On my bike:

1. Front saddle contains: 01 tent/ 01 Mattress, 1 pair of warm clothes. Water bottle at handle.
2. Back saddle contains: 01 sleeping bag, few t-shirts, socks, gloves. And GoPro equipment.
3. Frame bag contains: air pump, 1 spare tube, Chain lube, nutrition packets, toiletries.

I think weight is not more then 25kg. After Shinkula it's all offroad till Padum. After





The first village in the Zaskar Valley; Kargyak



Shinkula I did some trail riding till Lakhang. And every time I see a trail I can't stop myself... It's better to go on trails rather than riding on the road. We did some hiking around Lakhang to Kargyak due to heavy flooding in the river... We took an old trekking path.

What was the most difficult part on this journey? Where you did sleep overnight? Where did you get your food?

Crossing Panzilla pass in one shot is little bit difficult.

We slept near villages sometimes. And sometimes in home stays which cost no more than 600Rs. Including breakfast. There are small dhabhas on the road. We could eat at a place and pack some for further meals. Since the road is open to Shinkula you will find small shops after a few km.



Phuktal Gumpa



Did you face problems with the bike, or could it take the beating in these harsh conditions? Did you have many punctures? How many spare gears for the bike did you take with you? And which ones were really important?

I had no problem with my Trek X Caliber 8.

I got ZERO punctures in this trip.

I took no spare parts with me.. Just air pump, spare tube and chain lube. Chain lube is the really important spare thing you must carry with yourself.



Camp at Purney

Can you tell us, what was the best part of this tour? Tell us, what should be not missed. Would you change anything for the next tour?

Going down from Panzila to Kargil is the best part. Actually this whole ride was a best one. Don't miss visiting Phuktal Gumpa, Zanskar and Sani village in Padum.

If your bike has air shocks, it's better to

carry an air pump which can also be used for shocks.

My shocks went down to 0 after crossing Panzi La. I think due to altitude changing.

Any plans for another tour in the Indian Himalayas with the bike? If you could just go and not care about the travel restrictions and money, where you would like to ride your bike?





Down to Kargil

The Plan is to ride Winter Spiti once again in Feb/March. Or Thorangla Pass or Anpurna circuit. And the northeast of India.

Just thinking about doing Pin Parveti trek on MTB from Spiti to Tsomoriri leh.

I hope I'll get to do some real MTB fun and long rides in Nepal and Indonesia. But first India.

Thank you very much and cheers!!!! I just want to make people biking around their place.

FTW Forever Two Wheels. (I still don't know how to drive a car!)





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LONG LIVE CHAINSAW

THE LIFE AND LEGACY
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Red Bull Media House and Anthill Films release new documentary, Long Live Chainsaw, for digital download. The film reveals the true story of the meteoric rise, untimely death and long-lasting legacy of Canadian downhill mountain bike legend, Stevie Smith. Produced in partnership with the Stevie Smith Legacy Foundation, all proceeds of the film will go directly to the foundation to help grow Stevie's legacy of inspiring the next generation of riders.

The first feature-length documentary from Anthill Films, Long Live Chainsaw was produced throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and only made possible by a global, collaborative effort from Stevie's family, friends, fellow athletes, brands, filmmakers and photographers. We are so thankful to have the opportunity to work with so many talented people to help share Stevie's story with the world.

Long Live Chainsaw is now available for digital download on iTunes, Apple TV, Vimeo on Demand, GooglePlay, Amazon, Xbox Movie or Vudu:

“I’m at a loss for words....for me, this is the greatest tribute possible! I think that telling Steve’s story will be inspiring to a lot of the young riders out there. It will show them that you just never know...if a kid from Cassidy can do it, anything is possible!”

- Tianna Smith, mom.





“Stevie was a pioneer of Canadian gravity racing and a massive inspiration for many of our athletes. We are really excited for the release of this project with Anthill Films to further share the impact that Stevie is still having.”

- Gabe Fox, Stevie Smith
Legacy Foundation Board
Member.

Not a day goes by that this man doesn't cross my mind, wondering what he's up to up there but just wishing he was here with us... I'm overly excited that Anthill Films have brought to life a documentary about the life and legacy of Stevie and the impact he had on Canadian MTB and the world. We love you Stevie."

- Brook Macdonald, friend and pro rider.





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PHOTOS **CARL STEVEN REYS & OTHERS**

A Cup of Coffee with Jerich and Eboy

It is surprising how much you can learn about mountain biking in the Philippines with a little research - about different riders, trails, bike parks and of course riding clips. This is all the more astonishing when you consider how little we in western countries know about MTB in this region.

WORDS **AURELIUS SATLOW**



After having a cup of coffee in one of the last issues with Ariana Dormitorio, the female XCO-rider from the Philippines, I thought it's time for a male rider! So I found Jerich Farr, a shining star on the Philippines downhill racing scene! First, during my research, I came across Frederick Farr aka Eboy, who rides DH, Enduro, XCO, as well as dirt jump, BMX and Motocross, and you can see him out in various places in the Philippines. This caught my attention and I contacted him. In the conversation it turned out that he is the trainer for the Mountain Biking National Team of the Philippines and responsible for the downhill discipline there. From him I got in touch with other interesting riders, one of whom, Jerich Farr, I will introduce here today.

„The apple doesn't fall far from the tree, after all.“ Many know the saying, which proves true in the case of Frederick and Jerich Farr: Jerich, 25 years old, is the son of Frederick, who is 50. Jerich was born and raised in Manila. His earliest memory of riding a bike





goes back to when he was 4 years old. „I can't remember, but my dad taught me riding. And as a child I loved jumping from humps and riding around in the streets with my friends." But it wasn't always like that: "When I was a young kid I was often on my computer and playing games." Here his father goes on telling the story, how desperate he was about the situation: "I tried to hook him, but it wasn't easy, since he was the youngest in the group of elder brothers." Just telling his son to go out and ride his bike wasn't working – as kids often don't want to do what parents say. Then Frederick came up with a new idea: "I couldn't stand always seeing him on his computer, his body getting fat. So, I offered to buy him lunch from McDonalds, but under the condition he has to ride there by bike." Basically, this was the turning point, when Jerich started discovering riding for himself. At the beginning, Jerich had no bike of his own, and rode around on his father's Specialized Stumpjumper. Soon his father started to train him. Later Jerich got his first DH bike, the old one of his father. It

was around 2008 when he participated in his first races. Jerich started in the amateur class when he was 11, and the other riders were all around 25 years old, since there were no other kids. Competing against adult riders didn't make him nervous: "First, I was afraid, but my dad told if anyone has to be afraid it was my opponents, because if they were gonna to get beat by a kid, that would be another story and that actually motivated me." Jerich even succeeded in ending up in the top 10.

After the years of riding as a hobby, downhill became Jerich's profession: "School is important as well, but to be honest, I wasn't really a good student; my mind was always on racing, and riding the bike. And after graduating high school, my dad asked me whether I wanted to continue studying or race full-time. I decided for racing, that's what I'm better in and my job is very cool!". Jerich's father Frederick was the trainer of the Philippines national team already from 2005 to 2008. Jerich joined the National Team in





2014. And to this day, every year he has been able to defend his position there. His father came back as coach to the National Team in 2018. But is having dad as coach good or not? Jerich explains: "Either way is good; it's actually good since we can share our passion and good moments." and he adds: "He is like the foundation of everything; he is my first sponsor."

Jerich's biggest successes are the National Champions in 2017 and 2018, the Gold medal in the men's elite class during the 2019 South East Asian Games, and just recently, Gold Medalist in the 2021 Philippines National Downhill Trials, where he proved to be good enough to stay in the National Team. Besides downhill, he has twice qualified for the Red Bull pump track competition - 2019 in Switzerland, and 2018 in the USA. He found that "to be a super interesting experience, a whole lot different from DH". Jerich admits, he isn't used to riding pump track. Although they have one near his home, it's not as technical as the professional pump tracks

abroad. So, in the end in Switzerland he didn't qualify for the finals.

The next races that Jerich is preparing for, are the South East Asian games in 2022 Vietnam, which has been postponed this year. S, at moment, Jerich concentrates on his daily training, 6 days a week, containing riding and gym sessions for strengthening. For the gym sessions, all the 33 athletes of the national team, scattered around the Philippines, get instructions and explanations from the gym trainer using zoom, due to the ongoing pandemic. At least once a year his father organizes a training camp, where the other National Team downhill riders from the Philippines come and train together. This is Lea Denise Belgira , who won the Gold Medal at the 30th South East Asian Games 2019 and Eleazar Barba jr. who took silver at the same race. Besides riding MTB, Jerich has ridden Motocross since his childhood. It is totally different, but the MX training definitely helps him he says, especially for getting used to long distance jumps.





For downhill training sessions, Jerich and his father drive to the mountains south of Manila. There are 3 downhill tracks built by local riders. So, there is no lift of course, but they found a special way to get on the mountain: hiring motor bikes to get uplift on the top. The tracks there are quite earthy, have berms and twisted turns, super steep sections and a few jumps at the end. "Overall it's a really fun track" Jerich states. He's been familiar with these tracks since his childhood, and he shreds them down in about 3 minutes. Still, Frederick puts a critique on the concept of trail building in the Philippines: for lots of professional riders, most of the tracks aren't really suitable. Trail designers should not only consider beginner riders, and build so that professionals can also improve their riding. It is not very difficult to do mountain biking in the Philippines, as long as one takes the way into rural and mountainous area. Within a 5 to 6 hour car drive from Manila, one can find beautiful trails. There are several ongoing projects for mountain bike tracks or small bike parks, for example the "Bonggabon

Bike Park” north of Manila. Some riders even have built their own tracks in their backyards; local people in the countryside are pretty generous about letting riders use parts of their land.

However Jerich still dreams of riding again in the bike parks in Switzerland, where he and his dad were during the Red Bull pump track race in 2019. If Jerich had to choose between a fast steep downhill track and a well shaped line with big jumps he would definitely like the jumps more, he says. For Jerich it's hard to explain what he likes most about mountain biking, “but for sure the adrenaline rush, when we're having fun, but also when getting to new different places and enjoying incredible views; mtb has taken us to different places around the world; also in the Philippines.” After races the local riders often invite Jerich and his father to ride at their local trails and places, where the two sometimes teach the locals how to ride a mountain bike properly.





An amateur hobby rider is always keen on mountain biking. I wondered how it is for a professional rider, whose duty is to ride and practice as much as possible. Frederick told me how they deal with that: "In the National Team we focus on racing; so we also face the problem of getting burned out when always riding downhill; so we do dirt jumps to get new stamina and interest in riding on the dh again; also we enhance our skills for jumping; and also riding motocross is good." Jerich's worst experience was a crash when he wanted to be the first to jump a fresh-built huge double jump. He overshot and, even worse, nose-dived and broke his wrist. The doctor told him he couldn't ride for 3 months; but Jerich couldn't bear seeing his other friends riding new bikes in new places, so he convinced the doctor to take out the pins after only 2 months.

Jerich's big idol is Sam Hill. When Jerich was a kid he always watched videos of his hero and that was a motivation. Jerich describes Hill's riding style as "really smooth, up until now

it's really good, I try to copy his style; and he uses flat pedals till now." I wanted to know whether Jerich dreams of winning a world cup one day and his answer was almost too factual and honest: "Really difficult, we riders on the Philippines are way behind; just racing at a world cup would be a dream to come true." His father Eboy adds: "We want to take it step by step; we focus on countries; games, then Asian Games, after that maybe we focus on more; but for now it's just about getting more experience." And Enduro is becoming more popular on the Philippines. There is a lot of Enduro races now instead of DH, that's why Jerich basically also focuses on Enduro as well; he finds it to be a good cross-training.





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