

MY ARMS ACHE. OVER THE LAST TEN YEARS, THROUGH THE ADVENT OF THE FIRST V-BRAKES AND THEN HYDRAULIC DISC BRAKES, I THOUGHT ARM PUMP HAD BECOME A FADED MEMORY, BUT THREE HOURS OF RIPPING DOWN JUNGLE SINGLETRACK HAD BROUGHT IT BACK. TRUE — I DON'T RIDE AS MUCH AS I USED TO, BUT I STILL SPEND A FAIR AMOUNT OF TIME ON MY BIKE AND I HADN'T FELT THIS BEAT UP SINCE THE MID '90s. MY FAVORITE TYPE OF RIDE IS A LONG,



ROLLING, SWOOPY SINGLETRACK (YOU KNOW THE KIND) AND IN THE LAST FEW YEARS, I'VE HAD THE INCREDIBLE PRIVILEGE OF RIDING A BUNCH OF GOOD ONES. MY PAST FAVORITES HAVE INCLUDED RIDES IN THE CHILCOTIN REGION OF B.C., AND A DESCENT DOWN THE IRAZU VOLCANO IN COSTA RICA. I SAY PAST FAVORITES BECAUSE I HAVE A NEW ONE, AND IT MADE MY ARMS ACHE. IT ALSO PRETTY MUCH TRIED TO KILL KATHY PRUITT, BUT THAT'S A DIFFERENT PART OF THE STORY.

pot holes in paradise

how i learned to
appreshi-love jamaica

by ian hylands, with cam mccauley,
kathy pruitt and katrina strand

I'd been awake since the aroma of freshly roasted coffee had made its way into my head around 8am. Rolling out of my bed, I'd shuffled groggily into the other room for my morning dose and then proceeded to wake the others. Cam McCaul, Kyle Ebbett, Kathy Pruitt, Katrina Strand, Olivier "ogee" Guincetre, and I had spent the night at Whitfield Hall, a 230-year-old home and coffee farm near Blue Mountain. We were accompanied by our friend Andy Giles as well as Marshall and Greg, two guys from Toronto who, like us, loved to ride their bikes. We had come to Jamaica for the Jamaican Fat Tire Festival, four days of riding that culminated with the National "Rambo" Cycling Championships.

Riding Blue Mountain is a true epic, even with a 4x4 shuttle truck you still end up pushing your bike up a significant portion of its eleven miles and 5,000 vertical feet of singletrack. Whitfield Hall is at 4,200 feet and it's pretty close to the end of the road, which meant that we had started riding and pushing our bikes up the trail at 7:30 in the morning. Thanks, Jah, for coffee! Four hours and 3,200 feet later, we had reached the peak of the 7,400-foot mountain.

The previous week had been a blur of laughing and smiling, so much that my face hurt. The people in Jamaica, for the most part, seem to have happiness completely dialed in; I'd noticed that immediately. One of the other things that I'd noticed when we arrived was the condition of the roads. There were pot holes everywhere, and people drove all over the road to avoid them. It was totally not unusual to have someone coming toward you in your lane, only to swerve out of the way at the last second.

After spending a week in paradise, I really hadn't wanted to leave the perfect trails that all seemed to end at beautiful beaches, or all the people we met along the way - everything was incredible. Nothing really mattered anymore; even the potholes seemed mellower. I don't know if they really had anything to do with the overall pace of life, but the pot holes that I'd originally cursed every time we had to drive somewhere really forced everyone to slow down a little. When the great paved road of progress marches into rural Jamaica, I wonder how it will change?

- Ian Hylands

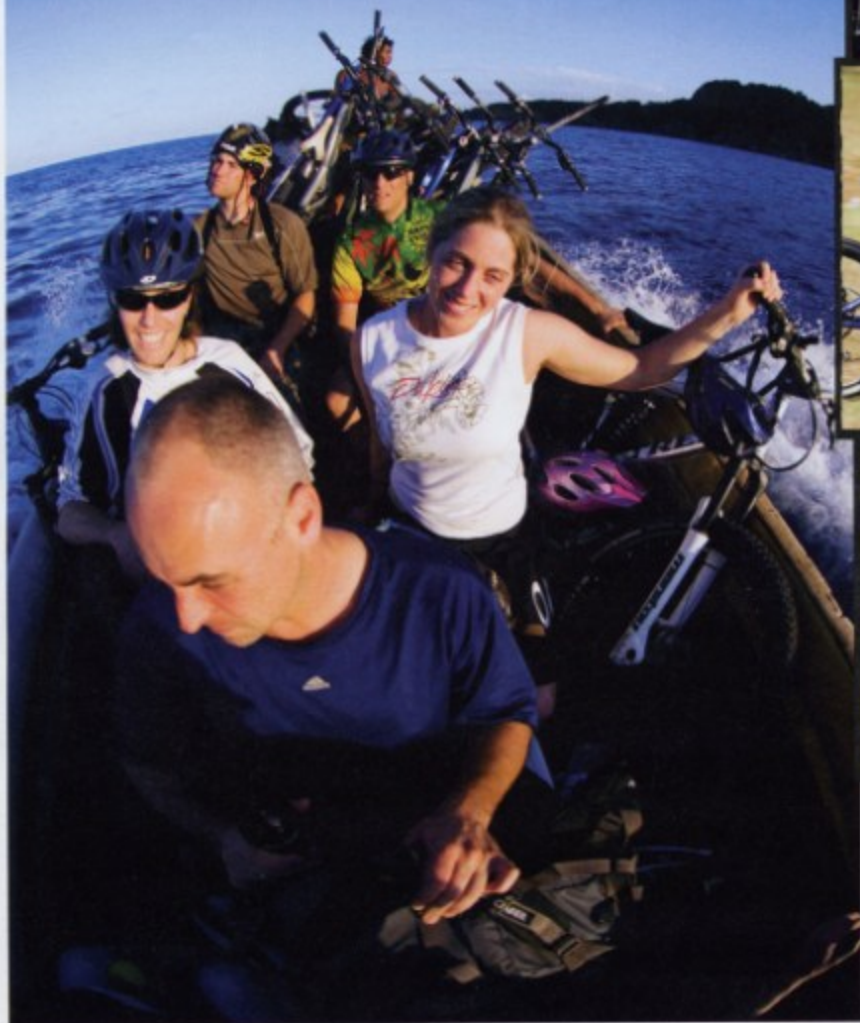
Cam McCaul: Don't Be A Guinea Pig

ON A COUPLE OF OUR RIDES, WE PASSED THROUGH SOME CRAZY RASTA VILLAGES WAY OUT IN THE BOONDOCKS OF THE JAMAICAN JUNGLE. IT WAS PRETTY COOL TO SEE THESE PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN THEIR LITTLE SHACKS WITH NOTHING MORE THAN A DONKEY AND A MACHETE. SINCE THE JUNGLE IS SO LUSH WITH LIFE, IT SEEMS LIKE THAT'S ALL THEY NEED TO SURVIVE ON THEIR OWN. IF THEY'RE THIRSTY, THEY GRAB A COCONUT AND DRINK THE WATER. IF THEY'RE HUNGRY, THEY CAN DROP A LINE IN THE OCEAN AND SNAG A FISH. THEY ALSO HAVE SPECIAL WAYS OF CURING MEDICAL ILLMENTS THAT MAY OCCUR DURING LIFE IN THE JUNGLE. THESE REMEDIES PROBABLY WORK REALLY WELL FOR THEM, BUT ONE DAY, A COURTEOUS RASTA TRIED TO APPLY HIS MEDICAL THEORIES TO THE CUT ON MY LEG AND IT DIDN'T REALLY WORK OUT.

The day I left for Jamaica, just a couple hours before my flight, I slid out in a berm at the jumps and was left with a slight abrasion on my leg. Now, I do this all the time and I never really think much of it, but apparently little cuts are taken very seriously out in the jungle. One day after a ride, a friendly Rasta named Lion spotted the cut on my leg and offered up one of his homemade treatments for abrasions. I figured, "What the heck. The thing is pretty much already healed so what damage could he do." I was just kinda curious to see what he had up his sleeve and if it worked or not. He started out by cutting down a big leaf off of a cactus to get some Aloe goo out of it. That was pretty cool. I know its good to put Aloe goo on stuff, but I usually squeeze it out of a plastic tube. This was the first time I had it squeezed straight from the plant to my wound. It was nice and cool and soothed my scrape, leaving my leg feeling like someone's mouth from an Orbit gum commercial. At this point, I was sold on the fact that Lion knew what he was doing and I was in good paws, but his next move abruptly proved me wrong.

Right when I thought I was done with my Rasta Rx experience, good old Lion showed up with a new plant in hand. He was holding a whole heap of regular looking leaves. I was worried he was going to try to make me eat them, but he started crunching them up in his hands until it mashed into a thick paste. He kneaded through the pile of leaf product until it looked like a thick guacamole, at which point he began to smear the paste all

This captain originally started as a "what-is-Cameron-McCauley-thinking" in the background. But after 30 minutes, we still didn't have anything.



over my leg. My mind was reassuring itself that this was probably an ancient Jamaican secret passed down from generation to generation to miraculously heal superficial wounds. At the same time, I was also remembering that there wasn't really anything wrong with my leg to begin with so I shouldn't have anything to loose. I was wrong.

After a couple minutes of BS-ing with the Rasta's and understanding about 14-percent of the words coming from their mouths (apparently they were all speaking English), I remembered my leg and decided to take a gander at the progress. I was shocked to see that my leg was bleeding from all over and leaking down to my

feet. It looked like I'd just finished kick boxing a table saw.

Lion saw it and said, "Oh, com ear mon. Looks like ya needs sum more medicine." Ahhh, time to go. We thanked everybody for showing us around and respectfully headed toward the truck. Once in the truck, we were all laughing about how jacked up my leg was! It was pretty funny and I wasn't too worried about it.

Back at the hotel, I went in the shower and cleaned my beat up limb only to find that under the blood was a thick weird layer of "who knows what"

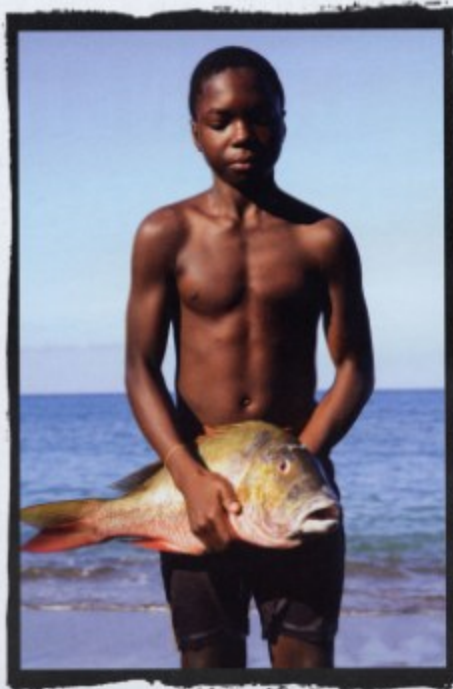
that attached itself to the open skin on my leg. I tried scrubbing it off but it was there to stay. I just accepted the fact that my leg was going to have scabies for the rest of its life and went about my business. Luckily, it all healed up after a few days, and I learned a valuable lesson - don't be a Jamaican witch doctor's guinea pig.

- Cam McCaul

Kathy Pruitt: Just Riding Along

ROCKS AND STONES ARE SLIDING PAST ME, CUTTING UP MY ARMS AND LEGS. MY GRIP AROUND THE TREE TRUNK IS FIRM AND I WAIT UNTIL THE NOSE FROM THE MINI LANDSLIDE STOPS. I HAVE NO IDEA HOW I GOT HERE AND WHY I BLACKED OUT. I AM SO CONFUSED.

I hear Ebbett yell out to me, "Kathy, you okay?"



Mapping the next day's ride...



KP.



Kyle Ebbett, true to his bird heritage: Like a duck to water...



Post-race party at Oracabessa.

with all my strength, bear-hug style, and was swung around. When the momentum stopped, my feet were dangling with nothing but 70 feet of air below.

After my friends pull me back on to the trail, I started to walk but my legs were shaking and my mind was confused. I wanted to get back on my bike to finish this ride. Get me off this mountain!

For the next 30 minutes, I rode the narrow singletrack with no seat or seatpost as mine had broken off when I took that tumble. Some might say that it just wasn't my day, but I, on the other hand, thought it was my lucky day!

I couldn't wrap my mind around what just happened. It was surreal, unbelievable and unforgettable to anyone who saw what happened that afternoon. Was this lush, tropical, beautiful mountain trying to claim me forever?

Driving down the mountain to our hotel,

From where my friends were standing, they couldn't see that I was hanging onto the back of the tree. Only my bike was visible, just off the trail. They thought I was flying to my death.

"I'm okay, help me!" I yelled back to Ebbett.

Katrina, Ian, Cam and Ebbett work together to hoist me back up to the safety of the Blue Mountain trail.

I'd just been "riding along" a singletrack that hugged the mountain, enjoying the new scenery when all of a sudden a rock collided with my helmet and I saw black. There was a cliff, there were rocks and there was a big tree. Survival took over and I grabbed the tree

we stopped to enjoy some cold Red Stripe beer. We all shared stories from the day and had a few laughs. After a few more Red Stripes, the pain in my body started to disappear and the reggae music put a smile back on my face. What a day.

Jamaica wanted me to remember it, and I will. I have a permanent reminder on my right arm to remind me, everyday, of this amazing and intoxicating island.

—Kathy Pruitt

Katrina Strand: Two Wheels, One Love

THE RACE HAD BARELY STARTED AND I WAS ALREADY OUT OF BREATH BY THE FIRST CORNER BECAUSE I WAS LAUGHING SO HARD. I WAS CRYING AND LAUGHING UNCONTROLLABLY — THIS IS THE BEST WAY TO START A RACE! THE LE MANS GONG SHOW — HOW COULD ANYONE START A RACE LIKE THIS WITHOUT CONVULSIVE LAUGHTER? TRIPPING OVER OUR FEET, TRYING TO PUSH EACH OTHER OUT OF THE WAY, WE UNTANGLED BIKES AND OFF WE ALL WENT! THE JAMAICANS CHEERED US ALONG AND WE SMILED AND WAVED IN RETURN.

The Jamaican National Rambo Cycling Championships took place on Hamilton Mountain in St. Mary's — just outside of Ocho Rios. Jonathan and Andy, the organizers, had it dialed, complete with reggae blaring beats and jerk chicken on the BBQ. Besides an XC race and dirt jump show, we were all there to celebrate bikes. Just as the festival mantra says: "Two wheels, One Love."

The Jamaicans were stoked and we were stoked. We spent most of the afternoon letting the kids rip around the field on our bikes while Cam, Kyle and Ogee showcased their skills on the dirt jump they had built the day before. Although the jump quickly rutted up into a sketchy take off, they still managed to pull some flips and tricks to awe the crowd. When it was time to leave, we said goodbye to our new little buddies and jumped on our bikes to descend to the beach.

We arrived at Conscious Corner, a little beach bar that overlooked yet another beautiful Jamaican seaside view.



From Whitefield Hall to the peak of Blue Mountain, you'll cover 3,000 vertical feet of climbing. The singletrack descent you earn: 5,000 feet in 11 miles. It's mostly singletrack and all-the-way worth it. Katrina Strand leads Kathy Pruitt to the payoff.

Good thing this has been the norm here in Jamaica – awesome trails that end at beautiful beaches with crystal clear water. Humid riding makes it mandatory to get into the water immediately after a ride. After some body surfing, we joined the festivities – local Jamaicans brewing a feast of fresh fish and breadfruit, sipping on ice cold Red Stripe and dancing to some wicked reggae. “You don’t appreciate Jamaica, you appreshi-love Jamaica,” I overheard Martin, the owner of the shack, talking to Hylands. Hylands was smiling, nodding and definitely appreshi-loving the scene here at Concious corner. The vibe is addicting.

Is this really happening? I have caught myself saying that several times on this Jamaican adventure. Is it possible to

have this much fun? Apparently it is. Good music, good people and Jamaican flare are the recipe.

We grooved the evening away to end another amazing day in Jamaica.

– *Katrina Strand* 📷



Even dirt jumpers know: It's all about exit speed.



"I Must style start. And the Rumba Cycling & Transportation of Jamaica begin."

