

# SNOWBOARDUK

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**Romain Marti Profile**

**Graylorne: Breaking the Code of Silence**

**X-Box Big Day Out**

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**TAMING THE DARK SIDE: CONQUERING FEAR WITH THE PROS  
WIRED: 3 WALL RIDE TRICKS TO GET YOU FROTHING**

W I N I ! A Y E A R ' S S U B S C R I P T I O N

# Braylorne:

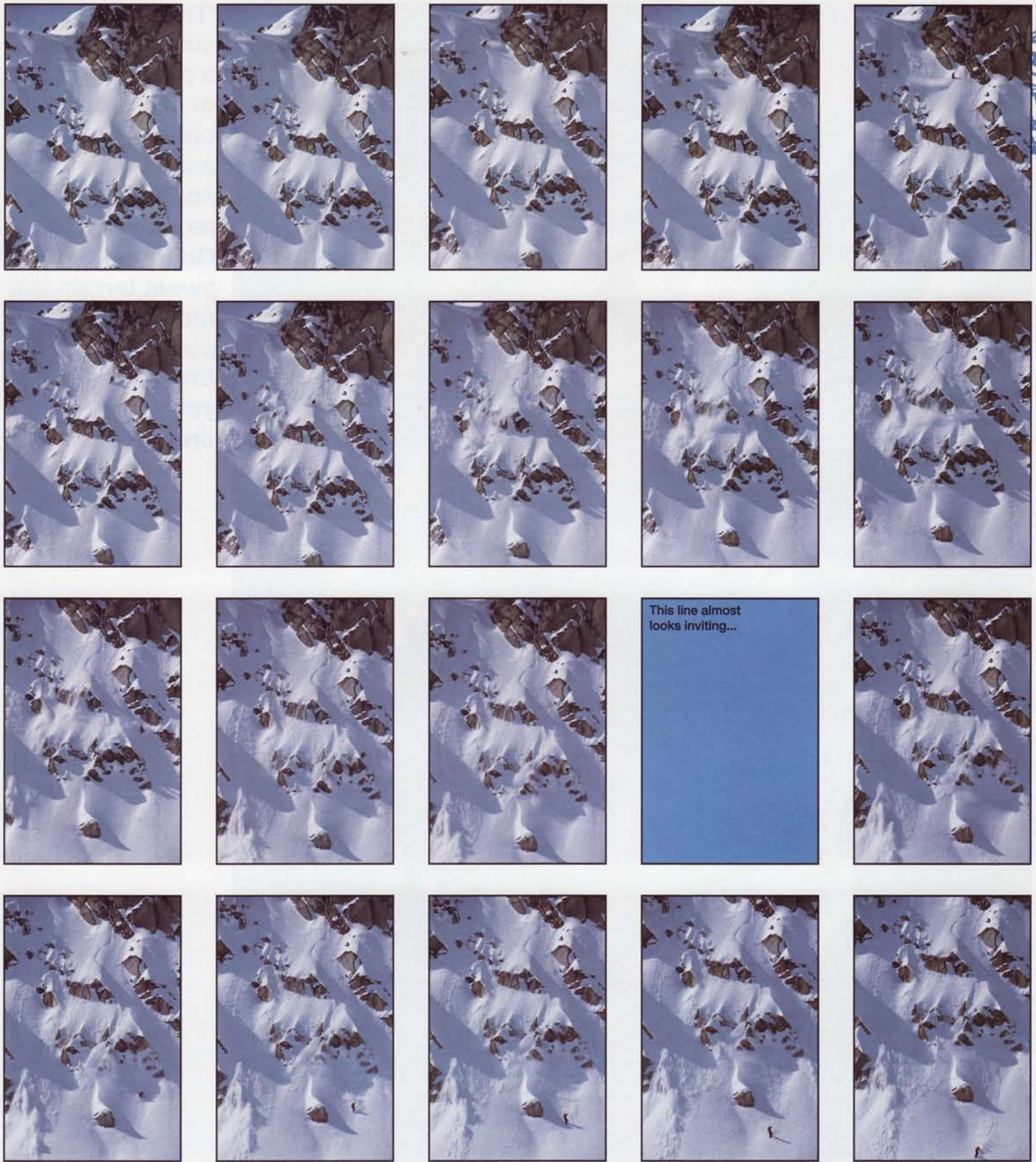
Breaking the code of silence

**A** long, long time ago me and a few friends went out exploring the hills and mountains in BC on snowmobiles, looking for spots to film. Anyway, we somehow stumbled across Bralorne and Gold Bridge. For a whole season my shred bro Orion and I explored all the terrain around and, holy fuck, is it endless! With Whistler being a cross between little Japan and little Quebec, I'm sure people are going to want an alternative to go where they actually feel like they're in British Columbia. I know that I do. The place is sick and make sure you stay in the hotel in Bralorne and get nice and pissed at the bar. Dev and I will thank you for it in our old age." - *Sean Kearns*



Words Natalie Langman  
Photos Jeff Corbett

Pretty amazing view, huh?  
Makes you want to go out and  
nail a line like Alan Clarke's on  
the opposite page, doesn't it?



properly partied in the 'Lorne until you drink at Johan's bar.) In turn, Al and Johan taught Lenny the fundamentals of snowboarding, and in his later years the tradesman has become a backcountry guru. Just imagine Johan Oloffson and Al Clark teaching you to snowboard in your own backyard! The mind boggles. Al, who has just returned from a fishing trip, is stoked to see his old snowboard buddies in town. "Hey guys," he says, "head up to the house and unpack your bags. You can still get a 4:00 pm shred in, the sun sets later than usual in this valley." As it turns out, sled problems prevent the afternoon session - Shin blows his engine on the way up the trail. Johan's

absence proves to be a blessing; while Shin pilfers the necessary parts off the Swede's sled and repairs his own machine, the rest of the crew settles into the bar.

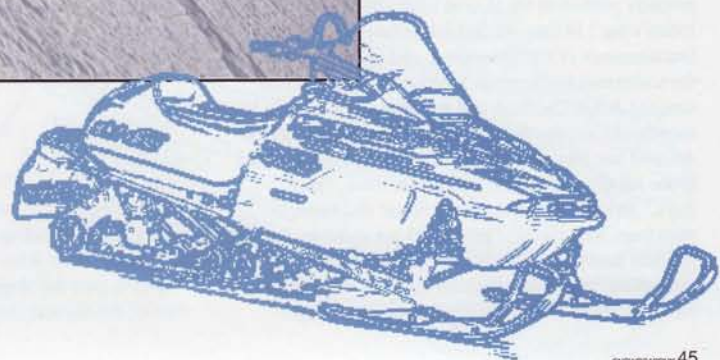
## Booterville

The sun beams the next morning as the crew gears up for a day of riding. Up into the hills they drive, no problems today. After sleds are unloaded, they roop up the trail, past the single-track in the tight trees, up into one of the highest points of the Noel-Birkenhead Range.

Upon reaching the summit, Jon, Shin, Shandy and Mike stand astounded by the spiraling glaciers that shoot straight towards the sky. Beyond these towering crowns of magnitude, to the Northwest of Pemberton and the Southwest of Gold Bridge, the mountains stretch all the way to the Pacific Ocean. The Coastal Mountains move upwards along BC's coast to Alaska. South of the Hurley River, the Sampson Range boasts six mountains that are accessible on the northern aspect, while the Bridge/Lillooet Divide is well known for its massive peaks of Mt. Sloan, Mt. Sampson and Lone Goat. The group is surrounded by a playground of cliff drops, chutes, cornices and knolls, known

Shin Campos busts out a solid frontside three where most people wouldn't even dream of it.

'The group is surrounded by a playground of cliff drops, chutes, cornices and knolls, known locally as Booterville. On top of this sweet terrain is a foot of untracked powder. That's Braylorne for you - a rider's dreamland.'





I'm traveling north through winding switchbacks from the town of Gold Bridge, population 43, or so the sign reads. The day began four hours earlier in Whistler. I drove through Pemberton, over the Duffy, out past Lillooet onto the Bridge River Road. The dusty roads lead me past a wide bend that jets out over the 55 metre high Terzaghi Dam. A stint on Carpenter Lake road releases me just below my destination of Bralorne, BC. Normally, in the middle of winter, a 45-minute snowmobile ride over the Pemberton Hurley logging road would have taken me to this remote shred land. But it's now late in the season and the snowboard scene is winding down from its winter peak. The sun has been out for weeks and the usual Whistler zones are tracked out. When the Callaghan Valley began looking like a pinball machine crossed with a skating rink, it was time to head north. The drive is long, but this trip will be the only way to find powder in the final days of the winter.

## Bralorne Time

My thoughts reflect back to the 30s when Bralorne was in its peak of gold production. Respectful miners like Al Abbott made their way from Lillooett, Seton Portage and Anderson Lake in Model-T Fords. Others came by train from Shalath, enduring a one-week horse pack over the treacherously steep Mission Mountain. It would be quite an experience for those old mining men to see the line-up of monster trucks and sleds charging up the hill today, blowing dust and blasting dope beats. The crew joining me in Bralorne is solid; Shin and Shandy Campos, Mike Wilson and Jon Cartwright. Jeff Corbett comes along to shoot photos, with Rick Johnson and Paul Watt filming for Brainwash Cinema. I check my watch as I pull into the old mining town. Strangely enough, the time is blinking at 4:20 pm - it had stopped working. I have to laugh, realizing I'm now officially on 'Bralorne time'.

There has traditionally been an unspoken code of silence on the subject of Bralorne, but that's not how people here want their town portrayed. They're welcoming filmmakers and photographers to shoot in the region. In the early days, snowboard crews scoured BC in search of 'new' zones no other professional rider had touched. But somehow they overlooked this spot just two hours north of Whistler, with ranges huge enough to resemble the Matterhorn. It's ironic that Bralorne was thriving in the early 1900s, yet on the parallel side of the valley, Whistler wasn't even on the map yet. More than 5000 men were once employed by the Bralorne mines. If any of these miners bragged of Bralorne's riches - gold nuggets the size of a man's fist - more men would come by the dozens. If I now brag of Bralorne's white, snowy gold, will the same thing happen? The possibilities are endless, but if this story upsets anyone, please come to my doorstep and knock on my door. If you're lucky, I'll hand you a drink, give you a bed, or maybe even show you some of the legendary terrain. But I may have already said too much, so this is where I disappear into the floorboards of some old miner's home and the rest of the story unfolds.

Remnants of the gold rush days still cling to every corner of Bralorne's old homes. Still hidden amongst them are remnants of a jail cell, brothel, the old town hall, a hospital, a bank, a renovated

old church, and a closed down ski-hill named Sunshine. To the southeast of Bralorne, Sunshine stands at 7,595 feet within the Cadwallader Range. It was once considered the prime location for ski hill development. On the lower slopes there was a rope tow and lodge (still standing) belonging to the Bralorne Ski Club. Many Scandinavian skiers became local to the area and tales are still told of riding the Bralorne rope tow all day for 50 cents. Unfortunately the majority of the town was torched in a blaze of flames, when the mines shut down, in fear of hippies starting a commune in the valley. 33 years later, it's not hippies but a slew of Whistlerites and mountain people wanting a get-away cabin who've moved in. It's a new era in this land of plenty.

## Johan's House

Shin Campos and a trail of trucks drive to a prominent house that sits upon a terrace of stilts. A couple of snow-skates linger at the staircase. The steps lead to a residence ripe with the history



A fine pair...



"Where did you put the keys, you idiot!"

of two snowboard legends. Snowboards rest on a workbench, an old Superpipe tent sits in the corner, and photos from around the world (including a wall of Craig Kelly memorabilia) hang on the walls. If Scandinavian ski potential was discovered here, then perhaps that explains why Johan Oloffson realized the value of Bralorne and bought this old lawyer's home. Then again, Bralorne not only has gnarly mountains, but also a bar within stumbling distance from Johan's front porch. And just like Sweden, you can ride your snowmobile around town. Knowing that Johan was back home recovering from knee surgery, Shin was in search of the home's other resident, Al Clark. No one has seen much of Al in the past few years, but in that time he and Johan pioneered unmarked routes and dialed numerous first descents throughout the valley. Their names are strong within these mountains. They became part of the volunteer fire department, and Johan traded snowboards to a local tradesman named Lenny for a hand-carved bar made of pine logs. (Needless to say, you haven't



Shin Campos getting a spanking on the pool table.

**'I check my watch as I pull into the old mining town. Strangely enough, the time is blinking at 4:20 pm - it had stopped working. I have to laugh, realizing I'm now officially on 'Bralorne time'.'**



**'In turn, Al and Johan taught Lenny the fundamentals of snowboarding, and in his later years the tradesman has become a backcountry guru. Just imagine Johan Oloffson and Al Clark teaching you to snowboard in your own backyard! The mind boggles.'**



...till he goes and boots it off the cliff at the bottom. Shin Campos having it.

locally as Booterville. On top of this sweet terrain is a foot untracked of powder. That's Bralorne for you - a rider's dreamland. Al, not wanting to waste time in his own backyard, steps up and kills a steep face. It would be the sickest line of the day. He lingers for a little while, then heads home for the day. He's made his mark, proving he can freestyle his way through any given pitch. The rest of the crew hit booters, drop cliffs, and scope out the zone for the next day. The sun is going down and they've put in a solid day of riding. With the Canucks playing that night, the race is on to the Claim Jumper, Bralorne's local bar. This establishment has housed many nights of debauchery and serves up the best deep-fried food north of the border. Standing at the entrance to what some consider a crazy town, it's no wonder the Claim Jumper it is part owned by two snowboard rock stars, Sean Kearns and Devun Walsh. That night, the doors open to reveal to a miner's galleria. It seems the miners like hockey too, and they've just come in from a hard day of work. One elderly gent tells tales of when he came to Bralorne in search of work years before. He figured that since he could play hockey, there would be a good chance of him getting a job at the mines. The two mines in town ended up bidding over him for a better wage rate. Nobody found work unless they could play hockey, in his words, "extremely well." Hence, during those days, Bralorne and Pioneer had two of the best hockey teams in BC, if not Canada.

That day the snowboarders had been standing on top of a 7,000 foot peak while the miners might have traveled some 3,000 feet below sea level. "It's amazing what we take for granted," comments someone as the riders hear Rosie the bartender croon an old tune about "never going down into those mines again."

## The Claim Jumper

The crew awake to another sunny day and head into the hills. It's almost comical not to rush in the morning like they do in Whistler, but then again they're on Bralorne time and the two skiers in the parking lot aren't interested in their lines. They set out to blast apart some north facing rock bands. Shandy, Shin and Jon all make their mark, but it's Mike Wilson who eyes up the day's most intense line - a gnarly chute to cliff drop. Mike hikes up and stands on top of the small cornice. He hollers out to Shin, asking if it's possible. Shin isn't sure - one false move and it'll be all over. Yet something inside of Mike makes him go for it. "Yep, I'm doing it," he yells down. He proceeds to drop in, ride through the chute with three sharp turns, then stomps the cliff with style that Johan himself would have cheered for. Mike earns high fives all around. The day proves successful for everyone. Tricks are dialed and rolls of film are shot. The crew even

makes it back in time for hockey at the Claim Jumper. But they're in for a rip routin' good ol' time tonight - Rockin' Rosie the bartender has brought in a karaoke machine. Rosie is one hot mama, no doubt about it. She runs the town without blinking an eye. She'll close up the bar, fight a fire, open it up again to pour you a fresh jug of draft, and hit the karaoke machine with a full-throated voice. A free pool tournament is being held that night and Shin is taking the house by storm - until Mike Wilson steps up for the second time. Mike's on form, nailing every shot. Shin goes down in flames. Since the loser has to sing karaoke, and doesn't get to pick his own song, Jon and Mike select a real crowd pleaser for Shin to perform. The bar of rednecks, miners and locals howl as he belts out the lyrics to UB40's Red Wine. Shin rocks the bar, eager to step up for an encore.

## Lone Goat

The last day of the trip is spent on Lone Goat. For the majority of winter months you can drive your sled directly there from town, but since the warm spring weather has melted the snow along the road we have to drive through Gold Bridge. The riders stop to pick up lunch at the Gold Bridge Hotel along the way, absorbing history while they wait for their sandwiches to be assembled.



Mike Wilson taking on one of Bralorne's scarier lines...and giving it a jolly good seeing too.

'As for the conditions, I know that if I mention a foot of pow in mid-April no one will believe me. Then again, I also know that what happens in Bralorne stays in Bralorne, so you'll have to experience it yourself to fully understand it.'



Lone Goat is no secret, it's simply the inaccessibility and isolation that keeps people away. Many riders know of the area, and the logbook in the solar-powered visitor's cabin have pages of comments to prove it. Matt Domanski and Sean Kearns are in the book, as are Dave Bastereacha, Eric Smith (rest in peace) and Kurtis Croy from the Adventurescope days. And this isn't the first time Jon and Jeff have been here. The logbook quotes Jon as saying, "Lone Goat was the most fun you could have with your clothes on." Well put, Jon. Lone Goat is sun baked this day and the terrain has turned to soup. The guys are still able to dial in a few lines, but the sloppy conditions give them no reason to explore. But the lines here have amazing potential and talk turns to returning next season for a re-match. On the way out, Mike's sled hits a rock and he breaks a ski. A good combination of MacGyver skills,

zap-straps and a shovel handle create a temporary replacement. Incidentally, the temporary fix breaks on our way out, serving as a reminder that the valley is miles away from mechanical or even medical help.

As I drive out of the valley amidst a storm of dustballs, something catches the corner of my eye. I realize my watch now reads 4:21 pm - the digits finally changed after a stint on Bralorne time. My mind wanders through my memories of the past few days. I know that once I arrive in Whistler, everyone will ask how the conditions were and what went down. What can I say? I saw Mike Wilson tear apart the 'Lorne like he's the next big thing. Al Clark proved his skills had done nothing but sharpen since he drifted from Whistler. Jon was ultra stoked and his riding proved it. The Campos brothers bounced off

every cliff band they could find. The rumour mill ran rampant, hinting at Canadian Idol scouting for Shin's singing talents, somebody filming a Bralorne spin-off to The Trailer Park Boys, and Jeff Corbett abandoning his Whistler lifestyle to move to there full-time. As for the conditions, I know that if I mention a foot of pow in mid-April no one will believe me. Then again, I also know that what happens in Bralorne stays in Bralorne, so you'll have to experience it yourself to fully understand it.

**To book a room in Bralorne at The Mine's Motel, call Rockin' Rosie down at the Claim Jumper Bar and Grill: (250) 238-0150**