

*The*  
NEXT PHASE  
*of* TRAVIS RICE

*The champion snowboarder on his new film and life in the backcountry*

*Interview by* KEITH GORDON



**T**ravis Rice is widely considered one of the best all-around snowboarders on the planet. He's also the sport's renaissance man. The Red Bull-sponsored athlete recently completed his latest film, *The Fourth Phase*, and took a few moments away from the slopes to talk with *Maxim* about what inspired the movie, filming in deep snow, and overcoming fear before making a deadly drop.

**What was the motivation behind your new film, and where does the name come from?**

"This process we follow, this cycle we ride" was a conceptual seed that one of my mentors, Bryan Iguchi, planted deep within my psyche many years ago. I didn't realize it at the time, but it has helped to shape my life and the things I apply value to. This way of life honors the biorhythms of the planet and has taught me much about myself. For this film, I felt like our team was finally ready to showcase a glimpse into the hydrological cycle that so many of us have centered our lives around. We focused on a subset of the North Pacific gyre [a large system of circular ocean currents] that is responsible for the majority of the weather we get here in North America, west of the Continental Divide. While making this film, I stumbled on the research of Gerald Pollack, Ph.D., who wrote the book *The Fourth Phase of Water*, which is where we borrowed the film's title from.

**What are some of the challenges of creating such a project?**

A typical day starts around 3:30 to 4 A.M., when the production crew gets equipment prepped for the day. We typically are trying to shoot in morning light, so we need to arrive at our backcountry access point and travel many miles into the forest before sunrise. When we call it for shooting, we start to prepare the trails, jumps, or approaches for the next day. We try to get back to the trailhead by dark, but that usually doesn't happen. A long trip home is followed by a push to dump footage, charge cameras, eat a healthy dinner, and attempt to get six hours of sleep before we do it all again the next day. We try to film in places that get a lot of snow, which means they also get a lot of bad weather, and avalanche conditions change every day. So just being in a remote area with such a large crew on the right day for game time is a small miracle in itself.

**What's the ultimate goal for a professional snowboarder?**

The beauty of snowboarding is that there are so many different facets of what it means to be a professional. For some it's winning contests, or putting together a film part, pursuit of the perfect turn, landing a trick that has never been done, finding the gnarliest hand rail or urban



setup. And while it is different for everyone, the one common thread is creative expression. I have had every one of those goals at some point in my career.

**Are you ever afraid before dropping into a dangerous line?**

If I didn't ever get scared or feel that rush of alertness that can be associated with the term *fear*, I don't think I would still be around today. The key in what I do is aligning with fear and making it my ally. It is there for good reason; primal fear keeps us alive and alert. What matters is keeping it in check and asserting power over it so that it is unable to suffocate me.

**Are the risks inherent in snowboarding something you think about regularly?**

Snowboarding can be dangerous, just like eating fast food regularly. Although only one of those is sure to kill you in the long run. It's about risk versus reward. I find only a couple days out of my whole year does the weight of the decision factor in the possibility of serious injury or death. The new information about concussions that has come out makes me grateful that I primarily ride and film in powder snow conditions these days.

**What's your favorite snowboarding destination?**

Honestly, with how much conditions can vary, my favorite spot is wherever the conditions are firing and I'm with a group of close friends. I find the location to be secondary. Locations that have higher probabilities of being great are places like British Columbia, Japan, Alaska, and Jackson Hole.

**What's next for you?**

I started a contest called the Supernatural with Red Bull at Baldface Lodge in Nelson, B.C., years back, and I believe it has the foundation to be the highest echelon of competitive snowboarding. The Supernatural takes everything a rider has learned over the course of his or her life from freestyle and all-mountain riding and applies it to a backcountry setting where the mountain face has been enhanced beyond its "natural" qualities. The event takes place with powder conditions on a mile-long run that challenges riders in every way. I plan on putting my efforts into trying to bring this event back to life. Beyond that, after coming out of a project like *The Fourth Phase*, my plan this winter is the anti-plan. I want to go ride wherever the winds blow me.

COURTESY OF RED BULL

*Rice's latest film chronicles a 15,000-mile mission following the hydrological cycle around the North Pacific Rim*