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photos: Mattias Fredriksson, Graham Jones, John Lightfoot, Dave Heath



Putting up a smoke screen



Snowcat boarding February 2007



Summer mountainbike trip to Baldface!

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The other day a bug flew in my ear. It happened on the first bike ride of the season. For the most part, when a bug flies in my ear, it doesn't come out. When you're riding, it's the worst possible time for this chance encounter—a panicked, spastic moment with the impending doom of delay.

Depending on the trail, stopping right away to deal with the pesky intruder isn't always an option. But neither is the bug crawling in your ear. Gross. So you panic, pull to the side, do whatever it takes to get off the bike so you can stick a big, fat, gloved finger in your ear. You think you're doing the right thing, but really you're just pushing the bug deeper. You're telling said bug, "Why don't you go inside my head. I'm sticking my dumb finger in my ear so you have no other option. Have a nice stay."

But you can't help it. After your pathetic attempt at extraction, you have to deal with a freaking-out bug inside your head for the rest of the ride—distracting to say the least, especially when you can feel it buzzing its way deeper toward your brain.

But it gets you thinking—as bugs in the head often do—of all the nooks and crannies in the world, why would this bug, on this day, decide to size up my tiny temporal orifice passing by at relatively quick speed? The bug is doing something different, going its own

way. This bug's decided to make a statement. A bug with style. Of all the bugs in the world, how many go for the ear? I'm willing to bet not many.

This issue is all about bugs that go into ears. The Mountain Lifestyle issue: living life with style. Doing something different. Standing up for your beliefs. Identifying yourself by doing your own thing. Overcoming the fear of doing so in the process.

Like the story in our Backyard section about three Canmore climbers who find a new route in the Bugaboos, a place presumed to have no remaining unclimbed classics. Or our story on the Sons of Freedom, stalwart believers whose public burnings and nude marches were carried out in the name of faith. The take-it-back-from-the-Man mountain bike activists of Cumberland, BC, profiled in our new Dispatch section. There's a tale of a burly creekboater who hucks an 18-metre waterfall in an inflatable dinghy just to show everyone it's no big deal, and a controversial artist who calls himself ManWoman.

Ah, the bug in your ear. Now we've put one in there for you. And what are you going to do? Stick your big finger in there and try to get it out? Or will you let it be? Let it do its thing? The choice, like most things in life, is up to you. Enjoy Issue #11.

—Mitchell Scott