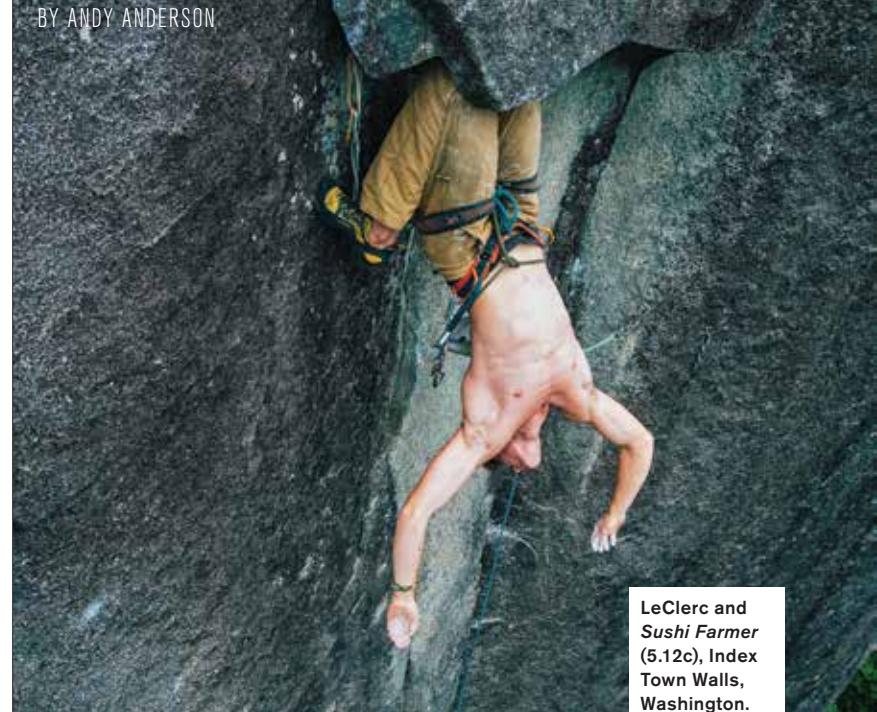


## SPOTLIGHT

BY ANDY ANDERSON



LeClerc and  
Sushi Farmer  
(5.12c), Index  
Town Walls,  
Washington.

# MARC-ANDRÉ LECLERC SHINES IN PATAGONIA

## SQUAMISH ROCK CLIMBER SHINES IN PATAGONIA

**I**n early morning darkness on the Southeast Ridge of Cerro Torre, Marc-André LeClerc shone a headlamp up at a 5.10 hand crack choked with ice and running with water. Above, the rest of the route was pasted in a veneer of ice too thin to climb. LeClerc was alone, attempting the first solo of the serious 4,000-foot *Corkscrew Linkup*. It was February 21, and he had spent the night in a crevasse sitting out a rainstorm.

Meticulously clearing verglas off each hold, LeClerc switched between free-soloing and moving with his daisy chain clipped to pieces of pro, chipping out cam placements, and swapping rock shoes with boots and crampons. Terrain that would normally require around an hour to cover took him more than four hours before the rising sun finally cleaned the route. Still, amazingly, he completed the route in a single day.

“I understand how it sounds kind of crazy,” he

### BEST HITS

#### FIRST ASCENTS

- *Last Temptation of St. Anthony* (5.13 R/X), Squamish, BC, October 2013.
- *La Traversia del Oso Buda* (5.10, C1, M5, WI5/6), Torre Massif, Patagonia, January 2015.
- *Directa de la Mentira* (5.10c, 90 degrees/ WI5), Cerro Torre, Patagonia, February 2015.

#### SOLOS

- *Navigator Wall, East Pillar Direct* and *Northeast Buttress* (5.10d, 5.10c and 5.9+) on Mt. Slesse, BC, solo in a day, August 2014.
- *Corkscrew Linkup* (5.10d, A1) on Cerro Torre in a day, February 2015.
- *Northeast Buttress*, Mt. Slesse, BC, freesolo in winter, March 2015.

#### SINGLE-PUSH ASCENT

- *The Wild Thing* (VI WI4 M7), Mt. Chephren, Canadian Rockies, November 2014.

says. "But in the moment, it was totally fine."

That day LeClerc completed the first solo of the route, the seventh solo of the mountain, and his third trip to the summit in six weeks, including a complete south-to-north traverse of the *Torre massif* with Colin Haley. Rolando Garibotti, writing on the Facebook page for his *Patagonia Vertical* guidebook, called LeClerc's solo "an ascent of earth-shifting proportions."

Marc-André, who lives in Squamish, began climbing where many new-age phenoms do—in the gym. Competitions and plastic holds grew tiresome, though, and he began exploring the mountains around his home in British Columbia's Fraser Valley, moving into trad climbing, then ice and alpine. After high school, he relocated to Squamish and rapidly gained notoriety for solo linkups and bold climbing on some of the area's hardest, headiest routes. More recently he has applied himself to the mountains of the Coast Range, Canadian Rockies and Patagonia.

## Q&A

**Where did your approach come from?** I was pretty serious about climbing when I was young, and the whole idea of things being runout and scary, or free-soloing, those were really appealing to me.

I would bike to the crag by myself and just solo routes, and when I would put up routes I would climb them ground-up. I actually went back to some of my old routes [a few years ago] and got scared and added bolts.

**At the time did you just think that was normal?** Yeah, and it was just kind of what I was psyched on. I read a lot of old-school climbing literature, books by Don Whillans and Dougal Haston, so that probably shaped how I thought climbing was supposed to be. Then when I moved to Squamish, people were like, "Whoa, dude." Not everybody shared the same ideas, and I had to accept how other people climbed. I was 17 and pretty opinionated.

**Why go solo in the mountains?** I read this book called *Banner in the Sky* when I was 10, and it talks about this young kid going out to climb a mountain with these three guys. They take off back to town, and he just goes up by himself and is soloing on this huge mountain. It was this epic story that stuck in my mind.

I soloed my first big alpine north face when I was 16, and it was just such a cool experience. Whenever I look at a mountain, I see routes that I'd like to try with a partner, and



there's always something I'd want to do as a solo.

**How do you prepare for a big route?** This fall I got more into training, mostly just general fitness. But there's also a mental side ... a point where I commit to an idea and turn it into something I'm going to try. And then I'll start thinking about it all the time, planning what I'm going to carry, how I'm going to pack my bag. When I'm doing it, it's all planned and mapped out. It just kind of happens.

**Right after returning home, you free soloed Mount Slesse in winter—what is that story?** Slesse is like the Cerro Torre of Chilliwack, where I grew up. I wanted to climb it when I was 15 and had two horrendous epics. I got it on my third try, and it was a huge step up for me at the time. Five years later I came back and soloed two routes in the same day. That's what got me really psyched on alpine climbing again. It had only been climbed in the winter once, in 1986. When I got back from Patagonia, conditions were perfect, and I felt ready to go for it. It was rad to bring that psyche home.