



From left to right |

Eric Jeffcoat on location in Ice Creek Lodge, BC

Las Lenas powfield and Tom Routh

Ice Creek Lodge, BC

words Dan Kostrzewski photos Chris Ankeny

No medium showcases snowboarding like film. Focused on real time capture of agility, artistry and athleticism, the annual library of shred flicks documents the sport's progression and gives us all a glimpse into the pro-level lifestyle. Each season, new videos serve to separate us from our cash and project what successful filmmakers envision snowboarding to be.

But as with all post-Soviet endeavors, industry undercurrents exert a powerful influence on what is captured through the viewfinder. From locations and logos to big-name pros and en-vogue riding styles, the equation for commercial success remains safely the same. And with a few creative exceptions, what the snowboarding masses are sold for consumption fits the formula we have replayed season after season.

"Sanctuary," Eric Jeffcoat's first entry into the snowboard movie melee, breaks this mold of complacency. Filmed primarily in Super-8 format and focused on backcountry freeriding, this new documentary-style feature provides a refreshing angle on a subject that suffers from repetition.

The film follows four friends through a partially self-funded season of travel and turns that is backdropped by exceptional locations: Montana, interior British Columbia, Alaska, and Argentina. Edited with short-film format, "Sanctuary" relies heavily on rider interviews to cut through the standard sheen of traditional ski and snowboard porn, cultivating a more accessible and inclusive vibe.

"I didn't want to have to fit this into a specific box," explains Jeffcoat. "It doesn't really pander to anything, it's just about freeriding and being in the mountains really."

Following this thread, he says that transporting the viewer to enticing places and rideable locations was a top priority. "I really wanted it to be a movie that you could sit down and watch and say, 'You know, I could do that, I could ride in those conditions.' I wanted people to be able to relate to the riders in the movie."

Jeffcoat says it was easier to accomplish his directive because, "Profit was not a priority for me. I decided that I was going to do it regardless of whether I had any financial assistance or not."

Eventually, Eric did find support for his film. "I really wanted to do something that was a little more underground and subtle. So, I approached Arc'Teryx with the concept because it really fit what they were trying to say," he recounts. "I said that I didn't want to be shackled by anything artistically in terms of any sort of decision making on the movie. So, when they said that was fine, that they were going to give me complete creative control, I was ready to go."

Eric selected four longtime friends as subjects for the movie and says this created a more open filming dynamic. He explains, "With Tom [Routh] and Billy [Buchbauer] and Annie [Fast] and Chris [Ankeny] and everybody, we've worked together enough that I just wanted to give them the freedom to ride the line that they wanted. I think it created a lack of pressure, for them to not to be jumping through hoops for me." He continues about the ethos surrounding "Sanctuary," "Everybody in the movie is in it to freeride and nobody is in it to get a magazine cover or make a million bucks. Everybody is super-passionate about just going out and being in the mountains and having this experience and sharing it with friends."

He continues, "It seems strange because we're all friends, we're all bros, and we've been together doing this for a long time, but maybe that's why we're all friends, that's why we've ridden together and traveled for so long



because we all have this common interest. And I just wanted to show that in a movie."

As another divergence from standard form, "Sanctuary" was shot primarily in Super-8 format. Not only did the lighter rig provide better backcountry mobility, but it also lent a distinctive character to the film. Eric explains, "One of the reasons I shot this movie in Super-8 was because I didn't want the real slick, polished look that you get out of 16mm. I wanted something that was... a little grittier and more real life."

"More than anything, I want people to see that there's a hell of a lot more out there than the resort-based experience. There's a completely different dimension to skiing and snowboarding that you just don't get when you're in a resort. You don't have to go spend 68 bucks to go have fun, and you don't need to go buy an eight-dollar hamburger, and you don't need to wait in line for 45 minutes. You don't need all that. You don't get the same experience as when you're out in the mountains."

He concludes by saying, "There's a heck of a lot more out there that people should be experiencing. It doesn't mean that you've got to go drop some big gnar chute. Just going out and going skinning, just riding some fresh pow down a hill through the trees out in the middle of nowhere where it's quiet, and you don't hear the chairlift and you don't hear music piped through speakers in the trees, is pretty cool. It's a different deal."

"Sanctuary" has recently been on the bill at both the Vancouver International Mountain Film Festival and the Flagstaff Mountain Film Festival, and will be shown at the Telluride Mountain Film Festival, which takes place from May 28 to May 31. DVD copies can also be obtained at cost by emailing Frontside Productions directly at sanctuary@homebrew.com. ▲