



## AAC Publications

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### **Fremont Peak, West Face, They Live**

Wyoming, Wind River Range

**Our time was running out. Mark Evans, Oli Shaw, and I had already bailed from high on Fremont Peak's west face—twice.** On our first magnificent failure, in September 2014, we nearly froze to the wall (see AAJ 2015). The second was a week ago, from the last technical pitch, below the start of easy ground to the summit. If only we had a big, ninja grappling hook—I joked later—we could have finished the route that day with questionable tactics. Reluctantly, we rapped the entire face in a whiteout, completely enveloped by clouds.

With the end of July approaching, and with only a few days left before packhorses arrived, it was evident that our decision not to blast was an agonizing one. Cozy in our bags, under a boulder bivouac above Mistake Lake, I grew paranoid: Had we blown our final chance?

We descended to our basecamp to discover dear friends from Pinedale had surprised us with a visit and generously augmented our booze supply. After a huge feast—as was our custom—and an icy swim to the namesake feature at Island Lake, we'd recovered sufficiently from our midday rounds of Famous Grouse whiskey to have another go at the wall. We hiked up at dusk to our boulder bivouac, hopeful the morning would dawn clear and still.

July 26 was by far the best single day of stable climbing weather we'd seen in our nearly six weeks here—in total, spread across two seasons. That morning, we hastily retraced our way by headlamp up the loose, steep approach to the base of Fremont's west face. Anxious to avoid being caught just shy of the top again, we soloed the initial 500' of easier fourth and fifth class climbing and dispatched the familiar lower pitches with renewed urgency. Oli handily sent the crux at 5.10+, pulling us out of the shaded gully forming the left margin of the face and unveiling the vast, red, upper headwall.

Less than four hours after launch, we'd reached the Middle Finger ledge, a pitch below our highpoint. Kissed by sun, Mark re-led a brilliant, exposed pitch, gaining the right edge of the west pillar. Above this, Oli and I followed perfect cracks in red-patina rock up the huge, steep corner West Face Dihedral (AAJ 2015). Oli's bold, final lead (5.10 R) put us on low-angle terrain above the corner. Ten minutes later we were unroped atop the Continental Divide. We'd turned a yearlong haunting into a half-day, frenzied ascent.

We named our route after John Carpenter's 1988 cult, sci-fi classic, *They Live* (1,500', 5.10+ R). We hope our route will inspire future ascensionists to explore Fremont's expansive west side, where proud routes on impeccable backcountry stone await those who see between the lines.

– Shingo Ohkawa

## Images



Oli Shaw on the crux, fourth pitch of They Live (1,500', 5.10+ R).



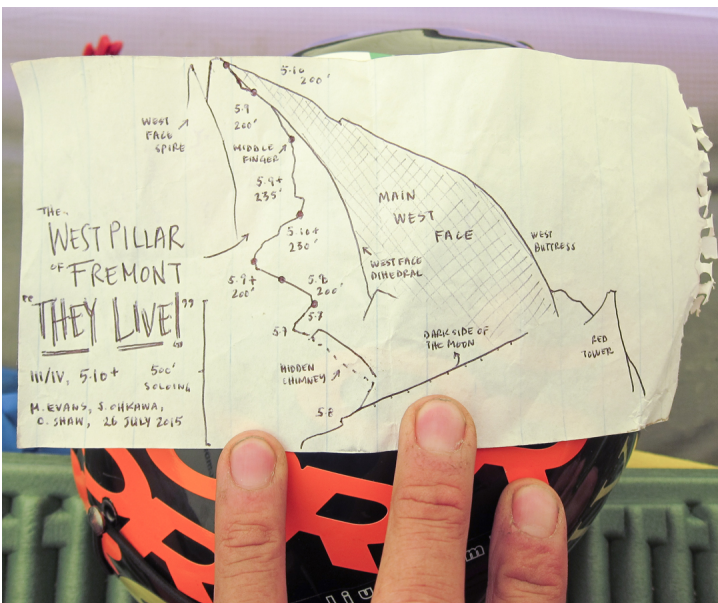
After soloing the initial 500', Shingo Ohkawa begins the "first pitch" with haste, hoping to avoid another cold-weather shutdown.



Oli Shaw leading pitch seven, a 5.10 R slab.



Mark Evans and Oli Shaw atop Fremont Peak, having finished their route They Live (1,500', 5.10+ R) after numerous attempts over two seasons.



A topo for They Live (1,500', 5.10+ R) on Fremont Peak's west face. The route joins the previously established West Face Dihedral on the final two pitches to the summit ridge.

## Article Details

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