



AAC Publications

Cynical Pinnacle, Only the Lonely

Colorado, South Platte Region

The South Platte region of Colorado has a strong history of scrappy rock climbing and a staunch ethic of bolting new routes on lead. So when my partner Dave Montgomery and I set out to climb the west face of the iconic Cynical Pinnacle, we knew there would be a good adventure.

Strappo Hughes first envisioned climbing this face ground-up in the late 1980s. After a short four-bolt section of climbing, Hughes retreated, leaving the face, which he called the “Only the Lonely” project, untouched for many years.

For both Dave and me, the history and ethics of the South Platte are firmly embedded in our climbing experiences. So, early on, we were torn between stubbornly upholding those ethics versus the possibility of adding useless hardware to one of our favorite local spires. As a compromise, we rappelled the west face to preview the wall. We did not rehearse any climbing, but only made sure there were enough features for it to be climbable.

With confidence there was a line, we pulled our ropes and started up from Strappo’s high point. Multiple days of slow progression ensued. Free climbing between hook placements and drilling when the hooks held, we were happy to make any small bits of progress. With each day’s end, we fixed ropes at the new high point and retreated. In December 2014, after several weeks of effort, we made the summit. We had completed the line but were only halfway to our original goal.

Between seasonal falcon closures, temperature-dependent face climbing, and the overall difficulty of the route, it would be more than two years before we completed our vision. On February 27, Dave and I shared a day we would not soon forget, climbing the west face of Cynical Pinnacle all free. Though not the longest of routes, at 400’, Only the Lonely has a nearly 40m crux pitch and difficulties up to 5.13+. The bolts are in place for future challengers, but the piss-shivering memories of trying to place those bolts from thin, teetering hooks will remain exclusively Dave and mine.

– Cody Scarpella

Editor’s Note: An earlier name for this route was used in the original AAJ 2015 article. The climbers subsequently decided to use the current name.

Earlier, in January 2014, Cody Scarpella, with support from Joe Mills and Dave Vuono, free climbed Buffaloes in Space (5.13b), an old aid line up the west side of Cynical Pinnacle’s summit block.

Images



Cody Scarpella edges up the 40-meter 5.13+ crux pitch of Only the Lonely on Cynical Pinnacle.



Photo-topo for Only the Lonely on Cynical Pinnacle.

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