



AAC Publications

Lower Buckhorn Wash, Crossroads

Utah, San Rafael Swell

PROLIFIC Utah route developer Bill Ohran recalls ripping down a dirty desert road in the San Rafael Swell in the mid-'90s, blaring Henry Rollins in his Chevy Nova. Unable to find a climbing partner, but with a strong desire to disconnect from the horizontal world, he went for the next best thing—aid soloing. On a distant buttress, a small seam led to an irresistible 115' fingers-to-hands crack, which Bill established as Disconnect (2 pitches, A2), though he stopped short of the summit, which was guarded by a long offwidth chimney.

Twenty years later, the music is different and the Chevy is a slight upgrade, but the charm of the Swell remains, drawing in a new crew looking to escape and explore. Mark Evans and I arrived at the 500' Broomstick Buttress (named for the broomstick-like leaning pillar in the center) with the goal to create a free climb that incorporated the stellar corner on the second pitch of Disconnect and continued to the summit of the buttress.

The initial attempts went ground up, mostly on good crack systems. However, virgin choss always has its exciting moments, and this route was no exception. I took a surprise rope-solo whipper while bolting the traverse pitch. Later, after giving my partner a solid choss bath as I bumped a tipped-out number 6 up the offwidth chimney, I was disappointed to find the crack not only widened but steepened. A case of the "over its" kicked in, and I shakily drilled a bolt and bailed—the ground-up attempts ended a mere 30' from the summit. However, while being lowered I noticed the face to my left was full of solid edges on what looked like decent rock.

A year later I returned, this time hiking to the top, not willing to quest up the face on hooks. What I discovered was much wilder than I had expected—exposed gymnastic climbing on small edges. Even on rappel, bolting the path of most awesomeness was no easy task, as a desert storm and 40mph winds rolled in. This route didn't want to give it up easily.

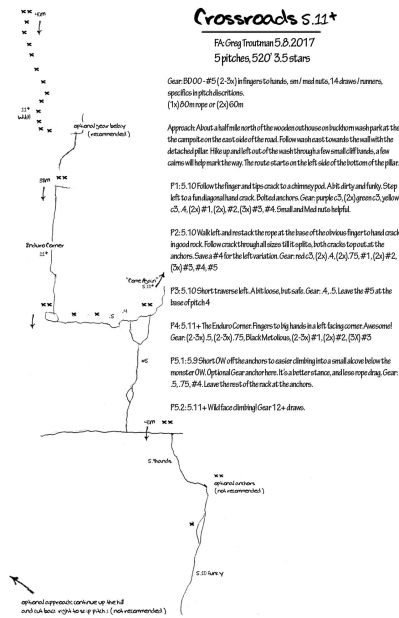
Two years after our first attempt, Mark and I returned for the long-awaited FFA. Our original plan was to swing leads, but after leading the first pitch I was psyched to take every pitch. Mark agreed, and I clawed my way to the top without falling to finally conclude Crossroads (5 pitches, 5.11+). The name comes from the fact that we crossed or incorporated two other routes in the creation of ours (the first half of the first pitch is an unknown 5.10). It was also derived from our mind-sets at the time, after spending the winter wandering the jungles of Chile in search of large granite walls, with no real life goals except to continue upward. Perhaps Bill had a similar mind-set 20+ years earlier—a need to "Disconnect" from the horizontal world and all its expectations and obligations.

After establishing Crossroads, Mark returned with Jon Wisnaisz and freed the original first pitch of Disconnect at a very stout 5.11+, thus creating a great direct free line of three stacked 11+ pitches of varying styles that shortcuts the first few pitches of Crossroads.

The Swell has always been one of my favorite places. Mark, other friends, and I have been discovering and developing other new lines over the past few years, and have put up a number of quality multi-pitch routes in the peaceful desert surroundings, including Deprivation 29 (4 pitches, 5.11c) and Whoa Dude (3 pitches, 5.10+), both in Lower Buckhorn Wash. Underneath the dirt and the choss lies a world of amazing adventure climbing.

– Greg Troutman

Images



Topo for Crossroads (5 pitches, 5.11+) in the San Rafael Swell of central Utah. Completed by Mark Evans and Greg Troutman in spring of 2017, Crossroads incorporates parts of two previously established routes—it is the first route to summit the formation and the first free route on the wall.



Mark Evans starts up the 5.11+ corner on Crossroads, a new route he and Greg Troutman completed in spring 2017 in Utah's San Rafael Swell. Evans, Troutman, and other friends have quietly developed challenging multi-pitch routes in the Swell over the last few years.



Mark Evans sinks a thank-god hand jam on the enduro corner fourth pitch of Crossroads (5 pitches, 5.11+) in the San Rafael Swell of central Utah.



Mark Evans finishing up the mega fourth pitch on his and Greg Troutman's new route Crossroads (5 pitches, 5.11+). The route incorporates parts of two previously established lines, but is the first to summit the formation and the first free route on the wall.



George Maynard engages the tricky, technical face climbing on the final pitch of Crossroads (5 pitches, 5.11+) in Utah's San Rafael Swell. Greg Troutman discovered and bolted this pitch after descending from ground-up attempts on the wall's obvious offwidth chimney.



George Maynard techs his way up the final, bolted face pitch of Crossroads (5 pitches, 5.11+) in Utah's San Rafael Swell. Greg Troutman and Mark Evans completed this new free line in the spring of 2017, after returning from a long expedition to South America.



The Disconnect/Crossroads buttress in the Lower Buckhorn Wash of Utah's San Rafael Swell. The original Disconnect (3 pitches, 5.11+) line is in red, and Crossroads (5 pitches, 5.11+) is in blue.

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