



Stortinden and Brettviktinden, New Routes

Norway, Lofoten

THERE ARE MOMENTS in life when one simply knows something special is happening. There's a tug at the heartstrings, a charge to the air, and a preciousness to each passing second that reminds us we are lucky to be there. The winter of 2017–2018 in Lofoten was filled with those moments, but one remains etched in my memory. There is a picture of me and Sami on top of Stortinden, smiling like children, a frozen glove I've forgotten still dangling from my mouth. We yelled with joy into the darkness as we pulled our hoods tight against the snow stinging our faces and made our way down. As we climbed out of the wind, I looked up for the first time in ages and there they were, two glowing green swirls dancing in the sky above the mountain, the sea, and the stars. I sat down and gazed at the world full of wonder. I pointed my camera and pushed the shutter. To my surprise it came out, but I could lose that photo forever and never forget the image, the moment, or the day.

Over four winters in the Nordland I have never seen conditions so consistently incredible as in February and March of 2018. Where often good spells are measured by the hour, for weeks each day dawned cold and clear, with every possibility in the islands frozen into perfection. There was a time when we started climbing by headlamp in the evenings after work, knowing we would never get everything done. I also found an exception this season in having available partners, and with them was able to complete two lines of which I'm quite proud, as well as a few others of lesser length and difficulty, but of equally high quality.

The first was Way Out West (600m, M7 A0 95°) on the north face of Stortinden (866m, Flakstadøya island), a route I climbed in late February with my good friend and fellow mountain guide Sami Modenius from Finland. The route takes a mostly direct line, starting on tenuous, thinly iced slabs, which give way to typically scrappy mixed climbing to reach a conspicuous chimney system leading to the summit. At the crux of the route I went for a ride after tearing a clump of turf out of a seam, and the A0 reflects that I hammered my tools into the crack while resting on my gear, before continuing to free the pitch at M7. Another pitch up high sent me for a second whip as I fell out of a moss-choked offwidth. Sami narrowly avoided airtime himself as he made an absolutely brilliant, near-70m lead through the chimney at the top, which involved some of the most fantastic and three-dimensional climbing I've ever done. Both upper pitches were sustained at M6+/M7. We descended the summit ridge west until we were able to drop into a gully that brought us back past the base of the face to the road.

A few days later, I was fortunate enough to team up for the first time with British guide Jon Bracey and Slovenian Luka Krajnc, after having raved at them about the superlative weather and all my wonderful ideas. I suggested we try a line I'd attempted in 2016 with Swede Carl Granlund on the northwest wall of Brettviktinden (836m) on Austvågøya island. Carl and I had managed to get through some excellent hard climbing on the lower portion of the face, but a lack of momentum ultimately sent us down. That experience was enough for me to stress to Jon and Luka that it would be fun, but likely a proper hard route for getting acquainted with the local style, and in the end it was.

Luka dispatched the lower pitches, as we discovered my old anchors and I slowly remembered the way. At my previous high point, we debated which of a series of compact, mossy corners to take. After picking one, Luka repeated my experience on Stortinden by fiddling in a cam moments before he removed the moss holding him to the wall and took flight. After being stymied again in the same section, he handed the lead over to Jon, who sent in great style and made the difficulties look not

nearly as difficult as they were. A string of strenuous, heady mixed pitches followed, with Jon delivering another strong lead of a thinly iced stem box and a wild frozen grass traverse, before I took us to the top via a corner system and some interesting climbing along the summit ridge. We topped out in the evening's last glow and were rewarded with a glorious sunset. We then descended via a ridge to the northeast, a few rappels, and some downclimbing in a southeasterly direction to the road, where Jon cajoled a reluctant passerby into giving him a lift to go fetch our car from the other side of the mountain. We named the route Bad Boys Bring Heaven to You (500m, M7+ 95°) after lyrics from Luka's favorite bad pop song of the moment.

A few days later the three of us headed out again for a more casual outing. This time we aimed for an obvious corner system and a line of smears left of Trym Atle Saeland and Marko Prezelj's 2010 route, Line C, on the east face of Stortinden. The route yielded highly enjoyable and mostly moderate climbing on a remarkable series of iced slabs, which led to an outstanding sunny view from the summit, a stark contrast to the cold wind and darkness I'd experienced atop Way Out West. We named the route from aforementioned song, calling it All Good Boys go to Heaven (600m, WI4+ M3). It received a quick repeat the very next day from Sami and Carl, who enjoyed all the pick holes and belay ledges we'd left in place.

During the same period, Jon and Luka also authored a number of lines throughout the islands, including a proud one in the cleft to the left of Storm Pillar on Vågakallen. I was able to repeat a number of established ice climbs near Henningsvær, Kabelvåg, and elsewhere, as well as opening what I believe to be a number of new ice and mixed lines, between one and three pitches in length, on the cliffs above Storvatnet lake and below Brettviktinden, on the north-facing buttress below Kallkneet near Kalle, and at Svartfloget near Grunnfjørffjorden.

If I'd had more time, more partners, and less work, I can only imagine how much more could have been done. I will have to satisfy myself by remembering we never could have climbed everything, that the islands will always have their secrets, that magic does happen there every day, and simply be grateful for having been a part of it in the first place.

– Chris Wright, AAC

Images



Luka Krajnc on the first ascent of All Good Boys Go to Heaven, Stortinden east face.



The east face of Stortinden. (1) All Good Boys go to Heaven. (2) Line C.



The north face of Stortinden and Way Out West.



Sami Modenius leading the upper chimney system of Way Out West, north face of Stortinden.



"On one of many memorable occasions I looked up and there they were, two glowing green swirls

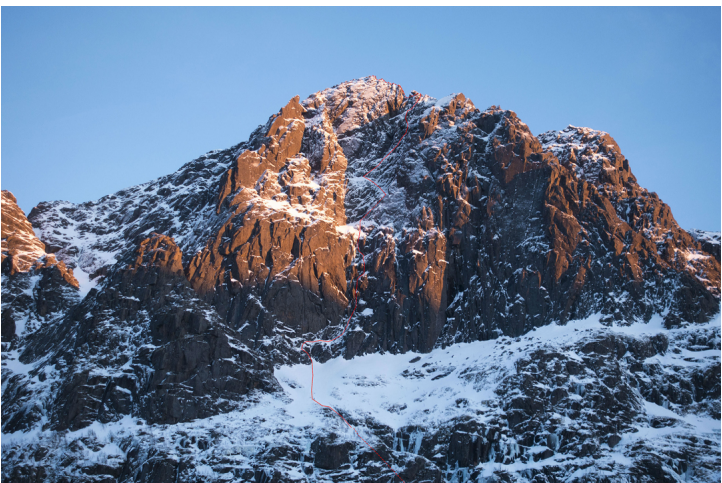
dancing in the sky above the snow and the mountain."



Luka Krajnc on difficult corner system of Bad Boys Bring Heaven to You on Brettviktinden's northwest face.



Luka Krajnc in the thinly iced stem-box section on the upper wall of Bad Boys Bring Heaven to You, Brettviktinden northwest face.



Bad Boys Bring Heaven to You on the northwest face of Brettviktinden.



The east and north faces of Stortinden on the island of Flakstadøya, showing (1) All Good Boys Go to Heaven (2018), (2) Line C (2010), and (3) Way Out West (2018).

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