

Europe's
Freestyle
Trailblazer:

Jamie 'Striker' Strachan 1973-2025

Hailed the British Godfather of European freestyle skiing, we pay tribute to Jamie Strachan, who graced the cover of Fall Line's millennium edition over two decades ago

WORDS LOUISE CAMERON HALL



This winter, the Alps will miss one of their brightest free spirits. Jamie 'Striker' Strachan – Somerset-born, Chamonix-based and hailed as the Godfather of European freestyle skiing – passed away in April, aged 52. A pioneer, artist, father and force of nature, 'Striker' was the UK's first professional freeskiier and a defining figure in the rise of freeride.

Bursting onto the scene in the early 1990s, Jamie shot to fame as the blue-haired Pepsi Max kid (the first sponsored British freestyle skier), helping to spark a counterculture that flipped alpine sport on its head. Freestyle was the new frontier – raw, expressive and fearless.

Inspired by the USA's Glen Plake and Scot Schmidt, Jamie fused moguls, cliffs and kickers with unfiltered joy, creating his signature 'McStrachan' trick (a 720 misty backflip) and

founding Chamonix's legendary ChamJam festival.

From his explosive aerals, iconic photo-shoots, art and ski design, Jamie lit the torch for the next gen of freeskiiers coming through: a movement that has exploded globally. He shaped not just the future of freeskiing, but the lives of all who knew him. Jamie went on to launch HIP Chalets, marry his true love, Julia Bergklint, Chamonix-based Swedish rock-climbing champion, and have three children.

Here, the freeski community pays tribute to the outrageous talent and infectious energy of 'one of life's best' – whose spiritual home was Chamonix and whose family was his universe.

As the late Shane McConkey once said: "Whether it was a steep, extreme descent or new freestyle, what we were doing was freeskiing – free to ski our own style on our own terms." And that was exactly what Jamie did.



Photo: Adam Johnston



Above top: Photo shoots of 'Striker', the blue-haired Pepsi Max kid. Above: Jamie's wild designs transformed how skis looked in the 90s & 00s. Right: Jamie and wife Julia



Photo: Adam Johnston

STIAN HAGEN, CHAMONIX-BASED NORWEGIAN PRO SKIER

Jamie was not an incredibly good British skier, he was a straight-up, naturally gifted, truly great skier. He was also a visionary in the ski industry, instrumental in changing skiing forever. This spring, around the time Jamie passed, it was when Völkl skis invited me to St Moritz's 2025 Freestyle World Championships that it hit me. This all started with Jamie. He was the first European freestyle skier, pioneering many of the tricks that are now the foundation of freestyle skiers' repertoires. He spearheaded the first big air competitions on European soil. He also changed the way skis look. Before Jamie, skis looked like they'd been designed by a tired accountant. Jamie turned them into canvases. Into art. His wizard (pictured left) and black buddha ski graphics for Völkl's V-Explosive skis will go down as some of the most legendary of all time.

DAVE 'GRAVY' KEAM, NEW ZEALAND-BASED AUSTRALIAN PRO FREESKIER

Jamie blazed the trail as the UK's first sponsored pro freeskiier, producing iconic tricks, ski graphics, clothing ranges, and the first pan-European ski magazine. One of the most loving, obscenely talented and inspirational free spirits, he was a true pioneer. Coming from Australia, aged 18, and meeting Jamie in Chamonix, I had no idea how lucky I was. We shared a passion for bumps, jumps and big mountain riding, pushing the progressive side of skiing. His energy and humour were infectious; he introduced me to Glen Plake and his crew carving out ski bum lives in Chamonix. The next year Jamie rocked blue hair – the Pepsi Max kid paid to ski. His creative flair was unforgettable. Somehow, we each persuaded K2, Völkl and RipCurl to sponsor us and found ourselves on the same flight path, travelling the world for 10 years, piecing life together and tearing it up. If you asked what Jamie did, he'd say he was good at colouring things in. And he was. He coloured all our lives in.

"Jamie lit the way, monetising freeskiiing in a way nobody else had before. He did the same with HIP Chalets. He showed the rest of us how to build a life and family around what you love." Jason 'Shutty' Shutt, GB skier



Jamie in Chamonix (top), shot by Swedish photographer Gudrun Bergdahl. She says: "Around 1994/5 I saw Jamie ski – blue hair, beautiful energy, so cute. I asked if we could make some pictures. I think that was the first time he'd modelled. We lost touch but Jamie stayed in my heart. A beautiful person."

TONY 'HARRO' HARRINGTON, AUSTRALIAN PHOTOGRAPHER AND WORLD HELI CHALLENGE FOUNDER

Jamie and I met winter '97 at the RipCurl World Heli Challenge in Wanaka, New Zealand – three heli-accessed days of freestyle, extreme, and downhill ski chaos. Striker stood out instantly – blue hair, huge smile, magnetic energy. He was cheeky, ballsy and super talented – and he could throw a mean backflip. The scene was wild, raw, unfiltered. Crazy time. Crazy talent. All the big names came: Chris Davenport, Shane McConkey, Mike Douglas, Andrea Binning, Eva Sandelgard, Kent Kreidler, Travis Rice – all pushing limits on equipment not yet built for taking off and landing switch off cliffs. That's how far ahead they were. Before twin-tips and long before 'big mountain freestyle' was a thing, Jamie lived and defined it.

WARREN SMITH, BRITISH FREERIDE SKIER

Jamie was mega. We were Vökl Skis-sponsored British freeskiers for 20 years. A massive Boss des Bosses (alpine moguls contest) driver, he helped set up Verbier-Ride 2000, always bringing a crowd and huge energy. In 2005, we commented on Eurosport and Redbull Xtreme – Jamie in a Peruvian facemask. I laughed so hard I couldn't commentate. So Jamie. The Godfather of European freeski, Jamie was a big inspiration for the next gen coming through: me, Pat, Chris Fecher, Jason 'Shutty' Shutt, Dave Young and Paddy Graham... He designed Vökl skis and took graphics into the 21st century – the Vökl V-Explosive with the wizard graphic was a classic (and my first skis designed by a Brit. I was proud). The Gotamas too. A different evolution of big mountain, all-terrain skis. Such talent. Such a loss.

Fall Line

• Donations in Jamie's memory gratefully received at thedinosaurtrust.com

JAMIE 'STRIKER' STRACHAN & THE EVOLUTION OF FREESKIING

- 1970s** Freeride born from 'hot-dogger' counterculture chasing big-mountain powder and creativity
- 1980s** Freestyle skiing (moguls, ballet, aerials) becomes a TV sport; 'rebel' freeride ethos grows
- 1988** Greg Stump's *Blizzard of Aahhh's* ignites extreme ski culture (spearheaded by stars Glen Plake, Scot Schmidt and Mike Hatstrup)
- 1990** First Boss Des Bosses, Chamonix – Europe's only inter-resort moguls comp. Striker captains the Chamonix team, later co-runs it with founder Tom Banfield and designs the courses.
- 1991** World Extreme Skiing Championships (WESC) launches in Valdez, Alaska.
- 1994** Europe's first pro freeskiier, the Pepsi Max kid, starts making headlines.
- 1995** RipCurl World Heli Challenge launches in Wanaka, New Zealand (and heli-accessed freeride takes off)
- 1996** ChamJam launches (Jamie designs the posters). Xtreme Verbier founded – the world's first extreme freeride competition, which later births the Freeride World Tour (FWT)
- 1997** LINE patents the twin-tip ski design – the 'new school' revolution begins; RipCurl and Vökl-sponsored Jamie competes on the world big mountain freestyle stage in Wanaka, NZ, at the RipCurl World Heli Challenge
- 1998** Atomic's Powder Plus ski launches, the world's first 'fat ski'; the Salomon TenEighty launches; X Games adds Skier Big Air; Jamie starts designing topsheets for Vökl skis
- 2000** Jamie graces the front cover of *Fall Line*
- 2003** Jamie retires and designs Vökl's V-Explosive and Gotama skis
- 2005** Halfpipe is added to FIS World Championships.
- 2011** IOC approves ski halfpipe for the Olympics
- 2014** Ski halfpipe and slopestyle debut at the Sochi Winter Olympics
- 2022** Skiing big air debuts at the Beijing Winter Olympics
- 2023** Jamie passes his mantle to son Otto [then eight] at the 27th Boss des Bosses

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