



The south and east faces of Poi, showing 1. True At First Light (Bechtel-Milton-Piana-Skinner, 1999). 2. East Face (Corkhill-Wielochowski, 1983). PAUL PIANA

Mali or Madagascar. On the *Dark Safari* route, we took no pegs or bolts.

PAT LITTLEJOHN, *United Kingdom*

## MADAGASCAR

### Andringitra National Park

*Andringitra National Park, Various Activity.* The French team of Thierry Giginot and Patrice Glairon-Rappaz spent several weeks repeating quite a few of the classics from last year and making a greatly criticized second ascent of *Fantasia* that involved new bolts and holes for hooking. Meanwhile, Gerard Thomas and Jacky Sananes put up the highly recommended and praised seven-pitch *Pectorine* in May. The climbing is exceptional on perfect rock with an incredible pitch on knobs and chicken heads (V+); difficulty is moderate with most pitches in the 6a/b range. The line is on the very wide wall right of Karambony, at the opposite side of *Tsaky-tsaky* and *Ebola*. Descent is made via the classic Karambony gully.

Two Swiss brave hearts who were present at the same period as the *Bravo Les Filles* team (see below) applied a different approach, working very hard and hand-drilling the 16-pitch *Norspace*. Stephane Salur and Walter von Ballmoos spent nearly a month in June and July on their project. Difficulties were consistently around 6b/c; two pitches had single 7a moves. The line is directly right of *Gondwanaland* and exits in the gully between Tsaranoro Be and Kely.

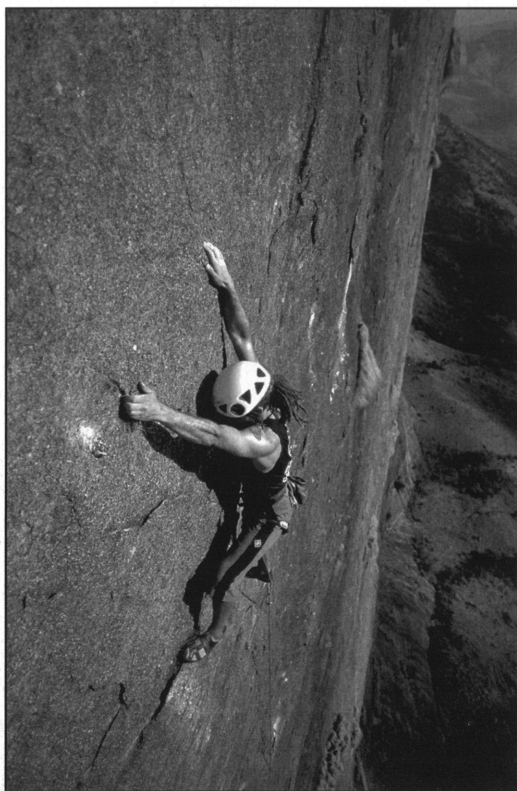
Michel Piola came back with his family and friends and repeated quite a few of the now-

classics from his 1998 expedition. They spent ten days on the northern limestone cliffs in the Diego Suarez area, where they bolted a dozen single-pitch routes up to 7b. They also put up a fun ten-pitch route on the right-hand side of Karambony's north face, which goes up slabs just left of the gully. It is actually two routes: *Alien I* goes for the first four pitches to a big slanting ledge and finishes on top of the protruding pinnacle (above a characteristic yellow roof) with two more pitches (5c/6a max). *Alien II* starts from the ledge, has a common pitch with *Alien I*, then goes straight up for five or six pitches (6b max). The 350-meter route was opened on August 3 and 5 by Piola and Fabian Pavillard.

September turned out to be very busy with the visit of two impressive Spanish mutants. Francisco Blanco and Toti Vales opened a bold line of 12 pitches (plus 150 meters of III-IV climbing to the summit) named *Via Mora Mora*. Francisco bolted this incredibly hard and continuous route over six days in September, including a 150-meter, totally continuous 7b/c+ groove in the upper part. Although not redpointed, pitch 7 implies a long 55-meter 8b/b+ pitch. It is possibly the hardest route to date and seems to be quite engaged climbing. This 700-meter line lies just right of *Mai Piu Così* on Tsaranoro Atsimo. This was also the first route of such difficulty opened from the bottom with a Ryobi gas-powered drill.

Mike Turner, Louise Thomas, Steve Meyers and Grant Farquar (UK) repeated many routes in September and opened the much-sought-after north face of the Karambony. From September 15-22, they established *Always The Sun*, which lies between the *Rainboto* pillar and *Aliens* gully. Difficulties up to 7c+ were unexpectedly concentrated on the second half of the climb.

Probably the last major route of the season was opened from October 8-17 by another Swiss team of Dennis Burdet, Régis Dubois and Damien Ruggieri. *Taoka Gasy* (the local Malagasy ethyl alcohol, heavily absorbed by locals and some visitors) has 15 pitches plus 130 meters of climbing/scrambling to the top. Seven of the pitches are 7a or harder, with a crux of 7b+. The same Swiss team put up *Le Catta Marrant* on the west face of Pic Dondy on the other side of the valley facing Tsaranoro; they were accompanied by Christian Delaroche, who had already made an attempt on the face (nine pitches, V+ max) in 1998. Despite some lichen, they found very beautiful friction slabs and some impressive grooves on the upper part. They confirmed the quality of the face and the big potential of the large western face of Dondy. *Le Catta Marrant* is



Francisco Blanco on pitch 4 (5.12c) of Mora Mora.

CRAIG LUEBBEN

a very beautiful 23-pitch route of moderate difficulty with only a few 6a sections. However, protection is scarce.

In 1998, with my daughter, Badria (Baba), I put up *Baba Kely* to the right of *Alien I*. The route has four pitches up to V+.

GILLES GAUTIER, *France*

*Tsaronoro, Bravo Les Filles.* Nancy Feagin, Kath Pyke, Beth Rodden (who had never placed a piece of pro or climbed a big wall) and I, along with Greg Epperson (photographer) and Kevin Thaw (film team rigger) and Michael Brown and Rob Raker as the film team arrived at our base camp, located within an hour's walk of the Tsaronoro massif, on June 23. We noticed one particularly nice-looking wall with a separate summit to the right of the main formation that didn't have a single route up it, so we set our sights on climbing this wall. On June 24, we began the first pitch of the route. Since we were four climbers, we split up into two teams of two. Kath and I formed one team and Nancy and Beth formed the other. The lower part of the wall started out fairly low angle, but after the first few pitches, the angle of the wall gradually became steeper and the climbing more difficult. Since there were very few cracks in which to place natural protection, our main forms of protection were bolts placed on the lead.

By the time we reached pitch 6, the climbing went from 5.10d to 5.11c. Pitch 7 (5.12c) was even steeper, the climbing was more difficult and it was harder to find edges of rock to hang my sky-hooks on and drill the protection bolts. By the time we had reached pitch 8, Beth had to leave for a competition back in the States, so Kath, Nancy and I continued to equip the last five pitches to the top. Our goal was to climb the entire route from the ground up while placing all the protection bolts on the lead. Once the route was equipped, we would try to free climb the entire route from ground to top.

As it turned out, we finished equipping the route with only one day left before leaving the Tsaronoro area. Up to that point, I had free climbed every pitch of the route except pitch 8. On the last day, Nancy and I rappelled down to pitch 8 and I began the process of working out a complicated sequence of moves. This pitch starts out on thin face holds, then follows up a finger crack until the crack peters out into a steep, shallow groove. After



*Nancy Feagin on pitch 7, Bravo Les Filles. KATH PYKE*