

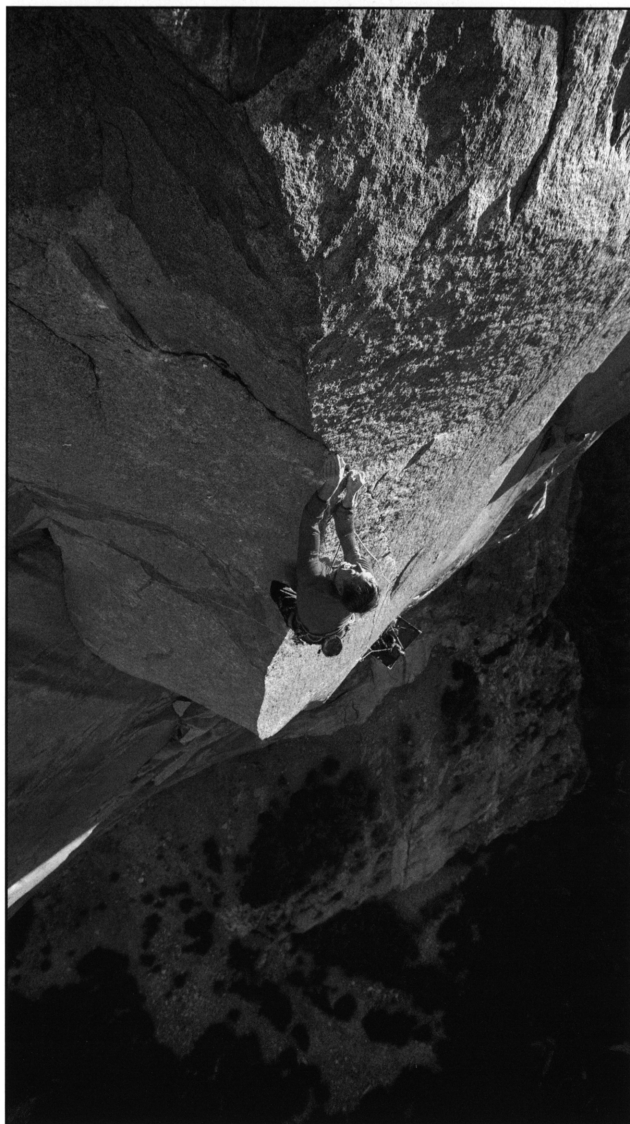
CALIFORNIA
YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

El Capitan, The Prophet. On October 27, Jason Pickles and I completed our nine-year quest to establish a new free route on El Cap. The Prophet (E9 7a, 5.13d R) is on the far right side of El Cap, home to many of Yosemite's scariest and most technical aid routes. Jason and I made it almost halfway up the route in 2001, in a ground-up attempt using no bolts, no aid, no port-a-ledge,

and no fixed rope that ultimately proved too ambitious. After several other unsuccessful ground-up attempts, we returned in 2010 for a more conventional, top-down approach. We invested many days preparing ourselves and the climb before, at long last, a successful redpoint.

The 600m, 13-pitch route demands continuously difficult, bold climbing. It frees the first five pitches of the aid route Bad to the Bone; climbs three pitches of entirely new terrain and a traverse pitch, the Devil's Dyno (which shares 10m of climbing with Nico Favresse and Sean Villanueva's free route, The Secret Passage); then frees the last four pitches of Eagle's Way, including the stunning A1 Beauty. We added eight protection bolts and four bolts in belays.

The most extreme difficulties come high on the wall. Pitch 9 (5.13c R), the Devil's Dyno, involves a wild, 2.5m, no-points-of-contact side-ways jump. The A1 Beauty, a hairline crack splitting an immaculate golden headwall in an extremely exposed position, forms the crux of the route. Matchstick edges, non-existent footholds, and



Leo Houlding near the top of the crux A1 Beauty pitch on The Prophet, El Capitan. Alastair Lee

sustained desperate moves create an incredible pitch protected exclusively by natural gear.

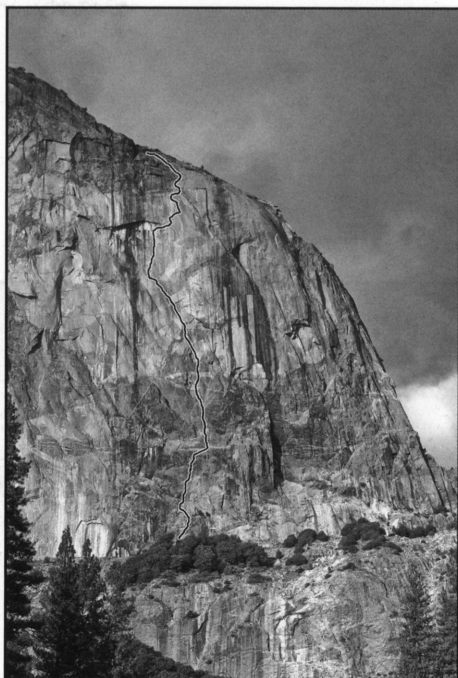
I led all of the pitches during the continuous free ascent, with Jason seconding everything cleanly except the A1 Beauty. During the six-day ascent, we were hammered by a severe four-day storm. After 80 hours of squalor on the port-a-ledge, the A1 Beauty pitch (free at 5.13d R) pushed me to my limit. It is the most perfect pitch I could ever have imagined—such an aesthetic line in an unequalled position, so desperately thin, and painfully close to my limit. If I never climb anything harder, I will not be disappointed. The Prophet was a dream come true.

LEO HOULDING, U.K.

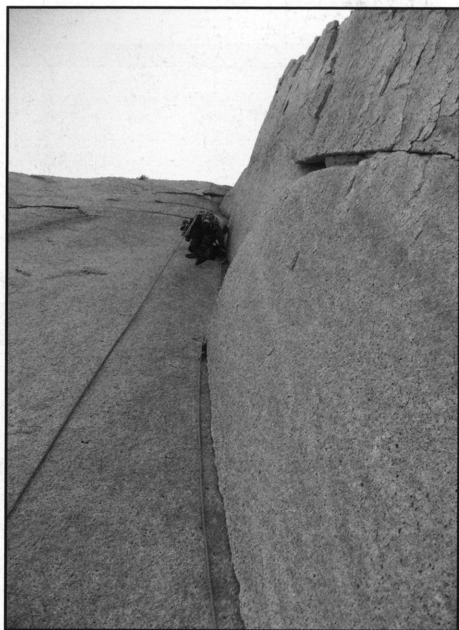
Liberty Cap, Scarface. In late June, Steve Bosque and I completed a 13-pitch independent line on the west face of Liberty Cap. The route follows a long crack system that shoots straight through a huge, white scar, the wall's most prominent feature. Steve and his wife, Paula, started the climb in 2004. Soon after, Chuck Clance joined them before an injury forced them to fix and descend from the top of pitch three.

Steve mentioned the line in early spring and we headed straight for it, replacing the fixed lines and establishing a fourth pitch, which brought us to the base of the scar. We returned in late June for the final push.

We were greeted by impeccable cracks cutting through the bulletproof rockscar. Late on the third day, with a heat wave moving in, Steve made a great effort on pitch seven by drilling eight rivets and then nailing straight up into an A2 corner crack that ended at the base of the "Cubano Corner." After adding a belay bolt, we hauled the bags and I racked up for the most impressive corner I have climbed. Laser cut and vertical, the corner leads to very thin A3 beaking and a bit of loose free to a belay on a decent ledge. By then we were cooked. White rock, nuclear sun, and long days



The Prophet, El Capitan. John Dickey, *Rock and Ice*



Josh Mucci on pitch 8 of Scarface. Steve Bosque