

On day three I started up perfect splitters in a T-shirt, reveling in the morning sun, but we soon turned a corner into the shade, and I was slowed by wet, icy cracks. Halfway up the pillar Cheyne took the lead and made a diagonal rappel left onto the Casarotto Route, where he battled up wide, wet cracks. This was our longest climbing day; it wasn't until after midnight that we reached the top of the pillar and bivouacked.

The wall above glowing orange, we'd put ourselves in position for success. With 1,700m of climbing below us, and a year of planning and dreaming, we were within striking distance of the summit. However, the icy headwall looked intimidating. Cheyne, having more experience with mixed climbing, changed to boots and crampons, grabbed our tools, and started up. Kicking into brittle ice, he sent showers onto my belay. A few moments of hesitation preceded each move, as he made sure to find solid pick placements in the poor ice. He soon discovered a passage to the right, off the ice and onto rock, and we were back in business.

I led two more long pitches on perfect granite, and soon we gained the final snowfield. After scrambling to the summit, Cheyne and I stood silently, giving thanks for the opportunities, daydreams, and hard work that brought us to the summit of King Fitz.

The North Pillar Sitz Start had free-climbing up to 5.11, with numerous points of aid, pendulums, and rappels. The elevation gain is nearly 2,000m, though with rappels and downclimbing the total gain may be 300m more. We avoided the summits of Mermoz and Val Biois. We descended the Franco-Argentinean Route and, after a final bivouac at Lago de los Tres, reached Chalten on the morning of the 23rd.

Cheyne Lempe, 21, thanks the AAC for a generous Mountain Fellowship grant.

SCOTT BENNETT, AAC

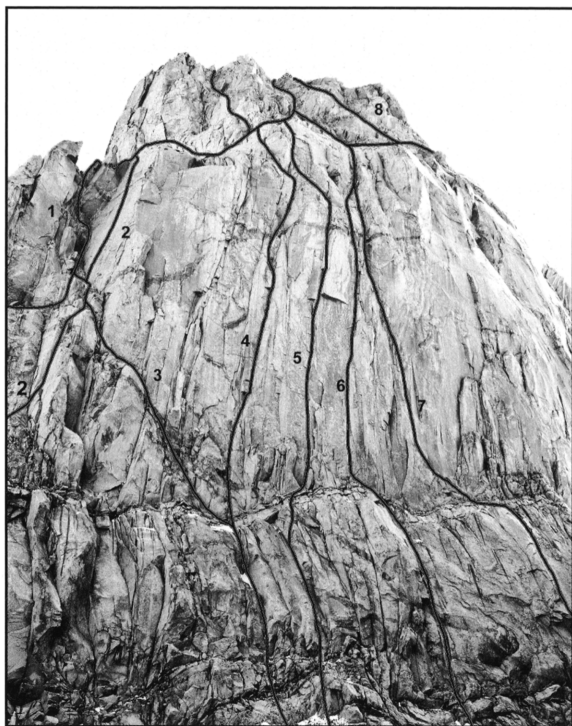
*Editor's note: this was the first continuous ascent of the northwest ridge of Mermoz, the ridge having been climbed in two sections, during November 2001, by Zlatko Koren and Vasja Kosuta as far as a col 100m below the summit. Bennett and Lempe made a significant variation, climbing over 500m of new terrain at the start, left of the original.*

*Poincenot, southwest face, Rise of the Machines.* Over the years Jens Holsten, Mikey Schaefer, and I spent hours studying a high-resolution photo, picking out a line on this aesthetic face. It looked like high-quality, straight-in cracks to where it would join established lines. We were wrong.

We took our time on the approach and even laughed our way up the initial seven free pitches. The laughter stopped at the base of the headwall. The headwall had looked as if it would offer perfect hand cracks. However, this expectation was squashed when Jens led the first pitches of a steep, exfoliating, and all but closed crack. His high-stepping from a 000 C3 to a hook move off an ice tool and Mikey's run-out .75 Camalot crack and subsequent crack switch (read large pendulum), earned them both medals of honor. We repented our optimism often during the three days it took to complete the route.

Mikey led a huge aid block on day two. When the terrain finally broke down, Jens led into the night, arriving at an Ahwahnee Ledge at 1 a.m. The ledge was spacious and the night short.

At 5 a.m. we sat up simultaneously, after dreaming of suffocating and putting in ear plugs because of increasing wind. I led into broken crack systems, with the idea of eventually breaking right to join the established lines. We simul-climbed on moderate terrain and traversed on a red, chossy dike before seeing signs of other routes. I connected lines between tattered anchors



Southwest face of Poincenot. (1) Fonrouge-Rosasco (900M, 6c A0, 1968). (2) Southern Cross (1,000m, 6b+ A1, Copp-Taylor, 2002). (3) Benedetti-DeGregori variation start (6c, 2010). (4) El Sacrificio del Raton. (5) Rise of the Machines. (6) Judgement Day. (7) Historia Interminable (550m 6c A3, Cobo-Murcia, 1987). (8) Original Route (550m, 5+ M3, Cochran-Whillans, 1962). *Mikey Schaefer. Route lines by Rolando Garibotti*

Terminator theme: Judgement Day is just right of our line. [Rise of the Machines lies between El Sacrificio del Raton (900m, ca 600 new, 5.11 A1, Sharratt-Wilkinson, 2006) and Judgement Day (900m, 650 new, 5.11 A1, Gerberding-Smith, 1992), finishing with the 1968 Fonrouge-Rosasco and the original 1962 Route]. We climbed it from December 13 to 15.

JOEL KAUFFMAN, AAC

*Aguja Poincenot (3,002m), southeast face, Via Russo.* In 2011 Sergey Dashkevitch (29), Arkadiy Seregin (52), and I (45) attempted a new route on the east face of Poincenot but retreated in bad weather. We returned in 2012 having as our goal the long, cold southeast face, and were joined by Eugeny Dmitrienko (37). I think it is impossible to climb this wall in a light-and-fast style, so we climbed capsule style, moving our portaledge twice.

On February 8 we established a snow cave beneath St. Exupéry and the following day took six-and-a-half hours to find a way across the glacier to the face. That day we climbed and fixed the first two pitches, both 6a M4. Next day, with heavy rain in the morning, we fixed three more pitches, the first two free, at 6a/6b, and the third A2/A3. On the 11th it rained sporadically all day, but we added four more pitches, with difficulties up to 6b A2/A3. On the 12th we placed a portaledge at

and found my way to the base of a right-slanting, hands-to-fists crack. This crack earned me extra credit, as did the steep crack off the following belay. I pulled into the sun on the right side of the summit and finished the spiral staircase to gain the high point. We had reached the halfway point.

We walked the knife-edge ridge individually. Jens led the initial raps and we paused to finish the gas canister before rapping the headwall. The small amount of gas melted a few liters of water and rehydrated a meal. Mikey led the raps down the headwall, rebuilding every anchor and salvaging gear from the routes that crossed. Halfway down, Jens and I looked across the Torre Valley for the source of a loud noise; it was rockfall on El Mocho, and the debris ran over the entire moraine approach, rock dust sweeping over Niponino. We had been there a few days earlier.

We called our route Rise of the Machines (900m, 650 new, VI 5.11 A2+), in keeping with the