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FOR A KITE BRAND, GETTING THE PRODUCT SHOTS SORTED IN TIME FOR THE RELEASE OF A NEW KITE IS ONE OF THE TENSEST PERIODS OF THE YEAR. THE KITES HAVE TO GET THERE IN TIME, THE CREW HAVE TO BE IN PLACE, AND CONDITIONS HAVE TO BE ON.

THANKFULLY - DESPITE THIS BEING A COMMERCIAL NECESSITY - IT CAN ALSO BE A WHOLE LOT OF FUN..

Words and photos: Hannes Burner

We had been planning the product video shoot for the new Reo for many months. The printed prototypes of the new kite would be ready beginning of May and the deadline for the video was the end of June. Torrin, Ozone's product and media manager, gave us some basic requirements for the video: proper wave conditions, blue water, board shorts, empty lineup and low budget. Not too much to ask for! And where the hell would we find these conditions this time of year? Off-season Cape Verde seemed to be an option but we would need to be lucky to get a good swell there... We kept one eye hopefully on the forecast. ▶



EVERYTHING

DROP EVERYTHING

GOOD

Our Portuguese wave rider, Paulino Pereira, was the first to get excited about a possible swell. It looked like it could be on for the following weekend so we got on to our Irish big wave rider, Ryan Coote, who wasn't convinced: "That is a 'week' forecast which makes it a WEAK forecast!" Then we had the kites - these were still somewhere between our Vietnam factory and Barcelona office, and seemed unlikely to arrive in time. Then we would have to send them to Paulino in Lisbon which would take another 2 or 3 days.

IT SOUNDED LIKE MISSION IMPOSSIBLE...



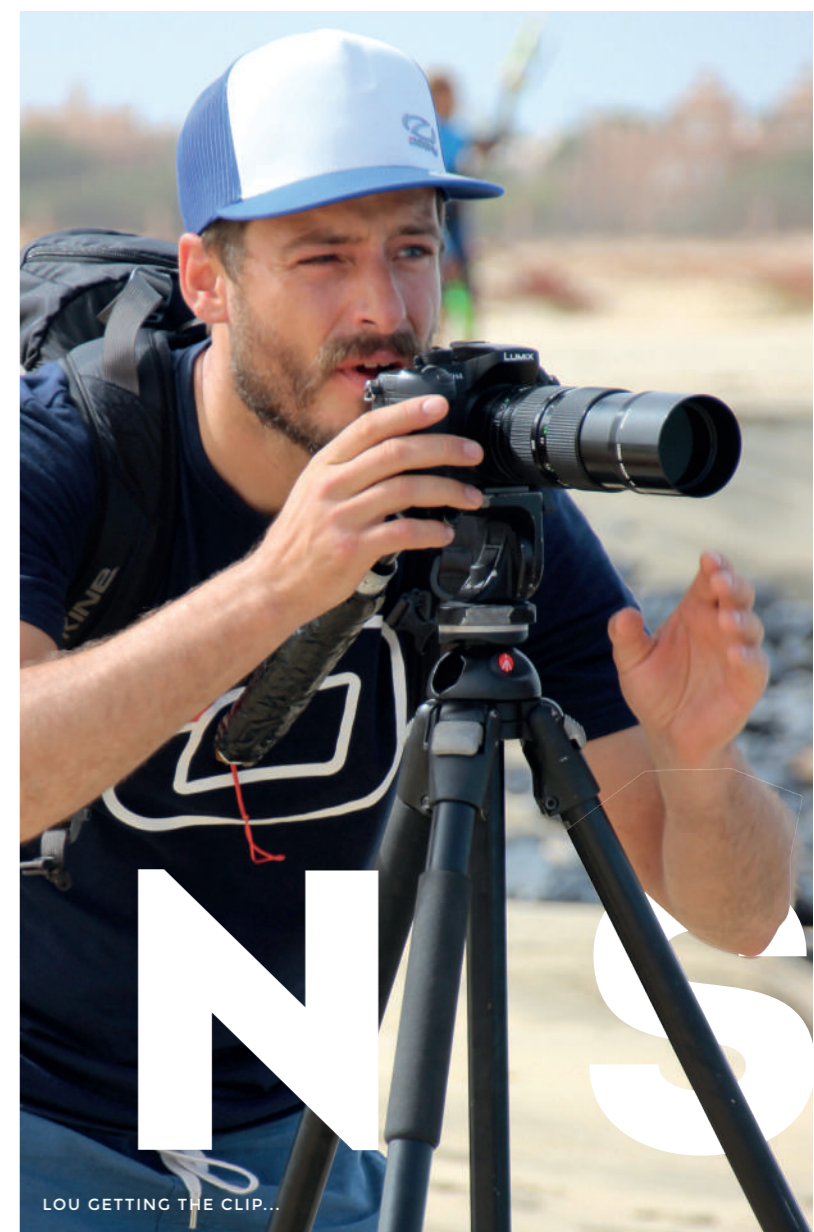
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Three days later, on the Tuesday, and Paulino was getting more confident: "On Friday and Saturday Cape Verde will be firing! This might be our chance to film the Reo in the last swell of the season in Cape Verde." Plus the island would be empty as, according to the locals, all the riders that had spent the season there had already gone home. And for the shoot we really needed an empty wave line-up. Then some good news came - the proto kites arrived in Barcelona. Suddenly it was Mission On. And we all dropped everything to get there... We couldn't risk a courier to ship the kites on time so someone would have to take them on the plane to Lisbon to make sure they got there for a Thursday evening flight. Ryan and Lou Merkert, our cameramen, considered their options and shuffling around their agendas they found a way to join in. On Tuesday evening everybody had booked flights to Lisbon for Thursday, including myself as courier, caddie and camera assistant.

We all arrived at midnight in Sal and the Cape Verdean custom agents couldn't resist checking our mountain of baggage, but thankfully they let us pass without making us pay import duties on the tons of brand new kites we brought along. Paulino had sorted us a Chinese-built pick-up truck and a local apartment, and excitement for what the next day might bring kept the team awake until late... ▶



THE RIDERS



LOU GETTING THE CLIP...

DAWN

PATROL



Lou woke us up at 6am on Friday morning and we went to Ponta Preta at first light to check the stage. There was nobody there and the water was worryingly flat. We grabbed some breakfast in the village, and at 9am we went back to the spot. The wind had picked up, and the swell was starting to show. Every time a knee-high set rolled in the team cheered.

Ryan was out first and Paulino followed and got a fairly good sized wave straight away. It broke so close to the rocks that he risked his fins and feet, but he gave it his all for the camera. By midday the swell was head-high and Lou got his first good footage. Still none of the locals were in the line-up, and before long set-after-set of crystal clear pumping waves were rolling in for the boys to ride. We couldn't believe that we nailed the conditions for this shoot!

After a few hours shooting, the African elements were starting to take their toll on us and the equipment so we decided to take a quick lunch to recharge our batteries and back-up the full to bursting SD cards.

WHEN WE CAME BACK TO PONTA PRETA THE SWELL WAS WAY BIGGER AND THE WIND DIRECTION PERFECT CROSS-OFF.

The guys rode until sunset and, although the light got worse, Lou kept on shooting and filling up his cards. By the end of the day we could have gone back home as we had scored enough footage for the entire product clip. Friday happened to be Ryan's birthday too, and he couldn't imagine a better present than the day's session. Airtón Cozzolino's sister even sang him a birthday song over our seafood dinner. ▶

BIG KITES, BIG TANGLES

The next day we were on the water by 9, the wind was blowing 15 knots side-off and the swell was building up nicely. Heavyweight Ryan took the 12m and Paulino took the 10. Again we were alone in the line-up and Lou opted for the down-the-line angle as the light for that was only good in the morning. The conditions were hard for the guys, and when heading out through the heavy shore-dump Ryan snapped his board. Thankfully he had three more with him...

Ryan and Paulino tried to make the best out of the lightwind session, even as the locals quit as the wind dropped further. Ryan decided to bodydrag into the break to shoot Paulino with the GoPro, but with the light wind the inevitable happened: a tangle. Ryan managed to relaunch his kite, but Paulino had to self-rescue as the lines were all messed up. Timing the sets, Paulino tried to use the current to get back to the shore but, with only around 30 meters to go, the kite got caught and he had to let everything go... Thankfully I was waiting for him on the beach – and the caddie saved the proto kite!

Lou was pretty ruthless and sent Paulino out again to get more footage which was going to be hard work on the 12... Every bottom turn was a gamble as the lines went slack. In one of the top turns Paulino passed across a steering line – his kite hit the water and the board leash also got tangled. Luckily the set passed quickly and Paulino had got time to release and undo everything. Then, chicken loop in one hand and board leash in the other, he prepared himself to let go if another huge set rolled in. Thankfully the 12m Reo pulled him out of the danger zone and once again everything was sorted and he relaunched the kite without any effort. But by lunchtime the wind had died down and Ponta Preta had stopped working. After Lunch, Lou was still hungry for more shots so we went to check out different spots on the island. At Shark Beach we saw some tourists watching baby sharks in the lagoon and, although the scenery was stunning and a few medium sized left-handers were rolling in, Lou couldn't persuade the boys to ride with the prospect of Mummy and Daddy shark checking on their kids! ▶





THE WILD WEST

Paulino told us of the rough west coast and that we might find something there. It was getting late and our chances to score were slim but we thought we would try our luck. The dirt track to the spot was pretty extreme and our Chinese truck did a superb job. Finally we got to the secret spot where strong offshore wind and shoulder-high waves awaited us. We found a small cove where entering the water seemed possible and pumping up the kite was a challenge as we didn't want to put the protos on the razor sharp rocks. The launch was tricky as there were rocks and sea urchins everywhere. Paulino cut his toe badly, but he didn't want to miss this session on the 7m. Ryan was out first with the 9m and he scored some nice sets just as Lou put his camera in position. The scenery was amazing and he ran around trying different angles to capture the beauty of the moment. It was a short lived session as the wind started getting funny, so they made a heading to a landing spot downwind...

With no more swell over the following days we spent time filming fly-bys and close-ups of the Reo. Lou was stoked with the exotic scenery of the island, he was so into filming the off-road sequences and lifestyle stuff for a second video project – maybe we can give the footage to the Chinese car company!

SO FOR US THIS WAS A GREAT TRIP FOR FILMING THE KITE, BUT ALSO A REMINDER AS A KITER TO ALWAYS FOLLOW YOUR INSTINCTS WHEN THE ELEMENTS ARE CALLING: A REMINDER TO BE INSPIRED, AND TO DROP EVERYTHING FOR THE SESSION. ■

