

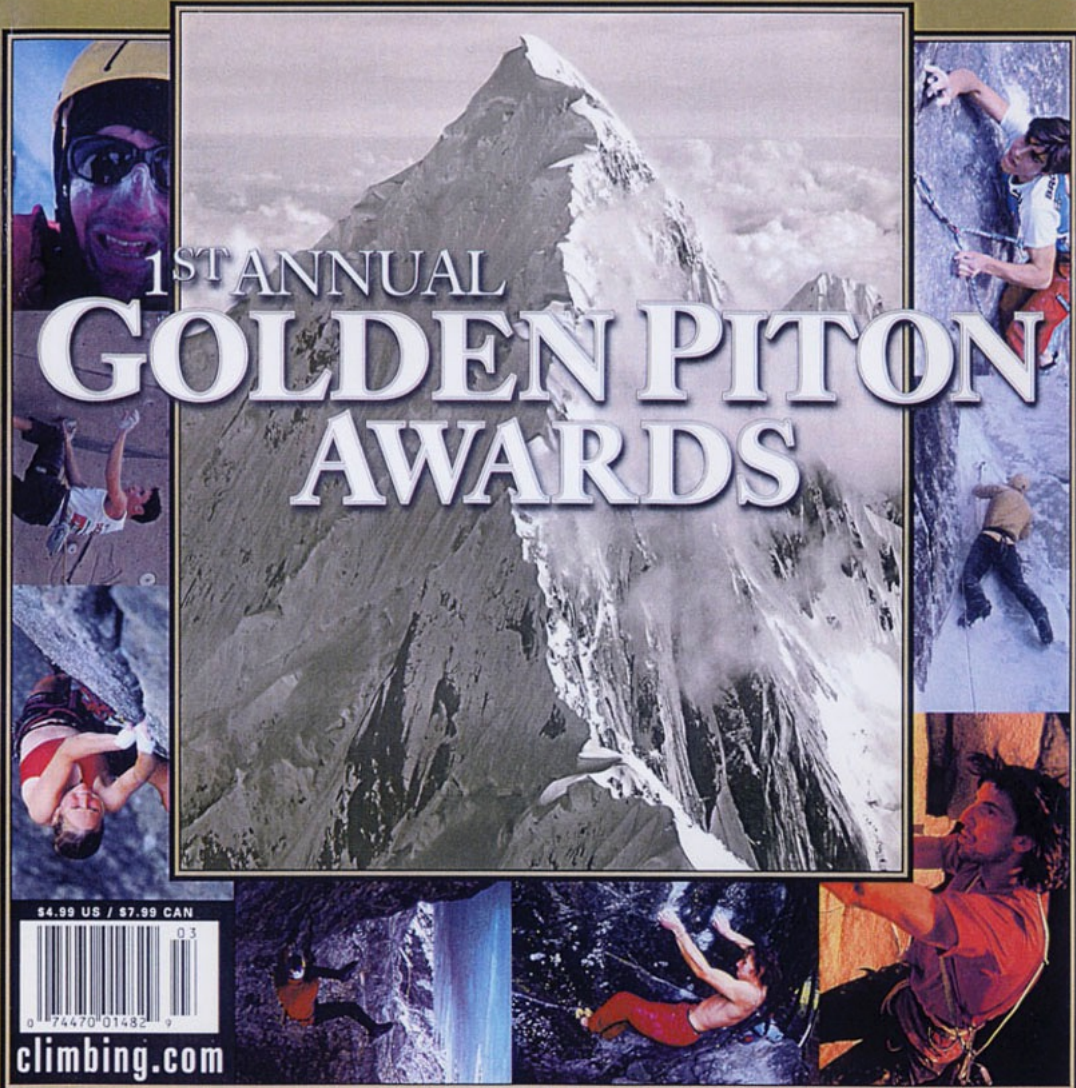
GREATEST CLIMBING ACHIEVEMENTS OF 2002

# Climbing

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## 1ST ANNUAL GOLDEN PITON AWARDS

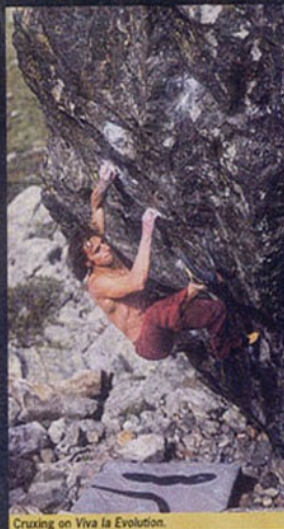


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## BOULDERING



Cruising on *Viva la Evolution*.



"Slimpering" on *New Base Line*.

### BOULDERING Berd Zangerl *Viva la Evolution* (V15) and *New Base Line* (V15)

Internationally unknown until 2001, Bernd Zangerl of Austria is now at the forefront of an elite group of climbers who are pushing the limits of free climbing. The hardest moves are found on boulder problems, and of the world's hardest problems Zangerl has climbed three: Last year he bagged the second ascent of *Dreamtime*, and, within an incredible two-month span this fall, established *Viva la Evolution* at Alm in the Austrian Tyrol and *New Base Line* at Magic Wood, Switzerland. Tall, proud, independent lines, they are both unrepeatable, although Dave Graham has worked on *New Base Line* and confirmed the grade. Zangerl, 24, considers both of his new problems to be harder than *Dreamtime*.

So what's a "hard V15" boulder problem like? Imagine the holds on the hardest vertical boulder

problem that you could climb. Now slap these holds on a problem that's 30 to 45 degrees overhanging and you get a rough idea of the difficulty of *Viva la Evolution* and *New Base Line*. Both are long, with 13 and 11 moves respectively. *Viva la Evolution* climbs a 45-degree, overhanging granito prow on minuscule, razor-sharp holds. *New Base Line* climbs the center of a 30-degree-overhanging granite shield and finishes with a series of long reaches between sloping crimps, or — as Zangerl calls them — "slimppers." Since you can't slap for a slimper, the reaches must be made statically, with ab-clenching body tension and robotic precision. Says Zangerl, "If you don't grab the holds just right, or if your feet come off, you're finished."

It's hard to attribute Zangerl's achievements to anything except raw talent. "I'm a normal-looking, normal-sized guy," says the 5-foot-9-inch, 145-pound geography student. Although he has been climbing since he was 16, Zangerl didn't start bouldering until a

more three years ago. (He doesn't do much indoor training, preferring to climb outside.) In fact, Zangerl credits his recent improvement to a knee injury that curtailed his outdoor climbing last winter and forced him to train on a campus board for the first time in his life.

Given the apparent ease with which Zangerl has risen to the pinnacle of the sport, who can doubt his statement that V15 is not the limit? "I have boulders where I am not able to make many of the moves," he says, "but I think they are possible for me in the coming years."

— DP

#### HONORABLE MENTION

- Josune Bereziartu, *Travesía de Balzola* (V13/14 or 5.14c/d), a 40-move, upward-rising traverse at the Balzola Cave in northern Spain.
- Fred Nicole, John Gaskins, and Markus Bock (plus the aforementioned Zangerl) all claim V15 first ascents.