



“And you can tell *Rolling Stone* magazine that my last words were...I’m on drugs!”

PHOTO: ERIK CARLSÉN

## ALMOST FAMOUS

SEVENTEEN-YEAR-OLD ERIK CARLSÉN LIVED AND PHOTOGRAPHED THE DREAM

**I**n November 2011, Erik Carlsén was sitting in his high school English class in Gothenburg, Sweden, when the e-mail arrived. Beanie Milne Home, the marketing and team manager for Faction Skis, wondered if he might be interested in photographing a handful of Faction’s pro team for six weeks starting in January. It would be busy—he’d have to go to Whistler, Revelstoke, Whitewater, Breckenridge, Denver, Verbier, St. Anton, and Chamonix—and he’d

have to deliver high-end shots for Faction’s catalog and website. He’d also have to endure long road trips with fun people, eat good food, and ski deep powder.

Yes, Carlsén replied to Milne Home, playing it cool. He could probably make time for that assignment. He just had to check with his, um, teachers.

“And that’s when we found out he was only 17,” says Milne Home.

There had been hints before. When Faction bought Carlsén’s work in 2010—images of his childhood friend and Faction skier Oskar Pedersen that ran in a catalog—the finances hadn’t seemed right. “We couldn’t understand what the deal was because the photos were really cheap, but really good,” says Milne Home. So good, in fact, that she and Faction founder Tony McWilliam offered Carlsén the six-week assignment based solely on merit. Even after they learned his age, their *Almost Famous*-esque offer stood, albeit with new variables on the planning side. “I was like, ‘Do I need to speak with your mom?’” Milne Home recalled. “And he said, ‘No, no, it’s fine.’”

The trip coincided with a two-month work placement required of high school seniors at Carlsén’s NTI Media School. So with his mother and Milne Home calling to check on him daily, Carlsén flew to Vancouver and boarded a 12-hour bus to Revelstoke, then Nelson, where he spent a week shooting eight skiers under gray skies.

“He basically turned a week that wouldn’t have been very good into a week that was really successful,” says Faction skier Drew Petersen.

From Nelson, Carlsén caught a bus to

Whistler to shoot with big-mountain skier Shane Carmichael. Their first day, Carmichael led them up a peak in the Whistler backcountry. Carlsén, who lives six hours from the nearest resort and mostly skis park, was gripped. “Shane skied a big line,” says the Swede. “I had all my camera equipment, probably 65 pounds, and I was like, ‘OK, I’ll try to get down this run, but I’m not sure if I’ll survive it.’”

His next stop was more relaxed, shooting park and urban features in Summit County, Colorado. “We’d look through old magazines every night and come up with ideas,” says Petersen. “We shot mining buildings and railroads in Leadville and creek gaps in Montezuma. He takes his camera everywhere, even to the grocery store.”

After swinging through Austria, Switzerland, and France, Carlsén got home on a Sunday night, just in time to go back to school the next morning. You could call it a solid trip: The Swede saw a fair bit of two continents on someone else’s dime, Faction is publishing his photos in international print ads and, oh yeah, he won Photographer of the Year honors at his high school. —DEVON O’NEIL



ERIC NORMAN