

TRANSWORLD SURF BUSINESS

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"Are you ready to double your business?" Why Jay Wilson of Vans thinks our industry is poised for explosive growth. **Page 18**

EXPANDING HORIZONS

Redline Entertainment is poised to take action sports to the mainstream.

Tony Hawk's got game. After tackling the video-game marketplace with his *Pro Skater* franchise, he set aim at the WWF—and conquered it.

Before the release of *Tony Hawk's Trick Tips, Volume 1*, the World Wrestling Federation dominated *Billboard's* Recreational Sports Video sales charts. But in November 2000, Hawk unleashed his own Vader Bomb on the WWF, and he quickly had the WWF videos in a figure-four leglock.

As of this July, *Trick Tips* had been in the top ten for 30 weeks and sold more than 80,000 copies, making it certified platinum and the best-selling skate video of all time. But Hawk didn't do this on his own. Much of *Trick Tips'* remarkable success is credited to Redline Entertainment, a Best Buy-owned company whose goal is to introduce action-sports music,

videos, and interactive games to the mass marketplace.

So far, Redline has brought ten action-sports titles in DVD to mainstream outlets like Best Buy, Tower Records, Virgin Records, and The Wherehouse. Ten more DVDs are scheduled to hit shelves this September, including an updated version of Poor Specimen's *Loose Change*.

Why is Redline so interested in the action-sports market? "We have a fundamental belief that every generation deserves its own set of heroes," says Redline Entertainment President Gary Arnold, who adds that the action-sports market is "hugely important."

"When we looked at the heroes who were emerging for the new generation, it was clear that action-sports heroes were becoming very important in the mass marketplace," he says.

Redline Entertainment is not the first mainstream company to bring action-sports videos to the mass market. Earlier attempts flopped, and Arnold says it was because outsiders didn't understand the market and released films that weren't authentic. "Previous attempts were unsuccessful because their credibility was eroded by the time it hit the mass marketplace," says Arnold. "They [outside companies] took a very generic approach to content and marketed the videos under things like 'Extreme' and 'X' sports."

Redline Entertainment doesn't pretend it understands the finicky and not-so-forgiving action-sports market. It left that job to Encinitas-based action-sports and music consultant Surfdog Sports and Entertainment (same group as Surfdog Records). "Surfdog is our eyes and ears [to the action-sports market]," says Arnold. "They're leading us through this challenge. They have the relationships with the filmmakers."

Surfdog's Pierce Flynn is excited about his partnership with Redline. "We see this as a great opportunity for action sports to grow credibly into the mass market," says Flynn.

"Redline's letting the trendsetters lead the image. It's going to be good for everyone."

Poor Specimen General Manager Sam Yago agrees: "One of the things we're most stoked on is that we're able to get into the mainstream market with an unfiltered voice."

Clearly the relationship is positive for action-sports film producers, but will it be good for the 'core retailer? Yago says yes, because it will drive more traffic to action-sports stores. "Videos are not the most important product in a shop—it's the hardgoods and the softgoods that really run the shop. Say a kid buys the video at Best Buy, he watches it, then he gets stoked and goes to buy the skateboard at the 'core shop.'"

And increasing the enthusiasm for action sports is one of Redline's goals. "We want to become the next step in the growth of the industry," claims Arnold. "We don't know everything, but we know certain things pretty well. We want to be the partner of the filmmakers and the athletes and help grow this to the levels we think it's capable of becoming."

—John Maynard