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Old Swiss powder hound is still in the frame

Perret, one of the old-timers on the freeride circuit at the age of 44, recently inaugurated a photo exhibition of his off-piste exploits at the Olympic Museum in Lausanne. He is one of around 30 professional riders in Switzerland who have managed to build a career gliding through knee-deep powder and jumping off cliffs.

Over the past twenty years, freeride skiing and snowboarding have witnessed a boom in Europe, USA and Japan. As a result, the market for extreme skiing DVDs and films continues to grow - a boon for athletes and businessmen like Perret, and an ideal showcase for sponsors.

Dominique Perret says that he has managed to stay on top because of his passion for skiing and the mountains. "It's also a sport where you really evolve. At the beginning, you are much more physical, but as you get older you focus more on the mental side. Today I can do different, perhaps more difficult things that in the past I wouldn't have attempted. But it's important to maintain a high standard

of skiing. If you don't, your sponsors could tell you to stop; you have to be creative.

I try to remain true to myself. It's a sport for individualists. The aim of the game is to leave your mark in the snow. I don't want to be on top of a mountain with 15 other people.



Alpine freeriding near Davos

The films I have produced are always about skiing, but the style changes. The message at the beginning was very sport-oriented, but now it's more about freedom and living out your dream. I'm interested in going places where no one has ever been before. I want to communicate my passion for this sport and its freedom using beautiful pictures - some-

thing timeless.

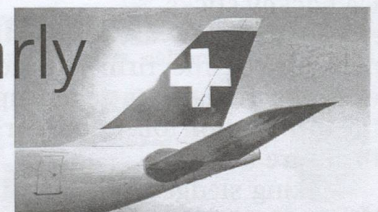
I like to make an analogy with music. Freeriding is a bit like rap, jazz or rock - an instinctive, spontaneous style. It's the opposite of say classical music, or competitive skiing, where you have to follow the music - precise and organised. I'm not encouraging people to ski where I go - that would be ridiculous. I'm trying to open up perspectives, to make people dream.

More and more people are going freeriding, as they really need some freedom. Ski resorts have set up runs that are just boring motorways. People are fed up and are looking for some adventure. But you can't be a consumer of mountains. Attitudes need to change. The most important thing to learn - security-wise - is to take your time. The mountain decides if it's safe or not. People need to learn to say, 'I'll come back tomorrow, next week or next year' and not want everything now because they've paid. That attitude leads to dangerous behaviour. Most accidents are due to stupid behaviour rather than any real danger." *swissinfo*

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