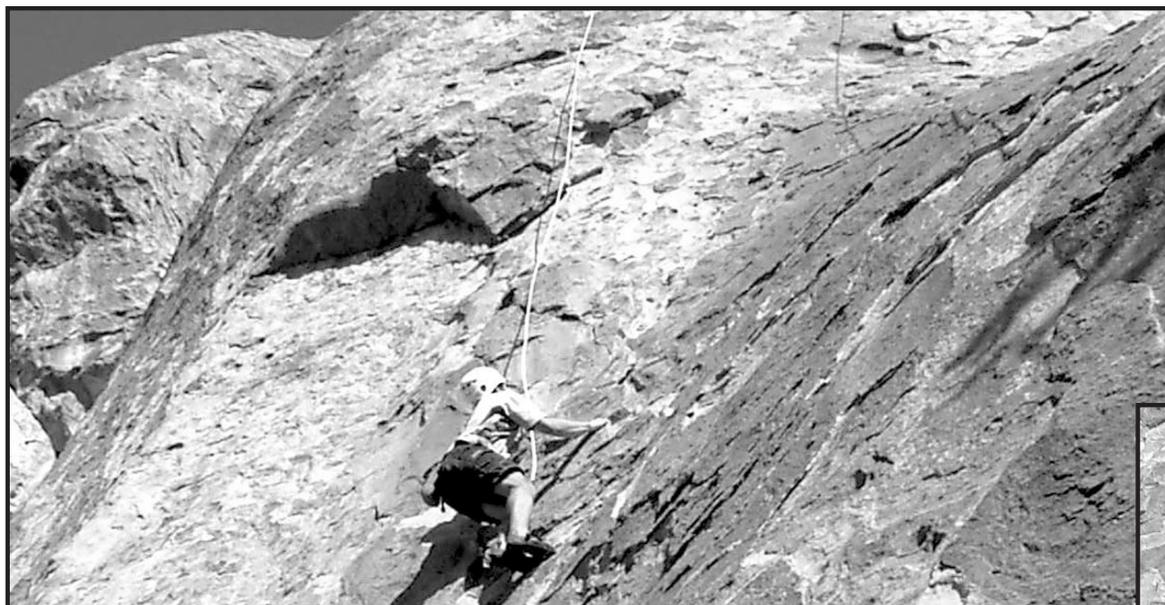


# FREE Entertainment Weekly for El Paso • Juarez • Las Cruces

# what's up

what's up LOCAL November 13-19, 2003



Marcus Garcia scales the rock face at Hueco Tanks.

## Second Annual ROCK JAM

Photos and story by Lauren Courcy

Two hundred feet high, with chest pressed close and fingers tucked into the rock's natural pockets, Hueco Tanks is usually as quiet as the sky.

But the park was transformed last Saturday, when, in a fit of faith in the rock-climbing community and Red Bull company, Hueco Tanks opened its gates to a couple hundred climbers, musicians, dancers and spectators for the second-annual Red Bull Rock Jam.

First came the rocks, then the jam.

Forty climbers – a lean, muscular lot of men and women hailing from here to California – zipped up six vertical routes with

names like Alice in Bananaland and Malice in Bucketland, clocking their times on each.

The fastest two men and fastest two women ended the day on a route named Window Pain, which decided the race for each. Money hung in the balance: \$1,375 for first place and \$600 for second.

They had scaled nearly 1,000 feet already that day, when the leading men, Marcus Garcia and Matt Wilder, and leading women Tori Allen and Claire Murphy Bell, reached the base of that last route.

Understand that these people do not sit in offices, send memos or curry favor with buttoned-down bosses for a living. They climb. Either they climb for

work or they work to climb.

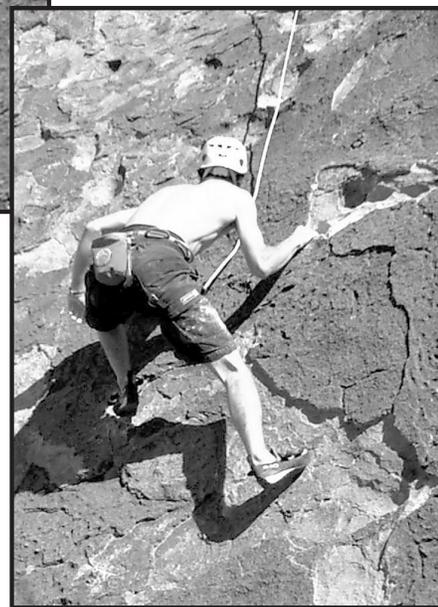
They are the types that guide mountaineering exhibitions and count climbing Everest on their to-do list – like Garcia – or that solve the Rubik's Cube on San Francisco street corners for change, earning enough to climb through the winter – like Wilder – or that bunk up in the desert around Hueco for months at time, year after year, because they need little more than gorgeous boulders and food to live – like Murphy Bell – or who are so young and strong that companies like Red Bull pay for their climbing trips – like Allen.

Garcia and Wilder, and Murphy Bell and Allen, would be only seconds apart, but the organizers kept the winners secret until after dark, when the whole scene slid over from the park's guarded oasis to the Hueco Rock Ranch. The ranch, owned by outdoorsman Rob Rice, is less a ranch and more a depot for the coming and going

of world-class rock climbers and the granola set in general.

The night's fiesta was a rare love-in between the usually very protective Hueco Tanks management and everybody else.

A few park managers traded their ranger uniforms for jeans and boots and partied with the public out at the ranch. A bonfire lashed the cold out of the night, and a band jammed on the front porch until the times were tallied



Matt Wilder placed first at the Rock Jam.

and winners were announced.

Wilder placed first, scaling more than 1,000 feet of rock face in 10 minutes, 10 seconds, while Garcia fell just five seconds behind. Murphy Bell clocked 15 minutes, 20 seconds topping Allen by a slim four seconds.

To protect the fragile ecosystem, Hueco Tanks State Historic Site is rarely opened to so many at once, but the park is open to the public by reservation or on a limited, first-come, first-serve basis. Guided climbing tours and tours of the site's pictographs, flora and fauna are available. Call 849-6684 for more information.