

## Motocross : March

Los Angeles 310-751-3960

B4-0D7U0 7.875 x 10.5

TR062\_\_0D7U0.pdf

Tue Jan 07 16:48:40 2014

MOC-140300-GNE.indd 17/14 4:45 PM PAGE 62

QuadGraphics  
PREMEDIA LOS ANGELES

## BEHIND THE CURTAIN: ERIC PERONNARD

The dude is a legend—Eric Peronnard has had his hands in racing longer than most of us have known what a dirt bike is. Born in France, Peronnard knew as a kid that only two things were for certain: he would one day live in America, and he would work in the motorcycle industry. After finishing school in 1978, he packed his bags and moved to the US for six months to see what American life was really like, but it was the American dirt biking life that he was truly interested in. When he returned to France, Peronnard set his plans in motion and opened a motorcycle dealership in Grenoble, becoming the youngest Suzuki dealer in his home country at the age of 20. Four years later, he sold his dealership despite its success and relocated to the US for good to bring his dreams to fruition.

The résumé he has amassed since then is extensive and probably too long to list, but he was the creative mind behind the US Open of Supercross (which is now the Monster Energy Cup), Minimoto, and the very popular Endurocross series. Peronnard is also a consultant for ESPN and handles all X Games motorsport events. The Geneva Supercross is Peronnard's first love, though, and the one event that has remained constant throughout his work for over two decades. What's been Peronnard's secret to success? He has a few, but elevating the show-

manship of his events to heights never seen, and treating fans to something entirely new, has become his trademark. "Really, the key in European racing is based on the fans," he explains. "The fans are what make a difference, and they only see a race like this once a year. That's why it sells out three months in advance. This is the biggest motorsports event in Switzerland—not just motorcycles, all motorsports. It's a very special place here because you have three languages—French, German, and Italian—and each segment of the country has a different personality. Here, you mix them up together, and it just turns crazy. Italy is also only about an hour away and France is just 30 minutes from here, so you have 30,000 fans and several countries—it's like a Motocross of Nations in a way."

At an event like in Geneva, Peronnard is everywhere, appearing to have multiple clones, as he never stops moving in effort to ensure everything is running smoothly. But through the melee that he calls his work schedule, one thing is obvious: he is a motocross fan like the rest of us. Peronnard truly appreciates what he does and everyone involved, and he possesses an invaluable gift of being able to make people feel welcome. "It's a lifestyle," he says. "Just treat people the way that you would like to be treated. A lot of promoters are business people, and they do a great job, but I think sometimes you miss

out. I love motorcycles before being a promoter, and when it comes to a choice between the sport and the athletes or myself, I'm always going to choose the sport and the athletes. It's been paying off and there's no reason to question my choice. I'm sure I could have made a few more dollars making other decisions, but I wouldn't sleep as well as I do. I get to meet everybody and in a different environment. The friendships that we have built with the riders here—it's impossible to do that at home because it's so intense and they have so much work to do with testing and riding. Here, they come and really rely on you 100 percent, so you can engage with them on such a different level."

What's next for Eric Peronnard? For someone who has been a part of so much, it's truly tough to predict, but the Frenchman will always be devoted to the two-wheeled sport he chose to dedicate his life to so long ago. "I have accomplished 10 times more than I could have dreamed about," Peronnard reflects. "I just wanted to make a living in the motorcycle industry, and I have done a lot more than that. I'm not saying that I'm retiring—it's still my number one sport and passion, and there's nothing better than starting a bike and going for a ride. At the end of the day, I'm always in the game to elevate the sport for the better and to be good to the riders and good to the industry." ♥