



# REWIND

## Turning Back The Years... Video-Style

By Jeff Hemmel

In case you haven't noticed, retro is cool. Neon is back, '80s music is celebrated rather than ridiculed, and the mullet... well, two-out-of-three ain't bad. The point is vintage stuff is cool again, and why not? It gives us a chance to reconnect with our history and explore our roots, even if there is a little cringing and a lot of laughter along the way.

If you're looking to reconnect and explore a little personal watercraft history, I can't think of a better pair of videos than *Jet Ski Fever* (1984) and *Jet Dreams* (1989), both recently available for the first time in DVD. Both marked milestones of sorts

in 2009. *Jet Ski Fever*, a documentary of the once-dominant World Cup Series, celebrated its 25th anniversary. Meanwhile, the MTV-influenced *Jet Dreams* was re-released as a 20th Anniversary edition.

To celebrate, I tracked down copies of both, dug out some neon Jet Pilot duds of old, and threw in the popcorn. When I was finished I had the strong desire to polish up my stand-up skills...and the sudden urge to download the greatest hits of Duran Duran, the Hooters, and Flock of Seagulls. Weird.

### Jet Ski Fever

*Jet Ski Fever* is without doubt the grandfather of all personal watercraft videos. A professionally produced documentary chronicling the happenings and personalities involved in the 2003 World Cup, *Fever* was many early enthusiasts first look at professional PWC racing, as well as pro-caliber riders like Larry "The Ripper" Rippenkroeger and "Flyin' Brian" Bendix. Sure, their skis all had bad sticker jobs and facial hair seemed to be at its height of popularity, but that's what makes retro stuff so cool. I almost want to grow a 'stache after watching it.

All jokes aside, the film stands as an excellent history lesson into the sport and the glory days that



'83 Stricklen starter



"Flyin' Brian" Bendix



Gary Shlifer, *Jet Dreams*

were to follow. Brothers Mark and Chris Lauber's World Cup Series was considered the premier series of its time, with sponsorship from high-profile companies like Anheuser Busch and Panama Jack and a prominent spot on the country-wide national tour. By the time the tour's traveling road show got to Florida, riders had been duking it out for months. (They'd also been on one extended road trip and all that implies, but you won't get those juicy details here. *Fever* takes a professional tone from start to end.)

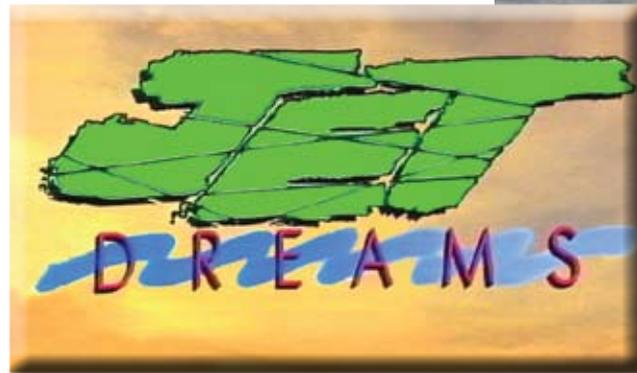
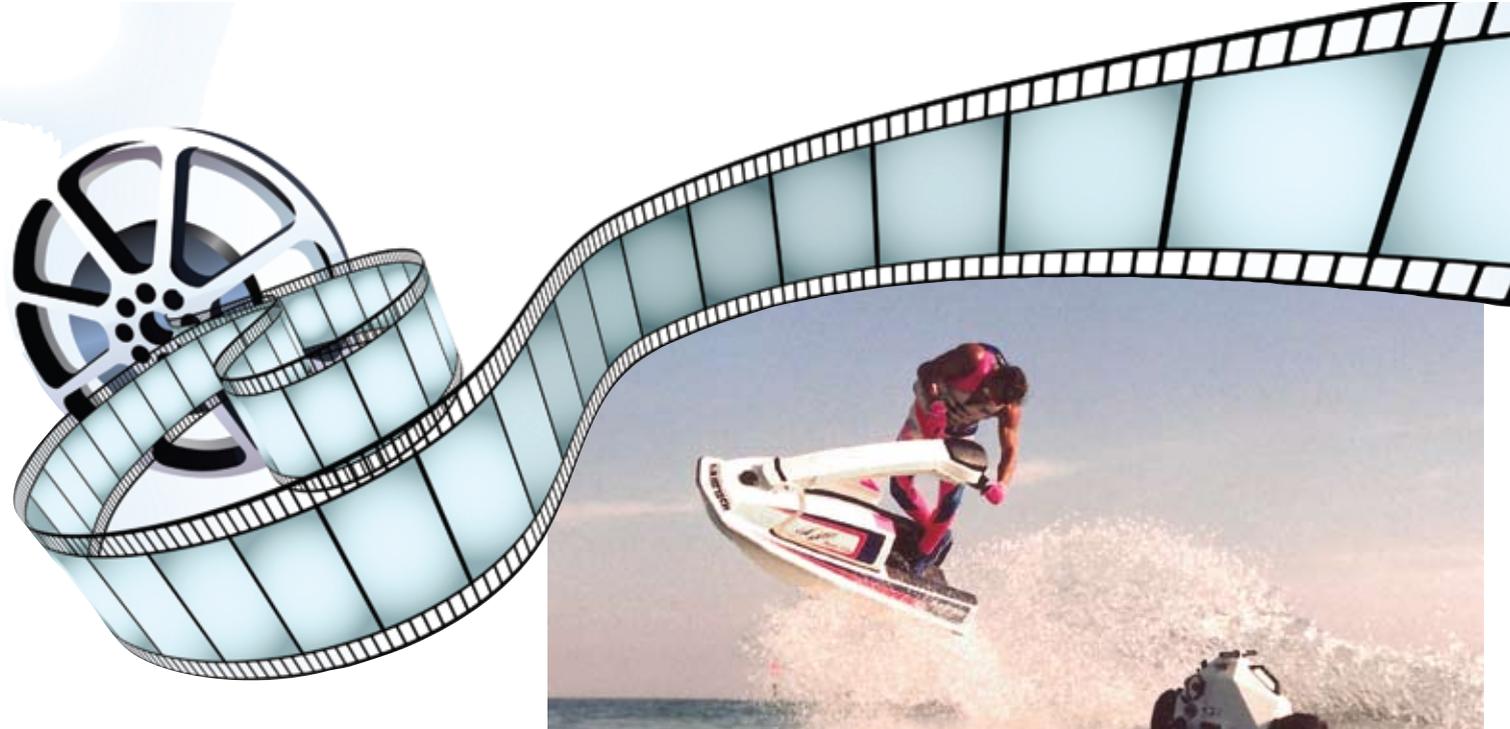
Highlights? The battle between Rippenkroeger and Bendix for the overall title takes center stage, but we also get to see Celeste Peterson take on the guys, a budding free-style champ named Dave "Flash" Gordon, and no less than five riders attack the Cypress Gardens water ski jump en masse. You'll also hear some recognizable tunes from the early '80s, as well as the title track *Jet Ski Fever*, a tune that's simultaneously so awesome — and awful — that you'll be humming it for days.

To purchase a DVD copy of *Jet Ski Fever*, contact Watercross International at 727/347-4440, [flroadraces@aol.com](mailto:flroadraces@aol.com).

Cypress Gardens water ski jump en masse

"The Ripper" Rippenkroeger





## Jet Dreams

I probably wore out my VCR when Jet Dreams was first released. With all its celebrity firepower, super slow-mo action, and in-water camera angles, you just had a feeling the sport was on the verge of something big. As were the video's stars, guys like the aforementioned Rippenkroeger, Chris "The Flying Fish" Fischetti, "Haulin' Harry" Goatcher, and Scott "Hollywood" Watkins.



Scott "Hollywood" Watkins.

The brainchild of Watkins and Director Gary Shlifer, Jet Dreams is part documentary and part music video, with a vague plotline thrown into the mix just to keep things interesting. The plot line follows Watkins as he searches for the girl of his "jet dreams," a dark-haired beauty he sees first while deep in slumber, and then occasionally encounters in real life as he, along with the other three, live out their other dreams on the water. Cheesy? Absolutely, but that's kind of a requirement of retro in my book.

For the price of admission, you'll get some eye-searing neon, a lot of freestyle and free riding, and a bang-up end part in the surf. Just don't expect Eric Malone-esque aerials; Watkins' and Rippenkroeger's nose stabs and bronco moves are the only hint of the high-flying acrobatics to come. But do expect to hear Chris Fischetti and Harry Goatcher talk in all their awesome dude-ness, Rippenkroeger to wear really short shorts, and Watkins to have some lingering camera angles that only a budding celebrity could pull off.

Hint? Don't tune out after the credits. Here you'll find a commercial for Watkins "signature" ski, featuring the

www.awahq.org



Criss Cross



"The Ripper" Rippenkroeger Chris "The Flying Fish" Fischetti, "Haulin' Harry" Goatcher, and Scott "Hollywood" Watkins.

one-time freestyle champ decked out as a nerd in an orange life preserver and taped-up glasses, before becoming a sort-of Jet Ski Terminator in pink-and-blue Jet Pilot and Oakley blades once his ski magically transforms. At the time I remember thinking the height and power of Watkins' 180 nose stab jumps in that final segment were amazing. And after all these years I have to admit, they still are.

To purchase a DVD copy of Jet Dreams, check out [www.directorcameraman.com/jetdreams.html](http://www.directorcameraman.com/jetdreams.html).

www.awahq.org

COMING SOON

**THE ALASKAN Wet Dog Race**  
2000 miles

Visit our website at <http://wetdograce.com> for more information and please take a minute to complete the online survey.