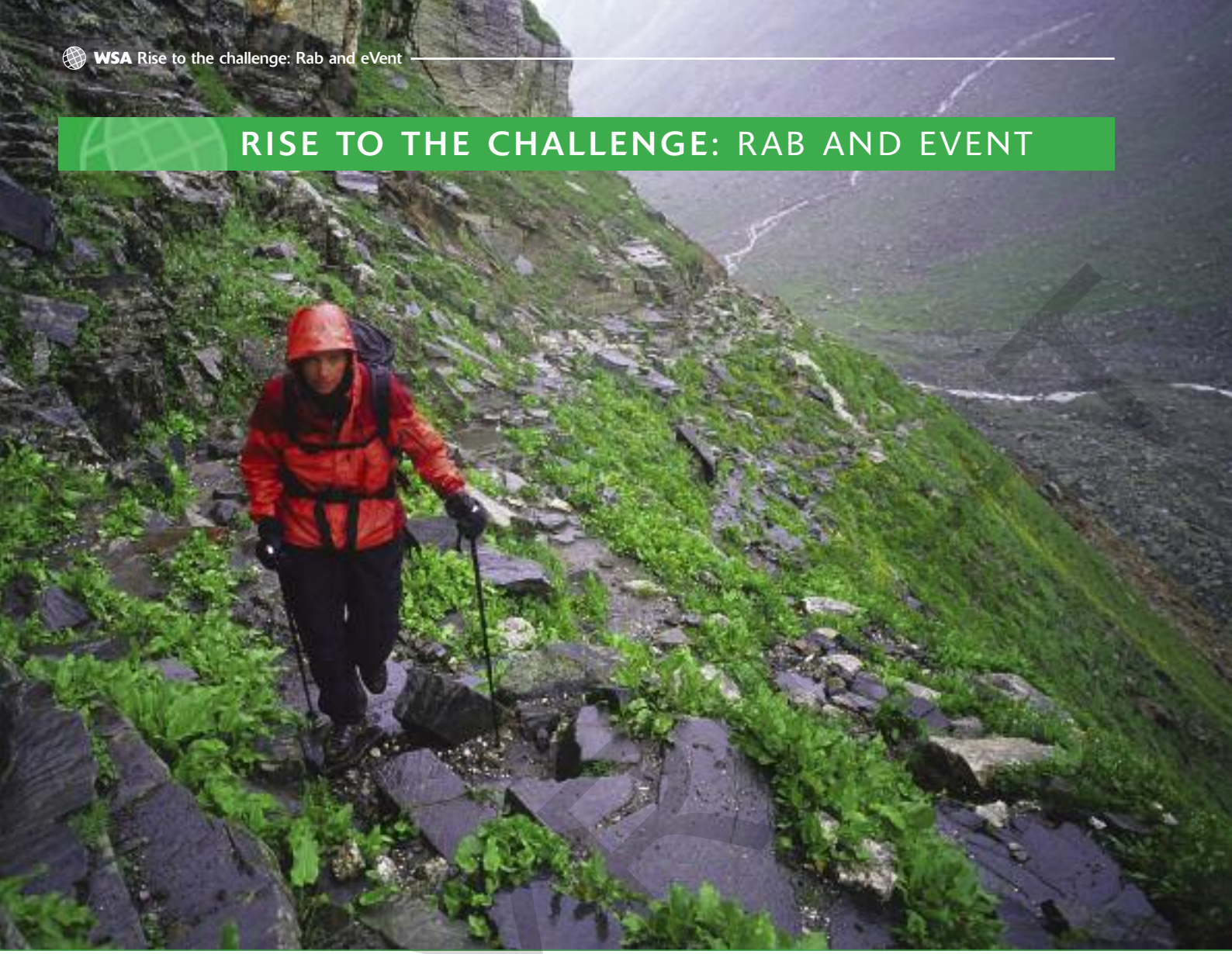
RISE TO THE CHALLENGE: RAB AND EVENT



High-end outdoor apparel brand Rab is one of the first to use a new waterproof fabric from eVent called DVL, offering high levels of weather protection in a lighter weight than tried-and-tested three-layer constructions.

New fabrics make year-round rainwear a reality

Outdoor apparel brand Rab has incorporated new waterproof fabrics from eVent into its spring 2013 line. It showcased several new styles at industry events in summer 2012. The Viper jacket for men and the Maverick jacket and pants for men and women are perhaps the most prominent products in the collection to feature the new waterproof fabric, eVent DVL. The two companies insist it is 100% waterproof, air permeable and breathable.

"We are proud of our commitment to using eVent fabrics and we have had a long and trusting partnership with the eVent fabrics team," said Matt Gowar, chief executive of Equip Outdoor Technologies, the parent company of Rab, at the time of the DVL announcement.

Hikers and other outdoor enthusiasts want protection from the wet in all seasons.

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"The new eVent DVL fabrics are a perfect solution that not only builds on our partnership but has allowed us to create a year-round rainwear line ideal for the active Rab consumer, who demands performance. It is truly the only summer rainwear that is comfortable and doesn't create a damp feeling next to the skin."

Four seasons

DVL fabric is described by eVent, a division of GE Energy, as lightweight and "highly breathable", specially suited to unlined garments for light outdoor activities, including cycling, trail-running and road-running. However, eVent says the fabric will also work well in the winter in cross-country skiing apparel, so it has the potential to be a product for all seasons. It's an unlined laminate that features a protective print and is applied directly onto eVent's proprietary waterproof membrane. So there is the face fabric on the outside, the membrane behind it and the protective print, designed with an eye-catching arrangement of triangular shapes, behind that to provide a durable protective screen for the membrane.

GE first developed this proprietary membrane technology in the 1990s to help it make more effective air filtration systems for gas turbines and other industrial applications. It soon found another niche in performance fabrics thanks to the technology's ability to offer air permeability for breathability and a high level of protection against rain and snow. It allows what GE has long referred to as "direct venting" of the body's heat and moisture through the fabric without letting water in from the outside environment. DVL stands for "direct venting lite".

Layer upon layer

Most in the outdoor industry are familiar with this concept and, naturally, other membrane technologies are widely available. Many of the membrane systems that are in use for clothing for extreme conditions use three-layer constructions, with the membrane layer sandwiched between a face fabric and a backing layer. Two-layer alternatives also exist with the membrane technology incorporated into the face fabric layer with only a drop liner layer behind it. This can work well in less expensive applications in which a lower level of durability is needed.

DVL, with its protective print behind the membrane layer is, therefore, somewhere between the two, a 2.5 layer construction, but one that breathes. The idea of 2.5 layers is not new, eVent acknowledges, but it says too many attempts in the past have provided too little breathability by virtue of being constructed from continuous polyurethane layers that block the pores in the membrane and stop air from getting through making garments uncomfortable to wear. Clothing brands were attracted to the idea because of the saving in weight and greater packability of 2.5-layer garments.



The Maverick jacket. Rather than three layers, the DVL fabric has face fabric on the outside, eVent's membrane behind it and just a protective print behind that. Garments are therefore lighter and more packable.

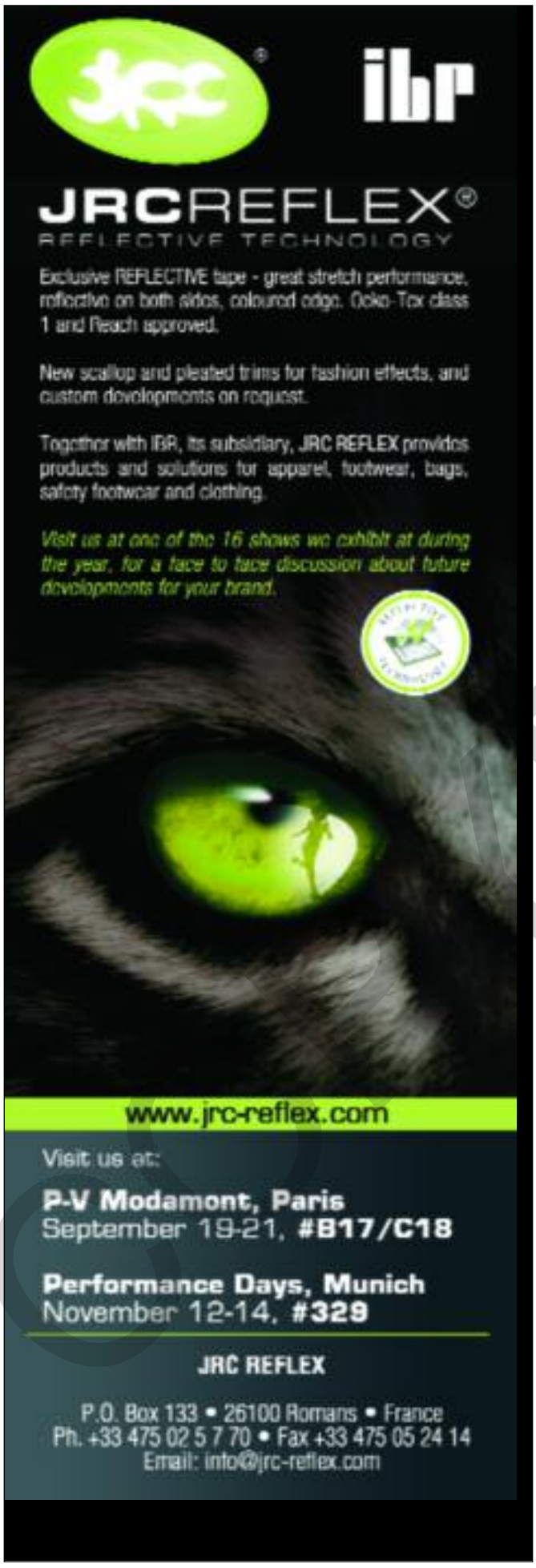
Rab

Shared excitement

Rab believes DVL will give it and other users the benefits without any blockage. "Everyone is really excited about this," says press spokesperson, Nikki Skinner. "It's going to be one of our big stories for spring 2013."

She explains that the relationship between the two companies goes back a number of years now and that Rab has always been happy with the levels of protection and breathability eVent fabrics have given to its products. DVL will be no different, really, she believes, except that it's lighter because it's 2.5-layer. "We've always had very good feedback on the effectiveness of the membrane technology from eVent. And although it's a bit soon to say yet what reaction we will get to the Maverick and the Viper because the first samples only came back in July for us to give out to our sponsored athletes, we know a lot of people are as excited as we are. Membrane technology from eVent is a point of distinction for us. It works better than other membrane technologies that are available on the market in our opinion."

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The Viper jacket from Rab's spring 2013 collection, one of the first products to incorporate eVent DVL fabric.

Rab

Put performance first

GE Energy global product manager, Chad Kelly, says Rab first took an interest in eVent coming up for ten years ago. "We were a new technology [for fabrics] at the time and they were a brave company to go after a new technology idea based on performance, but eVent is a performance-driven product and they have based their decision on us on performance."

He acknowledges the appeal of lightweight, breathable, packable 2.5-layer garments in a high-end market like Rab's but says he also expects breakthroughs in markets such as cycling. Cyclists also like jackets, for example, that are light, easy to pack and highly breathable. "It's an ideal market for DVL," he says. "We are already supplying the fabric to big, professional teams and we expect it to filter down from there."

Mr Kelly feels it's important for eVent to "expand into spring programmes". He explains that his company receives direct requests from the market to make jackets and trousers that can keep moisture out without making the wearer feel clammy and uncomfortable. Consumers are always looking for something new, he points out, but he says the market is shifting away from the standard three-layer mountain jacket. Alternatives are in demand and GE feels DVL fabric can help clothing brands fill the gap. "DVL is the big launch this season for us," he concludes.

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