



## The First Action Hero: Evel Knievel

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BEFORE EVEL KNEIEVEL'S 1967 JUMP of the famed fountains at Caesars Palace, they were just fountains. My parents were there—I grew up in Vegas—and I remember my dad describing the crash to me eight years later as I unwrapped the Evel Knievel Deluxe Dare Devil Stunt Set I'd received for my fifth birthday. I thought it was odd to hear a man described as a "rag doll," but that was before I'd seen the footage of Knievel bouncing off the Caesars asphalt. That one left him in a coma for a month. Back then, I just knew Knievel as the guy who'd tried to fly over a canyon on a jet bike, and I had to have his action figure and wind-up motorcycle. We all did. There was nothing within a mile of my house that my friends and I didn't make our toy Evels jump off: tables, cars, houses. Not until Tony Hawk's video games would anyone else inspire so many kids to cheat death by proxy. Knievel was pulling huge air long before the term was coined. We called him a stuntman back then. That was before Hawk, Travis Pastrana, and the X Games altered the vocabulary and showed us that Knievel was simply, spectacularly, our first action-sports hero. He changed the way we play.

—JOHN BRADLEY