who worked at the company and our friends,” Burton recalls. “It really hasn’t changed—it’s just gotten a lot bigger.” This year, more than 1,400 people showed up, and the band Shiny Toy Guns performed. “It was epic,” he says. Surely his home gets trashed, though, right? “It’s part of the deal.”

Burton—who’s full name is Jake Burton Carpenter—didn’t invent snowboarding, but the former competitive skier and onetime horse trainer almost single-handedly popularized it. The company that bears his name evolved from a single snowboard whipped up in its Vermont garage in 1977—a pointy-nosed, fish-tailed oddity that was steered with a rope—into the dominant force in the sport, a behemoth that earns an estimated $200 million a year, controls nearly half of snowboarding’s retail business, and has since branched (via affiliated brands like Gravis, Analog, and Channel Islands) into skateboarding and surfing, the latter hardly surprising once one sees any time with the Long Island-born boss.

Three years ago, Burton pulled his kids out of school, hired some tutors and folks to look after the family dogs, and set off on a 10-month trip around the world. “We followed winter,” he says. “But you can’t help but find good surf along the way.” He and his wife, Donna (who oversees women’s initiatives at the company), and sons George, 18, Taylor, 14, and Timmy, 11, spent a month in Austria, a month in Tokyo, and six weeks in New Zealand. All told, the family hit 15 countries, surfing and snowboarding on six continents. “I thought going in it would be this character-building thing that would be best when it was all done, but every day was an adventure,” Burton says. “It was the best year of our lives.”

Burton still chases the best powder, wherever it may be, snowboarding in Alaska or Norway or New Zealand alongside team riders like Shaun White (the Torino gold medalist and indisputable dominator of the half-pipe) and Terje Haakonsen (one of the most innovative boarders of all time), or just cruising Stowe, a few miles down the road, with his boys. He and his youngest son, Timmy, took a boat-and-surf trip to the Maldives last summer, and later this afternoon the two are headed for New York to catch a few waves and attend the VH1 Hip Hop Honors awards—you have to imagine Timmy is one of the few kids not embarrassed to sit next to his dad in a crowd that includes Snoop Dogg, Missy Elliott, and Pharrell Williams.

After 30 years at the helm, Burton has eased out of the company’s day-to-day operations, choosing to focus his energies on marketing and especially product development and testing. His gigantic home in Vermont resembles a ransacked showroom—boards, boots, jackets, bindings, hats, pants, and gloves hang from just about every surface. Jake likes to try out for himself most anything Burton or its subsidiaries make. Last year, he snowboarded 125 days and surfed another 60 or 70.

But at what age is a man too old to relate to a youth-driven market? No one really knows—it’s untracked terrain. “I think there’ll be signs and I’ll understand when it’s time to step aside,” he says. “Snowboarding has done so much for me. I want to make damn sure I’m looking out for it and protecting it.”—JOSH DBAN

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THE TENOR

With an extraordinary voice and a mighty presence, Joseph Kaiser has stormed the opera world to a chorus of bravos.

The tenor line is from the role of the First Prisoner in Beethoven’s opera, Fidelio, and one Kaiser will surely always remember.

Three seasons ago, while he was singing the part at the Lyric Opera house in Chicago, Kaiser had no idea that the illustrious conductor Daniel Barenboim and the filmmaker and actor Kenneth Branagh both happened to be in the audience. This fortunate convergence of talent and destiny landed Kaiser the starring role in Branagh’s film of Mozart’s The Magic Flute, which is set to open in the U.S. during the coming year, and a major part in Tchaikovsky’s Eugene Onegin, conducted by Barenboim, at this year’s Salzburg Festival. This is the operatic equivalent of a grand slam.

So here we are, already halfway through the festival, and Kaiser has just come off stage, his character Lensky having

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SINGER’S OVERTURE

TO THE RAFTERS

Kaiser takes a break from performing at the Salzburg Festival.
Richard James suit.
Emma Willis shirt.
Veni Porto tie.
Agphey cufflinks.
Fashion Editor: Tanja Martin.
been shot in a duel. He’s relaxed (“because I’m dead,” he jokes), his intense blue eyes radiant with a post-performance glow and the sheer joy of singing at Salzburg.

is final aria—which he performed slumped against the wall, a challenge for any singer—brought a wildly enthusiastic response from an audience that knows opera inside out. “If you’re bad, you’ll get booed here,” says Kaiser, whose easygoing charm seems a million miles from the intense performance I’ve just seen. “It’s a real risk singing here.”

Despite his pose and professionalism, the Montreal-born singer can’t quite believe he’s singing with Barenboim and the Vienna Philharmonic. “It’s insane who’s in the audience,” he tells me as we exit the stage door into a sultry Salzburg night, the Alps rising up nearby toward the inky sky. “Last Saturday after the concert, I heard someone say, ‘Joseph. I turn around and it’s Plácido,’” he says with a grin.

There is a gaggle of autograph hunters outside, and Kaiser, who’s six foot four and wearing gold-rimmed glasses, is easily spotted. He seems almost bashful as he grabs a pen and stoops a little to sign each program. “Until I came here, I was never asked for an autograph in my life,” he says.

That’s about to change. Kaiser will soon be all the more recognizable after America sees him in his starring role as Tamino in The Magic Flute. Branagh, who admits that he knew little about opera before directing the film, immediately noticed Kaiser’s charisma during casting. “I told him, ‘You’re a handsome lad, but you’ll want to have lost some weight before we start shooting,’” says Branagh. “And, bugger me, four months later this slim figure showed up. And that’s the kind of discipline he showed on the set.” Kaiser, who has an athletic physique, says he lost 55 pounds for the role, adding with a smile, “But opera people said, ‘You got too skinny.’”

Kaiser also made his debut at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York this season as none other than Romeo, opposite the opera superstar Anna Netrebko in Gounod’s Roméo et Juliette. The head of the Met, Peter Gelb, recently saw Kaiser in Salzburg. “The world of opera is relatively small when it comes to important new talent,” he says. “And the word was out early on Joe Kaiser.”

As Kaiser and I head to Triangel—a favorite among the post-opera crowd—for a late-night beer, I ask him how he’s handling all this success. He explains that he has an “incredible wife,” Julie, to whom he has been married for nearly five years, and two small boys, Jackson and Jacob (three and one and a half, respectively). He says his itinerant lifestyle is hard without his young family, who live in Chicago, but he’s thrilled because they’re with him in Salzburg for this gig.

Jackson, he tells me, is “very verbal” and has recently taken to saying the phrase, “Focus on right now.”

“I say it to myself, too,” he confides, sipping a cold Austrian pilsner. “During the audition with Barenboim I thought to myself: I can either throw up from nerves or focus on right now,” adds Kaiser, who is occasionally interrupted by fans shouting “Bravo!” He handles it all with grace. “I can’t imagine doing anything else.”—DAMIAN FOWLER

Photographed by Julian Dufort