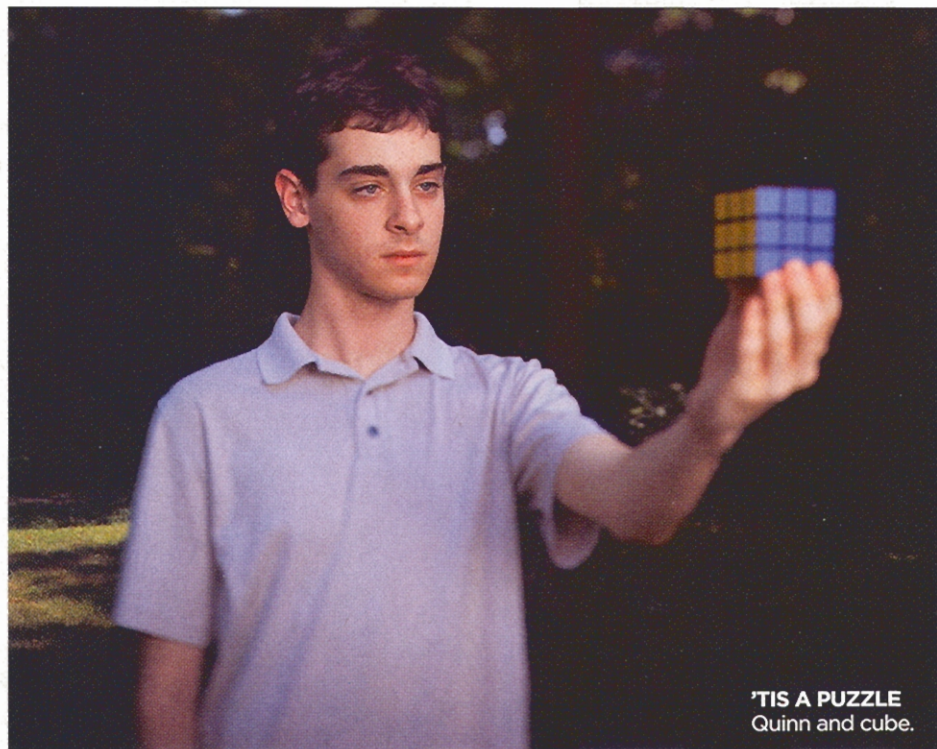


# The Return of Cubism



**'TIS A PUZZLE**  
Quinn and cube.

The Rubik's Cube is hot again, and a 17-year-old from Central Bucks West is the American record-holder

Quinn Lewis had just become the fastest American ever to solve a Rubik's Cube—13.41 seconds to align all 54 multi-colored squares—and was celebrating with a hamburger and, naturally, more “cubing” with fellow competitors at the East Coast Championships in Riverdale, New York. “I was dumbfounded,” the 17-year-old says. “Afterward I kept wondering, ‘Did I really just do that?’ Going into the event, I thought I was going to get pummeled.”

Lewis, a senior at C.B. West in Doylestown, is part of a Rubik's resurgence in which speed-cubing events can be found in at least eight countries

worldwide, and the record books are under constant fire. The sport will draw hundreds of fans to its World Championship in Orlando in November.

Taught two years ago by a friend in the marching band, Lewis has risen from beginner to record-breaker swiftly. Employing the Fridrich method, a system that utilizes more than 50 algorithms, and a rigid training regimen (at least an hour a day, and more like six or seven when cramming for an event), he's able to pull 600 finger-flicking moves a minute. But even Lewis was surprised by his sub-14-second showing. “I'm constantly striving to get better,” he says. “If you're comfortable at one minute, you're never going to get faster.”

Performing solo is one thing, but Lewis won his first-ever event in front of a live crowd—contestant's hands are projected onto a big screen, and

the audience sits in enraptured, church-like quiet. “It's a nerve-racking environment,” admits Lewis. The drama is sometimes so good, in fact, that Japan's Shotaro Makisumi—the world record-holder—is currently being trailed on the Cube circuit by a film crew for the documentary *CubeFreak*. Lewis, an accomplished alto saxophonist and juggler (he can handle up to nine balls), has other aspirations, though. College looms, with the Eastman and Manhattan schools of music topping his list; he'd like to become a jazz musician. “I have zero expectations [for the World Championships], but this whole thing has given me more confidence,” he says. “More people know who I am. At school there was some teasing at first, but now everyone wants me to win in Orlando. I know I'm a dork. I'm okay with it.” —Geordie Brackin