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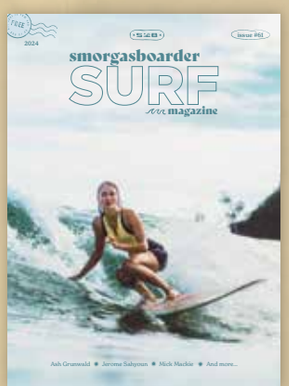
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our cover

Photo: Riley O'Dea

Surfer: Em Niwa

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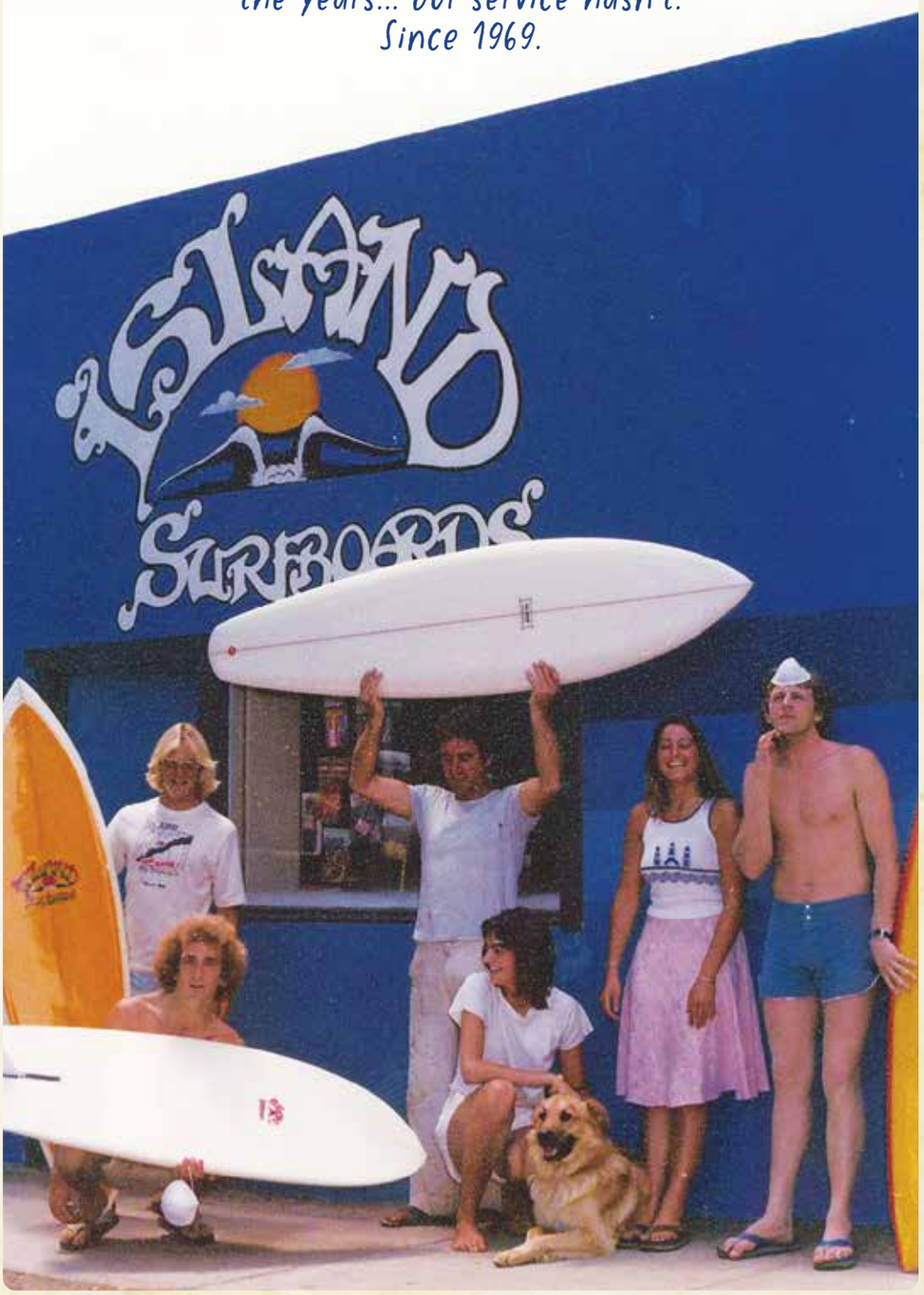
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Photo by Riley O'Dea

Surfer: Em Niwa

LIFE IS WHAT YOU MAKE OF IT

Simply put, this age-old idiom suggests our lives are shaped by our choices, actions, and attitudes. The saying also embodies a somewhat philosophical approach of the need to be proactive in realising the life you want for yourself. Certainly, there will be circumstances at times beyond your control, but it is how you respond to life's opportunities and challenges that will set you on your chosen path.

This short statement also conveys a commitment to oneself to take responsibility, to live your life with a positive mindset, to be resilient, and to pursue your goals with purpose, with no excuses. If you wish to be happy, make every effort to undertake things that make you happy. If you wish to be successful, chart a course to success. In short, take control of your life.

As I write this foreword, our two youngest children, Sam and Phoebe, are doing just that, and I couldn't be happier. They wanted to work a season in the snow and experience what it is like to live in Canada, and they're doing it. They worked hard, they saved, and they're there. Our eldest Mikaela always wanted to be a drummer in a band playing before huge crowds of people. She's worked hard and recently had the opportunity to play in front of 14,000 at Melbourne's Myer Music Bowl and 10,000 at Brisbane's Riverstage before jetting off to LA to write and record with artists such as G Flip and Japanese Wallpaper. She's living her dream.

I just want to work a little less and surf a bit more. Well, I best take a leaf out of my kids' books, pull my finger out, and make it happen. Things won't change if I don't proactively do something about it. This also entails changing my mindset. I constantly talk of always working, and I realise that needs to change. I believe there is merit in manifesting what you want out of life – of turning your dreams into reality through visualising, believing, and cultivating the outcomes you desire.

Now, apologies – you can often tell when I'm overworked. I become a little delirious and can tend to ramble on. Anyhow, long story short, it's important you throw everything you've got at achieving the life you want for yourself. Speaking of which, via that extremely long segue, this topic of conversation leads me into talking about some of our feature interviews in this 61st edition.

If you wanted an example of someone who epitomises the value of visualising your goals and then finding ways to achieve them, you need look no further than Ash Grunwald, who has made a career out of just that. Surfing by day and playing music at night is what he set out to do, and he has achieved it.

At this point, I must give a huge shout out to Ben Jhoty at Australian Men's Health magazine. His article on Ash back in 2022 was absolutely brilliant. I loved the way he delved into Ash's belief in the power of programming your subconscious to realise your dreams and then setting about practical steps to realising. What stuck in my mind most about that interview was Ash's reference to the word 'now'.

Ben referenced a particular acoustic guitar in Ash's Brunswick Heads studio that had a print of a wave etched around the body. Flipping it over revealed what appeared to be a random pattern but was in fact the word 'now' repeated around the sound hole. It is the same word that also adorns a clock on one of his albums too, underlining Ash's belief in the importance of being present in the moment. Ash has worked hard to ensure his dreams become his now, and we look forward to sharing his perspective on realising the life you want for yourself, which also includes a more than healthy dose of surfing in his case.

Another interesting person whose life has been governed by the ocean is Moroccan surfer Jerome Sahyoun. Oft referred to as a nomadic surfer/hunter/survivalist and one of the most renowned big slab surfers in the game, we simply had to find out more about this man and his zest for life. When you see the images of some of his pursuits, you will inevitably come to the same conclusion that Jerome is a man who lives his life to the full, and most certainly without fear.

Then, in terms of an unswayable determination to travel, we have Sarah Broughton. Wow, what an incredible story she has to tell – too much for one small paragraph in this foreword. In her story contained within, we talk about where her passion for travel stemmed, her deep respect and love for the ocean, her passion for conservation, the dangers of travelling solo (such as accidentally catching a lift with a confessed murderer), and even her own very personal struggles with anorexia and anxiety.

Most importantly, we celebrate the tremendous work her brother Scott, a marine biologist, has undertaken with regards to the Great Southern Reef and Sarah's support of his efforts with the publishing of her children's book of the same name.

We also talk with the immensely talented Tammen Willmott – Australian born of Swiss descent with an unequivocal love for snow, art, and the surf. For Tammen, all endeavours have been about immersing "in that place where you both lose and find yourself."

Then there's George Kalpakis – a fellow surf and snow enthusiast who is the founder of Brazen Brownies. The smile never leaves this guy's face, and you can just tell how passionate he is about life and getting the most out of it, which includes some sweet indulgence and taking your taste buds to new heights.

Finally, we share with you insights from some of the most influential surfboard artisans from across Australia and New Zealand, namely the one board they craft that best encapsulates the focus of their endeavours. These guys and girls have committed their lives to crafting the instruments for which we derive so much fun out in the surf. As always, there's plenty to read – we're not just a pretty picture book. Enjoy.

PS – To Curl, thank you for recognising the phenomena of shower beers is real and so very, very enjoyable. See Aloha Barry on page 99. It will all make sense.


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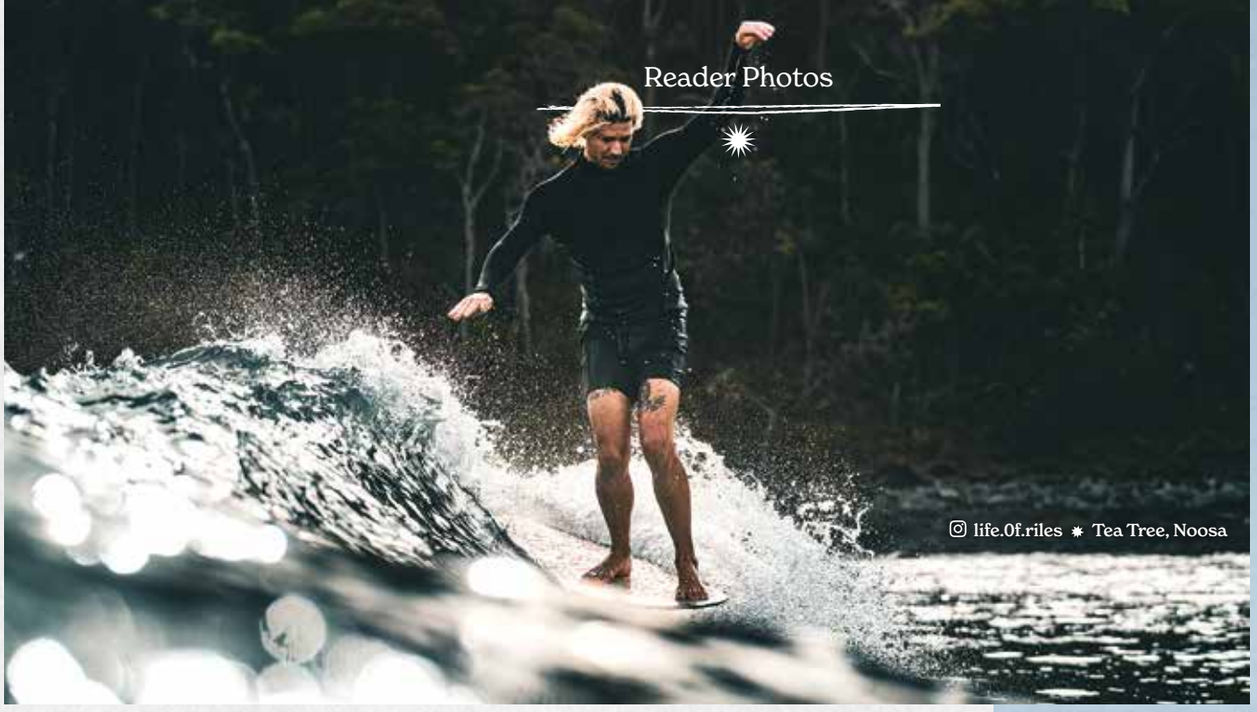


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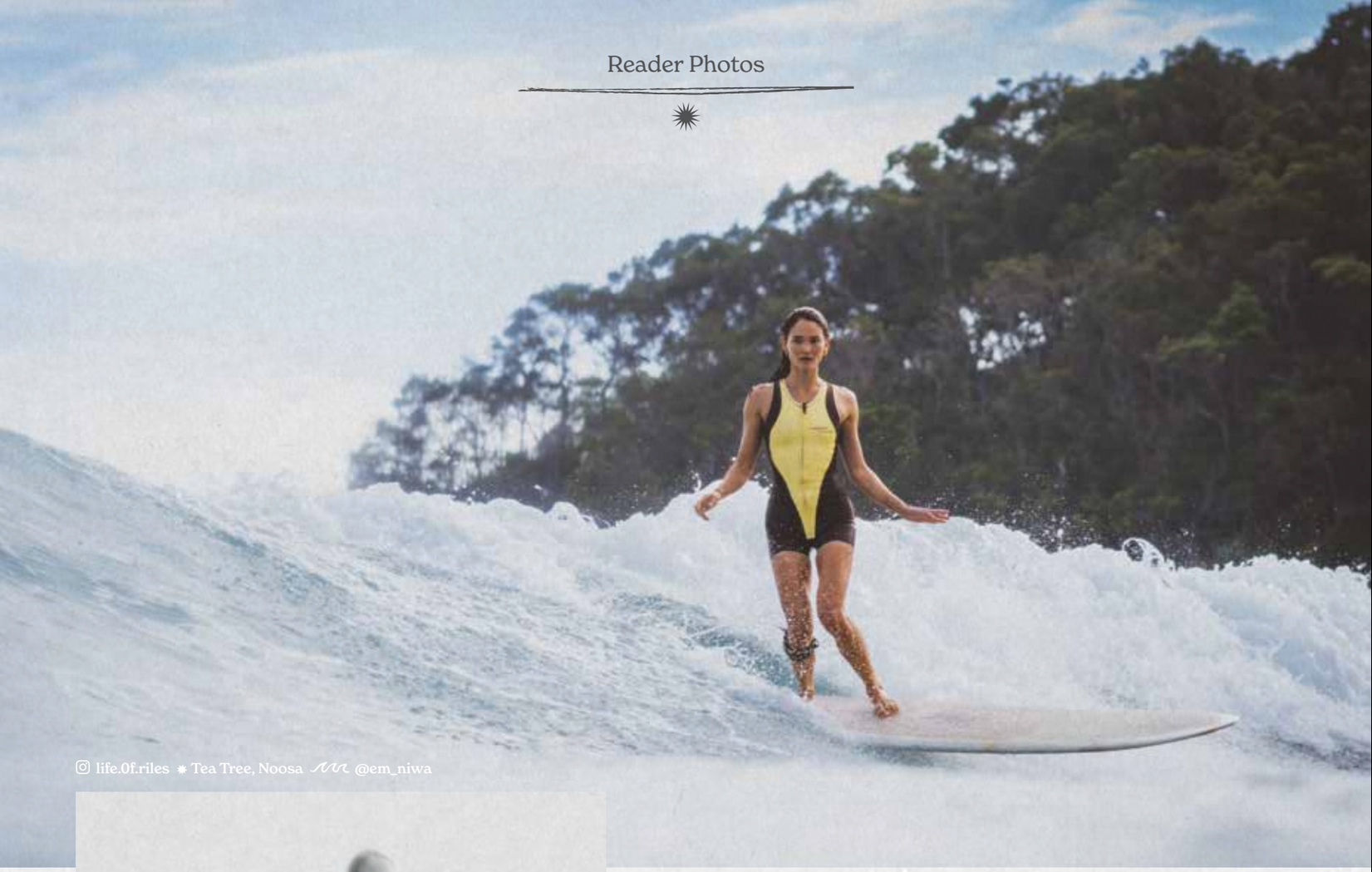

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Readers might recall the exposé of Romy Roache's work which featured in edition 51 back in 2021. Many, ourselves included, marvelled at her unique oceanscapes around the greater Victorian surf coast. Well, we were recently shocked to learn that her beloved business in Torquay burnt down. We called to check if she was okay. Romy filled us in on the events that transpired.

"It was pretty devastating. Reportedly, a fire from a restaurant in our quaint little arcade in the heart of Torquay burnt the surrounding businesses down, which included my studio. It was heartbreaking to wake up to hundreds of missed calls on my phone and hear the news that my photography studio had been fully damaged due to a huge fire. I was ever so fortunate though to have my camera gear, laptop, and backups at home."

Unfortunately, however, due to tough trading conditions over the last 12 months, Romy had let her insurance lapse.

"Yes, silly girl I know, but it is what it is. Onwards and upwards, they say.

"It's taken some months to get over the heartache and loss of my dream that I had slowly built up, opening the doors just before Covid hit. I still miss riding my bike to work with my dog, Oscar, and having those wonderful chats with clients about my work. That said, I have to feel very fortunate that I had such a fine opportunity to work my passion and managed to keep my doors open through some very challenging times for small businesses.

"I am still very committed to continuing with what I love doing and have sourced some new ways of getting my work seen. I feel I have been in this business long enough for clients to find me on my socials, through word of mouth, and by my visual works that are displayed locally."

Romy also hopes to continue featuring on sites such as Swellnet and work with various surf books and magazines, such as Smorgasboarder. Until such time, here's just a little glimpse of her stunning work.



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RIVER SURFING

IN MONTREAL

Words by Phoebe Swan

So, Sam and I have been travelling around Canada, and one of our stops was in Montreal.

Whilst we were checking out places to visit and things to see, we got a call from Dad, who let us know about this incredible river wave. So, of course, we rushed to check it out. I think it's safe to say it was unreal!

The speed of that water was insane, and we were lucky enough to witness some guys ripping it up.

Now, you might be wondering if we decided to give it a go. Well… no. Unfortunately, we did not. Sam, of course, was more than ready to jump in – even if it meant stripping down to his underwear despite how freezing it was. He definitely takes after Dad in that regard – they're both crazy and have absolutely no fear.

I, on the other hand, was weighing up the dangers, and one of them happened to be the big bloody rock shelf that was sucking in the water right underneath you at about a million miles per hour. If you came off your board, you did not want to end up to the left of the wave, that's for sure.

We also happened to be lacking in the wetsuit and surfboard department, and I wasn't planning on frostbite anytime soon, so we decided to give it a miss. Nonetheless, we still came away happy with the fact that we got to see such a frickin' cool and unique wave!

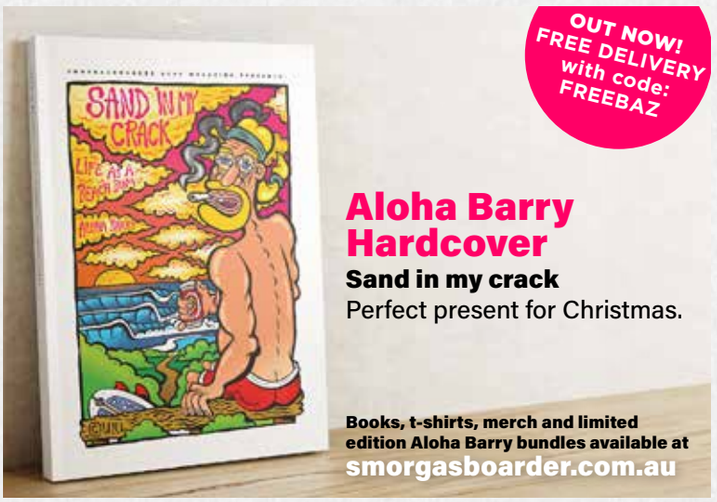
Thanks Dad for the recommendation, as always. We love you.




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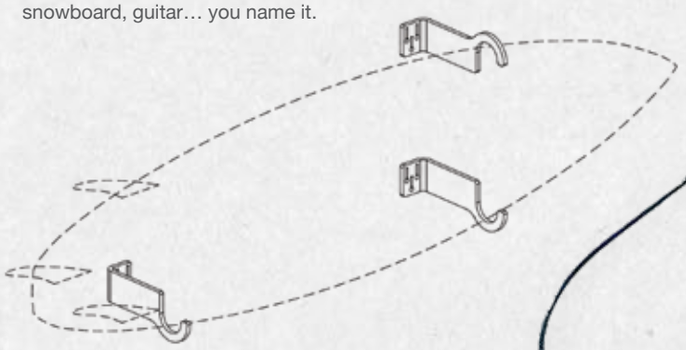


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1. Follow our Smorgasboarder Instagram page.
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Callum Robson photos by Swilly, supplied by VIZ Insurance.

2.

Callum Robson's surfboard, thanks to VIZ Tradie's Insurance

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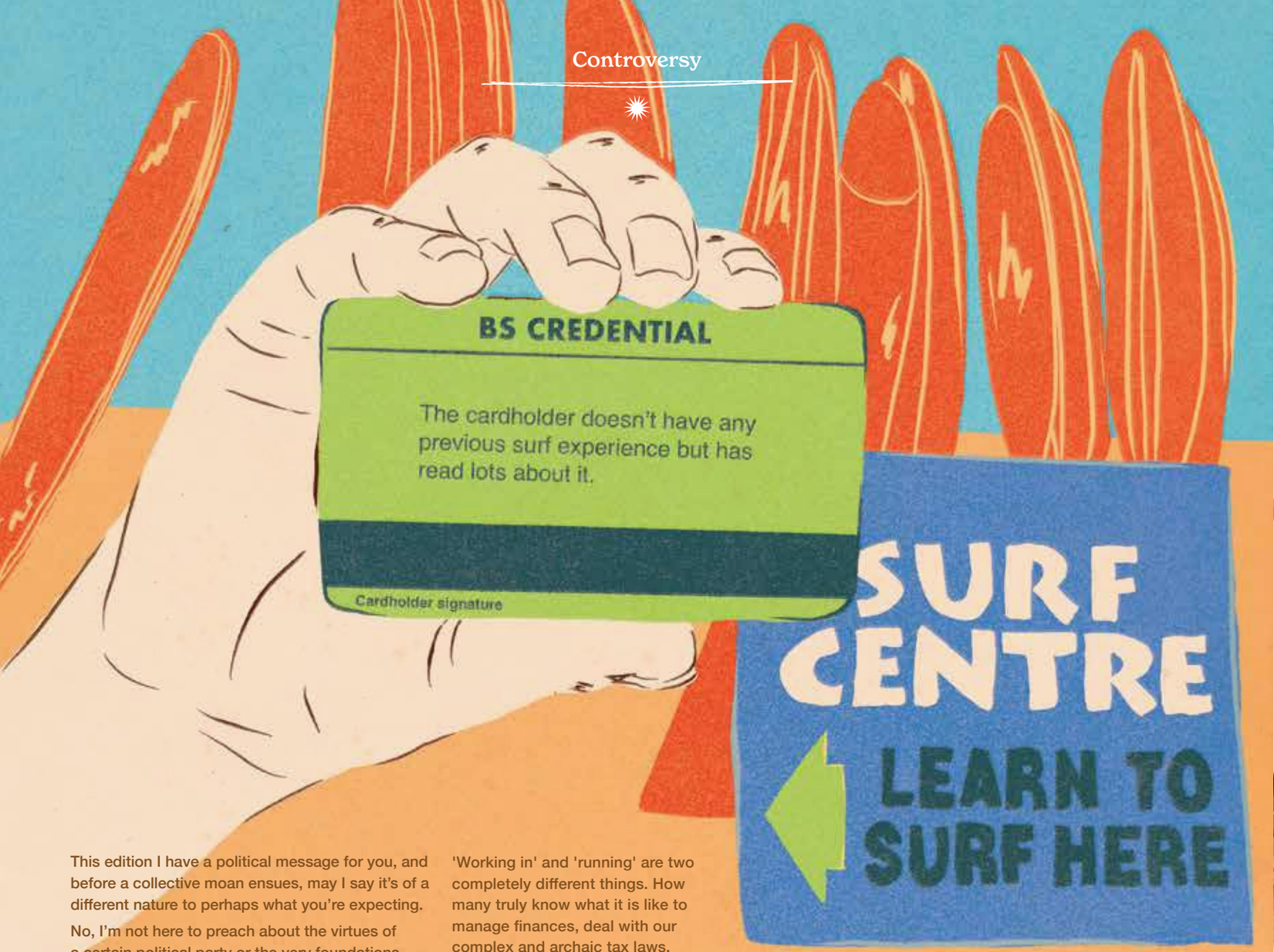
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This edition I have a political message for you, and before a collective moan ensues, may I say it's of a different nature to perhaps what you're expecting.

No, I'm not here to preach about the virtues of a certain political party or the very foundations of democracy. I wish to speak of our politician's qualifications, namely their business acumen. Having witnessed recent local, state, and overseas elections and considered the performance of respective governments, it prompted me to investigate the resumes of our politicians.

So, how on earth does this relate to surfing in any way, shape, or form? Well, I wish to draw an analogy.

Would you enlist in a surf school where the coach has never surfed before, albeit he or she has read lots about it? Would you enlist the services of a surf coach who is incredibly learned in the mechanics of surfing, but has not ever practiced what they preach out in the waves?

I am guessing the reply might be, "Hell no. How can anyone who hasn't surfed, no matter how much they have read about it, truly teach what it is like to surf a wave?"

So, with that said, I would suggest that no matter what policies a said political leader/party pursued, none could be successfully employed without first a well-managed, functioning economy. Strangely enough, you need money to honour all those promises! All the good intentions in the world count for little if you can't pay for them.

So how many of our politicians have a business background? How many have run a successful business, large or small? And I am not talking about working for a large corporate entity.

'Working in' and 'running' are two completely different things. How many truly know what it is like to manage finances, deal with our complex and archaic tax laws, and navigate the administrative red tape our politicians seem so keen to introduce to every aspect of our lives?

Career politicians might be well-versed on how the political machine operates and how best to get elected, but if they don't possess commercial common sense, can we expect to ever have our local, state, or federal governments in the black instead of endlessly being in the red?

If you run a business, the harsh reality is that money isn't on tap – there isn't an endless supply of it. In the real world, you can't chalk up 'deficits' ad nauseam, and if you do, you need to make sure you're not trading insolvently. Basically put, you can't spend what you don't have, and you certainly won't introduce administrative layers within your organisation unless they improve operational efficiency and efficacy, and don't negatively impact the profitability of your business.

Small to medium enterprises (SMEs) play a crucial role in the Australian economy. Reportedly, they account for over 98% of all businesses, employ around 70% of the national workforce, and generate approximately $500 billion of economic activity, which constitutes one third of Australia's GDP. Conversely, how many of our parliamentarians are career politicians or have only worked for large corporate entities? A recent article penned by Ronal Mizen, political correspondent for the Australian Financial Review, on 9 September this year confirmed my fears.

Former political staffers, read career politicians, dominate the ranks of politicians sitting in the House of Representatives and Senate. More than half of Labor MPs worked as staffers before getting preselected – same goes for around one third of Liberal Party MPs and 20% of Nationals.

Further to that, about one in five federal parliamentarians from the four major political parties come from white-collar backgrounds working for large legal firms. Simply put, around half our politicians have never set foot in the real world outside of their protected political bubble, and it would appear that very, very few have ever run a business.

We speak of a desire for parliament to be more inclusive of minorities and more representative of society, with a greater proportion of women and ethnicities and so forth, which I for one wholeheartedly applaud.

Given that SMEs employ 70% of the Australian workforce and contribute to more than a third of our GDP, other than those things we dig out of our ground, which we are simply fortuitous to have, wouldn't it be great to also have a few people in parliament who know what it's like to run a business?

If they treated our money like it was their own, that they had toiled so bloody hard to make, they might not be as wasteful.



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The evolution of surf technology: are we losing touch?

Words by **Hugh Powell**
Partner & Sunshine Coast Leader, Travis Schultz & Partners

Growing up at the beach, I have fond memories of my dad teaching me how to read the synoptic charts, watch the weather, and read the conditions to predict where and when to surf. There were no surf cams. Surf forecasts were sparse. It was up to you to work it all out and develop a plan. That uncertainty about not knowing what the next day would bring or even what the surf was truly going to be like when driving down to the beach was exciting, particularly as a grom. After parking up and heading through the bush to check the surf, Dad would always say that the quicker you run to check it, the better it will be. I'm not sure about the science behind that, but it certainly did get me excited to surf, whatever the conditions were.

Of course, having local knowledge of a surf break and understanding how it performs in certain conditions goes a long way. But as we know, Mother Nature is unpredictable. Subtle changes in swell direction, period, and tides can have a major impact on what it's like. You never truly know until you see it with your own eyes.

Over the past few decades, some saw this unpredictability as a pain point for surfers who sought more certainty about conditions. Initially, surf reports by telephone were offered for a fee. With the advent of the internet came surf reporting and forecasting websites, and the introduction of surf cams. These days, there are countless websites and platforms that broadcast live footage of surf breaks across Australia and the world.

When surf cams were first introduced, my recollection is that the initial response was one of resistance. It seemed to contradict the very essence of the surfing experience, which relied on local knowledge and skills to assess and determine when and where to surf. Over time, the general sentiment seems to have evolved to that of acceptance as technology has encroached further into our lives. These days, you can replay your sessions on certain platforms, watch your mates surf without leaving the comfort of your home, and track and share a huge range of data from your session. The evolution of technology and its widespread adoption by surfers has profoundly altered how we surf, where we surf, when we surf, and surf culture generally.

While I'm still not sold on the value in tracking how far I paddle or how fast I can go on a wave, there are clearly benefits to being able to access surf cams and assess conditions in real time from a remote location. Surf cams support efficient use of time by allowing observers to make decisions about where, or whether, to commit to a surf before leaving the house. As a dad with young twins, I am all for efficient use of time.

A 2020 study indicated that 68% of surfers agreed or strongly agreed that surf cams and surf forecast websites influenced their decision about whether to surf and where to surf on a daily basis.[1] Interestingly though, other research suggests that only about half of those surveyed said that surf cams actually contributed to their enjoyment of surfing.[2]

Critics of surf cams have long argued that it causes overcrowding and, in turn, increased localism and aggression in the lineup. Others have highlighted the moral dilemma of exploiting what is, in effect, public surveillance for commercial gain without reinvestment back into local communities. Though one could argue the attraction of surfers to an area with surf cams provides an indirect (but unmeasured) economic return to the local community.

I do keep an eye on a few surf cams here and there, out of curiosity more than anything. At the end of the day though, nothing will replace standing on the shoreline, gazing out at the ocean, and watching the waves roll in.

I look forward to the times ahead when I am pulling up in the car park without knowing what the surf is like and telling my kids to sprint to the beach to make sure the waves are good.

[1] Mach, L., Ponting, J., Brown, J., & Savage, J. (2020). Riding waves of intra-seasonal demand in surf tourism: Analysing the nexus of seasonality and 21st century surf forecasting technology.
Annals of Leisure Research, 23(2), 184–202. https://doi.org/10.1080/11745398.2018.1491801.

[2] Mach, L. (2017). Surfing in the technological era. In G. Borne, J. Gregor (Eds.), Sustainable surfing (pp. 41–71). Taylor & Francis.

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SURFING, HOLIDAYS, AND HOME LOAN REFINANCING - HOW TO GET ON THE FRONT FOOT WITH YOUR 2025 FINANCIAL GOALS

Words by **RYAN GRAY**
Founder and director, Gray Finance

As the festive season rolls in like a perfect set of waves, Australians are gearing up for sun-soaked days at the beach and, for some, the thrill of more 'me' time to surf. This magical time of year not only offers a chance to catch more waves, but also presents a golden opportunity to hang out with family, reflect on the past year, and set yourself up for financial success in the coming one.

Let's dive into why the holiday period is the perfect time to combine your love for surfing with a smart move to refinance your home loan.

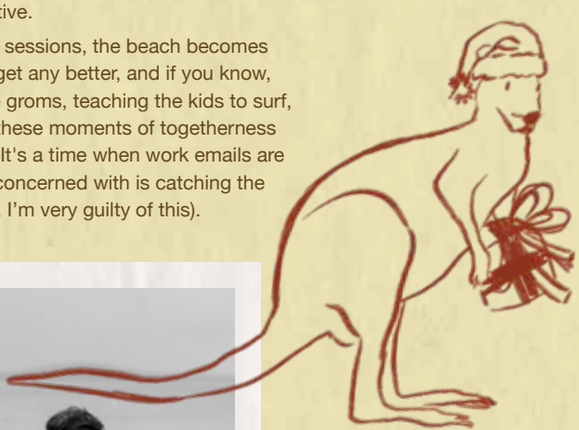
RIDING THE FESTIVE WAVE

Sun, surf, and serenity. There's nothing quite like the Australian summer. As the mercury rises and the holidays begin, our beautiful coastlines become a playground for surf enthusiasts. From the Sunshine Coast, my local, to Margaret River, surfers of all levels paddle out to catch that perfect wave. The combination of warm water, consistent swells, and long, lazy days creates an ideal environment not just for surfing, but for clearing your mind and gaining perspective.

Family time on the sand. Between surf sessions, the beach becomes a hub of family activity. It really doesn't get any better, and if you know, you know. Building sandcastles with the groms, teaching the kids to surf, or simply lounging under an umbrella – these moments of togetherness are what the festive season is all about. It's a time when work emails are forgotten, and the only deadline you're concerned with is catching the next set before the sun goes down (yep, I'm very guilty of this).



THE HOLIDAY MINDSET: PERFECT FOR FINANCIAL REFLECTION



Relaxed mind, clear thoughts. There's something about the rhythm of the waves and the expanse of the ocean that puts things into perspective. This has, and will always be, my place of calm – sitting on your board, waiting for that next perfect wave. You're in a unique state of mind, relaxed yet focused. This mental state is ideal for contemplating important life decisions, including your financial future.

Time to think and plan. The holiday period presents us with something precious – time. Without the daily grind of work and routine, you have the space to think about your goals and aspirations. This makes it an excellent opportunity to consider your financial situation, particularly your home loan.

WHY REFINANCE YOUR HOME LOAN NOW?

Competitive market. The end of the year often sees lenders offering competitive rates to meet annual targets. This can work in your favour if you're looking to refinance. Just as you'd take advantage of perfect surf conditions, now might be the time to catch a great financial wave.

New year, new rate. Starting the new year with a better home loan rate can set a positive tone for your finances. It's like paddling hard at the start of a wave – the momentum you gain can carry you through the rest of the year.

Cash flow for your passions. Refinancing could potentially lower your monthly repayments, freeing up cash for the things you love, like a new surfboard, a surf trip, or investing in other areas of your life.

STEPS TO REFINANCE WHILE ENJOYING YOUR SURF HOLIDAY

1. Understand what you are on now, and if it's competitive.

2. Speak to experts. Many mortgage brokers and bank representatives take time off through the holiday period. At Gray Finance, we don't. Schedule a phone call or video chat for when you're back from the beach.

3. Gather your documents. Use a rainy day or a flat surf day to collect necessary paperwork. Most of this can be done digitally now, so it won't eat into your beach time too much.



4. Let us do the work and take the stress away. You can start the process from your beach house or holiday apartment.

5. Celebrate your decision. Once you've set the refinancing wheels in motion, celebrate with an extra-long surf session or a beachside barbeque with family and friends.

BALANCING FINANCIAL GOALS WITH HOLIDAY JOY

Remember, while refinancing your home loan is important, it shouldn't overshadow the joy of the holiday season. The goal is to set yourself up for a financially stronger future while fully enjoying the present moment.

Mindful financial decisions. Just as you read the waves before paddling out, take the time to carefully consider your refinancing options. **Enjoy the now.** While you're considering your financial future, don't forget to relish the present. Savour every wave, every laugh with family, and every moment of holiday bliss.



GRAY FINANCE: RIDING THE WAVES OF FINANCIAL SUCCESS

As you enjoy the sun, surf, and family time this festive season, consider the unique opportunity it presents to improve your financial position. Refinancing your home loan could be the key to unlocking better financial freedom in the coming year, allowing you to enjoy more of what you love, like those perfect summer waves. Remember, just as every great surfer knows how to read the ocean, every savvy homeowner should know when to catch the wave of a great refinancing opportunity. So, this holiday season, as you're waxing your board and checking the surf report, take a moment to check in on your home loan too. You might just catch the financial wave of the year! The festive season is a time for joy, relaxation, and new beginnings. By combining the thrill of surfing with smart financial planning, you're setting yourself up for a year of success both in and out of the water.

Wishing you and your loved ones a merry Christmas and New Year filled with prosperity, good health, and exciting adventures.

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Some things just have to change...

Words by Jase John

If spring is for new beginnings, then summer must equal inspiration, expression, and that ability to get outdoors.

As winter 2024 rolled out the door, spring pleasured us with not only an abundant and plentiful amount of late-season snow, but also an opportunity to take stock, redesign, and most importantly, evolve.

It would be great to say that this was based around a moment of inspiration, or simply an idea that developed and flourished, culminating in something new. To an extent, part of this is true... however the overall evolution of NZSHRED has been more similar to a summer thunderstorm, hanging over the mountains, ready to dump an infinite amount of rain and hail at any moment… and in all seriousness, it looked like exactly that had happened over the days and weeks towards the end of October.

That's right... we were renovating!!!

Over the past 15 to 20 years, we have progressively wedged ourselves further and further into the abyss that had become our Queenstown CBD store. Every little corner or crevasse was being used, presenting product on any square centimetre of forward-facing wall and hanging anything anywhere and everywhere – boxes of shoes from the floor to the roof, hidden behind a strategically positioned beach towel, and skateboard decks in wooden beer boxes. We even had paddleboards strapped from the ceiling that doubled as snow helmet shelves.

It was a monster that knew no end, and unfortunately customers knew us for that. Change is difficult. We are a product of our own actions, and that fuels development.

But there needs to be a line – a point at which you say, "Enough is enough, we're just not doing this well".

So, we changed. We started to think less about the timing of deliveries, the brand additions to our stable, and the making of money, and more about the representation of product, the customer experience, and (without being too bossman-like about it) the overall vibe that all of our NZSHRED family would encounter.



So, what did we change?

For starters, we got bigger. Not bigger to fit more brands and more product. But bigger to show you all a better representation of the gear we think the marketplace needs. The additional floor area creates both a better flowing and more meaningful customer experience, as well as a more comfortable and supportive environment for our staff to show their abilities and expertise.

And, what did we learn?

“Well, this sh*t don’t happen overnight."

Almost every job takes twice the time, requires twice the effort, and costs twice the price. But then again, that’s just business. We also learnt about relationships. Yep, we learnt that we have some really cool brands and have built a great connection with them all, both individually and collectively.

We learnt that we really have a magical group of amazing staff. The girls worked tirelessly doing all sorts of jobs – some they knew what to do, some they had no idea about, and plenty that they just really didn’t want to do. They were, are, and will continue to be bloody amazing.

But most of all, I think we learnt (or should I say, we re-learnt) about our NZSHRED family.



It’s all of us – the staff, the owners, the friends of ours, the brands, the reps, the daily customers, the casual visitors, the “I’ve never been in here before” types, and most importantly, those that just enjoy and appreciate the aura that is NZSHRED.

We’ve always appreciated someone who comes through the doorway to have a look, but never as much as the ones we see now, with the smiles on their faces and the congratulatory gestures of “Well, this is cool."

Yep, you're right – we order the product, get it sorted, stack the shelves, and pay the bills. But without you guys, this ship would never sail.

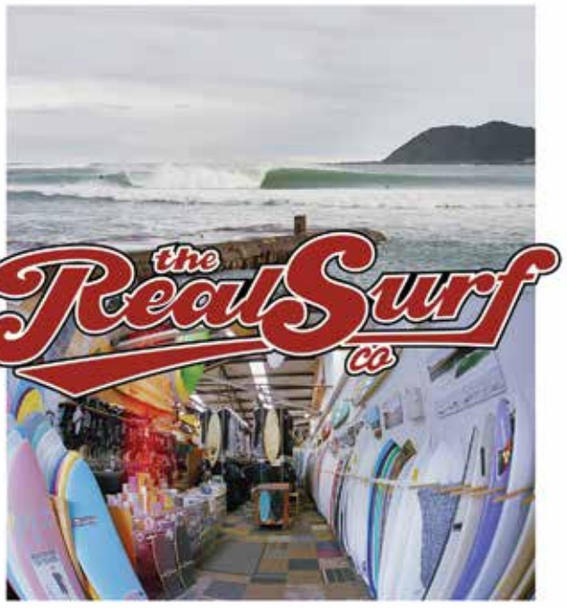
At the end of the day, NZSHRED is your shop... See ya soon!!!

nzshred.co.nz

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ASH GRUNWALD

SURF BY DAY,





Photo credit: Simon Williams



JAM BY NIGHT

Words by Amber O'Dell

"If you want it, you must will it. If you will it, it will be yours."

Yes, this quote does indeed come from the sequel of an Oscar-winning animated flick about emperor penguins… but its point still hits home all the same.

Realise the life you want for yourself and find your own place in the world – be the architect of your own destiny, so to speak.

For some reason, it was this exact sentiment that came to mind when I was introduced to the admirable mindset of Ash Grunwald. One of Australia's most successful blues musicians, he got to where he is today by relentlessly chasing his goals and the things that make him happy.

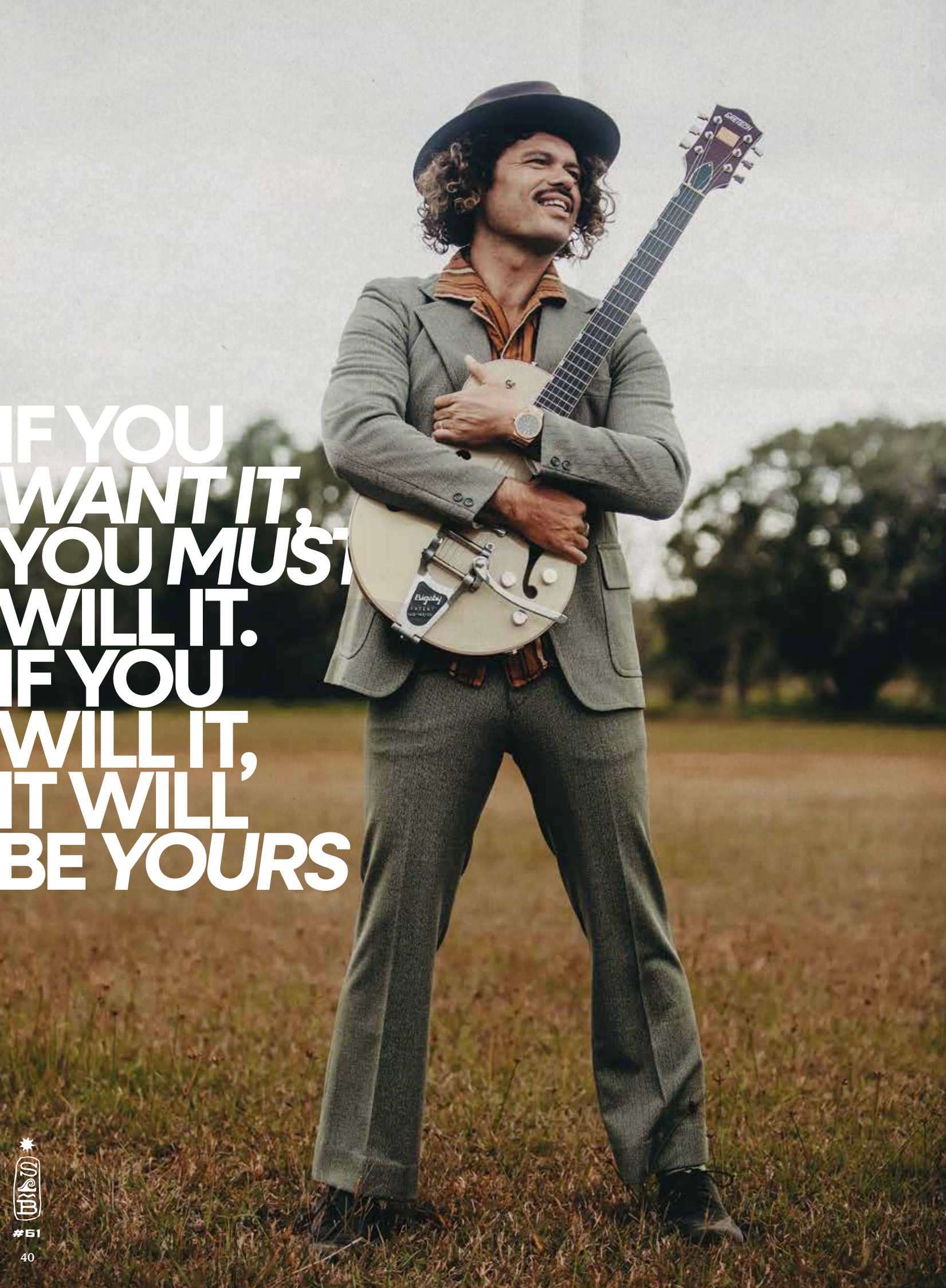
Ash grew up listening to blues community radio stations in Melbourne, which he said was lucky for his career, as this meant he spent a lot of time in his early twenties focusing on his music.

"I think if I had been on the coast, I would've just surfed all the time, so who knows where my music career would've ended up. But I did really enjoy surfing whenever I could.

"As my career started to progress, I was able to move to Torquay, where I lived for seven years. Most of the days I was at home, I surfed Bells, Winkipop, and other breaks around there.

"It's amazing to have surfing in your life. It balances everything, except maybe time. It does take up a lot, but it's time that's never wasted."

After being trained as a secondary school teacher, as a 26-year-old, Ash visualised living a life that revolved around music and surfing, and so he found a way to achieve that. Fast forward to today, and he has six Australian Top-50 albums, five nominations for Aria Music Awards, and of course, an impressive collection of surfboards.


IF YOU
WANT IT,
YOU MUST
WILL IT.
IF YOU
WILL IT,
IT WILL
BE YOURS

After describing himself as a ‘boardaholic’, I was eager to know what beauties Ash could possibly have in his surf quiver.

“I try not to be too much of a consumer, but I generally fail in that quest when it comes to surfboards. I just love them. I've had a 20-year fascination with the fish design, which helps me and my 92 kilos get plenty of waves.

“But I’ll ride anything from a 6’0” fish to a 9’9” longboard. In fact, I love Beau Young's designs, especially for longboards, and I absolutely love Jim Banks' shortboards, guns, and fishes. Jim's a good friend of mine, and so is Beau. I have plenty of their boards.

“I've got a handmade surfboard coming my way from Beau, so I'm looking forward to that. I've also got a couple of single fins and twinnies, and Varuna just hooked me up with some beautiful eco-friendly wooden boards as well, which are really awesome.”

It’s no surprise that Ash’s love for exquisitely handcrafted things also extends to guitars. In fact, he recently collaborated with Pratley Guitars, a family-owned manufacturer on the Gold Coast, to release his own signature orchestra model.

“My Pratley is absolutely awesome. It just sounds incredible and is so easy to play. I love it so much. I am obviously very, very honoured that such a quality instrument is going to come out in my name. "It’s one of the best and most beautiful acoustics I've ever played.”

Well before he started his boutique collections of surfboards and guitars, Ash started drawing attention as a solo artist in 2002 with the release of his first studio album, Introducing Ash Grunwald, which was recorded live in one session with nothing but an acoustic guitar, a stomp box, and a tambourine.

By far, one of the most memorable of his debut tracks is Dolphin Song – a number inspired by a real-life encounter he had with a shark and a pod of dolphins that came to his rescue.

Ash’s infatuation with the ocean can be seen in just about everything he does. In an effort to improve his physical and mental health, he even spent a few years after 2015 soaking up the surf lifestyle of Bali, which is now one of his favourite places on earth.

At that point in his career, Ash said he was due for a bit of a sabbatical.

“I had just done maybe 15 years in the music industry, so it was time for a little break. But I still recorded a few singles, did some festivals in Australia, and played the odd gig here and there to keep the vibe going and the money rolling in.

"But in the main, most of that time was spent just enjoying Bali.

“I try not to be too much of a consumer, but I generally fail in that quest when it comes to surfboards. I just love them. I've had a 20-year fascination with the fish design, which helps me and my 92 kilos get plenty of waves."



Photo: Simon Williams

“I was in Canggu, so I obviously surfed heaps. That area is super overrun and way too busy now, but I was there to see it all go crazy, which was awesome. That was such an incredible period of my life, and I'll always look back on it fondly.

“I'd love to do it again. I'm kind of thinking I might go back when I'm 50, which is in about two and a half years. It definitely might be time to check in, get super fit, and allow myself to be filled up by everything Bali has to offer.”

This year, Ash’s celebrated take on blues music – soulful and psychedelic with a hint of electronica – has reverberated off the walls of countless venues across rural and urban Australia. In fact, he took a much-needed break from this tour just a few months ago, where he returned to Bali with his two young children and wife, Danni Carr.

“I’m away a lot on tour, so I do miss the family. It's usually four nights a week, and it’s most weeks, although it’s nice to remember our family holiday in the middle of the year. We went to all of our old stomping grounds, and I surfed my brains out.

“I've been gigging so much, so that was the first time I've ever gone on a trip and not taken a guitar. It was really good for me. When I came back, I actually had to practice. Touring is kind of gruelling in a way, but it’s also just awesome. It's been such a good year.

“We also did a lap of Australia last year, which was absolutely amazing. On that run, I only did about 10 gigs, but I surfed in the desert of South Australia and the Red Bluff of Western Australia. So yeah, I generally get away when I can. I always bring boards of course – that’s why I prefer to drive.”

Going off the many tales imbued in his music, Ash is one hell of a gifted storyteller, which is probably why he was inclined to publish his first book in 2019.

Surf by Day, Jam by Night was born from a connection that Ash made about surfing and music – to be good at them, you need to know the science behind what you’re doing while allowing yourself to be free enough to let your intuition guide you.

Not only does the book give a rare insight into the minds of legends who have mastered both art forms, it also explores flow states, jamming versus shredding, style, transcendence, fear, career longevity, growth mindset, mindfulness, and what it’s really like to live your dreams.

Ash said the process taught him a lot, and even helped him rebuild his life a little bit too.

“I interviewed surfers who play music and musicians who surf. I got to hang out with Kelly Slater and Steph Gilmore, and I interviewed Jack Johnson and a lot of my mates like Beau, Jim, Dave Rastovich, and many others.

“It was absolutely awesome and a great experience. Coincidentally, I quit alcohol that year, so I documented some of that. There were just a lot of mindset shifts that were going on at that time. This also resulted in my wife and I putting out a book called How I Quit Alcohol this year.

“We were actually working on the audiobook version earlier today. So that book is a little bit of a follow-up too, because it’s been seven years since we quit. During that time, Danni also started a podcast of the same name, which has been helping so many people.”



Ash told us that his experience with How I Quit Alcohol was also a great one, although it was confronting at times.

“I usually like to keep quiet about my sobriety. I'm not so much of an open book as Danni is on the podcast. She’s very used to people sharing their stories. Sometimes, as a musician, you like to keep that veil up a little bit with your private life, but I did end up telling a few tales.

“The feedback so far has been that it’s super helpful, and I think that's really important. Alcohol is a massive part of surf culture, a massive part of the music culture, and a massive part of Australian culture. I'm not going to say there weren’t good times associated with it, but it was definitely time for us to quit.

“I know a lot of other people feel the same way, so it’s not so much about trying to convince anyone else to quit, but for those who want to, I think it's a very helpful thing, this book.”

For the last four years, Ash has been enjoying collaborating with songwriters and new-school producers, continuing to weave new tunes and daring to wander away from what is considered the norm for blues music.

Ever the environmentalist, on top of everything else he also runs Earth Bottles alongside Danni. Created to eradicate single-use plastic bottles, the company has a huge reach, partnering with charities such as Hope For Health, Breast Cancer Network, and Beyond Blue, as well as acts such as Midnight Oil, The Living End, Ziggy Alberts, and Bobby Alu.



SO DON'T *YOU DIE* WITH THE *MUSIC INSIDE* CAUSE YOU KNOW IT JUST WANT TO *LIV FRE*

As this edition goes to print, Ash is continuing to roam around Australia with his guitar in hand. If you're lucky enough to catch one of his shows, chances are you'll be hearing his newest single, Feeling Better – a track about optimism, embracing new beginnings, and working towards happiness.

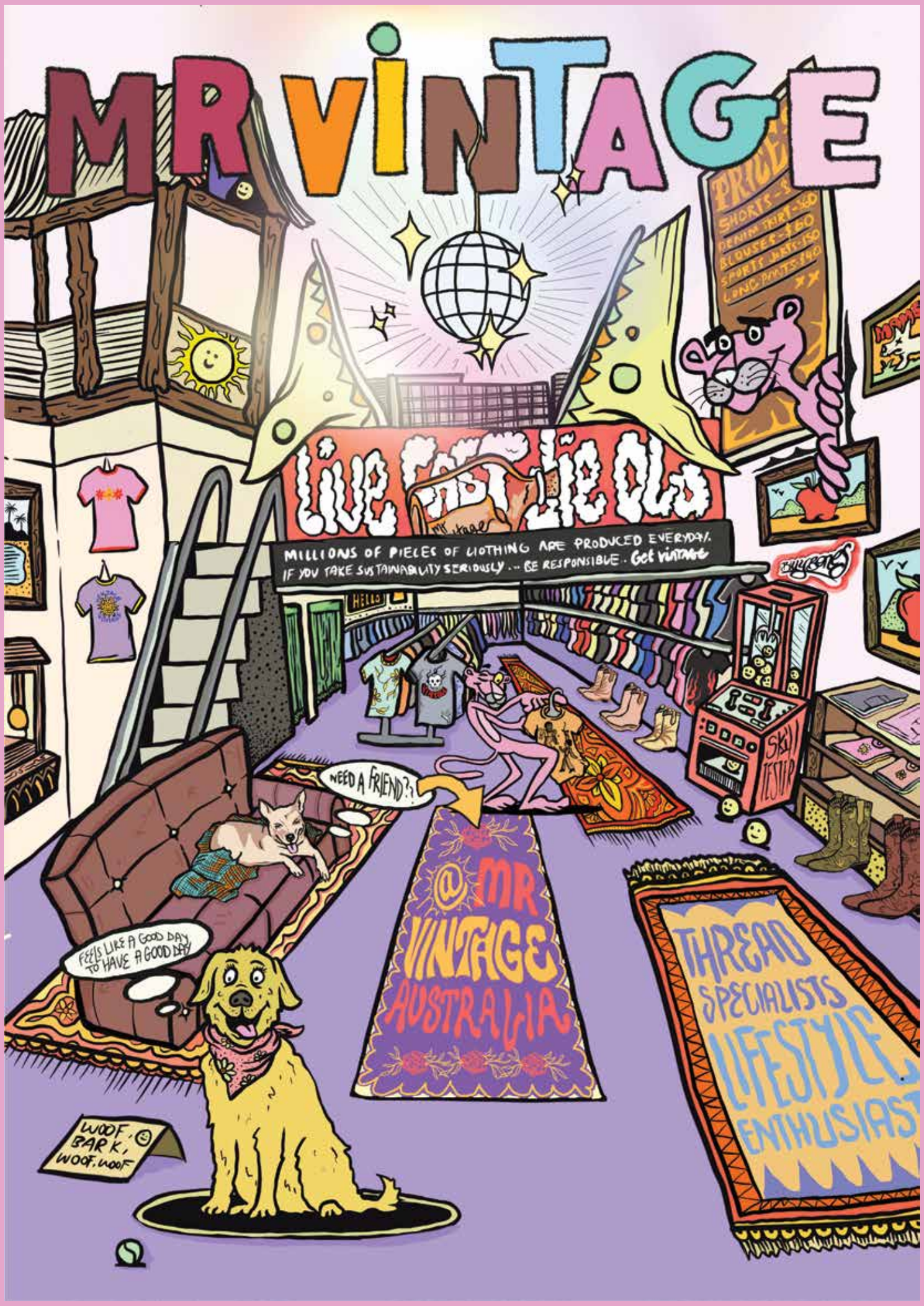
Much like the man himself, the track's good vibes are infectious.

"I feel that, when you're in a positive mindset, it's amazing how many hurdles you can climb. It's just amazing what's possible. So yeah, I guess it's a little bit of a positive psychology song.

"I speak a lot about mental health in my writing and songs, more out of a recognition of how important it is rather than because I've had any big mental struggles myself. It's one of the most important aspects of life, which usually doesn't get any attention unless something goes horribly wrong.

"It's always been a fascination of mine, because what do you have if you don't have your marbles? Your thoughts are the filter through which you interpret and thus experience life. So what could be more important?"




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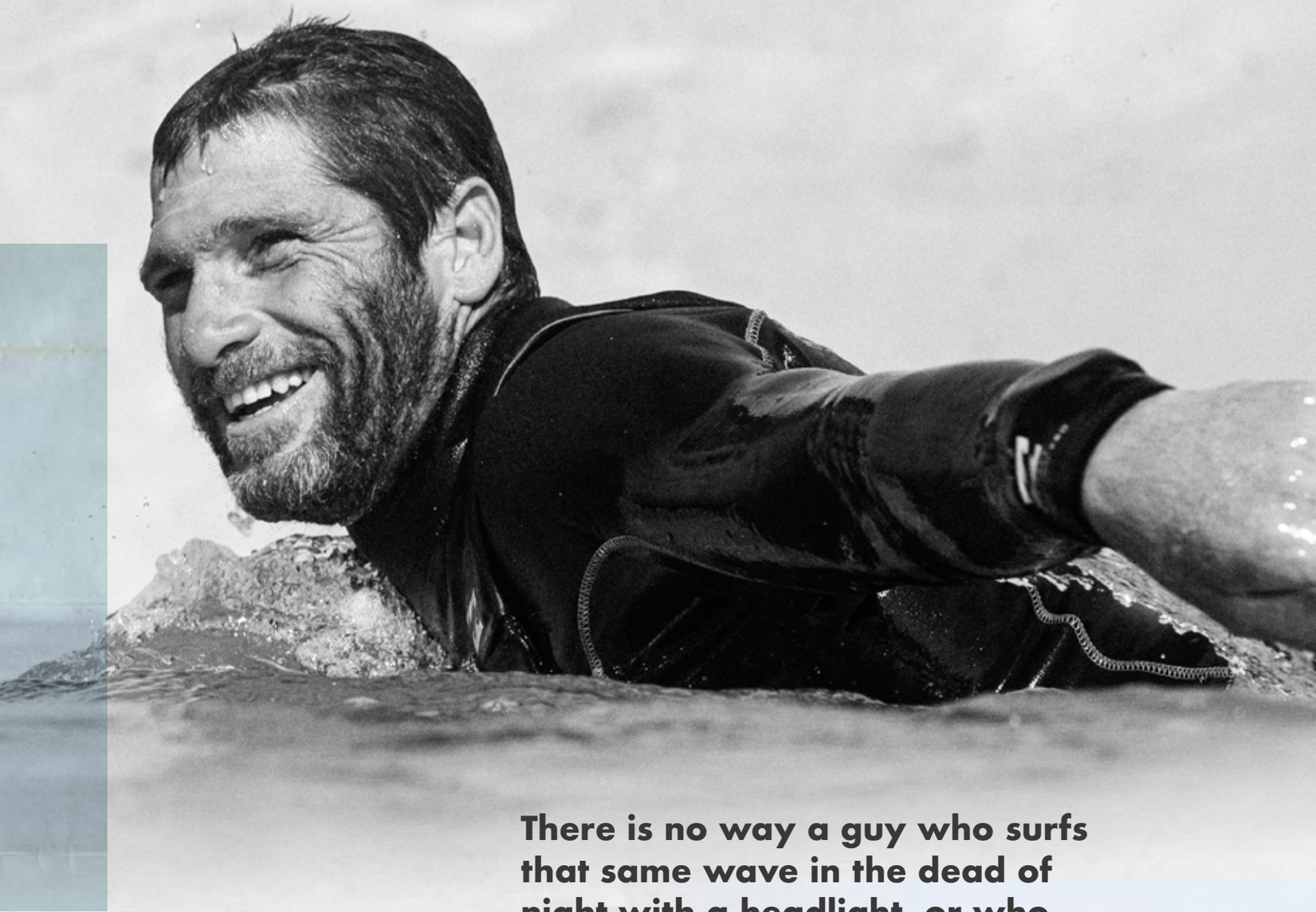


ALL THE BEST PEOPLE ARE

AT SMORGASBOARDER, WE'VE ALWAYS BEEN ABOUT TALKING WITH INTERESTING PEOPLE WHO LOVE TO SURF. SO, YOU CANNOT EVEN IMAGINE OUR EXCITEMENT WHEN WE CAME ACROSS A SURFER FROM MOROCCO WHO LIKES TO **BASE JUMP INTO WAVES**. YEAH, YOU HEARD THAT RIGHT. BELOW IS OUR VERY SPECIAL INTERVIEW WITH JEROME SAHYOUN — ONE OF THE CRAZIEST SURFERS WE KNOW, IN THE VERY BEST WAY.


OME
OUN

Photography by Bastien Bonnarme and Mustapha Elbaz.



There is no way a guy who surfs that same wave in the dead of night with a headlight, or who gets nominated for the biggest wipeout of the year at 80ft Nazare, or who tackles monstrous slabs at Shipsterns or other far-flung locations way out to sea, has any form of fear.

First off — can you give us a little bit of a background on who you are, where you grew up, and how you became enamoured with nature and the sea?

Hi, my name is Jerome Sahyoun. I'm 44 years old and I'm from Morocco. I'm married with two kids. Today, I have an eco-lodge and work in the family's company.

I've been fishing and hunting since I was five years old, which taught me how to be very connected to nature. Surfing came a few years later when I was 15 years old.

As a surf mag, we have to ask you to rant about surfing to us. What boards do you like to ride and what are your favourite breaks? What are the joys you find in surfing?

I don't have one special board that I like to surf, but if I had to choose one, it would be my Dylan Longbottom.

My two favourite breaks in Morocco would be the Imsouane slab and Miami (Mici Mici). What I love about surfing is getting barrelled alone, far away from people or with a group of friends, always in Morocco.

We wanted to call you out on something. In one particular interview we read about you, you expressed fear of a certain wave. I believe it was a break back home in Morocco – the heaving right hand barrel at Safi.

We feel you were being disingenuous.



If you do, in fact, feel a sense of fear, how do you quell those nerves?

I'm very scared, but I do it for myself and not for the cameras. The more I get scared, the more I feel alive, and this is where my satisfaction comes from. It doesn't come from the other – I only do it for love.

Are we right, or was there a photo of you strapped into your surfboard hanging onto a BASE jumper some several hundred feet above the ocean? What was the reason behind such craziness?

A few years ago I got the idea to surf a wave coming from the sky.

When we surf, we always watch the birds coming from the sky and surf the waves. I wanted to be a bird. When I presented my project to some brands to help me financially, none of them accepted, so I did it alone. It was a super gnarly project because it took me one week to get two waves. I had five to seven jumps per day.

After a few years, I saw on social media a video of one guy jumping from a plane into Kelly Slater's wave pool. It made me laugh, because the logistics of his project were way easier than mine. In his project, between the time he jumps from the plane and the time he arrives on the wave, everything was calculated.

The funniest part of it is that brands refused my project but jumped on his. But today my project is not over – I still have it in mind. The only thing is that now I have a family that I have to take care of, but the next step is to get a huge barrel from the sky.

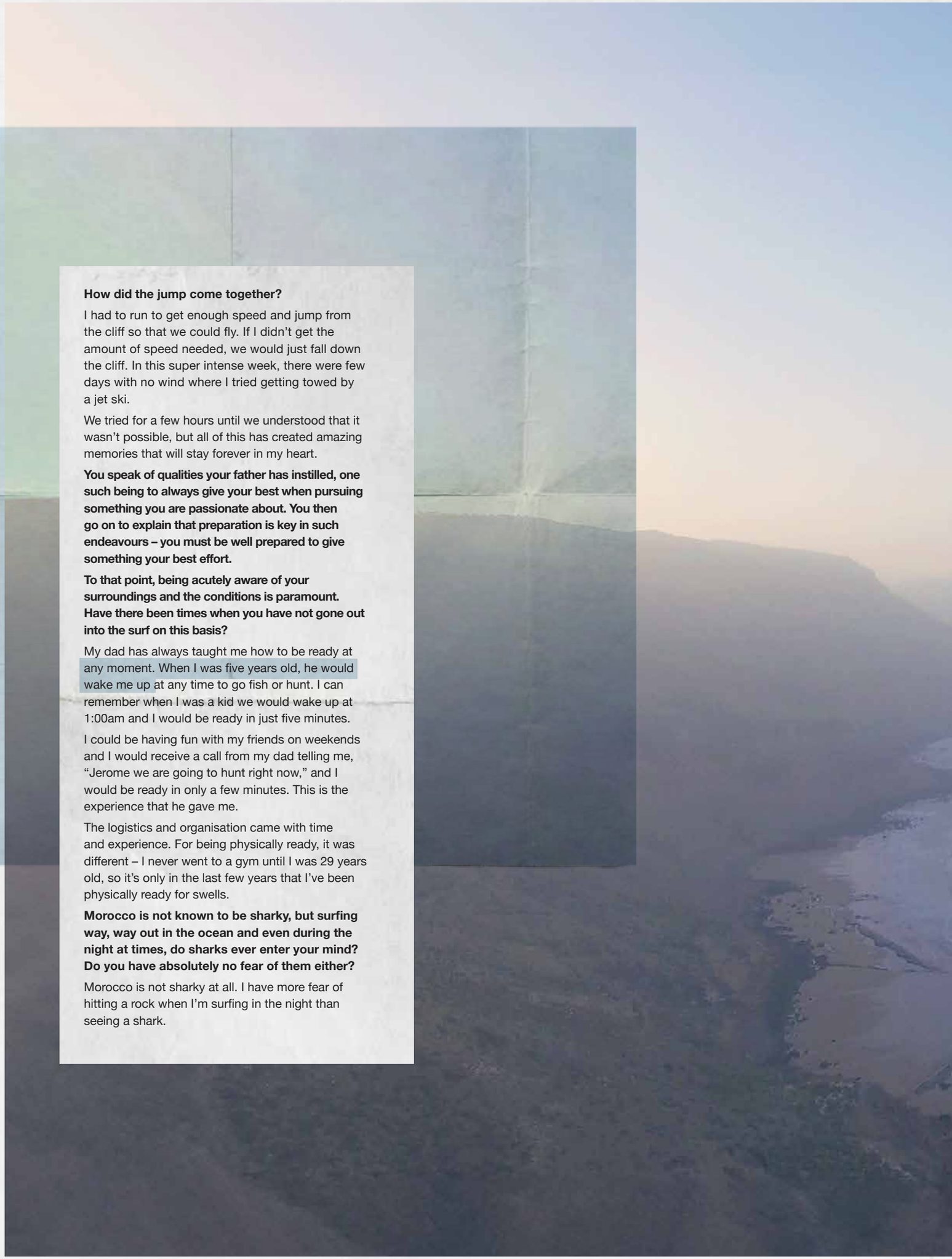












How did the jump come together?

I had to run to get enough speed and jump from the cliff so that we could fly. If I didn't get the amount of speed needed, we would just fall down the cliff. In this super intense week, there were few days with no wind where I tried getting towed by a jet ski.

We tried for a few hours until we understood that it wasn't possible, but all of this has created amazing memories that will stay forever in my heart.

You speak of qualities your father has instilled, one such being to always give your best when pursuing something you are passionate about. You then go on to explain that preparation is key in such endeavours – you must be well prepared to give something your best effort.

To that point, being acutely aware of your surroundings and the conditions is paramount. Have there been times when you have not gone out into the surf on this basis?

My dad has always taught me how to be ready at any moment. When I was five years old, he would wake me up at any time to go fish or hunt. I can remember when I was a kid we would wake up at 1:00am and I would be ready in just five minutes.

I could be having fun with my friends on weekends and I would receive a call from my dad telling me, "Jerome we are going to hunt right now," and I would be ready in only a few minutes. This is the experience that he gave me.

The logistics and organisation came with time and experience. For being physically ready, it was different – I never went to a gym until I was 29 years old, so it's only in the last few years that I've been physically ready for swells.

Morocco is not known to be sharky, but surfing way, way out in the ocean and even during the night at times, do sharks ever enter your mind? Do you have absolutely no fear of them either?

Morocco is not sharky at all. I have more fear of hitting a rock when I'm surfing in the night than seeing a shark.


The more I get scared,
the more I feel alive,
and this is where my
satisfaction comes from.
It doesn't come from
the other – I only
do it for love.



We note in one big wave session last year, your son Liam also came out and took the drop on a few bombs. Did you get a little nervous or fearful at all for him?

This day, Liam was 14 years old. Liam arrived before me on the spot, and he was getting crazy. When I made it to the spot, he told me, “Dad I want to surf. Can you tow me?”

At this moment, my legs went empty! But as a father, you don’t show anything and do your best to stay calm. I didn’t want to tow my son, so I decided to ask Dylan Longbottom to tow Liam and Axi Muniain to drive the jet ski with me on the sled, because if something happens to Liam, I want to be the one rescuing him.

Liam caught his first wave. Dylan placed him like I asked him to, on the shoulder, but Liam went straight down and took a while before he started planting the rail to turn. The wave swelled bigger and almost swallowed him!

The whitewash covered him up for a few seconds, but when he reappeared, it was good to know he had made the ride. For a few seconds, it was the scariest moment of my life. I was proud and scared, and it was so intense that for the first time, I cried.

We see your daughter, Lou, also surfs. Does your wife surf too?

My daughter just started surfing. My wife doesn’t surf, but she loves going to the beach to chill, watch us surf, and film. For me, this is the perfect combo – my two kids in the water and me and my wife on the beach. What more could I ask?



You have lived quite an adventurous life and pushed the limits in virtually everything you undertake. Do you see yourself slowing down at all or perhaps being a bit more risk-averse? I don’t see myself getting older, and I’m not ready to stop pushing the limits. One of the reasons why I can’t stop is because my son Liam just started surfing big waves, and today I have to train more and harder than ever if I want to be able to surf these kinds of waves and share what I have been doing my whole life with him.

You have become a renowned big wave surfer, obviously respected by peers and everyday surfers worldwide, and with that comes a public profile.

Do you ever feel you need to be more reserved in what you put out into the public domain, such as your love for hunting, for example? This is no doubt polarising to some, but we see it has been such a large part of your upbringing.

No, I don’t think I should be more reserved because I don’t post shocking stuff. People think they know everything about you just by social media, but the reality is that we show only what we want to show.







Can you explain a little about why living off the land, and the sea for that matter, is so important to you?

When I'm in the ocean I feel free, alive, myself.

I need the kinds of moments where I'm alone on my jet ski searching for waves in the middle of the ocean, riding kilometres to no end. I feel like these kinds of moments are the only time where I can actually be myself.

Another feeling that I love is knowing that, when in the ocean, everything can happen. You can pass from the best moment ever and, in only a few seconds, have the worst situation of your life. When I know that this can happen at any time, having this feeling makes me feel alive.



Finally, surfing in Morocco – why should people venture there? I see you opened a surf lodge back in mid-2022.

I personally think that people should venture to Morocco first of all for the culture, because you have the Moroccans, the Berbers, and the Sahara people, so already there are three different cultures.

The second reason is because of the waves. Everyone only knows one area going from Safi to Taghazout, but there are so many others. Between the north, the middle, and the south of Morocco, the swells are all different and not the same type at all.

The last reason is for the food, especially Moroccan tea and tajines. Just like the waves, the cuisine is completely different from the north to the south.

When it comes to my hotels, I have one eco-lodge in Dakhla in front of a perfect little right. These waves are incredible for beginners and also for professionals. Then I have another hotel in front of the famous wave and cliff of Imsouane. Just like Dakhla, these waves are perfect for every level of surfing.

Thank you so much for your time Jerome. Any closing remarks?

Today, surfing has changed a lot. People don't even surf for themselves anymore. For me, if you want to be a surfer, don't surf for others and social media. Surf for yourself.

There have always been rules in surfing, and you should never forget them, but we are lucky to live with this sport, so let's have fun and do it for the good reasons.

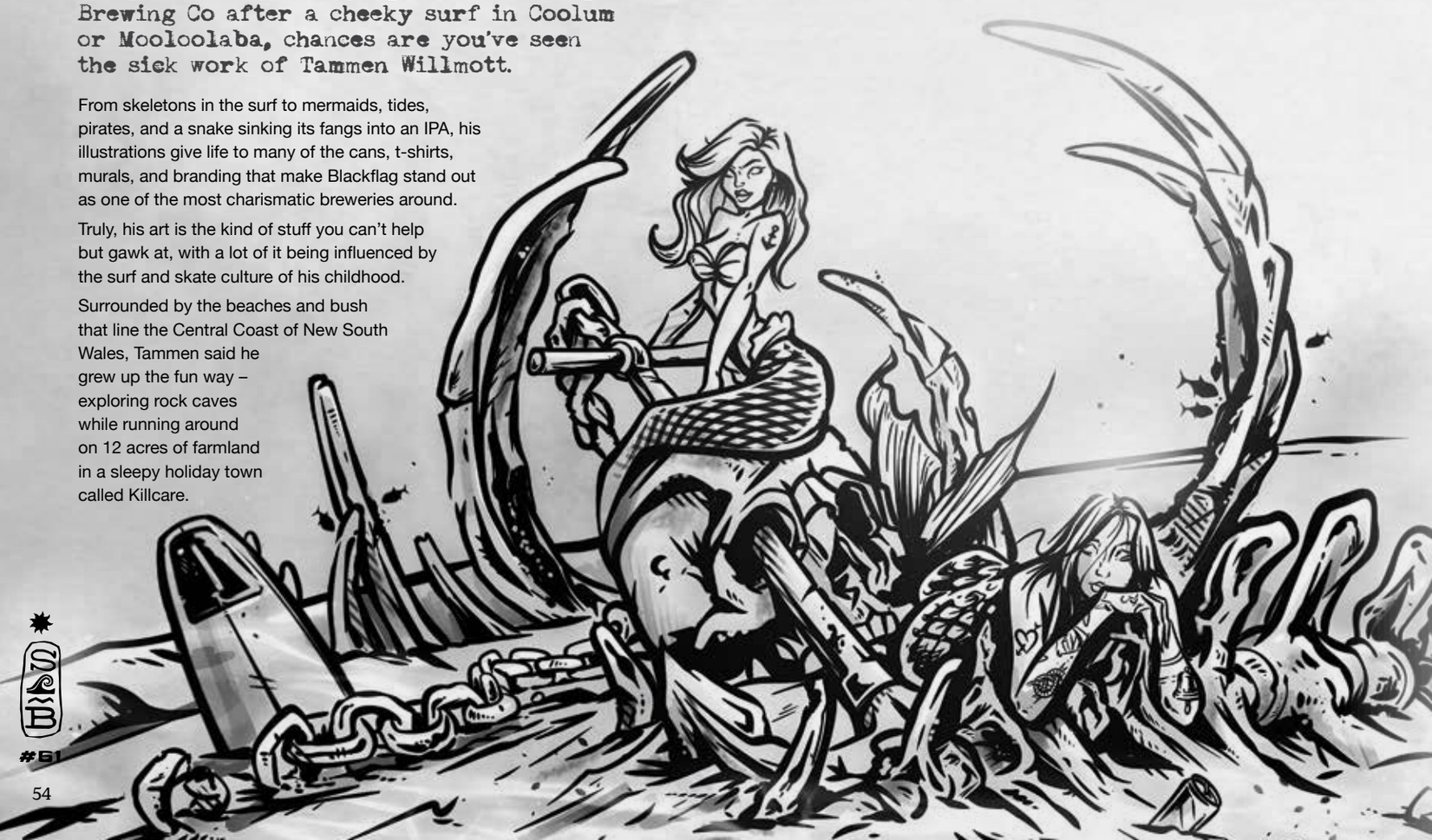
SKULL & CROSSBONES

If you are familiar with the craft beer scene on the Sunshine Coast, or have ever had the pleasure of dropping into Blackflag Brewing Co after a cheeky surf in Coolum or Mooloolaba, chances are you've seen the sick work of Tammen Willmott.

From skeletons in the surf to mermaids, tides, pirates, and a snake sinking its fangs into an IPA, his illustrations give life to many of the cans, t-shirts, murals, and branding that make Blackflag stand out as one of the most charismatic breweries around.

Truly, his art is the kind of stuff you can't help but gawk at, with a lot of it being influenced by the surf and skate culture of his childhood.

Surrounded by the beaches and bush that line the Central Coast of New South Wales, Tammen said he grew up the fun way – exploring rock caves while running around on 12 acres of farmland in a sleepy holiday town called Killcare.





MET

Words by Amber O'Dell



"For me, it's not so much about the perfect wave anymore. It's about being in that flow state - close to nature and the energy that the water, wind, and sun hold."



"My mum and grandmother had a studio where we would all just create. I experimented with oils and watercolours, sculptures, drawing, painting, and any other wacky craft I could think up.

"I was hooked on surfing and hell-bent on learning after I was given my first surfboard. The name of the board was long gone because it had been repaired so many times, but it was a home job – a broken, yellow, put-back-together single fin.

"My friends and I used to travel up and down the coast searching for waves in my mate's red second-hand 1989 Mercedes Benz Sedan with all of our boards hanging out the boot.

"We had plenty of secret spots from the Central Coast all the way up to Newcastle, and would spend most weekends surfing anything and everything before we would just hang out in car parks eating, skating, and simply enjoying life."

Tammen refers to surfing as the place where you both lose and find yourself, and said it has always been a big part of his life, even after he moved up to the Sunshine Coast.

"We used to surf crazy big point breaks, blown-out, weedy, wedgy corners, and stupid stormy closeout beaches with two inches of water. But these days, I can't go past a nice and sunny two-foot left-hander mal wave by myself or with my kids.

"I love the joy of being in the water and teaching the kids how to surf with the sun on my back and the salt on my skin – just having fun and forgetting about the pressures of life for one more session.

"For me, it's not so much about the perfect wave anymore. It's about being in that flow state – close to nature and the energy that the water, wind, and sun hold.

"My favourite breaks in New South Wales are Killy wedge, Macs point, Avoca point, and Pelicans, which is a bit of a secret. In Queensland, I love surfing the Kawana stretch, Point Cartwright, and Noosa as long as there's no one, haha."

For those as curious and nosy as we are when it comes to surfboards, Tammen currently rides a Bourton Shapes Mojo Pipedream 6'0" x 20 3/4" x 2 9/16" round tail with a cathedral channel from the nose to the mid rocker. He also has a 5'10" of the same kind and often nicks his daughter's 7'0" for the smaller days.



Australian born of Swiss descent, we were delighted to hear that Tammen loves the cold and snow as much as we do, with snowboarding being one of his favourite things to do when he has the chance to visit the snowfields or the European Alps.

“It’s just another extension of surfing – you feel free and can take in the energy of the mountain. I also skated as a teenager, but I couldn’t keep going with the smashed shins and tailbones, haha. I loved the skate culture though, which drew me even more towards the art side of things. I was in awe of 80’s and 90’s skateboard and snowboard graphics and often wondered, ‘Who creates all this stuff?’.

“Santa Cruz, Jim Phillips, Ben Brown, Mambo, Quicksilver, and anything that was bright, grungy, and had skulls were my go-to favourites. I started off creating free logos for people and just having an almost stupid obsession with designing cool graphics for brands and businesses.

“I have managed to pursue my hobby, make it into a career, and see my visions come true. Now, I design for clothing brands here in Australia and abroad. The Prodigy, The Wombats, and The Mad Hueys are just a few that I’m the most proud of.”

After being captivated by the sheer coolness of his life and career, it was quite a shock to hear that Tammen actually suffered a devastating stroke 15 years ago. In addition to his doctors listing out a whole lot of things about his body that needed fixing, they also said he wouldn’t be able to surf
or snowboard again, as he couldn’t walk in a straight line.

Fortunately, thanks to a whole lot of rehab, time, therapy, and willpower, he was able to get back on his feet and carve it up once more – apparently, with an even better backhand snap than before. As it would seem, Dave’s not the only one with a penchant for seriously injuring himself and dusting it off like nothing happened.

(Actually, as we were pulling this edition together, Tammen mentioned not being able to get out on the waves due to an infection in his knee caused by a bite he got while travelling in the Amazon Rainforest. How crazy is that? But anyway…)

Above all else, Tammen said that being able to funnel his energy through art and design has helped him overcome whatever life throws his way.

“The past few years have been mentally draining on all levels. Managing kids, family, work, and life in general when the one closest to you is going through a disease that is a continuous struggle is tough, so it’s easy to see how you can fall over. But surfing, meditation, clean eating, spiritual endeavours, being in nature, and my art has continued to pull me through.

“The family – that is, my workmates – at Blackflag have been super helpful, and I can’t thank them enough for the support that has been given to me and my family. We all struggle in some way or another, but we just need to remember to listen, talk, and ask for help.

“I’m also thankful to live in such a great place here on the Sunshine Coast.

"People love being outdoors with family and friends, many eating, drinking, and making great memories with a craft beer in hand. Honestly, I think a lot of people up here are just sick of drinking sh*t beer.”

Known for pushing the boundaries not only with their creative and innovative beer styles, but also with their outspoken branding steeped in surf and skate culture, Blackflag is indeed a force to be reckoned with in Australia’s kaleidoscopic craft beer industry (and is a favourite of the Smorgasboarder office).

Alongside fellow artist Ross Holloway, Tammen makes up the brand’s in-house design studio, which is affectionately known as The Doodle Crew or Team Etch A Sketch. Tammen said that Blackflag’s signature style, which is effectively the aesthetic of a bunch of grungy, punk rock pirates, actually ties in really nicely with the brewery’s eclectic selection of beers.

“We nail everything from traditional ales to experimental brews, and try to cater to a range of palates while matching the flavour profiles to the eye candy that is our can art. It’s super fun to come up with something wild and out-of-the-box for every new beer we produce.

“Ross has solidified the brewery’s aesthetic with his very recognisable mural street art style, but with both of us grinding and pushing the limits of the brand’s look, I think together we can forge a very strong and eye-catching brand direction.

“Sometimes, there is an urge to pull away from the norm and create something a bit different that will keep it fresh and make people want more. Depending on the workload, Ross and I will either work together or just go ahead with a design that the crew thinks will work best for the brand.

“For me, I love having the freedom to just be super creative with minimal restrictions. I like reflecting back on my style and seeing how I can apply it to a certain outcome, whether that be a beer can, t-shirt, festival banner, or any graphic element for the brewery.”

Honestly, nothing seems more fulfilling than living a life surrounded by art, surfing, and a bunch of cold crafties with mates. So, in the wise words of Tammen, don’t let your fifth-grade teacher tell you it’s a waste of time to doodle skulls and surf logos in the back of your English book.

“Who’s laughing now, Mr Riley? But seriously, creating massive designs and branding is a buzz.

"Above all else, Tammen said that being able to funnel his energy through art and design has helped him overcome whatever life throws his way."





"Winning and placing in creative comps and industry awards year after year goes to show we are on a winning path.

"The flow state is constant and is a testament to Ross's brand direction. Every day is fun coming up with cool new ideas.

"My passion is design, so every year I donate my time and art to the Moss Foundation Skaters to generate funds that go towards helping communities in Swaziland have access to fresh, clean water.

"Me and a bunch of other great artists paint skateboards for this auction, but last year was a real highlight for me, as I had a live paint battle against my hero, Ben Brown.

"Working with the Blackflag family is truly a dream job – great people, beers, and drawing skulls most days can't be beat. Ark Eleven is my brand and side hustle, where people can catch my other work, but Ross and I love making eyes pop with sick art for the brewery, and we hope to continue for years to come."

Honestly, nothing seems more fulfilling than living a life surrounded by art, surfing, and a bunch of cold crafties with mates.



SALT OF THE EARTH

Words by Amber O'Dell

On paper, it's quite a strange thing to be called, and yet I couldn't think of anyone more fitting of the compliment than Sarah Broughton - an adventurer and thalassophile with a resounding appreciation for the living things around her.

Like many of us, Sarah feels as if she belongs more in the water than on land. Growing up in Tasmania in an extremely active and ocean-loving family, she participated in every possible water sport alongside her two older brothers, from kayaking and camping to water skiing and diving.

However, it was snorkelling around the biodiverse coast of Bicheno that left the biggest impact on her as a kid. Actually, it's one of the sole reasons she published her book, Growing up on the Great Southern Reef, but we will get to that in just a bit.

Of course, it was only a matter of time before the siblings took up surfing. Sarah said she tried her hardest to learn as a P-plater in Tasmania, which involved lots of exploring down dirt roads and wearing a uniform of wetsuits, hoodies, beanies, and Ugg boots.

"I was pretty clueless about where to look or what conditions suited what location. That didn't deter me though. I was hopeless, but obsessed. The enjoyment I found in surfing was indescribable.

"Being in the water in one way or another has been at the forefront of my entire life. I am awkward on land but comfortable in the ocean, so surfing is an extension of that. It allows for movement, flow, individuality, and effortlessness when I'm in a good frame of mind.

“But even when I’m not, it teaches me lessons that I cannot learn on land and have difficulty describing to people who don’t surf. I’m out in the waves a lot on my own, but also with friends. Both bring me insurmountable amounts of joy.”

Sarah finished school with an unswayable determination to travel. Her first trip was to Fiji, where she volunteered with the Wildlife Conservation Society to help collect data on whether fishing and non-fishing zones were effective. Every day, she was out scuba diving and counting fish.

After returning home, it wasn’t long until she headed off again, determined to get better at surfing. At just 19 years old, she decided to travel solo for a few months, buying a tent and surfboard and making her way down Mexico’s west coast.

Sarah said this trip was extremely memorable, if not a little chaotic…

“There were a couple of mishaps, such as accidentally catching a lift with a confessed murderer, hitchhiking in the middle of the night because I fell asleep on the bus and missed my stop, getting peed on by a group of Israeli surfers when I got stung by a jellyfish, and getting my first and only tattoo – La Mar es Vida (the ocean is my life).

“Mostly, I spent my time surfing in completely inappropriate conditions for learning, but I didn’t mind. While travelling, I’d been deferring my spot at university to study nursing. When I got home, I picked the campus closest to the best waves and surfed as much as possible while studying in Coffs Harbour and then later on in Byron Bay.

“I’ll surf any craft in any wave, but my preference for boards is twins and single fins. My husband and I have quite a beautiful quiver, with boards from some amazing shapers. I use everything from a 5’9” McTavish Vinnie twin fin to a 9’4” McTavish Squaretail.

“My most surfed board is a Simon Jones Morning of the Earth 6’6” Fiji Tracks Twinny, but my favourite board is my 6’9” paulownia single fin hand-shaped by my husband and gifted to me after the birth of our second child.”

After her study, Sarah made her way up to the east coast of Australia. Today, she lives in Yaroomba Beach in south east Queensland with her husband and two boys, aged five and seven. Sarah said they visit Tasmania as much as possible, as it’s still very much home to her.

“I’ve surfed many incredible spots, so it’s hard to pick a favourite. I definitely have some memorable moments in Tasmania and its surrounding islands, although that’s as specific as I’ll get… Tassie locals are pretty protective of their breaks.

“I’ve spent a fair bit of time on the New South Wales coast between Coffs Harbour and Tweed Heads, and I’m always in awe of the sheer number of wave choices that are there if you’re willing to explore. I’ve surfed Central and South America, Indonesia, the Pacific Islands, and Europe, and I have many more places on the bucket list, such as Sri Lanka, Tahiti, and Hawaii.”

As mentioned previously, Sarah started snorkelling at a very young age, with her passion for underwater ecosystems being encouraged by her dad, who would gift her dive gear and pocket knives every year for Christmas.

It was honestly delightful hearing about Sarah’s fondest childhood memories, many of which revolved around her grandparents’ home in Bicheno. The property, which is now where her parents live, has a 180-degree view of the ocean and was built by her grandad in the ‘70s.

Sarah lovingly described the house as always littered with cowries, nautilus shells, washed-up seahorses, and diaries that tracked whale migration.

“My dad and his friend would often take us out in a tinny named The Midnight, where we took it in turns snorkelling. When we were older, we headed to the Great Barrier Reef to get our diving certificates.



"I was, and still am, the brunt of many family jokes when it comes to scuba diving. I was notorious for racing around, talking underwater, and using my air too quickly.

“The reefs around the Bicheno coastline are phenomenal, but as a child I had no concept of how special they really are. One of my favourite encounters was being close to the surface because I had run out of air and looking down at my brother, who was swarmed by dolphins like they were toddlers trying to make a whirlpool.

“I also developed a love-hate relationship with octopuses. They are scarily smart and brave, always creeping up on you and grabbing at things that don’t belong to them. My uncle dived in Waubs Bay so often that he knew where all of the creatures’ hideouts were. He even knew the exact rock where you could find weedy seadragons – one of my favourite locals of the Great Southern Reef.”

As it turns out, Sarah’s brother, Scott, has done some remarkable work in the marine biology space, turning his obsession with underwater environments into a career. After many years of study, he did his PhD on the effect that rising sea temperatures have on giant kelp forests. The results were unfortunately devastating, with 95% of the habitats having disappeared.

On a positive note, Scott’s incredible work researching the expansive kelp biomes led him to the realisation that he was studying one interconnected ecosystem stretching from northern New South Wales to Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia, and Western Australia.

Similarly to the Great Barrier Reef being a collection of coral reefs, what Scott and other scientists had discovered was a collection of kelp reefs. Thus, the Great Southern Reef was named and first published in late 2015.

“It’s not every day that your brother gives a new identity to an 8,000-kilometre stretch of coastline. Since the Great Southern Reef gained recognition, we’ve been trying to raise awareness within the scientific community, the government, and of course, the locals.

“The team at the Great Southern Reef Foundation has done a fantastic job with this, but I really wanted to help. Initially, I started by writing to people in the surf community. I wanted surfers in New South Wales to know that their beloved local break was the same as the surfers in Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia, and Western Australia.

“They’re all connected by one reef – the Great Southern Reef. Giving it a name gives it power, and giving it power allows for change. Similarly to the Great Barrier Reef, this sprawling ecosystem is not without its threats, which is why advocacy and funding are essential.”

Sarah initially felt that she was useless to the cause – full of passion and ideas but with little knowledge or experience to back it up. But, driven by the gut feeling that she could spread further awareness, one night she decided to sit down and write an entire children’s book.

Complemented by delightful illustrations of giant kelp forests and other sea creatures (many of which are found nowhere else on the planet), Growing up on the Great Southern Reef not only delves into the colourful habitat that Sarah grew up with, but also explores how human actions are negatively affecting it.

Sarah said it took a couple of years, but when the book was finally published, it was an overwhelming experience.

“I was fortunate enough to be connected with my illustrator, Lily Barnett, who’s a tour guide in south east Tasmania and experiences the beauty of the Great Southern Reef every day. My initial goal was just to hold that book in my hands and read it to my kids, so achieving that was so very special to me.

“I don’t consider myself a writer, and generally articulating my thoughts into words is a daily struggle for me. With the book, it all came naturally, especially since I was writing about my own experiences but through the eyes of my son, Thomas, and his cousin, Luna.

“I do have another children’s book idea with a similar theme of raising environmental awareness. This one would be based around Yaroomba Beach and the incredible David and Goliath story that I think the children of this community ought to know about.”

If anyone reading has ever considered getting more involved with ocean conservation or environmental activism, it goes without saying that it’s never too late to make a difference.



“Being in the water in one way or another has been at the forefront of my entire life. I am awkward on land but comfortable in the ocean, so surfing is an extension of that. It allows for movement, flow, individuality, and effortlessness when I’m in a good frame of mind.”





It's truly such an important and fulfilling thing for us thalassophiles to get out there, ask questions, and support amazing organisations like Landcare Australia, Surfrider Foundation Australia, Sea Shepherd, and Surfers for Climate – just to name a few.

Sarah emphasised that organisations like these are always in need of help and are working hard to make the ocean healthier.

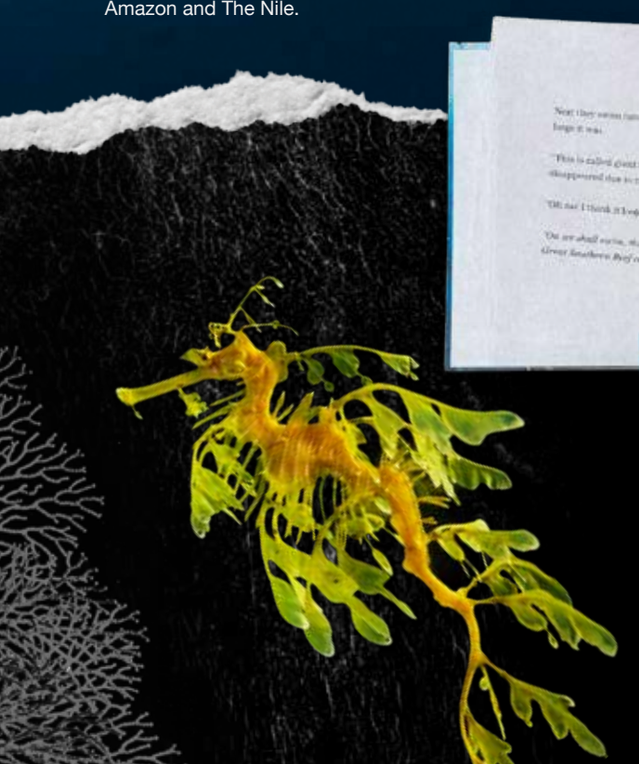
"I can't remember a time when I wasn't passionate about ocean conservation. It's such a great way to learn about the world and the ways in which we can improve ourselves. I still remember my first volunteer job in high school as a youth ambassador for World Vision.

"Currently, I volunteer with the Surfrider Foundation Sunshine Coast branch and sit on the committee as a treasurer. We do regular beach clean-ups, attend environmental events, and have recently started a kids enviro squad. I also volunteer for Coolum and North Shore Coast Care's turtle monitoring program.

"During turtle nesting season, I get up before sunrise and check out Yaroomba Beach for turtle tracks. The team will then mark the nest and monitor it until the turtles hatch. They record extensive data and send it to the Sunshine Coast Council Turtle Care program. Obviously, volunteering has always been an important part of who I am."

For those interested, we highly recommend you check out Sarah's book, Growing up on the Great Southern Reef, which is available on Amazon and The Nile.









Honestly, we couldn't think of a better way to not only support such a beautiful and lovingly created piece of art, but also bolster the efforts of those who are going above and beyond to protect the rare ecosystems that we may take for granted sometimes.

Sarah left us with a personal story about the ocean and her mental health, further emphasising its importance to her and the need for us to advocate for the entity that connects, lifts, and calms us all.

"It's well established that I love the ocean, but there was a period where I lived away from it. We visited often, but there were some particularly difficult cold winters in my schooling years where I experienced some personal struggles. My mental health suffered, and I ended up with anxiety and anorexia.

"I was embarrassed, ashamed, scrawny, weak, and always cold. I had been trying to learn to surf, but I didn't have enough strength. When I was in the water, I escaped the reality of what I was facing. Bit by bit, the ocean gave me the strength to recover and return to being who I wanted to be.

"I think often of the book Blue Mind by Wallace J Nichols. The book offers valuable insights into the science behind why being near the ocean makes you happier, healthier, and more connected. It starts with the Jacques Cousteau quote,

'The sea, once it casts its spell, holds one in its net of wonder forever.'

"Life is overwhelming, but it doesn't always have to be. Surfing is obviously an outlet for me, but I also dabble in trail running, growing vegetables, woodcarving, and surf skating. I'm not very good at any of these, but they make me very happy. My goal next year is to learn to sail."





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Surfing, Brownies, & the Universe Calling

Words by Dave Swan

It's always interesting when a chance meeting brings two people together who share quite a deal in common.



I recently had the great pleasure of meeting the infectiously positive George Kalpakis. Many years back, George left the relative safety of the corporate world to pursue his passion and start a business with his wife. Along the way, he's made sure to find time for family while getting in a healthy dose of surfing and some snow holidays.

It's interesting because, funnily enough, myself and my business partner in Smorgasboarder, Mark (who thankfully is not my wife), also left our corporate gigs in search of something that would afford us more time with family with plenty of surfing and snowboarding to boot.

We both just so happen to very much like brownies, which incidentally is the business George and his wife Caroline started some ten years ago called Brazen Brownies.

George and Caroline have three kids – 26, 23, and 19. Coincidentally, Katie and I also have three kids – 24, 22, and 19. My wife Katie hails from Balwyn in Melbourne, while



George and Caroline live just up the road in East Ivanhoe and also have a place up here on the Sunshine Coast, only a couple of kilometres from where we live.

I honestly could go on and on, but needless to say, we have a lot in common and hit it off immediately.

Firstly, on the surfing side of things, George is a self-confessed average surfer. I am the same. He surfed often as a kid, but it was during the time when he lived on Victoria's Surf Coast that this passion truly took hold. George picks up the story.

"Well, back when I worked for ANZ's mobile division, we lived down in Torquay at The Sands. After all, with that kind of a role, there was no point living in Melbourne. Although I probably shouldn't say, the lifestyle down there was very much so that some days you might finish around two in the afternoon, so I would often go off for a surf. Some of my friends would get on their buggies and play golf with a few tinnies, but I loved nothing more than going for a surf. It was beautiful."

Interestingly enough, George's weapon of choice is a McTavish Fireball, and reportedly he and Bob are good friends. Coincidentally, my dad and Bob were good mates too.

"Yeah, I don't consider myself much of a surfer with short boards or anything like that. I just like my longboard. That's my cup of tea. Plus, the thing about surfing is that it's not really about the vehicle anyway – it's about being surrounded by nature. I don't know whether it's the sand or the salt or the breeze, but it really gives you this incredible feeling that just makes me want to immerse myself in it.

"These days, I don't take on anything too challenging. When the wind and tide are right, I will take the longboard out front at Bokarina, but I don't want to risk hurting myself."

It's interesting to note that George is quite accident-prone, much like myself. Although, I must say he has raised the stakes suffering a serious spinal injury whilst mountain biking.

However, George's sentiments about not risking injury and the adverse impacts it can have on your business and family life certainly resonate with me. Once I was happy to throw caution to the air, but I have undoubtedly become a lot more cautious these days, read chicken.

"I certainly still enjoy getting in the water every chance I get. Even when we're on the road with the business, I can't take a board with me, but I still love to call in at little places along the east coast and have a body bash. I might pull over and think, 'Well, that's a nice wave,' and jump in. That's the beauty of it. When you come out, you just feel so fresh and great. I mean, what more do you want?"

Recalling my regular road trips with Smorgasboarder along the east coast, which are far too infrequent these days, I couldn't agree more.

"Yeah, it gives me a nice little burst of energy to carry on. Then, I indulge in a couple of coffees and a brownie – that's my diet."

Ah yes, the brownie. I too have an addiction to those little slabs of chocolate goodness. As I mentioned, that just so happens to be George's business. George went on to explain how he became a dealer.

"Well, my wife Caroline was in fact a lawyer with her own practice. She was for over 25 years before she came to the realisation that she wanted to do something that actually brings joy to people.

"Her love of travelling and food led her to undertake culinary studies in both Australia and Europe. This just cemented her love for cooking, and she knew her true passion was in the food industry."

Interestingly, my wife Katie also loves to cook. As for her speciality, she bakes one awesome brownie, although she's never pursued it in a commercial sense. George went on to explain his role in the business.





"Where I come in, well, I love sweets. I'm a dessert lover, and I like to think of myself as a brownie advocate and ambassador. That's my title, whereas my wife is a brownie designer.

"I spent more than 25 years in professional services, you know, working for the likes of AMP, GE, CSC, and ANZ. I love dealing with people and building relationships, and so I help with the business side of things and work with our wonderful clients.

"When I'm not doing that, I'm in a black apron crunching out brownies alongside Caroline and the team. That said, what I love most of all is getting out there and meeting with all of the people who have supported us."

Now, at this point, having sampled quite a few Brazen Brownies, I must say they are seriously good, and I believe I am somewhat of a brownie aficionado given that Katie makes some of the best brownies I have ever tasted.

At risk of putting myself in the doghouse, this is stiff competition. The Brazen Brownies I have sampled are absolutely something else.

"I suppose what makes us different from our competitors is that we're not a bakery – we are purely manufacturers of brownies and brownies only. There's not one brownie company that would specialise in the way that we do.

"So, we have 20 different products and have them all flow-wrapped. That's how we ship them, and that's how we preserve the freshness. That's the key – freshness and the fact that we are small-batch and can focus on quality over quantity."

If you're the owner of a small coffee shop, café, restaurant, or general store along the east coast of Australia, I would seriously consider reaching out to George and the team at Brazen Brownies.

Having travelled the road so many times from the Sunshine Coast all the way down to Cape Bridgewater in Victoria near the South Australian border, I know of so many of my frequent pitstops along the way where these delectable little sweet treats would be a huge hit. You never know – you too may share a heap in common with this lovable man.



"Let's face it, everyone needs a guilty pleasure. Brownies are the perfect match with coffee, texturally and taste-wise. They go hand in hand with extending ourselves – it's a reward. That's why we like to associate ourselves with things like run clubs and surfing for that matter.

"You put in all that hard work, so you need to be lifted back up again. When your body is tired, you need something that will elevate you and your taste buds. When they are, guess what? You feel great. You want to go back out."

Finally, not that I detected an accent, but George and his wife are from North America. Caroline is from New Jersey, with George having lived in Toronto, Canada. Where are my kids right now? Canada. And how about where they were when George and I first met? At that point in time, they just so happened to be in Toronto. Cue The X-Files music.



SURFBOARD SHAPERS

Surfboard design has always been an obsession for us. It is at the very heart and soul of what this magazine is about. We love to immerse ourselves in discussion about the approach of certain said surfboard designs, the principles behind them, and what that particular shaper is trying to achieve.

In this special Smorgasboarder editorial series, we provide an insight into the minds of some of Australia and New Zealand's most influential surfboard artisans, along with a few newcomers to the scene. In each edition, we will feature 10 surfboard shapers, shining a spotlight on the one board they craft, or one aspect of their designs, that best encapsulates the focus of their endeavours.

10 SHAPERS

BRYAN BATES SURFBOARDS

AGNES WATER

BRYAN BATES

Currently my favourite board, both to ride and to shape, is the Grease Slapper. It has all of my most beloved design features I've studied through the years combined.

Starting with an 80's shortboard chassis, it has a flat deck, balanced rocker, and foil reminiscent of MR's classic twin fins. The bottom shape pulls a page from Maurice Cole's Reverse Vee, with a modern twist of transitioning to a single concave in the tail.

Similar to my wing model, this bottom shape steers wonderfully rail to rail from the front foot and has that sparky, powered-up feeling off the tail that modern concaves deliver. The reverse vee has a bonus effect of allowing for a lovely early entry when paddling into waves. Combined with the flat deck, this makes for a board that paddles outstandingly and is forgiving to foot placement.

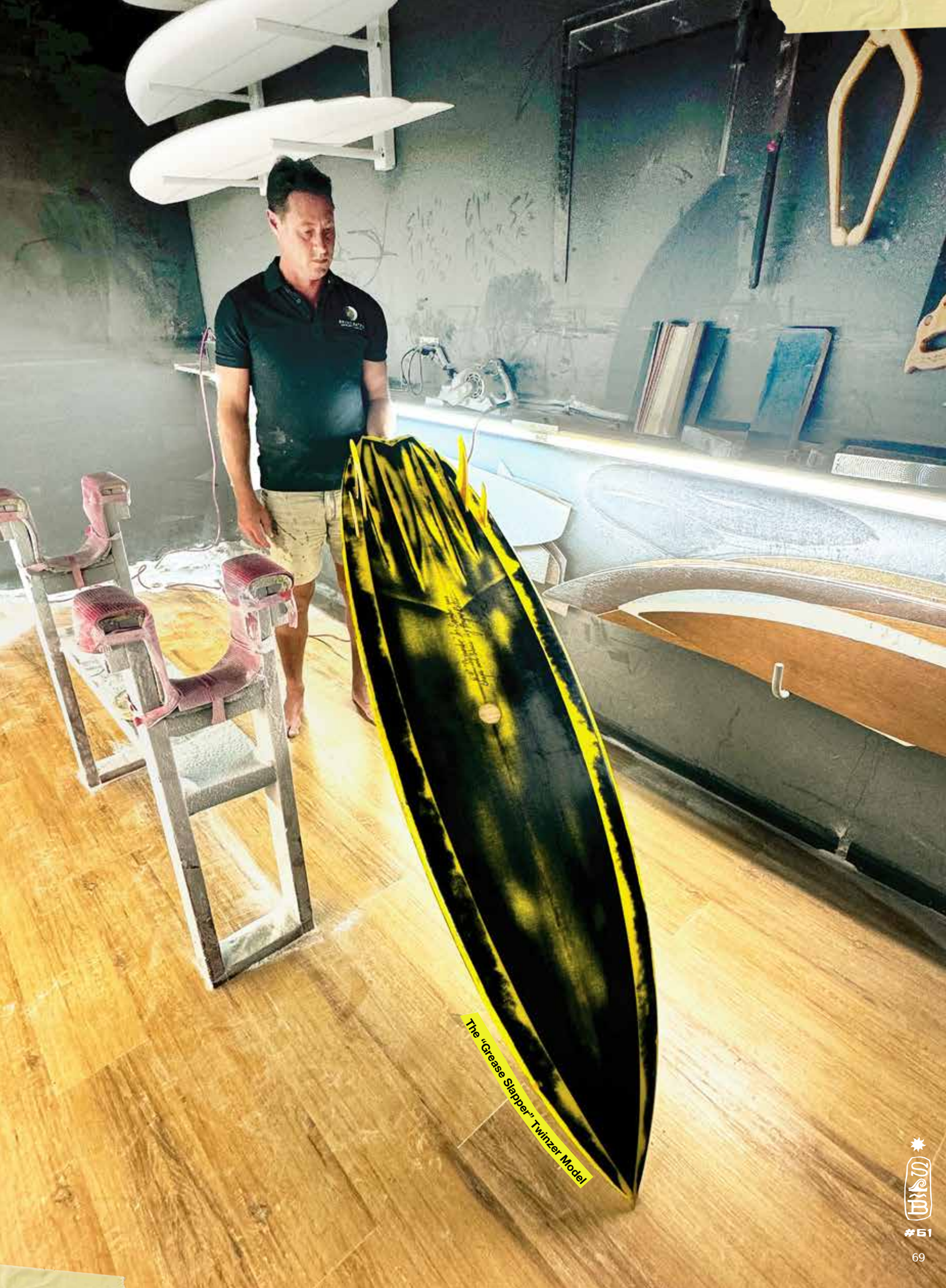
The outline is a tip of the cap to McCoy's Lazer Zap, though far less dramatic. There's generous tail area, a more parallel section between your feet for drive, and heaps of curve behind your back foot for carving and wrapping cuttys. Forward of the wide point, the outline simply gets out of the way while retaining good area.

The Twinzer fin setup became a favourite of mine 20 years ago, and I've been building them using the original design parameters set out by Twinzer inventor Wil Jobson. I make the fins myself and router and set them into the board. This creates a bulletproof attachment without the drag caused by fin rovings. Fin angles and toe in are crucial, but when executed properly, a Twinzer is faster than a twin and is as dependable as any thruster in critical settings.

Four channels out the back add drive and grip and really project the board where you want it to go. Lastly, the rails are quite fine in the tail area, allowing the rail to penetrate into the wave when driven into a turn and not bog. The rails are edged up but tucked with a tight radius for clean water release while remaining forgiving.

Every one of my boards is hand-shaped and built from start to finish by me. The Grease Slapper can handle a pretty wide range of conditions but is best in waves with a little push and curve to them to really get the Twinzer effect happening. It's an 'extra gear' kind of feeling that I don't find in any other fin arrangement. It's awesome!

bryanbates.com.au bryanbatessurfboards


The "Grease Slapper" Twinzer Model


Sidecut Fish

MACKIE DESIGNS

ULLADULLA

MICK MACKIE

The sidecut designs that I have been shaping and riding for over 25 years now are something of a personal quest that I have been refining different versions of, from deep swallowtails to rounded square tails.

The sidecut design was influenced heavily by Dimitrjie Milovich in Utah and his original Winterstick snowboard, which is still a master design/shape. I was also influenced by Australian shaper Rodney Ball's master shapes that had variations of sidecut from the mid-seventies through to the early eighties.

This fusion of surf and snow has allowed me to develop my own unique take on surfboard design. Sidecut allows a semi-friction-free slice feel through turns – a feeling that is quite unique and very addictive.

Both boards shown have flex tails and a thin rail through the back third, so as to emulate the thin rail of a snowboard. This gives bite and a direct 'slice' feel through the back foot. They also both feature a thicker centre platform, which allows for float through the thinner tail for the back foot.

The flex tails offer variable tail rocker as well as load and release whip, with added speed when the waves and board get going. Both boards have a hard tucked edge running nose to tail, with the forward part of the board's rails having a hard flat chine to form the tucked edges. This adds speed and direction as opposed to a soft, spongy rail.

Bottom shape for the big fish (7'10" x 22" x 3 1/2") is a light to mid-depth panelled vee with a mid-double concave running from around centre to between the twin keels, with the forward section running a narrow mid-depth double concave to the nose with flat panels outside of the concave to the hard chined edges.

The bigger rounded square tail (9'0" x 21 7/8" x 3 1/2"), which is a thruster, is of a much simpler bottom shape, being a light panelled vee in the forward third running to a slightly double concave flat bottom, with the tail being a vee in the flex tail section.

These boards were firstly designed for speed and smooth long arcs, so they work properly in longer open-faced waves, though they can still be used in small waves for a glide style of surfing.

It is both rewarding and exciting to see where I can take my personal craft and board designs in my ongoing pursuit of innovation.

mackiesurfboards.com.au mackiedesigns

HARVEST CUSTOM SURFBOARDS

TWEED VALLEY

JACK KNIGHT

As you know, I began shaping back in 1968. I was first taught the craft of making boards by Neal Purchase Snr while working at Keyo Surfboards, and throughout the '70s, I worked with some of the best in the business at Bennett Surfboards, including Shane and McGrigor, to name a few. I then started my SeaFlight label in the '80s on the central coast and moved to the Gold Coast in the '90s, shaping for Spyder Surfboards before reverting back to shaping under my own name in the early 2000s.

Anyhow, fast forward to 2012, and my youngest son, Aaron, and I started the Harvest label. We basically developed Harvest because of our desire to re-engage with ideas from a bygone era and experiment with different feelings in surfboard design.

Our main focus is on crafting individually made boards – true customs. I guess some people are in this industry to make money first and foremost. Then there are those like us who just love making surfboards, and as long as we can make ends meet, we're happy. We're not interested in pumping out boards by the hundred. Everything we make is hand-shaped. Our emphasis has always been on quality over quantity. So, we prefer making boards with stronger glass jobs and higher-quality materials and finishes. Basically, the genuine article, which includes twin fins, thrusters, quads, and single fins.

Possibly one of the boards we are most renowned for is the Jim Pollard inspired channel bottom single fin.

As I mentioned, I have been fortunate to have learnt from some of the best in the business. Three people in particular, however, had a major influence on me – Glen Ritchie, who was the first person I knew to shape full concaves, Glen Winton, who I developed the four-fin surfboard with (now known as a quad), and Jim Pollard, the first guy to shape channel bottoms.

Jim's channels back in the day started 12" from the nose and followed the plan shape and curved out through the flyers in the tail. I still shape these channel bottom boards to this day, and I guess one of the reasons why we are renowned for them is that they can't be machine shaped.

You have to hand-shape these channels. No computer could replicate the design. But they are such a beautiful board to surf. The curved channels follow your movements and are really mellow, soft, fluid, and free-flowing, whereas with a straight-channel board, you have to really get on top of the channels to surf them. You have to drive the water out the tail so they surf long. The curved channels don't and deliver somewhat of a hydrofoil effect. When you surf one, you will understand the appeal.

harvestsurfboards.com harvestsurfboards


7’0” JPI Single Fin


Twin Fins

SADHANA SURFBOARDS

CHRISTCHURCH, NEW ZEALAND

JAY JACKMAN

Coming from the ‘ride everything’ school of thought, it would be hard for me to nail down one board shape above another, so I would say from my point of view, it’s not so much one surfboard shape but one design that has been a recurring theme and influence through my shaping life, the twin fin surfboard.

Readers of a certain age will remember a TV ad with a four-time world champion and his twin fin promoting a beer. Watching THAT board and THOSE moves in that 60-second commercial switched me on for good (they even wrote a line about the twin fin in the jingle). Luckily, I was obsessed with MR’s surfing at that time and not the sponsor’s product (for a few more years at least).

I was a tiny grom still getting my nipples torn to pieces on a Hanimex Coolite when the thruster had just taken over as the board design of choice. Twinnies were grommet learners that you’d pick up on second-hand racks. Some of those very early 80’s twin fin stabilisers were some of the funnest to ride, and the prettiest I’ve seen to this day.

There’s a playfulness in having no centre fin to hold the tail in. Width opens creative doors to make riding fringe and marginal waves feel like bullet train lines. The connection between rail and fin is central to its design achievement. The whole art and style of riding a snowboard can be attributed to the twin fin. Quad fin 12’ guns at Pe’ahi? Twin fin concept, friends.

Students of history note that the twin fin has been around since fibreglass has been wrapping boards watertight. They were early problem solvers for heavy tracking single skeg logs. By ’97, I pretty much only rode and experimented with twinnies (apart from a very nice 6’10 McGrigor single fin I found stashed in the surf club gear shed).

From the keel fish new wave of the 90’s to the current buzz of mids and short rippers, crew are still finding that freedom – freedom from drag, freedom of foot placement, and freedom of wave search. The dance floor’s still funky.

sadhanasurfboards.co.nz sadhanasurf

OCEAN FOIL SURFBOARDS

URUNGA, NEW SOUTH WALES

KEITH "ATLAS" ROBINSON

This thing I started seven or eight years ago has gone crazy. I am now selling my Gut Sliders not only all around Australia, but all around the world. We're getting orders from California and New York, and we even got one recently from Utah of all places.

In addition to Timor, the Maldives, Sri Lanka, Sumatra, Bali, and Fiji, I'm getting orders from Tasmania, Western Australia, South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales, and Queensland – even an old mate I used to work with in New Zealand rang me up about them.

I've received so many orders that I enlisted the help of Oke Surfboards in Melbourne to keep up with demand because I know the people really well and because they are like me – very fastidious. Their quality is amazing. They are all great people, and I am quite happy to work with them because I can't possibly make all of these boards. I still make the local stuff, like orders from the Sunshine Coast and from as far down as Sydney.

Who would have thought the board I did some years back for a mate of mine who had a hip operation would turn into this? Most readers would know, but this guy I knew had hip pain and couldn't get up fast enough. So, I started experimenting with shapes, sizes, and fin placement to develop a board that would allow riders to paddle on to waves easily, manoeuvre just under the lip, and perform cutbacks just like you can on a surfboard, all without using flippers.

Long story short, I developed a board you lie down on called the Gut Slider, which was built on a tri-plane hull where the rail curve is different from the bottom curve through the board. The word got out, and it went crazy. As it turns out, there's a whole range of people out there that just can't physically push up to get onto their feet anymore, or it just takes them so long to get up that they miss the best part of the wave.

The board is designed to get up and go as fast as you can on a rail, so you can do little reos (re-entries) and amazing cut-backs – they're quite a thing. Rest assured, once you get the hang of surfing these things, it puts a whole lot of fun back in your day.

The boards range from 5'5" to 5'10" in length and are 23" wide, although the rail-to-rail turning points are about 19" to get a fast rail transition. These boards are an incredible entry-level board for kids too, as they can catch waves and get to their feet without a struggle. This is better than a high-performance board, which is often too twitchy for them.

It's such an enjoyable way to surf, because when you are lying down on the board, it gives you a new perspective on the beauty of a wave. You get to see a lot more of the wave compared to when you are standing up. You can see all of the beautiful curves and the kinetic energy, and you can direct yourself better. You get to identify the energy pockets when normally you don't see much of that. You soar on these boards – you actually fly.

When people get over the ego nonsense of laying down on a surfboard, they realise how much fun and lifechanging it really is. It's so rewarding to see that so many people's lives are improving because of the Gut Sliders.

When I got to 65, I was going to retire, but this whole Gut Slider craze had other ideas.

The surfboard industry for some people is a commercial venture, but for me it's always just been about the lifestyle. I make boards because I want to, not because I have to, and I take a great deal of pride in getting them perfectly suited to the customer. When I know exactly what people need, where they surf, how they like riding, and what size board they need, I am able to do the best job I can for them.

I always take into consideration how old the customer is, how long they've been surfing, and where they surf. I put all of that information together and make those subtle changes as I am shaping the board, because I've always been a custom surfboard shaper.

Plus, I've surfed just about everywhere in Australia where there are waves, so that makes it easy for me to customise because I know the kind of waves they'll be surfing. It's not just about knowing their idiosyncrasies – it's about knowing the locations they surf.

I spend a good 15 hours on a surfboard, because I try to cater to any colour and design the customer wants. I think that makes it way more valuable than any mass production board that can be churned out in six hours. The process has always been pretty personal all the way down the line.

I am continuing to work on the Gut Slider design to improve it with every passing day. I am constantly tweaking the design and handcrafting it to suit the needs of every customer.


Gut Slider


Anything balsa

RILEY CLASSIC BALSAWOOD SURFBOARDS CRONULLA

MARK RILEY

What's the primary focus of my designs? Balsa. It is the most lightweight, versatile, sustainable, durable, and beautiful timber, which is absolutely perfectly suited to building surfboards. That's what continues to be the focus of every one of my designs.

Sure, there are other timbers to build wooden surfboards out of, such as paulownia, but in all honesty, there is no comparison. Balsa is lighter, balsa is easier to shape, and balsa is undeniably more beautiful. Mixed and matched with other feature timbers, such as Australian red cedar on the stringers, nose and tail blocks, and fins (all my boards come with fins), the surfboards become functional works of art. The dark, rich red colour of the cedar provides a stunning contrast to the balsa for real wow factor.

I stress 'functional' because the boards I build, both the solid balsa wood classics and the lightweight, high performance surfboards that feature a recycled EPS blank wrapped in a balsa skin, are near indestructible. I mean, Captain Destruction, Dave Swan's son, Sam, even has issues dinging his Riley boards, and he wrecks almost everything else he rides.

So, in short, the focus of my designs since inception has been balsa and will continue to be going forward. I will keep refining how I use this wood and where I source it from, ensuring sustainable practices are in place, including the recycling practices I undertake in my surfboard building process, which are already ingrained in my day-to-day operations. Of equal importance is the fact that all of my boards are proudly Australian made, by me.

Other than that, I will continue to ensure my supply of this blond gold is a source of inspiration for some of the most revered board builders on the planet, including the likes of Mitchell Rae, Dick Van Straalen (although retired, I am guessing he will most likely knock out a few for himself), and home board-building enthusiasts who wish to craft something special.

balsawoodsurfboardsriley.com.au rileybalsasurfboards

RAGLAN LONGBOARDS (MICKEY T SURFBOARDS) RAGLAN, NEW ZEALAND

MIKE THOMPSON

The board I've been shaping the most of in the last few years is The Sapling. I made the first one for myself about six or eight years ago and have been through a few minor variations of the design since then.

Most of my old boards become shop rentals, and we've had consistently good feedback from a wide array of travelling surfers. I've also had numerous orders for the same after riding it as a demo.

Living here at Raglan, we mostly get rideable waves in the waist-high to overhead range, not usually below this threshold. On the east coast (typically more of the knee-high to waist-high days), every couple of years after coming back from the east coast, I'd make myself a new 9'6" log. Then I'd surf it once or twice and park it in the back of the shop to gather cobwebs.

It would just feel too big and boaty for the conditions we mostly experience, not to mention how heavy it would feel walking back up the hill from the beach break! So then I devised the Sapling model.

The '60s-style log and the modern high-performance longboard sit at opposite ends of the longboard design spectrum. The Sapling sits smack dab in the middle.

It takes the single-fin, lower rocker, and aesthetics of the log and combines them with a modernised bottom contour/rail configuration that makes it very user-friendly. It achieves great paddle power, noseriding, and general 'glide' factor while remaining agile and quick to react (and still carrying speed through the turns).

The most popular dimensions (coincidentally what I ride) are

9'1" x 22 1/2" x 2 1/2", but I do a range up to 9'6" x 23" x 3 1/8". Usually glassed 6/6+6 with a resin gloss coat for a solid but not overly heavy glass job.

It's been our best-selling model the last several years, and it's pretty evenly divided between men and women surfers.

It's probably the model that best reflects my current thinking on surfboard design. I like to combine a clean, classic look with some evolutionary progress in the design features to make a board that handles well and makes the rider feel like they are surfing a little easier and better than before.

The rounded tail makes the board feel shorter than its length, as the plan shape pulls in behind the back foot, allowing for ease of transition from rail to rail without the need to plant the back foot so hard and far back on the tail that you stall and pivot on the fin.

That, combined with a slight tucked edge around the fin and a slight vee double concave between the feet, keeps the board lively, responsive, and easy to handle.

Right now, a large segment of the thruster-native surf population is fully enamoured with the retro designs of the '60s and '70s – an era they didn't get to experience in person. In fact, a common theme seems to be anything but three.

My first 10 years of surfing, from 1971 to 1981, were spent on single fin shortboards, as longboards had died a quick death just previous to that.

We had the hair, the bell-bottom jeans, and the great music, but the surfboards were kind of dead in the water compared to what we have learned since. We've since come a long way in terms of rocker, bottom contours, and fin configurations.

These can be quite subtle and hard to see or appreciate for the average surfer. The '70s were a time for dramatic design features such as bonzers, wings, stings, channel bottoms, step bottoms, and other such attempts to loosen up that sluggish old single fin.

Longboards, on the other hand, have been evolving a little differently.

After being practically extinct through the '70s and '80s, they started to make a big comeback from the late '80s to the present day. The modern era morphed into high-performance, rockered, thinned-out, multi-finned machines capable of nose riding and doing big turns and re-entries.

These, in turn, became uncool, and the pendulum swung all the way over into retro-land again – heavy, low-rockered, roll-bottomed, 9'6" single fins to the point where the weaker and more pitiful the conditions, the better the board went.

By contrast, when the waves are bigger, sharper, and more powerful, the logs reach their limitations. They start to handle like boats.

I've been a bit bemused watching some of the WSL pro longboarding coverage lately. They keep going to good wave venues like Bells Beach and El Salvador and experiencing overhead surf, but religiously riding large, wide-tailed nose riders regardless of the conditions.

It's probably more a reflection on judging criteria, as rail turns are outlawed and hard edges/side fins may get you disqualified or, at least, laughed out of town.

All I'm saying is, horses for courses! They will all be on Saplings one day. Haha.

raglanlongboards.co.nz raglanlongboards



The Sapling


Zen Blade Flextail

OUTER ISLAND SURFBOARDS

URUNGA

MITCHELL RAE

If I had to sum up my life's work, it would be most definitely the pursuit of flex. Within nature, flex is omnipresent. There is so much that can be learned from various creatures and how their forms and shapes function. Living creatures can alter their shape whilst in motion. Birds can extend their wings for more lift, soaring on a thermal and tucking them in on a speed dive while chasing prey. Fish have the same abilities. Dolphins, fish, and sharks all generate propulsion with their tail fins.

With this as inspiration, I have always focused my creations on leveraging the benefits of flex. I've been working with flexible designs since the '70s. Flex introduces variable control curves and, most importantly, generate 'reflex'. The flex tail gives propulsion out of a turn, like a diver on a springboard or an arrow being released from a bow. The boards feel alive to ride.

So, flex is what I am best known for, and my Zen Blade is the full science/technology package. The board is alive with flex. The rear third is where the magic happens.

Quite a few years back, I developed a design called V2 Flex using two timber stringers in a V shape converging at the tip of the nose and exiting the rail about a third from the tail. These increase rigidity in the forward entry area and allow for a degree of natural flex in the tail third of the board. That's where you want the flex properties to be concentrated.

I glue my own stringers, as the placement and rocker are so key. With the Zen Blade, I then combine this construction method with a carbon fibre composite FlexTail acting like a dolphin's flipper. I'll sculpt out 10-15% of the tail's volume and then restore it to its original volume and buoyancy with soft, flexible EVA foam that is bonded and shaped into the construction.

The combination of these two flex ingredients generates amazing acceleration and control, making the board capable of extremely tight arcs and high-speed drive lines. With variable curve whilst in motion, the 'reflex' out of turns gives amazing projection.

The other vital ingredients that turbocharge this design are deep concaves, a Persian Slipper dolphin nose, and VE cross-linked epoxy backbone resin.

I fine-tune the Zen Blade specifically to the weight of the rider and wave range. Many call them the Ferraris of the surfboard world. These forever boards are an absolute labour of love and so very time-consuming. As such, I only allocate five slots per year to build Zen Blades. Boards of this nature are sure to be around many years after I am pushing up daisies. They are most certainly my life's work encapsulated.

outerislandsurfboards.com outerislandsurfboards

BARE NAKED HAND CRAFTED
WOODEN SURFBOARDS

BARINGA, SUNSHINE COAST

SHAYNE EVANS

The focus of my designs is sheer enjoyment. The feeling of surfing something that you have built with your own hands is just something else. It's almost indescribable to someone who hasn't done it, but there is one thing for sure – when you catch that first wave on something you made yourself, the feeling is nothing but sheer enjoyment. I guess it's why so many people don't stop at just one.

I've worked FIFO (fly in, fly out) for over 15 years now. I was determined to find a way to spend more time at home with my family, and I came across the opportunity to buy this business and make something of it, and that's what I have done.

I have built wooden boards in the past using a kit and absolutely loved it. So, I was keen to share the experience with others. I've never come across anyone who has undertaken a wooden surfboard workshop that didn't leave them buzzing afterwards.

To ensure the experience is special, I keep our classes to a minimum, meaning one-on-one or a couple of mates shaping together, no more than two people max.

That way, I can provide my personalised attention to the boards our customers are building.

The classes are hands-on and have been designed for both people who have never built a board before and seasoned enthusiasts. You don't need any prior trade experience.

We provide everything needed to create your own timber surfboard, and at the end of the workshop, we arrange to have your surfboard glassed. It's included in the price of the workshop.

The course is held over three days. I work with the customer in the time that works for them. Basically, I like to keep it relaxed. You're there to enjoy yourself. At the end of it, you come out with an incredible wooden surfboard and a lasting memory.

In terms of the boards that we make in the workshop, it's everything from longboards to super fun, easy paddling mid lengths and our dynamic performance smaller fish models.

Want to find the perfect Christmas gift for someone who loves surfing? Well, this is it.

barenakedboards.com.au bare_naked_boards


Hollow wooden surfboards


9'5" log

ISLAND SURFBOARDS

PHILLIP ISLAND

ANGUS MARLBOROUGH

I have always been interested in surfboard design and the whole process from start to finish. I have surfed all my life. Growing up on the island, everyone does.

I was lucky to get a start with Island (Surfboards) about six years ago. The first year I got a hand from Hogey (Greg Hogan) and the boys in shaping my own boards. In the second year, I started working full time. I have been fortunate to learn from all the guys in the factory. There's so much experience in there. My dad even worked here for a few years way back, so I have kind of followed in his footsteps a little.

They're all great, and guys like Pete Coffey (who does a lot of Island Surfboards' glassing and, in fact, started with Klemm Bell back in 1967) have helped me a heap with all the tint work, glassing, and stuff. He has a really good eye for detail and has been a big help.

I really enjoy shaping twin fins and logs. I like to create things that are unique, with an attention to detail that makes them both long-lasting and have their own identity. For me, no two boards should be the same. Recently I even shaped and finished an 11'4" glider.

I suppose some of the boards I make that we have received a lot of interest in are my logs. I design them as an all-round log with nose riding in mind, although you can still crank it – summer fun.

I guess I like shaping those traditional boards with rolled bottoms, slightly pinched 50/50 rails, and nose concave glassing them with tints and pigments or intricate inlays. This one features resin panels – that's not a spray job.

A lot of people will go that little extra bit budget-wise to get some colour or something different. They appreciate the eye for detail. It's why I enjoy what I do. It keeps it fresh and fun. It is rewarding to be able to make a board for someone and then you see them out in the water surfing it, appreciating it, and having fun. It's definitely a nice feeling.

I am just going to keep working with the people riding them, trying to get them better and better, taking on board their feedback to further refine the designs.

islandsurfboards.com.au islandsurfboards1969

RAILS

WORDS BY DAVE SWAN

AS WE CONSTANTLY REITERATED IN OUR PREVIOUS EDITION, NO ONE SAID ASPECT OF SURFBOARD DESIGN OPERATES IN ISOLATION. **THE TRUE ALCHEMY OF SURFBOARD DESIGN IS HOW EACH ASPECT IS BLENDED WITH EACH OTHER** — EVERYTHING FROM THE TAIL TO THE RAIL, FIN SETUP, NOSE, DECK, BOTTOM CONTOUR, ROCKER, AND OUTLINE, NOT TO MENTION THE LENGTH AND WEIGHT.

There are tried, tested, and trusted designs that blend all these factors into relatively staple surfboard shapes, but it is the exploration of different blends that keeps things interesting and constantly evolving. It is what feeds the ever-continuing balancing act between **manoeuvrability and stability, speed and hold**. So, this time around, let's talk about surfboard rails with these four factors in mind.

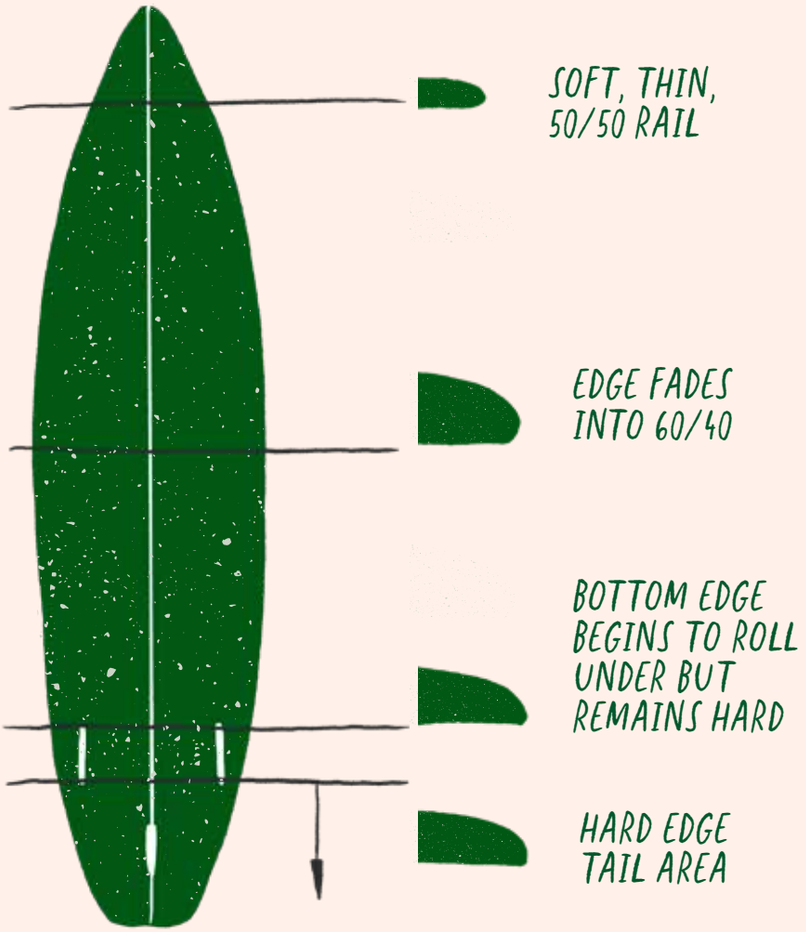
THE RAIL IS THE EDGE OF THE SURFBOARD RUNNING FROM NOSE TO TAIL AND FROM THE DECK TO THE BOTTOM. The function of a rail is to primarily hold the board on the face of a wave and release it when the rider endeavours to turn the board. The profile of the rail will control the way the surfboard holds and releases from the wave.

So why on earth would you want this to change, you might say? How you surf, the waves you are surfing on, and your skill level will determine the amount of hold and release you require. Those requirements can even differ in accordance with your tail shape and fin placement.

As we previously discussed, a twin fin makes the board quite loose and easy to turn, but a shaper may counterbalance this to a degree with a 'softer' rail, so it provides added hold when the waves get bigger, preventing the board from sliding out.

A fuller, or often described as 'softer', rail carries more foam and is considered more 'forgiving'. What this means is that, at times, you can turn too abruptly. As a consequence of this, your board will cut into the wave and stall your momentum.

A board with a forgiving rail 'softens' those mistakes, releasing the board from the wave face and, because it has more foam and is thus more buoyant, allows you to carry on surfing the wave. However, the downside is that the fuller the rail, the harder it is to dig in, and therefore the harder it is to turn.



Longboards and beginner boards generally have softer rails to aid with flotation and stability, plus they're the type of boards where you're not looking to perform radical cutbacks and really carve on.

Performance surfboards, on the other hand, definitely feature hard-edged rails. This type of rail carries less foam and is more tapered and thin. Therefore, it is easier to lean on and sink. This enables the rider to get the rail to 'bite', effectively burying the board's rail into the wave face to perform an abrupt turn, displacing a large plume of water.

THE HARDER THE EDGE, THE CLEANER THE WATER BREAKS AWAY AND RELEASES THE BOARD FROM THE WAVE FACE LIKE THE ACTION OF A KNIFE, WHICH CONTRIBUTES TO LOOSENESS AND THE ABILITY OF THE BOARD TO GENERATE SPEED THROUGH TURNS. HOWEVER, SOME PEOPLE BELIEVE HARD RAILS CAUSE THE BOARDS TO CONSTANTLY DIG IN TOO MUCH, SLOWING YOUR MOMENTUM.

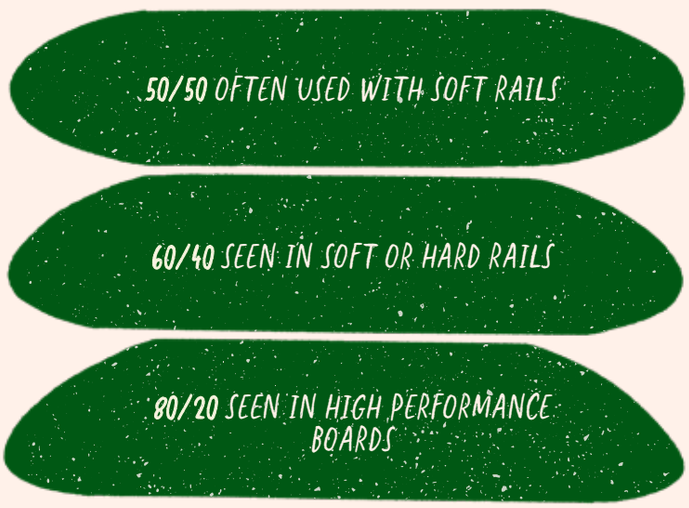
I guess that is what is so refreshing about surfboard design – there are always differences of opinion. There are also times when you don't want the board to dig in, like when you're surfing waves of consequence. You certainly don't want to bury a rail, at least not too deeply, into the wave face and stall when you're surfing Mavericks or Nazare (big wave spots known to get swell in excess of 30ft).

Now to totally confuse you, shapers will often blend a surfboard's rail line from soft to hard as it approaches the tail. The aim is that if you accidentally dig in the nose of your board, you want the rail line to release it quickly. Hence, you want softer rails towards the nose. As you reach the tail, a hard rail enhances the turning ability of the board, so you generally see hard rails around the tail section of most boards.

As you can see, surfboard design is all about this delicate balance between 'hold' and 'release', just as we discussed with tail shapes. You might recall that we talked about narrow pintails and how they will really hold the surfer on the face of large waves but tend to 'track' (go in a straight line) and be quite hard to turn. Hard rails, combined with the narrowness of the tail, are used to try and increase the board's manoeuvrability.

Now that you understand the general governing principles of soft and hard rails, let's take the conversation a step further, taking into consideration the rail profile. This essentially relates to where the 'hard edge' of the rail is located.

RAIL SHAPE FOILS



A **50/50** RAIL IS BASICALLY A ROUNDED EDGE – YOUR STEREOTYPICAL SOFT RAIL. THE VOLUME ON EITHER SIDE OF THE HALFWAY MARK OF THE RAIL IS EQUIVALENT TO THE OTHER – PERFECTLY BALANCED.

A **60/40** MOVES THE SHARP EDGE OF THE RAIL JUST BELOW HALFWAY TOWARDS THE BOTTOM OF THE BOARD. THIS TYPE OF RAIL IS OFTEN FOUND IN MID-LENGTHS AND FUN BOARDS SUCH AS EGGS AND FISHES.

AN **80/20** IS WHERE THE HARD EDGE MOVES EVEN CLOSER TO THE BOTTOM OF THE BOARD. THIS TYPE OF RAIL PROFILE IS COMMON TOWARDS THE TAIL OF MOST PERFORMANCE SHORTBOARDS.

TYPES OF RAILS

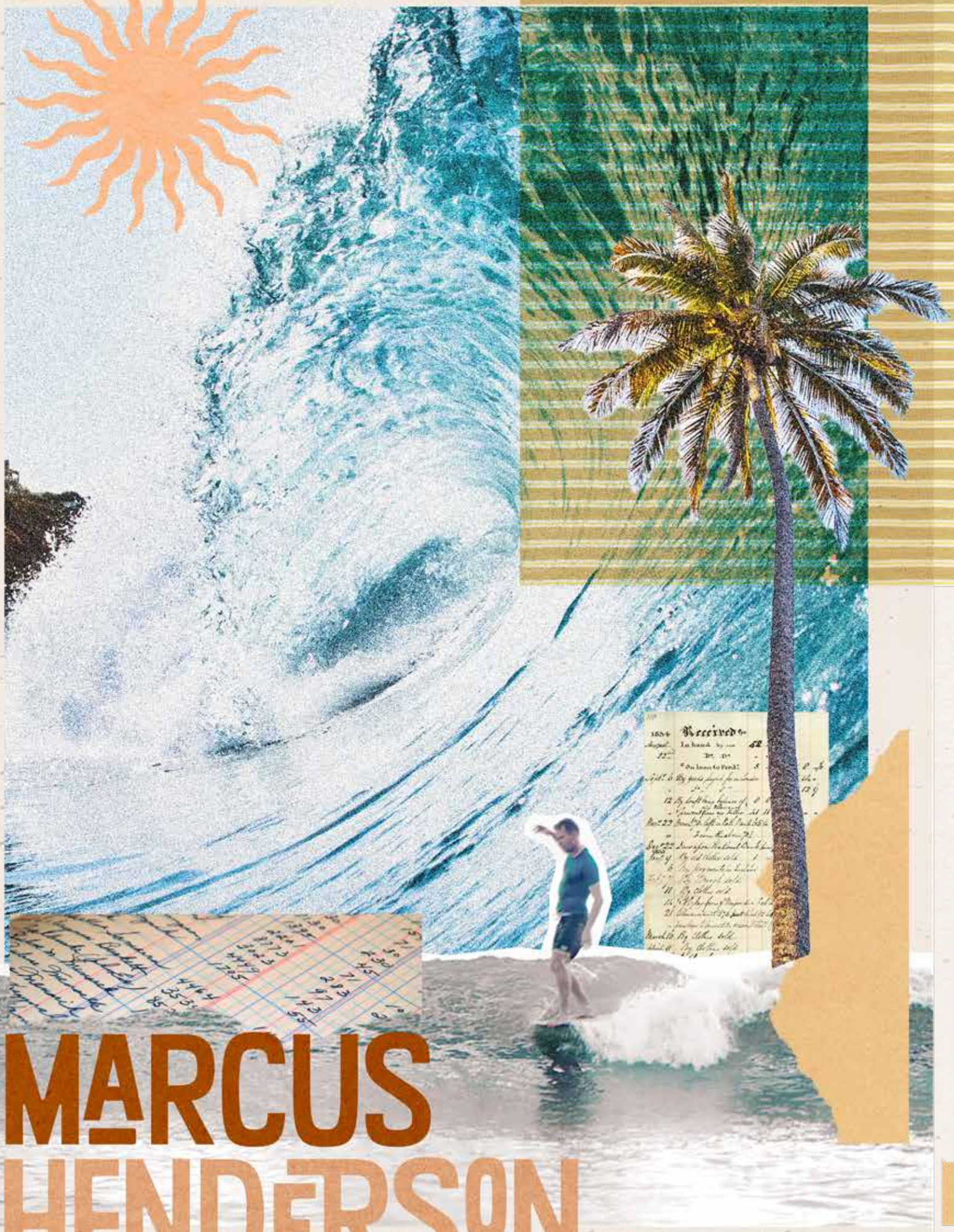


Another type of rail is a chine or bevelled edge rail. This type of rail introduces another sharp edge on the rail profile. It effectively provides another edge to pivot off and is widely considered to 'loosen' the board, making it even easier to manoeuvre. Many consider the chine to also provide the board with added 'lift' by channelling the water under the board, making it even faster, before releasing that water across the fins.

Then there are pinched rails, where the rails don't have a hard edge per se, but less foam makes them easier to bury the rail and turn. However, there is a fine line between 'bury' and 'dig'. 'Bury' brings about a turn, whereas 'dig' causes the board to stall.

Finally, there are tucked-edge rails that basically combine the best of both worlds, blending the features of hard and soft rails where the hard edge is tucked under the bottom of the board. This is where you have the hold and stability of a soft rail with a smoother response through turns but can engage the hard edge when required to make a critical turn in powerful waves.

I HOPE THIS ARTICLE ASSISTS YOU IN TAKING ANOTHER STEP TOWARDS UNDERSTANDING SURFBOARD DESIGN AND THE MANY INTRICACIES THAT GOVERN THE PERFORMANCE OF YOUR BOARD.


MARCUS
HENDERSON

QUIVER QUIVER QUIVER

AS THEY SAY, ***IT'S NOT THE SIZE OF YOUR QUIVER — IT'S HOW YOU USE IT,*** AND USE IT WELL HE DOES. MARCUS HENDERSON MAY BE GETTING ON A BIT (HE'S ALMOST HALF MY AGE), BUT HE CAN STILL FRIGGIN' SURF. AN ACCOMPLISHED LONGBOARDER, HE NOW DELVES MORE IN AND AROUND THE MID-LENGTH RANGE. PERHAPS IT'S A MID-LIFE CRISIS? BA DUM TSS!

We've known Marcus for quite a while now. Together with Sam Archer and their team at BOQ, they look after all our business banking. However, this isn't some cheesy advertorial crap you would read in a vanity publishing title. Marcus just so happens to be a bloody good bloke that we really enjoy hanging out with, and he loves surfing. Also, he just so happens to be way better at surfing than us… way, way better. So, I was curious as to what he rides nowadays. Marcus gave us a rundown of his quiver.

Words by Dave Swan & Marcus Henderson





MITCH SURMAN SINGLE FIN (CUSTOM)
7' * 21" * 2 3/4"

I asked Mitch to make me a single fin specifically for the points, and this is what we came up with. Similar to the Christenson Huntsman, with a slight change to dimensions and finished in Volan. (Volan is the original old-school fibreglass cloth that was, and still is, used on longboards and fishes. Volan has a larger weave and adsorbs more resin, making it reportedly a stronger finish on surfboards). It's a really fun and forgiving board to ride and, as expected, loves a long point break.

CRIME GOTHIC DOLPHIN
6'6" * 21 3/4" * 2 4/5"

Crime are based in California and developed by CJ Nelson. They are basically an epoxy blank with a soft top layer. The Gothic Dolphin has been surfed in everything from knee-high to well overhead, performing well as a 2+1. It's a fun board to get out when it's knee-high and gutless – which helps on the Sunny Coast!

CRIME CA TWIN
7' * 22" * 2 4/5"

Another Crime. This was bought to be a log killer. It was performing exactly as expected until a solid day at Mooloolaba creased it. This is now used to push our youngest, Izaac, into shories.



CHANNEL ISLANDS MID TWIN
6'7" * 20 7/8" * 2 11/16"

This has turned into my go-to, above shoulder/ head high. Surprisingly responsive and doesn't mind getting vertical. Paired perfectly with the Britt Merrick Twins, this board can be surfed into anything from shallow barrels to fat point breaks. If I ever snap it, I'll be going back for seconds.

ODYSEA SKIPPER QUAD
6' * 21 1/2" * 23"

Any Sunshine Coast Softboard Bandit knows when it (finally) gets big around here, Mooloolaba can turn on a mean shorey. The Odysea Skipper is the perfect board for throwing yourself over the ledge into knee-high water. The quad system helps with the late drop and drive needed to avoid a trip to the chiro.

ALBUM PLASMIC TWIN
5'8" * 20 3/4" * 2 5/8"

My latest purchase, purely on impulse after picking one up at a twin fin meet. Mitch Surman was there, and after a quick text, an order was placed. The ultimate groveller and perfect for the Sunshine Coast, the speed you can generate is unbelievable. Still working out the best fins – however, the Asher Pacey 5.59"s seem to be the go. Between this and the CI Mid, you could cover 99% of the waves we get around here or a two-board travel quiver.

You can tell Marcus knows what he's talking about and can back up that talk with his surfing ability. He's downsized the quiver, but sought quality over quantity.

In finishing, I just wanted to mention that whilst Marcus is a really good surfer, Sam Archer, his business partner, who I mentioned earlier, most certainly isn't. Yep, Sam does surf, but with him around you always feel like a surfing god. Sam puts the humour in our surfing sessions, ensuring everyone has a smile on their dial. Marcus and Sam are like the Yin and Yang of surfing, the good and bad… Thank goodness they have a good sense of humour too.

We love you Sam. We love you Marcus. Thank you for your time and thank you for always looking after us.

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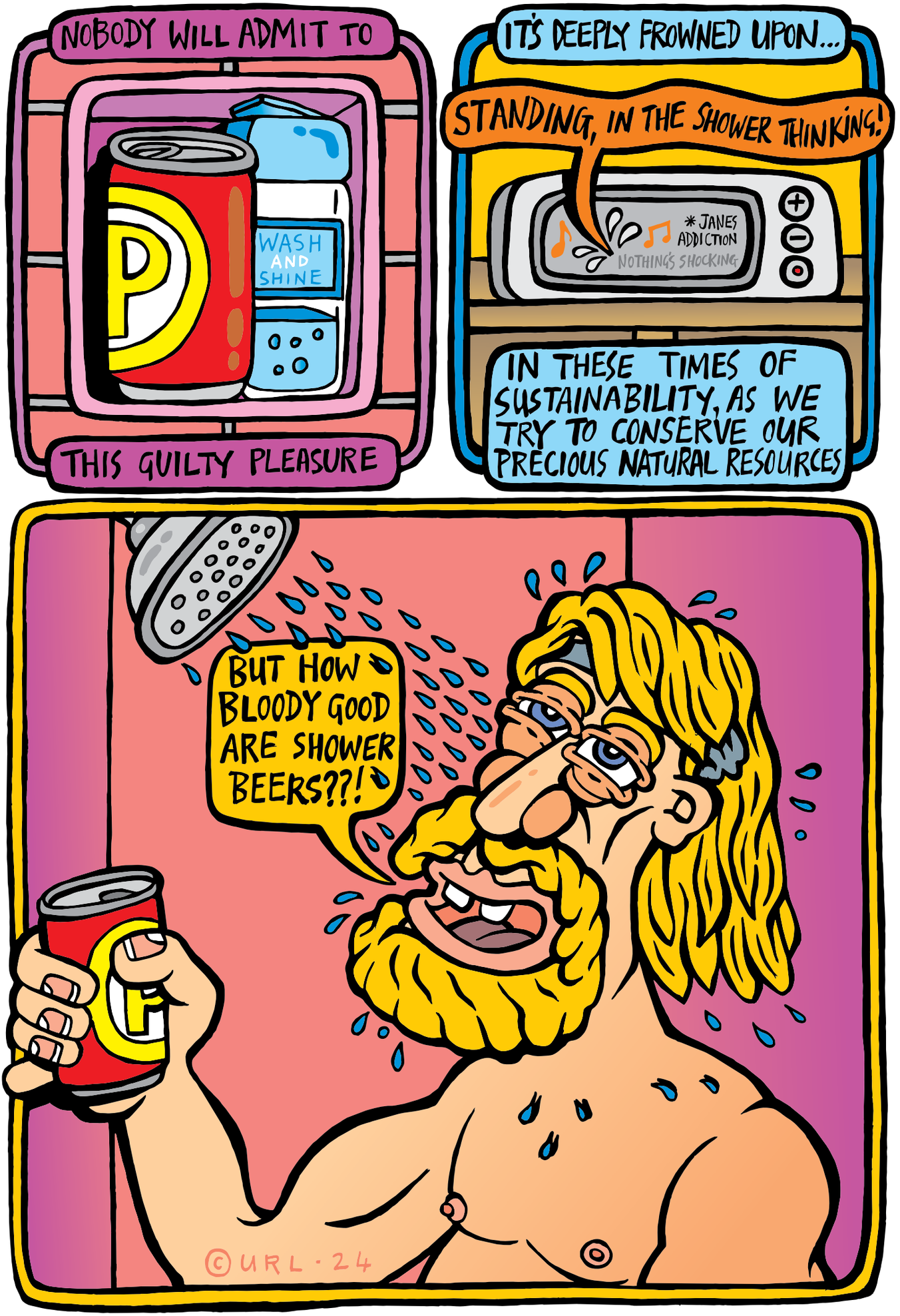
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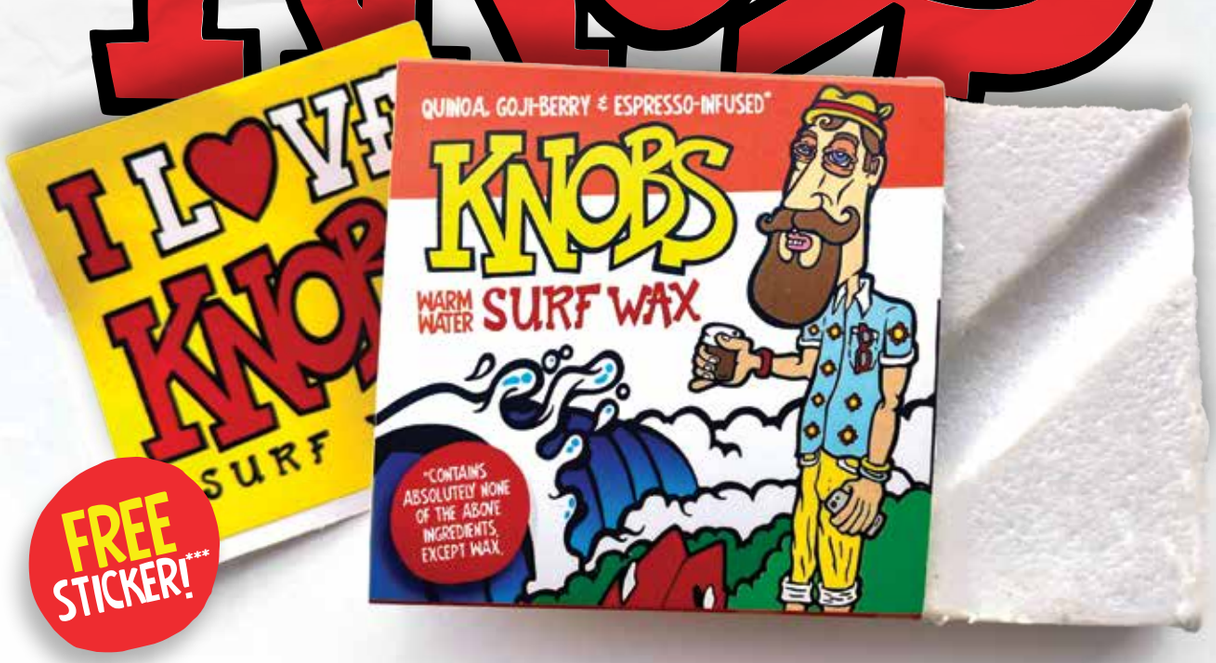
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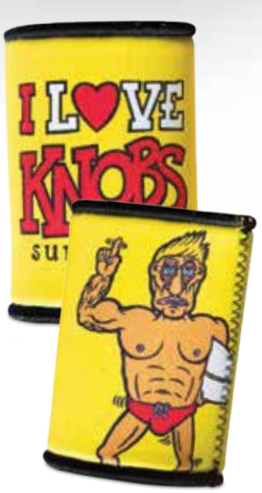
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Callum Robson,
VIZ ambassador
Photo: Swilly

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