

Five minutes with Greg by Nathan Mackie

For those that have never had the pleasure of meeting Greg before I'll give you a quick introduction, he's been taking fantastic photos of some of the worlds leading longboarders as well as shortboarders for many years now, covering anything from local to major international comps, with many photos gracing the pages of major mags, he's also captured some of the most fantastic coastal scenic shots going around. Several years ago he produced the movies Luminary followed by Style and now divides his time between work, the south coast and his photography business at Taren Pt.

Whereabouts did you first start surfing and on what.

Answer: I started surfing on boards in Cronulla in 1969 where I grew up but we were at the beach from before we could walk. I just missed the longboard era and started surfing on a 7' 6" Dale surfboard which I think was actually shaped by Bob McTavish. I saved for nearly a year to buy the board secondhand from Jackos and within about 6 weeks of buying the thing the size of boards dropped under 6' making my board look like a relic though it was certainly a good board to learn on.

So what was it that attracted you to photography, and more specifically photographing longboarders.

Answer: I stumbled into photography by accident in 1975 when at 21 my back played up on me and I needed to stay out of the water for awhile so I asked for a camera for my 21st birthday. In the early years I made my own waterhousings and mainly shot from the water with wide angle lenses that put me right amongst the action (the next best thing to actually surfing yourself). I took a break from photography during the eighties when my kids came along and mainly surfed during this period. In the early nineties and with a move from corporate life into my own personal injury insurance consultancy business (read workers compensation consultant) which afforded me more time and the financial means to buy the latest autofocus gear so I could start shooting again.

Around the late nineties I started shooting longboarding as well as shortboarding. I was by then in my forties and found myself starting to ride longboards myself so I had an appreciation for the style. I also found that the age group and outlook of longboarders was more compatible with my own.

With so much time spent taking photos and working do you still get the time to get a wave yourself.

Answer: I am surfing more now than ever on my Jackson quad and when it is real small my 10 footer. I am lucky that my working life (at the time of writing Greg chairs a number of government and corporate boards that all meet in the

same week of every month) allows me to work about 50% of my time from my house at Dolphin Point on the south coast where I can get quality waves most of the time. The only problem I have is trying to find someone to surf with during the week. Photography does not pay all the bills and whilst I do run it as a business about the only thing you can be sure of with surf photography is that you will lose money helping the magazines make money. My fine art gallery, Oceanart, takes more of my time than surf photography but it also allows me to fit plenty of surfing in and often provides me with the excuse to travel to exotic surf locations.

Are there any photographers who produce great shots that you really like.

Answer: There are a great number of photographers whose work I admire but in particular Peter Eastway (one of the current owners of Surfing World) and Peter Lik both in the fine art category and in the surf genre would be Art Brewer, George Greenough (for his quirky photo angles) and Simon 'Swilly' Williams (for his work ethic and sheer enthusiasm) up on the Gold Coast.

You would have met some fantastic surfers over the years, are there any that stand out in your mind or any you would enjoy working with again.

Answer: I have certainly met some great surfers over the years but most of them through my association with running ASP contests in the eighties with Graham 'Syd' Cassidy. Mark Richards, Peter Townend, Ian Cairns, Shaun Thomson and Simon Anderson would be the most memorable from that era. Of course in the modern era would be Kelly Slater who I met several times because of my traveling with his brother Stephen. My favorite longboarders though are Dane Wilson, Beau Young and Stephen Slater because of their penchant for the traditional style and just their generosity with their time when I was making my movies.

Luminary was one of the vids you filmed and produced which featured Dane, Skippy, Beau and a host of others, everyone I know enjoyed it, any plans for another.

Answer: It is hard to justify the time and money to make another movie. You only sell about 1500 (longboarders being older don't buy movies like the kids do). If you do the math on 1500 dvds times \$15.00 per movie (yeah I know they sell for \$45.00 in the shops but all I can get is \$15.00) that is about \$22K out of which I have cover duplicating the dvds, printing the cover sliks, dvd cases, advertising, travel and accommodation, music royalties, amortization of about \$100k worth of camera gear and computer editing equipment which means I generally have to dip into my pocket to cover all this because \$22K certainly does not and that is all before I think of paying myself anything for the effort. And then to add insult to all this is one guy buys my dvd then burns a copy for all his mates who get it for free and these guys are generally the ones who are at me to make another one. If this sounds like a winge it is.

I do enjoy it though so in future I might make little 5 minute docos and podcast them on either the surfimages or oceanart websites.

Does it ever drive you stir crazy standing on the beach all day watching fantastic waves being ridden and not being able to get out there.

Answer: Standing on the beach does but being out in the water shooting is exciting and almost as good as being there yourself plus it enables you to be out there sometimes with some of the best surfers in world. I especially like shooting Shark Island from the water. I would not dream of surfing it these days but being in the channel only metres from the action is exhilarating.

Your ideal or dream place for a surfing holiday with mates or family would be.

Answer: Of all the places I have been I would have to say the Maldives.

Best excuse for dropping in.

Answer: I've been waiting longer than you (and in any case my board is bigger than yours) but my all time favorite one is "I did not see you"

There's always been the debate of traditional vs progressive longboarding and everyone seems to have an opinion on it, is there any particular style that does it for you.

Answer: Traditional, no if butts or maybes (that is why I like Beau and Dane). I know this might upset some people but for me longboarding is an under head high trip – if you need a legrope it is big enough to bust out the short boards.

Well thanks for the chat Greg, any last words.

Answer: Check out my websites at www.oceanart.com.au or www.surfimages.com.au