

R O S E

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ANDREW CROCKETT CROWD FUNDED HIS THIRD AND FINAL SWITCHFOOT BOOK, A KALEIDOSCOPE OF SURFINGS RICH CULTURAL 1960S

INTERVIEW BY LUCY SMALL





"I'VE SIFTED THROUGH COUNTLESS GARAGES AND OLD SHOEBOXES. SHOE BOXES FULL OF CLASSIC AND OFTEN NEVER SEEN SURF NEGATIVES AND SLIDES."



Main shot: Head dip. **Inset:** This was a bus that came down from Manly to Bellambi for a surf comp against the Woolongong boardriders club, Feb 1965. The guy at the front is Lynden Riley and the guy at the back is Mick McMahon, both well known surfers from that era. Lynden is still surfing comps today in the over 65 division. (Dave Milnes). **Previous spread left:** This was a colour slide of Ian Nolan and Terry Steen taken at Cronulla by Bob Weeks back in 1963. This shot is what the books are all about – going surfing and having fun with your mates. I also love that he left the fungus on the slide when he scanned it. **Right:** There were four shots from this session at Weeney Bay in 1964 and they all smacked of fun, but this one was Bob Weeks's favourite and he spent many hours working on it in post production.(Weeks)

Ten years ago, while our eyes were peeled to the glossy pages of surf mags and social media was just being born, Andrew Crockett was donning a head torch and a pair of rose coloured goggles to shuffle through the garages and crusty old shoe boxes of Australia's first wave of surf photographers, looking for lost evidence of a rich surf history. What he found changed the direction of his life, resulting in his self-published book, *Switchfoot*. A decade on, the romance continues with the third *Switchfoot* book set for release in November. It's a journey that has connected Crockett with pretty much every surfing, shaping and photoshooting legend of the '60s and '70s. A surprising area of exploration for someone in their thirties, the latest book, funded by an online public campaign, is the fifth in a growing library of Crockett's publications. A die-hard golf fan, father and tragic of bygone eras, *SW* caught up with the Mullumbimby guy, to hear about his latest time capsule.

So Andrew, tell us about Switchfoot III?
AC: The new book is titled, *Switchfoot: The Other Side of Surfing* from 1960 to

1976. It's the third coffee table book I've done. I guess you'd call it a celebration of classic surfing – classic style, the shapers and the surfers that really pioneered what we have today. When I started the *Switchfoot* book in 2003, the opening line was 'the other side of surfing' because at that time in the media it was all thrash and crash, particularly in the surf magazines. The whole art, lifestyle, music, culture, was forgotten about to a large degree.

Why were you drawn to this particular era and style of surfing? What kind of exposure to it did you have to it growing up?

I was really fortunate that my pointy nose thruster got stolen when I was camping at Clarkes Beach in the '90s. I borrowed a surfboard off my uncle and it was an early '80s thruster and it was so much better for me than the modern board. I started to hunt around for these old boards and after about five years I had nearly a hundred old single fins and twin fins and I couldn't believe how well they surfed for me. I got into learning about who had shaped them and I started to buy old magazines and watch the old movies and I wanted share that with everyone. Like, look at this, check this board out, a guy called Michael Peterson shaped it, it goes insane.

Did you have a board from MP?
I had three or four. I got one from a garage sale in Brisbane. One of them was from an ad for a surfboard in the newspaper for 150 bucks. I rang up and this old lady says 'There's a name on the board, it says m-m-Michael Pat-Paterson, Michael Patterson designs k-k-k-Kirra Beach'. I'm like 'oh that sounds nice... I'll come and have a look at it, can you please not sell it before I get there?' I had boards by Michael, Nat Young, Midget, Wayne Lynch, Frank Latta, Keith Paull, all of them.

Still got them?
No. I sold the last Michael Peterson board to help pay to make this book.

What's your best find?
I found a Peter Crawford kneeboard that was in immaculate condition for five bucks. I found a Mark Richards twin fin, like a classic MR twinnie in perfect condition for 50 bucks. One time in a pawn shop I saw this Frank Latta twin. I didn't have any money but I had a watch and I swapped it for the surfboard.

Finding surfboards is one thing but in the piecing together of these Switchfoot books you've also unearthed so many great photographs. That must be a thrilling feeling?
Yeah that's very true and actually so many of the photos I loved were often those ones that the photographers thought were terrible. They'd be like "that's no good" I'd be like "Are you kidding this is all time!" So I'd take them home, scan them and when they'd appear on the computer screen I'd be sitting there thinking, "Oh my god. This is incredible." In the early days it was only Dick Hoole's garage but since then I've sifted through countless garages and old shoeboxes full of classic and often never seen surf negatives and slides.

What was it like dealing with the photographers before you formed relationships with them? Understandably, they can be quite protective of their work?
Almost every one of those guys was a bit prickly to start off with. They've all had bad experiences or been burned, either back in the day when they were working on mags or in more recent times sharing their archives. Even some of

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the surfers don't want to do interviews or have become so reclusive that you can't even find them.

Who was hard to find?

Ted Spencer was hard to find and when I did eventually track him down he didn't want to go on record saying anything. A lot of them are like that. It depends on what you want and what their current situation is. Some of them are still working within surfing and they want all the promotion they can get. Other guys, Greenough for example, he doesn't have any need to do any media. He doesn't have any surfing business agenda. So to eventually become friends with someone like him, I'm really grateful for that. Greenough's got so much knowledge across so many different areas and eras, surfboard design and photography and gardening and all sorts of stuff.

What was it like meeting Greenough for the first time?

I grew up around Byron so I'd see him in the surf occasionally. The first time I spoke to him was on the phone when I was doing the first Switchfoot and he started going on like 'the only thing those modern surfboards are good for is stabbing people with the pointed nose.' He was awesome and hilarious and inspiring, a truly inspirational person. And he's an exceptional gardener. I didn't know how to grow potatoes before I met him.

Did he take you in the garden?

Oh yeah, he's got a great garden. I have three acres and growing your own vegetables is something that becomes a passion as you get older like into your thirties and stuff. I dunno, maybe it's just a phase. Like when I was in my teenage years I didn't care about gardening but as I got a bit older I found to be very relaxing.

Can you tell us about some of the more human moments that came from the piecing together of these books?

I remember rocking up at Nat Young's house in my Kombi with my cousin from England around 2003. I was a bit nervous because, you know, Nat's Nat and all that and we'd never met. So we pull up and Nat

greets us warmly and takes us surfing and is basically unreal. We caught a few waves with him and his kids and they cooked us a nice meal and we had a few wines and next thing everyone's having a siesta in the back of my Kombi. And you scratch yourself. You're surfing and hanging out with Nat Young and then the next minute you're talking to someone like Greenough or Midget Farrelly or Peter Troy or Wayne Lynch.

What was Peter Troy like when you first met him?

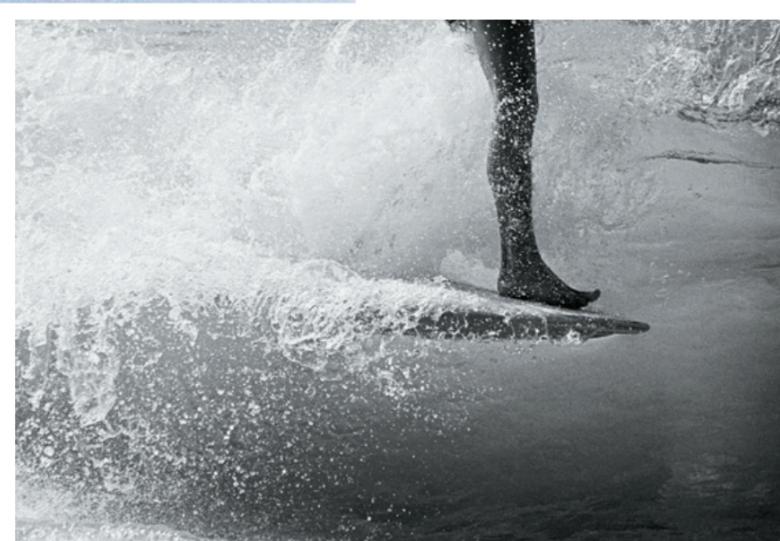
Some of these guys you meet are just surf surf surf. Peter Troy transcended that bubble. He was incredible. He did a lot for surfing but his curiosity and his passion for people and places was unlike anyone else I've met. He got into places and explored them to the most minute detail. If you wanted to know the history of Papua New Guinea's postage stamp Peter Troy was the guy you'd talk to. In his later life he became really keen on an island out in the Cook Islands, I won't mention it's name here but he believed it was the last place on earth that humans hadn't destroyed.

A lot of people would give an arm and a leg to be in your position, to hear these stories firsthand from such legends.

And so many of these guys are still with us and still surfing and still as stoked as ever. I met David Nuuhiwa and he still looked rock n roll. He still had the crazy hair and everything. It's a trip when you read about and feel like you know so much about these people but then you start to form your own relationships outside of that.

How have the books been received? Not only by the public but also by the people in the books?

The first book ended up in America and England and I think someone even took some over to Japan. I had distribution in New Zealand and America and the UK. I got invited to go to America and the UK and do art exhibitions and I mean it's pretty rad. I've emails from people all over the world of people just stoked. I've had over one hundred contributors to the books who have given their time in interviews and I've paid for their photographs and I don't know of anyone that's grumpy, everyone's really stoked. And this third book was done by crowdfunding campaigns.



Main pic: The stuff in the pipe came from Morocco and Dick Hoole (who supplied the photo) cannot remember what country they were in or how they even got the Kombi that high up the Alps. Dick said, "Whatever they sold us in Morocco, we should have got more of." (Hoole) **Inset:** This is another classic Bob Weeks photo, one foot on the nose. It was shot from the beach in 1962, not with a telephoto lens, Bob was just really close to the shore. The surfer is Dave Coppelson, who after a freak accident on a building site, went on to recover and be a successful business man. (Weeks) **Inset:** AC with his guitars, his amp and Carrot the fluffy yellow rabbit.



We raised over 25000 dollars from the public. So the public is basically just saying we want another book so I went and made one. I definitely had bit of a spring in my step for a while after that, feeling appreciated.

Surf history can change radically in the minds of the people who were there. Have you had much “No, it didn’t happen like that at all, it happened like this...” ?

Yeah plenty. I’ve done my best to verify any claims from as many reliable sources as possible but if the claim is too outlandish it won’t go in. There are lots of shades of grey. There’s a lot of folklore and mysteriousness about people that are no longer with us. So many heats, so many stories, there’s no documented evidence to back it up so you’re just relying on what people are saying. I kind of love that because folklore is dead now. Everything is documented. It’ll probably get even more intense over the next 10 or 20 years, with pretty much everything being visually recorded but... a good example was when they filmed *Children of the Sun* in 1966. There was the biggest low off the Australian coast in recorded history in 1966, the swell was pumping and Greenough had the option of going to surf perfect Noosa with everyone but instead he wanted something with horsepower so he went and surfed Moffatt beach and it was pumping but there’s not one photo. A guy who was watching him surf told him when he came in that when he did a bottom turn and he was going so fast it carved a sheet of spray as long as the Caloundra picture theatre. That’s a big sheet of spray. But it didn’t get documented. So there is this folklore about surfing which is beginning to die. These books let that live on to a certain degree.



It must be pretty awesome to hear these kind of stories first hand

There’re over thirty characters in this book that I interviewed and you think of someone like Joe Larkin, when he started there were no surfboards, they were all body surfers. And then they invented the swim fin and it was like wow, there’re all these surf spots that we can surf now because we’ve got flippers. And then they invented the hand plane and they were like wow this is awesome man, now I’ve got a hand plane, this is rad. And they started surfing and then they got the belly board and then they started to get these long sought of 16 foot tooth picks and Joe Larkin saw all of that and then he saw it go from 16 foot to nine foot balsa and then balsa to fibreglass and then from nine foot to six foot, single fins into twin fins and thrusters and he’s seen everything, so it’s incredible. He’s in his eighties and to get to actually talk to someone like that, document what they think and feel, what they have learned and pass on their knowledge and put that into the book along with all these other guys, it just feels like a time capsule that will maybe as time winds on will become more and more valuable to people. There’s so much knowledge in there. He still lives in the same house he’s lived in for 40 years. He’s classic. So funny. He cracked me up. He had Michael Peterson working for him. And he’d say stuff like, ‘Michael, he worked in there for two years, I never got more than 10 words out of him’ He was great. So funny. God he cracked me up. Aussie legend. 🍷

Above: I saw this shot on a proofsheets at Dick Hoole’s house. When he said it was Byron Bay, I was intrigued. We all know that there were little shaping sheds and country soul surfboards being shaped, but where had the blanks come from? Turns out they came from Barry Bennett’s in Sydney, on a rig like this! Epic. (Hoole) **Inset:** Ten years of digging up gold, compiled and presented in Andrew Crockett’s wonderful Switchfoot trilogy.