

Swell Cinema

A simple idea, perfectly executed, became the blueprint for all surf films



BRUCE BROWN

The concept is beguilingly simple: A pair of buddies go on a globetrotting search for the perfect wave. But the ripple effect of Bruce Brown's *Endless Summer* (\$12; amazon.com) continues to be felt. In 1964 Brown spoke to core surfers and land-lubbers alike in a language they both easily understood. Here, the message that the journey is the reward was artfully delivered (with witty voice-over narration) by young men on exotic never-before-surfed spots from Africa to New Zealand. And the subtext was: Find your own perfect outdoor playground.

Endless Summer's impact traveled



beyond the surf audience because even if you don't surf, you're attracted to the primal drama of man versus wave — both the natural beauty of the breaking waves and the courageous artistry of the men who ride them. Surf movies also afford us a voyeuristic look at a sun-drenched, beachy lifestyle, governed by nothing more than the tides.

With more than 500 movies now dedicated to wave riding, few sports have a filmography as deep as surfing. While there's a lot of surf-porn flotsam, a handful of movies carries on *Endless Summer's* winning mix of action plus story. From the '70s, Albert Falzon's *Morning of Earth*, Greg MacGillivray's *Five Summer Stories*, and John Milius's *Big Wednesday*. From the '80s and '90s, Kelly Slater in *Black and White* and Laird Hamilton (*White Knuckle Extreme*). And more recently, Stacy Peralta's *Riding Giants* and Timmy Turner's *Second Thoughts*, a raw, narrated travelogue that features groundbreaking, inside-the-barrel footage and yet one more perfect wave. —MARK ANDERS



13 Secrets of the Titanic (1986)

At 12,000 feet Robert Ballard filmed this definitive documentary

about the discovery and exploration of the ocean liner. **WOW SCENE** Glimpses of the marine life-encrusted interior juxtaposed with shots of the ship before it sank.

EXTRAS Ballard explains how he found the ship. (\$25; nationalgeographic.com)



14 Into the Tsangpo Gorge (2002)

Scott Lindgren shoots the first descent of

Tibet's Tsangpo, the Everest of rivers. **WOW SCENE** In a grueling portage, the team climbs a 12,000-foot pass. **EXTRAS** Hidden Falls, the inspiration for Shangri-la. (\$25; amazon.com)



15 BASE Climb (1992)

Mountain climbing and BASE jumping demand opposing skills — holding on and letting go — which is

the premise of Australian filmmaker Glenn Singleman's blood-rushing epic. *BASE Climb* documents how a climber and a BASE jumper team up to scale and leap off Pakistan's Trango Tower. **WOW SCENE** A 90-second

free fall with vertigo-inducing head-cam shots. **EXTRAS** *BASE Climb 2* is also out on DVD. (\$30; baseclimb.com)



16 Breaking Away (1979)

Cyclist Dave Stohler's search for identity propels this coming-of-age

drama that introduced many Americans to European-style biking culture. **WOW SCENE** Stohler rides in the slipstream of a truck going 60 mph. **EXTRAS** The "Little 500" is a race held at Indiana University and, as in the movie, participants ride single-speed Roadmasters. (\$11; amazon.com)



17 Into the Thunder Dragon (2002)

Mountain unicycling is the most technical fat-tire sport there is for two

reasons: no handlebars and no gears.

WOW SCENE Sean White captures a 10,000-foot descent in Bhutan's Himalayas

from a saddle-cam. **EXTRAS** Learn how to unicycle. (\$25; unicycle.com)



19 Farther Than the Eye Can See (2003)

Weaving heartrending

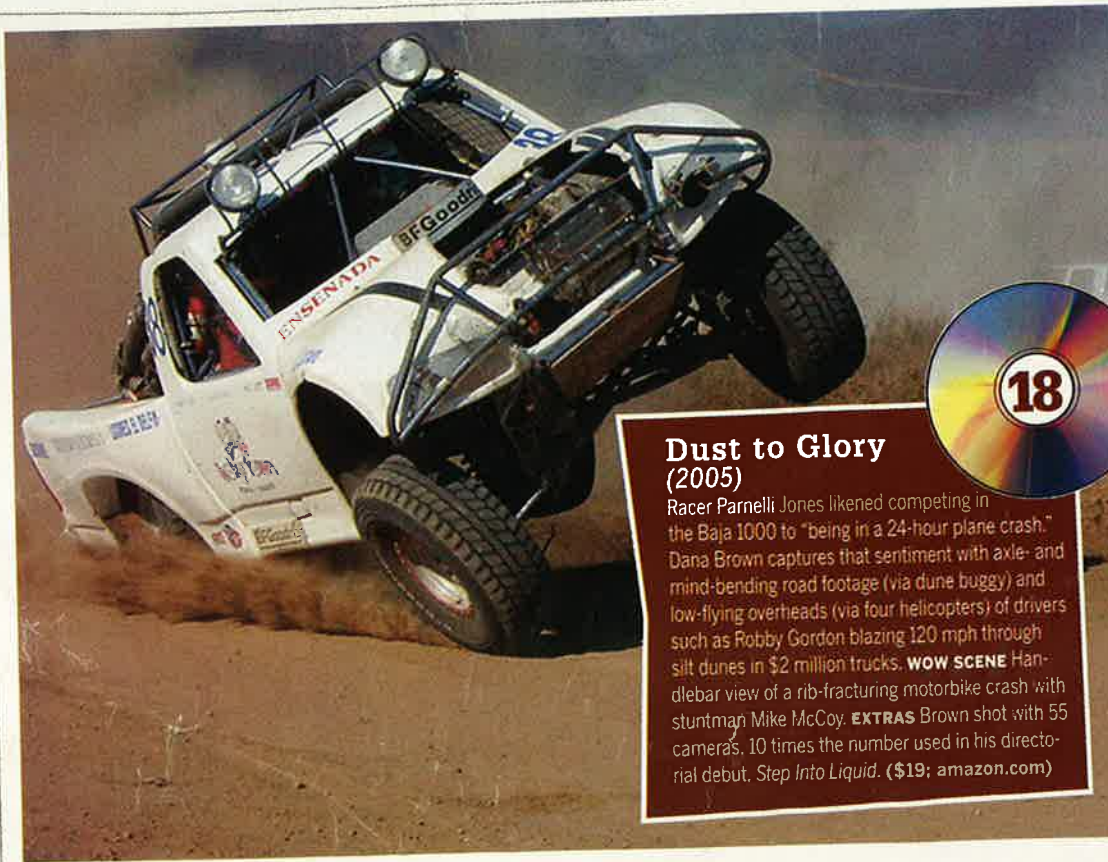
confessionals and expansive mountain perspectives, Michael Brown's high-def documentary is about blind climber Erik Weihenmayer's unprecedented Everest ascent. **WOW SCENE** A four-minute, nail-biting shot of Weihenmayer making his first ladder crossing in the Khumbu ice fall. **EXTRAS** Weihenmayer has since completed the seven summits. (\$25; seracfilms.com)



20 Alone Across Australia (2004)

Australian explorer Jon

Muir's unsupported 1,600-mile trek across the outback with only his Welsh terrier for company is the ultimate walkabout. Muir shows us, through real-time monologues, the struggles and rewards that go with such a crazy quest. **WOW SCENE** On day 27 of 128, Muir picks a coaster-size blister off his heel. **EXTRAS** Watch as Muir loses one-third of his body weight. (\$30; amazon.com)

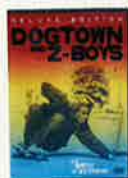


Dust to Glory (2005)

Racer Parnelli Jones likened competing in the Baja 1000 to "being in a 24-hour plane crash." Dana Brown captures that sentiment with axle- and mind-bending road footage (via dune buggy) and low-flying overheads (via four helicopters) of drivers such as Robby Gordon blazing 120 mph through silt-beds in \$2 million trucks. **WOW SCENE** Handlebar view of a rib-fracturing motorbike crash with stuntman Mike McCoy. **EXTRAS** Brown shot with 55 cameras, 10 times the number used in his directorial debut. *Step Into Liquid*. (\$19; amazon.com)



GERONIMO! Seconds into *BASE Climbs*' record free fall off Pakistan's Trango Tower



4 Dogtown and Z-Boys (2001)

Combining vintage footage with contemporary interviews, Stacy Peralta

captured the innovative Zephyr skateboarding team as it turned a local fad into a worldwide phenomenon. **WOW SCENE** Tony Alva takes skateboarding in a new direction when he lands a front-side air, planting the seed for the aerials that define modern skate- and snowboarding. **EXTRAS** Skate culture also spawned the *Whiskey* videos, the precursors to *Jackass*. (\$16; amazon.com)



5 A Sunday in Hell (1976)

Jørgen Leth's slow burner etches an intimate portrait of the suffering pro cyclists endure in the

annual Paris-Roubaix race. Switching between 21 stationary, moving, and aerial cameras, Leth ratchets up the intensity as Eddy Merckx battles Roger De Vlaeminck over the cobblestones. **WOW SCENE** In the elegiac three-minute opening sequence a mechanic meticulously preps a racer's bike. **EXTRAS** That's the Royal Danish Opera chanting "Paris-Roubaix: L'enfer du Nord." (\$30; worldcycling.com)



6 For All Mankind (1989)

The missions to the moon unfold in stunning detail in this NASA documentary, while offscreen astronauts and engineers describe their roles in what President Kennedy called "the most hazardous and dangerous and greatest adventure on which man has ever embarked." **WOW SCENE** While in orbit, Ed White trails the capsule on a tether at 25,000 mph. **EXTRAS** Launch footage and audio highlights. (\$32; amazon.com)



7 The Endurance (2000)

Using diary excerpts, letters, and original photographs and film of the

Antarctic disaster, *The Endurance* brings the 20th century's greatest survival story to life. **WOW SCENE** Shackleton's men frolicking with sled dogs on the ice. **EXTRAS** The film is based on Caroline Alexander's book, which includes crew-member Frank Hurley's photographs. (\$15; amazon.com)



10 Aguirre, the Wrath of God (1972)

Filmmaking itself is the ultimate adventure with Werner Herzog. In Fitz-

Best in Snow

What does it take to create the perfect ski movie?

The whump, whump, whump of heli rotors as a pilot peels away, leaving a lone skier staring out over Alaska's Chugach. You try to relax in your seat, but by the time the first turns are carved and the powder flies, you're so pumped you feel like it's you flying down the mountain. Ski flicks are unique that way: You always project yourself into the lead role.

It's something Warren Miller understood. The best of his 70-plus films, such as *Steep* and *Ski Time*,

perfectly capture the rhythm and spirit of the sport. And it's a mission that has been advanced by Teton Gravity Research (see the seminal *Continuum*) and Matchstick Productions, with their *Ski Movie* trilogy. But nothing has ever made you want to be there like Greg Stump's *Four-some* box set, which includes the classic *Blizzard of Aahhh's* (\$60; justpushplay.com). When Scott Schmidt stares down a near-vertical chute in Chamonix, France, and says, "I'll do it," he became the ballsy skier you imagine yourself to be—in your dreams. —TOM BIE



9 BLIZZARD OF AAHHH'S



8 On Any Sunday (1971)

Bruce Brown's best film, technically speaking, exposes the oil-spewing underbelly of the motorcycle racing world. The painterly cinematography combines sweeping aerial footage with tight action shots, while the snappy narration keeps the revs high. Not to mention a cameo from Steve McQueen. **WOW SCENE** An ice race in Quebec City, Canada, in which riders, sporting leather masks and spiked tires, defy a snowstorm to shred the track. **EXTRAS** Deleted scenes of McQueen storming the sands of Baja and Camp Pendleton. (\$20; montereymedia.com)



carraldo, the film crew literally carried a huge steamship over a mountain, and in *Aguirre*, about Spanish conquistadors fighting their way up a South American river, he allegedly pulled a gun on his half-insane leading man, Klaus Kinski. **WOW SCENE** A Spanish army climbs down a narrow mountain trail in single file. **EXTRAS** Was *Aguirre* the inspiration for *Apocalypse Now*? You decide. (\$24; amazon.com)



11 The Blue Planet (2001)

Narrated by Sir David Attenborough, this \$10-million, eight-episode oceanic tour de force took five years to film. **WOW SCENE** Killer whales drag sea lion pups off the beach and then play catch with them. **EXTRAS** "Making of" vignettes show how hard it is to capture wildlife on film. (\$80 for 4-DVD box set; discovery.com)