

Is Show Business Guilty Of Pushing Cocaine?

AUGUST 25, 1986 ■ \$1.50

People weekly

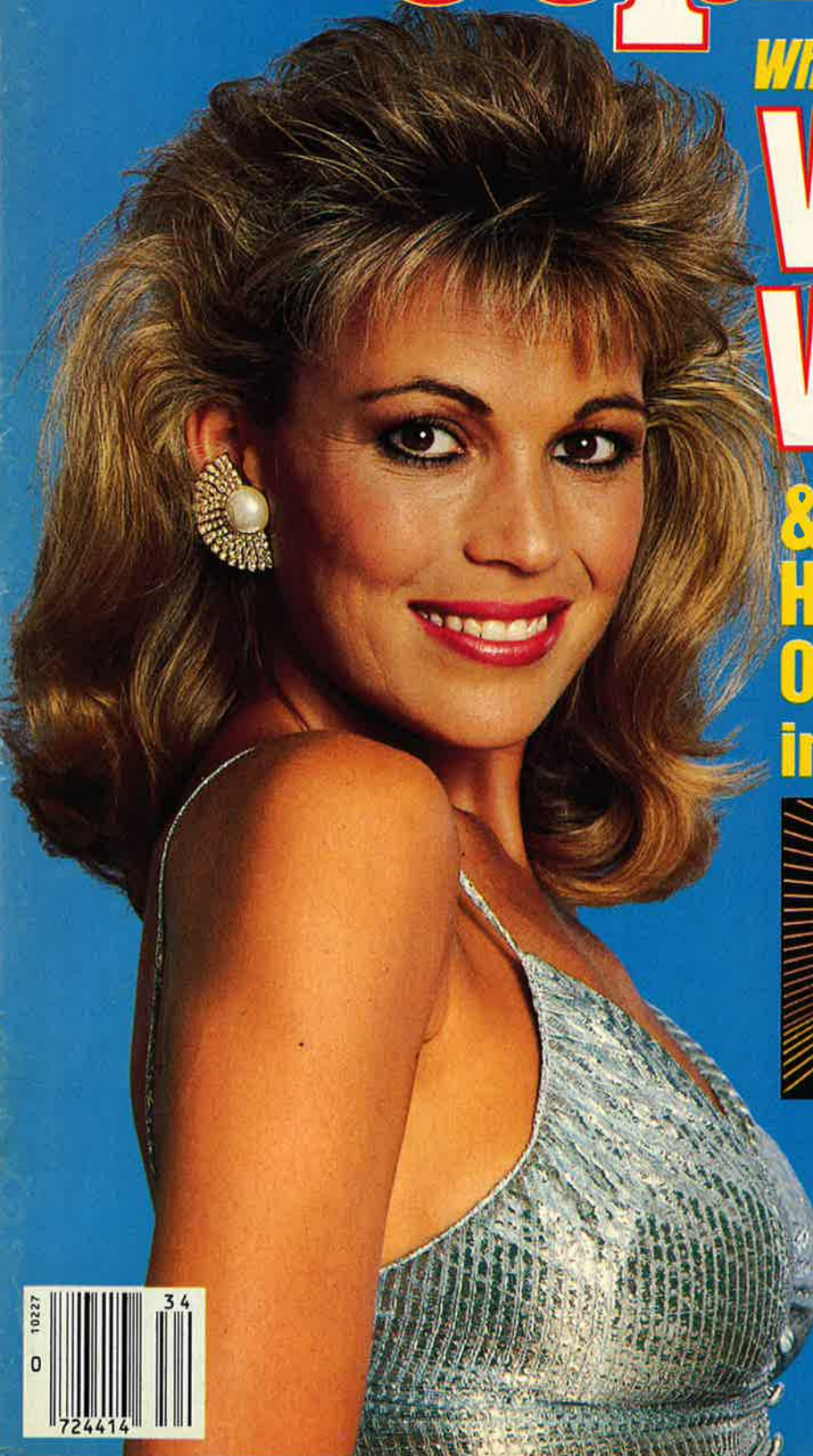
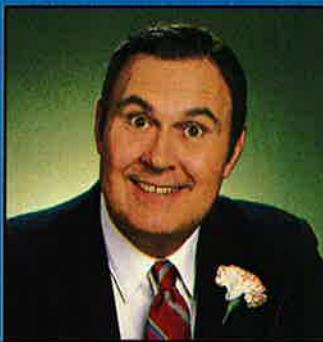
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THE SURF'S STILL UP FOR THE MEN WHO MADE THE ENDLESS SUMMER

What every surfer dreams of finding is a small wave with perfect shape, what we call a perfect wave. The odds of finding that are 10 million to one.

—from *The Endless Summer*

Out straddling their boards in the rolling surge beyond the break, most surfers soak up rays and wait like sun-tanned saints for the perfect wave to

come along. In 1963 Bruce Brown got tired of waiting. His idea: to postpone winter perpetually by following the sun from hemisphere to hemisphere while hunting down the exotic local surf. In short, to boldly surf where no man had surfed before. Recording the odyssey on 16-mm film, Brown produced the world's first documented global surfin' safari, and it was called *The Endless Summer*.

No beach-blanket borefest, this 90-minute escape epic became the homegrown classic of a sport that was beginning to pique the country's imagination. *The Endless Summer* caught the wave of surfing popularity and rode it all the way into shore.

For generations of goofy-footers, hotdoggers and even landlocked non-Californians, *The Endless Summer* is a common historical takeoff point. According to *Surfing* magazine editor

Sam George, 30, "To any surfer 25 or older, *The Endless Summer* has been a major force in his life. The image of chasing the good surf, of being the first to ride a wave, it captured the essence of and set the tone for the entire sport."

In order to make his dream a reality, Brown, then 26, enlisted two young surfers to be his barefoot leads. Both were hot board riders from Southern California, but there the similarity ended. Robert August, 18, tall and dark haired, was atypical in functioning as well as form. A straight-A student-body president at Huntington Beach High School, August aspired to a career in dentistry and was such a serious student that his family had to persuade him that it would be all right to miss his first semester of college to go on Brown's once-in-a-lifetime adventure. Because of the negative image engen-

dered by beach films of the day, August had kept his love of surfing in the closet. "I never let anybody at school know that I surfed," he admits.

With his slicked-back blond hair and tough-guy attitude, August's 21-year-old co-star, Mike Hynson, was an example of a beachboy going bad. At age 14, he says, he was caught stealing nine surfboards from a Laguna Beach shop. As for Brown, he had limited experience making movies—a few moderately successful documentaries, which he narrated himself at small local auditoriums.

So on a rainy day in November 1963, the unlikely trio set out on the first leg of their journey, to Africa's west coast. While August checked his luggage, Hynson checked his traveling stash of marijuana and rolling papers. Just after the three arrived in South Africa, John Kennedy was killed. "We tried to

call home," recalls August, "but the lines were all tied up. Everywhere we went for the rest of the trip people treated us like a relative of ours had died."

During the next three months, Brown and company had as many adventures on land as they did in the surf. In Kenya, they found themselves in the middle of a revolution, which they observed from their hotel window for one night before being escorted by security forces to the first flight out the next day. There were also numerous run-ins with customs agents and baggage handlers who didn't like the look of the camera equipment and didn't know what to make of the two surfboards. On the other hand, the surfers were given a ticker tape parade in Sydney, Australia.

Throughout the trip, August and Hynson fell victim to the powerful hormonal undertow common to all healthy young males. Says August: "At that age, finding women was at least as important a goal as finding the perfect wave." They met their share of bikini-ed board-bunnies, but the undisputed highlight of the journey occurred a month into the trip. On the advice of a local surfer, the Californians trudged three miles across trackless sands toward South Africa's Cape St. Francis. They amused themselves by dragging their boards up the landward side of the mighty dunes and sand surfing down the seaward sides, but that quickly proved tiring in the blazing sun.

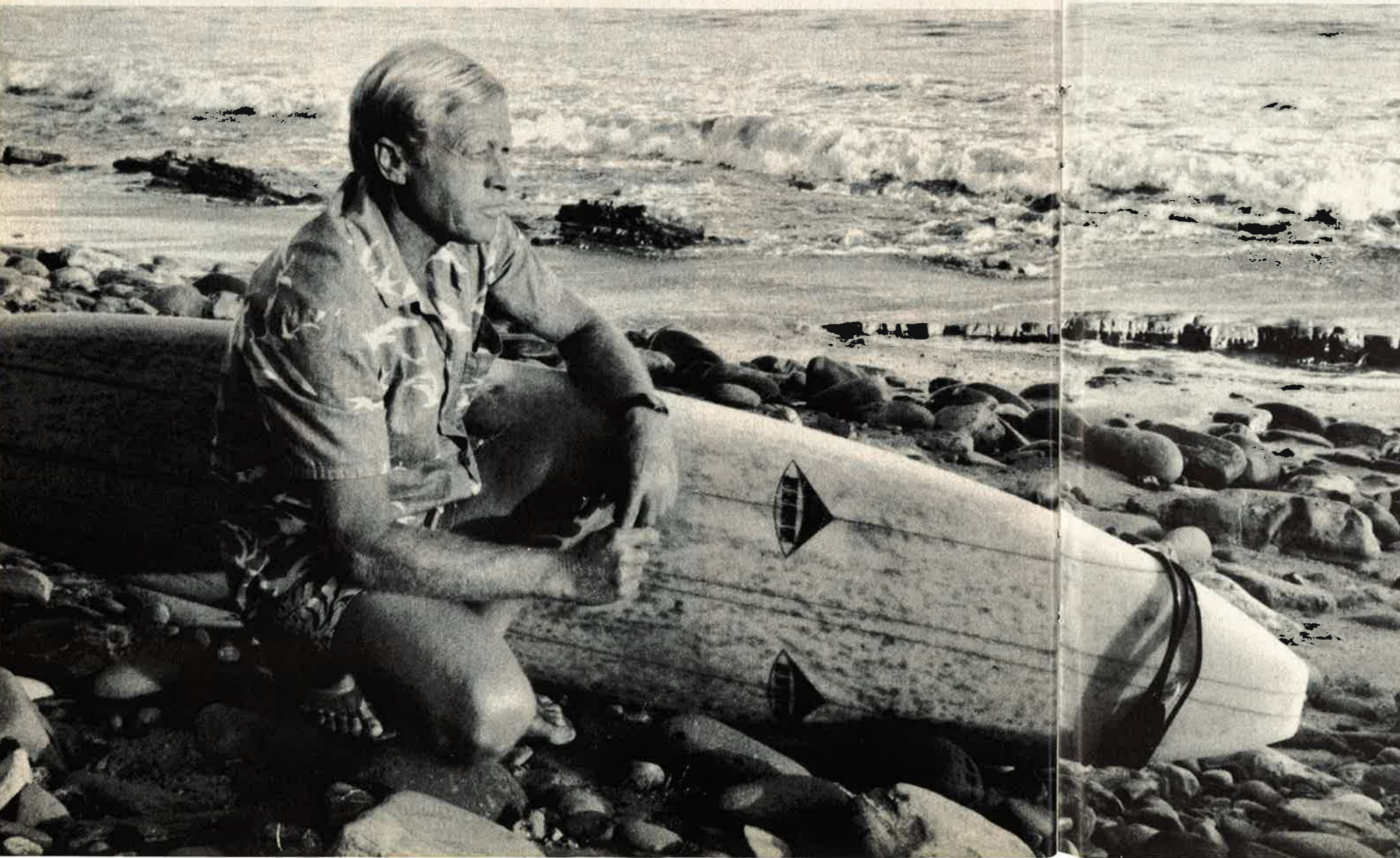
Finally, from atop the last line of dunes, they saw them. Perfect, glassy, tube-shaped waves rolling effortlessly and endlessly to shore. So perfect and symmetrical, Brown would later say in his narration, that "they looked like they had been formed by some machine." It was a surfer's Shangri-la.

"I was so damned excited that I threw up out in the water," remembers August. "It was something I'd been dreaming about since I was a little kid." For Hynson, the moment tasted like fame and immortality. "I knew right then that the whole world would see the movie we were making," he says.

That proved easier as a euphoric daydream than in actual practice. The rest of the threesome's beach-hopping to Australia, New Zealand, Tahiti and Hawaii was scenic but anticlimactic after the peerless waves at Cape St. Francis. In February 1964 Brown and August returned to California (Hynson, who was being sought for draft evasion, laid low in Hawaii), and Brown began his next adventure: trying to arrange nationwide release for his film.

After personally narrating his movie in rented auditoriums up and down the West Coast for most of 1964 and 1965, Brown still couldn't sell it to the distributors. "They said nobody's going to accept a few freaks in California," remembers Brown. In desperation, he rented a theater in Wichita, Kans. in the winter of 1966 and packed the place for two weeks. "We thought,

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Brown (left) contemplates the break below his Gaviota, Calif. home. Searching for the perfect wave in deepest Africa, Hynson and August discovered an eternal truth—it's a jungle out there.

'That'll show 'em,' " says the determined director. "Little did we know that New Yorkers don't pay attention to anywhere in the world but New York."

So Brown borrowed enough money to blow up the film from 16 to 35 mm and headed to New York. "I knew that people really liked the movie and that it was just a matter of getting it to them," he says. Brown rented out the Kips Bay Theater, and 20 years ago last month, *The Endless Summer* broke over Manhattan.

The critics promptly went wipeout wild. Brown's dry-witted narration and laid-back delivery proved a perfect counterpoint to the thrilling in-ocean action and gorgeous locations. The *New York Times* called Brown "a sort of Fellini of the foam" and *TIME* labeled him "a Bergman of the boards." Quicker than you could say "cowabunga," the U.S. got totally stoked, and the film went on to become one of the most successful sleepers of all time.

Two decades later Brown is still bemused by the overwhelming response. "It is a home movie," he says. "That's all I ever intended it to be. I never

Brown's two surf stars, who were not paid for their part in the film, have had a somewhat rougher ride. Once Hynson straightened out his draft board problems by pretending to be a head case, he took a more serious header into the '60s. "I was definitely one of the psychedelic revolutionaries," he boasts. He became friends with guitarist Jimi Hendrix and began to experiment with LSD.

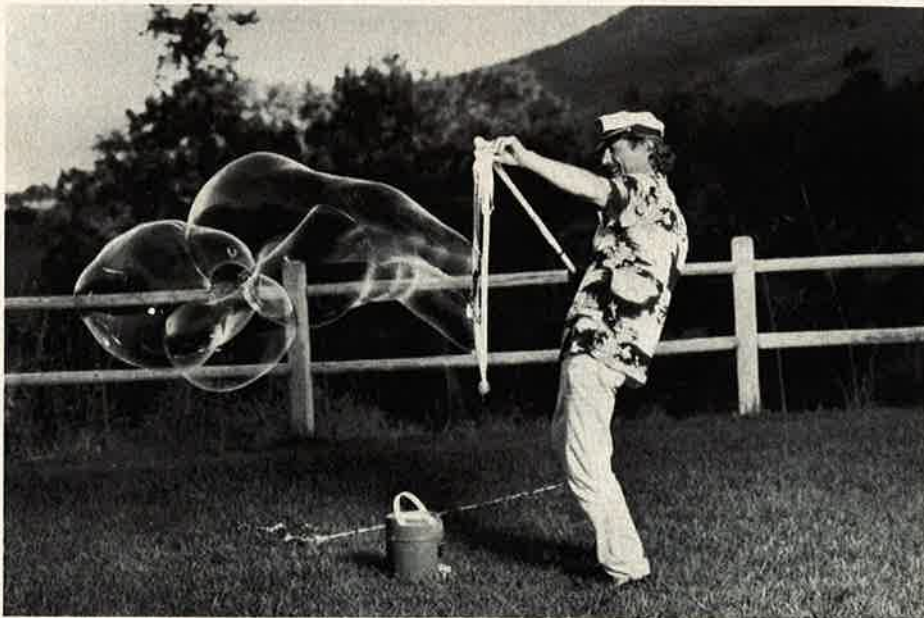
After an unsuccessful attempt to open a string of organic juice bars, Hynson started his own line of surfboards. That lasted about as long as a ride at Rincon. He has worked steadily in the surfboard business since the late '60s, shaping and designing boards for different companies. Hynson now is employed by Yater Surfboards in Santa Barbara, where he lives with his second wife, Vicky.

Like the other two men, Hynson, a hyperactive 43-year-old who cannot sit still, has kept on surfing. These days, though, he has a new passion: bubbles. He has invented a bubble wand that he claims "can make bubbles the size of Cadillacs. After my first bubble, I knew I was in love."

As for August, the trip changed his outlook entirely. He went back to school but didn't enjoy it. "I began to wonder if I really wanted to spend the next 10 years of my life in school just so I could be a dentist," he says. After August's own dentist admitted that he hated his profession, August dropped out of school and got a job at a local surf shop in Huntington Beach. He has been making surfboards ever since, putting out his own line of highly regarded "Robert August" boards for the last 13 years. Forty years old and divorced, he has one son, Sam, who is a minor league pitcher in the Houston Astros organization.

Brown, Hynson and August rarely see each other, and none has returned to South Africa to savor the perfect surf. (A luxury hotel has gone up at Cape St. Francis, but the waves—now called Brown's Beauties in honor of the filmmaker—are as perfect as ever.) The three men are also at a loss as to the reason for their little travelogue's lasting popularity. As Brown puts it, "The movie showed what I thought surfing was really all about. The deeper feelings, when you're out on your board with a pal and it's a beautiful day. I don't know exactly what's neat or why you feel good, but you still do."

—Written by Ned Geeslin, reported by Dirk Mathison



Hynson demonstrates his latest invention, a bubble wand, while August works on one of the 20 or so \$350 surfboards he crafts a week.

thought about the film philosophically until people kept asking me about it. Then I had to try to think up answers."

Since then Brown has had plenty of time to think. The return from a film that cost only \$50,000 to make and is still making money in theaters as well as in video and TV rights has made Brown a wealthy man. Now 48, he has directed a few commercials for Kodak and in 1971 made another successful movie, a documentary about motorcycle racing called *On Any Sunday*. He restored old cars for a while and now invests in the commodities market. "After I do something once, I begin to lose interest in it," he explains. Nonetheless, he still surfs every morning and lives with his wife, Patricia, in a large house overlooking the ocean north of Santa Barbara.

