



**SURFING
WORLD**

AN AUSTRALIAN LEGEND

MISFITS

The
ODDBALLS
And
ECCENTRICS
Making Surfing Magic

KYE FITZGERALD, THE SHIPSTERNS LADS, MITCH CREWS
ANDREW MOONEY, MICHAEL MACKIE, CHRIS CHONG
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WIRE CURTAIN, MICKEY SMITH, CORI SCHUMACHER

2011
**WORTHYS
FINALISTS**
Revealed

ISSN 1322-5375



9 771322 537000

\$9.99 | NZ \$11.20 inc GST

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**KYE
FITZGERALD**

Aggressive commitment

By Vaughan Blakey





The Fitzgeralds of Narrabeen have always been a family committed to the idea of the individual. Be it on the wave or in the bay the lines of Terry, Joel and Kye have continually bucked popular trend. Kye Fitzgerald's six year commitment to understanding the performance capabilities of his father's original single fin designs stretches well beyond the current love for climbing on vintage craft. The cool cruise posturing of the current retro scene this ain't, and Kye wants you to know that these boards were born with shredding in mind. Who better to ask about the misfit's place in today's mainstream surf culture than this issue's cover star.

SW: Surfing has traditionally been the great refuge of misfits but do you think that's changed in the past 30 years? Is the rebel a creature of surfing's past?
KF: It's blatantly obvious that the perception of surfing as a fringe culture in the eyes of society is not there anymore. What we have now is the surfacing of fringe cultures within surfing. There's this quest out there to be different, to be seen as doing your own thing within surf culture. There's a deliberate effort to steer away from what is considered to be mainstream surfing. Sometimes you have to ask yourself how true it is, how much do these people really want to be part of a fringe culture within surfing and how many just want to appear to be cool? But I think generally it is leading

to more individualism and experimentation with different equipment, this dogged determined attitude to not be part of the mainstream. **TF has always been about the individual, choosing your own line, riding your own way. Were those philosophies ingrained in you from your earliest days on a board?**
 Deeply engrained. I remember going to the Aussie Titles on a Cheyne Horan winged keel single fin because Terry would not let me ride a Thruster. I would be the only person surfing single fins at the Aussie Titles. We would just argue and argue about surfing Thrusters. That was when I first learned that you didn't have to ride a mainstream board to surf well. I had my own equipment and it was weird but I'd come

out of the water and people would be like, "Wow, you surfed really well on that board." They were surprised. And that's the first time my eyes were opened to the fact I didn't have to be on the same board as everyone else to surf well.
Do you remember a wave or a board or a moment in time when you felt like, "Ah... this is what it's about! This is what I want from my surfing?"
 Well, it happens all the time. It happened when I was a grommet, it happened mid life when I went back to surfing single fins after surfing Thrusters and it happened last week when I was in Bali. I surfed my Drifta, the one board the whole time I was there and I felt like I absolutely mastered those waves and that board. I felt like I'd completely accomplished something. I felt like, "This board is

"You don't have to get on single fins just to cruise, you can get on them with your typical aggressive Australian mentality and attack the lip."

so me." So yeah it happens all the time.
Do you think surfers struggle to find that feeling these days though?
 Yeah I do. People can be very fickle. They might change boards with every new trend in the market or at the whim of the next hot shaper without persisting with a design concept or particular board long term. It takes determination, confidence, skill, everything that you can imagine to understand and get the best results from a design. When you see guys surfing alternative equipment in really good, challenging waves, well they're the guys I respect. So many people will fall back onto equipment they know when the waves get challenging or bigger. It's one thing to fool around on different boards in one to two foot shit for a bit of fun, it's another taking those boards to Indo, Hawaii or even out into six to eight foot pumping east swells like we've had around here recently. That's when you see the real guys out there experimenting with equipment, the guys who are serious about it. To be honest the old DH (Derek Hynd) is the perfect example of what you can accomplish through blind determination. He is mastering his equipment. It's not about expecting the board to work for you and making everything easier for you. It's about the sense of achievement you feel in mastering a design concept that's sitting in front of you.
We've followed your journey on single fins over the past three years, where are you at with the boards you're on at the moment?

I'm still here because it's an evolving working relationship with TF. It's five or six years of refining the shapes we've been putting together. And there're still designs of his I haven't gotten around to even trying out yet. The Screwdriver is one I really want to get going on but we haven't been able to find an original to work off (laughs). You know TF was basically shaping his boards for aggressive Australian surfers and their mentality at the time of the designs was to hit the lip. So I always had the right mentality when I got on Terry's boards and that was to surf aggressively. To a certain extent it's bringing modern surfing to them but with the original attitude. And you can do that. That's a big perception I've been trying to change over the past five or six years. You don't have to get onto these boards just to cruise, you can get on them with your typical aggressive Australian mentality and attack the lip. We have got to get past the idea that single fins are old logs you get from under the house or council cleanups, that are waterlogged and only good for a cruise on a Sunday arvo when its two foot. Let's get real. The single fin is as much a high performance vehicle as anything else if you get on it with that perception in mind. That's the way I feel about it.
Getting back to where we started, will the individual always have a place within surfing?
 The individual will always have a place without surfing, man. You don't need surfing or surf culture to be an individual. ▀



PREVIOUS SPREAD: LOCKED IN AND ABOUT TO RELEASE. KF SHOWS THE KIDS THAT SUPERIOR POSITIONING IS TIMELESS NO MATTER THE CRAFT. **INSETS:** LEAN BUT NOT MEAN, NOBODY DOES IT LIKE PAPA FITZ AT NARRABEEN. FITZ CURLS. (ALL PHOTOS ONORATI)