

Endless Summer (1964) – Consuming Waves and Surfing the Frontier

The Endless Summer defined our sport. For the first time the rest of the world would have a clear look at the surfing lifestyle.' Matt Warshaw, *Surfer's Journal History of Surfing Films*)

...Brown cobbled together \$50,000 and set out with two California surfers, Mike Hynson and Robert August, to produce a true documentary on real surfers. Not beach bums or playboys who sang to their girlfriends, surfers were athletes who enjoyed the adventure of scanning the globe in search of the perfect wave.' ('The Sick Six: Six of the Most Important Surf Movies Ever Made, from the Fifties to Now', http://yerbabuenaarts.org/himvideo/sicksix_pn.htm, accessed 1.08.00)

After World War II America and the West experienced a consumer boom resulting from greater disposable incomes, advances in technology and commodity production. Part of consumer culture at this time involved the pleasure derived from acquiring goods and goods came to symbolise lifestyles or identities¹. An integral part of consumer culture was in the 'baby boom' generation which followed the War. The baby boomers became teenagers in the late 1950s and grew up in cultures in which consumer goods came to exemplify and construct identity and lifestyles. American teenagers numbered ten to fifteen million in the 1950s with a potential spending power of nine billion dollars². It is therefore unsurprising that this market became the target of advertising and mass media exploitation and were shamelessly exploited from the 1950s onwards³. By the early 1960s youth culture became the locus for innovation in fashion, music and style which crossed over into adult lifestyles, for instance in dance crazes of the early sixties such as the Twist⁴.

Part of the consumer boom for young people was in the growth of leisure activities; going to the movies, driving and sport. Surfing, in particular, became inextricably linked with the growth in consumerism as it was regarded as a hot new sport with a youthful focus, appealing to middle class, white youth and epitomising the ideal Californian lifestyle. 'Surfsploitation' as the surf craze became known, emerged in America as a cross media drive to attract youth audiences through the glamour and freedom supposedly on offer through the surfing lifestyle. Surfsploitation included surf music in the shape of The Beach Boys, the Ventures and Jan and Dean. The Beach Boys particularly were marketed as all-American high school boys who surfed, were clean cut, and cared only for cars, girls and fun, fun, fun. Hollywood produced up to seventy surf-related exploitation films purporting to lift the lid on just what happened on the beach when adults were not around to regulate undesirable behaviour. Out of this heady, consumerist mix of mass media exploitation emerged what many surfers regard as the definitive 'pure' surf movie, Bruce Brown's *The Endless Summer* (1964).

The Endless Summer has a simple premise, the quest for the perfect wave' which is one of the defining myths of surf culture and its representation outside the subculture. Director and surfer, Bruce Brown followed two surfers, Robert August and Mike Hynson around the globe to experience an endless summer and catch the perfect wave. To do this the friends travelled to little known destinations such as Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Tahiti and Ghana in addition to Malibu and Hawaii. Brown explained that: 'Originally we were just going to South Africa and then come back...But it turned out to be \$50 cheaper to go all the way round the world, so we did that'⁵.

The Endless Summer belongs to a sub-genre of surf films Booth (1996) describes as 'pure'⁶. These are surf films made by surfers for a limited surfing audience and typically exhibited at surf clubs. Brown's credentials as a surfer, a surf filmmaker and his association with significant shapers such as Dale Velzy ensured the authenticity of his representation of surf culture to its audiences. 'Pure' surf films relied on the film producer distributing and exhibiting them around a 'four wall' circuit. As with many four-wall producers at the time, Brown exhibited the film along with a running commentary around the usual high school halls, and club houses to enthusiastic surfer audiences⁷. On the tour Brown developed a script from which he distilled the best of the jokes and script elements before recording a permanent soundtrack. In an effort to gain Hollywood studio distribution, Brown, aided by Paul Allen, toured around America to places such as Witchita, Kansas, a venue little famed for its waves, where the film ran for two weeks to full houses. However, something unexpected happened with *The Endless Summer*, it crossed over from niche to mainstream audiences when the distribution was taken up by Columbia. Indeed, such was the popularity of the film that *Newsweek* dubbed *The Endless Summer* one of the best ten films of 1964.

So why was *Endless Summer* so popular? Robert August, one of the film's 'stars' believes that the re-release of the film in 1966 was a reminder to Americans of a more innocent time, providing them with time out from Vietnam and the possibility to have fun for a while, 'it was the right time for it' (Robert August, *Surfer's Journal History of Surfing Films*). Bruce Brown is not sure:

I don't know...I've run into so many people who saw *The Endless Summer* particularly back east, and said it had some effect on them. But a lot of 'em, they didn't surf, and they never did surf. It's always been a mystery to me.⁸

A generation of surfers later, Thoms wrote of *The Endless Summer* :

What everyone picked up on was the beauty of surfing, the harmonious union of man and nature, the adventure implicit in riding waves no-one surfed before, and the sense of freedom to be found away from civilisation's complexity.⁹

Thoms, however, ignored the consumer aspect of *The Endless Summer*, conferring upon it an Edenic innocence with which it has been associated

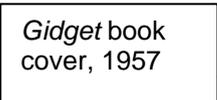
ever since. However, this essay argues that it is impossible to wrest the film from its consumer roots. The reasons for the popularity of *The Endless Summer* was that it perfectly expressed the dreams of American culture in a hedonist search for freedom from the restrictions of conformity in American culture from the early to mid sixties. Further, the main premise of the film, surfers' quest for the perfect wave, was attractive to American culture in this period, articulating a re-enactment of the conquering of the American frontier and, as August suggests reminding Americans of a simpler more innocent time before Vietnam.

SURF EXPLOITATION AND THE TEENAGE CONSUMER

In the early to mid 1950s, teenagers were represented as transgressive and the perceived problems of juvenile delinquency as a threat to the American way of life were, according to J. Edgar Hoover, second only to communism.

10 However, the late fifties and early sixties saw the emergence of the 'clean teen', fun-loving teen who conformed to the strictures of society. The clean teen phenomenon was, '...a quite literal product of the parent culture, fabricated from above, peddled down below...' **11** 1950s rebellious teen pop icons such as Elvis, Jerry Lee Lewis and Chuck Berry were replaced by squeaky-clean stars such as Pat Boone, Frankie Avalon and Annette Funicello. Clean teen stars were promoted across the media in films, pop music and television. For instance, Frankie Avalon had a big hit with 'Venus in Blue Jeans' and Annette Funicello starred as a Mouseketeer in the 'Mickey Mouse Club' and also had a hit record with 'Tall Paul'. Just as pop music was 'tamed', so Hollywood quickly changed its representation of teenagers in the early sixties, depicting them as fun loving, clean living and most of all, good consumers.

Surfing, previously regarded as transgressive, was caught up in the clean teen phenomenon when it was identified as a sport enjoyed by teenagers, but more importantly white, middle class teenagers with a good income. The surf boom was fuelled by the release of a film in 1959 starring teen star, Sandra Dee as Gidget, the 'girl midget.' *Gidget* (1959) was adapted from Fred Kohner's book about his daughter Kathy's experiences with a bunch of surfers at The Point in Malibu. It starred Sandra Dee in the title role and heartthrob James Darren as surfbum wannabe, Moondoggie.



Gidget book cover, 1957

Gidget was a typical white, middle class teenager who had enough disposable income to either buy a surfboard, or cajole her doting parents to buy it for her. The story told of her romance with Moondoggie, and the romantic, dropout lifestyle of the surfbums lead by Kahuna. By the end of the film, Gidget got her man and converted Kahuna, previously a confirmed bachelor and layabout, into a productive member of society. Following on the success of *Gidget*, American Independent Pictures, released a series of seven exploitation films with a surfing background. The first of the series, *Beach Party* (1963) set the paradigm for the other films (*Muscle Beach Party* (1964),

Bikini Beach (1964), *Beach Blanket Bingo* (1965), *How to Stuff a Wild Bikini*, *Ghost in the Invisible Bikini*).

Most of AIP's beach films starred Frankie Avalon and Annette Funicello¹² they included a regular gang of surfers such as Joel McCrae as Deadhead.

There was also a regular supporting cast featuring Candy Johnson (Miss Perpetual Motion), Frankie Avalon and Annette Funicello are pictured bottom left. The liminal nature of the beach, couple adult supervision offered AIP the opportunity to exploit the sand dunes, pop songs and slapstick

Poster *Muscle Beach Party* (1964) featuring Candy Johnson (Miss Perpetual Motion), Frankie Avalon and Annette Funicello are pictured bottom left.

exploitation of their culture caused such fury in the Californian surf community of the time that Mickey Dora, the most famous surfer in California and a vociferous opponent of surf commercialism, released a jar of moths onto the screen at *Beach Party's* first screening. Paradoxically, Dora was not above taking money for stunt work in the film. He also provided stunt footage for several other Hollywood films of the time such as *Ride the Wild Surf* (1964) and *Gidget* (1959).

Coincidentally around this time surfboard technology was also undergoing a revolution. Previously, surfboards were made from the increasingly rare and expensive balsa wood. This made them too expensive for the average teenager to buy. The weight of the surfboards also made them more difficult to carry and manoeuvre in the water. Surfboards were also scarce. A surfboard might take up to three weeks to craft. However, when Hobie Alter and Dale Velsay began to use foam, they could produce up to 160 boards per week at a cost of \$70-\$80 (Young, 1994) Indeed Alter noted that 'If that movie'd [*Gidget*] come out in the balsa era...no one could have supplied 'em.'¹³ The production of cheaper and lighter boards enabled a whole generation of teenagers to take to the waves. When coupled with the growing affluence in California, an affluence which was especially experienced by teenagers, Malibu and other Californian surf spots soon became very popular and very crowded. The exploitation of the sport dismayed many of the bone fide surfers, and it was in an effort to depict an authentic surf lifestyle that Bruce Brown claims he produced *The Endless Summer*. The sobriety of the film is apparent from the press pack which is restrained, consisting of a brief history of surfing and some stills from the film with reviews from *Time*, *The New Yorker* and *Playboy*. When compared with the flashy, hyperbolic poster for *Muscle Beach Party*, the simplicity of *The Endless Summer* poster promises a mythic and idealised vision of surfing and surf culture as Robert August and Mike Hynson, '...follow this everlasting summer around the world.'

Columbia, who took over the release of the film in 1966 deliberately placed a good deal of clear blue water product compared with its ex for *The Endless Summer* is p

The Endless Summer (1964) poster image was taken from a photograph of Mike Hynson, Robert August and Bruce Brown.

er as a quality advertising copy n. The notion of

summer connotes the optimism of holidays and youth and adding 'endless' to this idea, holds out the promise that youth and holidays may go on forever. The poster copy begins: 'On any day of the year it's summer somewhere in the world.' It goes on to describe the quest for the perfect wave before concluding with the possibility for audiences to: 'Share their [Mike Hynson and Robert August's] experiences as they search the world for that perfect wave that might be forming just over the horizon.' The notion of the wave forming 'just over the horizon' is a promise of the fulfilment of the quest but also it holds an echo of pushing back a frontier or exploring a new and undiscovered country.

The frontier myth has concerned American culture since its origins¹⁴. Surfers' quest for the perfect wave emulates an underpinning value of American culture, an aim to explore the wilderness and thereby extend the frontiers of 'civilisation'¹⁵. It also intersects with the aim of the tourist to discover new locations in which the 'authentic' way of life of other peoples may be scrutinised. The surfer as constructed through tourist discourse is a phenomenon which originates from the dissemination of surfing from the Pacific Islands to America at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Surfing was part of the ancient *kapua* caste system of Hawaii for at least one thousand years. When Captain Cook's ship, 'The Resolution' anchored at Kealano Bay the *kapua* system was already in decline¹⁶. The arrival of European missionaries and disease hastened that decline, and surfing too virtually disappeared until the mid to late nineteenth century.

Surfing re-emerged as a result of consumerist discourse and modernity in the late nineteenth century. In an effort to overthrow plantation culture Hawaii developed its tourist potential using myths of paradise on earth and unspoiled beauty to attract mainly American tourists¹⁷. The Waikiki Hotel in particular attracted tourists with its outrigger club and the Waikiki Beach Boys, native Hawaiians who gave surfing demonstrations to tourists. Prior to *The Endless Summer* surfers regularly made pilgrimages to 'the Islands'. There was a constant migration of surfers from the 1920s onwards to Hawaii to experience surfing's spiritual home. The Islands created an exotic mystique that conferred subcultural capital on the émigrés¹⁸. Indeed in the 1930s, one of the first surfing colonies in California at San Onofre celebrated the Hawaiian lifestyle in a hedonistic and bohemian way of life. This type of reverence for 'the Islands is translated into popular notions of surfing in the character of Kahuna in *Gidget*. Kahuna (who is named after a Hawaiian priest) is regarded as the head of the surfing colony at Malibu by reason of his lifestyle as a dropout but also because he has surfed the Islands¹⁹. In *The Endless Summer* Bruce Brown took the exotic mystique of surfing the 'other'²⁰ and developed it into a global quest for the perfect wave. However, despite its simple premise, the discourses constructing the nature of this perfect wave and representations of surfers and other places in the film could only be expressed in such a fashion as a consequence of American culture in that specific historic and societal moment. Indeed, consumerism which underpinned exploitation films in that era was also crucial to the production of

The Endless Summer more than Columbia or Bruce Brown would care to admit.

The Development and Commodification of Californian Surfing

A number of issues should be considered prior to the discussion of *The Endless Summer*. First, the importance of California cannot be overemphasised. Since the late fifties California, home of the typical American surfer, was regarded as a state of golden people who were all young, tanned and affluent²¹. Second, America was 'discovered'²² in 1492 as a result of European exploration and expansion. However, America was imagined prior to Columbus on maps as 'Terra Incognita' and assumptions were made by Europeans about the inhabitants of such a land. Once Europeans began to colonise America European clerics and academics began to position the indigenous population as children. The continent was described as 'the New World' as opposed to Europe, the Old World. These associations informed representations of America from the 16th century to the present and continue to influence contemporary culture in notions of America as a youthful society. These notions also influenced America's ideas about its own culture and is particularly prevalent in America's worship of youth and youthfulness²³.

Gans ²⁴ suggests that much of American ideology rests upon the notion of personal liberty, and the personal freedom of choice. Within American capitalism there is the notion that an individual can make money by striving harder than anyone else. This competitiveness is a major component of the American Dream which suggests that it is every person's duty to strive and ultimately win. These ideas are enshrined in what Slotkin describes as America's frontier myth in which early settlers conquer the land, pushing back the frontier and civilising the wilderness. By the early 60s there were no more frontiers to conquer except space and the ocean. Surfers seemed to represent the frontiersmen conquering the final frontier to America. Indeed in 1958 the *Saturday Evening Post* noted that surfers represented: '...the last frontier. Civilisation drops behind them when they leave the shore and the beauty and challenge of the great oceans is all around them.'²⁵ Surfers seemed to symbolize the Californian spirit. They were golden people who represented infinite possibilities and youthfulness to American mainstream culture. Travel and surfing as noted above are inexorably linked and these two activities coalesced in the notion of the surfing safari (the 'surfari') which is discussed below.

California and Malibu as location was also of crucial importance to the growth and development of surfing. Foam technology from the aircraft industry made possible the wider availability of increasingly cheaper surfboards. Hobie Alter is credited with the first exploitation of foam technology in surfboard production his aim was to shape a board which could substitute for rare and expensive balsa wood. Foam technology was quickly adopted by Alter's main rival Dale Velzy at Venice Beach. Velzy was so successful he was able to buy himself a Mercedes. His altruism was legendary amongst Californian surfing, he would give good surfers free surfboards, send surfers to international contests in Australia, he also gave Bruce Brown his first camera and enough money to shoot his first film, *Slippery When Wet* (1958). However, films were not the only advance in the development of surf culture. In the early sixties, the first major magazine, *The Surfer*, appeared which

would cement the international surfing community and promote Californian surf culture.

The Surfer started in 1961 as a 10,000 copy newsletter promoting film maker John Severson's latest surf film, *Surf Happy*. The newsletter sold 5000 copies in South California. This inspired Severson to produce the newsletter as a quarterly magazine, *The Surfer* in 1961. Within three months it sold 5000 copies and became a crucial component of surf culture. Initially *The Surfer* promoted a Californian notion of the fantasy surfing lifestyle with articles about surfing ideals, travel and high quality surfing photography. In 1965, Wardy, for instance, claimed that 'Surfing is a release from exploding tensions of 20th-century living, escape from the hustling, bustling city world of steel and concrete, a return to nature's reality.'²⁶ This articulated the romance of the leisure surfer's escape to the natural which was to become fully developed with the emergence of the soul surfer of the 1970s. Wardy too expressed the surfer's: '...endless search for the windless day, an uncrowded beach, the perfect wave.' reiterating disenchantment with crowded beaches. *The Surfer* which became known as 'the surfer's bible' presented surfers with images of perfect waves every two months in the early 1960s. In an early editorial, 'Surfing Is...' Severson described *The Surfer* as: '...a dream magazine. I saw that right away. The perfect surf, the faraway places...we all dream about the same things.'²⁷ This notion of the daydream is worth discussing here as it is central to consumer and tourist discourse and, ultimately in surfing, the perfect wave. Indeed, *The Endless Summer* could be described as a cinematic realisation of *Surfer* magazine in its evocation of the quest for the perfect wave, a quest which was not entirely predicated on 'discovery' so much as 're-discovery'.

By the early 1960s, as discussed above, Malibu waves had become too crowded. Indeed, once a hot new surf spot was discovered word quickly travelled and it became a nightmare to surf. Warshaw notes that in the '50s and early '60s surf magazines and films were quite transparent about the best locations for waves. However:

Discovery...invited ruin. In the late 1950s, when the "perfect wave" designation floated above Malibu like a neon sign, surfers were banging off one another in the lineup like heated molecules. To varying degrees, the same would eventually hold true for the Pipeline, Kirra, Jeffreys, Grajagan, and any other spot renowned and cursed as "perfect." For many surfers...the real search for the perfect wave has been less to do with adventure, romance, and the pursuit of new experiences and more with just getting the hell away from what...Mickey Dora called "all the surf dopes, ego heroes, rah-rah boys, concessionaires, lifeguards, fags, and finks." Surfers on the road didn't look for anything particularly different. They wanted Malibu (or Kirra, or Grajagan, etc) without the crowds.²⁸

Indeed, such was the pressure on popular surf spots that *Surfer* stopped identifying locations in the mid sixties. In the late fifties onwards, Californian surfers began to travel further afield on the surfari to find the perfect wave. However, as Warshaw notes above, the aim of the surfari was not to discover new waves, rather it was to *rediscover* waves which surfers already knew. Thus, according to Warshaw, films such as *The Endless Summer* and magazines such as *Surfer* promoted travel to distant beaches as a dream, a fantasy, 'reality heightened by imagination'.²⁹

Surfing, as suggested above, is a leisure activity predicated on consumerism. It is the romantic aspect of consumerism that is crucial here, for as Colin Campbell argues that consumerism is based upon desire and the possibility of achieving the perfect life through buying and consuming objects or experiences³⁰. This separates the physical from the imaginary world for the consumer who: '...learns to substitute imaginary for real stimuli and by self-consciously creating and manipulating illusions or imaginary experiences or emotions in daydreams and fantasies constructs his or her own pleasurable environment.'³¹ Images are an important part in this daydream of the perfect life. However, these images can never live up to the dream. The holiday also conjures up an image of the perfect experience whether in reality or in the images constantly broadcast on television, the Internet or printed in newspapers, magazines and travel brochures. These alluring images also encourage the daydream of the potential tourist and fantasy:

Names like Waikiki, Nice, Majorca, Acapulco, Bali and Marrakech roll across the page evoking images of sun, pleasure and escape. In a world dominated by bureaucracies and machines, we are offered these destinations as retreats to a childlike world in which the sun always shines, and we can gratify all our desires.³²

This quotation neatly summarises many of the discourses which construct a notion of the holiday. First, there is the idea that the holiday is a retreat or escape from the routine of everyday life. Next there is the notion of a return to childishness and the implicit notion of a return to an Edenic state of innocence, in which tourists can satisfy their merest whims. These ideas, at their root, coalesce around notions of time and the ways in which time is segmented in modern Western cultures, but the cultural appropriation of space is also significant in an examination of tourism. As Turner and Ash argue, tourism is implicated geographically in the 'pleasure periphery', in which certain geographical locations are designated tourist areas by virtue of their proximity to urban centres. Tourist destinations tend to be approximately 2-4 hours away from big cities of the northern or industrialised zone. For America the pleasure periphery is listed as the Caribbean, Latin America (Mexico, Tijuana, Acapulco) and the Pacific Islands. As discussed above, Hawaii was a popular destination for rich American tourists from the mid 19th century. It appealed to notions of the exotic, Paradise and the simple life. Although Turner and Ash wrote in the mid 70s their arguments concerning

holidaymaking remain valid and are peculiarly appropriate to the present discussion as they were almost contemporary.

A further interrelated reason for the desire to retreat to an idealised lifestyle is a result of urbanisation. Urry 33 notes the growth of urbanisation with its attendant overcrowding and the squalor of city life from the late 18th century induced in city dwellers a wish for escape to a rural idyll. Coupled with Romantic sensibilities, this developed a desire within city dwellers to return to a rural or idyllic space, a space which may be likened to Eden or Arcadia; in short, a paradise on earth. To this end tourists may anticipate the holiday or daydream about it using tourist literature as a means to imagine what it might be like. This 'imagining' of future pleasures is a symptom of modern hedonism:

...pleasure is sought via emotional and not merely sensory stimulation, whilst...the images which fulfil this function are either imaginatively created or modified by the individual for self-consumption, there being little reliance upon the presence of 'real' stimuli. These two facets mean that modern hedonism tends to be covert and self-illusory; that is to say, individuals employ their imagination and creative powers to construct mental images which they consume for the intrinsic pleasure they provide, a practice best described as day-dreaming or fantasizing. 34

Day-dreaming, an integral part of the sojourn³⁵ or tourist experience, is predicated upon the visual and may be experienced in holiday brochures, television programmes or other mass media texts. Rosengren takes the notion of visibility further in his discussion of the sojourn, 'to dwell in a place temporarily or as a stranger, the implication being that once returned to the point of departure the sojourn is of no further consequence.'³⁵ The 'surfari' is a type of sojourn, an activity based upon sensation but contains many elements of tourism such as the daydream (which Rosengren describes as the 'self-departure'). The experience of sojourning is fuelled by the rhetoric and images in surf magazines and films which hold out the promise for escape from the everyday routine. It is daydream **predicated** upon consumerism and articulated through media representations. Issues surrounding the romance and daydream in tourism and the appropriation of space continuously recur in *The Endless Summer* and are discussed in the remainder of this essay.

THE ENDLESS SUMMER: CONSTRUCTING THE KNOWN/UNKNOWN

The pressbook for *The Endless Summer* includes several reviews which praise the film, *Playboy* for instance notes:

The Endless Summer is one of the most pleasant and least self-conscious travelogs and sports commentaries to come along in years, a delightful sojourn into surfdom. 36

The opening titles pick up the theme of the title in gold-drenched images of surfboards packed into a car driving towards the sun. Travel is highlighted in the opening credits, a yacht bobs on sun-flecked water and an airplane flies towards the sun. The film begins in California, Brown contextualizes surf culture describing the favoured type of surf: 'Most surfers like to ride a regular board and perform on a medium sized wave.' When Brown suggests the surfer 'performs' he refers to the popularity of the hotdogging style of surfing. Hotdogging was a performance style of surfing in which the surfer performed manoeuvres on the board. The ideal hotdogger wave was the small to medium Malibu wave. Matt Warshaw reinforces the argument that surfers enact both a spectacular and performative identity when he describes hotdogging as, 'trick riding...often on beaches full of onlookers'.³⁷ Brown lists hot surfers of the early 1960s such as Mickey Dora, who at that time was the star of the Malibu medium wave, Phil Edwards, the first to surf the Pipeline, Hawaii whom Brown had starred in his previous film, *Surfing Hollow Days* (1962)³⁸ and Australian, Nat Young, who had just won the World Surfing Championship in San Diego. There is the archetypal wipeout³⁹ and footage of surfing in Hawaii with a list of the most famous waves, the Garbage Hole, Waikiki and Number 3. Brown describes the object of surfing, '...to remain in the curl, stay as close to the wave without getting caught by it. All the movements in surfing, stalling, turning, riding the nose are directed towards the ultimate aim of riding the curl.' There is some slapstick of surfers, carrying their surfboards, attempting to cross the busy highway, a sequence which demonstrates the overcrowding of the Californian surf.

Another negative aspect of Californian surfing, according to Brown, is the winter:

The ultimate thing for all of us would be to have an endless summer; the warm water and waves without the summer crowds of California. The only way to do this is to follow the summer season as it moves around the world.

To achieve this goal Robert August and Mike Hynson sit in front of a fire one evening planning and daydreaming about such a trip. They consult travel books such as *National Geographic*, read a malaria manual, a book on how to repel shark attacks. The following ninety minutes shows the pair visiting Senegal, Ghana, South Africa, Australia, Tahiti and Hawaii. Each location is stereotyped in a particular way. Brown notes that in Senegal they stamp 'sucker' on your forehead as they are forced to stay in a government hotel costing them \$30 per day and \$1 for coffee. Brown estimates that each wave costs \$9.95. However, they convert several natives (a term used incessantly by Brown) to surfing.

In Accra they stay in a small fishing village, the first white men ever seen by some of the villagers. Brown stresses the unchanging way of life for thousands of years. Here villagers make canoes from a single tree trunk, money is rarely used and when Hynson and August surf the children quickly make paddleboards for themselves and begin surfing. The surf is compared favourably with that of Malibu. The lack of surfers is stressed in South Africa

– where there are only one hundred surfers around the Cape. However, the brotherhood of surfing is stressed when all one hundred arrive on the beach to welcome Robert and Mike. Despite the lack of surfers, when Mike and Robert hitchhike outside Durban ('you can wait three days for a car') they manage to hitch a lift with two passing surfers. In South Africa, defying narrative conventions for the achievement of the goal towards the film's resolution, Robert and Mike discover the perfect wave, just off Cape St Francis, described by Brown in typical hyperbole as, 'so perfect it could be made by a machine...so long I couldn't get most of them [the waves] on one piece of film.' The local fishermen note the waves in this area are funny looking things, 'like pipes' and, as Brown asserts, they are like this three hundred days a year. The water temperature here is also perfect at seventy degrees with a prevailing offshore wind. This wave is so long and perfect that the surfers get cramps in their legs from squatting down in the curl. Brown concludes, 'I couldn't help but think of the hundreds of years these waves must've been breaking here but until this day no one had ever ridden one. Thousands of waves must've gone to waste right now on Cape St. Francis.' Hyperbole continues in the Australian segment in which Brown, August and Hynson cannot discover any waves and are constantly told, 'You should have been here last winter'. However, the perfection of New Zealand waves echoes that of South Africa when on Christmas Day they surf in a cove by themselves ('I can't even show you a full ride it would take the whole second half of the film.')

The final leg of the journey marries the weird with the familiar. In Tahiti where there are reputedly no waves the surfers discover well formed waves. In Papeete waves can be ridden in *and* out. The film climaxes in Hawaii ('good old Hawaii) the spiritual home of surfers. Brown demonstrates the art of the filmmaker by strapping the camera to the front of the board to show the waves from a surfer's point of view. There are shots of the Pipeline which is described as 'a Roman gladiator's pit' because of the razor-sharp coral underneath the shallow wave. The spikes can wound or kill, 'Any wipeout at the Pipeline in Hawaii is a bad one.' As if to underline this point a surfer, Bob Pike, takes a wipeout and Brown reports he sustains a broken collar-bone and three broken ribs. The board of another surfer, Butch van Arsdale is broken in two – and, as Brown informs the audience, surfboards are so tough they cannot be broken even if you drive a car over them⁴⁰. The film ends with Brown's admonition, 'With enough time and money you could spend the rest of your life following the summer around the world.' This describes the wish of many surfers, to have enough free time and money to surf without the routine of work and everyday living. The film gives surfers a taste of what such a life might be like. The cultural context and discourses constructing surfing in this era are discussed above. The final part of this article discusses the influences of consumerism, leisure and youth culture on the construction of the film, and makes a tentative conclusion for the film's continuing popularity.

THE ENDLESS SUMMER: SURFING THE FRONTIER, SELLING THE WAVE

The Endless Summer is a documentary/travelogue however it is not a documentary in the traditional sense of the mode. It is not a sober and objective narrative, rather in the early 1960s surf films, like all 'pure' surf films, it was meant to be exhibited in front of an enthusiastic surf audience by its director. Brown, like other 'four wall' producers produced, distributed and presented the film, he would play music from a tape recorder whilst narrating to the audience from his written script. The film therefore was meant to 'stoke' the audience. It was also imperative that something was happening throughout the film, there could be no quiet passages. Therefore, Brown disrupted the narrative in reel and real time. So, for instance, while Mike and Robert flew from Africa to Australia Brown injected interest by showing footage of Hawaii, 'While Mike and Robert are on their way to Australia, let's look at waves in Hawaii.' When they 'arrived' in Australia he directed the audience to rejoin Robert and Mike. This was obviously a narrative device to prevent boredom in the audience, but also used up Brown's excess footage of Hawaii. However, these flashbacks also served the purpose to remind surfers of the familiar, compared with the unfamiliar, the recognition and rediscovery of their own waves through the unfamiliar wave. Pleasure in the past was reflected upon and compared with the imperfection of the present. Therefore, when Hynson and August attempted to hitch a lift in Durban, rather than showing several minutes of the isolated African road, Brown took the audience to Newport Beach, California, 'the dirty old Wedge'. The stress was on the crowded beach and waves and this was compared with the isolation and strangeness of the road. Similarly, when there was a lull in the waves at Bell's Beach in Perth, Australia, Rod Sumpter described a surfing session he enjoyed with Nat Young in the winter. In Sydney August and Hynson reflected upon the monster waves in Waimea which needed 'big gun' surfboards to ride them. In these three flashbacks there was a juxtaposition of the familiar and unfamiliar, but also an engagement in daydreaming and imagination, an integral part of modern hedonism. In all of these cases pleasure and the perfection of the imagination, the daydream, was compared with the imperfection of reality.

The Endless Summer, however, did not always represent a true picture of what happened on Mike Hynson, Robert August and Bruce Brown's quest for the perfect wave. It glossed over some of the more tedious aspects of production. Each location was represented as containing certain elements. Robert August admitted, 'We went to a lot of places there was just nothing.'⁴¹ Nevertheless this aspect of production was not apparent in the film's narrative. For instance, Brown described how the perfect wave was discovered after a trek across three miles of sand dunes at Cape St Francis in South Africa. Narrative tension was built up when Brown commented that the odds of finding a perfect wave were ten million to one. The film showed the surfers on top of a sand dune looking down on the ocean, 'They finally got their first look at St Francis, South Africa.' The camera then showed the perfect wave. Brown built up tension and the 'stoke' in the audience by selling them the wave in South Africa, a wave so perfect it looked like it was made by a machine, so long it could not be contained on one film, 'I timed them in the curl for forty-five seconds.' Brown exhorted surfers to visit South Africa by reminding them of the wasted opportunities to ride this perfect wave,

'Out of a whole days surfing...each wave was perfect.' Indeed, he compared this wave with Malibu and Rincorn and concluding, '...and it's better every day.' 'Selling' the wave to American surfers through the 'pure' surf film commodified it just as much as surfing was 'sold' by exploitation films. Indeed, *The Endless Summer* shared many of its values with the image of 'clean teens'. The two stars of the film, Robert August and Mike Hynson were typical of middle class, clean cut youth. At the airport they dressed in suits, their hair was neatly cut and they were respectful to their elders. For instance in a scene in Africa, they called the village chief 'sir'. They were, at the same time, ambassadors of American youth and frontiersmen venturing into the wilderness and colonising waves in undiscovered territories⁴². Further, as noted above, their exploration of the unknown wave was only made possible by increasingly cheap airfares in the early sixties.

As discussed above, *The Endless Summer* articulated issues surrounding the American frontier myth, consumer and tourist discourses.

Robert August and
Bruce Brown filming
*The Endless
Summer*

These issues recur throughout the film in binaries concerning known/unknown, named/unnamed, exotic/familiar and crowds/isolation. Brown began the film with an account of the crowds on the beaches of Malibu and Hawaii. The theme of the crowd was juxtaposed with that of the isolation and the notion of the idyllic ride in locations around the world. For instance, on Christmas Day August and Hynson surfed by themselves in New Zealand on what is an extremely long wave, 'I can't even show you a full ride. It would take the whole second half of the film.' Brown notes that eventually the ride became so long that August and Hynson resorted to chatting with each other as a means of diverting boredom. Obviously this was an exaggeration, as proposed above, aimed at selling the unknown, more importantly, uncrowded wave so desired by American surfers frustrated by the overcrowded Malibu wave. As if to emphasise the point Brown juxtaposed footage of crowds on the beach at 'the dirty old Wedge' in California with an empty highway in Durban, South Africa. Here, Brown claimed you can wait for three days before seeing a car, [this is] 'one of the few places in the world you can be alone on a main highway.' Of the beaches in South Africa, Brown proposed that Brown stated, '...most beaches haven't been set foot on for ten years'.

The notion of the crowded and the isolated was intimately linked with that of the exotic (elsewhere) and the familiar (America). California and Hawaii were continuously compared with unknown and exotic locations throughout the film in the form of flashbacks. The exotic was located as a negative against California, the physical home of surfing, or Hawaii (described as 'good old Hawaii' by Brown) as the spiritual home of surfing. August and Hynson travelled to Hawaii on the last leg of their journey, in effect, travelling from the familiar to the familiar, from home to 'paradise on earth'. Brown concluded, 'Hawaii is truly a land of an endless summer.'

Throughout the film there was reference to distance related back to California in either time or miles. For instance, in Dakata, Senegal, Brown stated, 'Here they were only four hours away off an airplane from the United States and

already into better surf than the day they left California.' Time and space was conflated through the act of riding the wave, 'They rode those waves knowing they were the first to ever do it and also knowing the closest surfer to them was four thousand miles away.' August and Hynson were portrayed in this segment of the film as civilising influences, akin to the civilising influence on America by Europe after Columbus. They descended like gods into the primitive village in Ghana – so primitive that money was unknown, rather society was predicated upon barter and exchange. They were the first white men ever seen by many of the villagers, and as the missionaries in Hawaii, they set about spreading the good word, in this case, explicitly surfing and implicitly, capitalism. They established a surf school to teach the children how to surf. The children quickly take to this new pastime, making paddleboards for themselves to surf the waves⁴³. Adults too enjoy surfing, and one attempted to surf in his outrigger canoe in a style similar to that of early surfing in the Pacific Islands.

The wilderness, uncultivated and unshaped was evoked in descriptions of the unknown surf spot. A wave with ideal conditions in Durban, South Africa, described as 70 degrees with an offshore wind, '...doesn't even have a name'. In Dakata, Senegal, Brown described; '...surf that no one had ever ridden before, and as far as we know, surf that no one ever knew before.' These unnamed surf spots are given names by Brown, names which in some cases remain to this day. In Tahiti, for instance a wave considered so unknown was named 'The Other Spot', a title designed to be as obscure as the location. It is worth noting that the names Brown gave to a particular spot might overlay names given to these places by local people. This act is similar to that of Columbus when he claimed and named islands for the Spanish throne⁴⁴. In other words, it echoed a colonial enterprise as it claimed symbolic ownership of the wilderness for surfing and America.

Another aspect of the known/unknown binary was related to the representation of surfers encountered by August and Hynson. When the duo visited South Africa, all the local surfers, numbering one hundred and some from as far away as four hundred miles, descended upon the beach and surfed with them. By this act Brown suggested surfers were part of a global tribe, sharing the waves and a special brotherhood. However, the difference between different surf cultures was also noted, South African surfers tended to be older than Californian surfers. Australian surfers were of similar age, but were very competitive with the 'Yanks' – a phenomenon which became significant within two years of the making of *The Endless Summer* with the advent of the shortboard revolution⁴⁵.

The quest for the perfect wave did not aim to discover an unknown wave, rather it aimed to recreate the known. The constant comparison between waves in Lagos, Senegal, Cape St Francis, etc with California and Hawaii was a search to discover a new Waimea or Malibu. Just as surfers the world over were similar but different to Californian surfers, so the waves were also continuously compared to those already known waves in California and Hawaii. In Sydney, the lack of waves and flat conditions were juxtaposed with the mountainous waves of Waimea in Hawaii which were first ridden in 1958

after surfers spent ten years looking at the waves. In an analogy to hunting, Brown noted these waves needed special surfboards, 'big guns' and were surfed by, 'only a handful of surfers...sportsmen and nuts'. In these dangerous waves the flailing surfboard could cut you in half. For this reason in a wipeout surfers dove away from boards. The water temperature was also compared with 'home', in South Africa it was 54 degrees, whilst Lagos's ninety-one degrees was so warm, 'it melted the wax right off the surfboards.' What is of note here, however, is that up to 1958 this wave had not been ridden or even given a name. It is when it was named and tamed that surfers, usually American surfers, claimed it as theirs.

Unknown waves, however, could be dangerous and Brown constantly stressed the importance of surfing with a friend in strange waters. It was not only the waves that were dangerous but what lurked beneath them. In Australia and South Africa beaches are cordoned off from shark attack. In Australia, sharks, rather ominously, were known as 'the men in grey'. In South Africa when the sinister grey fins were seen cutting the surface of the water when Hynson and August are surfing Brown warned that despite netting, there was a fifty/fifty chance you would be killed by a shark. However, the danger was mitigated when the sharks are identified as porpoises. Brown turned this into a political statement, noting that porpoises and sharks do not swim in the same waters, 'they have yet to integrate.' In addition to sharks in Lagos there was the hazard of the stone fish, 'If you step on a stone fish you die in about fifteen minutes.'

In the global quest for the perfect wave, Brown, August and Hynson made known the unknown and so incorporated locations and waves into American culture. It was a culture based upon consumerism. A quest for the perfect wave could not have been made by any other society or subcultural surfing group than American, specifically Californian, at this time. All the conditions for such a journey were in place within this specific socio-historic moment. In addition to being a journey of exploration and adventure, it was a journey of colonisation and incorporation of other surfers and waves into American surf culture. It affirmed America's dominance of global surfing at the time and was a crucial component in the popularity of the film with surfing and non-surfing audiences.