

ecember 1, 2017: Bruce Brown turns 80! Hopefully you'll not be asking 'who he?' at this moment. Bruce Brown is after all the director, the writer, the mover, shaker, imaginer behind 'On Any Sunday', arguably the finest motorcycle movie ever made.

We can refer to that in the singular, for Californian Brown, for over a decade a producer-director of surf movies – where he created the equally seminal worldwide hit 'Endless Summer' – quit the movie making business almost immediately after Sunday. He went at out at the top.

We are stretching back 47 years here, for *On Any Sunday* was made ostensibly in 1970, released in 1971. Like many Californians in the late 1960s, Brown had caught the dirt bike bug – fueled by the arrival of affordable and lightweight Japanese-made trail bikes. And having noted the poor public persona of the motorcycling fraternity *(glorified by Hollywood in the likes of The Wild One, Hell's Angels and Easy Rider)* he set out to cast the community in a better light. He took his template from *Endless Summer*, applied it to the bikes and created gold.

Brown was savvy in so many ways. He managed to strong-arm Hollywood star Steve McQueen into being a financial backer of the film. He took the analogue, clunky heavy cameras of the day and 'souped them up' to capture the virtual hi-def action sequences. And long before we even knew the term 'onboard camera' he strapped a full-on movie camera to a rider's helmet and captured some of the most breathtaking motorcycle action ever seen, then or now.

Brown also – crucially – knew the art of story telling. He created three story lines from which he supported the diverse factions of motorcycling. So we followed a year in the motorcycling life of Steve (McQueen), Mert (Lawill) and Malcolm (Smith). Through them we got to know desert racing, road racing, flat track and

more. And at the climax of the film we got the buddy story, too, as the three came together for an iconic closing sequence in the Californian sand dunes, set to the mesmerizing *On Any Sunday* theme tune.

The scope, the creativity, the sensitivity, the sound-track and the sheer brilliance are still unsurpassed in moto-movie-making.

The following feature was first published in TBM in 2010. I'd actually interviewed Brown two years before. I'd called transatlantic, his production team had given me the privilege of his home number at his ranch. I'd got him out of the shower, he explained, and so Bruce told me his story stood there in a bath towel, looking out of his bedroom window, across the acres of his homestead on a summer morning.

Here at RUST we're delighted to reprint that interview, and to wish a happy 80th birthday to Bruce. And once more to say thanks for creating a film that inspired not just one generation of riders, but countless. As old Malcolm would say, 'that was really neat'.



Story: Jonathan Bentman; Pics: Courtesy of Bruce Brown Films, LLC(C) 2009 www.brucebrownfilms.com

SIMAN NSHPI

Nearly 40 years after its release, On Any Sunday is still considered the greatest motorcycle movie ever made. RUST tracked down the film's director - Bruce Brown - and took a look at the enduring nature of the daddy of all bike films...

OU'D THINK HE'D be pretty sick of hearing it by now - the gushing praise from people like me who can't help but tell Bruce Brown 'Gee Bruce... your movie is the whole reason I'm into this gig'. As he readily admits, if he hears it 1000 times a year in the company of motorcyclists (not bikers you understand, but motorcyclists, Brown's distinction) then he gets it another 1000 times a year from surfers. For Brown also made what is considered to be the most iconic of all surf movies too - Endless Summer.



No GoPro's in those days...

Wilson





'Brown's first love was surfing.
In his teens he was surfing 'paddleboards' on Long
Beach, California - filming the surf, using a little
8mm camera to capture his experiences...'

And none of us is immune, he can be talking to you, to me, to Jeremy McGrath, Ben Bostrom or the feature writer from Long Board magazine - we all splutter those same words. It's a measure of his good nature then, that after four decades he still takes these gushy outpourings with such good grace and genuine modesty.

Talk to the man and you soon discover that Brown is still every inch the laid back west coast boy his film narration suggests. At 72 years young, he's still dirt biking, having only recently given up a Suzuki DR-Z400 for a more manageable Yamaha XT225. And when you start talking with the man - and even more so when you start researching - there's simply so much ground to cover.

Makin' Waves

So let's start at the beginning. Brown's first love was surfing. In his teens he was surfing 'paddleboards' on Long Beach, California. When adulthood approached so did conscription and the Korean War! A canny lad, Brown applied for submarine service, having identified a particular submarine base located in Hawaii where the best breakers landed. Sure enough, with a little plotting, Brown was soon surfing the breaks off North Shore and Makaha. At that time he also developed an interest in filming the surf, using a little 8mm camera to capture his experiences for the folks back home.

On discharge from the Navy in 1957 Brown - ever the beach bum - went to work as a lifeguard back at Long Beach, while working evenings in the local surf shop. But it was only after surf shop owner - and surfing legend, Dale Velzy - saw Brown's 8mm rushes, that Brown took his first step toward making commercial films. Velzy funded Brown to the tune of \$5000 to return to Hawaii and make a surf film. Armed with a spanking new 16mm Bolex camera, Brown spent three months in late 1957 doing just that.

And it was those same techniques he developed and used to great effect in the surf films he shot in the late 1950s which gives On Any Sunday that curious home-movie appeal that makes it so endearing and eminently watchable.





The hands-on nature of film making back then also helped Brown develop a feel for his films. Editing was done by hand on a bench with a viewfinder, hand cranking spools, cutting and splicing as he went. Soundtracks were recorded separately on reel-to-reel tapes. For his first film Brown approached a local jazz band after a gig, and for \$200 he got the band to compose and play the musical score. The band would watch the surfing footage projected on a wall and play as they felt suited.

Then Brown would take his movie and soundtrack, on the road. The job as it was then, was to tour the high schools and theatres, playing the films to the kids in the auditoriums, narrating live as the film played.

'I hadn't ever got up in front of an audience and done anything like that before' Brown recalls. 'Anyway, I came up with something, did it, and the people in the audience were laughing. So I thought wow, this isn't too bad.'

Repeating his narration over and over to live audiences gave Brown a real insight into what pressed their buttons as well as indicating where his films might drop into lulls - prompting further edits. And it also allowed him to develop that assured laid-back, yet utterly engaging narrative style that we hear in On Any Sunday.

And so started a process that Brown repeated some six times. That first film from 1957 was known as Slippery When Wet, and at the end of the line stood Endless Summer, released in 1966. Part movie, part documentary, it told the story of two surf dudes who chased the summer season around the globe in order to keep on surfing. Given that the budget on Endless Summer (filmed over three months) was ten times that of the first film he made, it illustrates the level of development and sophistication Brown had taken on board during the intervening years

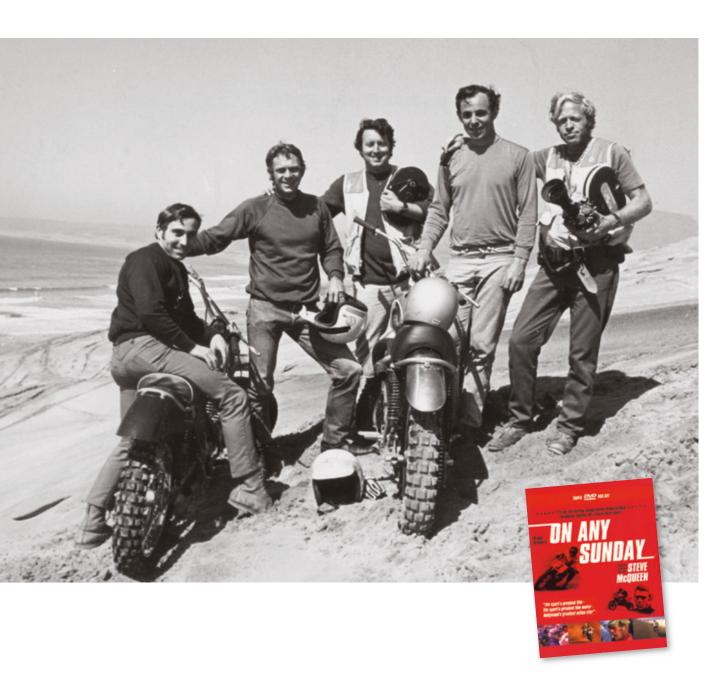
'It was lucky I never went to film school otherwise I would have realised I couldn't be doing what I was doing [for the money]' admits Brown. But irrespective of the financial rewards, Endless Summer paved the way for Brown's future film exploits...

Summer Holiday

Endless Summer is to surfing what On Any Sunday is to motorcycling. It's an important marker in the progress of the 'sport'. You can easily spot the shared parentage. It was also a step-up for Brown.







'So I said to Steve McQueen, "I won't let you be in my movie then". He laughed and said "let me think about your offer..."

You see his first five movies used a similar process. Three months in filming, then the edit, then the touring with the film. Collecting 50-100 bucks a showing, sometimes three times a day. Good money back then, but making for a tiring schedule. Five times around the block the appeal was wearing thin. Meanwhile Brown had been attracting commercial commissions - a TV advert for Kodak, event reporting for ABC's Wide World of Sports - and all this made for an unrelenting schedule.

Endless Summer broke away from this. The film took on a broader concept - that of traveling the world with a surf board - and presented the world of surfing to a more mainstream audience. Intended to be educational and entertaining for everyone, not just surfers, curiously though when it came to screenings initially Brown did as he always did touring with the film, live narrating. It wasn't until touring the East Coast that an Associated Press film critic saw the film and suggested it would stand up to general release.

There's a fair old story behind Endless Summer finding a distributor - it took months of hard work. There was the trick too, whereby Brown 'blew up' his film from 16mm to the more accepted 32mm format used for the big screen - something few had attempted or thought feasible. There was, as well, the self-funded screening of the film in a theatre in Witchita, Kansas in the deepest mid-winter, to prove the film had an audience outside of the coastal surfing communities (it sold-out for two weeks solid). And there was the screening in New York itself - where it ran for a full year - finally winning over a sceptical film industry.



When the film was finally accepted by a distributor it went stellar, making Brown a small fortune in the process - but at the cost of terminal burn out. Brown gave up the films, investing instead in commercial swordfish hunting. And in truth Brown didn't return to make another surf movie for 20 years.

I didn't have to make another film.' He admits 'My modus operandi has always been that of a California beach bum. I don't have an expensive lifestyle, I don't want for anything I don't already have, so after Endless Summer, which took from '64 to '66 I didn't do anther film until On Any Sunday. And after that I took another 15 years off!'

Endless Summer almost inadvertently spawned On Any Sunday. While touring in Japan with Endless Summer, Brown had seen the locals buzzing about on little 'scoots' [motorcycles] and so when he returned to the States he bought one for his own use. Of course it wasn't long before a few mates got them too and when you've got two guys on a motorcycle, you've got a race. Soon the boys were riding in the hills behind Brown's ranch at Dana Point. And from there came the natural extension to joining in the races and traveling to see the pros ride. Brown fell in love with his new community. It was only natural that it should prompt an urge to film again.

I guess I got into motorcycle riding late in life (by now into his 30s) and after meeting the people and seeing what they were like - totally different to what the public perception was - I just admired them. I wanted to show the rest of the world what it was really about. I never really thought about it... what the film would become... I just tried to do the best job I could.'

Sunday Sport

It stands to reason that Brown would take all his lessons learnt with Endless Summer into making On Any Sunday.

Whereas Slippery When Wet had cost \$5000 and Endless Summer \$50,000 the budget for On Any Sunday was a mighty \$313,000. It's fair to say (that after years of telling it), Brown has the story of his first meeting with Steve McQueen - one of the film's stars - as word perfect as one of his narrations



RUST HERITAGE









I went and met with Steve, I didn't know him, but he knew of me through Endless Summer. He had this production company, so I went to him and said, "You know, I want to make this film on motorcycle racing," and he goes, "okay great, what can I do?" And I said, "finance it". He replied "I make movies, I don't finance them". So I said, "I won't let you be in my movie then". He laughed and said "let me think about it". Then calls me the next day and said, "Okay, let's go for it"."

'He was a great partner. He just co-operated, no interference, just let us do our own thing. But he'd do anything we asked him to do to help out.'

What may or may not be obvious to viewers is that the film was made WITHOUT the involvement of the bike industry. To see the number of Husqvarnas in the film, you'd be forgiven for thinking that the Swedish firm had a big financial commitment to the film. Not so.

I never went to anybody in the industry as we had all the money we needed and I didn't want to be beholden to anybody. Husqvarna just happened to be what everybody had at that time. But after the movie those industry guys were all my buddies, you know? (laughs).'

The filming involved some entirely new techniques both for Brown and the industry. Despite the budget at his disposal, Brown couldn't afford high-speed cameras to shoot slow-motion - his solution, to run his 25-frames-a-second cameras at double speed. 'We juiced them up,' he recalls laughing.

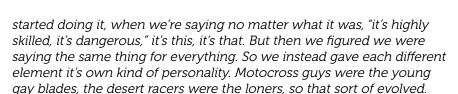
It took almost two years to make the film: 'I had two guys that worked with me the whole time. And then we'd hire cameramen for different venues and whatnot. Some of the stuff, like the International Six Day Trial I just went with Malcolm and Whitey and a Bolex [camera] and shot that by myself.'

Brown worked his magic on the production side of things like he had countless times before with his surf movies. His script for On Any Sunday is so word perfect, so brilliantly complementary, and so easy to listen to because by now he was the craftsman of the catchy commentary.

'When you're editing the thing, looking at it eight million times, in the end you're editing with a story in mind, you're thinking what does this shot mean, what am I trying to say? It kind of evolved from when we first



'When I was doing the surfing films you could put any kind of music to it and it would work. But for motorcycles, jazz-based melodies reminiscent of The Beach Boys weren't an obvious accompaniment!'



'Some people like the narration. Some people say, who is that fool [doing the talking]? For the most part people like it - the motorcycle crowd does - but I recall the New York critics would say, 'the guy sounds howdidoodee' or something.'

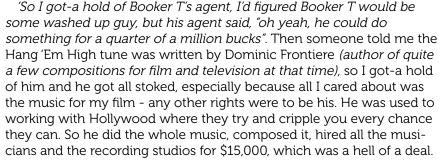
When it came to the memorable soundtrack, Brown was well practiced in getting what he wanted. For Endless Summer he'd signed The Sandals to create him a soundtrack from beginning to end. But jazz-based melodies reminiscent of The Beach Boys weren't an obvious accompaniment to motorcycle action.

'When I was doing the surfing films you could put any kind of music to it and it would work, it would just change the mood slightly. Suddenly here I was with the motorcycle thing and I hadn't thought too much about the music. I started playing music but nothing worked, the only thing close was Green Onions and Hang 'Em High by Booker T and the MGs.' [Hang 'Em High was Clint Eastwood's first American-made Western, after his spaghetti-western days.]









'And the main title theme, where the lady sings at the end, that was like a total shock. I'm there at the studios and Dominic says there's this girl, Sally Stevens, he's got coming for the end of the recording session and she's going to sing a song she wrote. I'm thinking, 'oh god, this is going to be a motorcycle mama' or something. But this young girl came in and broke into song and I just couldn't believe it, she captured the whole mood of the thing.'

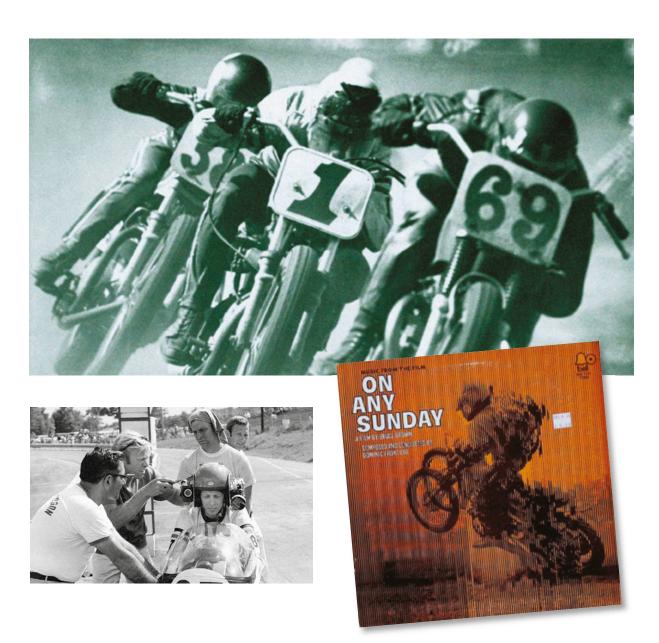
Of course probably none of us have ever known it was Sally Stephens, or even who she is. She is actually a very successful studio singer, rather than a recording artist. Sally Stephens has sung on countless musical scores for both TV and film, anything from Forrest Gump to The Abyss, and here's the thing, that opening vocal to The Simpsons - well, that's Sally Stephens too.

Seminal Success

That the film succeeded so well and continues to do so to this day, is as much based on the elements of its structure and Brown's hard won understanding of audiences, as it is to the striking action images we see on screen.

Bearing in mind the recent success of a huge number of freestyle motocross videos, it was going to be interesting to get Brown's take on them. Does he like them?

'No. Don't get me wrong, what they do is unbelievable' he reveals, 'but they're making videos not films. I had some young relatives who came





up to see me, who have just started to ride. They'd jump their bikes about an inch off the ground and say, 'what would Deegan do?' They'd put on a video and say, 'Check this out Uncle Bruce, this is so cool'. So I'm looking at it and the riders would be driving around in cars giving old ladies the finger and telling them to get fucked. And I'd say, "what is that?" And the kids said, "that's nothing, that's just lifestyle".'

Brown though, sees modern racers being pretty much like the racers he knew from his film.

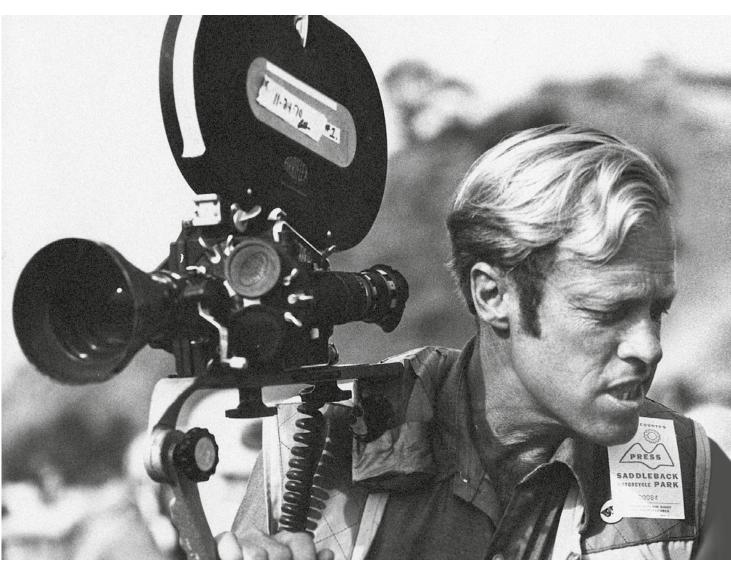
'Like Jeremy McGrath walked up to me one day and said, "I'm Jeremy McGrath I race supercross," and I said, "yeah, I know who you are!" "You do!?" He seemed so surprised. I think it's a typical motorcycle trait, like with Travis Pastrana too, they're just real nice kids.'

And so, as you may have guessed from the film - the racing, while it's great, isn't essentially what turned Brown onto the sport. He's definitely a people person.

'I guess of all the riders I worked with on the film, the guy I most related to was Malcolm Smith. Because Malcolm did the kind of stuff we did, you could go trailing with him or whatever. Whereas the professional flat trackers, I couldn't relate to those guys because they were in a whole different time zone to me, you know. I couldn't imagine doing what they did.'

So what does Brown make of the film's enduring success? 'It's humbling, you know? Endless Summer is the same kind of thing. Both those films were made from the heart. I didn't think about it at the time. I looked at it as my job and thought I'll make as good a job as I can. That they've stayed around so long is, er... something I really can't begin to explain.'

For a man who seems to always have the right words for every occasion, perhaps it's apt that he should be struck speechless over this last point...







The one that got away

Barry Briggs the Kiwi speedway rider - and by 1971 at the time of the film's release, four times world champion - had to wait 30 years after his sequences were filmed for his inclusion in the On Any Sunday enclave.

Briggo was filmed as the star of what was to be a speedway sequence in the original film, but when the film over-ran, the final edit left all of poor Briggo's footage on the cutting room floor. It took some three decades and Brown's son Dana working through all the archive footage for Briggo to take his rightful place - within the 30th anniversary triple-CD box set.

There's a real story to Briggo's part in On Any Sunday though, as Brown recalls.

'With On Any Sunday the film was about 10 minutes too long, so we had to chop something out - and that was the speedway part. Now Briggo came all the way over from England for the premiere and I realised too late that I hadn't told him what had happened. He got off the plane and I had to tell him, "Briggo, I'm really sorry but you're on the floor, man."

'Anyway, Briggo got to level the score with me. He and I later went to ride the Greenhorn Enduro. Husqvarna had given me some factory bike to ride while he borrowed Bill Francis' Kawasaki. Anyway, the Kawi broke and he left it out there somewhere, and when he went back to get it, it was stolen. I said to him, "You better tell Bill". He said, "Oh yeah, no problem". And so there he was getting on the plane home when he turned to me and said, "Oh, could you tell Bill his bike was stolen?" I said something like, "Oh God, you jerk!" So I had to go to Bill and tell him, "Hey, Briggo lost your motorcycle!" And fortunately Bill just laughed.'

There were no hard feelings though, Brown and Briggs are good buddies to this day. Briggo in fact bought Brown's house on Dana Point when Brown moved to his current ranch.





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Multiple European and British enduro champion Tom Sagar tests the Husgyarna TE250i and TE300i for RUST Magazine in British Columbia, Canada...



www.youtube.com/watch?v=uL7 ebar560

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2016 V-STROM 650XT

Seve Hacket explains the revisions to the Suzuki 650 V-Strom in order to make it more suitable for all-out adventure riding...



www.youtube.com/watch?v=CXtl8s3xA98

JB RIDES THE LATEST 2018 MODELS FROM BETA

JB finds the latest Betas to be lighter, more powerful and easier to use. Which must makes them better. Shouldn't it? Read the feature to find out...



www.youtube.com/watch?v=xH0E2Ra1TL4

2016 WELSH TWO-DAY ENDURO THE MOVIE - RUST rode the Welsh and lived to

tell the tale... just. The trials and the tribulations all here, in glorious colour. Enjoy...



www.youtube.com/watch?v=yriJw FU910

2016 YAMAHA WR450F

JB tests the new Yamaha WR450F in the hills of Andalusia and finds that it's packing some heat and demands a good deal of respect...



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2018 KTM 250/300 EXC TPI **FUEL-INJECTED TWO STROKES**

Jochi Sauer KTM of-road product development manager explains the story behind the development of these revolutionary two-strokes...



www.youtube.com/watch?v=7 EGuentg3s

2017 HUSQVARNA LAUNCH

The 2017 Husqvarna enduro bikes, ridden and rated by RUST's Jon Bentman... Check out the 2017 Husgyarna Special Edition at rustsports.com.



www.youtube.com/watch?v=4v6loSJI4jN

2018 KTM 250/300 EXC TPI **FUEL-INJECTED TWO STROKES**

Ride along with JB on the latest KTM TPI machines and hear his verdict on these Euro Stage 4 compliant motorcycles...



www.youtube.com/watch?v=RwK49cZ4yvs

2017 BETA LAUNCH

The 2017 Beta enduro bikes, ridden and rated by RUST's Jon Bentman... Check out the full review in the 2017 Beta Special Edition at rustsports.com.



www.youtube.com/watch?v=9oHMTpB0RNw

2016 HONDA AFRICA TWIN

Exclusve first test of the new Honda CRF1000L Africa Twin... Read the story in the RUST Magazine Special Edition at www.rustsports.com



www.youtube.com/watch?v=ntK07I63tuA

HONDA CB500X ADVENTURE

Jon gets an exclusive ride on the Rally Raid Products latest adaptation of the CB500X for the adventure riders out there...



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