

Blue Yonder, a journey into the heart of Surf Culture

by **James McMillan**



This excerpt taken from one of the feature stories, **Ocean Street**

Derek (Hynd) knew his stuff and talked specifically with numbers, dates, specifications and reason. Andrew (Kidman) listened, all hands on deck. Board talk continued. I (James) told them about the original custom shaped Occhilupo Rusty, circa '86, resting in my car. "It was given to me mid 80's and then when Occy was back in town, after he won the '99 world title, he signed it for me."

"No way, let's have a look", said Derek, with a, well-don't-just-stand-there-son-go-and-get-the-bloody-thing, look on his face.

Back in the yard and now with Occy's original Rusty, I stood it nose down and peeled off the blue terry-toweling cover. Derek was quick to hold it in both hands. He eyed the tail and checked the specs. "This is an '87." He paused...*"Oh, hang on a minute."* Derek flipped the board. *"It could be an '84. See these rails, quite thick but low, they're what made these boards unique. The more power applied, the more forgiving they were, and Occhilupo was the only one with enough brute power to pull em back in and around."*

Correct? I certainly wasn't gonna question him, because as far as I was concerned it was 100% correct. As a kid I'd seen Occy do it many times at my local beach.

"What would it take to get a template of the Occy?" asked Andrew. In my mind, I was thinking 'shape me a board', but I didn't say it, just smiled as I handed the vintage Rusty to a wide-eyed Andrew.

As the afternoon slowly turned to dusk and with it the winds to the west, we made a late dash for a surf further north up at Palm Beach. Andrew, Michele and Barlo (Steve Barilotti) in the Volvo wagon and myself and Andy (Davis) in my Landrover County. We trailed the Volvo up and around the many bends that form the road to Palm Beach. The Bay of Pittwater to our left was calm and glassy, shimmering in the afternoon sun, yachts bobbing about as the last boats crawled into port. Andy mentioned he was anxious to head up the north coast. He planned to hook up with Joel Tudor and surf the daydream pointbreaks of Snapper Rocks and Lennox Head. He told of a nice right pointbreak back home called Swamis...

...Andrew, Michele and Barlo were waxing when we arrived at the beach. There was plenty of swell on offer and the onshore wind had eased to a slight cross-shore. Peaking outside were waves of promise, and ended up being just that, shifting onto the inside

bank for nothing more than a whomping closeout. It came as a shock that Kidman ventured out in the breezy conditions in boardshorts, after hearing stories of him wearing a steamer in Hawaii. Andy and I chose to stick with our position in the car. The closeouts weren't too inviting and we pretty much couldn't stop talking—the subject now being, Andy's art. He commented, "*It's simple stuff. All my art comes from memories at the beach.*"

Amongst the closeouts Andrew found a couple of backside pockets before losing his board and bodysurfing a few waves back in. He approached the car, asking if he could take Andy's single fin for a surf. The back door of my Landy is quite difficult to open, yet he managed it in one clean sweep. "*How'd you know how to open that?*" "*Lynch's got one of these, been in it heaps*", said Andrew proudly, referring to legendary Victorian goofyfoot Wayne Lynch's Landrover.

After twenty minutes of paddling and only one successful wave, a stoked Barlo was back on land clasping at his towel and at our car window talking food.

"*I wouldn't mind a Pizza.*" Andrew sat outside the breakers on the single fin, waiting for a liquid corner. The breeze had swung offshore and the darkening skies blended both sea and sky a murky grey color. He took off on a lefthander that stood up just long enough for him to carve an articulate bottom/top turn combo. Smooth as butter; the board, or the surfer? A combination of both you'd think.

Whomp! Another empty barrel closed out, as we drove off.