THE STYLE OF STOKE

BY MORGAN MAASSEN

The precision, skill, and balance required to stand up on a surfboard and navigate a wave is breathtaking. What other sport even comes close? And across the spectrum of waves, ambition, and skill in surfing, we all are doing the same thing: dancing on waves. Enter surf photographers, a rare breed of people wielding cameras who have the most magnificent subject matter to work with. Whether it's massive seascapes or macro photos of a surfer's footwork, one thing is for certain: Beauty is to be found in every moment of surfing.

As I've traveled the world as a surf photographer for more than a decade, it has been a great pleasure to shoot alongside masters and beginners, photojournalists and artists alike. I took the opportunity to ask some of my favorite people on the frontlines what they'd like to share in their appreciation of the dance, as well as being a part of it in our immersive passion.





ZAK NOYLE

@zaknoyle

There is no wave in the world like Pipeline. Swimming out, I wanted to show the speed, movement, and power that it possesses. By slowing my shutter down to 1/30th of second on this brilliantly sunny day, I was able to show just how fast the water moving is. While many photos don't turn out in slow shutter sequences, I lucked out with this one of Koa Smith, perfectly stoked, speeding through the barrel yet frozen, the power of the sea encompassing him.



SARAH LEE

@HIsarahlee

A chance encounter — I swam out that morning to shoot someone else. Stephanie happened to be out, and this was one of the first sequences I ever shot of her. One of those mornings where everything just lined up. A glassy January morning on the North Shore between the big swells, on a single fin shaped by Alex Lopez. The spot isn't world class by any means, but it was having its day, and so was she.



LEA HAHN

@LH.PROD

The photo was taken at Teahupo'o, Tahiti. During a day of powerful swell, I was positioned near the end of the ride, waiting for the moment when the wave would release all of its energy onto the shallow reef. The gradient of blues was striking, giving the image both depth and intensity, while the breaking lip revealed the raw power that makes Teahupo'o one of the most challenging waves in the world. In this frame, the surfer emerges from the wave with both arms raised in celebration. That gesture says everything. It captures the emotion, the relief, and the satisfaction of successfully riding such an extreme wave. His expression confirms it. He knows he has made it.

BEN THOUARD

@benthouard

I've always been passionate about what the light creates underwater. In this moment, there is such special harmony between the liquid, the light, and then of course the surfer's silhouette creates a magical moment. I've worked many years for this one, so it's both a preconception with a lot of luck to get things together into one frame, the surfer's style perfect amongst the sea.





TOM SERVAIS

@tomservaisjr

Laird Hamilton organized a super trip to the Mentawai Islands, West Sumatra, Indonesia, in 2005. There was an Impressive crew aboard the Indies Trader 4 with Martin Daly as their captain. Laird's guests included Gerry Lopez, Rob Machado, Dave Kalama, Brett Lickle, all three of the Malloy brothers, and some of the very best photographers and filmers, including Don King, Jeff Hornbaker, Scott Soens, Dave Homcy, Sonny Miller, and Sylvain Cazenave (plus a few friends). They scored great waves and a few secret spots Martin made everyone swear to secrecy. This spot is called Greenbush, well-known to everyone. Rob Machado is paddling out, getting a front row seat to his idol Gerry Lopez, who's demonstrating his ultra stylish soul-arch bottom turn. Rob has always been inspired by Gerry's casual style, which is quite evident in Rob's style. Both are Pipeline Master Champions, Gerry in the '70s and Rob in 2002.

SHANNON HAYES

@shannonhayes

This image was captured on O'ahu, Hawai'i, during my first swim at Pipeline and Backdoor on a smaller day. Mornings on the North Shore can carry a quiet, mystical feeling unlike anywhere else I've surfed. During sunrise, the ocean sits in the shadow of the steep mountain ranges, and the air feels cool and still. When the surf is huge, it sometimes feels unsettled and raging. Then as the sun rises, its warmth spreads across the water like an embrace, illuminating the surfers and the ocean before reaching the shoreline. This is also where many surfers experience the conditions grooming nicely as the sun hits the water.

Having grown up on Australia's east coast, this experience stood out to me. I felt drawn to the image's textures and the film-like quality. Particularly how the surfer was gliding through a playful Backdoor wave towards the sunlight.

