

Readers stoked as Bob's book arrives

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NOOSA: Excuse me while I drift into cliché-land, but they broke the mould when they made Bob McTavish, they really did.

I've had the pleasure of working with Bob on the shortboard revolution movie *Going Vertical* over the past six months, and I'm astounded at his unfailing energy and his positive attitude to everything about surfing. Bob buzzes around shaping boards, promoting his brand and its epoxy cousins, writing books, making movies, whatever and still manages to find time for family, worship and, as ever, for a surf every day there are waves. There's not much of him, and at 65 years young, he's probably started to shrink, but every ounce of McTavish is surf stoked. So, naturally enough, that's the name he's given the first instalment of his autobiography. We just got our first order in at Back Beach a few days ago, and I've been poring over *Stoked* whenever I get a chance, savouring every page.

As a writer, Bob has forsaken the hippy-trippy prose poems he was fond of in the 1960s for a more earthy, straightforward style that accurately reflects what it's like to sit down and have a quiet beer with the man. The stories flow seamlessly, and all those wonderful characters come to life through Bob's sheer enthusiasm for the moment.

Stoked covers the early years up to about 1970, when Bob met Lynn at a party in Noosa and settled down to a country soul lifestyle around Byron, so a lot of it is set here on the Sunshine Coast, where McTavish came of age sleeping weekends in the first aid room at the Kings Beach Surf Club, and surfing Kings and Moffat's with his mate Pa Bendall.

A panel operator at radio station 4BH in Brisbane, Bob would finish his Friday shift and hitch up the coast. Soon, as he puts it, "my weekends started getting longer and longer". When 4BH eventually showed him the door and not the one into the studio he became a serious surf vagabond. Interviewed for *Going Vertical* film-maker Paul Witzig told me: "He'd eat a live spider or drink from a pool of mud at the side of the road, anything for two bob so he could buy bread and bananas to keep going."

In *Stoked* Bob covers the early years at the southern end of the coast, then Pa Bendall's introduction of Noosa to his surfing geography, and the magical years when they would share the points with Hayden Kenny and very few others. From Noosa, he drifted into the emerging surfboard industry at Brookvale in Sydney, where he established himself as an innovative shaper and designer, before getting the sack from Scott Dillon's for surfing too much, whereupon he and a friends stowed away on the Orsova _ bound for Hawaii. McTavish made headlines when he was inevitably busted and dragged home kicking and screaming. Needing to lie low for a while, he headed to Noosa where he began a long process of experimentation with surfboard design (not to

mention other stuff) that ultimately led to the development of the Fantastic Plastic Machine, the board that changed the world back in 1967.

Bob McTavish has led such a colourful life (and it ain't over yet, by a long shot he still has a solid dig when it's double overhead plus) that he could probably fill 10 volumes with his stories and probably will. For now, though, Stoked is a great introduction to the man and his spirit. Just enough to keep you going until next March when we host the world premiere of Going Vertical.

Bob will be at Back Beach from 1-3pm next Thursday, November 19, to have a chat and sign copies, so please put it in your diary and come and meet the little legend of Aussie surfing.

Designer's Tour of Duty

Also in town next Thursday (and visiting Beach Beat as well) will be the Global Surf Industries design team. Steve Walden, Greg Webber, Thomas Meyerhoffer and Richie Lovett will be joining Bob at Back Beach to display their wares and talk about their latest design concepts. It's hard to imagine a more diverse bunch of shapers, and each of them is a totally committed craftsman. Should be a fascinating afternoon.

Incidentally, I've had a peanut-shaped Meyerhoffer since last March but only started riding it on a regular basis quite recently. I love it. Super-light, manoeuvrable and bouncy, it's the perfect toy for a less than perfect day of crumbly faces and dribble burgers.

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