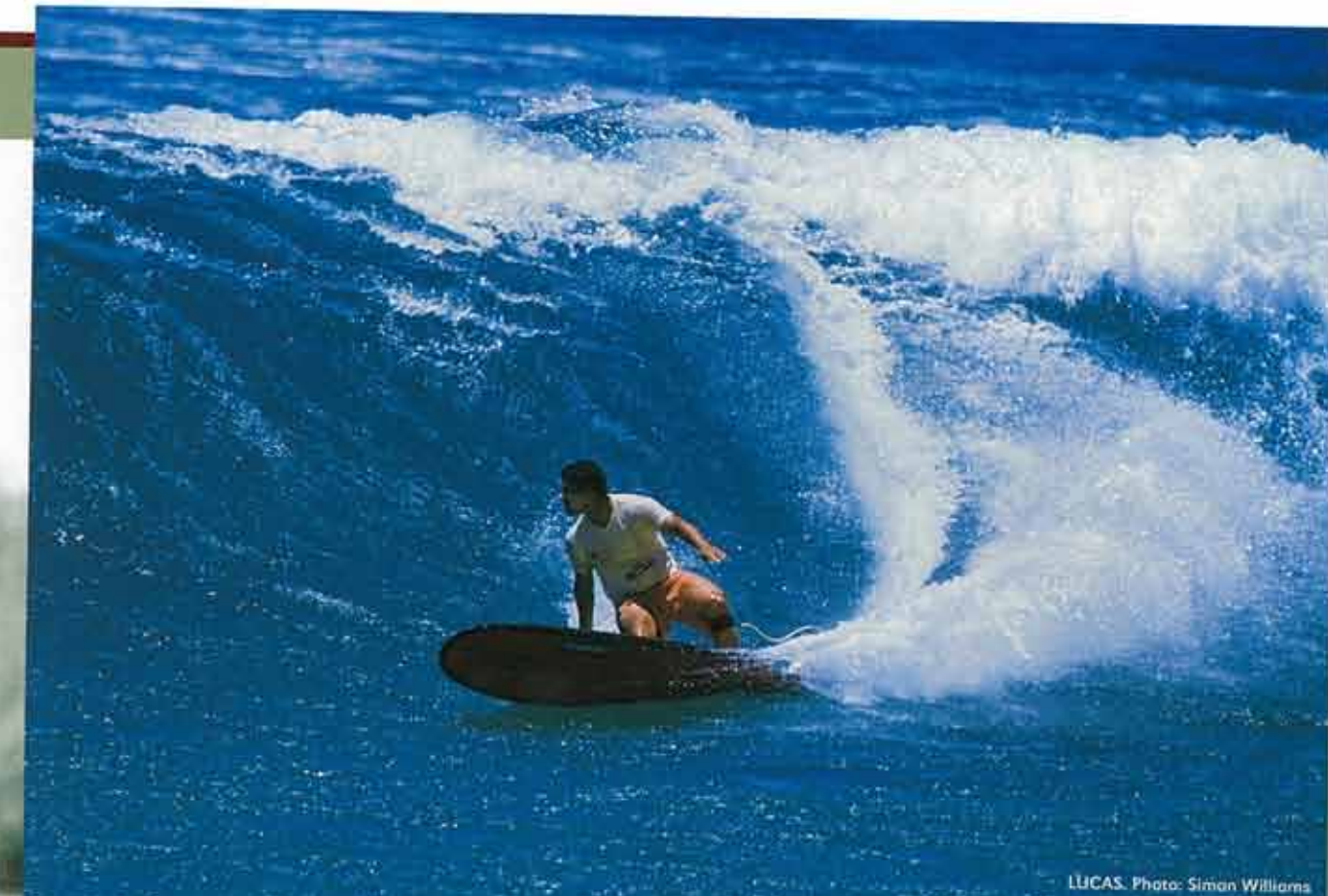


BEN AND LUCAS PROUDFOOT
Photo: Alison Aprhys

Proudly BROTHERS

BY ALISON APRHYS



LUCAS. Photo: Simon Williams



BEN. Photo: Simon Williams

tHE FIRST INDICATION THAT THIS WAS NOT GOING TO BE YOUR NORMAL SURFER PROFILE WAS WHEN I RANG LUCAS PROUDFOOT A COUPLE OF DAYS BEFORE OUR MEETING AND ALL I COULD HEAR WAS A LOUD NOISE IN THE BACKGROUND. "SORRY ABOUT THE DIN," SHOUTED HIS BROTHER BEN, "MUM'S ON THE DRUMS, I'LL GET LUCAS FOR YOU!"

Driving into the Proudfoots' hometown of Kingscliff, it struck me as a pretty little place with a great view of the ocean, and in the tradition of Australian coastal towns has a surf club, a caravan park, a milk bar, plus a sprinkling of cafes offering plenty of choice for serious post-surf eats. After checking the array of accommodation, I settled into the Kingscliff Cabins, small 1950s fibro shacks behind the main street, and was instantly reminded of childhood beach holidays with Mum and Dad.

7.30 am saw me loitering outside the Kingscliff Bowling Club waiting for Lucas and Ben to arrive. Earlier, I'd been thinking about the coming weekend after rising at first light to check out the surf. Walking along the beach I found a beautiful cowrie shell and felt it was a good omen. A station wagon rolled up stacked with boards and two young men peered out with that 'Is it her?' look, which then broke into friendly smiles. "Hi, I'm Lucas," said the driver extending a hand to shake. Behind him in the passenger seat, Ben nodded "hello" with an engaging smile and then insisted I sit in the front.

Friendly and quiet was my first impression of the brothers, as we headed off to check out the surf at various beaches down the coast. Later as we relaxed I adjusted that impression to friendly and outgoing, as Ben's jokes, comments and infectious laughter regularly erupted from the back seat, accompanied by Lucas's spontaneous remarks and wry observations.

On the way south they showed me where their new family home is to be built in a recent beachfront development, where they've already completed some landscaping, which is their regular work in between travelling and competing. We ended up at Hastings Point where Lucas and Ben greeted a few mates and chatted to some other surfers. I was feeling a little nervous having decided to leave my 7'2" in my car and take the guys up on their offer to borrow a mal. Out the back, all was forgotten though as I watched Lucas and Ben catch wave after wave. On land they look and act like two ordinary guys, albeit smart, down to earth and charming. But in and on the water, a subtle metamorphosis occurs as the salt water that flows in their veins kicks into action. Again and again their manoeuvres ranged from graceful and dreamy to fast and gnarly. It was like being given keys to a secret world... like when you fall into a book or film and have to shake yourself to come back. It was fascinating to see that when these men concentrate on their surfing, they really focus, turn on the steam and charge!

Afterwards, we headed back into town for brekky at Morine. The waitress was cheeky and delighted in exchanging sassy banter with two gorgeous guys as they decided what to eat. When I told them it was on me, they at once reverted to polite good manners and had to be convinced to order what they really wanted, not what they thought wasn't expensive. Very refreshing. Having heard that the café does an 'unreal' breakfast, our subsequent and exhaustive research into this subject proved that the serves were big enough to keep even these energetic brothers happy.

These guys are no lightweights in the water or out. Lucas is the current #13 on the world longboard circuit and in his first year back in 2001 made an astonishing leap from a world ranking of 117 to 17. "I weigh about 95kg, so a longboard is heaps easier for me," he smiles. Ben is rated in the top 100 in the world and in the top 20 in Australia, and both attribute their success to focus and training.

Surfing competitions aren't generally renowned for early, quiet nights. "At comps there's always people who want to party pretty hard," says Lucas seriously. "It's so tempting to just cut loose, especially if you're overseas, but you've just got to block it out and stay focused and remember the reason you're there." They realise that a quality performance leads to higher rankings, prize money, competition invites and attracting and maintaining sponsorship. Lucas is currently sponsored by French clothing label Oxbow. "Francoise Pradel, their Team Manager, is a great lady and she and the company provide good support," he says. Ben is seeking sponsorship, but the way he's surfing it shouldn't be long before someone recognises his class and offers him a deal that will allow him to reach his full capabilities.

*I want to see you around
I never want to see your face frown
A smile's too good to hide
A girl like you... make me feel good on the inside...*

'A Girl Like You' - Lucas Proudfoot / Max Judo

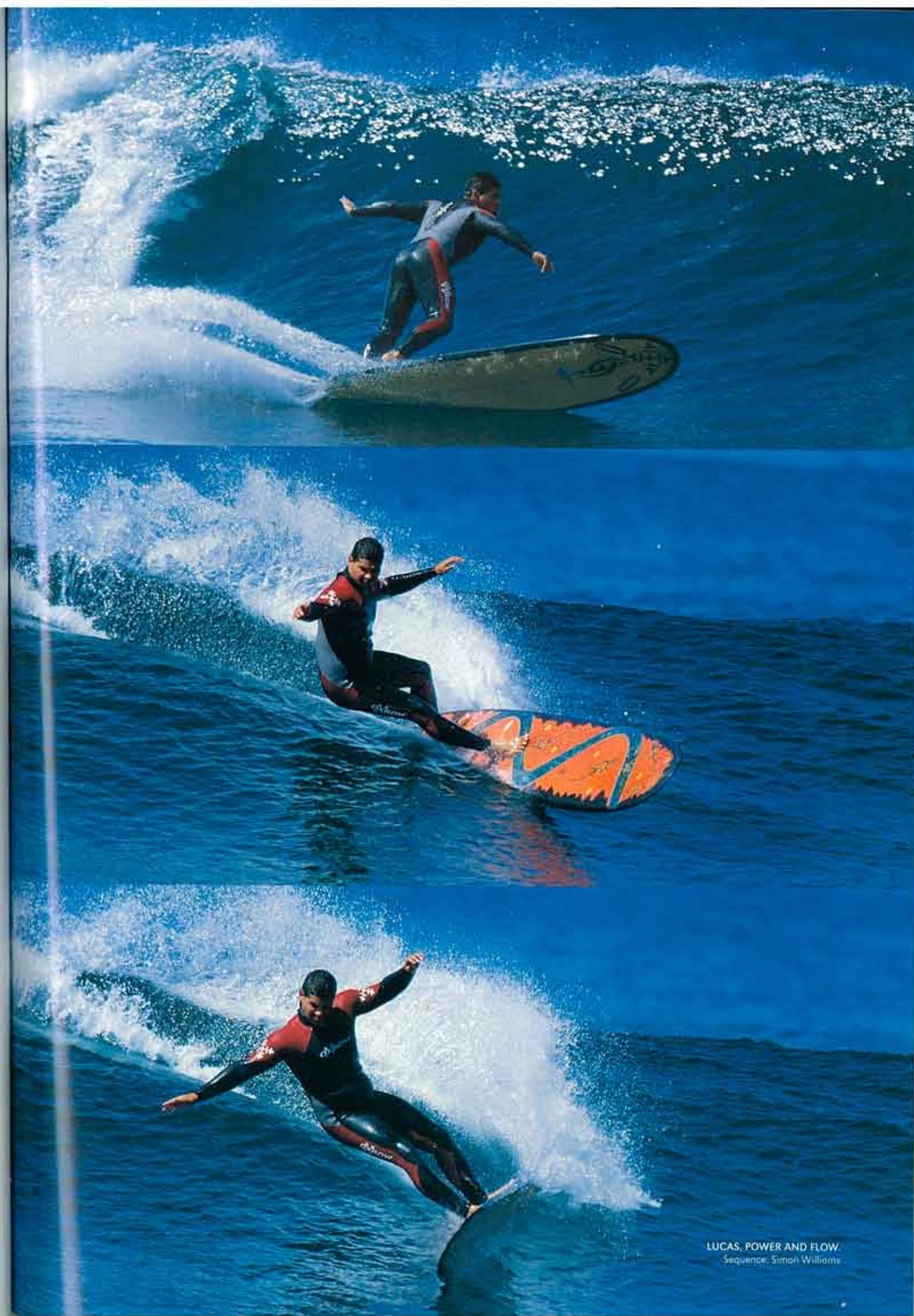
On the subject of girlfriends, Lucas states: "I'd rather find the right person, someone I can laugh with and feel good about, than just have a girlfriend for the sake of having a girlfriend." Brother Ben has been seeing his girl Alicia for a while, and it's obvious he thinks she's very special.

Ben and Lucas are two distinct individuals, however, they are very close and share many common qualities, and like the Williams sisters, the Proudfoots are each other's backstop during a competition. "We had a real heavy argument in Portugal," remembers Ben. "Yeah, we drove for hours, not speaking," laughs Lucas. "But we're brothers and on tour you've got to support each other." Where there's brotherly love is there sibling rivalry? "I've never beaten Luke, but yeah, I've got a few years on him," laughs Ben. Lucas agrees, "It's odd competing against your brother... but if I'm going to lose to anyone, I want it to be him."

After an hour or so chatting at the café, they invite me back to their home to meet their family and watch some surfing videos. As soon as you walk in you can see where both their robust musical abilities and down to earth influences come from. Guitars, drums, didge and music abound. Family ties are obviously strong and loving. Parents Sue and



PAINTED UP FOR A FESTIVAL. Photos: Moonwalker



LUCAS, POWER AND FLOW
Sequence: Simon Williams

David are both teachers, Sue teaches music and voice and David is a local principal, and when the boys aren't out surfing or hanging with their mates, they're at home jamming with the family. "Dad's a surfer and we sometimes come home and find the car and our boards missing, or maybe Mum and some friends will have taken off down the coast," laughs Lucas. "They are great parents," muses Ben. "When we've had hard times in between contests, they really get behind us and are supportive." Lucas agrees, adding that Mum and Dad are "really cool". Both guys believe that they get their competitive streak from their mother Sue, who played hockey for Queensland and Australian teams. Their sister Romy, a tall, striking girl of 16, also loves the beach but isn't into surfing.

Liked by their fellow longboarders, Ben and Lucas seem to make friends at all the competitions. "These guys are a lot of fun, great surfers and they're really good ambassadors for their surfing as well as their culture," says Jason Blewitt, Operations Manager for Surfing Australia. Lucas also appears to be as much respected for his music. "Our first intro to Lucas was as at the Noosa Festival in 2000," says Soz Carlbergg, who plays lead guitar with Mal And The Longboarders. "We were playing at the Reef Hotel to a packed house and Lucas introduced himself and asked if he could have a blow with us on didge. It was great and the crowd went off!"

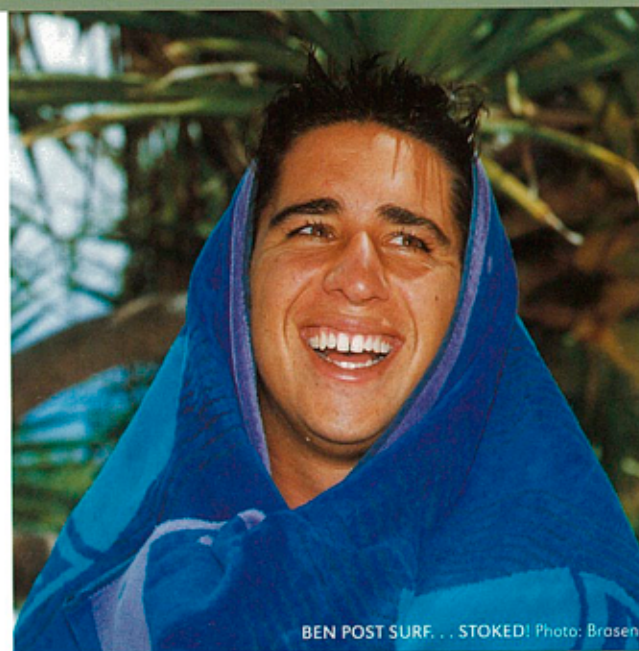
"When Mark Donovan, who plays rhythm guitar, wrote 'Cabarita', we thought the riff was well suited to didgeridoo," recalls Soz. "So we gave Lucas the call when we were ready to go into the studio to record. The sounds he got out of that darn stick - it was just what we were after and I think the feel on that track speaks for itself - we were stoked." This year at Noosa, Lucas did a spot at The Reef Hotel before Beau Young's band performed. "The songs are all penned by Lucas and we couldn't believe how much his voice has matured," says Soz seriously. "His songs are really strong and heartfelt, they had the crowd captivated. We have a great deal of respect for Lucas and Ben. Besides being great surfers, they are really good people - no illusions, feet firmly on the ground and very modest - they are great ambassadors for modern Australian longboarding."

"It's funny," muses Lucas recalling the Noosa Festival, "I was talking to Beau Young after we were both eliminated from the second round, and I asked him if he was thinking more about his music or his surfing? And he said 'music'."

Lucas found it interesting that while Beau said he was a bit bummed that he didn't make it through his heat, he was really stoked that people liked his music. When listening to Max Judo, it's obvious that Lucas puts as much effort, passion and thought into his musicianship and lyrics as he does his longboarding. "People know that you can surf... but then you surprise them when you play your music and they like it!" So what was he thinking of during the competition? "Sure I was thinking about my heats, but I was worried about putting on a good gig that night and playing well with Rusty Miller and Marty Shang," he laughs. In case this sounds as though he's not dead serious about his surfing he adds, "I tend to focus on the events during the middle of the year in the world rather than the Australian rankings. I don't know why, but my results at home don't ever seem to match my international events."

Lucas stresses that this is not because he doesn't want to do well here, "But I rarely make a final locally, I've always done so much better overseas. I plan to surf the World Tour this year," he says firmly. "And like Ben, I'm about to bump up my training and my aim is move my surfing to another level."

Ben and Lucas both perform with the Minjungbal Aboriginal Dance Group. "I've been with them about nine years," says Lucas. "Ben joined about five years ago." Their dancing has taken them overseas to perform at festivals in Taiwan and southern Japan. "We love to do the saltwater



BEN POST SURF... STOKED! Photo: Brasen

*I want to know just what it takes,
To live life without mistakes,
It's not possible no... you've got to go with the flow*

Go With The Flow - Lucas Proudfoot / Max Judo



LUCAS MESMERIZES THE CROWD. Photo: Moonwalker



(above): A FEARLESS AND CLASSY SURFER, BEN STALLS FOR A SAND-DREDGER. Photo: Simon Williams
(left): LUCAS GRABS FIVE ON TAKE-OFF. Photo: Simon Williams



dance," says Lucas. "It's cool," adds Ben, "a different way of expressing ourselves."

Like many people in the area, the Proudfoots have mixed bloodlines. "We are Bundjalung/South Sea Islander men and our great-grandma's family are Watego's people from Byron. The Bundjalung area covers from Grafton north to Stradbroke Island," says Ben. "The name Proudfoot is Scottish," says Lucas, "it's a good name to have... distinctive."

Saturday night saw Max Judo rock the Cabarita Beach Hotel. It was a mixed crowd of locals getting together for a mate's 21st as well as heaps of blow-ins who'd heard there'd be some good live music. Lucas arrived looking cool in a shirt and jeans, but soon changed into a singlet. His mum Sue rolled her eyes at this sartorial transformation as we joined his sister Romy and their friends to commandeer seats at the back. The band launched into a signature track, 'Monte Limar', to great appreciation and when Lucas later played the didge the place erupted... and it stayed rockin' through till midnight.

On the Sunday the boys underwent an arduous (oh, maybe 15 minute) photo session at the river, carefully picking their barefoot way across the mudflats to avoid the sharp oyster shells. Ben then elected to take off elsewhere, so Lucas heroically offered to go searching for waves. We trawled back and forth checking out one secret spot after another only to end up at Kingscliff's main beach. Lucas was even better that day. His turns were sinuous and graceful and I wasn't the only one out there to regularly miss a good wave while watching him surf. As if in agreement, a large stingray gracefully swooped under the waves. *

PROUDFOOT CONTEST RESULTS

LUCAS 9th World titles, Mexico 2002
5th O'Neill Pro, Spain 2001
5th Biarritz Pro, France 2001
OXBOW Expression Session winner,
2001, 2002 for best modern manoeuvre
Currently ranked 13th in the World
1997 Indigenous Longboard Champion
1999 NSW State 8ft Champion

BEN Quarters Noosa 2003
25th O'Neill Pro, Spain 2001
25th Portugal pro 2001
1998 Indigenous Longboard Champion