

It's undoubtedly the best windsurfing film to come along since *RIP*, and if you haven't seen it yet then you're missing out. **Brian McDowell** caught up with one of the main men behind the making of...

THE WINDSURFING MOVIE

Pix by **Jerome Houyvet**



The *Windsurfing Movie* (TWM) is billed as being windsurfing's definitive film. Intended for mainstream release as well as to dedicated sailors, it's available now on DVD.

Directed by the award-winning ski cinematographer Johnny DeCesare of Poor Boyz Productions, *TWM's* producers have clearly set out to showcase our sport to the masses without selling the hardcore short of real action. And there's no doubt that it is a quality production. Everything about the film reeks of it. From the minute you hear Mick Jagger singing *Gimme Shelter* over a cinema sound system you know you're in for a full assault on the senses.

BOARDS' editor was eager to find out more about the thinking behind the film, so he ordered me to do some digging. So, while at Sylt I manfully sacrificed a perfectly good lunch break to track down Jace Panebianco, who, after a chance encounter with DeCesare back in 2004, originally sparked the venture into action. Jace is a typical East Coast Yank with a wacky dress sense and a unique Hamptons drawl, and is always good value for a chat – even if you're hungry. Backstage at the Sylt World Cup, with the unmistakably mouth-watering smell of *bratwurst* wafting by, I pressed him for some answers as to why I should skip my lunch, and why you should part with your cash...

So I guess the biggie is why? Not just why people should buy it necessarily, but why did you make it in the first place?

JP: *It's pretty simple really. To give a worldwide perspective on windsurfing. To introduce windsurfing to the masses. To tell an important story to as many windsurfers as possible about their sport, its colourful history, its roots, its pioneers, and a fair bit about its future.*

You've toured far and wide with it – I've seen it screened at nearly every event this season. Has it been over-exposed? Will people still buy it?

JP: *We set out for it to be a social thing, to lay on the premieres and to let as many people*

as possible see it. It's the kind of movie you'll always want to have by the side of your entertainment system or on the shelf for a rainy day. In fact the more people that see it the more copies we seem to sell, which proves that it's perceived immediately as one of those classic, must-have titles rather than a single view serving.

We first unveiled it at the Santa Barbara Film Festival and at the Lake Tahoe Festival, and then to over 3,000 people in Maui at the growing film festival there. The reaction was mad everywhere, but for me the best was the LA premier at Red Bull's HQ. People were packing the aisles in the theatre to see it and I'll never forget hearing the hoots and cheers from everyone and, for the first time ever, not

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feeling that windsurfing is like the ginger-haired stepchild of surfing.

Everyone there was like, "We want more of this!" There's no bigger affirmation than that, really, is there? We'll carry on touring with it and spreading the word and hoping that it helps bring more and more people into the sport, too.

OK, but for the already committed windsurfers out there who already have 100 DVDs – what's different about it? Isn't it just another windsurfing DVD?

JP: I hope it's different to your regular windsurfing flick in a thousand ways. We're all perfectionists and spent over three years filming in both classic 16mm film and HD, plus over 60 days of non-stop editing for four full-time guys. We totally hope that

this comes across to the viewer that this is in NO WAY a homemade movie put together in five minutes on some kid's Mac. I mean we got the freakin' Rolling Stones to support us with rights to their material, and a whole lot of amazing music that no-one else has ever – legally – cut into their movies. You'd also be stunned to hear what we spent on helicopters and travel to get the most amazing angles and viewpoints that stuff shot on some home-movie camera just doesn't convey.

We've also made a real effort to put a story into it too, and to produce a proper documentary element. And, with the input of Robby Naish, our sport's undisputed icon, we've managed to get a really private character to open up about his life, and it's the first movie since RIP that he's been involved with. Whenever I watch it I still get chills →

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watching the way he picks up that first World title trophy he ever won aged just 13 and thinking about what he went on to achieve for himself and the sport of windsurfing.

What's the reaction been from outside sports?

JP: Browsing our MySpace pages and the forums and the receptions we've had at screenings in ski locations, we've been bowled over. Even Johnny DeCesare hasn't made a storyboarded, documentary film like this in his background sport of skiing, so the mountain community in the States has taken to it really well thanks to his reputation in the snow. In fact, we've found that skiing and windsurfing have, more than ever, gone hand in hand with this project as they have the contrasting seasons, and there's already a buzz about windsurfing in the ski world from people who've seen the film and want to learn how to sail, or renew their relationship with windsurfing. A surprising number of ski pros also windsurf and sail full-on to a good standard in their

off-season, so they're a powerful word of mouth tool for us to spread the news.

Will there be a sequel?

JP: Well, it's gonna be hard for TWMM to out-do itself, but there are a lot of things we wish we'd done or would do now, and we've loads of ideas. Plus, having this kind of support from Robby, Red Bull and Oxbow it is possible we'll do something else, and as I said the Red Bull reaction was a big "Yes please, give it to us now!" anyway.

We've had some reaction from other filmmakers of movies we've loved and emulate such as Dogtown and Z-Boys' Stacy Peralta, who's also worked with stars like Laird Hamilton on Riding Giants. In fact Laird thought we'd exactly captured the soul and essence of windsurfing, and Sam George, the US Surfing magazine editor, writer and filmmaker – who's also something of a critic – got talking to me about why it's important to show how sports such as windsurfing and surfing are all-encompassing and addictive, and how they totally give people new lifestyles and new outlooks on living.

I have to be honest though, and it has to be said I'm a total sceptic. I've seen a thousand windsurfing flicks and I sometimes feel like I've seen this one a thousand times already. But even so I still can't stop staring at it whenever it's played on tour in a bar or on a screen.

If something's gripping you that much it's got to be good – a bit like windsurfing itself. Despite a lot of blagging this year to Levi or Jace I never seem to be able grab a copy,

and whenever I did they always needed it back for someone else who was actually important. But all said and done I'd pay good money for it anyway, 'cos it really is a classic and it's been a long time coming.

Interview over, as I leave in search of sustenance the stupendously loud loudspeakers next to us suddenly thunder into life, and I think about what Sam George told Jace as I hear Robby Naish himself giving his annual address to his adoring throngs in German.

Then, as he quickly switches back into English, I hear the King say, "I'm sorry but I have to describe this in my own language."

My ears instantly prick up, and I stop to look as he goes on to explain himself and make a very valid point in his amazingly calm voice. "Adults forget how to play as they go through life – especially after all the stresses and strains of the modern workplace, or after the absorbing yet demanding times of bringing up kids. Sports like windsurfing help us to reconnect with who we really are, and through this kind of play and recreation, we become better individuals, more productive colleagues, nicer friends and cooler parents as a result. I'm genuinely proud to put my name to stuff that makes the world a better place and that improves people's lives."

OK, Robby may have been talking principally about his Naish branded products, but what he said succinctly sums up the ethos of TWMM and all the people involved in its production. There's no doubt whatsoever that they have made a great contribution to windsurfing in showing how great our sport makes our lives. Now, go and buy it! ☺



The Windsurfing Movie is available from our online shop at www.boards.co.uk