

OUT THERE



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HANGING OUT WITH SHANE 'KENNY' JACOBSON

ON VICTORIA'S SURF COAST

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HANGING WITH 'KENNY'...

...on the Victorian Surf Coast

WORDS: MICHAEL MAPSTONE

Shane Jacobson – best known as loveable portaloos plumber Kenny from the movie of the same name – readily admits he's no surfer. Even so, he's quick to name Victoria's Surf Coast as his favourite Australian holiday destination.

Shane spent countless holidays in his youth at towns in the area including Barwon Heads, Ocean Grove, Jan Juc and Torquay and said that the region provides him with a great feeling of familiarity.

"We holidayed there lots and I swam there so much I knew the fish and sharks by name," the affable actor laughs to *OUTthere*.

"It's like your lounge room. You get to know everything in it and you tend to feel comfortable there."

"I remember at Torquay I saw *Life of Brian* on fold-out chairs at the church or town hall," he recalls with fondness. He has since observed the town's transformation from a place with a surf shop to a surfing retail juggernaut – and seems to consider himself

fortunate to have known it in both forms.

But Shane says the real appeal of the region is its natural beauty. He particularly likes that in some places, particularly around Anglesea, the bush meets the ocean.

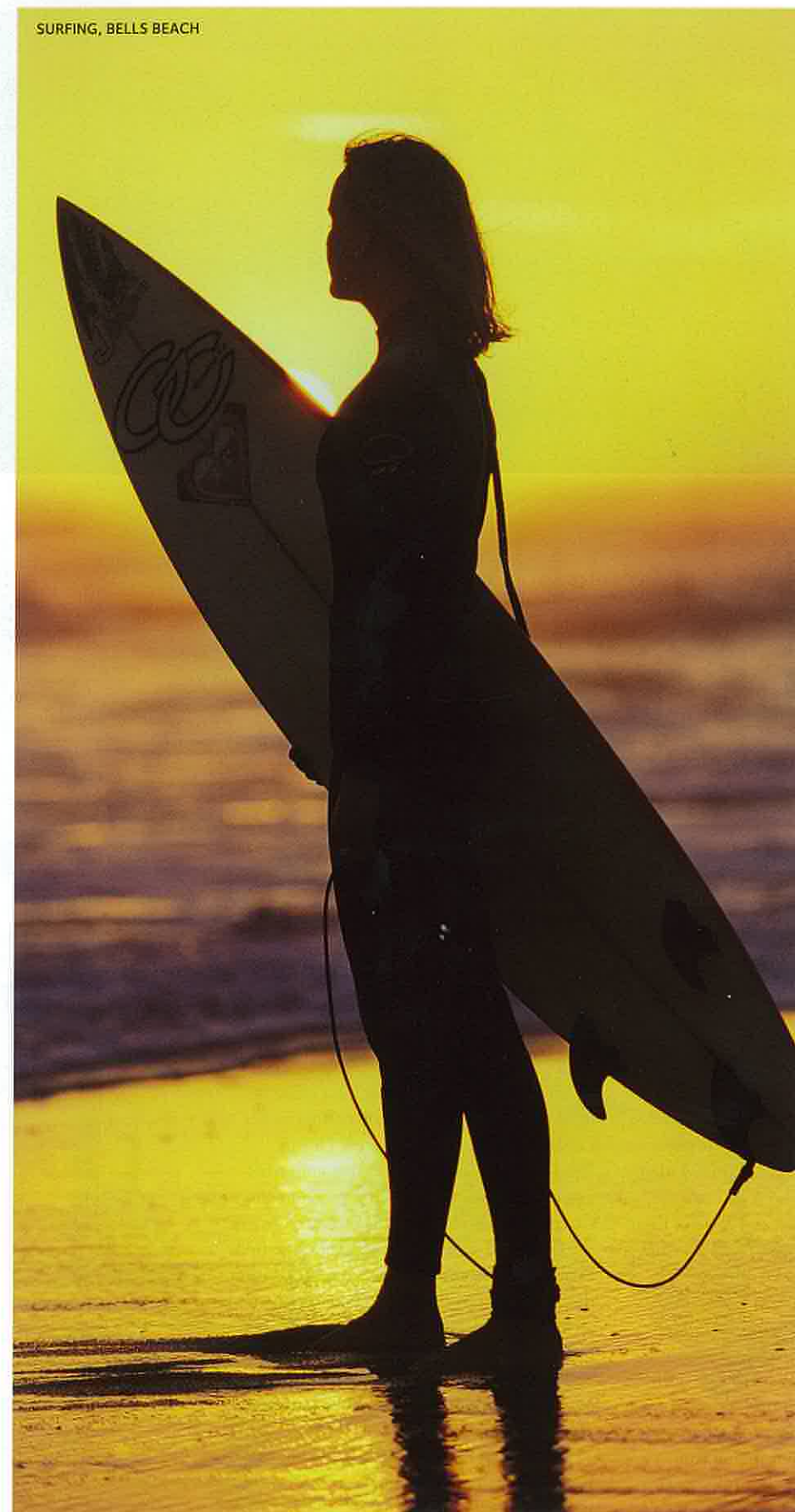
"It has that country feel right up to the sand itself," he says, appreciatively.

Shane believes the Surf Coast offers a little bit of everything for the holidaymaker.

"It's at the start of the Great Ocean Road – and no-one needs convincing what a stunning piece of coast that is. There are stunning views. There is that country vibe on the coast and great waves at places like Bells Beach, Queenscliff, which is the heads into the [Port Phillip] Bay of Melbourne, is an area steeped in history. And there are great restaurants and plenty of caravan parks."

Shane says his ideal holiday destination is one where he can see a lot, while sitting still and doing very little.

It's for that reason another of his favourite holiday spots is Torrumbarry, on the Murray River just west of Echuca.



SURFING, BELLS BEACH

"When I choose to head to the Murray it's to be still and be near the water. I'm usually in need of some down time and I could happily just sit by the Murray all day. I enjoy bush cooking and I'm happy with one pot, one pan and some good wine or beer."

But even more generally, Shane says his favourite holiday spot – having spent several months travelling overseas before talking to *OUTthere* – is anywhere in Australia.

Shane's been to all the state capitals, most major regional centres and seen plenty of our wide brown expanses. His affection for all of it is genuine.

"There's not a bad spot in Australia in my mind," he says. "I could be in a town with one pub and I'm stoked, or I could be in a big city with a thousand buildings and lots of restaurants and I'm stoked."

"I admire other countries and enjoy other cultures, but I love ours."

"Travelling in Australia you can fly for five hours and get off the plane and still use the same currency and be greeted with a 'G'day mate!'. And at certain times of the year you could snow ski, waterski and swim in the ocean all on one day."

Shane also reckons that you've got to be Australian to enjoy all of the Australian landscape. "With a good enough esky, I could camp anywhere," he says.

Since *Kenny* hit the big time though, holidays haven't been high on Shane's agenda. Not that he's complaining. He's been swept up in a whirlwind of success beyond his wildest imagining – and seems truly grateful for what has come his way.

"The train has kept moving and we've witnessed it from the entertainment cart. My brother [Clayton, the movie's writer and director] and I have been so blessed with its success. We set out to build a doghouse and it turned into a mansion."

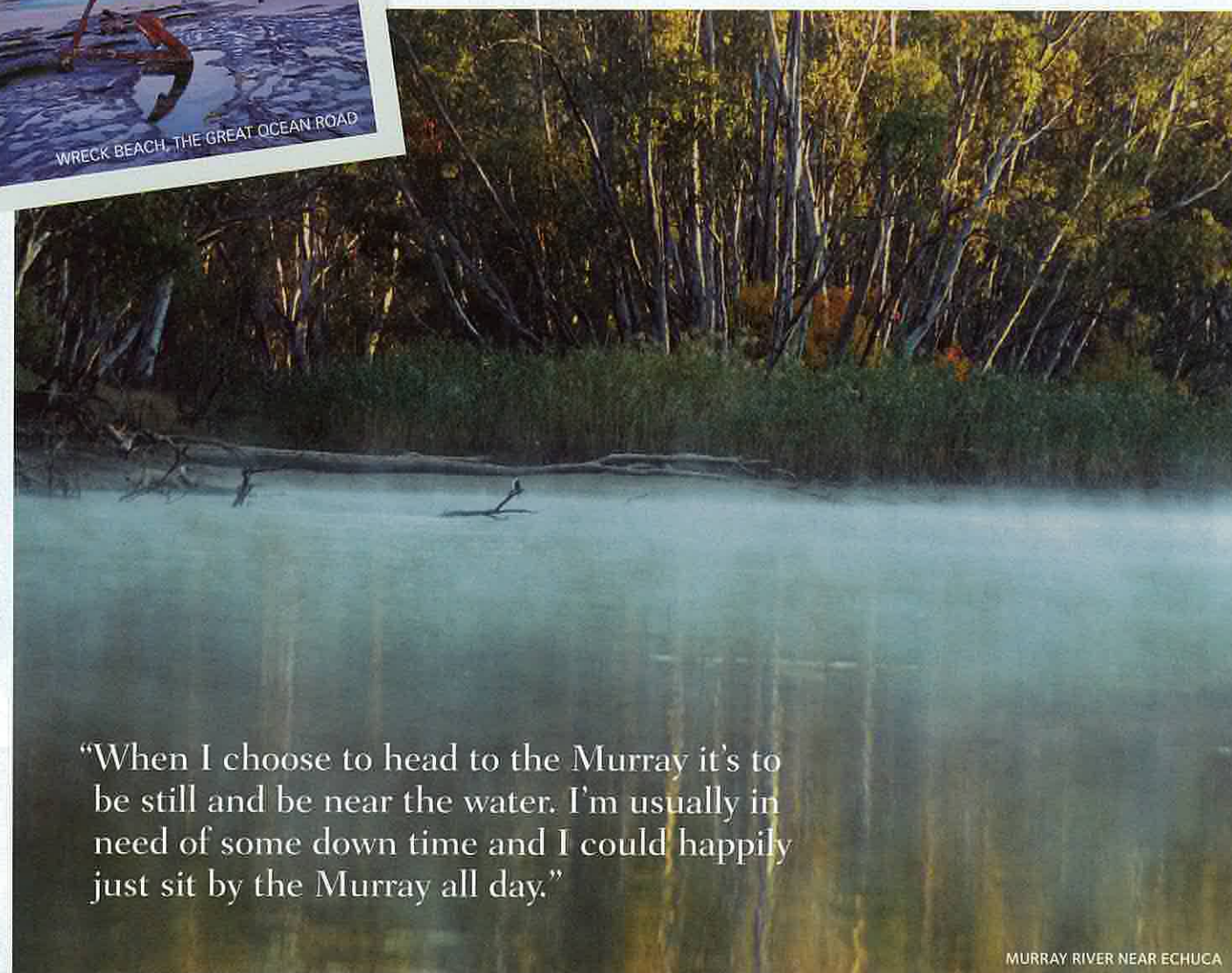
"People have enjoyed the character so much. As an artist you don't set out to achieve financially. The real reward is that people have laughed along and felt the heart of the character."

Shane prefers not to think that he has become a celebrity, or famous. Rather, that he has a 'recognisable head'.

"Everybody has been so supportive and encouraging. The way I see it is that I've had the opportunity to have strangers give me well wishes. They say that there are no strangers,



WRECK BEACH, THE GREAT OCEAN ROAD



MURRAY RIVER NEAR ECHUCA

"When I choose to head to the Murray it's to be still and be near the water. I'm usually in need of some down time and I could happily just sit by the Murray all day."

just friends you haven't met – and it's been a special feeling for me to experience that. Thank goodness though we didn't set out to make *Jack the Ripper*. It might have been different," he laughs.

There will, of course, be some who may only ever recognise Shane as Kenny, despite that he's been doing character impersonations for years. Shane accepts that – and wishes that he was truly as nice a bloke as the plumber he portrayed so brilliantly.

But it's also true that *Kenny* has opened a myriad of doors for Shane.

During 2007 he was cast in two Australian dramas: *Cactus*, described as a part-heist, part-road trip film that had Bryan Brown as its executive producer; and *Newcastle*, in which he plays the father of three boys trying to break into the pro-surfing ranks. Both movies are due for release in 2008.

PHOTOS: TOURISM VICTORIA, ISTOCK

"It's been great to do drama. It's always good to do other projects and I love to have new challenges thrown at me constantly."

Those other projects will just keep coming. Shane will return to his theatrical roots as the character Nicely Nicely Johnson when *Guys and Dolls* opens at Melbourne's Princess Theatre in late March.

The outstanding cast includes Garry McDonald, Magda Szubanski, Lisa McCune, Ian Stenlake and Marina Prior. While he has something special to say about each of them, Shane says his first great moment as a cast member came when he met McDonald.

"I have been a fan of Garry's for as long as my brain will allow me to remember. I was in a lift when he got in and said 'Hello Shane'. I couldn't believe he knew my name. I had to run out and ring my brother and say 'Guess what...?'"

While there has been plenty on Shane's agenda, *Kenny* fans will be pleased to know they haven't seen the last of the popular plumber.

The Jacobson brothers have been working on a 'docu-comedy' that will feature Kenny touring the toilets of the world. The series promises to feature bizarre, intriguing and ridiculous toilet technology. It will screen in eight 30-minute episodes on Network 10 in the latter half of 2008.

Beyond that, Shane says there are a lot of other projects in the pipeline.

"There's not much chance for a break, but I have been fortunate. It's great to be in work and to have the chance to be paid to do what I enjoy," he says.

"But if there is anyone out there with some spare time, if they could put it in an envelope and send it to me. I will accept minutes," he says in typically jovial fashion. ■