

Santa Barbara Maritime Museum: Dan Merkel Hangs Ten...and More

By ANDRIA WATSON / CASA

A LIFETIME OF PHOTOGRAPHING EXTREME SPORTS

and the wilderness have earned Dan Merkel a reputation nearly as hearty and brave as the surfers he caught in the 70s as they transformed a pass time into an internationally followed sport. He rode the waves with them to get his shots - and they knew him. After decades in the business, he still travels 300 days a year with hardly anything except a camera to keep him company.

An exhibit of his early surfing images will be on display through February 18th at the Maritime Museum, featuring images from the time depicted in the documentary *Bustin' Down the Door* narrated by Edward Norton which will make its world premier at the SBIF. Merkel's show includes around 30 iconic surfing images.

"The show highlights the surfers from the late 70s and early 80s that struggled to make surfing the sport it is today," said Julie Ann McDonald, Executive Director of the Museum. "It's a nice collaboration with Dan Merkel, and the Maritime Museum is honored to be part of the exhibition."



Dan Merkel

One of surfing's legendary photographers for over 30 years, Emmy Award-winning Merkel is responsible for some of surfing's most memorable images. From the late 1970s through the 1990s he abandoned still photography to concentrate on commercial cinematography,

contributing to such surf film classics as *Big Wednesday* and *Endless Summer II*.

Merkel soaked up experiences he



PT Setting Up the Inside Bowl at Sunset Beach by Dan Merkel



Shaun Relaxing Under the Off the Wall Guillotine by Dan Merkel

had with John Millis, the director of *Big Wednesday* and *Conan the Barbarian*.

"Everything in this business seemed effortless for John," Merkel noted. "He was my biggest influence."

With his fast-paced lifestyle, Merkel's favorite part of his job are the places he gets to see and explore. "I don't see them as a tourist would," he explained. "I see them as living, breathing, works of art." Merkel has been to Egypt, Indonesia, Australia, Japan, Thailand, Holland, Italy, Russia, Greece, Central America, Tahiti, and other exotic destinations.

Merkel's collection of iconic

photographs includes images of surfing legends Rabbit Bartholomew, Mark Richards, Shaun Tomson, Peter Townend, Eddie Aikau, Barry Kanaiaupuni, and many others.

The Santa Barbara City Council will present Shaun Tomson and the surfers featured in *Bustin' Down the Door* with a Proclamation in honor of their surfing careers.

The limited edition photographs will be available for purchase at the Maritime Museum, with a portion of each sale to benefit the Museum.

The Museum is located at 113 Harbor Way and is open Daily 10 to 5pm and closed Wednesday. Entrance is \$7 adults/\$2 children. For information call 962-8404.