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SURFERMAG.COM FEATURES

A Night Out--SURFER Style

The 31st Annual Surfer Poll and 8th Annual Surf Video Awards



All the regalia. (c)Bass

Continuing in a tradition that has spanned four decades, the 31st Annual Surfer Poll and 8th Annual Surf Video Awards went off in style on the night of Tuesday, September 9, 2003. With more than 2,000 guests gathered at the Grove of Anaheim, the theater was brimming from start to finish with surfers and invited guests of SURFER Magazine, all of whom wanted to be on hand for a night of revelry and a giant feel-good party that would have even the most conservative guests talking for days. Fuel sponsored the evening, and in concert with SURFER Magazine, the red carpet was laid out surfer style, as more than one pair of sandy flip-flops slapped their way into the theater to play witness to what always promises to be an interesting study in surf culture.

Even before the event got underway, guests were greeted at the doors with authentic Polynesian music and cocktails, which lent an authentic island air to this gathering. But by the time catered dinner was packed away, the mingling throng had at least somewhat settled to watch SURFER Magazine Editor Sam George take the stage, uncharacteristically clad from head to toe in a fine Italian suit (though the shoes were open-toed), to deliver a welcoming address that had the crowd cheering with agreement as he highlighted the familial bond unique to all surfers. To the gracious hoots from the crowd, Sam ceded control of the evening to Peter King and Jodi Young, who emceed the Video Awards. By the time that 3 Degrees was announced as winner for Video of the Year, and Joel Parkinson, Mick Fanning and Dean Morrison took the stage to deliver an amusing acceptance speech written by Fanning and Parko for Morrison to read, the crowd had settled into its groove, and the walls were lined as all seats were taken.

SURFER Senior Editor Chris Mauro took the stage to present the Boost Mobile Breakthrough Performer of the Year award, which for the first time in the event's history went to a female, Chelsea Georgeson, who won a year's worth of cell phone usage in addition to the respect of her peers. It was then time for Photo Editor Grant Ellis to take the stage in spite of his nerves to award David Pu'u a Canon digital camera and lens for the Canon Photo of the Year--a shot of Dan Malloy riding through a Ventura County barrel at sunset (featured on the cover of SURFER's Big Issue). In what was perhaps the most heartfelt



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moment of the evening, Mauro presented Jason Bogle's sister with a framed photo of Jason signed by friends and well-wishers, as well as a \$32,000 check from Boost Mobile and two surfers (Kelly Slater and Tim Curran), to help with Bogle's bout with cancer.

The saintly Rob Machado accepts.  
(c)Bass

When Sal Masakela took the stage to host the Surfer Poll Awards, the crowd was chomping at the bit to get the party started and greet the winners that more than 17,000 readers had voted on. The first surprise came when Women's #3 was announced and Rochelle Ballard was introduced, for the first time in three years in a position other than #1. Ballard, graciously accepting her removal from the top spot as a sign that others could enjoy the limelight, would appear on stage again just minutes later to bear hug women's #1 Layne Beachley, who won the award for the first time in her career. Beachley was visibly touched by the fact that SURFER readers had voted her #1, and after the onslaught of her peers, gave a reservedly grateful acceptance speech. For her victory in the poll, Layne was presented with a 50cc Honda motorbike presented by Red Bull, and it took all the work of backstage personnel to keep the girls from riding the bike offstage.

By the time that Mick Fanning gave his acceptance speech for winning #3 in the SURFER Poll, the crowd was eager to know who would win the Men's Poll. Last year's winner Andy Irons was the first person to steal victory away from Kelly Slater in 10 years, and it remained to be seen if the readers would vote him #1 again. What was certain was that Kelly and Andy were separated from #3 Mick Fanning by more than 3,000 votes. But when Kelly was announced as #2, the most unusual moment of the evening transpired, as Quiksilver's Danny Kwock took the stage on Kelly's behalf, saying, "Kelly was here tonight, but he had to leave. He had to go see the women he wants to spend the rest of his life with." It was a strange admission, one reminiscent of the Good Will Hunting line, "I had to go see about a girl," and a piece of news that had surf industry gossipers going to work in seconds.

Regardless of Kelly's love life, it was now clear that Irons had won the Poll again, and, after a brief speech by Masakela, he took the stage to accept his award and his 50cc Bike presented by Red Bull, but was soon joined by Reno Abeillera who presented Andy with a bird of paradise flower, citing Andy's grace as an inspiration.



Beautiful ladies, a SURFER Poll tradition  
(c)Bass

With the feel good thrust of the evening in full gear, the theater emptied and the guests spilled themselves on the bar and the dance floor to cut the rug to the sounds of a DJ provided by Red Bull. And while many guests called in sick for work the next morning, it's a safe bet that they'll all be back next year.

FYI: Users of the Surfermag.com website can get exclusive, random candid SURFER Poll party photos, broadband video of all the SURFER Magazine Video Award nominees and winners, Surfer Poll results, and video acceptance speeches by the evenings Poll winners (Andy Irons and Layne Beachley).

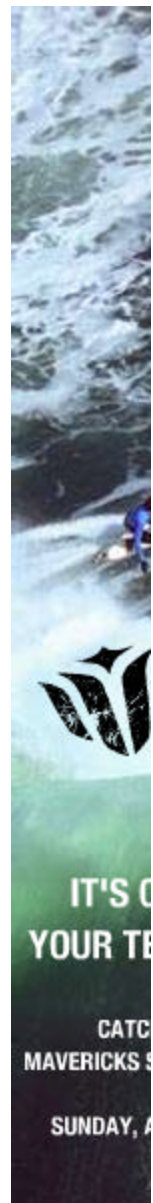
(Thanks to Fuel, Boost, Canon and Red Bull for their support of the evening.)  
and

**Elliott "Ebony" Rabin at Ridout Plastics** ([www.ridoutplastics.com](http://www.ridoutplastics.com)) is responsible for the new look of the Surfer Poll Awards. The factory, based in San Diego, has produced creative POP displays for Reef, Rusty, Spy, and others. The engineering division works with Sony, HP, Hitachi, Qualcomm... Oh - and these are the same guys that made the Flexdex composite skateboards with Slater, Kalani, Wingnut, & Curran. email to [ebone@ridoutplastics.com](mailto:ebone@ridoutplastics.com)

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