



Brian Bent

San Juan Capistrano

Catching a glimpse of Brian is like being hit by a bolt of lightning. You're left feeling like, "What was that?!" He has that effect in the water when you see him zip by on one of his kook box boards, or on land when he zooms past in one of his homemade speedster cars. Whatever he's doing in the moment, he's always stoked to be doing it. His lust for life is contagious. It beams out of him, whether through painting, surfing, music, or simple conversation.

Interview by Paul Collins

Where are you from?

I was born in Inglewood, California. My mom and uncles were from Redondo Beach, and we would go there and Hermosa Beach to hang out by the ocean when I was young.

How did you first get into art?

My first introduction to art was through my uncles. My uncle Rocky became a pro surfer and was into art, painting murals on his bedroom walls. He would draw lots of waves. He inspired me to do the same. I also started drawing Don Martin cartoons out of *Mad Magazine*.

What is your favorite part about the area you live in?

I live in San Juan Capistrano in Southern California. I'm blessed to be at the mouth of the Ortega Highway. I love to take the old speedsters out there and drive the winding road. The beaches are just a short drive from me. San Onofre is my spot.

Your house looks amazing. How did you find it and how long have you been there?

An old neighbor of ours told us about a house for sale in a housing tract built in the fifties. My wife and I have liked the fifties aesthetic for a long time. We had collected lots of fifties furniture together, and the house seemed like a great fit.

What are your favorite parts of your home?

My favorite part is an angle that jets out of the entry hall into the living room. I also like the view of the pool in the backyard from the house. The backyard and pool have been great for entertaining over the years and for our kids growing up.

Who are your style icons and why?

The first one that comes to mind is Marlon Brando. *The Wild One!* But he still had a bit of a compassion... I just like the simple cuff jeans, T-shirt, leather jacket. That's my most comfortable outfit. My grandfather had big cuff jeans and wore tight shirts showcasing his big arms. He welded, worked in concrete, and built hotrods in the forties. He was a classic working guy wearing classic work wear. He could make something out of nothing! I also like Coco Chanel. The early pieces she made are a big inspiration.

Tell us about the kook boxes that you build. What's the history behind that style and what made you want to build and surf them?

One day my buddy JJ Wessels brought a kook box down to San Onofre and I just said, "Wow... It's a thirties-style surfboard!" I couldn't wait to try to surf it because I was into the thirties style at that time. The more we surfed them the more I dug them. I started making a few different variations. The ones I made were around 40 to maybe 60 pounds. The thing that keeps me on them is the nostalgic trim on the wave. They go super-fast on a shoulder-high wave and you have to be tactical when riding them. I nicknamed them "square-railed wave dragsters."

When did you start building those hand-built hot rods?

I started building my first hot rod around 2004. My buddy John and a couple friends from the ACES Car Club showed me the basics. I met them going to the Hot Rod Church for Sinners, which was a non-denominational church at a pizza restaurant and bar that my buddy and his father owned. Someone said we should build a mascot for the church and the next thing I knew that's what we did. Then I started building another one. Soon after that I wanted to build one in an older style because I loved the simplicity, style, and overall coolness of them.

Where does the process start? How do you decide what you're going to build and how?

I get inspired to build a car from an idea—like wanting to drag race a bi-plane like they did in the 1910s. Two years ago I was talking to Nick Clements of *Men's File Magazine* and he said he would come out from England and photograph the process. My buddy JJ Wessels and I built the car and we did it—drag racing the bi-plane, I mean. JJ knew a pilot and we set up the race at some salt flats out in the California desert. So yeah, it's usually from an inspiration and idea. You have to start to build something this way from the ground up for it to work and make sense. And you can add inspiration as you go. I usually look into learning how to do something—whether it's art, music, or cars—then learn and go for it.

How do you get them street legal?

I made friends with my local DMV.

Do you have a favorite hot rod that you've built?

The Model A Ford with the four-cylinder engine is my go-to car right now. It's a lot of fun! Tons of torque and bumpy, but drives fun and solid. Top speed is about 55 miles per hour. I dig hopping into it and driving to town or out on the Ortega Highway.

You do it all: painter, sculptor, surfer, builder of boards and cars, musician, father. Is there anything you haven't done yet that you've been wanting to?

I would have maybe liked to sing opera... I think their voices are so rad! Pure beauty.