

# NORTH COUNTY TIMES

NEWS FROM ENCINITAS, CARDIFF, LEUCADIA, OLIVENHAIN, SOLANA BEACH, DEL MAR, CARMEL VALLEY AND ALL NORTH COUNTY



LOGAN JENKINS

## Using rock to save sand and water

**A** little north of Swami's Beach, on South Coast Highway 101, you can get a mug of coffee and a cool story that goes like this:

Thirty-eight years ago, a 2-year-old from Phoenix stepped on the beach. Though his family summered every year in Mission Beach, Dave Kaplan never forgot those first toe-tingling strides on the sand.

Fast forward to Wednesday. Kaplan, fresh from surfing, is sitting at a picnic table behind Surfdog's Java Hut, sipping a smoothie and telling a sunburning geezer how he came to found a record company that, in concert with the Surfrider Foundation, has given birth to an absolutely amazing . . . MOM.

**O**ne key stop in the oceanic odyssey was Santa Barbara, where Kaplan attended UC, earning a degree in business economics while surfing and playing in a number of rock bands.

After graduation, he moved to San Diego ("the greatest city on the planet") and worked as a buttoned-down accountant for clients such as the Price Co. Kaplan stuck it out for two years, long enough to become a CPA, but when a friend invited him to work for an L.A. T-shirt company that featured rock stars, he was gone. The "music freak" with the business head was soon developing contacts, ultimately co-managing UB-40 and signing new bands.

In 1991, Kaplan put out his own shingle in Venice Beach, creating the Surfdog label and its stick-figure logo of a surfer with the motto: "Please help preserve our ocean."

Five years ago, Kaplan moved Surfdog to Encinitas and started working with Pierce Flynn, the Surfrider Foundation's director, on an ocean-themed album to benefit Surfrider's conservation programs.

MOM took off, thanks to the generosity of ocean-loving musicians, notably Pearl Jam's Eddie Vedder, a surfer and former San Diegan. Eventually, more than 20 acts, the likes of Brian Setzer, the Ramones and Porno for Pyros, contributed to the first MOM, or (in Flynn's loose translation) Music for Our Mother Ocean.

To date, the three albums (MOM 3 was released Aug. 10) have raised \$500,000 for Surfrider as well as generating free ads in *Playboy*, *Wired*, *Rolling Stone* and other media with a soft spot for the ocean.

To my grizzled ear, MOM albums are a bracing challenge. Some of it's smash mouth (actually, that's the name of one of the bands) and probably not for anyone with a pacemaker, but I was taken by haunting Indian tribal music and curmudgeon-friendly performers like Jewel (she surfs), Paul McCartney (son surfs), the Beach Boys (used to surf) and Jimmy Buffett (drinks an ocean), among others.

Locals will get a solid kick out of MOM cuts from hot Surfdog artists Sprung Monkey and Gary Hoey, who wrote and performed the music for the movie "Endless Summer II."

**A**bout six months ago, Kaplan bought what used to be called The Naked Bean, adding ocean murals and installing his Surfdog headquarters in the back. This may be the only record company in the world where trays of wheat grass grow in a window.

Flynn, who earned a doctorate in sociology from UCSD, recently left Surfrider to work full time at Surfdog. He and Kaplan already are looking ahead to MOM 4.

A world MOM tour, a saltwater Lollapalooza, isn't too far-fetched for the two surfers to contemplate.

Driving away, you believe Surfdog won't rest until the ocean is as cleanly mystical as it seems when little toes wriggle in the sand.