

GIVEN

formerly the goodwin project

INTERVIEW BY

LUKE KENNEDY

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A Global Adventure With The Goodwins

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PHOTOS BY CODY WELSH

Imagine deciding that you were going to take your three-year-old son and three-month-old daughter on a global surfing adventure that spanned six continents, 15 countries and 40 cities. Surfing, super-couple, Aamion and Daize Goodwin, decided to do exactly that and make a film about it with friend, Jessi Bianchi.

Aamion is best known as the tall, string-limbed-limbed goofy footer who climbed the North Shore ranks to become a modern, Pipeline specialist, while Daize is a former two-time world long-boarding champion.

Given, directed by Jessi Bianchi, is a global adventure that immerses you in the Goodwin's quest to embrace the richness and diversity of the planet's natural and human wonders.

Told through the eyes of their six-year-old son, (whose name is Given) the film is a travel epic that fully delivers on the sensory overload scale. Exquisitely shot and edited, it's not so much a documentary as a cinematic experience that rips you out of your daily grind and makes you question why you are not seeing more of the world.

While their itinerary is guided by their passion for waves, the Goodwins take anything but a predictable route as they journey to Israel, Iceland, Thailand, Nepal and Senegal, along with a bunch of better-travelled coastlines in Australia, Sth Africa, Peru and Fiji.

The film focuses on the majesty of the natural world and the dignity of the diverse humans who walk upon it. Meanwhile, the surfing action provides an engaging counterpoint to the geographic odyssey, as Aamion spears purposefully through tubes and Daize shuffle-steps elegantly against sunset backdrops on her long-board.

True, the film is intentionally idealised, but you also have to be mindful that we are suppose to be seeing the world through the eyes of a child – a technique which helps return us to the innocence of our own youth. The spectacular landscapes, intriguing human subjects and kaleidoscope of different cultures, make you want to believe in the planet and the people who call it home. This is perhaps the film's greatest achievement – that in a time when the mainstream media serves up a constant diet of fear, scepticism and division, The Goodwin's epic journey reminds us that there is still a world of good will, wonder and excitement waiting to be experienced. All that's left is to start our own journey.

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IN THE INTERVIEW BELOW THE GOODMINS AND
DIRECTOR, JESSI BIANCHI, TALK ABOUT WHAT
THEY LEARNED FROM THE PROJECT AND WHY THEY
CAN'T WAIT TO GO ON THEIR NEXT TRIP.

Aamion you enjoyed a more alternative upbringing where you travelled regularly between Kauai New Zealand, Kauai and Fiji. When did it occur to you that your childhood was unique and privileged in its own way? Tell us a bit about it.

Aamion: I realised at about 13 that us traveling to New Zealand, Fiji, then back home to Kauai was very unique. A lot of my friends had things like Nintendo, pets, and what I had were crazy stories from our travels. My dad is an artist, and didn't have much of anything so as we travelled a lot we were always camping under tarp or grass shacks. To me that was the life! I didn't realise that we were in the sense poor because our life was so rich with new experiences every day. Every day in Fiji was a full on adventure. As young kids we were already given many responsibilities to the village. If we weren't fetching water from the mountain spring, or catching fish for our daily meals, we were in the bush foraging for wild yams and other fruits and starches. The nearest store was a six hour boat ride on a heavy wooden boat that needed someone bailing water at all times. More often than not you were drifting while the the driver was jerry rigging the engine to press on. Learning from the Fijian elders was indescribable. They taught me so much about life and how rich it can be in the simplicities.

Did you feel that your expansive upbringing gave you a confidence and resourcefulness that kids from more traditional families lacked?

Aamion: I definitely learned how to blend in with the crowd and not be the centre of attention. That was never my personality but travelling the world with my dad gave me that characteristic of sitting back and watching things unfold instead of making them happen. There is a lot that goes on in the details of daily life and most of the time we were all moving to fast to see them. I learned at a young age how to be resourceful. We would get dropped off on an island by our selves, the oldest kid being around 10. Our job was to catch fish, make a fire and prepare lunch for the elders who were diving on the outer reefs for giant clams, sea slugs and fish to sell on the main island. Life was simple, real and always exciting.

You have both pursued pro surfing to varying degrees. Daize you became a women's world champion? Obviously it's a great lifestyle but can that life be a little narrow if you don't look outside of it?

Daize: I have seen that mentality happen to friends in our industry but I actually felt quite the opposite... Being exposed to so many different waves in so many different countries was such an eye-opening experience at a young age. I grew up in a tiny town on the east side of O'ahu, so going on trips for contests and free surfs changed my life. I think with any profession or even

growing up in small towns, you can become narrow minded. That's why to me it's so important to show up for everything. Read as many books, get out there whenever you can with an open heart. The only thing with professional long boarding is that you don't make much money so you better have a side job.

When did you first come up with the idea to take your children on an around the world adventure? Did it begin as a movie concept or were you heading down that path and someone decided it would be good to document your travels?

Aamion: We came up with the idea before we even had children. Knowing that we wanted to expose them to this amazing planet and all it has to offer. When we called Jess (director) and shot the idea at him it was only a matter of minutes before he returned the call and said yes let's do it.

Daize: We didn't really have a story but we had the budget, imagination, top of the line gear and a small crew that was committed.

Jess: We were childhood friends that had grown apart. Aamion became a pro surfer and I went into film. After visiting Kauai for the first time in over 10 years I bumped into Aamion. It was like no time had past and we picked right back up where we left off 18 years earlier. I saw the whole family paddling down Lumahi river and took a photo of them. They had a very special energy that is so easily captured by the lens. We hung out on the beach that day and I very casually said, 'L'et's do a project together sometime.' A few days later I was in San Francisco and received a call from Aamion asking if I'd be interested in traveling around the world with him and his family. Everything changed in that moment. I dropped everything I was involved in and put a team together. Three months later we were on the trip of our lives.

How old was your son at the time? Did you genuinely feel that his experience of childhood and the world would be enriched by exposure to a multitude of cultures and experiences at a young age?

Aamion: Given was three when we left. I knew that this would impact him greatly as that's when I was traveling as a child as well. I remember those times. Short vivid memories that have stayed with me my entire



life. I firmly believe that when you set foot on a new soil you soak up energy from that place. There is a grounding effect like no other, a connection that only a child understands.

Daize: There really is something magical about the first five years of your life. Your pure, unjailed, and totally open to everything around you. I had a few hesitations as a mother but knew that those were only my fears that have been passed down and we couldn't hold back on going on the adventure of a lifetime.

Was it hard to determine an itinerary?

Jess: We determined the itinerary by a few factors. True was only three months old when we left and Given was only three years of age. So we had to consider the amount of time on the planes. We decided that the longest flight the kids could handle was 8 hours. The next factor was Aamion's original journey with his father, which consisted of Hawaii, New Zealand, and Fiji. Aamion wanted to go to Fiji first but I thought it was important to save the best for last. As a kid Aamion would always tell us epic stories about Fiji. So there was a lifetime of tales to live up to. Third, we tried to create a diverse visual experience with unique landscapes, cultures, and surf. We wanted to show the world that you can surf just about anywhere on this planet.

Was it all mapped out or were some of the travel decisions made spontaneously?

Aamion: Before we left we basically had it mapped out.

Daize: We avoided countries that had high kidnapping ratings, where malaria was rampant, things like that.

Aamion: There were a few countries that we knew we had to go to, so we started in New York City and headed east. We always tried to keep the flights less than eight hours for the kids' sake.



Jess: It was a production! 3-5 months were mapped out at a time. You can't just go wherever you want when you are dragging a film crew and babies around the world. You have to call ahead and make sure everyone has a place to sleep. Although spontaneously moving around was the spirit of the project it wasn't realistic to ask that of the family and the crew for a 14-month project. We wanted to be able to be spontaneous but the closest we could get was staying three to five weeks in a country with the first week planned and the rest being loose.

It's hard to speak for others but do you think modern society has become a little safe and risk averse? Kids are wrapped in cotton wool and glued to screens. We think we've gone forwards but in some ways we've gone backwards, because we have lost our spirit of adventure and the ability make our own fun?

Jess: Absolutly! I'd say you said it perfectly with your question. A dumbing down has happened, but there is hope! I think an awakening is happening too. We most likely will be made fun of by our offspring because we were from this era.

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Daize: Couldn't agree with you more. Pretty sure that's why this movie is having such an emotional and rattling response. There has to be a middle ground because technology is the future but it's so important to spend a ton of time outside. We realised on this Journey as well, you don't have to live in fear. If you trust all will work out.

Aamion: Something else that really stood out was how we were accepted everywhere we went because we had the kids with us. People would invite us in for dinner, invite us to stay at their house, even give us the shirt off their back. This world really is a loving, open place but so many of us have our faces stuck to a screen socializing through a device. We're guilty of it too, and that's why it's important to make a conscious decision to put it down sometimes and see what's happening right there in that moment around you. Travel is great for that.

Americans as a rule don't travel much. Do you think that puts limitations on how the culture evolves?

Jess: I think anyone that doesn't leave their little bubble will inevitably never experience growth.

Daize: I saw a great picture of someone painting a globe all blue except for the United States. It said this is how America views the world. For me that was the biggest cultural shock... Coming back from being in Morocco and all over the world, then going to a Hilton hotel on the east coast and seeing what the average American culture is made up of.

Aamion: Traveling from wherever you live is important. America, Australia, Europe, wherever you live. I love the quote, "The world is a book and those who don't travel read only one page of it." So true.

Did you hope that your adventure inspired others to embrace the opportunity to explore at least a little bit more of the world.

Aamion: Most definitely. Also that it's really not that hard to go on an adventure. When we didn't have the money, we would go camping, have a picnic and watch the sunset. But always saved up for our trips because we knew it was important for the kids to see what else was out there.

Daize: Also it's so about the journey from start to finish. Packing, planning a bit, then going somewhere, taking it all in and then coming home. You



always come back grateful for where you call home and filled up from all you experienced!

Jess: My hope is to inspire people to break free of any situation that is less than what you dreamed up as a kid. Not everyone can travel the world but everyone can leave their home.

What advice would you give parents who were inspired to recreate your trip or do something similar?

Daize: Spending a longer amounts of time in some of the countries we are in would be a sure thing. Sometimes it felt a little rushed because we were on a budget, and also a deadline.

Aamion: Yah, spending a month in each place would be the least amount of time that we will do it, when we do it again. I recommend having no agenda at times and just allowing things to unfold as they will. By doing this you really get into the groove of the place.

Tell us about some of the highlights of the trip for you two?

Daize: There were so many!! Watching our daughter have her first milestones are always a huge stand out for me. Her first meal in Jerusalem. Her first steps at Redbluff in Australia. Then the look on True and Given's face when they saw the castles in Ireland. We met so many amazing people that were so kind, all of their hearts we now take with us forever.







THE GOODWINS



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Aamion: Brining my Family back to Fiji where I was raised was huge for me personally. For my kids and wife to be out on an island in the middle of nowhere living off the land and under a bure house that my Fijian brothers and I built. I just look forward to getting back there, that simple life is where it's always been for me.

Jess: Glacier surfing, Outback camping, Fijian diving, and a whole lot more. It was epic and I feel like I can say that I have truly lived because of this journey.

Who was the most interesting person/people you met along he way?

Aamion: Everyone was so unique. Each person had such a story to tell, and a little wisdom to share. Couldn't pinpoint it to one.

Daize: There was an incredible family in Ireland that had never met us but heard what we were doing and offered our whole crew to stay at their house for 10 days. They had a compostable toilet, a refrigerator that used no electricity and their water was rain catchment. They had a giant garden, their house was made of straw and hempcrete and the roof was topped with grass. Such kind hearted people that really are showing the world how to live completely off



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the grid and be sustainable. Everything about them still stands out.

Jess: the Fijian people were the kindest people I have ever met.

Were there moments where you felt vulnerable or scared?

Daize: There definitely were a few that are seared in my memories. Getting tick bite fever in a village in the middle of nowhere in Africa, that was the sickest I've ever been. Also had a run in with a huge gang of kids in Morocco who chased Given and I down a mountain throwing bottles at us and screaming for our money. We had gone on a "nature walk" next to a town that was heavily populated. One of the scariest times of my life honestly.

Aamion: No, wasn't ever scared, but Given got really sea sick when we were in the Marshall Islands and couldn't stop throwing up. That definitely made me a little nervous as he couldn't even keep water down and it went on for days.

Jess: Yes, I was consistently worried for the family and crew. I felt responsible for everyone's safety. We had a few moments like getting tick bite fever in South Africa. It put everyone but two of us down, including the



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