

A Q & A SESSION WITH:

LES STROUD

By Charlie Richie Jr.

Photos by Laura Bombier

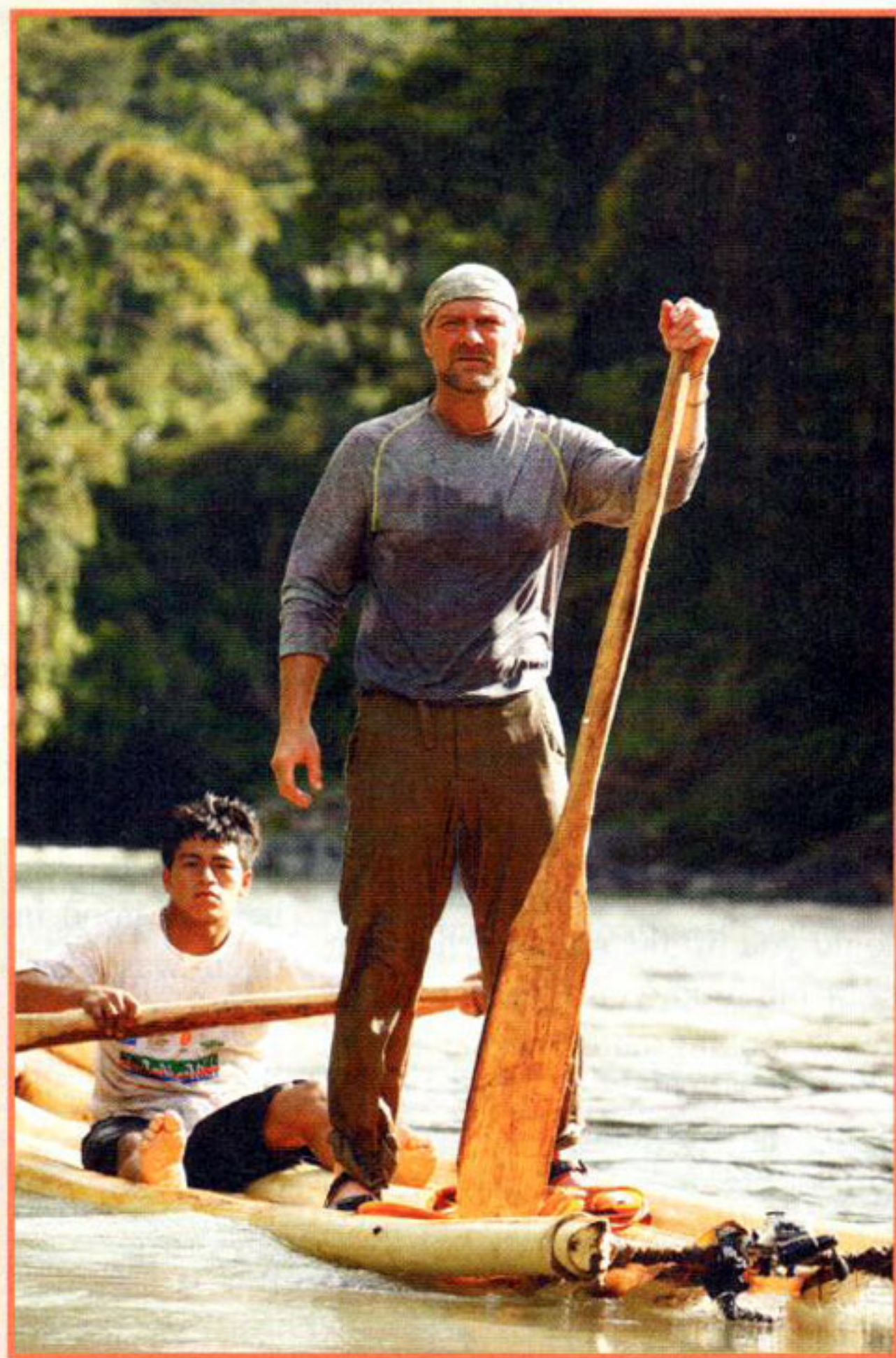
I was given the opportunity to have a conversation with survival expert and TV star Les Stroud. Hope that you enjoy it.

BWM: Since yourself and others have helped bring survival skills into the mainstream, and with the climate changing, global warming and with the inevitable increase of natural disasters upon us, do you think that we are now at a point where everyone should at least know some basic survival skills?

LS: Well, I'm not apocalyptic about it, believing that we need to know the skills because the apocalypse is imminent and the end of the world is coming and we need to start building bunkers. I'm more of the opinion that it's a passion of life and a skill set that is critical depending on what you do in life. I think that for someone who lives in Manhattan and never leaves the city, do they need to know how to build a shelter out of twigs? No. Do they need to know how to start a fire by rubbing sticks together? No. Do they need to know how to be self-sufficient and how to bolster their will to live because that's the general part of life that I believe in? Yes. I come from the perspective more of survival in the wilderness for its own sake not because I have a dismal view to it and think that we need to start building bunkers and learning how to hunt and fish, that's just something I enjoy, as other people do.

BWM: Do you feel that it should even be a required class in the education system?

LS: The answer to that is absolutely, because it's something that really can instill within the kids new thoughts as to what they are capable of. As most kids in the education system will say, "Oh I could never do that or that thing looks old or that looks painful". And then you take them out into a situation like this and they understand it and they can do quite well, there's more in them than they think. And often when you do it in a group situation you find that a lot of the lesser individuals are the ones who come to the forefront and do extremely well and sometimes it's the more bravado frontline type of personality that doesn't do so well. And then there are exceptions to all those rules. I absolutely think it should be a required course. I mean,

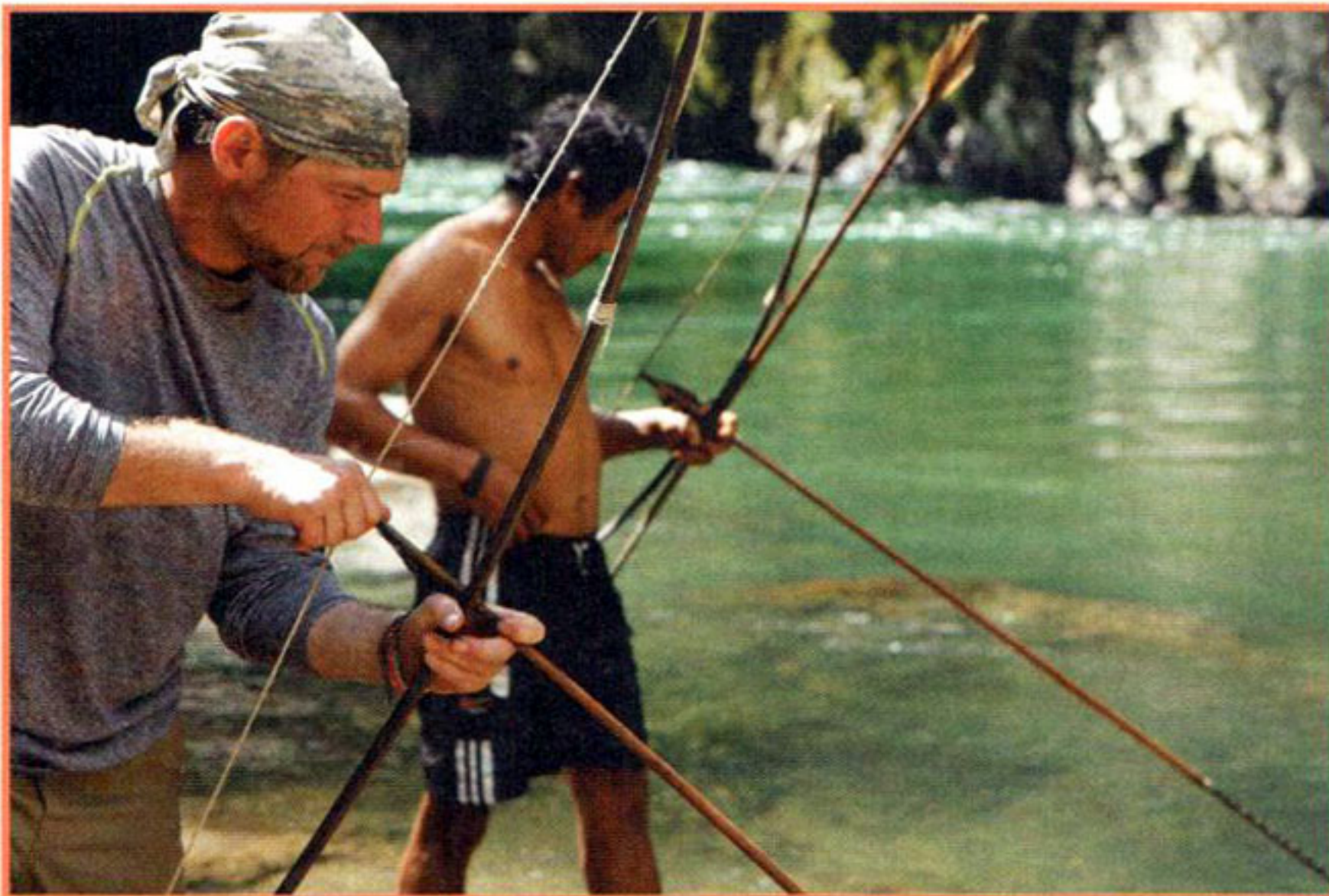


Peruvian Jungle

why not? My kids are going out and learning how to golf and they learn tennis, so they're being taught physical education, so why not learn survival?

BWM: What inspired you to make a show like Beyond Survival, which is quite different from Survivorman?

LS: Well, a couple of things. The initial inspiration was that in shooting Survivorman I was able to go out and learn from a lot of these remote peoples, and seeing them do the hand drill or hunt with a bow and arrow, which, to me, was a lot more intriguing than me doing it. Also, along the way I discovered the fact that I'm very progressive. I want to always be doing something new, and moving inwards and upwards. I could do another 40 shows making shelters but the reality is that there is a lot more to survival than just making shelters and fire bows. These people show it because they're still surviving daily and it gives the public a chance to see cultural survival and spiritual/emotional survival because that is a part of surviving, especially if it's going to be long-term like with these people. So I think that's where most of my inspiration lies.



Peruvian Jungle

BWM: Do you feel a more spiritual connection to nature after experiencing these things, like living with the Zulu Tribe and learning how they have survived for generations in very harsh climates?

LS: Well, I not only feel a better spiritual connection. I actually completely and entirely found again my spiritual connection, which you think, well you made *Survivorman*, you must be totally in-tune. Well, the reality is that *Survivorman* was so down and dirty and so laborious in its efforts, and there was so much work to do, that I actually lost a lot of, well I didn't lose my connection, I just didn't get a chance to get in touch with it, even after seven days alone. But in doing this with these other peoples, I've become back in touch. I remember while doing these things where I was 10 years ago, when all I did was paddle a canoe all three seasons and dog sled in the winter. I was very much in touch emotionally and spiritually with my connection to the earth then, and I kind of lost it during *Survivorman*. I believe that I re-found it during *Beyond Survival*.

BWM: Who were some of your influences and where did you study your survival skills?

LS: I just did what a lot of other people do, I started taking college courses. You see in the newspaper on the weekends the continuing education flyers that say *Wilderness Survival Thursday nights*. And that's where I started. But then I took courses everywhere I could after that. A

favorite learning spot of mine was with John and Geri McPherson out of Randolph, KS, they're a company called *Prairie Wolf*. I loved going and learning with them. I also have some teachers up here in Canada, including David Arama and Doug Getwood. And of course, a ton of my own personal survival time out in the bush practicing. I used to go out all the time. And my inspirations, well, how about *Jeremiah Johnson*. The view of the mountains, there was something about that. The way Robert Redford put together that movie for me was a big fantasy inspiration. They put a lot of the best things into that movie. On a real-life level, and especially with the film making, there's a gentlemen

in Canada, called Bill Mason, who did a lot of canoeing films in the 70's. Brilliant stuff that really influenced me, and he really brought you into these canoe trips, and I wanted to do that with my style. Earlier on, my childhood influences were Jacques Cousteau and *Tarzan* movies. It's always been that sort of adventure/filmmaking, filmmaking/adventure, just back and forth. It's always been there.

BWM: I understand that you are currently working on an album and multi-media tour. Could you please tell us more about that?

LS: I've got something that no one else on the planet has, and that's a bunch of years of these incredible experiences, both physical, emotional, spiritual and cultural. I've really got this incredible long story arc of



Papa New Guinea

what I've gone through, especially in producing *Beyond Survival*. Think of it kind of like, you remember *Star Wars*, the musical? This is like *Survivorman* the musical. This is Les Stroud on stage storytelling with phenomenal imagery on massive screens from all of my exploits around the world and new ones still yet unseen. And it's just this full evening of multi-media film and music experience. It's a stage production, not a concert. It gives me the chance to get one-on-one with two and three thousand people at a time, and feel the energy in that room. And when I start talking about being with head hunters or perceived head hunters or digging graves in Papua New Guinea, I can share that and feel the immediate energy right there as we go there and show the imagery. So it's kind of like Peter Gabriel meets Cirque Du Soleil meets Les Stroud.

BWM: There was a stigma attached to people who knew survival skills, which occurred at Backwoodsman Magazine's onset and I think that you have helped eliminate that stereotype and have helped people realize that it's very important to hone these skills and keep our instincts alive inside us.

LS: When I was doing it, I didn't know anybody else doing it, except the people at the class. The fortunate position I occupied was that I would see film makers do something on survival and it would be terrible because they didn't understand survival and I'd see survival people do films on survival and it would be terrible because they didn't understand film making and I rode the line in between. I'm a film maker and a survival instructor, so I knew that I could present the beauty of survival and everything I loved about it in a way that was palpable for the general population and reduce the geekiness associated with it. You don't have to be a big gear geek to love this stuff. And the survivalism, build the bunker and hide from society, you don't have to be like that to love this stuff. You just have to be someone who is passionate about the earth, passionate about the wilderness, adventure, and survival. And that's where I came from and that's what I

wanted to present. And look at it now, in the end I am credited with having started the entire genre of survival television, and look where it's gone. And now it's complete with its circus show and its bickery and all the drama that comes along with television. I never came from that place from the beginning. I came from a place of being a survival instructor who knew how to make a good film. I stayed there all the way along. I am very

proud of where it's gone. I can't watch the first shows because I think they're horrible now, but that the film making speaking. It's sort of like I didn't want to make survival sexy, I just wanted to make it acceptable.

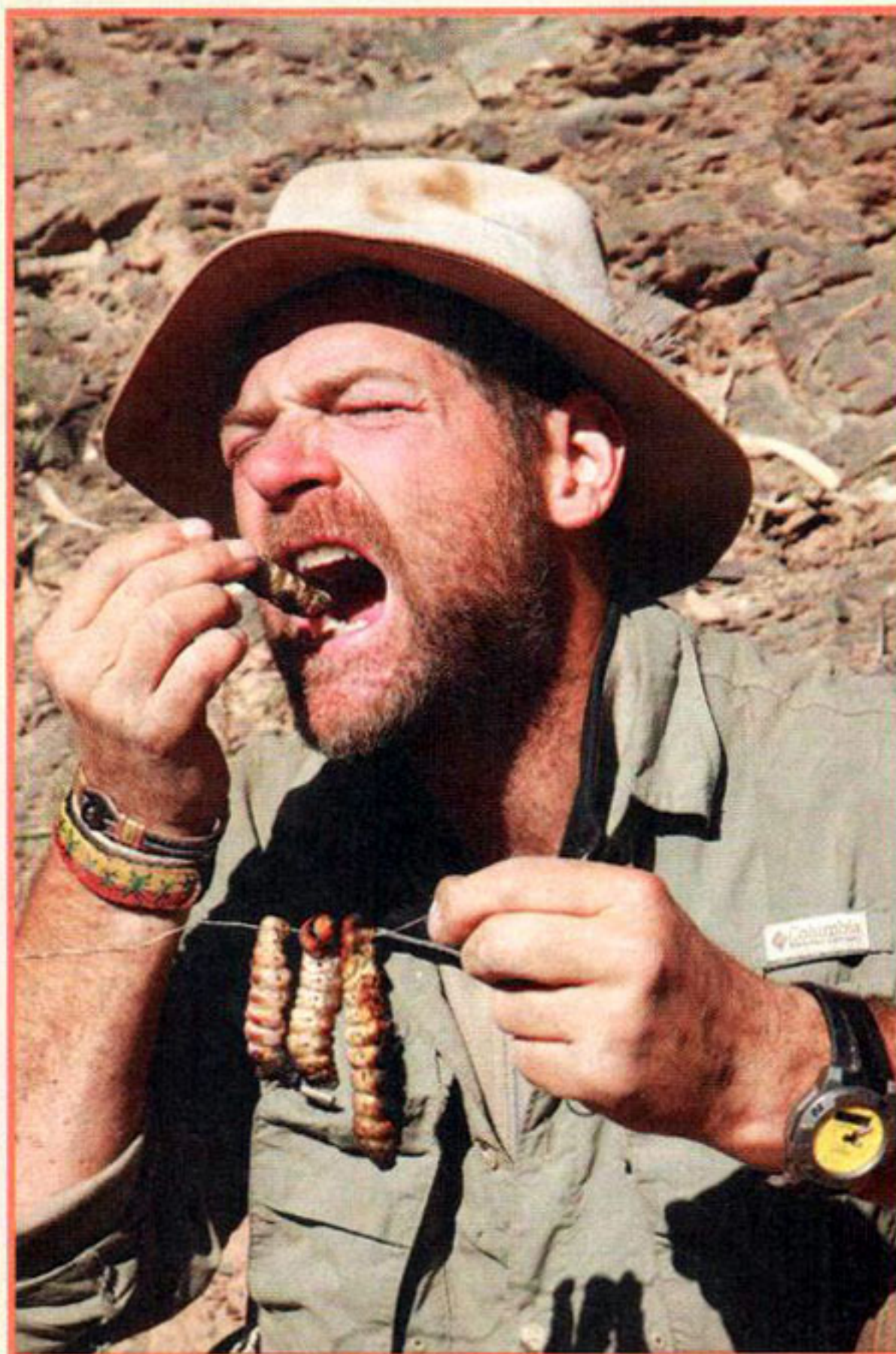
BWM: I read somewhere that while filming Survivorman, you spent 60% of the time working with your cameras and the other 40% gathering food or building your shelter, etc...In my opinion, I don't think that there will ever be anything produced the way Survivorman was.

LS: The amount of effort it took to make *Survivorman* was intense but it was my film making passion that drove me to do that. And a lot of these other guys, they don't want to do that. They're like, "what do you mean, I have to stay out here?" There's been I think one

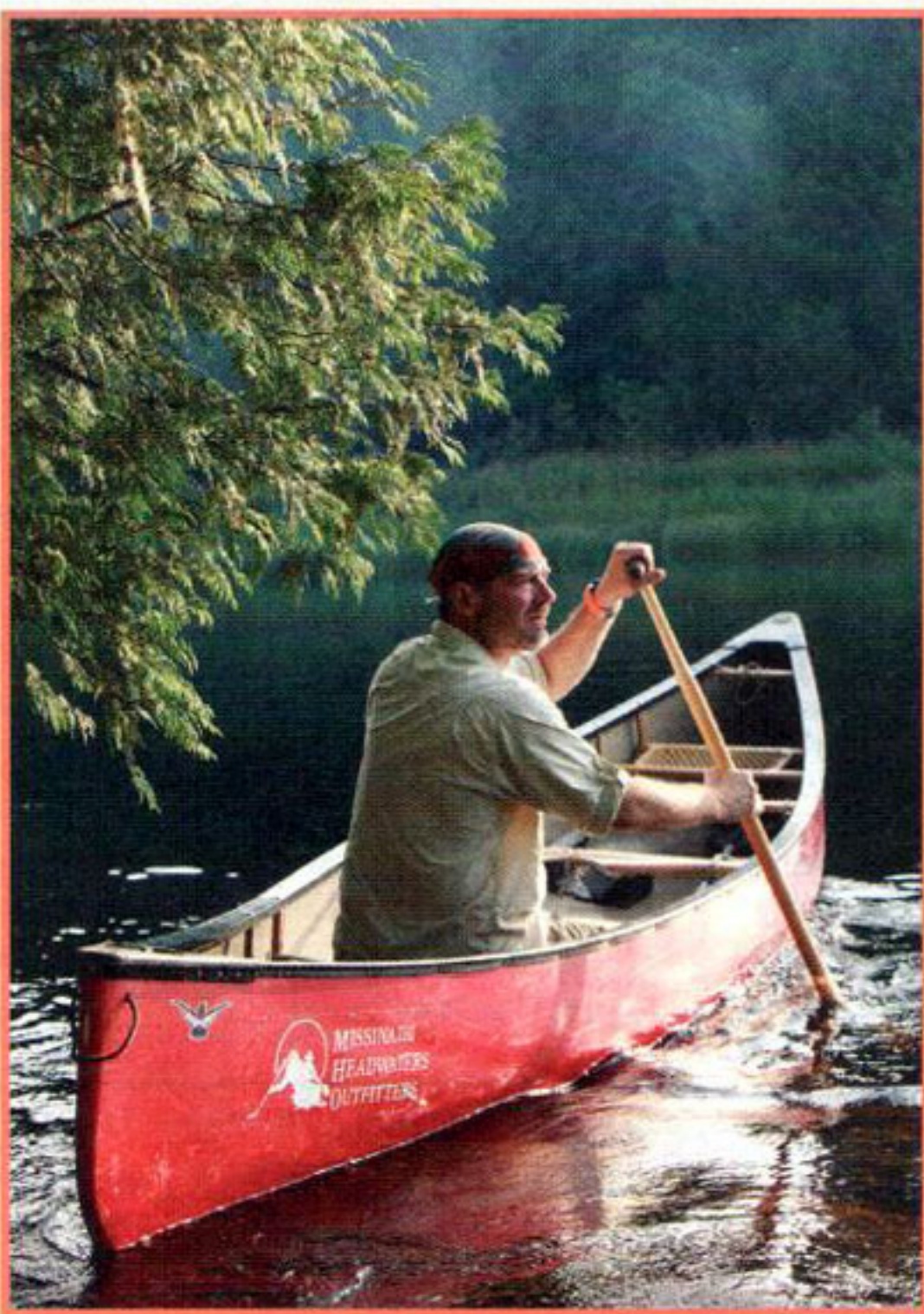
or two people who have tried to do what I did and they couldn't do it, they quit. And there's been a lot of wonderful fans that have tried to do it for fun and I get emails going, "how the hell do you do this?" So I'm very proud of that too, because I never pulled any punches. I just said this is me and these cameras and I'm going to have a horrible shelter but I'm going to have a really good shot. And in this case I'm sacrificing for the passion of film making, so I can present it to you in a really nice way. It's been a long haul, but I'm good with it and I'm glad where I'm going, too.

BWM: Will there be a second season of Beyond Survival?

LS: There is absolutely more film work and television to come, not just the multi-media tour.



The Outback in Oz



Temagami Ontario

BIOGRAPHY

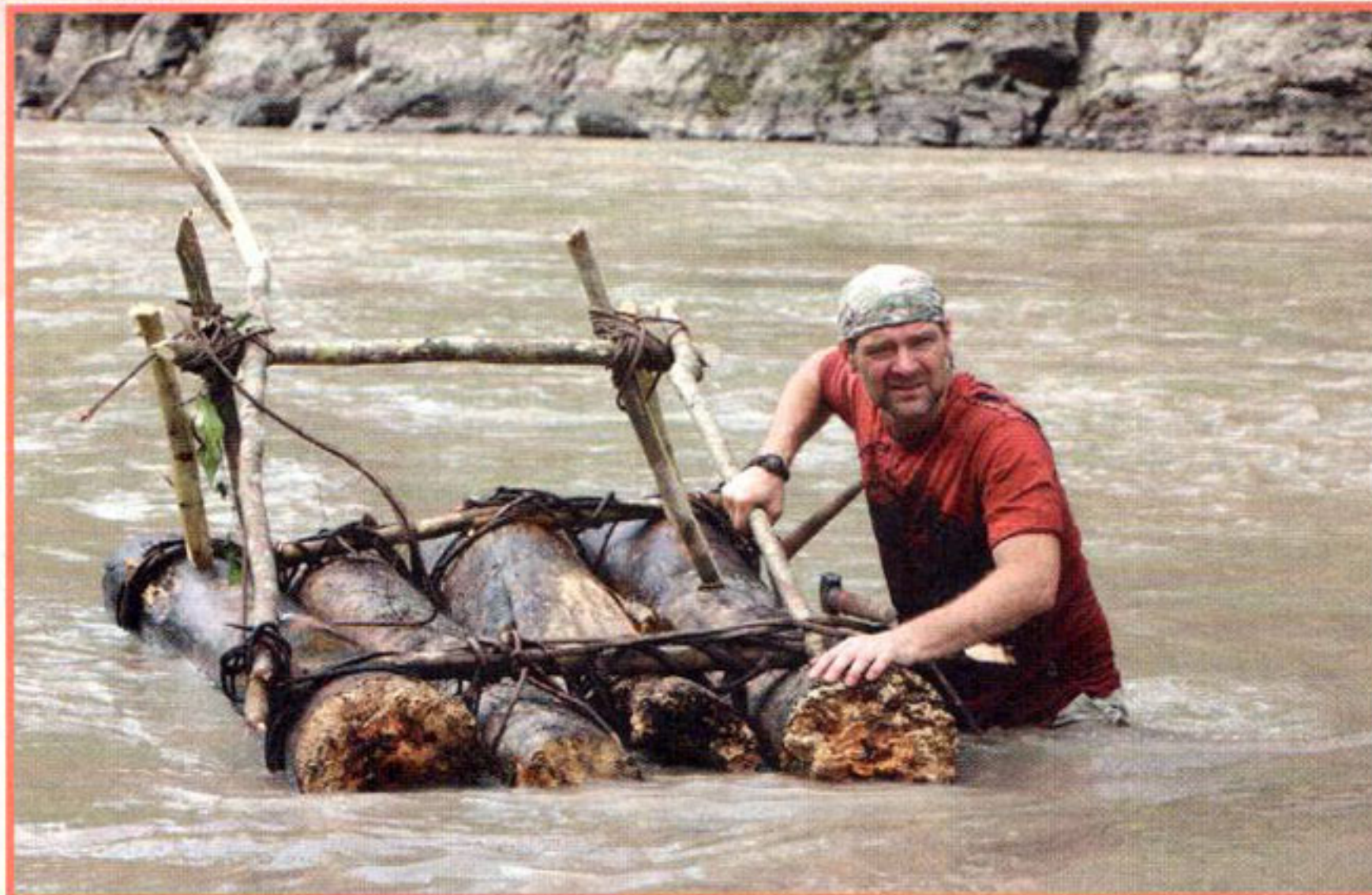
Filmmaker, Outdoor Adventurer, Singer-Songwriter, Performer

Best known as star of the six-time Gemini nominated hit TV series *Survivorman* (OLN Canada, The Science Channel US, Discovery Channel International, City TV (Rogers Canada)), Les Stroud continues to forge new pathways as a prolific, creative force. He single-handedly created, produced, wrote, filmed, hosted, edited and composed the theme music for the first two original, one-hour pilots that would eventually become the hit *Survivorman* TV series. The only producer in the history of television to produce an internationally broadcast series entirely written, videotaped and hosted alone, Stroud is credited with starting a new genre of television known as "Survival TV". *Survivorman* became the highest rated show in the history of both OLN Canada and the Science Channel US and among the most popular and highest rated shows on Discovery Channel US. Stroud has appeared on the *Late Late Show*

with Craig Ferguson (3 times), *The Ellen DeGeneres Show*, *MTV Live* (2 times), *The View*, *The Hour*, and *Larry King Live* (4 times). In July 2010, Les was invited by the Prime Minister of Canada (The Honorable Stephen Harper) to meet the Queen of England and the Duke of Edinburgh during their 2010 Royal Tour of Canada. Stroud's commercial with famous Geico Gecko was referenced by David Letterman, Howard Stern and numerous other media personalities and he has been parodied on the hit TV sitcoms "The Office" and "King of the Hill".

Stroud has appeared in and/or produced numerous television specials including hosting the 20th Anniversary of Discovery Channel's *Shark Week* (2007); *I Shouldn't Be Alive*; *The Science of Survival* (2008), *Surviving Sharks* (*Shark Week* 2008), *Expedition Everest*, *Surviving Urban Disasters*, *After the Experiment* (Discovery), *Deadly Waters* (*Shark Week* 2009), and "Off the Grid with Les Stroud". In 2010, he earned his seventh Gemini nomination as Executive Producer/Host of the hit kids TV series "Survive This" and "Survive This 2" (YTVk Cartoon Network). He is also Executive Producer/Host of NHL celebrity survival series "Survival Challenge" (OLN). "Les Stroud Beyond Survival" (2010) earns Les another certifiable hit with ratings surpassing all movies and even sports TV on a couple of US airings, and becoming one of the highest rated programs on Canada's OLN. Celebrated keynote speaker, musician and author, his debut book: "Survive!-Essential Skills and Tactics to Get You Out of Anywhere-Alive!" (Harper Collins) made the bestseller list for 20 weeks and broke the top 100 on Amazon.com. His latest book "Will to Live" (Harper Collins) had already sold 20,000 pre-ordered copies before hitting bookshelves across Canada November 6th. Musically, Stroud has worked with the top in the business, including Alice Cooper, Robby Krieger, Tommy Shaw, Steven Stills, Canadian's The Northern Pikes, and renowned producer Terry Brown. Continuing through winter 2011, Les will be back in the studio and focused on music. Working with the management team at SRO Anthem (best known as Rush and Steven Page's management), Stroud's next challenge is an exciting new album and multi-media tour, heavily influenced by indigenous sounds and images collected from his *Beyond Survival* travels around the globe. A proud member of the Explorers Club, Les contributes to dozens of charities and benefits, and is a Survival Specialist Instructor for the Canadian Armed Forces. For more information or for media inquiries, please contact: Kate Heming Ph: 705-789-2910x24; Mobile: 705-787-5080; email: kate@lesstroud.ca

Les Stroud Productions Inc. 680 Muskoka Rd 3 North Huntsville Canada P1H 1C9. Official Website: www.lesstroud.ca



Papa
New Guinea