



## BEACH BOY

Surfer Kent Layton, photographed by LeRoy Grannis in Hermosa Beach, California, 1969; right, a fashion shot for *Per Lui* magazine, Deauville, France, 1988, from Pamela Hanson's *Boys*.



These are dark days. How dark? Authors practically need night-vision goggles to write, but several novelists are exploding the darkness, blasting back, lasers set on devastating intelligence and stunning humor.

*Zeitgeist* surfer **Douglas Coupland** downloads his brain into *JPod* (Bloomsbury), set in an amoral video-game-design company. The always provocative *V.F.* contributing editor **A. M. Homes** promises *This Book Will Save Your Life* (Viking). In *Persuasion Nation* (Riverhead) the scarily smart **George Saunders** focuses his piercing satirical vision on our proud country. The deeply warped **Gary Shteyngart** creates *Absurdistan* (Random House). And **Daniel Handler**, in his new (Lemony Snicket-free) novel, *Adverbs* (Ecco), engages in wordplay so dazzling it's like watching someone juggle torches—yes, it's that entertaining.

Also in fiery bloom: Nobel Peace Prize winner **Shirin Ebadi** (with help from **Azadeh Moaveni**) has a view of *Iran Awakening* (Random House). Veteran war reporter turned novelist **Scott Anderson** checks into *Moonlight Hotel* (Doubleday). The Jewish, much-married, arrogant, death-obsessed hero of **Philip Roth's** *Everyman* (Houghton Mifflin) is every man the author's ever been. **Terri Jentz** returns to

the Oregon town where 15 years earlier she and her roommate were attacked by an ax-wielding maniac, only to find in this *Strange Piece*

## HOT TYPE

ELISSA SCHAPPELL

of *Paradise* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux) that the town is as changed by that night as the girls are. The Center for Constitutional Rights publishes the *Articles of Impeachment Against George W. Bush*. **Simon Schama's** *Rough Crossings* (Ecco) captures the little-recalled time during the American

Revolution when Britain proclaimed free-

dom for American slaves. For *Adventures of a Hollywood Secretary* (University of California), **Cari Beauchamp** edited the letters of a nice Italian girl from Jersey who played gal Friday to Sam Goldwyn. For 45 glorious years, claws-out British caricaturist **Gerald Scarfe** has been *Drawing Blood* (Little, Brown UK). **Charles D'Ambrosio** is back with *The Dead Fish Museum* (Knopf), an unforgettable collection of intense and soulful stories. The public slaying of a family member sets off tremors in **Susan Richards Shreve's** thrilling novel *A Student of Living Things* (Viking). *V.F.* contributing editor **Betsy Osborne** illuminates *The Natural History of Uncas Metcalfe* (St. Martin's). **Nathaniel Philbrick's** *Mayflower* (Viking) reveals the Pilgrims' dark side. **Pamela Hanson** shoots *Boys* (Assouline) being boys. **Taschen books celebrates** surf photographer **LeRoy Grannis**. The first-ever crossing of North America was, as **Paul Schneider** maps out, a *Brutal Journey* (John Macrae). Playwright **Wendy Wasserstein's** posthumous debut novel showcases all her comic gifts, and unforgettable *Elements of Style* (Knopf). **Kelly Killoren Bensimon** stuffs *The Bikini Book* (Assouline) with wild fun. Style so rivetingly hideous it could only be evidence of evil appears in **Peter York's** *Dictator Style* (Chronicle); witness: Tito's stuffed cheetah and Idi Amin's shag carpeting. Now, that is soul-killingly tacky.

## COMIC VISION

British cartoonist Gerald Scarfe in his Hampstead studio, 1964; inset, Scarfe's 2005 illustration of Tony Blair.

