

# Bra boys analysis



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Sunny Abberton's highly personal documentary, narrated by Russell Crowe, examines Australian surfculture– a far cry from the endless summer stereotype image of laid-back guys blessed out on being one with the waves -- through the story of his own family. What it lacks in objectivity, it makes up for in vivid intimacy. The "Bra Boys" are surfers from Maroubra Beach ("maroubra" is an aboriginal word meaning "place of thunder"), a depressed suburban community south of Sydney, riddled with drugs, crime, street violence and broken families.

The Abberton brothers – Sunny, Jai, Koby and Dakota – had three different fathers; their mother was a heroin addict and her boyfriend a thief. But their grandmother, Mavis "Ma" Abberton, lived a block from the beach and opened her home not only to her grandsons, but to also their friends, boisterous, directionless youngsters united by a ferocious love of wave riding. They call themselves a tribe – part of a long-standing tradition of beach tribes -- while the police and news media prefer the term "gang. Deeply rooted cultural bias against surfers from poor neighborhoods notwithstanding, the Abbertons and their friends did their part to foster the image of surf larrikins -- violent, tattooed, hell-raising punks who spent their land-based time drinking, baiting cops and waging turf wars. Sunny and Jai surfed professionally -- Sunny went on his first tour when he was 15 – while Koby earned a reputation as one of the world's most accomplished big-wave surfers.

Jai also murdered a local thug named Anthony Hines, and Koby was later charged with obstructing justice; their trial by media and legal battles provide the film's dramatic throughline. Unfortunately, this is where Sunny

Abberton's closeness to the material becomes a serious liability: His brothers' accounts of events are evasive, and a more professional filmmaker would have introduced other sources to fill in the blanks.

It's hard to know how seriously to take the film's assertions about the Bra Boys' pro-social activities – warning impressionable teens away from drugs, promoting racial harmony, fostering community pride. It may all be true, but Sunny's sketchy treatment of Koby and Jai's story, and his own loyalty to the tribe make you wonder. What he does best is provide an insider's tour of a marginalized community whose bully-boy culture is rooted in cultural exclusion, along with some stunning surfing footage.

Source: <http://www.tvguide.com/movies/bra-boys/review/293290/>