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Paul Hogan CROCODILE DUNDEE'S WILD RIDE

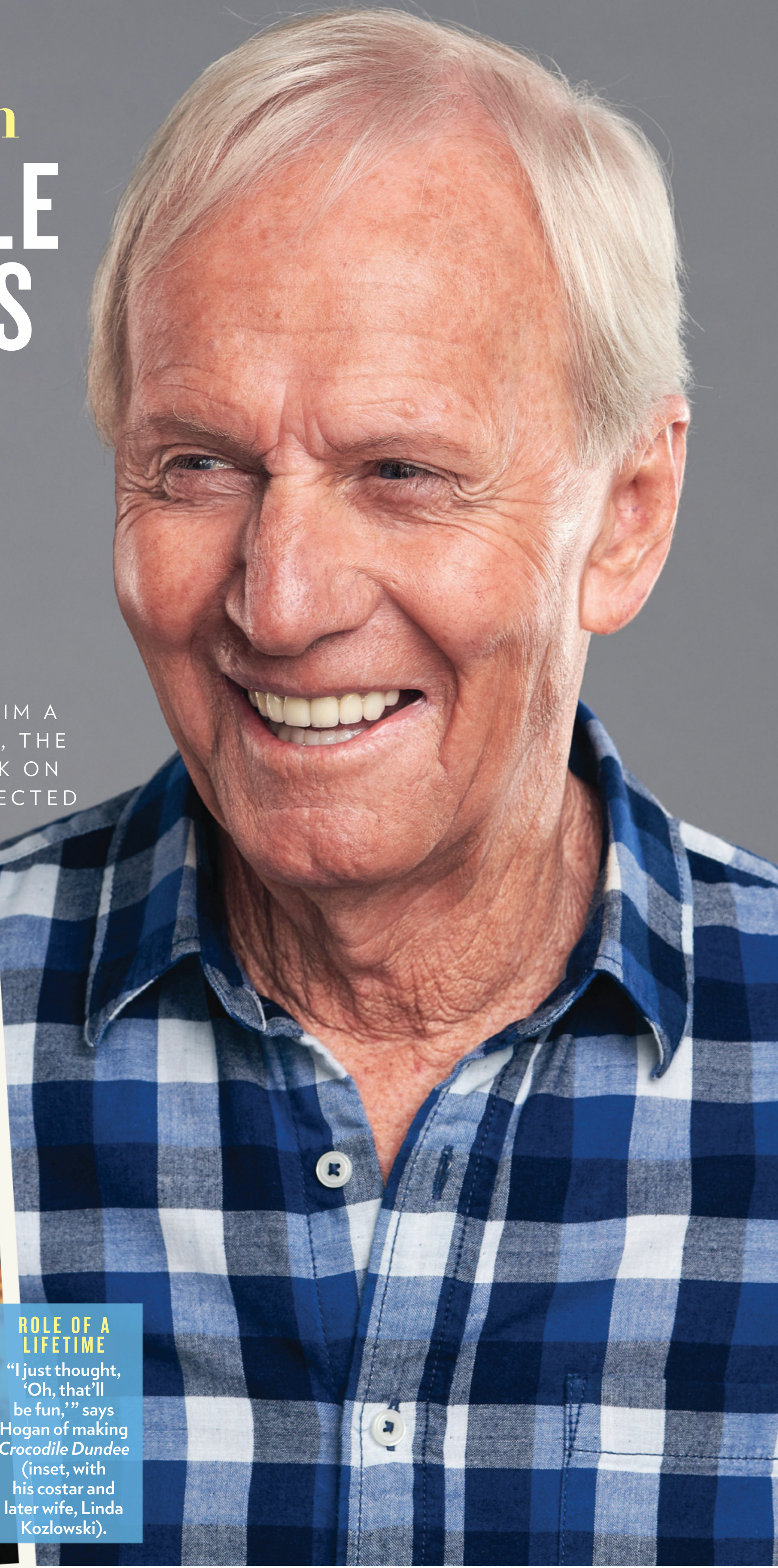
HIS HIT 1986 MOVIE MADE HIM A GLOBAL SENSATION. NOW 81, THE RUGGED AUSSIE LOOKS BACK ON THE STARDOM HE NEVER EXPECTED

By **GILLIAN TELLING**



ROLE OF A LIFETIME

"I just thought, 'Oh, that'll be fun,'" says Hogan of making *Crocodile Dundee* (inset, with his costar and later wife, Linda Kozlowski).





HIS FIRST LOVE

Hogan wed Noelene Edwards (left, in 1975) in 1958; they split in 1981, remarried a year later and divorced again in 1989. They have five children together.

One time, Australian actor Paul Hogan was taking a walk in Franklin Canyon in Los Angeles when he came upon two women in a panic. “They said, ‘Oh, thank God, it’s you!’” recalls Hogan, 81. “They told me, ‘Around the bend is the biggest rattlesnake we’ve ever seen! We’re so lucky that *Crocodile Dundee* is here; he’ll know what to do!’” Hogan laughs at the memory. “They assumed I’d go and wring its neck. Fortunately for me, by the time I went and looked for it, it had gone.”

That wasn’t the first or the last time people confused Hogan with the character he created for his hit 1986 film *Crocodile Dundee*, a fish-out-of-water comedy about a tough Australian bushwhacker named Mick Dundee who winds up in New York City. The movie, which earned him an Oscar nomination for Best Screenplay, made him a superstar in the United States. “For quite a few years, I was never Paul Hogan,” he says. “Americans thought *Croc Dundee* was real, mainly because unlike people in Australia or the U.K., they’d never seen me in anything else.”

Almost 35 years later, Hogan—who pokes fun at his unlikely journey in the new movie *The Very Excellent Mr. Dundee*—looks back fondly on his fleeting moments of megafame. Now happily semiretired in L.A., he points out he was 47 when he starred in *Dundee* and had already had a successful career in Australia with *The Paul Hogan Show*, a sketch-comedy series that ran for 12 seasons. “If I’d been a promising young actor and was typecast like that, it might have been a bit of a problem,” he says. “But I was a comedy writer as far as I was concerned. It didn’t harm my filmmaking career because I never had one.” He adds, “And I didn’t particularly want one!”

In fact, Hogan became an entertainer entirely by accident. Born in Sydney, he dropped out of school at 15 to earn a living. He was working as a rigger on the Sydney Harbour Bridge in 1971 when, as a joke



FALLING FOR A COSTAR

Hogan and Connecticut-born Linda Kozlowski (in 2001) met making *Dundee* and married soon after his second divorce from Noelene was finalized. They divorced amicably in 2014.

to make his coworkers laugh, he finagled his way onto a talent show called *New Faces* by claiming he was a “tap dancing knife thrower.” Once on-set, he just made fun of the judges while shuffling around the stage. The audience loved it. Two years later he became the host of his own sketch-comedy show. “I might be the only person who ever went on one of those televised talent shows with no dream or intention of winning it,” he says with a laugh. “Or even being invited back!”

before he was famous



Before he found TV stardom, Hogan worked as a rigger, a high-risk job placing platforms for workers on the Sydney Harbour Bridge. (Left, he returned to pose on the bridge in 1976.) Once, a man jumped from the bridge as Hogan and his coworkers tried to talk him down. In a 2014 documentary, Hogan said he drew from the troubling experience for a scene in *Crocodile Dundee*, in which he dissuades an office worker from jumping off a building.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: FAIRFAX MEDIA/GETTY IMAGES; LUCY NICHOLSON/ATP/GETTY IMAGES; RUSSELL MCPHERAN/FAIRFAX MEDIA/GETTY IMAGES



An Accidental Superstar



CROCODILE DUNDEE

Made on a \$10 million budget, the 1986 action comedy became Australia's highest-grossing film of all time, earning \$328 million.



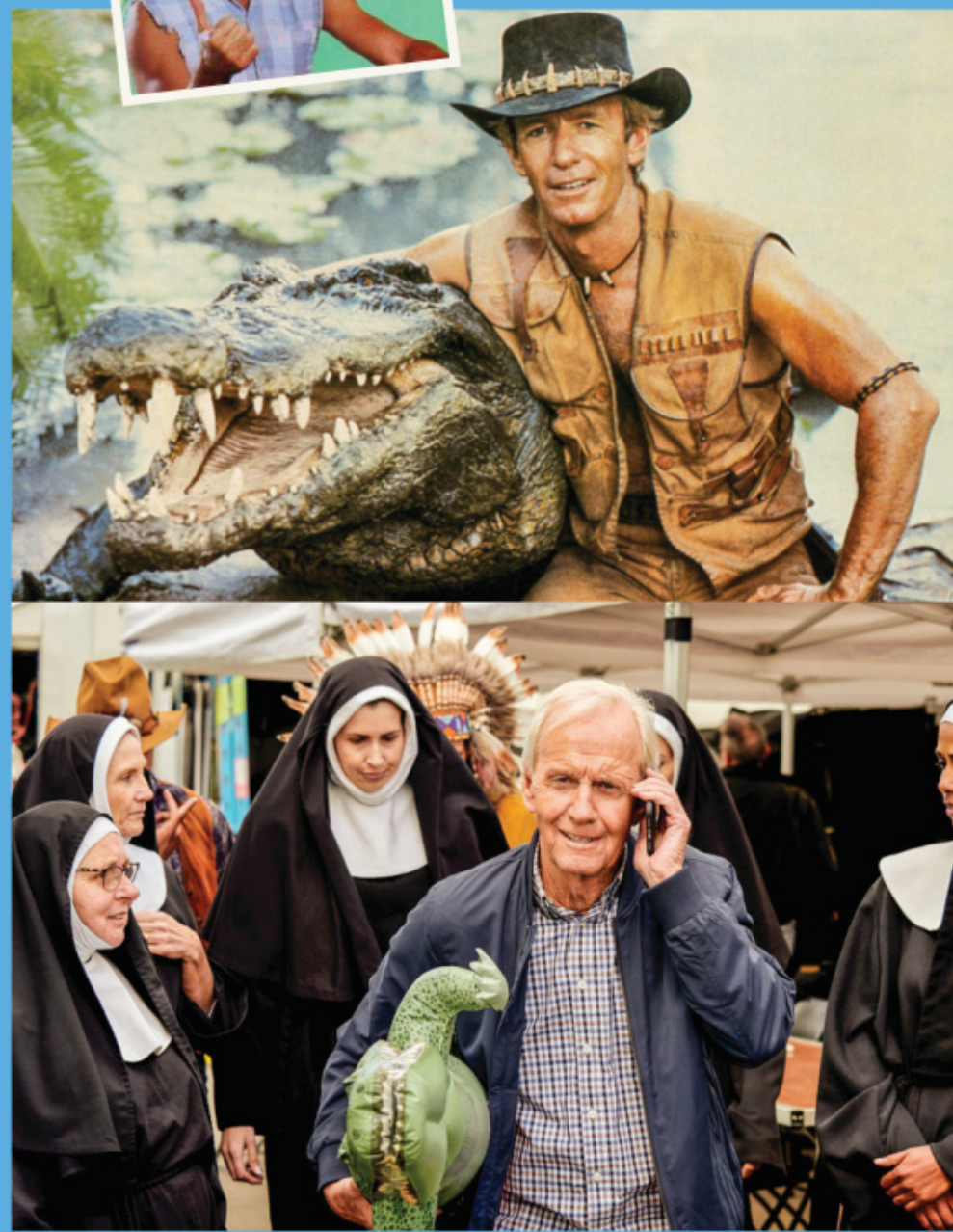
THE VERY EXCELLENT MR. DUNDEE

Hogan made his first film in 11 years (now streaming) because of his friendship with director Dean Murphy: "He won't let me retire!"



THE PAUL HOGAN SHOW

The comedy series, which ran in Australia from 1973 to 1984, showed "Hoges" playing characters like Donger, a beer-chugging suburban dad.



I just went on to take the mickey out of it." He had no idea it would lead to fame and fortune. "Not in my wildest dreams," he says. "Now I think I'm an inspiration to young people, because you don't have to be successful at 19. You can sort of find your niche along the way." He adds, "My extraordinary life was not through any huge, obvious gift. It just sort of happened."

He first broke out in the U.S. in 1984 with his famous "shrimp on the barbie" commercial, credited with doubling American tourism to Australia—then *Crocodile Dundee* launched him to new heights.

In 1990 he made worldwide headlines after he divorced his first wife of more than 30 years, Noelene, 79, to marry his *Dundee* costar Linda Kozlowski, 62. The two lived together in L.A., raising their son Chance, 22, before divorcing in 2014. "The worst part was the loss of privacy," he says of his celebrity. "But it was also fabulous. In the '80s and early '90s, I was a flavor of the month. I got invited everywhere. I got offered everything. Having come from the real world and lived this blue-collar life until I was 30, I got blown away meeting big stars and going to big events." When he made a *Dundee* sequel in 1988, "I watched it with Prince Charles on one side of me and Princess Diana on the other, laughing at my

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jokes. It was mind-boggling! I had dinner with Liz Taylor. I've exchanged barbs with Clint Eastwood. I got a real buzz out of all of that."

When his follow-up films were less successful, Hogan says, he didn't mind. "I figured I'd reached my peak," he says. "I sort of lost interest in the business." He took up skiing at 50 and spent as much time as he could traveling the world. "I emotionally retired many years ago," he says. But when his longtime friend, screenwriter Dean Murphy, asked if he'd star in a fictional movie based on his life, he agreed. *The Very Excellent Mr. Dundee* (now streaming on demand), which also stars John Cleese, Chevy Chase and Olivia Newton-John, paints Hogan as a nice guy who keeps making embarrassing public mistakes. Some of the film's jokes were based on his real life, like studios continually asking him to make another *Dundee* movie. So would he ever? "If I did another one, he'd be in a retirement village with a walker," Hogan jokes. "Though I did get an interesting pitch with Chris Hemsworth playing my son and Margot Robbie playing my daughter. I thought, 'If Mick Dundee has Chris Hemsworth as his son and Margot Robbie as his daughter, he shouldn't be hunting crocs. He should just be running a stud farm, making really beautiful children.'" ●