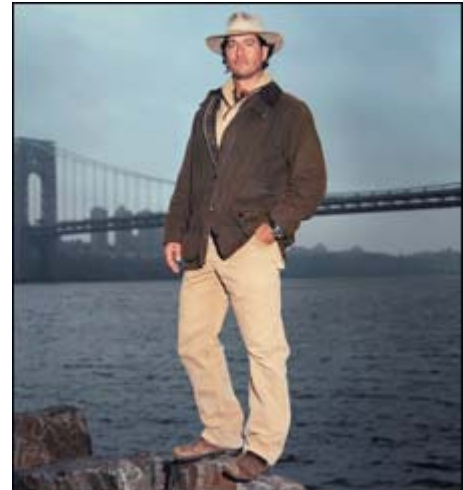


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Dispatches: The *Outside* Interview
Josh Bernstein
The History Channel's mad hatter

By Anthony Cerretani

A New Yorker with enough adventure cred to run Colorado's Boulder Outdoor Survival School (BOSS), Josh Bernstein is giving the History Channel a swift kick in its dusty demographics. As host of the archaeology-themed *Digging for the Truth*, Bernstein, 35, has delivered the channel its highest-rated original series (January marks the debut of season three and the release of his first book) and has done more for fedoras and antiquity than anyone since Harrison Ford. **ANTHONY CERRETANI** caught up with Bernstein as he rested between takes in Bolivia.



Dana Lixenberg

OUTSIDE: Did you really think an archaeology show could be a hit?

BERNSTEIN: The ratings don't really matter to me, although they are nice to get. But I think it's great that a show can teach the way *DFT* does and attract such a diverse audience.

What's been your secret?

Caffeine. We film three episodes back to back in a month, take a five-day break to do narration and promotional stuff, then shoot three more. It's like that for nine months.

So what's with the fedora?

The hat's been a point of discussion since the premier episode, but I've actually had it since 1997, so it's not like I'm wearing a costume.

How did you go from Manhattan and Cornell to being a survival instructor and adventure host?

My biggest influence growing up was the death of my father when I was almost 15. He died in his sleep, and it set me on a path where I became interested in self-reliance and being a man of action versus a man of talk.

That eventually led you to BOSS, which is where you first dabbled in the entertainment business.

We did a number of high-profile consulting jobs—*Cast Away* with Tom Hanks, and I took Drew Barrymore, Cameron Diaz, and Lucy Liu into the desert for three days and nights to teach some skills for *Charlie's Angels*.

Whoa!

No shortage of good stories. But that was over six years ago. It feels a bit foolish to be rehashing it now.

Then what's your most mind-blowing experience from *DFT*?

The most literally mind-blowing was San Pedro cactus, a hallucinogen I took on an episode about a cult in Peru. Pretty trippy.