

"DIGGING" JOSH

IF YOU THOUGHT THE HISTORY CHANNEL WAS ALL STODGY OLD MEN REHASHING THE PAST, THINK AGAIN. BY SARAH SCHOOLCRAFT

When a series on **The History Channel** spawns its own comic book, you know that times are changing. With *Digging for the Truth* and host Josh Bernstein, the network has proved that history can be hip. Beyond the obvious comparisons to Indiana Jones and his rugged good looks, Bernstein is the real deal when it comes to "stones and bones" smarts. A survivalist expert, Bernstein logged more than 100,000 miles during *Digging's* first season, and is in the process of upping that number in Season 2, which airs Tuesday nights. "This time [I visited] 21 countries, and [did] 125,000 miles of flying," he says happily.

At stops including Stonehenge, Ethiopia and more, Bernstein gives a fresh, hands-on spin to the exploration of some of history's greatest archaeological mysteries. Instead of just talking about history, he lives it. Rappelling into ancient caves, coming face-to-face with poisonous snakes — it's all in a day's work for the native New Yorker.

As of late, that day's work also includes Hollywood premieres, talk-show interviews and an appearance in the premiere issue of *Men's Vogue*. Bernstein is enjoying the ride, but is taking the attention in stride. "For me, it's more about the message than the messenger," he says. "I'm not interested in seeing my name in bold, just for the sake of celebrity. I'd rather deliver something meaningful and share excitement, and hopefully inspire people to travel and explore and appreciate the world."

As for the inevitable comparisons to Harrison Ford's famous character, Bernstein doesn't mind ... but admits he had a stronger influence. "I liked Indiana Jones, but in terms of the posters on my wall as a kid, it was Clint Eastwood more than Harrison Ford. I loved the whole do-it-yourself Western mentality. The say-less, do-more, get-the-job-done approach that Clint [had] was much more of an inspiration to me than the whip and the hat."

Bernstein believes that it was this spirit of adventurism that ultimately brought him to "the whole self-reliance wilderness survival approach" in his life. "Growing up in New York, where people are more likely to have someone else do the heavy lifting," he explains, "Clint was a great sort of 'Let me do the heavy lifting' role model. [He showed that] someone can actually set a path for themselves about individuality, authenticity and ruggedness — and succeed."

Naturally, not everyone can travel as extensively as Bernstein has. That doesn't mean, though, that there's not adventure to be had. "I think exploration is more than exotic locations," he asserts. "[It] can be done anywhere. It's more of a philosophy and a perspective and an approach to life. There's so many different adventures and discoveries to be made in our backyard, that I don't think you have to go to Africa or the Amazon to be fulfilled."