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Qweekend. QW

50

best & brightest
Queenslanders taking it to the world



Professor John Hockings, 57

architect & designer

The former head of the architecture and design schools at the University of Queensland and QUT has returned to private practice as design director with Architectus, but continues his involvement with the Centre for Subtropical Design and the project he initiated to design a sustainable township on the Pacific atoll of Kiribati, which is under threat from rising sea levels. He also has been driving the urban renewal of Maryborough and is design director of the new \$600 million, 19-storey Supreme Court complex in Brisbane's CBD.

Year ahead: architectural/urban projects in Queensland and sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific.



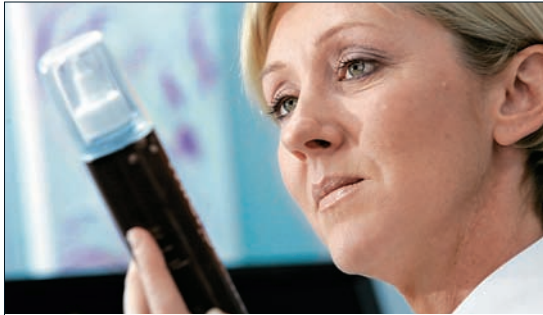
Mark Henry, 40

designer & manufacturer

Mark Henry, bachelor of engineering and bachelor of business, is a master craftsman of the new world. The Queenslander has revolutionised the kitchen knife, says a chorus of approving chefs, bringing it out of the Middle Ages and into the 21st century. It has taken steely determination and passion – plus an apprenticeship with Queensland Rail and those Queensland University of Technology degrees – to turn a boy scout's interest in knives into an international business.

As a young knife engineer, Henry pioneered new shapes and processes with innovative flair tempered by a scientific approach. The chefs' knives were one-piece, with a revolutionary handle to offset fatigue, increase durability and maximise hygiene.

Henry says the "classic" knife is a leftover from medieval times, when swordsmiths began making kitchen knives. "Until I designed mine, the handle shape had been the same as knives from the 13th century, whether with two or three rivets or bound."



Linda Lowndes, 40

inventor & director, Microskin International

A clinic in New York, due to open within months, is expected to be the start of the global dissemination of Lowndes' revolutionary skin treatment, involving a simulated second skin that temporarily masks serious skin conditions brought on by burns, acne or disease. Since the company was formed in 2004, clients outside Australia have had to travel to her Brisbane clinic to have the product applied. There are temporary clinics in Sydney and Melbourne and plans for a similar set-up in Korea.

Year ahead: a major clinical trial.

Patricia Shaw, 78

author

Shaw's historical fiction, written from her Gold Coast base, has earned her megastar status in Germany where thousands line up for book-signing sessions. Her most recent release was *Mango Hill*, which hit Australian bookstores in May; a previous bestseller, *Cry of the Rain Bird*, was re-published this month. Her novels, set in 19th century Australia, have sold nine million copies worldwide.

Year ahead: a new Shaw epic is in the works for release in late 2008.

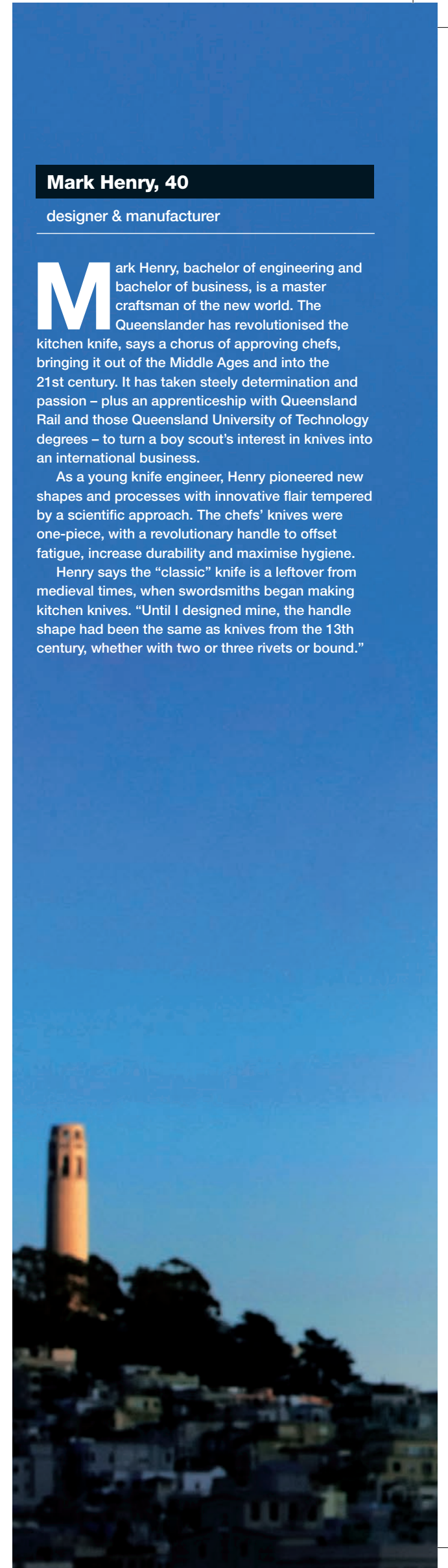


Chris Brown, 57

film producer

Brown brought Hollywood heart-throb Ethan Hawke to downtown Brisbane in August, shutting down busy Eagle Street to shoot scenes for his upcoming \$21 million futuristic vampire flick *Daybreakers*. He's worked with superstars such as Jodie Foster, David Bowie and Michael Caine during his British career but now makes his home on the Gold Coast, where he has produced the films *Blurred*, *The Proposition* and *Under the Radar*. He received an Independent Producer of the Year award in 2004 from the Screen Producers Association of Australia.

Year ahead: Brown will unveil a new British project to be shot entirely on the Gold Coast.



achievers.

Working with chefs, he understood that this shape was a recipe for carpal tunnel syndrome and arthritis. Chefs cut forward and down repetitively; with a handle tapering toward the blade, the user automatically squeezes the handle to stop slippage.

Henry reversed the handle, moving the broader hilt toward the blade, and his experience as a fitter and turner, coupled with his engineering degree, helped him find the right metal compounds.

He founded FÜRitechnics in 1996 with \$7000, confident that with a great chef's knife he could fashion a brand and make a difference to the industry.

"I just wanted to produce the best working knives for chefs, that's all I really knew," says Henry. "Because of my research, I knew they'd be good and chefs would like them. I could see the thing would grow, but I didn't know how successful the retail side would be."

Today FÜRitechnics, still headquartered in inner Brisbane's West End, sells more than a million knives around the globe. His company has six patents either granted or pending, a handful of design registrations and trademarks on knife and knife-sharpener designs. Henry has kept full control of his business, seeing off financial predators attracted by the company's growth and potential – much of it generated through innovation, brand-building and celebrity endorsements.

FÜRi products are approved by chefs around the world, from American television's Rachael Ray to Britain's "domestic goddess", Nigella Lawson.

FÜRitechnics' line-up – some products differ from country to country – now numbers about 60 items. Another 20 could be added in 2008. "Knives are the bread and butter, that's where the revenue is coming from, particularly in the United States, but now the sharpeners are taking off," he says.

Henry and his wife Natasha moved to San Francisco in 2005 and there, from an office at Fisherman's Wharf, FÜRitechnics' business is growing at a rate of 300 per cent a year.

The son of missionaries, Henry moved with his family from NSW to Queensland when he was six. After high school, including stints at Beaudesert and Bundamba, he did a turner's apprenticeship with Queensland Rail at North Ipswich. He then worked as a fitter, turner and machinist before heading to QUT to attack degrees in mechanical engineering and business.

"I founded the company when I was about three years into this double degree and had to finish the rest part-time," he says. "It nearly killed me with the business booming, silly stuff like taking exams at the Australian consulate in New York, studying on planes." But he was determined to finish the degrees.

"The stuff that was really valuable was the business degree – the accounting, law, marketing strategy. In engineering, it was all the things I'd seen in practice and done in practice – the manufacturing processes, the materials. It put it all into context."

Henry then applied modern science, using equipment such as electron microscopes to examine blade edges. He was confident in his product for professional use, but understood little about the retail market. "I didn't think the consumers would get real excited about it. But here in Australia we got the support of all the top chefs, TV chefs and the foodies, colleges and cooking schools. Word of mouth built up so quickly, people were walking into Myer or David Jones asking for the FÜRi knives."

FÜRitechnics now employs 12 people in Brisbane and 14 in San Francisco and Henry is enjoying his Californian stint with Natasha and 10-month-old son Lincoln. He retains a Brisbane house and one at Rainbow Bay on the Gold Coast. "I'd like to be in the US for a fair while," he says. "Unless we get so big that I need a professional CEO, and then I can refocus on design and brand-building. That's really my strength, the innovation side. I really don't enjoy the operations side, but it's okay for now. We'll just keep growing, see where it takes us." BRUCE McMAHON

