



**LEAPS AND BOUNDS** With *Rawmoves*, James Houston assembled members of Australia's leading dance companies. "I never get bored with nudes," he says. "I get inspired by my subjects and the challenge of pushing them to their limits to achieve the ultimate shot physically and emotionally."

## RAW HYPE

James Houston's body of work includes models, Olympic athletes and actors. With his latest book *Rawmoves*, he shifts his focus to dancers.

**P**HOTOGRAPHER JAMES HOUSTON SPENT FIVE YEARS putting together *Raw*, his acclaimed and award-winning collection of graphic nude shots in landscapes around the world. He likes the nude, and the nude likes him back – the portfolio of Australian Olympic athletes, *Black+White: The Sydney Dream*, of which Houston was the major contributor, sold out to a public eager for tasteful, arty shots of the body beautiful.

He's continuing with his exploration of the bare essentials in his new book *Rawmoves*, shots of dancers from the Australian Ballet, the Bangarra Dance Theatre and the Sydney Dance Company. This time 'round he didn't have the luxury of dawdling, with shooting limited to five days because of dancers' schedules. "In a way, though," he admits, "I like to shoot fast and keep the ideas and the energy up. I must admit that your eye does get a lot quicker the more you shoot; you just know when you've got a great image happening."

Houston's fascination with the nude can be traced back to his formative influences – sculpture in his teens, particularly the work of Henry Moore, and later photographers Paolo Roversi and Peter Lindbergh. Not for him the artful clutter of a LaChapelle; he'd rather see clean shapes and classic lines (when shooting fashion he prefers working with simple graphic clothes). "I feel nude shots will last forever," he says, "as it's not influenced by the fashion of the moment. I also love to work with simple graphic elements in my work and the nude to me is just that."

Working with dancers brought an extra dimension to the shoot. It's all in the way his subjects perceive themselves, he says. "Dancers tend to be more in tune with their emotions than models, it's all about feeling a physical expression first rather than how you look. They are also very comfortable with movement which a lot of models aren't. And they know their bodies and know what they're physically capable of."

Houston knows what he's talking about, having taken up the camera as a hobby when modelling in Japan in 1982. He never went to college, never assisted, always impatient to get on. He just kept shooting and picked up the technical side along the way.

Now the Australian has made the career move to New York, shooting fashion and nude work. His next project continues the dance theme and has already been signed up by a large American publishing company – *Move*, a selection of shots of New York-based dancers. "I love the reaction my work gets," he says. "I think that, above everything, keeps me pushing and working so hard. I feel I'm so lucky to have pursued it." – MARK WHITE