

SABOUR BRADLEY

MEDIA PERSONALITY

From steroid abuse to hiding for his life on the Syrian border, he's the man who can't help but tackle a story head first.

Sabour Bradley has a problem. 2014 has seen him morph from 'Australia's Louis Theroux' to 'Australia's Sabour Bradley' – thanks to the second season of his immersive documentary series *Head First* moving to prime-time ABC1 – but he's not sure that's entirely a good thing.

Yes, his burgeoning fame will fan ambitions of wanting to tell "bigger, and more international, stories". But, as the so-called gonzo filmmaker explains over lunch, he doesn't want his increased profile to overshadow the stories he so passionately – often daringly – brings to the small screen.

"You should never be the story. I don't know a lot about Louis Theroux. Or Michael Moore – they're very smart in not allowing too much out," he says. Then pauses. "That's why everything I've told you is false."

The 36-year-old takes a bite of a stuffed zucchini flower. His cappuccino has long gone cold: a common occurrence, apparently. Bradley's engaging company – a genial, self-deprecating raconteur with a collection of anecdotes sure to keep him employed on the after-dinner circuit should the docos dry up. Which they won't.

Ask him about the weirdest scenario he's been in and he'll mention the massage he had in a brothel while hiding from Thai police during a story about steroid vacations – one that saw him inject muscle-sculpting drugs, much to wife Isadora's concern.

The scariest? Hiding in bushes while attempting to cross the Turkish/Syrian border tops the list, which he did for an episode in which he accompanied a Melbourne nurse investigating her brother's death in Syria.

So, is he brave? He ponders for a second. "There is an element of bravery but also an element of fear, and it's the fear that's important because that stops you from getting killed. You want to get the story, but you also want to come back in one piece."

Like the aforementioned Theroux, Bradley – with what has been dubbed his 'guy-next-door charisma' – has the knack of persuading

people to reveal things they might rather keep to themselves. He says he does it in a way that's "charming and cheeky". Or, as a tweet during *Head First's* run put it: "He has such a nice-guy way of pissing people off."

As a teenager, the WA-born Bradley – who moved to North Queensland when he was six – voraciously read back issues of the *Courier Mail* at the library ("What kid does that?") but 10 months into a cadetship, he decided the fast pace of newspapers didn't appeal. Instead, film school beckoned, followed by a stint writing scripts for *Home and Away* and *Neighbours*.

His big break came when he followed his aid-worker girlfriend to Afghanistan. The relationship didn't last, but while there he got the opportunity to make – and front – a series that became Nat Geo's *Extreme Tourist: Afghanistan*. "What gave me my career in front of the camera was a willingness to put my life on the line because, at that moment, they didn't have anyone else out there to do it."

"I could have died, the show could have never gone to air. But the idea of saying yes in those situations is the one that's always guided me. If a story feels dangerous or challenging, then I go, 'That's a great story.' Just diving in has always been the best response."

Bradley has a deal with Isadora – who he met in Afghanistan where she was working for the UN ("I don't have a thing for aid workers!") – that neither will stop the other from doing what they want. "She's always enthusiastic about it except when she's not. Then I know."

Children will slow him down though. "I just won't have them until I've exhausted this."

In the meantime, the boy who dreamt of travelling the world "to meet people and be excited" has achieved just that. "Inadvertently. It's weird how things work out." ■

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Burgundy velvet jacket, \$1399, blue denim shirt, \$369, and green silk scarf, \$229, all by BOSS Menswear. Grooming: Rob Mason using Morris Motley product.

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