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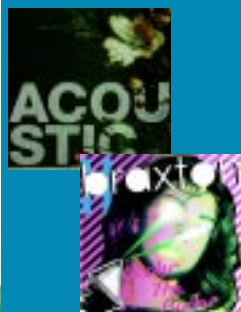
movies



carols



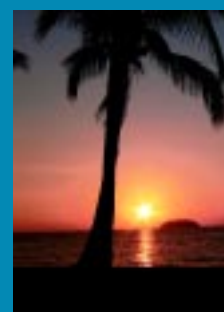
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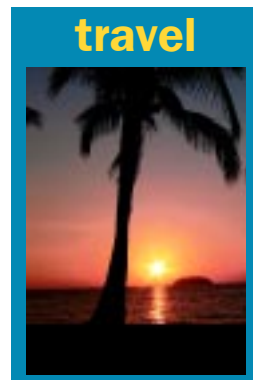
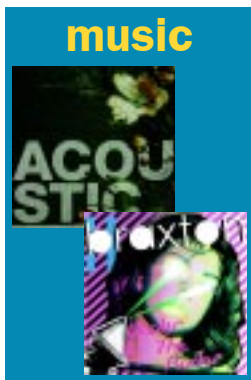
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Mat McNeil reviews some of the latest cinema releases.

WOLF CREEK

Wolf Creek is an outback horror flick by first time director Greg McLean. Perhaps the best movie to come out of Australia in recent years, it is certainly the best Australian horror movie of all time, and compares favourably with many iconic Hollywood horror flicks.

The story revolves around two English backpackers travelling around Australia with a young Aussie named Beb. The trio end up in Wolf Creek, the site of the biggest crater in the southern hemisphere. Car trouble forces them to seek the help of a local named Mick, who turns out to be a sadistic nut-job murderer who tries to kill the three travellers. This film is seriously scary. The direction is smart and *John Jarratt's* character is one of the most terrifying characters ever to appear on screen. This film is chillingly realistic and stays away from horror movie clichés. *Wolf Creek* is a thoroughly frightening but highly enjoyable ride.



CORPSE BRIDE

A great little film. I say little, but clearly the work that must have gone into this is huge. Everything has been perfectly animated, not only the characters but also the surroundings - from the little church to the one eyed skeleton.

The direction by *Tim Burton* is flawless, as he shows once again why he is regarded as one of the world's most innovative directors. The film has been put together so nicely that it really does make for a great film to watch with either kids or adults. *Johnny Depp*, who always throws everything into his roles, again does not disappoint. *Richard E. Grant* provides an appropriately chilling voice while *Helen Bonham Carter* is great as the corpse. The songs were very entertaining and the little jokes here and there keep the movie moving. The plot develops in such a way that you find yourself engrossed, right until the end. A film that can be enjoyed time and time again.



FOUR BROTHERS

While the above two movies come highly recommended this one's more for the DVD player. While not the worst film I've seen, the script tends to be cliché-laden. The movie is your basic 'revenge flick' although it does offer some moments that elevate it above similar films of its genre. *Mark Wahlberg* attempts to save the film with a stellar lead performance and, overall, the acting is quite good. *John Singleton's* directing is OK and there are a few plot twists that at least keep you interested enough to keep watching.

However, overall the plot twists are not the greatest. To me, they seemed a bit implausible (eg the good granny who goes up against the gangster... you'll understand what I mean when you see it). Probably best to save the price of a movie ticket and catch this one on DVD.

...and some DVDs worth looking out for.



THE PERFECT CATCH

Starring:
Drew Barrymore,
Jimmy Fallon

A successful young woman (Drew Barrymore) falls for a man she thinks is the perfect guy

(Jimmy Fallon). The only catch? He's a little bit obsessed with the Boston Red Sox baseball team. But how bad can it be? Loosely based on the brilliant Nick Hornsby novel *Fever Pitch*, a great film for anyone who's ever been passionate about their sport (or in love with someone who is!).

Available January 11th.



SIN CITY

Starring:
Bruce Willis,
Jessica Alba

Be prepared for one of the year's most stylish and energetic films. Based on Frank Miller's edgy comic books, 'Sin

City' is home to the tough, the corrupt and the broken-hearted. The story follows three anti-heroes bent on revenge as they battle crooked cops and merciless gangsters in a perpetual turf war. With an all-star cast and brilliant cinematography, this is a movie unlike anything you've seen before.



MADAGASCAR

Voices:
Ben Stiller,
Chris Rock
At New York's Central Park Zoo, a lion, a zebra, a giraffe, and a hippo are best friends and stars

of the show. But when one of the animals goes missing, the other three break free to look for him, only to find themselves reunited... on a ship en route to Africa. When their vessel is hijacked, however, the friends, learn first-hand what life can be like in the wild. Great holiday entertainment for the whole family.

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Christmas 2005



**Always caught humming at your local carols?
Well, to help you out, we have included the lyrics (and some historical background to astound your friends) to some of the most popular Christmas Carols. Enjoy your caroling and have a happy and safe Christmas and New Year.**

(Source www.carols.org.uk/)

O CHRISTMAS TREE

LYRICS

- O Christmas Tree! O Christmas Tree!
Thy leaves are so unchanging;
- O Christmas Tree! O Christmas Tree!
Thy leaves are so unchanging;
Not only green when summer's here,
But also when 'tis cold and drear.
- O Christmas Tree! O Christmas Tree!
Thy leaves are so unchanging!

- O Christmas Tree! O Christmas Tree!
Much pleasure thou can'st give me;
- O Christmas Tree! O Christmas Tree!
Much pleasure thou can'st give me;
How often has the Christmas tree
Afforded me the greatest glee!
- O Christmas Tree! O Christmas Tree!
Much pleasure thou can'st give me.

- O Christmas Tree! O Christmas Tree!
Thy candles shine so brightly!
- O Christmas Tree! O Christmas Tree!
Thy candles shine so brightly!
From base to summit, gay and bright,
There's only splendor for the sight.
- O Christmas Tree! O Christmas Tree!
Thy candles shine so brightly!

- O Christmas Tree! O Christmas Tree!
How richly God has decked thee!
- O Christmas Tree! O Christmas Tree!
How richly God has decked thee!
Thou bidst us true and faithful be,
And trust in God unchangingly.
- O Christmas Tree! O Christmas Tree!
How richly God has decked thee!



ORIGINS

O Christmas Tree is a traditional German Carol. The author of the lyrics is unknown as is the composer of the lyrics. The tradition of bringing a tree inside and decorating it with candy, baubles and bells was started in the nineteenth century and is immortalised in the *O Christmas Tree* lyrics.

SILENT NIGHT

LYRICS

- Silent night, holy night
All is calm, all is bright
Round yon Virgin Mother and Child
Holy Infant so tender and mild
Sleep in heavenly peace
Sleep in heavenly peace

- Silent night, holy night
Shepherds quake at the sight
Glories stream from heaven afar
Heavenly hosts sing Alleluia!
Christ, the Saviour is born
Christ, the Saviour is born

- Silent night, holy night
Son of God, love's pure light
Radiant beams from Thy holy face
With the dawn of redeeming grace
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth "

ORIGINS

The origin of the Christmas carol we know as *Silent Night* was a poem that was written in 1816 by an Austrian priest called Joseph Mohr. On Christmas Eve in 1818 in the small alpine village called Oberndorf it is reputed that the organ at St. Nicholas Church had broken. Joseph Mohr gave the poem of *Silent Night* (Stille Nacht) to his friend Franz Xavier Gruber and the melody for the carol was composed with this in mind. The music to *Silent Night* was therefore intended for a guitar and the simple score was finished in time for Midnight Mass. *Silent Night* is the most famous Christmas carol of all time.



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HAVE YOURSELF A MERRY LITTLE CHRISTMAS

LYRICS

Have yourself a merry little Christmas,
Let your heart be light
From now on,
our troubles will be out of sight

Have yourself a merry little Christmas,
Make the Yule-tide gay,
From now on,
our troubles will be miles away.

Here we are as in olden days,
Happy golden days of yore.
Faithful friends who are dear to us
Gather near to us once more.

Through the years
We all will be together,
If the Fates allow

Hang a shining star upon the highest
bough.

And have yourself A merry little
Christmas now.

ORIGINS

The heart warming Christmas song *Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas* was immortalised by Judy Garland when she sang this song to Margaret O'Brien and brought tears to the eyes of the audience.

The lyricist for *Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas* was Ralph Blane and the haunting music was composed by Hugh Martin.

The song was first published in 1943.

RUDOLPH THE RED NOSED REINDEER

LYRICS

Rudolph, the red-nosed reindeer
had a very shiny nose.
And if you ever saw him,
you would even say it glows.

All of the other reindeer
used to laugh and call him names.
They never let poor Rudolph
join in any reindeer games.

Then one foggy Christmas Eve
Santa came to say:
"Rudolph with your nose so bright,
won't you guide my sleigh tonight?"

Then all the reindeer loved him
as they shouted out with glee,
Rudolph the red-nosed reindeer,
you'll go down in history!

ORIGINS

The famous Christmas song *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer* started life as a poem created by an American advertising executive called Robert May. He was requested to produce a poem that could be given away to children by the Santa Claus employed by Department Stores at Christmas! Working as an Advertising Executive Robert May had a natural flair with words and was able to compose the Rudolph the red-nosed reindeer poem which was specifically designed to appeal to children. This marketing ploy was a massive success and approximately 2.5 million Rudolph, the red-nosed reindeer poems were given away in the first year of its publication! In 1949 the singer Gene Autry recorded a musical version of *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer* composed by Johnny Marks.

JINGLE BELLS

LYRICS

Dashing through the snow
In a one horse open sleigh
O'er the fields we go
Laughing all the way
Bells on bob tails ring
Making spirits bright

What fun it is to laugh and sing
A sleighing song tonight

Oh, jingle bells, jingle bells
Jingle all the way

Oh, what fun it is to ride
In a one horse open sleigh
Jingle bells, jingle bells
Jingle all the way

Oh, what fun it is to ride
In a one horse open sleigh

A day or two ago
I thought I'd take a ride
And soon Miss Fanny Bright
Was seated by my side
The horse was lean and lank
Misfortune seemed his lot
We got into a drifted bank
And then we got upstot

Oh, jingle bells, jingle bells
Jingle all the way

Oh, what fun it is to ride
In a one horse open sleigh
Jingle bells, jingle bells
Jingle all the way

Oh, what fun it is to ride
In a one horse open sleigh yeah

Jingle bells, jingle bells
Jingle all the way

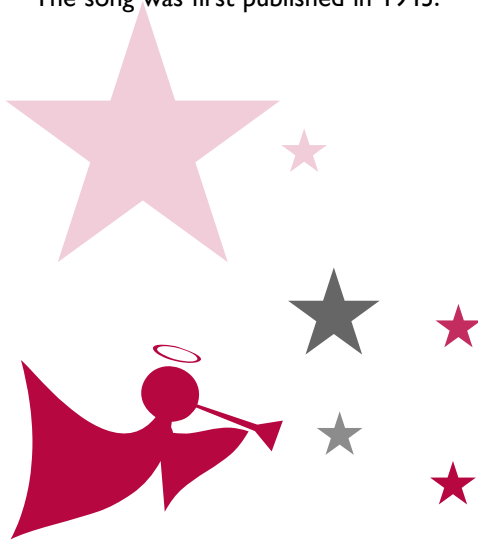
Oh, what fun it is to ride
In a one horse open sleigh
Jingle bells, jingle bells
Jingle all the way

Oh, what fun it is to ride
In a one horse open sleigh

ORIGINS

Believe it or not, *Jingle Bells* was originally written for Thanksgiving!

The author and composer was a minister called James Pierpoint who composed the song in 1857 for children celebrating his Boston Sunday School Thanksgiving. The song was so popular that it was repeated at Christmas, and indeed *Jingle Bells* has been reprised ever since. The use of bells in the song has become synonymous with the arrival of Santa Claus to the delight of children of all ages!





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HARK THE HERALD ANGELS SING

LYRICS

Hark the herald angels sing
"Glory to the newborn King!
Peace on earth and mercy mild
God and sinners reconciled"
Joyful, all ye nations rise
Join the triumph of the skies
With the angelic host proclaim:
"Christ is born in Bethlehem"
Hark! The herald angels sing
"Glory to the newborn King!"

Christ by highest heav'n adored
Christ the everlasting Lord!
Late in time behold Him come
Offspring of a Virgin's womb
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see
Hail the incarnate Deity
Pleased as man with man to dwell
Jesus, our Emmanuel
Hark! The herald angels sing
"Glory to the newborn King!"

Hail the heav'n-born Prince of Peace!
Hail the Son of Righteousness!
Light and life to all He brings
Ris'n with healing in His wings
Mild He lays His glory by
Born that man no more may die
Born to raise the sons of earth
Born to give them second birth
Hark! The herald angels sing
"Glory to the newborn King!"

ORIGINS

Hark the herald angels sing was written by Charles Wesley, brother of John Wesley founder of the Methodist church, in 1739. A sombre man, he requested slow and solemn music for his lyrics and thus *Hark the herald angels sing* was sung to a different tune initially. Over a hundred years later Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847) composed a cantata in 1840 to commemorate Johann Gutenberg's invention of the printing press. English musician William H. Cummings adapted Mendelssohn's music to fit the lyrics of *Hark the herald angels sing* already written by Wesley.

AWAY IN A MANGER

LYRICS

Away in a manger,
No crib for His bed
The little Lord Jesus
Laid down His sweet head

The stars in the bright sky
Looked down where He lay
The little Lord Jesus
Asleep on the hay

The cattle are lowing
The poor Baby wakes
But little Lord Jesus
No crying He makes

I love Thee, Lord Jesus
Look down from the sky
And stay by my side,
'Til morning is nigh.

Be near me, Lord Jesus,
I ask Thee to stay
Close by me forever
And love me I pray

Bless all the dear children
In Thy tender care
And take us to heaven
To live with Thee there

ORIGINS

Away in a Manger is always the first carol that children are taught. Originally published in 1885, the publication of *Away in a Manger* was in a Lutheran Sunday school book and this created the misconception that the lyrics of *Away in a Manger* were actually written by Martin Luther himself. The author is unknown. The music to *Away in a Manger* was composed by William J. Kirkpatrick in 1895.



WE WISH YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS

LYRICS

We wish you a Merry Christmas;
We wish you a Merry Christmas;
We wish you a Merry Christmas
and a Happy New Year.
Good tidings we bring
to you and your kin;
Good tidings for Christmas
and a Happy New Year.

Oh, bring us a figgy pudding;
Oh, bring us a figgy pudding;
Oh, bring us a figgy pudding
and a cup of good cheer
We won't go until we get some;
We won't go until we get some;
We won't go until we get some,
so bring some out here

We wish you a Merry Christmas;
We wish you a Merry Christmas;
We wish you a Merry Christmas
and a Happy New Year.

ORIGINS

The author and composer of *We Wish You a Merry Christmas* cannot be traced however it is believed to date back to England in the sixteenth century. The tradition of carollers being given Christmas treats for singing to wealthy members of the community is reflected in this Christmas song.

Over the years the fashion for figgy puddings mentioned in *We Wish You a Merry Christmas* has faded. But for the curious, the recipe consisted of the most important ingredient which was of course figs together with butter, sugar, eggs, milk, rum, apple, lemon and orange peel, nuts, cinnamon, cloves and ginger.

Not dissimilar to the modern day Christmas Puddings!



WHITE CHRISTMAS

LYRICS

I'm dreaming of a white Christmas
Just like the ones I used to know
Where the treetops glisten,
and children listen
To hear sleigh bells in the snow

I'm dreaming of a white Christmas
With every Christmas card I write
May your days be merry and bright
And may all your Christmases be white

I'm dreaming of a white Christmas
With every Christmas card I write
May your days be merry and bright
And may all your Christmases be white

ORIGINS

The song *White Christmas* is undoubtedly the most famous and popular of all the Christmas songs. The music and lyrics for *White Christmas* were written by Irving Berlin in 1942 and originally featured in the movie *Holiday Inn* starring Bing Crosby. The lyrics struck a chord with the soldiers fighting in the Second World War and their families who were waiting for them back home. The song and recording of *White Christmas* by Bing Crosby with John Scott Trotter's orchestra and the Ken Darby Singers was so popular that it was later reprised in the movie *White Christmas*. The film once again starred Bing Crosby together with Danny Kaye, Rosemary Clooney and Vera Ellen.



JOY TO THE WORLD

LYRICS

Joy to the world, the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare Him room,
And Heaven and nature sing,
And Heaven and nature sing,
And Heaven, and Heaven,
and nature sing.

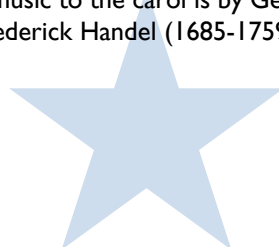
Joy to the world, the Savior reigns!
Let men their songs employ;
While fields and floods,
rocks, hills and plains
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, repeat, the sounding joy.

No more let sins and sorrows grow,
Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make His blessings flow
Far as the curse is found,
Far as the curse is found,
Far as, far as, the curse is found.

He rules the world with truth and grace,
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders, wonders, of His love

ORIGINS

The words and lyrics of the old Christmas carol *Joy to the World* were written in 1719 by Isaac Watts (1674-1748). The father of John Watts was a non-conformist and so extreme were his views that he was imprisoned twice. His father's influence over Isaac was demonstrated when he chose to attend non-conformist Academy at Stoke Newington in preference to a University. Watts was ordained as a Pastor of an Independent congregation. He wrote many hymns and carols and was awarded a Doctor of Divinity degree by the University of Edinburgh in 1728. The music to the carol is by George Frederick Handel (1685-1759).



DECK THE HALLS

LYRICS

Deck the halls with boughs of holly,
Fa la la la la, la la la la.
Tis the season to be jolly,
Fa la la la la, la la la la.

Don we now our gay apparel,
Fa la la, la la la, la la la.
Troll the ancient Yule tide carol,
Fa la la la la, la la la la.

See the blazing Yule before us,
Fa la la la la, la la la la.
Strike the harp and join the chorus.
Fa la la la la, la la la la.

Follow me in merry measure,
Fa la la la la, la la la la.
While I tell of Yule tide treasure,
Fa la la la la, la la la la.

Fast away the old year passes,
Fa la la la la, la la la la.
Hail the new, ye lads and lasses,
Fa la la la la, la la la la.

Sing we joyous, all together,
Fa la la la la, la la la la.
Heedless of the wind and weather,
Fa la la la la, la la la la.

ORIGINS

The music to *Deck the Halls* is believed to be Welsh in origin and was reputed to have come from a tune called *Nos Galan* dating back to the sixteenth century. In the eighteenth century Mozart used the tune to *Deck the Halls* for a violin and piano duet. J.P. McCaskey is sometimes credited with the lyrics to the song but he only edited the Franklin Square Song Collection in which the lyrics were first published. The first publication date of *Deck the Halls* is 1881. The author is unknown but the words are said to originate in America.



Searching for something different to listen to this summer? RACHAEL HERBST reviews a collection of low key releases.

**QUEER AS FOLK
- THE FINAL SEASON
(SOUNDTRACK)
Silver Label Festival
Mushroom Records**



Delightfully camp, *Queer As Folk - The Final Season* is a compilation for party boys and girls everywhere; a celebration of the groundbreaking series *Queer As Folk*.

Attracting a cult following world-wide when it premiered in the early 2000s, *Queer As Folk* was the first television series to portray non-stereotypical queer persons: happy, unashamed, fully functional (rather than the token Gay Best Friend, celibate Uncle In The Closet or other one-dimensional character.)

Suddenly, gay people had partners, valid relationships and a great social life!

Opening with the liberating and up beat *Skins* by the Scissor Sisters, *Queer As Folk - The Final Season* proves how far the world has come from celebrities such as *Paul Hogan* making Gay Jokes. (No - wait - that happened on television recently; but then, Hogan has had a few facelifts in his time... point taken.)

Featuring party tracks such as *Ride it* by Geri Halliwell, a remix of the 1980s classic *Shine* by *Cyndi Lauper*, rock legend *Marilyn Manson* and *Jin Go Lo Ba* by DJ, *Fatboy Slim*, *Queer As Folk - The Final Season* is a show-stopper.

Jive lovers will enjoy *Summer Moon* by *African All Stars*, while jazz connoisseurs will love *Fever* by *Superpitcher* and the You'd-Swear-It-Was-Ella-Fitzgerald track *Dance Me To The End Of Love* by *Madeleine Peyroux*. Europop fanatics will shine to *Hardcore Mutha F****r* by *DV Roxx*.

"With the last (U.S) election," say *Queer As Folk* creators *Cowen* and *Lipman*, "the advancement of Gay Rights has taken a severe setback. The issue of Gay Marriage has ignited an explosion of invective hatred and prejudice. Constitutions have been changed in at least a dozen States to prevent gay people from ever having the right to marry..."

Queer As Folk sets out to change the world, and change it has. Full of stylish and melodic tracks, *Queer As Folk - The Final Season* is guaranteed to excite. Pop on your dancing shoes and get partying!

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**THE FORGOTTEN ARM
AIMEE MANN
Super Ego Records**



Singer- songwriter *Aimee Mann*'s fifth album *The Forgotten Arm* is the long-awaited follow up to the hit *Lost In Space*.

Written and recorded much like a literary novel, *David Bowie*, *The Band* and *Elton John* fans will enjoy the moving story of *John* and *Caroline*, two star-crossed lovers who meet in Virginia USA, fall in love, go on a road trip and are ultimately headed for trouble...

Much like a modern-day *Romeo and Juliette*, *The Forgotten Arm* is a story that will always stay in listeners' hearts.

Produced by *Joe Henry*; *Oscar*, *Grammy*, and *Golden Globe* nominee *Aimee Mann* displays the talent - once more - that has made her a household name in America.

Opening with the melodic and poignant track *Dear John*, *The Forgotten Arm* immediately commands attention. Layered with smooth guitar riffs, percussive beats, delightful drum rolls and a unique intimacy, this concept album is reminiscent of *Rod Stewart* and *Linda Ronstadt* at their finest.

Vocally understated and pure, *Aimee Mann*'s voice eloquently slides through tracks *Going Through The Motions*, *I Can't Get My Head Around It*, the gospel-influenced *King Of The Jailhouse*, and the haunting ballad *Goodbye Caroline*.

"My friend who boxes had a move called *The Forgotten Arm*. To me (the name) is like the (punch) you never see coming" explains *Mann*.

The uplifting track *Beautiful* showcases *Aimee Mann*'s inspiration and philosophy perfectly. As *Mann* herself sings, "(I) think sharing the burden will lighten the load; so they pack up their troubles in a Cadillac. That's her in the mirror, asleep in the back." Akin to hits such as *Graceland* (*Paul Simon*) and *Road Tripping* (*The Red Hot Chili Peppers*), with a dark twist. *Beautiful* and soulful, (with lyrics included) the journey on the road of *The Forgotten Arm* is a gorgeous one! An album of our times. **Website www.aimeemann.com.**

**SKY HIGH (SOUNDTRACK)
Hollywood Records**

Created by *Walt Disney Pictures*, *Sky High* is a movie for the action buff in us all.

Starring *Kelly Preston* and *Kurt Russell*, everything about the picture screams excitement. And guess what? So does the soundtrack.



Featuring unofficial 1980s anthems *Everybody Wants To Save The World* (Christian Burns), *And She Was* (Keaton Simons) and *True* (Cary Brothers), *Sky High* is already halfway there.

Add uplifting and inspiring tracks such as *I Melt With You* (Bowling For Soup), *Through Being Cool* (They Might Be Giants) and *Twist And Crawl* (Skindred) and: we have a hit!

Often known as Mr Kurt 'Goldie Hawn' Russell and Mrs Kelly 'John Travolta' Preston, the two lead actors have often been underestimated: very true. But, tune into a late night movie and it's clear: the duo can certainly act (and act well).

B-Grade movie and soundtrack *Sky High* is not.

Pop fans will adore *Voices Carry* by Vitamin C. Smooth, with dream-like melodies and captivating climaxes, the song says "hit." Or, for rock fans *Save It For Later* by Flash Brown and *Lies* by The Click Five.

Featuring Walt Disney's trademark photographs and dazzling costumes, the *Sky High* soundtrack cover is as breathtaking as the music, too.

James Reyne lovers will enjoy *One Thing Leads To Another* by Steven Strait, with its stylish vocals and 1980s groove (complete with cute computer sound effects!). *Santana* fans will put their lights on to *Lies* by The Click Five. There is something for most listeners to enjoy and be inspired by on *Sky High*. Produced by music Big-Names Andrew Gunn, Mario Iscovich and Ann Marie Sanderlin, this soundtrack is one for the children (or children at heart!).

(And you get to see Kurt Russell in an action heroes' suit! Maybe he even got to take it home to Goldie?)

UNDER THE RADAR

BRAXTON
ECP Records

Lyrical savvy, Brisbane band *Braxton* are on their way to making a huge name for themselves.

Celebrating the release of their EP *Under The Radar*, the *Braxton* boys recently headed to Melbourne for a series of shows supporting one of the biggest bands in the country, *Bodyjar*.

Armed with gorgeous publicity photos and a 1980s art deco CD cover, *Braxton's* music is as stylish as their image.

The opening track *Unbelievable* is anthemic; with pumping beats and daring lyrics. An ode to one-night stands, they sing "She's been with every guy that I know and she's so unbelievable...I've heard lots of stories that she gives it up and all away."

Fans of 1980s computer tech effects will love *Let's get it on* with its powerful vocals, exciting de-climaxes, and trademark powerful message. When reviewing *Braxton's* EP, it seems that to mention the music but not the lyrical qualities would be illegal. State of the Art and then some.

Wistful *Ghost Town* is haunting and catchy, with gorgeous guitar grooves, captivating mid section, R'n'B influenced



backup vocals, and falsetto. Another anthem for those who love a great party, the song screams 'hit' "On a dance floor in a 'Ghost town', rock and roll's dead they all sing loud. Will a hero let us all know? The bigger they come the harder they fall..."

Consisting of Alex Dempsey, Michael Tramonte, Elliott Hammond and Adrian Karvinen, *Braxton* are bound to have their names mentioned at the ARIA Awards and beyond. "Friends and family: thankyou, we love you" they say, perhaps in rehearsal for that inevitable time?

Set It Off is reminiscent of many 1980s rock anthems - with a new age rock twist! Percussive, smooth, and with rock grooves to delight fans everywhere; the song makes tempo changes and four part harmonies (make that six!) look easy.

The closing track *Always Knew You'd Be A Failure* is stunning: "I always knew you'd be a failure 'cause you live in a dream. And your family don't get along and I can see why you never sleep at night, but yeah ya perfect for me..." Another hit!

Bodyjar can't be mistaken. *Braxton* are the next big thing. Get it while it's hot! **Website: www.braxtonmusic.com**

To read Rachael Herbst's interview with *Braxton* lead singer Elliott Hammond, turn to page 17.

ACOUSTIC (COMPILATION) Mushroom Records/ The Echo Label Ltd

Following massive success in the U.K, *Acoustic* compilation is set to make waves in Australia. Something to suit almost every taste, *Acoustic* brings some of Australia's most coveted artists together in a smooth, easy listening format.

Die-hard fans will adore rarities such as *Throw Your Arms Around Me* (Neil Finn) and *Reckless* (Paul Kelly), or perhaps soulful classics such as *Hallelujah* (Jeff Buckley), rock anthem *Carry On* (Motorace) and folk tune *Special Ones* (George). Nostalgic and stylish, *Acoustic* is more than a compilation. Bringing together the world's most loved singer-songwriters, and 'tributes' to the songs in the soundtracks of our lives, music lovers everywhere will adore the fine *Acoustic* sounds. Perfect accompaniment for a cocktail after work, falling in love, breaking up, dancing, staying in bed with the Chickenpox... and digitally recorded by some of the world's premier artists! Could you ask for more?

New talents such as Aria Award Winner *Missy Higgins*, and jazz legend *Ben Harper* make appearances, as does *Ryan Adams* (no 'B' in front of his first name,) and Album of the Year Winners *Radiohead*.

Already onto its 5th edition in the UK, *Acoustic* already has everything going for it. Prepare for listening pleasure!!!



more reviews over the page

GREG WALSH Live Recording

Live Recording by Greg Walsh is an album to take notice of. Featuring classics such as *The Letter*, *Easy*, and *The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face* as well as the original composition *Money Runs Dry*, there's something to delight everyone.

The poignant *Me and Mrs Jones* is soulful, accompanied by Walsh's breathtaking vocals, while *Smoke Gets In Your Eyes* is nostalgic and delivered in the unique style that sets his outstanding talent apart.

Money Runs Dry showcases this promising Melbourne artists' state-of-the-art song writing ability.

Classically trained, charming and versatile, Greg Walsh makes weaving Contemporary, Blues, Rock, and Country styles (to name a few!) look easy.

A recipient of several awards including winner of Darebin Talent Search, Greg Walsh has been performing throughout Melbourne to acclaim.

Immaculate and flawless, *Live Recording* by Greg Walsh is a perfect accompaniment for dinner with friends, bubble baths and Sunday drives. A great addition to your CD collection and a must have for Christmas Stockings!

To read Rachael Herbst's interview with Greg Walsh, turn to page 18.



DESPERATE HOUSEWIVES (SOUNDTRACK) Hollywood Records

Fans of worldwide smash *Desperate Housewives* will love this one!

Featuring an array of photographic highlights, as well as quotes from the *Desperate Housewives* themselves, the Soundtrack takes listeners behind-the-scenes of Wisteria Lane. "The music truly captures the soul of the show," say creators Mark Cherry and Mitchell Lieb, "the album is a must-have for *Desperate Housewives* fans."

Infiltrated with female vocalists such as KD Lang, Gloria Estefan, Joss Stone and Martina McBride, the *Desperate Housewives* soundtrack is like a disco cross self-help book for the price of a standard CD.

Shoes by Shania Twain is uplifting country at its best (with a hint of 'girl power'), while the remake of 1960s hit *Band of Gold* by Anna Nalick is bitter-sweet and catchy. *Mrs Robinson* by Indigo Girls maintains all of the flavour of the *Simon and Garfunkel* original, with a new percussive twist. Combining a cosmopolitan mix of emotive and powerful odes to the *Desperate Housewives*, the Soundtrack tells of stories many women can relate to. A treat for *Desperate Housewives* fans everywhere.



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BRAXTON

- the next big things

Brisbane band Braxton is a talent to keep a close eye on. Celebrating the release of their EP *Under the Radar* (see review page 15) with a Melbourne tour, they stopped to chat with media writer Rachael Herbst.



Comparisons are odious, but much like ARIA winning band *Jet*, *Braxton* are on their way to making it big. And guess what? They have their own unique sound. (Apologies to the lazy music writers who have compared *Braxton* to *The Carpenters* and *Slim Dusty*). Lead singer Elliott Hammond tells me what makes *Braxton's* sound so different.

"We wanted (music) that wouldn't categorise us into a genre; we definitely make a conscious effort not to go with the 'hardcore' scene. It (forming the band) was kind of like a new beginning for us."

With stunning arrangements, state-of-the-art lyrics and stylish grooves, *Braxton* have achieved a sound that is rapidly sweeping the country.

"We've been together about 18 months now," says Hammond. In this short space of time, the band have performed alongside *The Knockabouts*, *Sounds like Chicken*, *Gauge* and recently toured with one of Australia's most successful bands, *Bodyjar*.

Life on the road can be isolating - wake up, do interviews, do rehearsals, then perform; another day, another motel. Yet, it's very clear that *Braxton* are very

passionate and excited about what they do.

The Brisbane boys know very well of the - often lengthy - periods where simple pleasures like watching the news, having a Sunday barbecue with friends, and seeing family are a rarity. Elliott Hammond explains what keeps the band motivated: "Most of (our) songs are from our time on the road, and a lot of it is kind of looking at what's happening (around us.) It's just the music; that's what got us together in the first place and that's what keeps us going".

Braxton's LP *Under the Radar* is breathtaking - every song is layered with unique sounds and has a powerful message. Given the likelihood of major success, at this very moment, the band members are most likely enjoying the last phase of their lives where they'll be able to buy a carton of milk without fans asking for autographs.

And judging by the polite and charismatic nature of lead singer *Elliott Hammond*; the band is sure to dazzle

Australia (including on the inevitable night when the boys will "do a *Jet*" and 'clean up' at the ARIA awards). Pleasant to the eye, it won't be long until the walls of the bedrooms of Australian girls will be lined with *Braxton* posters while Australian boys might decide to do a speech about their new favourite band (rather than the set topic of photosynthesis!).

"At the end of the day we're a rock band; that's what we do." says Hammond, "We write the music to make people feel good."

And make people feel good *Braxton* does!

There are no comparisons: *Braxton* the band (and the *Under the Radar* LP!) are in a league of their own.

To find out how you can get hold of *Braxton's Under the Radar EP* (ECP RECORDS), or see them perform live, visit their website at www.braxtonmusic.com.

RELAXING WITH GREG WALSH

Spend two minutes with Melbourne musician Greg Walsh and you will be smitten. Friendly, funny and polite, Walsh greeted media writer RACHAEL HERBST with a warm smile and cup of tea (are you under his spell yet readers?).

With his album *Greg Walsh, Live Recording* out (see review on page 16) *Greg Walsh's* - very masculine and handsome - face is one to watch.

"(The music) was starting from when I was really young - I learnt classical piano and played in bands for about five or six years. It just dawned on me that music was what I wanted to do," says the talented singer-songwriter and pianist, "I think you only get one life and you should live that life how you want - otherwise, you'd miss out."

A regular performer at Melbourne's top wineries, restaurants, bistros, cafes, pubs and private functions, *Greg Walsh's* smooth and soulful vocals and music is complementary to good food and great friends.

"(The music) is mostly relaxing. It's also quite varied. I try to include something for everybody, and to move people."

Shedding light on some of the inspirations for his stunning album *Greg Walsh, Live Recording*, Walsh says,

"The skill, I guess, every songwriter's trying to develop is not to get 'preach-y' and put the lyrics in a more entertaining, more (open) way. *Stevie Wonder* is really up there; he's incredible! Incredible voice, incredible feel. I always think of *John Lennon's Imagine* as a good example of a song where the lyrics deliver a powerful message."

A positive outlook and deep thinker, *Greg Walsh* plans to record an original album in the near future. Stand-out track *Money Runs Dry* is an early indication of the dazzling pieces music lovers can expect.

"*Money Runs Dry*; it's not that serious; it's a little bit about everything, including working hard to make a living and (that) if you can't be rich, enjoy the important things in life!" (laughs)

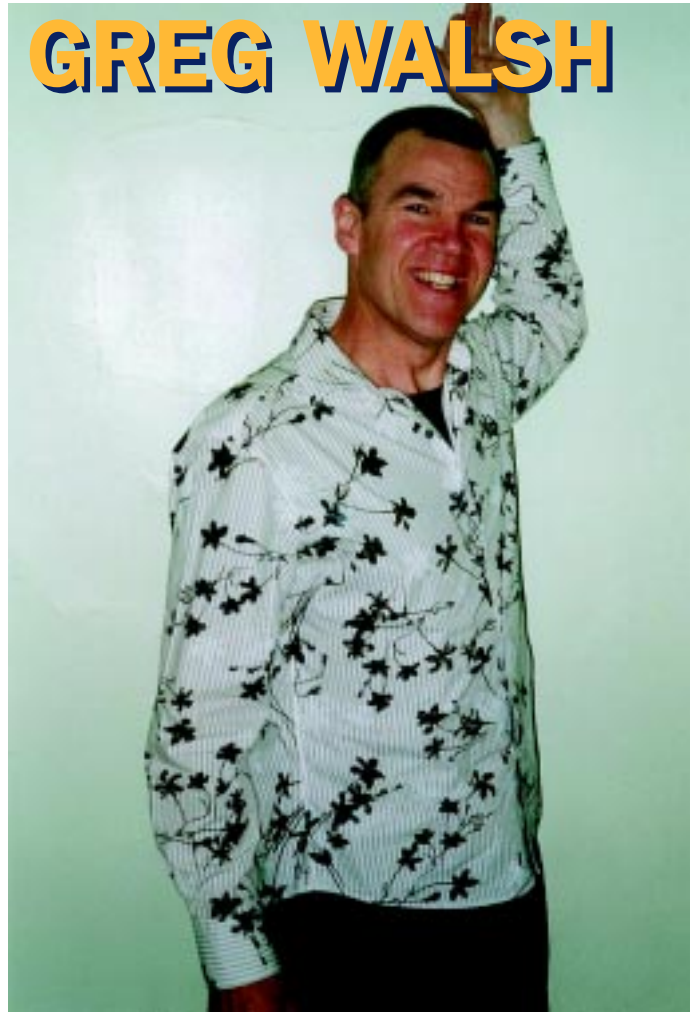
"You've got to relate to a song personally to do it well. I like so many different styles and it's a plus (because) it means also there'll, I hope, be something (to reach) everybody. I like to think that I put my 'stamp' on the (songs)."

Originally from Dunedin in New Zealand, Greg Walsh moved to Auckland, then to Melbourne as a young adult. He has now lived in Melbourne for over 16 years and counting.

Like many musicians, *Greg Walsh* has worked 'odd jobs' to make a living. After deciding his chosen tertiary music course was not for him and then working in a factory, he took the plunge to become a full-time performer.

"I was studying mainly classical and opera and I wanted to try different directions," he says, "(so) I got a factory job to make some money to buy synthesisers etcetera. I guess (when I went into music full-time) it was a stage of life where I'd bought a house and it was paid off. I worked as a Storeman for 10 years and it was a good time to leave."

Citing a familiar story for musicians, he adds: "I had a six week



period of no income (and) went around to (many) places - including agents - and dropped off CDs. I was determined to do it, and then the work started coming.

"After two and a half years I got back into some normal work". Melburnians have highly appraised his work, and he has generally performed at least once a week ever since, with often humorous consequences.

"Sometimes, some people get quite insistent that I should learn a particular song," he laughs, "It (compliments and feedback) is a good morale booster, and if (the music) does it for me then hopefully it will do it for other people as well."

Greg Walsh's repertoire is broad, including *Easy* (Lionel Richie/*Faith No More*), *Fur Elise* (Beethoven), *Crazy* (Seal), *Summertime* (Gershwin), *The Letter* (Joe Cocker), *Flame Trees* (Cold Chisel), *Ballade in G Minor* (Brahms) *Close To You* (The Carpenters), *Knocks Me Off My Feet* (Stevie Wonder), *Piano Man* (Billy Joel), as well as several of his own compositions - to name a small selection! Much like Gershwin himself, placing *Greg Walsh's* music into a genre is difficult - jazz, honky tonk, soul, popular, classical, blues, rock, a 'jack-of-all-trades', he is incredibly versatile.

To get hold of Greg Walsh, Live Recording phone 9481 8236, visit <http://users.bigpond.net.au/gregwalsh>, or email greg.w@bigfoot.com.

Now that the background music has been selected, how about a book to wile away those lazy summer days. **RACHAEL HERBST** provides some ideas.

THE WOMAN I AM
by HELEN REDDY
Harper Collins



Australian-born superstar *Helen Reddy's* memoir *The Woman I Am* gives insight into one of the nation's most misunderstood women. Creating uproar when she changed her citizenship to her adopted country - the U.S - in the 1970s; saying later "(America) was where my talents were free to flourish, away from the 'knockers,'" first impressions of her memoirs tend to indicate that they are anything but 'nice', particularly when referring to her country of birth. However, count the pages where Reddy fondly recalls her Melbourne upbringing, pride in her Australian-based performer parents, and joy at performing in the same room as *John Farnham*, *Julie Anthony* and *Bert Newton* and the misunderstanding clears a little. Recounting her path to unprecedented success in over seven countries including being the first Australian to receive a Grammy Award, a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, movie and Broadway stardom, her role as a feminist icon, prime-time television host, friendships with *Ella Fitzgerald* and duets with *Frank Sinatra*, *The Woman I Am* is inspiring. Exposing the woman behind the myth, *Reddy* also candidly speaks of leaving two abusive marriages, life as a single parent, and a diagnosis of Addison's Disease. Filled with dazzling photographs, readers will adore Reddy's excellent story-telling skills, commentary on the events that have changed the world, and ambition. "I'd seen many Aussies try to crack the American market, hit a brick wall and come back home with a chip-on-the-shoulder attitude. I didn't want to be one of them." The girl who beat the odds.

OUT NOW

FRENCH WOMEN DON'T GET FAT
by MIREILLE GUILIANO
Random House

"Who can resist a book that recommends love and chocolate as part of a balanced diet?" said critic *Allison Peason*. International best-seller *French Women Don't Get Fat* has come to the 'Great Southern Land'. After countless diet books, telling you what you can and can't eat, this is a book with a difference. Witty and amusing, *French Women Don't Get Fat* features recipes (many 'tres easy'), funny anecdotes, countless advice (contrary to what you'll find in those diet books), and stories of women who have followed the French way of life. "The French Paradox, for example," says *Mireille Guiliano*, "has sent countless heart patients and wellness enthusiasts sprinting to the wine store for bottles of red." A migrant to America, *Guiliano* tells of a 10 kilogram weight gain via following the American Way of Life... "My father said 'Tu ressembles a un sac de potatoes' ('You look like a sack of potatoes.') Some things don't sound any prettier in French". The book also covers the emotional side of eating behaviour, and ways to get beyond it (including how to avoid pastry shops.) "For me, avoidance of the pastry shops meant altering my route... buying some fragrant flowers was not only a treat but a defence. I'd sniff them when I came near a bakery." Absorbing, I found putting this book down difficult (much to the dismay of my singing teacher.) Readers who have ever been on such diets as the Straw Diet or Grapefruit Diet will possibly discover the same thing! "Sometimes, even French women gain more weight than can be offset by a week of compensation. We too go through puberty, pregnancy, menopause - all the equilibrium busters. The difference is how we respond," says *Guiliano*. Doubling as a beginners' French lesson, *French Women Don't Get Fat* is informative and fun. A great read!

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GIRLS' NIGHT IN 4

EDITED BY JESSICA ADAMS, MAGGIE ALDERSON,
NICK EARLS AND IMOGEN EDWARDS-JONES
Penguin Books

The fourth in the highly successful *Girls Night In* series, this book is a feast of innovative, funny, compassionate and sassy female authors.

Opening with a foreword by Australia's own Wendy Harmer, *Girls Night In 4* tells over 50 stories that women can relate to: The Casual Boyfriend, The We-Wish-We-Could-Really-Send-It-(Including-To-Our-Boss) Office Email, The Boys Night Out, The Mothers' Group... and true stories of women changing the world.

Raising funds for organisations such as *War Child* and *No Strings*, analysts predict worldwide sales of *Girls' Night In 4* to top one million copies.

Amusing tales such as *Heaven Knows I'm Miserable Now* by Jessica Adams recounts, amongst other things, tales of girls who have left their mobile phone on during the most inappropriate times. "Halfway through *Justin Rushcroft's* funeral (1970 - 2005), his ex girlfriend *Jo McGee* (1975 - present) realised that she had left her mobile phone on. Worse, the offending phone (and it really was offending as it vibrated and flashed pink at incoming calls) was now playing a jaunty version of the *Austin Powers* theme."

For the girl who loves a humanitarian story, *No Strings* is poignant and inspiring, telling of *Miss Piggy*, *Fozzie Bear*, *Kermit the Frog* and *Muppet* friends' expedition to areas affected by war. *Muppet* veterans *Michael K. Frith* and *Kathryn Mullen* decided (in 2003) to create a show educating children living in landmine affected areas about their dangers (and featuring all of their favourite characters!).

Says Wendy Harmer, tellingly: "You can sometimes lose sight of the big wide world on a girls night in; start to focus on what you don't have... You can think of all the places you'd rather be. But these few paragraphs at the front of this book are to remind you that right now, as you sit reading in a peaceful place you are the envy of most women on the planet. For so many of the world's women a girls' night in is a prison sentence."

Often reminding readers of their blessed lives, *Girls Night In 4* is refreshing; taking girls to all four corners of the world, and telling the stories that matter.

Party Planner by Meg Cabat is a hilarious look at the Great Australian office and all of its' email shenanigans.

"Just a reminder that all departments will close at 4.30 PM today so that employees can get an early start on their holiday merrymaking. We hope to see you all at the (staff party) at Les Hautes Manger" writes Charity Webber.

"Just a quick note to let you know how much I appreciate the great job you've done planning this year's (staff party). It must have been a lot more difficult for you than in previous years



when it was in the Senior Staff Dining Room..." replies Andrew Hargrave.

"Shut Up!!" writes Charity Webber to colleague Natasha Roberts, "He's (Andrew) just really cute! I want my response to sound witty and casual. But now all I can think about is his butt."

"I just hope... I don't propose to anyone! Especially since my grandma left me her two-carat diamond cocktail ring and I just happen to have it in my pocket right now..." writes Daniel Carmichael (!!).

How lucky the girls from Oz really are!

An entertaining and witty anthology by contemporary female novelists: *Girls Night In 4* is a must-have. Prepare to be dazzled girls!

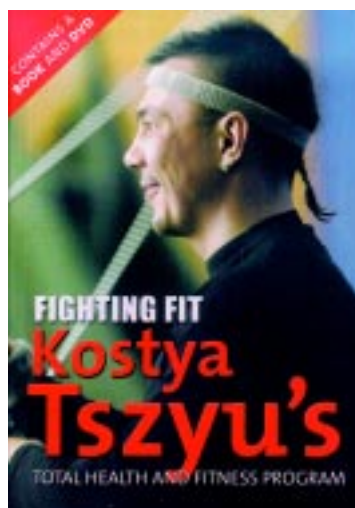
OUT NOW

If you liked 'Girls Night In 4' you'll love these titles (Penguin Books):

- *Girls Night In*
- *Girls Night In 2*
- *Big Night Out*
- *Kids' Night In*

www.girlsnightin.info, www.warchild.org.au, www.nostrings.org

Other enjoyable summer reads.



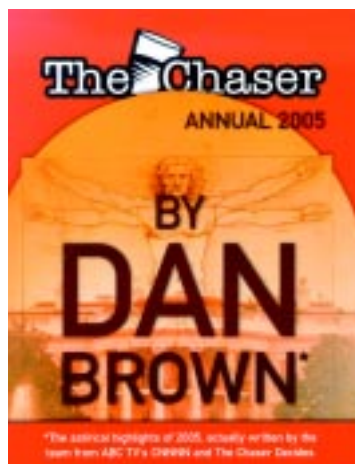
FIGHTING FIT:

Total Health and Fitness Program
Kostya Tszyu RRP: \$45.00

Kostya Tszyu's training, diet and exercise program helped make him a world boxing champion - a sport that produces some of the fittest athletes on earth. Now, using a comprehensive book and an easy-to follow DVD, you can learn Kostya's very own technique for becoming healthier, fitter and more motivated. This program is designed for all levels and experience.

The program contains:

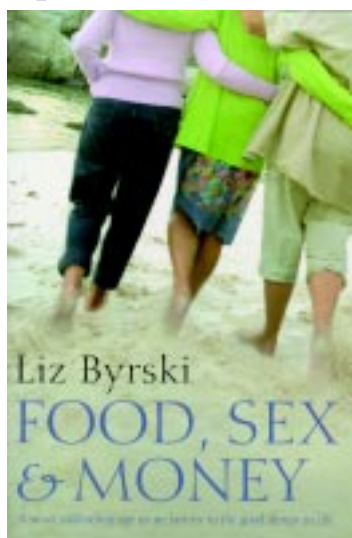
- Kostya's motivational techniques
- Kostya's health and fitness philosophy
- Expert nutritional advice, plans and recipes from Kostya's personal dietician
- Kostya's training tips



THE CHASER ANNUAL 2005:

(not) by Dan Brown RRP: \$25.00

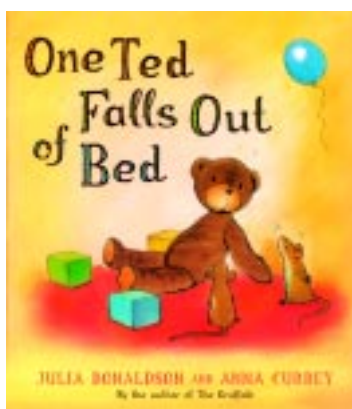
From the winners of the 2005 Logie for Most Outstanding Comedy comes the pick of the year's articles from Australia's fortnightly satirical newspaper. With a cover that will surely take it straight to the best-seller lists, the fifth *Chaser Annual* will have you sniggering like a school kid at the Chaser team's unique take on the year that was.



FOOD, SEX & MONEY

Liz Byrski RRP: \$32.95

It's almost forty years since the three ex-convent girls left school and went their separate ways, but finally they meet again. Bonnie, rocked by the death of her husband, is back in Australia after decades in Europe, and is discovering that financial security doesn't guarantee a fulfilling life. Fran, long divorced, is a struggling freelance food writer, battling with her diet, her bank balance and her relationship with her adult children. And Sylvia, marooned in a passionless marriage to an Anglican minister, is facing a crisis that will crack her world wide open. Together again, sharing their deepest secrets, Bonnie, Fran and Sylvia embark on a creative venture that will challenge everything they thought they knew about themselves - and give them more second chances than they ever could have imagined.

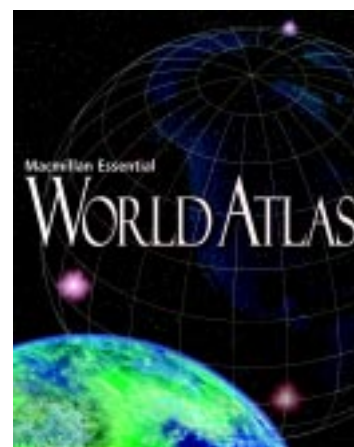


ONE TED FALLS OUT OF BED

Julia Donaldson

Illustrator: Anna Currey RRP: \$14.95

After dark, the only place a ted wants to be is tucked up in bed with his child. But this poor ted has fallen out of bed! Luckily, three mice have got some ideas. They take him on the adventure of his life, zooming off in fast cars, going on a balloon ride and climbing a building block mountain. It's all very exciting, but will it get Ted back to bed?



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SABAH - A SLICE OF NATURAL ASIA

BY STEVEN SCHELOSKE

Now I must be honest. Before embarking on this weeklong trip to Sabah I had very little knowledge of the country let alone the region. However, as I am forever interested in the natural Asia, the Asia that hasn't been overtaken by swarming tourists and sky rise buildings, a one-week sojourn to Sabah was pretty hard to knock back.

Like most of South Eastern Asia it is hot and humid and your introduction to its climate is a harsh one, taking place as soon as the plane lands. Much to my surprise the airport was larger and more advanced than what I was expecting. No bungalows here. After quickly getting our bags we were taken to the Shangri-La Tanjour Aru Resort where we would be staying. Flash accommodation, at this stage, is still ridiculously cheap, and this five star hotel had all the creature comforts of home and then some. As we arrived relatively late in the afternoon we took it pretty easy and had a few drinks at the bar followed by a seafood BBQ on the shore which was to die for. There was chilli crab, lobster and even creamy seafood lasagne. Needless to say we ate and sampled as much as we could. After dinner we decided to have an early night and head off to bed.

Early nights often mean early mornings. My wife and I woke up at the silly time of 6.00am (old habits seem to die hard) but we were rewarded with the most glorious sunrise over a mountain range that I have ever seen. A big part of travelling is the food and Maria and I took our time at this particular breakfast buffet as it offered some different items that had to be sampled, such as traditional Asian breakfast favourites such

as prawn balls, dim sums like I have never tasted before and my personal favourite, the pancakes with coconut jam.

Our first day was spent lounging around the resort - the morning by the pool and the afternoon by the South China Sea. A little R and R is always a good thing. At around 6:00pm the entire resort made its way to the shoreline to witness this coast's most stunning attraction - the sunset. I remember 15 years ago in Bali watching the sunset from some secluded spot that took us an hour to drive to and being left breathless. Well here, in our very own (temporary) backyard I was able to share the same experience this time with my wife in my arms. The sun appeared gigantic as it slowly sank into the sea. Over the next week we would venture down to the shore with our fellow guests and watch this miracle take place night after night, and every time my heart would stop and I would be left speechless.

The next couple of days we explored the capital city of Kota Kinabalu. In all honesty there isn't exactly a great deal to see here. The markets, both day and night, are interesting but lack the energy of other markets in Asia. There was one exception, which was the Filipino Market. This extremely cramped shed, that looked like it once housed a plane, had some bizarre items on offer such as mummified frogs. In general, the shopping is pretty average and the sights are few and far between. As a matter of fact the one attraction that I had read most about, the Atkinson Clock Tower, was devoid of tourists and we seemed to have been the only people for quite some time who had climbed the steep hill to see it up close. This relic of the colonial era is one of the only structures to





have survived the Allied bombing of Jesselton in 1945. The city also features a ridiculous amount of *kedai kopi* (coffee shops) and restaurants, however those stomach-expanding breakfasts left us with no desire for food during the course of the day.

One night we had a hankering for some crazy seafood, so we allowed our taxi driver - who became possessed by Michael Schumacher the moment he took off - to take us to a place that he thought would be best. Actually, it must be said that whilst the taxi drivers are cheap in Borneo they drive like madmen. Not because they are concerned about you being punctual but because they have agreed to a fixed fee before you have jumped in the car. I felt sorry for the cars, the women and children that we pushed out of the way just so that we could get to our restaurant, which at this stage had no name. The place that our driver took us to was a huge open 'barn-looking' place that was filled with hundreds of fish-tanks containing all sorts of marine life - some of which I had never heard of before. Our waiter walked us around the tanks and suggested different ways of cooking these presently live wonders of the sea. We ended up opting for the tiger prawns in a chilli sauce, the elephant nose (which was a type of shell fish) in a butter sauce and some grass-like beans steamed with garlic. The food was so good that we found ourselves back there two days later trying other delectable offerings.

Another night we took our doorman's advice and went to a local restaurant by the name of Sri Melacca. Despite the unfortunate name this place has been around for some thirty years and it's no wonder. There were over one hundred mains on the menu that you could order in three sizes. We ended up ordering seven small traditional dishes that our waitress recommended and a couple of beers, and walked out of there content with full bellies. The best part was that all costs associated with dinner - taxis, beers, and food - was around the AU\$20 mark. How good is that?

Despite my wife's attempts to make it so, our trip wasn't all about dining and shopping. On one day we went on a glass bottom boat tour to see the beautiful coral of the Tunku Abdul Rahman marine park located minutes from the resort. The fish were numerous and colourful. We even saw the clown fish made famous by the cartoon *Finding Nemo*. After the boat trip we went to one of Sabah's many neighbouring coral-fringed islands called Sapi. We were excited about the prospect of seeing monkeys running around on the beach and I was hungry to explore the shore's famous reef. As soon as we got there my wife was quick to spot one of the native monkeys, the long tailed Macaques, and then another one, and then another one followed by about 100 more. For every bronzed tourist that lay on the shore there were half a dozen monkeys plotting to steal their belongings. Equipped with nothing more than hotel towels and my snorkelling gear

we were not that concerned about theft and went into the sea. The water was clear and before long I was surrounded by hundreds of fish representing all the colours of the rainbow and exploring a beautiful underwater garden of coral. I spent hours face down in the water, following the fish and feeling their little teeth against my hands as they searched for food. I burned my back in the process (word of advice, wear a t-shirt) but loved every minute of it. It was the true highlight of the holiday.

We also took a little time out to see the area from a completely different perspective - the sky. I don't know how, but I managed to get my wife to go parasailing with me. What a view and what a ride. The cheeky kids controlling the boat, who I had joked around with beforehand, had the last laugh, dunking us in the water several times which was all good fun even if my wife was not prepared for the event. The view was breathtaking. From our vantage point, we were able to see the islands surrounding the resort as well as the stilt houses many of the locals reside in. Amazingly, one of our fellow holidaymakers commented that while they were parasailing, they managed to spot a turtle swimming in the sea.

On another day we made the trip to the Shangri La's sister hotel that lies at the foot of a mountain and an orangutan sanctuary. Rather than an enclosed environment the orangutans are allowed to roam free in the jungle only coming to the feeding area if they desire to. We were lucky enough to watch two of the 'showmen', eat, play and throw a bit of poo around while running in between our legs. Their faces are filled with such character and their body language is that of a 1920s actor. We spent an hour with these two guys as they entertained us non-stop with their mischievous behaviour. The orangutans originated here in Sabah and whilst they can be seen in zoos around the world there is something to be said about seeing the wild 'men' of Borneo playing in their own native untouched jungle.

Sadly time got the best of us and we ended up missing the two-day trek through the jungle up to the pinnacle of Mt. Kinabalu, one of the highest mountains in south-east Asia, and witnessing the world's largest flowers, the Rafflesia. Of the twelve or so species only found in Borneo and Sumatra, several are unique to Sabah.

Whether it is the service and the hotel, the friendly locals, the dining in the city or swimming amongst the rainbow coloured fish, Sabah is an oasis within Asia. It is really worth exploring now before mass tourism turns this place into just another part of what, for tourists, has become the more familiar Asia.



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