

metrotainment

restaurants, movies, theatre, music, reviews, travel & more



Ken James' social diary

The year in review

LOOKING back at 2006, I have fond memories and moments I shall not forget. Given that this is a social diary and not a political journal, I'll put aside the political unrest around the world and the terrorism that reared its ugly head, and focus on the social highlights that we had.

January gave us the opening night of **Dusty** the musical.

Readers of this column will know how much I enjoyed this all-Aussie show, and I am pleased to report that all looks well for it to open in London and, possibly, Las Vegas.

February heralded the birthdays of two of my favorite ladies: my fiancée **Rosemarie**, and the incredible **Coral Knowles**. Both of these fabulous women make me smile, so celebrating their birthdays was a joy.

In March we enjoyed the **Commonwealth Games** and what a spectacle it was! Australian talent was on show for the world to see. For such a relatively small country, we certainly possess a very talented population both in front of and behind the scenes. I also enjoyed a satirical look at flight attendants with a hilarious performance by Aussie comedian **Caroline Reid** as "**Pam Ann**" at Her Majesty's Theatre.

April had a bit of everything: from attending footy matches to art shows, and enjoying the Easter break in Portsea.

In May we enjoyed the amusing, if slightly silly, production of Gilbert and Sullivan's **The Gondoliers** by Opera Australia. It was fun to catch up with **Reg Livermore** from the cast. In May this year, Reg will again be

working for the opera company alongside **Anthony Warlow** in the eagerly awaited **Pirates of Penzance**. We also had the pleasure of attending an evening with American comedian **Joan Rivers**. This entertaining, if rather 'R' rated performance, gave us an incisive and cynical look at life through her eyes.

July saw us enjoying a sizzling performance of **Burn the Floor** at Palms at Crown. This high-energy production directed and choreographed by **Jason Gilkison** was a stand-out. Another highlight was **Swan Lake on Ice** by the **Imperial Ice Stars** at the Princes theatre. **Elaine Mariner**, wife of theatre owner **David**, was very excited about this production. And so she should: it was world class.

The first ten days of August were spent lazing away at **Clifton Beach** in Far North Queensland, just thirty minutes from **Cairns**. We were guests of an ex-pat Melbourne friend who now resides in what he and his partner call their "little piece of paradise". On returning to Melbourne we had the good fortune to see **I am my own Wife** at the Malthouse Theatre. This one-man tour de force by the very talented **Jefferson Mays** was an outstanding piece of theatre. If ever you get the opportunity to see this remarkable play, please do so.

We also attended the opening nights of the Production Company's **Pyjama Game** and the MTC's, **The Give and Take**. The month also featured surprise parties by the respective partners and friends of

John Michael Howson and **Variety Club president Doug Christie**. The other significant birthday celebration was for my dear friend **Trish Neilson**. This "Glamma", as she calls herself, really knows how to party.

The month of September will always bring back memories of that

infamous day on September 11, 2001, when the world stopped to witness a single act of terrorism on a scale never seen

before. Although it has been five years, the memories will never fade. But as I said, this is not a political journal, so back to happier times.

We enjoyed attending the 120-year anniversary of the **Grand Hotel** opened by **Dame Elizabeth Murdoch**. The Grand was refurbished by wealthy businessman **Les Erdi** who has created another Melbourne land mark for locals and tourists alike to admire and enjoy. That same week we attended a special performance by the **Supremes** to raise funds for the **Neo Natal Unit at the Royal Children's Hospital**.

The highlight in November is always the **Spring Racing Carnival** and spending as much time in the Bird Cage marquees as watching the horses go round, followed closely by my birthday celebrations. This birthday was certainly one to remember. Come to think of it... most of it was a blur.

Another great party we attended was a spectacular event thrown by English visitors **John Reid** and his partner **James Thompson** in their sumptuous Brighton home. I think John and James might like to call Australia home one day. The MTC gave us belly laughs with **Tom Foolery**, and Opera Australia's last three works of the season, **Turandot**, **Marriage of Figaro** and **Julius Caesar** left us appreciating what a talented opera company we have.

December became party month as well with a fabulous house warming given by businessman **Vincent Chiodo** in his



ACT II of Opera Australia's 'The Gondoliers'. Photo courtesy of Jeff Busby.

magnificent new home in Brighton's Golden Mile. We had Christmas drinks with former Melbourne model **Pam Watkins**. Then it was off to **Riva's** Christmas party, thrown by owner **Drew Bellmaine** for 800 of his closest friends.

It was also with great delight we accepted an invitation from **John** and **Barbara Gilbert** of Black Rock to join them for drinks. John was the financier behind **Dusty** to the tune of six million dollars. In show business these people are referred to as "angels". I'm sure producer **Denis Smith** thinks so. Tuesday 12th we walked the red carpet at the Melbourne premier of the animated film **Happy Feet**, with director **George Miller** and one of the stars, **Magda Szubanski**.

Christmas was a quiet affair with the best present being the delivery of a beautiful baby boy **Louis Domenic Peacock** born December 8 to Rosemarie's daughter, **Kristen** and her husband **Rod**.

I hope you all had a safe and enjoyable 2006 and enjoyed my column throughout the year. I look forward to sharing more of my experiences with you this year.

Till then, regards, Ken James.



Dusty



Pam Ann



Esther Cvejic, John and Molly Kasriel at the 2006 Melbourne Cup.

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Entertainment with Gary Turner



Coming tours

ANDREW McManus will bring the legendary **Crosby Stills & Nash** to Rochford Wines Yarra Valley on Saturday February 24 supported by **The Black Sorrows** with **Vika & Linda**. It's an amazing coup by McManus to get the group to tour Australia. This will be the only Victorian show with tickets on sale this week. Crosby Stills & Nash started recording in California in 1969 and their debut album sold over two million copies, and the group won a Grammy as Best New Artists of 1969. The group's light, acoustic sound, soaring harmonies, immaculate studio production, and talented arrangements are artistically refreshing and they have earned their place in the pantheon of supergroups. Tickets 136 100. www.crosbystillsnash.com. Their greatest hits album is out now through Warner Music. Check out www.warnermusic.com.au or www.rochfordwines.com

The New Capers in Hawthorn will continue some great acoustic shows in 2007 commencing with **Jon Stevens** appearing on Thursday January 25. **Diesel** will appear on Sunday January 28. **Ross Wilson** on Friday February 2nd, **Jon English** Thursday February 15th, **James Reyne** Friday February 16 and **Billy Thorpe** Thursday February 22nd. Tickets 9819-1797. www.newcapers.com.au

New CD & DVD releases

Australian Idol winner **Damien Leith** has shot to No.1 on the Top 50 singles chart with his debut single *Night of My Life*. Seventy thousand copies of his single have been delivered to record stores around the



country to cope with the demand. *Night of My Life* (Sony/BMG) is the fastest selling single released by Sony/BMG. Leith has already earned a gold disc for the single.

MRA has released *Air Supply: It Was 30 Years Ago Today 1975-2005* recorded live at the Casino

Rama in Ontario, Canada in 2004. Featuring 16 live tracks including the hits *Now and Forever*, *Even the Nights Are Better*, *Two Less People in the World*, *Lost in Love*, *All Out of Love* and more. **Air Supply** was formed by Russell Hitchcock and Graham Russell in 1976. The group was largely ignored in Australia but topped the US charts with seven Top 40 singles. Available at all CD stores RRP \$6.95. www.mraentertainment.com

EMI Music has released **ROXETTE HITS** (Capitol) featuring 20 of their greatest hits including *The Look*, *Dressed for Success*, *Listen to Your Heart*, *One Wish*, *It Must Have Been Love*, *How Do You Do!* and more. Check out www.roxette.se

The 12th Man's new album *Boned!* (EMI) has beaten all the competition to debut at

No 1. on the ARIA Chart and also top the iTunes Top Albums chart.

Already Triple Platinum after just one week of sales, *Boned!* has easily swung past albums by Damien Leith, U2, the Beatles and Robbie Williams. www.myspace.com/the12thmanbillybirmingham

Central Station is the renowned club and dance mix label of Australia. The latest Wild edition is *Wild Summer 07* (Central Station) is now available in CD/DVD containing the latest dance tracks including *Hush Boy* by Basement Jaax, *Watching You - Rogue Traders*, *Lost - Roger Sanchez*, *Dreams - Deep Dish*, *Flaunt It - TV Rock* plus tracks from *Bob Sinclair*, *Leo Sayer*, *The Audio Thieves*, *Armin van Buuren*, *The Stafford Brothers* and more. The DVD features 31 video clips including *Bob Sinclair*, *Infernal*, *TV Rock*, *Tiesto*, *Bananarama*, *Danni Minogue*, *Smash n Grab*, *Coolio feat Snoop Dogg* and more. Check out the new web www.centralstation.com.au and answer a simple question for your chance to win \$1,000 worth of CD's and DVD's



Huey Lewis & The News release *Greatest Hits* (Capitol) featuring all their chart hits including *The Power Of Love*, *I Want a New Drug*, *Stuck With You*, *Jacob's Ladder*, *If This is It*, *Do You Believe in Love*, *Heart And Soul*, *Hip To Be Square* and more. www.musichead.com.au



The long awaited *Crusty Demons: Hard Metal Collection Volumes 1-10* (MRA) is

now out in a specially designed box set (tin). This is the best Crusty Demons collection ever with 10 of the most awesome Crusty releases. www.mraentertainment.com. RRP \$99.

It has not taken long for **Bindi Irwin** to set off in her father's foot steps. Bindi has released her own DVD/CD *Bindi Kidfitness* with Steve Irwin and the Crocmen (EMI) rated G a special DVD & CD set. Featuring 9 fantastic new songs, Bindi and The Crocmen perform a series of aerobic style dances. Bindi also suggests lots of healthy exercises and teach kids some great facts about her favourite wild animals all packed with a powerful, healthy punch. *Bindi Kidfitness* RRP \$29.95 in all good DVD/CD stores now. www.musichead.com.au

Also from the MRA collection comes *Prehistoric Park 2* DVD set from the award winning producers of *Walking with Dinosaurs* comes this real adventure. 99.9% of creatures that have ever lived on this planet are now extinct. Imagine if you could travel back in time and see them.

You are about to go back in time and experience a prehistoric invasion. Welcome to Prehistoric Park! Special features include interactive animal stats and facts, the making of Prehistoric Park, storyboards and picture gallery. Rated PG, sells \$49.95 RRP www.mraentertainment.com.

Blame it on the Bossa Nova - the dance of love

DIRECT from Rio de Janeiro, eight masterful musicians will turn Melbourne's Spanish Club into a Bossa Nova Hot Club for an evening of seductive beats, samba rhythms and laid-back cool jazz. This special night of music is a rare opportunity to experience four living legends, backed by a bossa nova quartet, as they deliver the romance and rhythms of the music that seduced the world.

Composer Marcos Valle will direct one of Brazil's most fabled divas Wanda Sá, the man credited with inventing the bossa nova rhythm João Donato on jazz piano, and one of the original members of the bossa nova movement, Roberto Menescal, on guitar.

Marcos Valle has worked with everyone from Sergio Mendes to Frank Sinatra and Sarah Vaughan. He has composed many great bossa nova classics, in particular 'Samba de Verão' (So Nice), 'Os Grilos' and 'Batucada'. In recent years Valle's music has been rediscovered by a new generation of DJs and producers, including Sterolab and The Black Eyed Peas.

Bossa Nova is a long love story between two apparently different musical worlds: Brazilian samba and American modern jazz. It was in the early 1950s that musicians such as João Donato, João Gilberto, Antonio Carlos Jobin and Eumir Deodato began to expand the scope of their popular dance music by adopting modern jazz harmonies and jazz-oriented improvisation. Some forty years later, the spirit and passion of bossa nova lives on. Its influence on contemporary music is heard on countless remix albums, Brazilian lounge collections, and by hip producers and DJs worldwide.

Where: Melbourne Spanish Club 59-61 Johnston Street Fitzroy
When: Thurs 18 and Fri 19 January 2007
Price: \$40 plus bf (over 18s only venue)
Bookings: The Corner Box Office 57 Swan Street Richmond 03 9427 9198. Melbourne Spanish Club, 59-61 Johnston St, Fitzroy.



WIN WIN WIN
To win one of 10 double passes for either **January 18 or 19**, write your name, address, telephone number, email, age and sex at the back of an envelope and send it to "**Bossa Nova**", metro news, PO Box 2224, St Kilda West, 3182, by **Tues 16 Jan.**

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Happenings in your neck of the woods

A snapshot of some of the *priceless* local activities available in the cities of Melbourne, Port Phillip, Glen Eira, Bayside, Yarra, Boroondara and Kingston.

PORT PHILLIP



St Kilda Beach Night Market - Every Thursday
5pm - 10pm over Summer

In the beautiful and historic O' Donnell Gardens Acland Street.

Over 75 stalls offering market goers an alternative mix of stalls & goods: clothing, jewelry, massage, candles, plants, second hand cloths, fabrics, beads, art work & crafts. Ambient music, lanterns & fire twirling add to the color of the night, local community groups will raise awareness & funds through the BBQ.

12th Annual Pride March

Sunday 21 Jan

Assemble Cnr Lakeside Dve and Fitzroy Street St Kilda from 3.00pm. March commences down Fitzroy St at 5pm sharp. The march will conclude with a free concert at the Catani Gardens till 11pm. Concert features the Money Online Stage, The Saturday Night Greyhound Karaoke Stage, great food and 2 licensed bars with all profits donated to Pride March.

St Kilda Festival

Sunday 11 Feb 9am - 11.59pm.

Australia's premier outdoor street festival returns. It's free music, it's summer, it's extreme sports and of course much much more. And that's just the one day! Kicking off from Feb 3rd and going right through to Feb 11th, this year the Festival runs for a full eight days, featuring events such as: **Yalukit Wilam Ngargee - Sat 3 Feb, 8am-8pm.** O'Donnell Gardens Acland Street. Free outdoor Indigenous Festival featuring music, dance and Indigenous culture.

MELBOURNE



Bossa Negra - Sunday 14 January, Time: 12pm - 2pm

Location: Marquee cnr Queen & Victoria St
Bossa Negra invokes the excitement of Brazil's crazy carnivals and the exhilarating nightlife of Rio de Janeiro. This bands repertoire includes the styles of samba, frevo, maracatu, forro, Brazilian pop as well as the famous bossa nova that dominated the world since the 1960's

Twilight Rhythms

Enjoy a series of enchanting evenings of music under the stars. Salsa, swing or dance freestyle to the sounds of various music styles.

Saturdays and Sundays, 13 Jan to 4 Feb, 7:30pm to 9:30pm. Free.

Location: Fitzroy Gardens, Stage Lawn, opp. Model Tudor Village. Melway ref: 2G C3

Twilight Moves

Free dance lessons sure to get you grooving the night away. Each week will feature a different dance style including swing, funk, Bollywood & Latin.

Sundays, 14 Jan to 4 Feb, 7pm to 7.30pm (dance lesson), then groove on to the Twilight Rhythm session (7.30pm to 9.30pm).

Location: Fitzroy Gardens, Stage Lawn, opp. Model Tudor Village. Melway ref: 2G C3

14 January: Swing - Swing Patrol - big, bold and funky

Batting for the Battlers Celebrity Charity Cricket Match, Sun 4 Feb



Ross Gregory Oval, Cnr Lakeside Drive & Fitzroy St, St Kilda (opp Junction Oval)

Cost: Not free but only a gold coin donation
The famous and the infamous will pick their sides and take to the field to raise money for St Kilda's Sacred Heart Mission.

The match will include Joel Edgerton, John Jarrett, Gary Sweet and son Frank, Dermott Brereton, James Brayshaw, Dave Hughes, Russell Gilbert, Brett Tucker, Lisa McCune, Shane Bourne, Damien Oliver, Robert Taylor, Des Dowling, David Lightfoot, Steve Whittaker aka The King of Tonga, Geoff Morrell, Aaron Pedersen, Michael Veitch and many more.

Those not taking to the field will take turns on the commentary mics, cracking jokes and sending up the players, making for an incredibly entertaining and hilarious day.

Musicians Ross Wilson & the Urban Legends, Nick Barker and Phil Ceberano will play sets at half-time and after the match.

David Hobson will sing the National Anthem backed by Sacred Heart Mission's Choir of Hard Knocks. Nova 100.3 FM's Casanovas will broadcast live crosses from the ground.

There will also be a half-time auction of goods donated by St Kilda retailers plus the painting used for the poster/billboards by Archibald Prize winner Lewis Miller. Bring the kids early to take part in a Kids Cricket Clinic with St Kilda Cricket Club players at 9.30am.

Plenty of food, beer, wine, soft drinks and juices will be available from our bars - so no BYO!

Contact Phoebe Wilson on 9537 1166 for more info, or for marquee bookings.

Animal Farm - Tuesday 16, 18, 23, 25 January. 10am - 2pm

Location: I Shed
Country meets city as the ever popular Gum Gully Animal Farm returns to Queen Victoria Market. Pat and feed farm animals - it's an experience kids will really treasure!

21 January: Funk - Arch Ilias - an explosion of funk

28 January: Bollywood - Jhanak Dance Company - Classical Indian fused with Western techniques

4 February: Latin - Viva Dance - this fiery dance style will make your body move

The Fairy Factor - Daily, 2 to 14 January, 10am and 12noon (1 hour performance)

Location: Fitzroy Gardens, near the Fairies' Tree. Melway ref: 2G C3

Fairy King Fuss-a-Lot invites young fairies and wizards to the Grand Fairy Ball. Dress up in your favourite fairy costume for some enchanting fairy fun.

For more info about free Summer Fun in the City events, visit www.thatsmelbourne.com.au



STONNINGTON

Jazz in the Gardens - Sun 14 Jan 2007 6pm

Proudly presented by the City Of Stonnington. Perfect for a summer's evening, bring a picnic, rug, friends and family and relax with the cool sounds of the Stonnington Gardens Jazz Showband with special guests.

Features - Bob Sedergreen (keyboards), Jon Chidgey (bass), Dene Ford (guitar/vocals), Sonja Horbelt (drums), David Gardiner (tenor saxophone/clarinet), Malcolm Sedergreen (soprano/alto saxophone) and Dave Palmer (trombone/vocals).

VICTORIA GARDENS - Fri 26 Jan 6pm. Special guests Judy Jacques and Sandro Donati.

MALVERN GARDENS - Sun 28 Jan 6pm. Special guests Annemarie Sharry and the South of the River Gospel Choir.

ARDRIE PARK - Sun 4 Feb 6pm. Special guests Kerri Simpson and Shonah and Lamine Sonko African percussion group.
Visit www.stonnington.vic.gov.au or phone 8290 1333. In the event of wet weather concerts may be cancelled.



PRINCES GARDENS - Sun 11 Feb 5.30pm. Special guests Jerome Smith and Geoff Achison.

CENTRAL PARK - Special guests Axle Whitehead, Julie O'Hara, Nilusha Baeder and the Stonnington Youth Jazz Ensemble featuring Allan Browne.

KINGSTON

Busking by the Bay

The Australian Fiddle Music School will be playing their strings with passion and colour to make your bayside experience in Kingston one to remember. Look out for the playful fiddlers at these locations and times:

Assembled Kingston Musician's - 7-9pm Sun 14 Jan. Mordialloc Foreshore, (near pier)

The Mandolin Group - 7-9pm Sun 21 Jan. Parkdale Foreshore (end of Parkers Road)

Kingston Strings - 1-3pm Sat 3 Feb. The Strand (cnr Nepean Hwy), Chelsea

Summer by the Bay

This summer, "Seaweed Sally" will be visiting Mordialloc and Chelsea foreshores as part of Kingston's Summer by the Bay program. Children accompanied by an adult will have the chance to see and touch live sea animals, learn more about the beach environment and go into the draw to win a family pass to the Melbourne Aquarium.

Look out for Seaweed Sally at Peter Scullin Reserve in Mordialloc and at Victory Park at Chelsea foreshore between **11am and 3pm on: Thursday 11th Jan** (Mordialloc Foreshore), **Saturday 13th Jan** (Chelsea Foreshore), **Thursday 18th Jan** (Chelsea Foreshore), **Saturday 20th Jan** (Mordialloc Foreshore) and **Thursday 25th Jan** (Mordialloc Foreshore)

Whale Rider (Te Kaieke Tohora) (PG) 9pm, Saturday 20 January

Namatjira Park, Springs Road, Clayton South (Melways Ref: 79 A4)

On the east coast of NZ, the Whangara people believe their presence there dates back a thousand years or more to a single ancestor, Paikea, who escaped death when his canoe capsized by riding to shore on the back of a whale. From then on, Whangara chiefs, always the first-born, always male, have been considered Paikea's direct descendants. Pai, an 11-year-old girl in a patriarchal NZ tribe, believes she is destined to be the new chief. But her grandfather Koro is bound by tradition to pick a male leader. Enquiries: Catherine Rinaudo on 9581 4692

Higher learning

- *The Student Chronicles*. By Alice Garner, The Miegunyah Press, \$24.95

THE STUDENT CHRONICLES is Alice Garner's provocative and gripping meditation on her university years. Garner's book tells the story of the share-house dramas, friends, tiffs and study routines familiar to uni graduates and also tizzes out the debates that characterised her student days.

As a coming-of-age book, Garner also candidly describes the challenges of finding herself and striking out alone. Alice Garner is best known as the daughter of the well-known writer Helen Garner and also as an actor. Garner has had roles in a number of productions including the ABC-TV series *SeaChange* and in the film *Love and Other Catastrophes*.

Her latest work is in Ray Lawrence's feature *Jindabyne*. Garner is also a historian with a doctorate in History from Melbourne University, where she held a Vice-Chancellor's Fellowship in 2005-06, a musician and refugee advocate.

WIN WIN WIN

To win one of five copies of Alice Garner's book, valued at \$24.95, write your name, address, telephone number, email, age and sex at the back of an envelope and send it to "The Student Chronicles", metro news, PO Box 2224, St Kilda West, 3182, by Tuesday 30 January.

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Film Reviews

by Marcus Sinclair

CHARLOTTE'S WEB (G)

Based on the book by E B White about a spider that saves a pig from being slaughtered for the Christmas festivities, is lovingly brought to the screen by Gary Winick. It's a mixture of computer animation and real actors. The characters - especially the pig, Wilbur, and the spider, Charlotte, are beautifully developed, though the humans leave much to be desired. But the pity, of it all, is that for all the film's attention to detail and moral message, *Babe* (95) and its sequel have stolen its thunder.



UNACCOMPANIED MINORS (PG)

will delight young adolescents. A group of kids who are stranded in an airport over the Christmas holiday period, get bored and are hated by the airport manager who tries to keep them confined to a large room. The kids make their escape, cause mayhem in doing so and live happily ever after. Director Paul Feig keeps it all moving along nicely.

BLACK DAHLIA (MA)

Brian De Palma's **BLACK DAHLIA** (MA), a lavish production which gives great attention to detail, brings the period of the 1940s to life. But the plot is convoluted and there are too many whys and whats unanswered. It stars Scarlett Johansson, Josh Hartnett, Aaron Eckhart and Hilary Swank. The story is based on an actual brutal murder that took place in Hollywood, and which James Ellroy wove into his LAPD novel about cynicism, decadence and corruption with a plausible solution. Highlights are the boxing sequence and the death in the stairwell.



PAN'S LABYRINTH (MA)

Set during the last days of the Spanish Civil War, Guillermo del Toro's **PAN'S LABYRINTH** (MA) is a unique mix of realism and fantasy, which focuses on fear, brutality and subterfuge. An attractive woman travels to a remote area with her teenage daughter to be reunited with her husband for the birth of her baby. He is a brutal man- an army commander who is vain and completely devoid of compassion. The daughter, to escape from the harsh reality of her life, escapes into a world of fairy stories peopled with monsters and is given tasks to restore a kingdom to its former glory. Del Toro knows how to create atmosphere and tension, and his monsters are superb - straight out of the tales of the Brothers Grimm. All the characters are well developed, as are the situations in which they find themselves. Not for the squeamish, however, this film is WELL worth viewing.



ERAGON (M)

Sword and sorcery is alive and well with Stefan Fangmeier's **ERAGON** (M) and will give devotees of video games and books by Christopher Paolini a great deal of enjoyment. It's the same old tale: a young hero arises from the common people to free the land from a vicious tyrant. On the way he comes into contact with a beautiful princess, a wise man and, in this story, a dragon with which he communicates by mental telepathy. The scenery is magnificent, and there is plenty of action. The special effects, especially those dealing with the dragon, are quite impressive. However, the sets are limited, but suffice to create an atmosphere of a world long since gone (if it ever existed). **ERAGON** is a poor man's version of *The Lord of the Rings*. Overall, it never really convinces as the acting is just adequate. The wonder is that such talents as Jeremy Irons and John Malkovich would bother with such roles in this overworked nonsense.



THE HOLIDAY (M)

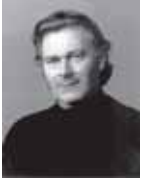
A VERY long film dealing with two young women with man problems who, in order to escape them, exchange houses (England and US) for the Christmas/New Year period. It stars Cameron Diaz, Kate Winslet, Jack Black, Jude Law, Rufus Sewell and Eli Wallach. All give relaxed performances. Director Nancy Meyers has produced a work that is the equivalent of a Mills and Boon novel: thin story line, stock characters and situations, and a predictable conclusion. The LA scenery/sets are the usual: lavish and English picture- postcard- perfect.



Live Theatre

with Blair Edgar

OAM is a former Opera Director & Founding & Life Member of the Green Room



Get me to the arts on time

LET'S NOT pretend. We all know that Arts is a "minor" government portfolio and it has had some strange bedfellows in the past. This time around it's playing second fiddle to Public Transport.



Entertaining Mr Sloan, Bob Hornery, Richard Piper & Amanda Muggleton (Photo credit Earl Carter)

Minister Lynne Kosky has been moved from Education to Public Transport and the Arts. So perhaps she will be able to get audiences into arts events on time.

It can only be hoped that she knows more about the Arts and has more commitment than her predecessor. Kosky's earlier web site says she is an enthusiastic painter, of what, it does not say.

Let's hope also that the in-coming Opposition spokesperson for the Arts is more vocal and shows more interest than her predecessor. Her silence was deafening.

MTC mixes it up

The MTC 2007 season shows an interesting mix of plays. There will be some that have become minor classics and some that are adventurous, new work. This is as it should be.

Joe Orton, David Williamson, Arthur Miller, Edward Albee, Jean Giraudoux, are all represented along with **Hannie Rayson, Shelagh Stephenson, Martin McDonagh, Alan Bennett and Ross Mueller**.

The final offering for the season is Giraudoux's, *The Mad Woman of Chaillot*. The mad woman and her so-called mad women friends from the Parisian precincts join forces to stop developers digging up Paris to get at oil. The role has attracted some great actresses and was a triumph for **Katharine Hepburn**. It also served **Angela Lansbury** well in the musical version entitled, *Dear World* by **Jerry Herman**.

So, it will provide a challenge and vehicle for the talents of **Magda Szubanski** when she "...wakes in the morning, and takes her hair out of the draw and her teeth out of the glass..."

Amanda Muggleton will be in *Entertaining Mr Sloane*, and **John Stanton and Janet Andrewartha** will

essay *All My Sons*. Muggleton and Szubanski will bookend the season.

All work, no pay

There are some shonky people around and young performers are their victims. Once again I am hearing of people styling themselves as management. "Mismanagements" would be more like it. They promise fees, and then they stage things and don't pay their performers.

We all know how much artists want to work. However you have to get tough, kids. Strike a deal. Performance fees should be paid before, or immediately after a performance.

No pay? You just don't show up for the next one. Leave "management" to explain why to their audience. You met your obligation, it's up to them to meet theirs, or go out of business.

Not a good year

2006 was not a good year for the theatre. There was a lot of floundering about and sunfishing around. A plethora of so-called festivals definitely didn't help. Every tin pot corner of town was sticking on a festival and pulling focus away from what needs to be done.

Self starters look like emerging again in 2007 as people open and restructure venues that can do the hard yards and create the life and controversy that feeds the Arts culture.

Personalities must emerge and debate must open. We don't need to know about the managers, we want to know about the artists. If the media would push the theatre in the same way it overloads us with red carpet nonentities we might find a more willing audience.

Pages are devoted to film and TV but what about the source of it all, live theatre?



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Off and Away... Country racing is odds on favourite to win this summer

Put away the beach towel and grab the picnic blanket instead. Racegoers and families are set for a bonanza of country racing right through January

SUMMERTIME is about sun, sea and surf. Right? Of course. But that's not all there is to do. It's time to take our sights away from the coast and look inwards. Regional Victoria is hosting some fabulous days out this month.

Country racing for one is on a roll. It's a popular activity for serious punters as well as families who just want a great day out.

This January, the Kids' Summer of Country Racing program will keep littlies busy with live entertainment, games, competitions, give-aways, and activities, while Mum and Dad can enjoy the track, take up the excellent dining facilities on offer, or just relax on the lawn and take in the country atmosphere.

And while you're having a heap of fun, you'll be supporting country Victorians as well. A recent study has found that country racing adds about



one billion dollars to the state economy and more than \$800 million goes to regional Victorians themselves.

Have a look at Mornington on January 6, Cranbourne on the 11th. Or why not head for Warrnambool on the 14th, Kilmore on the 21st and Hanging Rock for Australia Day on the 26th. For a full list go to www.countryracing.com.au

Picnic racing at Hanging Rock



The China trail

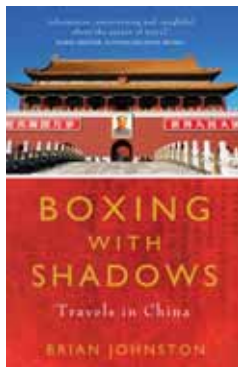
BOXING WITH SHADOWS – Travels in China

By Brian Johnston, MUP, \$22.95

BRIAN Johnston's, *Boxing with Shadows - Travels in China*, is a timely account of one of the world's fast-changing and fascinating nations. This award-winning I writer describes his two-and-a-half years spent living and travelling in China with honesty and great perception and the result is a powerfully evocative, engaging, witty and humorous book.

Humorous encounters with a TV crew, a snake, a drunken shoe salesman and China's most famous rock star are interwoven with observations about culture, politics and ethnic minorities, as well as, personal reflections and descriptions of the landscape.

Brian Johnston is an Irishman born in Nigeria and raised in England and



Switzerland. He contributes travel and other feature articles to travel magazines and websites, and to newspapers such as the Sydney Morning Herald, and New Zealand Herald.

In 2004 Brian won the prestigious Australian Travel Writer of the Year Award. He is the author of three travel books including *Into the Never-Never: Travels in Australia and Sicilian Summer*.

WIN WIN WIN

To win one of five copies of **BOXING WITH SHADOWS - Travels in China** valued at \$22.95, write your name, address, telephone number, email, age and sex at the back of an envelope and send it to "Boxing with Shadows", metro news, PO Box 2224, St Kilda West, 3182, by Tuesday 30 January.

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