



PixelPapers the Sixteenth.

1 July, 2001.

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Editorial

PixelPapers 16 is open for contributions during July, with two noteworthy innovations.

[The live index](#) will take advantage of the medium so that readers will be able to track through past issues at the click of a mouse,

navigating at will through our considerable compendium of stories, articles and poems as well as listing contributors' books. So far, I've woven my way through issues 1 - 4 and have been impressed with the coverage and quality of our writers. I hope to complete the job over the next three months, but later issues will be slower to process as the links are much more specific.

I intend also to use more graphic material as my ISP has generously added another 10MB of space to the website. I've put up some [photographs](#) of places about my fair state (Sadly, I don't travel east any more.). It won't be quite Perthcam, but it should be interesting and I'll try to have something new every few weeks. (If you have an interest in British scenery, especially Cornwall, have a look at [cornwallcam](#) where the amazing Charles Winpenny produces a new suite of photographs three or four times per week. The [BBC](#) site is also rich in regional photographic material.)

From time to time I've mused about the diminishing opportunities for the publication of creative work, but have suspected that my perceptions were tainted by the fact that in my state our newspapers have become tabloids and our sole literary magazine is now an uncertain annual.

I was therefore interested to catch a piece on the News Hour of PBS via SBS, noting the sudden decline of book reviews in some major USA broadsheets. It seems that cost pressures are to blame, as there is relatively little return for these pages.

It is a pity that publication of creative works and literary comment is to be subject to the dictates of the dollar.

The internet rates literature very lowly as a sub-set of entertainment or culture, so perhaps the older forms are being replaced by the new with films, song lyrics, video clips and rap lines! What a prospect!

Writers of glossy reports must be feeling a chill of apprehension from a recent stricture by Western Australia's premier, Dr Geoff

Gallop, banning their works. It is a movement that could spread coast to coast like a virus, so that the poor souls will have to revert to using plain text, triple spaced, of course, to spread their insubstantial messages across as many pages as possible.

The arts world spends enough on fairly meaningless, windy glossies to support not a few struggling artists.

Wordsworth

absolutely has figured in a recent advertising campaign where the word is used in colloquial fashion as an implied affirmative response as if it is stronger and more emphatic than a simple "yes". It means, "independently, in and by itself; arbitrarily, without external control; without qualification -" (COD) and would seem to be better used in responding to questions about compliance with a maintenance programme rather than response to comparatively mundane airline matters, few of which are not really subject to some qualification by the airline due to weather, industrial disputes or even possible failure to achieve absolute compliance with that maintenance programme. It is fascinating that the chosen slogan is phonemically close to **absolution**, the, "Formal setting free from guilt, sentence or obligation" (COD), which has a slightly different origin.

Moulin Rouge, in the news thanks to Baz Luhrman and Nicole Kidman, is being freely mispronounced in the media, probably by the same people who call Cairnes, *Cannes*, as moo-lon instead of something like moo-lan. It means, of course, mill red or red mill, the long playing establishment using its red mill at the front to distinguish it from other less distinguished premises.

adumbrate, is a fine chewable word that is not much heard these days outside of academic circles. My friend, Peter, liked to exercise it occasionally. It means, "Represent in outline; faintly indicate; typify, foreshadow; overshadow." (COD) My feeling is that the emphasis should be on the dumb.

News & Views

Is IT in?

Dr Terry Cutler is the new chair of the Australia Council, succeeding Margaret Seares.

He has 25 years experience in the information technology sector and more detail may be found on the Council website at http://www.ozco.gov.au/issues/releases/2001/rel01_26.html

It seems to be a good appointment, given the "retro" nature of the organisation. In view of the government's mean and tricky bit, I'll suspend judgment pending further information!

This should properly be a nomination, along with other key positions such as ABC chairman, to be debated before the parliament before an appointment is made by a significant majority vote.

See Gigs for review of

Walking On Water

Jim Cornish has brought out a book of humorous verse entitled, "Not Without Rhyme or Reason." We'll furnish more details later.

Janet Woods is enjoying a mede of success with two popular novels accepted over a two month period and due for release next year.

PRINT NOVELS.

DAUGHTER OF DARKNESS. Hardcover. Robert Hale Ltd. (UK) Historical. May

release. ISBN 0 7090 6887 5

Four years after being drugged and tricked into marrying 14-year old Willow Givanchy, a suspected witch, and the unwanted daughter of his deadliest enemy, Gerard Lytton returns home to find his wife and family much changed.

Having lost none of her fiery independence, Willow has become a well-loved member of the Lytton family. But, although nobly born, she cannot belie her mother's dark reputation, and her father's dishonour. Then Willow's long dead mother turns up unexpectedly, causing a mysterious series of events to

unfold.

PANDORA'S GIRL. Hardcover. Robert Hale (UK) Relationship. Release date and ISBN not yet known.

Pandora's life changes when an inheritance forces her to confront her past. She discovers that a daughter born to her in her early teens, and believed to be dead - is very much alive. Aided by her new love, the confronting Welsh psychiatrist, Bryn Llewellyn, Pandora successfully searches for the girl - only to be rejected.

Tragedy reunites the pair in a painful and uneasy relationship. Unwittingly, Pandora over-reacts, trying to buy her daughter's affection with generosity. Trinity is defensive, resenting her mother for the invasion of her privacy as she awaits the birth of her son.

As the uncomfortable circumstances of Trinity's birth unfolds, her baby's arrival brings joy and understanding to the two women, enabling them to reach compromise.

E-Novels.

SIGNED, SEALED AND DELIVERED

LOVE'S ILLUSION.

A duet of category romances to be released in May by New Concepts publishing. <http://www.newconceptspublishing.com>.

Also available from New Concepts.

SPELLBOUND & IN BED WITH THE ENEMY.

4 1/2 star review from Holly Domiano, December "Affaire de coeur"

America's foremost romance readers review magazine.

"Romantic comedy is the name of the game here. If the reader were expecting Sabrina, or Charmed, these programmes are tame compared to the steamy sensuality and tender emotions of Janet Wood's novel. The emotions may be hot, but it's a satisfying heat. This book will definitely leave the reader spellbound."

NEWS FROM THE SOCIETY OF WOMEN WRITERS.(WA)

"FOOTPRINTS" millennium anthology was launched in November.

With a foreword by Ruth Reid, "Footprints" has ten decade header poems and over forty short stories to take the reader on a journey through the 19th century.

With stories selected by Janet Woods and Carmel Cottrell over a period of two years, the anthology was typeset by Trudy Graham. Contributors of the featured work include Jean Lang, Ethel Webb-Bundell, Beryl Richards, Trudy Graham, Janet Woods, Jennifer Langley-Kemp, Claire Grose, Carmel Cottrell and Constance Herbert.

FOOTPRINTS costs &19.00 which includes GST. \$25.00 including local postage and packing. \$26 interstate. Cheques should be made out to SWW, WA.

It can be obtained by the following methods.

Janet Tel: 9331 5114 or email: woods@iinet.net.au

Or write to SWW,WA. PO Box 1224, East Victoria Park, WA, 6101

Joker

There's some truth here.

Joe Smith started the day early having set his alarm clock (MADE IN JAPAN) for 6 A.M. While his coffeepot (MADE IN TAIWAN) was perking with coffee (FROM KENYA, he shaved with his electric razor (MADE IN HONG KONG). He put on a dress shirt (MADE IN FIJI), designer jeans (MADE IN SINGAPORE) and tennis shoes (MADE IN KOREA). He cooked his breakfast in his new electric skillet (MADE IN INDIA) and sat down to drink his orange juice (FROM BRAZIL), his bacon (FROM CANADA), tomatoes (FROM ITALY), cheese (FROM HOLLAND) using crockery (MADE IN CHINA). Then with his calculator (MADE IN MEXICO) he planned how much he could spend today. After setting his watch (MADE IN TAIWAN) to the radio (ASSEMBLED IN MALAYSIA) he grabbed his mobile phone (MADE IN SWEDEN) and got into his car (MADE IN GERMANY) and continued his search for a good paying AUSTRALIAN JOB.

At the end of yet another discouraging and fruitless day, Joe decided to relax for a while. He

put on his sandals (MADE IN SRI LANKA) poured himself a glass of wine (MADE IN FRANCE) and turned on his TV (MADE IN INDONESIA) to watch programs (MADE IN USA). All the time he was wondering why he couldn't find a good paying job in.....AUSTRALIA.

The Art of Smuggling

Mwangi comes up to the Kenyan border on his bicycle. He has two large bags over his shoulders. The guard stops him and says, "What's in the bags?"

"Sand" answers Mwangi. The guard says, "We'll just see about that. Get off the bike." The guard takes the bags and rips them apart; he empties them out and finds nothing in them but sand. He detains Mwangi overnight and has the sand analyzed, only to discover that there is nothing but pure sand in the bags. The guard releases Mwangi, puts the sand into new bags, hefts them onto the man's shoulders, and lets him cross the border.

A week later, the same thing happens. The guard asks, "What have you got?"

"Sand" says Mwangi. The guard does his thorough examination and discovers that the bags contain nothing but sand. He gives the sand back to Mwangi, and Mwangi crosses the border on his bicycle.

This sequence of events is repeated every day for three years.

Finally, Mwangi doesn't show up one day and the guard meets him in a Café in Nairobi. "Hey, Buddy," says the guard, "I know you are smuggling something. It's driving me crazy. It's all I think about..... I can't sleep.. Just between you and me, what are you smuggling?" Mwangi sips his beer and says, "Bicycles."

Net Anon's blonde jokes

Overweight Blonde

A blonde is terribly overweight, so her doctor puts her on a diet. "I want you to eat regularly for two days, then skip a day, and repeat this procedure for two weeks. The next time I see you, you'll have lost at least five pounds".

When the blonde returns, she's lost nearly 20 pounds.

"Why, that's amazing!" the doctor says. "Did you follow my instructions?"

The blonde nods. "I'll tell you, though, I thought I was going to drop dead that third day."

"From hunger, you mean?" asked the doctor.

"No, from skipping."

River Walk

There's this blonde out for a walk. She comes to a river and sees another blonde on the opposite bank. "Yoo-hoo" she shouts, "how can I get to the other side?" The second blonde looks up the river then down the river then shouts back, "You are on the other side."

Knitting

A highway patrolman pulled alongside a speeding car on the freeway.

Glancing at the car, he was astounded to see that the blonde behind the wheel was knitting! Realizing that she was oblivious to his flashing lights and siren, the trooper cranked down his window, turned on his bullhorn and yelled, "PULLOVER!"

"NO," the blonde yelled back, "IT'S A SCARF!"

Blonde on the Sun

A Russian, an American, and a Blonde were talking one day. The

Russian said, "We were the first in space!"

The American said, "We were the first on the moon!"

The Blonde said, "So what, we're going to be the first on the sun!"

The Russian and the American looked at each other and shook

their heads. "You can't land on the sun, you idiot!

You'll burn up!" said the Russian.

To which the Blonde replied, "We're not stupid, you know. We're going at night!"

Speeding Ticket

A police officer stops a blonde for speeding and asks her very nicely

if he could see her license. She replied in a huff, "I wish you guys

would get your act together. Just yesterday you take away my license

and then today you expect me to show it to you!"

The Vacuum

A blonde was playing Trivial Pursuit one night. It was her turn.

She rolled the dice and she landed on "Science & Nature."

Her question was, "If you are in a vacuum and someone

calls your name, can you hear it?" She thought for a time

and then asked, "Is it on or off?"

Final Exam

The blonde reported for her university final examination that

consists of "yes/no" type questions. She takes her seat in the

examination hall, stares at the question paper for five minutes, and then in a fit of inspiration takes her purse out, removes a coin and starts tossing the coin and marking the answer sheet Yes for Heads and No for Tails. Within half an hour she is all done whereas the rest of the class is sweating it out. During the last few minutes, she is seen desperately throwing the coin, muttering and sweating. The moderator, alarmed, approaches her and asks what is going on. "I finished the exam in half an hour. But I'm rechecking my answers.

Blonde Stewardess

An airline captain was breaking in a new blonde stewardess.

The route they were flying had a stay over in another city, so upon their arrival, the captain showed the stewardess the best place for airline personnel to eat, shop and stay overnight. The next morning as the pilot was preparing the crew for the day's route, he noticed the new stewardess was missing.

He knew which room she was in at the hotel and called her up wondering what happened to her.

She answered the phone, sobbing, and said she couldn't get out of her room.

"You can't get out of your room?" the captain asked, "Why not?"

The stewardess replied, "There are only three doors in here," she cried, "one is the bathroom, one is the closet, and one has a sign on it that says, 'Do Not Disturb!'"

The Blonde Joke To End All Blonde Jokes!

There was a blonde woman who was having financial troubles so she

decided to kidnap a child and demand a ransom. She went to a local park, grabbed a little boy, took him behind a tree and wrote this note. "I have kidnapped your child. Leave \$10,000 in a plain brown bag behind the big oak tree in the park tomorrow at 7 AM.

Signed, The Blonde"

She pinned the note inside the little boy's jacket and told him to go straight home. The next morning, she returned to the park to find the \$10,000 in a brown bag, behind the big oak tree, just as she had instructed. Inside the bag was the following note...

"Here is your money. I cannot believe that one blonde would do this to another!"

A man is in bed with his wife when there is a rat-a-tat-tat on the door. He rolls over and looks at his clock, and it's half past three in the morning.

"I'm not getting out of bed at this time," he thinks, and rolls over. Then, a louder knock follows. "Aren't you going to answer that?" says his wife.

So he drags himself out of bed and goes downstairs. He opens the door and there is a man standing at the door. It didn't take the homeowner long to realize that the man was drunk. "Hi there," slurs the stranger. "Can you give me a push?"

"No, get lost. It's half past three. I was in bed," says the man and slams the door. He goes back up to bed and tells his wife what happened and she says, "Dave, that wasn't very nice of you. Remember that night we broke down in the pouring rain on the way to pick the kids up from the baby sitter and you had to knock on that man's house to get us started again? What would have happened if he'd told us to get lost?"

"But the guy was drunk," says the husband.

"It doesn't matter," says the wife. "He needs our help and it would be the Christian thing to help him."

So the husband gets out of bed again, gets dressed, and goes downstairs. He opens the door, and not being able to see the stranger anywhere he shouts, "Hey, do you still want a push??"

And he hears a voice cry out, "Yeah, please."

So, still being unable to see the stranger he shouts, "Where are you?"

The drunk replies, "Over here, on the swing."

If you get caught speeding....

Just in case you need it some time!

A police officer pulls a bloke over for speeding and has the following exchange:

Officer: May I see your driver's license?

Driver: I don't have one. I had it suspended for exceeding .05

Officer: May I see the registration for this vehicle?

Driver: It's not my car. I stole it.

Officer: The car is stolen?

Driver: That's right. But come to think of it, I think I saw the registration in the glove box when I was putting my gun in there.

Officer: There's a gun in the glove box?

Driver: Yes mate. That's where I put it after I shot and killed the woman who owns this car and stuffed her in the boot.

Officer: There's a BODY in the BOOT?!?!?

Driver: Yes, mate.

Hearing this, the officer immediately called his back up. The car was quickly surrounded by police, and the captain approached the driver to handle the tense situation:

Captain: Sir, can I see your license?

Driver: Sure. Here it is.(It was valid.)

Captain: Who's car is this?

Driver: It's mine, officer. Here's the registration papers.(The driver owned the car.)

Captain: Could you slowly open your glove box so I can see if there's a gun in it?

Driver: Yes, sir, but there's no gun in it.(Sure enough, there was nothing in the glove box.)

Captain: Would you mind opening your boot? I was told you said there's a body in it.

Driver: No problem. (Boot is opened; no body.)

Captain: I don't understand it. The officer who stopped you said you told him you didn't have a license, stole the car, had a gun in the glove box, and that there was a dead body in the boot.

Driver: Yeah, I'll bet the lying bastard told you I was speeding, as well.

Very True...

A philosophy professor stood before his class and had some items in front of him. When the class began, wordlessly he picked up a large empty jar and

proceeded to fill it with rocks, rocks about 2" in diameter.

He then asked the students if the jar was full? They agreed that it was.

So the professor then picked up a box of pebbles and poured them into the jar. He shook the jar lightly. The pebbles, of course, rolled into the open areas between the rocks. He then asked the students again if the jar was full. They agreed it was.

The professor picked up a box of sand and poured it into the jar. Of course, the sand filled up everything else.

"Now," said the professor, "I want you to recognise that this is your life.

The rocks are the important things - your family, your partner, your health, your children - things that if everything else was lost and only they remained, your life would still be full.

The pebbles are the other things that matter like your job, your house, your car.

The sand is everything else. The small stuff." "If you put the sand into the jar first, there is no room for the pebbles or the rocks. The same goes for your life.

If you spend all your time and energy on the small stuff, you will never have room for the things that are important to you.

Pay attention to the things that are critical to your happiness. Play with your children. Take time to get medical check-ups. Take your partner out dancing. There will always be time to go to work, clean the house, give

a dinner party and fix the disposal." "Take care of the rocks first - the things that really matter. Set your priorities. The rest is just sand."

But then...

A student then took the jar which the other students and the professor agreed was full, and proceeded to pour in a glass of beer. Of course the beer soaked into the sand, filling the remaining spaces within the jar making the jar truly full.

Which proves:*

**That no matter how full your life is, there is always room for a beer:
Your life will not be completely full without BEER.**

"Atheist and the Bear"

An atheist was taking a walk through the woods, admiring all the "accident of evolution" had created.

"What majestic trees! What powerful rivers! What beautiful animals!" He said to himself.

As he was walking alongside the river, he heard a rustling in the bushes behind him. When he turned to look he saw a seven foot grizzly charge towards him.

He ran as fast as he could up the path. Looking over his shoulder he saw that the bear was closing. He ran faster, so scared that tears were coming to his eyes. He looked over his shoulder again, and the Bear was even closer. His heart was pumping frantically and he tried to run even faster. He tripped and fell to the ground and as he rolled over to pick himself up, he saw the Bear right on top of him, reaching for him with his left paw and raising his right to strike.

At that instant the atheist cried out "Oh My God..." time stopped, the Bear froze, the forest was silent. Even the river stopped flowing.

As a bright light shone upon the man, a voice came from the sky saying "you deny my existence for all of these years; teach others I don't exist; and even credit all of creation to a cosmic accident. Do you now expect me to help you out of this predicament? Am I to count you as a believer?"

The atheist look directly into the light and said "it would be hypocritical to ask to be a Christian after all these years but perhaps... could you make the bear a Christian?"

"Very well" said the voice. The light went out, the river again ran and the sounds of the Forest returned. And then the bear dropped his right paw, brought it together with his left paw..... lowered his head and spoke:

"Lord for the food which I am about to receive, I am truly thankful."

[Top](#)



and Stage

Two Feet in the Grave, Channel 2

One Foot in the Grave has run its course, according to a recent Channel 2 promo, with the recent series being the last. Sadly, it is probably not the last we'll see of it. I cannot stand this series, with its join-the-dots scripts and mannered characters, but find constant amazement that some people, whose opinions I respect, see something in it that I do not.

After Shock, Channel 2

Richard Fidler's variation on talking heads is a change from the usual offering with short segments of discussion interspersed with taped inputs from various experts in the area under discussion. The staccato graphics which are doubtless designed to give a sharp, modern feel to the programme, are a bit of a worry. The show succeeds at times, thanks to Fidler's skilful leading, but often lapses into inanity.

For instance, the episode on nanotechnology had a useful first half with exposition and discussion but then fell into consideration of the problems as if the machines and technology were imminent, instead of being highly speculative science fantasy at this stage. For the uninitiated, nano machines would have the capacity to build complex structures such as ourselves, atom by atom.

The Arts Show Channel 2

The show is to be moved to Sunday afternoons. It is a pity that we have to have a special arts spot rather than integration into general programmes. I believe that this reflects an immature notion of the role of the arts in society, as a discrete add-on rather than part of the fabric of life.

For instance, the folksy News Hour of PBS via SBS has essays, poetry and book review/author interviews, mingled with news and politics and this is the way that it should be.

SBS Surfboards and Squiggles

I've speculated whether SBS is promoting surfboards or merely pointing up their ubiquity, as they are portrayed in unlikely geographical situations and shown in between major programmes. It has, of course, occurred to me that they are being used as representations of the map segments found in Molleweide's and other map projections and the channel is highlighting its multicultural focus with a new variations on a theme. Channel 2 has its squiggle and SBS its surfboards. Mind you, nobody has ever explained the squiggle, but I suspect it represents the distortion suffered by an object designed to be well-rounded but subject to many contrawise pressures and under-funding.

Hornblower Again, Channel 2.

"Mutiny", the latest film based on Forrester's work was much more satisfying, with a stronger plot (or plots!) than previously

Welshman, Ioan Gruffudd, is a watchable actor. Apparently his name is pronounced as something like John or Yon Griffith.

Robert Lindsay has a minor role, this time as the stern Sir Edward Pellew. He is a fine actor, showing equal versatility in comedy.

The Man Who Had Three Arms

by Edward Albee

Now, the whole point of this is *The Metamorphosis* presented as "A Report to an Academy" under the shade of Nabokov (who is directly cited) and "An Evening of Russian Poetry." It's a three-character play in two acts in the form of the eponym's lecture on the condition of his eponymity. No, as he might say, it's not catching. The play focuses in on the precise condition, and focuses out any generalities that might interfere. Anomaly, celebrity, monstrosity. The specific Albee type: "There was a loathing to it, a condemnation that I dare be articulate, coherent." The author removes all mickey with something more than fastidiousness, less than abstemiousness.

The nice concluding gag will do for one of Pinter's Revue Sketches. "Be careful when you go on a talk show, though: the dumb ones use a club, and the bright ones have a knife." Any fool who watches television can see that, now Broadway knows it as well.

Christopher Mulrooney

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poetry, fiction & translations in *Elimae*, *Del Sol Review*, *Shampoo*, *The Contemporary Review*, *Renditions*, *Fire*, *The Brooklyn Review* etc.

Marquise, SBS

A scene from this Belmont film, the dancer cartwheeling before the king, ostensibly sans knickers, has been used as a teaser for World Movies for some time. The setting is in the time of the sun king, Louis XIV, using the sumptuous surroundings of magnificent Versailles to advantage. The title role is taken by the beautiful and talented Sophie Marceau, but despite her charm and vivacity, the story is unsatisfying, more Follywood than French in style.

Perhaps the title sets the style. Would a commoner be allowed to use a noble title, albeit foreign, as a christian name, in those authoritarian times?

Moliere's theatre company, which is in favour at court, is used by Marquise as a vehicle to achieve fame and fortune as an actress. Poor old Moliere is portrayed as a lecher and something of a fool and has to use the work of the younger, more sober tragedian, Racine, who becomes the somewhat one-dimensional (and also foolish) love interest.

Some of the scenes are memorable. Marquise dances in the rain. The king at his stool and bathing are public events. The autocratic master of music, Lully, beats time for the musicians by thumping on the floor with his staff (a practice which cost the historical Lully his life, as he thumped his own toe and died from consequent blood poisoning).

Marquise dies on stage using a plot device that beggars belief. She takes some of the chocolate that has been hanging around for some months since the Racine character got it from a courtier who is notorious for her potions and poisons and sent it to Marquise's husband to turn him off her. It was not needed as the husband was dying anyway and hands over Marquise to him with his blessing. Despite being taxed by the king with the rumour that he poisoned the husband and is only saved by Moliere's defence, Racine carelessly leaves the chocolate in his beloved's possession. It turns out to be poison rather than potion, and the heroine snacks on it during a session of comfort eating when she is prevented from acting by a chill. Ho hum!

Let There Be Light (Que La Lumiere Soit), SBS

The scene from this charming little French film, with a bear dancing before a surprised camera crew, has also been used to promote World Movies.

God is appalled at his creation and decides that what humanity needs is a proper film to set it on the right track. He descends to earth with his attendant, wingless archangel, Rene, and proceeds to have his script performed, morphing freely from being to being in the process. (God has a slight facial tic which gives him away!) Script and direction is by Arthur Joffe.

Scriptwriters will derive much wry amusement from the vicissitudes of God's script and the fact that the character at the top of the production house is the Devil, incarnate. It is a variation on a theme that has been done before, but there are wry references to delight the film buff.

God's vehicle for the production is a young film director, Jeanne, played by the beautiful Helene de Fougerolles, who is put through the hoops in the struggle between God and the Devil. There is some resonance with the Joan of Arc story. She is committed to an asylum but manages to escape with the inmates, who purloin some equipment and become the production crew.

The newly completed film is shown in a church, which looks very like Notre Dame Cathedral, to provide some sort of sanctuary from the police, who have closed in. The audience, including the Devil, who has crept in incognito and has a pistol to commit mayhem, are literally transported with delight.

My local film guru, who rated it two stars out of five, was probably about half right!

Big Brother, Channel 10

So-called reality television has certainly set the cat amongst the pigeons. The idea that the filmed, mundane activities of a dozen or so youngsters cooped up in a house-like set for a week or two, is more appealing than crafted sit-coms and dramas, is shocking to the television world. It is estimated that nearly 2.8 million viewers were attracted to watch *Big Brother*, a huge audience in Australian terms.

But should we be surprised? There is a great yearning for entertainment that has some relevance to our lives. Stagey sit-coms with clagues and canned laughter and forensic dramas are irrelevant to most of us, offering little entertainment and escapism.

According to a Four Corners programme on Channel 2, the "reality" phenomenon surfaced in Holland with a production company called Endemol, that has promoted variants in many other countries, including Australia's *Big Brother*.

There is a voyeuristic streak in all of us that I doubt will be satisfied for very long by *Big Brother*, which is also artificial. Something else, hopefully much better, should develop.

The Conquistadors, SBS

This masterful documentary is a co-production between PBS and BBC, written and presented by Michael Wood and photographed by Peter Harvey.

It tells the strange and compelling story of the catastrophic intrusion of Spain into the Americas. Wood's scholarship and competence with the Spanish language are impressive. He is a marvellously enthusiastic but unobtrusive presenter, as he traces the routes travelled by the conquistadors and tells their stories.

There is added interest in the recent accession of the new president of Peru, who is a descendant of the Incas and paid his homage at the site so well described in this documentary.

Calling the Game

Sport seems to have made a poor transition from radio to television and we are afflicted with commentary which seems to ignore the fact that we can see what is going on. Silence is anathema, so that there is constant commentary, whether it is needed or not.

I have friends who mute their television when watching sport, cutting out all commentary. Some prefer the radio commentary for cricket and couple it with mute television!

Perhaps we need a new style of commentators who have more to do with camera focus and sorting out replays so that they illuminate rather than confuse.

Former sports persons do not necessarily make good commentators. It is field that is as much the province of poets as players.

This came to mind when watching the exploits of champion swimmer, Ian Thorpe, at the recent world swimming championships. He is called the *Thorpedo* by some, but there seems to be some diffidence about the coinage of this word.

Others have characterised him as, "the great black shark", which is unfortunate, as unlike great whites, great blacks do not have any prominence in nature. The lad is more eel-like than shark-like in his movement through the water, but people eat eels. Seal or dolphin-like would perhaps be apt, but these creatures tend to have a plump profile.

On balance, I think *Thorpedo* is probably as good as we can get.

A Sully Presentation, Channel 10.

It is my practice to flick through other channels when 2 is repeating the news or SBS is grinding through a promo or showing off its surfboards. I came across *Sandra Sully Presents* to find that 10 had re-packaged the marvellous BBC nature series, presented by one of the best in the business, David Attenborough.

More recently I found the BBC's, *The Human Body*, presented superbly by Lord Robert Winston, a noted researcher and professor in the field of reproductive technology. Sandra Sully presented again.

Given that these programmes have been shown without preamble on 2 and are designed to stand alone with their world class presenters, it seems to be redundant and pretentious

to package them in this way.

Remaindering for Screen and Stage

The information below is by courtesy of Artsvoice. I understand that there are plans to operate nationally.

NEW PERTH WEB SITE HELPS FILL EMPTY SEATS

SpareTickets is an new internet based marketing service designed to allow promoters and event managers to fill empty seats to events at close to the event times.

SpareTickets works on the principle that event organisers are better off filling empty seats at less than full prices than leaving them empty. The SpareTickets web site offers tickets to Concerts, Theatres, Seminars, Courses, Tours, Travel, Accommodation and Sporting Events.

Through its on-line Club, SpareTickets is building a large database of people who are prepared to be flexible in their entertainment options and will make last-minute decisions if provided with a compelling offer. Club members can specify their areas of interest from the above categories and are directly emailed details of relevant newly released offers. They can then use their Club Member ID and password to make reservations through the web site.

SpareTickets provides an ideal opportunity for promoters to attract people to their events who would not have otherwise attended and to gain revenue that they otherwise would not have received. It also allows them to potentially develop their audience base by allowing people to "taste their wares" without the barrier of normal full price tickets.

Registered SpareTickets Promoters are provided with password access to the Promoter's Area of the web site where they can lodge, maintain and monitor their own ticket offers. It cost nothing to become a SpareTickets Promoter or to lodge offers on the web site. After an initial free trial period, SpareTickets charges a 20% commission (+GST) on any ticket sales made through the site.

Offers placed on the SpareTickets site can include adult, concession and group pricing for each event. Ticket collection and payment requirements can be determined by the Promoter on a venue or event basis. For performance based events, the "collect and pay for your tickets at the theatre ticket office before the show" system is simple and works well where small numbers of tickets are being offered.

To assist amateur theatre and performance groups looking for an audience and to provide a variety of offers for its Club Members, SpareTickets allows these groups to offer and sell their tickets through the web site at no charge (some conditions apply).

To find out more about SpareTickets, go to their web site at:

<http://www.sparetickets.com.au>

More information specific to Promoters can be found at the following address:

<http://www.sparetickets.com.au/prointro.mgi>

or contact Peter Howlett at SpareTickets on (08) 9371 7330 or by email to

peterh@sparetickets.com.au

Catalyst, Channel 2

This interesting science magazine type programme is something of a puzzle as it is almost identical in format to *Quantum*, which was lapsed with great lamentations a year or so ago. It is anchored by the lovely and engaging Karina Kelly, who performed a similar function for the late lamented *Quantum* for several years, but apart from a stint as narrator for the intellectually unchallenging *Bananas in Pyjamas*, had quite disappeared from my view.

It raises questions. Had the Quantum team entrenched itself in power and dominance, to the dismay of the new ABC supremo? Was it on a profligate budget hike, which could only be stopped with an axe? Did the minister insist on having a science show only on his own terms, blossoming only during his regime?

As somebody once said, curiouser and curiouser.

Perhaps there are faint echoes of the Towards 2000/Beyond 2000 programmes, which went on to international success after being axed.



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