

THARUNKA

UNSW STUDENT PUBLICATION ISSUE FOUR VOLUME 57

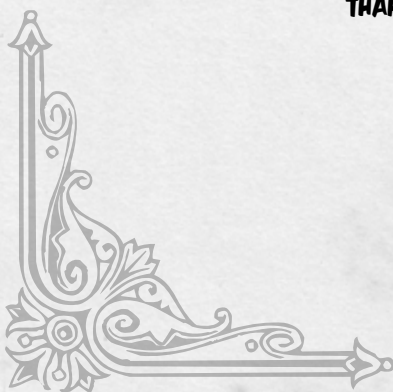




Editorial

For a long time it was difficult to write an editorial because god knows what really goes into this page because it can be a neutral statement about the contents inside the pages but we have the contents page for that or it could be a rabid political statement but we have the SRC for that and it could just be a drawing of a penis but that would seemingly carry on our favourite theme a bit too far so instead we present to you the worlds first, from what we can tell anyway, one sentence editorial about editorials and it's not because we find ourselves outrageously creative but merely a little bored by writing and writing and writing and words and such things so instead why don't I tell you about Monash University having a fetish party because their student union has organized such a thing and why doesn't UNSW have a fetish party since it could be a lot of fun although it's highly doubtful anyone in the marketing department would have the balls to organize a damn big leather-whips-pumpkin-pie sort of affair and surely someone would write in about how its degrading and complain and cry and there would be tears everywhere but not good leather tears but plain boring tears and then we could all get together and protest all three students who actually give a fuck about student organizations joined together in protest, candlelit vigils, the whole damn bit which reminds me of a few things I need to address before this editorial comes to a close and the first of those, not particularly an important thing but more of an addendum and an apology, is about the damn spell-check auto-correct robot in our Tharunky computers that keeps changing s's to z's for no particular reason because WE'RE NOT IN FUCKING AMERICA STEVE GATES but anyway could you imagine if all the words randomly had z's instead of s's so we'd have something a little like "I Know What You Did Lazt Zummer" and "Never Zay Never" and we'd be drinking milkzhakez and eating zazhimi and all sorts of weird shit so cut it out Microsoft thankyou and have a good day so the sentence is getting a little wonky at this point but fuck it we're almost four hundred words in and another thing, could you imagine how easy Scrabble would be with all those damn words that needed z's and how many points z's actually give you but I guess we'd all be playing Zcrabble with our friendz and zhit like that so in conclusion we're at word four-hundred and thirty eight, forty, forty one etc and we wish you a wonderful week and also read Tharunka because if you made it through this shit then surely you can make it through the rest, including a very interesting article all the way from Farrago at Melbourne University, a piece by Rosie Wong about her time in Honduras, Leigh Rigozzi's trip to the Courthouse Hotel, some poetry, some psychoanalysis and some penises scrap the penises not in this issue so read and enjoy and write to us and read us so till next time, ciao.

THARUNKA Editors





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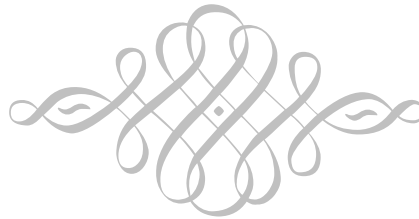
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the land on which the University now stands.

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Comments & Letters

Dear Editors,

Thank you for the inspired editorial in Issue Three, more of the same please. Also interested to see you are now in the pornography business (“Divine Seduction”, by Seddon ‘Sedz’ Johnston).

I’m enjoying the many interesting ideas in the magazine this year.

Bart James

Dear Editors,

I’ve said it once and I’ll say it again. I enjoyed your latest issue, but I still think Mitzi Macintosh should have been on the cover instead of that Dali-esque penis painting. And I was confused about the rugby ball? Are you trying to say something about sausages and balls? I expect better from you.

Shame! Shame!

Nevermind, love your work,

Matt King

Matt,

It was not a painting but an art installation bought to you via the medium of print. Idiot.

Editors

Dear Editors,

While I know it’s highly unusual to write a letter to oneself, I feel it is necessary to point out that the SRC has still failed to answer a most simple question asked by Alex Serpo since sometime last year. How much fucking money do we spend on NUS affiliation?

In numbers, not paragraphs, if you please.

Kylar Loussikian

Dear Editors,

We are all giant bigots.

Regards,

The Australian Christian Lobby

Short List

Julian Bondy, a former deputy dean at RMIT, has had his doctorate revoked after an investigation into concluded a 2001 PhD may have been plagiarised. Details of the investigation were not released, and Mr. Bondy denies the claims and says his treatment has been unfair.

Universities Australia, the peak association of Australian higher-education institutions, has made a formal submission to the Knight Review of student visa programs, calling for a selective reduction in the amount of money prospective students must demonstrate they can access to fund living expenses whilst studying here. The Review was set-up in December after a drop in international demand, which universities attribute to long application processing and a requirement to show access to a minimum of eighteen thousand dollars whilst studying in Australia.

Applications for the Prime Minister's Australia Asia Awards are now open, which is designed to encourage high achieving

undergraduates and postgraduates to take internships in Asia. Applications close June 30, and can be made through the UNSW Scholarship Manager Janina Jancu.

The Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences is, for the second year, the university partner of the Sydney Writers' Festival. The Sydney Wankers' Festival is held between May 14 and 22 across Sydney. Artistic Director Chip Rolley has already been featured in a public lecture last week, whilst other events are scheduled to be held at Kensington campus across the event.

Novelist William Golding's trust will hold a competition for short digital video animation portraying a scene, character or imaginative interpretation of any of his novels. The competition will be judged by Professor Tim Kendall, from the University of Exeter, Merlin Crossingham, creative director of Wallace & Gromit, and others. First prize is one thousand

pounds, and second prize seven hundred and fifty pounds. Entry is from the William Golding website.

Professor Robert Freestone of the Faculty of Built Environment has won the Planning Scholarship for Research or Teaching at the National Awards for Planning Excellence. His book, "Urban Nation: Australia's Planning Heritage", addresses the topic of the heritage value or urban planning.

The Faculty of Science has joined Monash University, the Universities of Queensland and Wollongong, and the Baosteel Group to establish the Baosteel-Australia Joint Research and Development Centre, to create and employ technologies with relevance to the steel industry. Baosteel has contributed twenty five million dollars over five years to the centre, which will be headquartered at the University of Queensland and chaired by Professor Aibing Yu from UNSW.

Express Media and The Age have collaborated on the launch of the online newspaper The Under Age, written entirely by high-school students. Coordinator Bhakthi Puvanenthiran said the articles ranged "from hard news, politics, high school issues, right through to arts and sports." The official launch took place April 27 in Melbourne.

Nominations are open for the 2011 State and Territory Landcare Awards, including the Young Leader Award for those aged between fifteen and thirty and who are carrying out on-ground environmental work. Landcare is a grass-roots volunteer organisation focused on managing the environment on a local scale. Further information on the Awards can be found on their website.

A festival of contemporary art by emerging Australian artists will host works spanning a range of mediums from video, performance, music, live art and installations. Tiny Stadiums will consider art and its social relationship to public art, and will begin May 2 and continue until May 15 at PACT, 107 Railway Parade, Erskineville.



Landscape with bottle (detail) 2010.
Chris O'Doherty (Reg Mombassa)

Calendar

The 2011 UNSW Med Revue will be playing at the Science Theatre from May 10 till 13. Med Revue 2011: Surgery Street will donate all proceeds to the Children's Cancer Institute. Tickets are \$10 for union members, \$12 for UNSW students and \$15 general admission.

Studio Four and NUTS present a comedy about world war one by Michael Yore and produced by Hannah Graham. Starring Emrys Quin, William Erinya, Madelaine Nunn, Mathew Rope and Simon Elder, A Wonderful War will run from May 3 to May 14 at Studio One. Tickets are \$5 for union members, \$8 for students and \$10 general admission.

NUTS is holding a proposal workshop in week 11, focused on how to prepare and write a proposal for a production, find a team, and how to work with cast and crew. The workshop will be held by Lauren Ross, director of Little Shop of Horrors, in the 2010 NUTS season. The venue has not yet been announced, but further information can be found on the NUTS Facebook page.

Dr Jason Prior of the Institute for Sustainable Futures at the University of Technology, Sydney, will present a seminar hosted by the National Centre in HIV Social Research. The seminar is based on improving health through access to sterile needles for people who inject drugs, and will be held at 4pm, May 10, at the NCHSR meeting room in Robert Webster.

A lecture series based on U.S. government debt and the American economy will be held by the Australian School of Business, and will feature Professor Larry J. Kotlikoff from Boston University. Professor Kotlikoff has previously argued "that conventional fiscal measures are incapable of measuring how well economic policy is working, and over several decades he has called for the development of generational accounting to directly measure the fiscal burden being placed on tomorrow's children." He will present three lectures on May 10, 11 and 12. For more details contact the Australian School of Business communication office on 9385 4293.

"Sustainable Use of Public Space: Cities for Walking, Cycling and Transit" is the fourth Utzon Lecture held by the Faculty of Built Environment. Hosted by Lars

Gemzøe, the lecture will be held 7pm May 18th at Keith Burrows Theatre, J14. For more information contact 9385 4800.

A documentary, "The Economics of Happiness", will be screened and discussed at COFA by it's director Helena Norberg-Hodge, John Dee and Gareth Johnston, among others. The film, which "reveals some uncomfortable truths about today's global economy in which big banks and big businesses are simultaneously degrading the environment, destroying jobs and creating financial chaos", will be shown 6.30pm May 5, at the COFA lecture theatre EGO2, Oxford St. and Greens Rd. Paddington. Entry \$15.

Dr Sandra Alföldy presents a design lecture on her book Mancraft, which argues "the gendered repositioning of DIY crafts popularized through these publications is directly related to the current period of economic recession, and reflects the masculine imperative of providing for the family." The lecture will be at held 6pm May 9, at the COFA lecture theatre EGO2.

Iain McCraig, designer on the three latest Star Wars films, will present a design lecture on the art of visual storytelling. "Shadowline: The Art of Visual Storytelling" will be held 1pm May 10, at the COFA lecture theatre EGO2.



Shit From The Inbox

The Environmental Research Initiative for Art presents a special lecture and group exhibition on the creation of solar powered, experimental and sustainable art. "Buffer Zone" features Bonita Ely, Allan Giddy, Alison Groves, Ihor Holubizky and Sarah Iremonger, and is on 6pm May 10, at the COFA lecture theatre EGO2.

An exhibition of fifty Australian and Chinese artists working with fine art print and the theme 'personal space' features the work of numerous COFA staff and students. "Personal Space: Contemporary Chinese and Australian Prints" runs till May 29 at the Art Gallery of New South Wales.

The Faculty of Law will host a screening of "The Burning Season", a film on deliberately lit fires in Indonesia that destroy pristine rain forest and endanger orangutans. The film will be shown 6.30pm May 6 in the Law Building GO2.

The Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation in Paddington is holding a full-length screening of Yang Fudong's five-part art film Seven Intellectuals in Bamboo Forest on May 5. Entry is \$25 and bookings are required. Tony Ayres, acclaimed screenwriter and director, will be in conversation with Caroline Baum on May 7 and 3pm, and Margaret Throsby will speak with Professor Geremie. R. Barne of the Australian Centre on China in the World at ANU on May 14, 3pm. Further inquiries can be made at 9331 1112.

Stella Downer present seven contemporary Australian artists and works inspired by artistic exchange between Australia and Japan. "Japonisme" features the work of Titania Henderson, Miki Kubo, Lucille Martin, David Pottinger, Liz Shreeve, Guy Stuart and Mami Yamanaka, and continues until May 21 at 2 Danks Street, Waterloo 2017, Tuesday to Saturday 11am - 6pm.

The Semi-Permanent design conference will cover disciplines of design including graphic design, photography, visual effects, animation, graffiti, motion graphics and architecture, and is now in its ninth year. Semi-Permanent runs for two days on May 13 and 14. Enquiries can be made on 9360 0690.

It's quite difficult, as some of you may realise, to fill up thirty two pages of text every two-three weeks and so we rely on our lovely contributors to send us material and ideas; so it has been for fifty something years of Tharunka. This year, however, we have received several interesting article ideas that are interesting in the Sarah Palin vein of interesting, instead of the Tina Fey vein of interesting, and by that I mean we sit around the editing table thinking, Jesus Christ is all this for real?

Jeff Phillips is, metaphorically speaking of course, our Palin for the week, with an idea ('ideal for a sports, gift idea or new gadget section!') on a write-up of his Beardo Bearded Beanies store. Unfortunately for Jeff, Tharunka doesn't really run a sports section, nor a gift ideas section, nor a new gadgets section, as a cursory glance at our last fifty thousand issues may have shown.

What the fuck are Beardo Bearded Beanies you may ask? Just as they're named, they are ('hand-knitted!') toques with a foldaway, detachable and adjustable beard. Jeff has even gone far enough to patent the device, which is apparently a World First, for good reason we may imagine. Coming from the world fashion capital of the Gold Coast, and approaching ten thousand Facebook fans (of which we can only imagine nine thousand are stoners and/or people who already own a Snuggie), the Beardo, claims Jeff, is looking to be a very popular discussion topic amongst people just in time for winter.

And pray-tell, what does one do with a detachable, adjustable beard and beanie? Well, Jeff suggests using it for Movember, or, more disturbingly, as a functional snowboarding and skiing accessory, the minutiae of which escapes me. Thankfully, Jeff offers a longer explanation in article format, if we are so interested. Unfortunately for Jeff, although we don't have a sports, gadgets or gift ideas section, we have this section, and so, thank you Jeff, for taking a shit in our inbox.

If you have some shit you'd like to forward to our inbox, send it to tharunka@arc.unsw.edu.au.

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Staying Green with Ivana Stab

I've reached that point in my life where I think that it's a really good idea to buy a Snuggie for zero dollars from Global Shop Direct, nine-ninety-five postage and handling, comes with a free book light! I'd be more embarrassed admitting this if it didn't feel so damn good to smoke a joint in the cold autumn night in my little backyard with possums edging along the fence, wrapping myself up in my blue blanket with sleeves pulled up over my head like a hood, looking like some sort of strange dazed and confused cult member under a full moon (or member of a new religious movement, to use the politically correct term). I've also reached that point in my life where I can't fall asleep sober anymore because I drink far too much coffee during the day to get through hours of research and then hours of surveys for rent money, so these late-night backyard sessions have become a regular activity and my ugly little Snuggie has come in very handy. It's even got a pocket to stash my lighter and sometimes snacks if I'm in the mood. The makers of the Snuggie surely must have had stoners in mind! What other kind of person would even imagine buying such a ridiculous thing!

Apologies:

Holy shit guys! No apologies this time! (Although to be honest, nearly everyone wants us to apologise for our wonderful 'Still life with Sausages' cover. Sorry guys, won't happen again... We'll leave the professionals to it.)

Libyan Desert Causeway

By Harold Shrum

It had been four hours since the bedraggled square of Mersa Matrouh had peeled into the background and the only things we'd seen on the nothingness that is the desert road to Siwa were three camels and a diner. It had taken less than a minute from when the bus careened into the parking lot for the hawkers to come begging at the door. Even a hundred and fifty kilometres from the nearest town, children lounged about pressing tobacco and coffee beans into our hands. As the light faded into evening and the tiny electric light bulbs were lit, hundreds of little globes burning into the night, it seemed we were the only people in three hundred square kilometres of the Libyan Desert, waiting patiently for our driver to finish his sixth cigarette.

A few days earlier we had arrived Cairo and headed to downtown to Talaat Harb to find a distant relative, a professor of zoology at the Cairo University, who had mistaken me for a genteel upstanding family member and had offered her and her husbands apartment to us for the week. Two days crossing the Sinai by mini-bus with some liberated rum and Snickers from Israel had not exactly given us a look of cheery students when we arrived disheveled, and downing her husband's, a wealthy industrialist, sherry didn't really seem to go down well, but things perked up when we began a well-watered discussion of middle east politics, a joke I felt she didn't particularly understand. Nevertheless, sometime that week, we were taken from their apartment and given a tour around Cairo, a dirty downtown with sprawling concrete suburbs and well-refined prestigious neighbourhoods around Zamalek and Heliopolis, where they lived.

The areas of Heliopolis and Garden City were built by expat communities, the English creating Garden City to surround their embassy, whilst Heliopolis was created by Belgian businessman



Edouard Louis Joseph. Built in 1905 by the Heliopolis Oasis Company, perhaps one of the first planned communities in the world, Heliopolis was built in what was once a distant desert far from downtown Cairo. Its broad avenues, golf course, racetrack, and luxury hotels have continued to draw wealthy expats, and the Armenian community, of which my aunt was a member, seemed to forever drive between each others houses, giving little thought to work, Cairo, Egypt or the world. Joseph's own house was designed as a homage to Hindu temples and South East Asian architecture, standing over the suburb like an Angkor Wat in the sweltering heat.

Slowly but surely, even living away in their downtown apartment, the patience of our hosts was slowly whittled away until we found ourselves on a coach express to Siwa, a far-flung desert oasis five hundred kilometres from Cairo. Largely an agricultural community cultivating dates and olives, Siwa has a population of only twenty thousand, mostly Berbers. Its only attraction is the Temple of the Oracle Amon, and the Shali fortress, which, like the rest of the town, had been built centuries before from mud and sand. Surrounding the town was a small circle of dates groves and palms, and from there the endless dunes of the desert.

At Matrouh, where the coach had stopped for the drivers third through fifth cigarette, we'd picked up essentials for a week in the oasis; cigarettes, toilet paper, hash and some bottled red drink we were reassured was alcoholic. By the time our driver finished his sixth cigarette, started the engine and begun the fifth hour of Arab pop, most of the red drink was gone. When we arrived, none was left.

It was midnight when Siwa hove into view. The bus shelter was a cigarette and bread kiosk and a wooden shelter that smelt like piss. Motorbikes had been arranged to





get us to our room, but they'd broken en-route, so we caught a lift in a donkey down the dirt pathways and through the midnight palm groves into an empty guesthouse that had clearly been intended for better guests. The proprietor seemed resentful of our presence and tried to usher us off into bed, but after hours on the road we were having none of it. Wandering back into town under the enormous Shali Fortress, we ate a pile of greasy chicken and sat back smoking a nargile. Later, at about three in the morning, we returned, sitting around the empty pool smoking hash and drinking tea. The night seemed to go on and on and on and on and on and on and there was not a single light, not ahead, not behind, not above.

The week we spent sitting around a hot spring devoid. The local bartender explained how the government had wanted to set up some tourism infrastructure; they'd asked some local families to open their houses up for guests, and soon enterprising businessmen were opening up lodgings around town. Several bars had set up around the hot springs, laying chairs around the date groves and signposting the tracks to their door. The only thing the government hadn't been able to bring were the tourists. It was the height of the leisure season and there were only a handful of tourists, us, smoking hash and

floating around the pool. We slept much of the day and much of the night. The mud brick walls of Shali looked down upon us, Flintstone like, from its desert perch.

We were told that the desert had hundreds of small oasis', tiny pockets of vegetation surrounding hot springs, and we could get there if we found ourselves a four wheel drive. After some time, my Cairean Aunt finally sent us some money and we hired ourselves a man of little words and a great big leering smile to drive us out past the dunes. Past some half-build lodgings and empty pools we climbed up through some dunes and suddenly, changing gears, we went speeding down the far side of the dune, again and again, up slowly, down rapidly. One of our party on the brink of fainting, we were told it was necessary to go faster than the sand that was dislodged when we reached the top of each dune. Our driver pointed to the cracks spreading across the windscreen and windows as an example of what may befall us if he didn't hit the gas.

Blasting out pop music, we continued like a ramshackle wedding party across the Libyan Desert roaring down the dunes and onto an oasis, where the desert met palms and reeds and a large lake that smelt like a bathroom. We sat about whilst our driver disappeared for a cigarette, and we hastily crumpled up some hash and had a cigarette

ourselves. The sun was beginning to fade after its early afternoon peak, and as we ran down the dunes stoned, sinking into the sand and rolling down into the reeds, it began to get cold.

Back in the jeep, we headed to another oasis past a long flat in the desert. The light splayed off the rocks and made the sand look like a lunar plain. Half white, half black, it was difficult to say whether it was a curiosity or our eyes hallucinating. Mesmerised by the moon rocks and weird shadows of the afternoon we all slowly dozed off coming to only at another oasis where we drank tea and sat about. The berbers that sat with us cared nothing for politics, nothing for Mubarak and life went on as it had for the past centuries with little change.

Back in Cairo a week later, sitting alone in an empty hotel room waiting for the time to come when I could get a cab out to the shiny refurbished buildings of the Cairo International Airport. The Cairo traffic below was gridlocked as ever, and my aunt was no longer speaking to me, and my time in Egypt was finished perhaps forever, but now, whenever I close my eyes or sink into a stoned sleep, the mud-brick ramparts of the Shali fortress and the swaying palm trees at night follow me about, beckoning me to return.

THE COURTHOUSE BAR

They invited me to the bar and then left.



I was stuck mid-beer with Shady & Emma, who I had never met before.



Then the Megs showed up with Joe, Sandy, Chlöe, Mickie, and the third Meg.



I knew nobody.



The plan was, we were all going to a party later and they were going to take speed.



There was no polite moment to leave.



I was part of nobody's conversation.



So I sat there smoking Emma's German cigarettes and listening to Sandy...



raving about the haloumi salad.



By Leigh Rigozzi

N.U.S. Replace

By Shaun Khoo

First published in Farrago, University of Melbourne, Ed 2, 2011.

It's easy to argue the National Union of Students (NUS) is a failure of a student representative organisation, but what alternative is there? Who deserves the \$50,000 Students' Council has budgeted for NUS fees in 2011? Obviously, the answer is an organisation that doesn't require that kind of budget, and one that doesn't have the rampant and detrimental factionalism of NUS. These financial and factional considerations can be best dealt with through a federated model of national student representation, and a simplified administration system than the current NUS.

Currently each student organisation which is a member of NUS elects up to seven delegates in their general elections. These delegates are assigned a certain number of votes, based on their student body size, by an accreditation committee. In theory, this might appear democratic because it tries to ensure one student's vote is not worth more or less depending on the size of their campus, but in practice it is just another element of the factional power games of NUS—because delegates are more loyal to their factions than their own campuses.

A federated model would involve one representative from each student

organisation, probably their President, who is given one vote—a council of student union Presidents. The benefit of simplicity strongly outweighs any theoretical democratic deficit from individual students having a proportionally more powerful vote in who they elect. In any case, given the extremely low electoral participation rates of less than ten per cent at most universities, any discussion of this is purely academic and largely irrelevant.

Federated student representation would not eliminate factionalism, but it would place an important check on its expression. Many student union Presidents are from Labor, but it is not uncommon for these Labor factions to have coalition or be in the minority on their Students' Councils. At Melbourne, even with Labor factions cooperating, their Unite ticket won only four out of a possible eighteen Students' Council positions. Federated student representation would make representatives accountable to their local organisations, making their local campus a higher responsibility than factional interests.

Simplicity of finances follows structural simplicity of federated student representation. Most of the National Conference would be unnecessary, since a smaller group of less factional individuals can deal with the business of

an Annual General Meeting and some strategic planning in a day or two. The large number of NUS offices would also decrease, with an associated reduction in the cost of rent. There would no longer have to be an accreditation committee or a business committee. A small committee of management might be necessary, but a single committee is much easier to manage and hold accountable. This is not unrealistic either: if the executive committee members of Medical Deans Australia and New Zealand can run all medical schools and be involved in a peak body, then there is no reason why student union Presidents could not be successful national spokespersons as well as local representatives.

If NUS were replaced with a federated student representative body, there would be no appreciable loss of function. Firstly, it's not apparent that NUS does much, especially the National Conference is taken an indicator. Its research department uses unsecured online surveys that do not have any findings that cannot be more accurately and reliably measured by academics who study Higher Education. Secondly, the expenditure in many areas shows NUS is doing little more than paying someone to hold a title. In 2008, the Environment Department at NUS had non-salary expenditure of \$1,216. That same year, the Melbourne Student

Union (UMSU) Environment Department had a budget for non-salary expenditure of nearly 10 times as much: \$10,693. The International Student Department at NUS spent \$51,776 in 2008. Each year the Melbourne University Overseas Students Service receives more than double that amount. Similar comparisons can be made for Queer and Women's Departments. The only areas where the NUS equivalent exceeded UMSU's were the President's travel and mobile phone budget and the Education Department, because of its \$22,922 photocopying bill.

There is only one thing local student unions cannot do that a national representative

body can: provide a united front to represent student interests to governments. This is a case only for the overall student interest, since departments representing environmental or gendered interests have other national bodies they can work through. This may be the reason why NUS has survived despite its numerous failures, but abolishing NUS and replacing it may be the most efficient way to achieve a better model of student representation. NUS itself was formed in 1987 after the collapse of its predecessor, the Australian Union of Students in 1984.

A mission that is as simple as representing student interests to governments does not require a \$50,000-

200,000 membership fee. More affordable peak representative bodies are possible, such as the National Association of Australian University Colleges, which charges college student clubs \$165 for membership or the Australian Council of Social Service, which is charging organisations with \$1-2 million income just \$4,717. Students need to recognise the injustice of NUS and motivate their representatives to implement a future where "student representation" is not a euphemism for fortunes spent on factionalism.

Browning believes the current stagnation of drag performance is tied in with society's current views of homosexuality. Graeme says greater acceptance is a double edged sword. On the one hand, the community that existed on Oxford St is slowly dying away. The big gay venues and dance parties that over-flowed in the past aren't bringing in the gays like they used to. The Sydney Sleaze Ball was the biggest gay party this side of the southern hemisphere, regularly attracting around 15 000 people, involving upwards of 150 dancers, choreographers and drag queens, and give drag queens opportunities to perform to huge audiences with enormous budgets. This year, the Sleaze Ball drew an audience of under 4000, and there's endless speculation of its demise.

Graeme thinks, especially amongst a younger generation of gay and lesbians, being a part of and fighting for a queer community is simply not important. "There just doesn't seem to be that sense of socializing and community that there used to be, and that's why the Sleaze Ball and drag in general suffers. The money's not coming into the venues to go out of the venues to pay the drag queens. Drag queens haven't had a pay increase for ten years." A slew of larger straight dance venues has also bled away gay audiences who aren't interested in the Oxford St scene. Abuse that was unthinkable in the past are now frequent enough to deter people from coming out. "We used to pub crawl from venue to venue in full drag, and now these days the girls have to cover up because they're scared of getting yelled at. That never used to happen."

Mitzi Macintosh enjoyed a career unheard of by most drag queens today. 'I was a full time drag queen for 20 years and to be able to support myself and have a full time job doing drag for that period of time was phenomenal.' As gay venues continue to see declining patronage and quality of drag performances Graeme is unsure where drag will end up. "Perhaps," he says, "it's all just a matter of swings and roundabouts."

THARUNKA WANTS YOU!

Readers,

Tharunka is a student magazine and we welcome contributions of prose, poetry, non-fiction essay, ficto-criticism, satire and visual media. We are interested in work that engages with UNSW, Sydney, the arts, music, politics and the media. Because some work may be unsuitable for Tharunka, please email us a short pitch or blurb before submitting an article.

Keep in mind we do not usually have space for pieces over two pages in length.

Letters & Comments

We accept letter relating to content in past Tharunka issues, opinions on university developments and politics, or just random shit you feel people need to know.

News & Reviews

Tharunka publishes relevant news in the 'Short List' section, as well as events in the 'Calendar' section. If you'd like for us to publicise an event, or have some campus or Sydney news, please email us.

Tharunka is regularly asked to review works of theatre, film, art and recordings. If you'd like to send us a piece to review, or would like to be included in our regular reviewers email, contact us now. Do it.

Comics, Cartoons & Visual Media

Tharunka especially welcomes visual pieces from COFA students and from artists outside UNSW. We also accept and regularly publish satirical cartoons, pieces of comic art and collage.

Submission Deadlines

Issue 05: May 2
Issue 06: July 11
Issue 07: July 25
Issue 08: August 8
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Bourg Saint Maurice

By Annie Ly



I was invited to have lunch at a house in the mountains so I took my camera and left for the afternoon instead.







When Memory Fails

By Rory Platt

Let me set the scene, really quick because the background of this story is irrelevant to what I need to tell you now. I'm on the island of Langkawi in Malaysia. I'm staying at a kick arse backpackers with amazing people and it's here that I met an astonishingly beautiful and perfect woman. This story is about the incredible evening that bonded us together, I also remember very little of it.

It's easy to have the most amazing day ever and then start drinking knowing the night's going to be just as good if not better. It started with cans of Tiger in the backpackers as usual and then onto the infamous 'plastic tables and chairs' restaurant for the best Thai Green Curry on Langkawi. Then we started drinking whiskey, which was exactly where things got a little hazy. Two bottles of Jack Daniels split between even 8 people is likely to make anybody forget

watching Eva run naked into the ocean. I turn to Paul as I start pulling my shorts and t-shirt off, "Fuck it, I'm going in. Do you mind watching our stuff?" and I start running into the waves after her, leaving my modesty behind

holding each other, bracing against the waves as we passionately kiss each other in the moonlight.

Completely lost in our own reality fantasy in the water, feeling the warmth and wetness of each other's bodies, touching, feeling and knowing

flashes of cameras in our direction. I'm lying on top of Eva in the sand wearing nothing but my boxers, kissing her. We laugh at the brief comprehension of our situation. Her dress, her hair, her body, all covered in sand, and mine the same. The sensation of holding someone covered in sand was almost like hugging sand paper but it didn't even matter

walking along the pavement, I have one arm around Eva and my other arm holding my guitar up by its neck, we're heading

I open my eyes, squinting from the tiny light let in by the partial opening from the curtains at the end of the dorm. I roll over and am surprised to see Eva lying next to me in the dorm, wearing one of my t-shirts and a pair of my boxers.

At that point I realise I just played partial witness to one of the greatest nights of my life. I don't even care that I didn't get to see the whole thing; the 5-second visuals and snapshots make it all the more memorable. I put my arm over her and try to forget all about my splitting headache.

Birth of an Investment Paradise

By Rosie Wong

Backed by the world's richest man, Mexican billionaire Carlos Slim, and the U.S. Embassy, the Honduran Government is currently preparing for a conference to mark the opening of Honduras to foreign investment. "Honduras is Open for Business", targeting companies in the energy, infrastructure, agribusiness, tourism, forestry and call-centre sectors, comes on the back of new laws on public-partnerships, investment protection and promotion reviews and with the seal of approval from U.S. Ambassador Llorens. What is not being discussed is how this revitalised, investor-friendly Honduras has come on the back of the ousting of a democratically-elected government, ostensibly one advocating reforms to protect human and environmental rights; in June 2009, little over three years into his presidency, President Zelaya was marched at gunpoint, still in his pyjamas, out of his house and into the Palmerola U.S. military base, where he was put in a small plane and flown to Costa Rica.

Early one evening in Tegucigalpa, I found myself sitting with resistance activist and psychologist Alfonso. We spoke about the military coup. "Some people started to talk (and say) do you think it's possible to have a military coup? I thought, no, I don't think so, it doesn't happen, nobody is crazy enough to make military coup. So everyone was a hundred percent sure that there was no way. So people now know that democracy is something that you can easily lose, you have to be really careful with democracy because one day, somebody could take it from you." At least one person in resistance has been killed every week since the coup, either through gunshot, death squad or gas bomb. Alfonso is amongst countless activists who received death threats for his resistance,



but he says the persecution has not stopped the media's portrayal that everything is well and normal in Honduras.

Dr Juan Almandares is another prominent activist and environmentalist. He told me the coup was a result of international interference. "Honduran people become more aware of their rights, they want to have a different nation, they want to have freedom and they want to have justice." He says the coup stopped the process of constitutional change, that would have ended discrimination against campesinos, against Indigenous peoples, and against Afrodescendent people."

Dr Almandares blames the forced behind the ruling government. "We have the military force, oligarchy, in alliance with the international forces who have

business interests in Honduras," he tells me. "The business interests include mining, agricultural, and also water resources, and they are building dams that will affect communities... palm oil (for biofuels), for this reason there have been many very violent evictions... some people have been killed... what I am trying to link is the coup d'état and the economic exploitation of the people, and also the participation of the multinationals." I discovered later, in fact, that there are almost four times the number of private soldiers serving alongside the Honduran military.

It is in lawlessness that makes 'good businesses' seem to thrive, contracting large private armies and buying judges, prosecutors and parliamentarians on their way. Energy and agribusiness investment



have seen palm oil plantations expand across the countryside. The campesinos of Bajo Aguan in the north are one of the most affected by the coup. In the last few years, twenty five people have been killed - twenty three farmers, a journalist and his partner. News had just come in that another two farmers had been assassinated. Dr Almendares said that with the palm expansion by large landholders had displaced small farmers and the farming of beans, rice and corn. Honduras, I was told, produces less than half the amount of basic staples they need for local food consumption, instead, having to import masses of beans and corn which makes food more expensive, while land to grow food to fuel cars for expand.

Of course, there are supporters can also be found. Carelessly conversing with a stranger one afternoon, I was asked what I was doing in Honduras. Telling her I was there for solidarity against the coup, she immediately began to tell me I got it wrong, that it was a 'constitutional succession'. This was the first time I'd heard that argument in person, even after a cable had leaked that the US Ambassador knew there was no legal substance to it. When I asked her about the five farmers killed in November by the private security forced of businessman Miguel Facusse, she told me I could be deported for talking about these things and left.

Luck had it that a local humanitarian organisation requested I join them on a human rights delegation to Bajo Aguan. The ten hour journey from Tegucigalpa to Colon coiled past palm tree plantations and beside the U.S. military base. We arrived in Aguan, ninety journalists and human rights activists from Germany, Austria and Australia, to document the situation and human rights violations. We slept at a hotel, and during the day we

went out to visit and speak with people in one farming co-operative after another in the land recovery movement.

Our first destination was to the communities of Paso Aguan and Panama, where evictions had been begun earlier that morning. As we entered this palm plantation, a single path with huts dotted on the sides, we first noticed an assortment of armed men, and vehicles without number plates. Some armed men were police and others soldiers, many with helmets and long guns, soldiers in camouflage and boots; big, tall, motionless looking men that don't look Honduran. Journalists and human rights defenders pointed their cameras and microphones as weapons, zooming in on the soldier with his machine gun and chain of bullets, on another army guy with his face covered by a green wrap with a gap only for the eyes, his gloved hand holding a huge gun.

There were families sitting around, moving about, watching, and working about where to go. Their faces showed anger and resilience that came only after being subjected to this kind of displacement in the past, only normally it was worse. The huts or tents called chozas were makeshift homes made carefully with sticks and plastic sheeting. These were their homes, until the contingent showed up and torn them apart. What was left behind was skeletons of the sticks home, traces of plastic sheets, boots, sandals, plates and pan lids scattered on the floor. There were dwindling fires and a few pigs about. Some of the community members talked with the journalists or angrily challenged police statements.

While the police spokesperson Alex Madrid told us the police were carrying out an eviction in a peaceful and professional manner, community people complained that the police were putting

on a show, "Miguel Facusse wanted us to leave within an hour... they saw that the press cameras are coming," said Misael, who was getting ready to work when the eviction was executed, "they knew more or less you people were coming." and said it would have been far worse otherwise. Normally, he said "they come and put fire on all our things and we can't say or do anything because they can shoot us or they can capture us and beat us."

The speed, impunity and frequency at which communities can be kicked off their land for expansion of biofuel project, under the coup regime, is what makes Honduras attractive for foreign investment. In January there was almost unanimity by the Honduras Supreme Court to rule a decree unconstitutional. The decree, 18-2008, benefited twenty thousand families, because, as Alfonso explains, "if you have land on which you don't work, you lose it; they give it to someone who needs it". The move increases the intensity of evictions.

"We call on different human rights organisations," Rafael Alegria of La Via Campesina tells me, "to maintain alert because there is no doubt that there will be direct violations of human rights against the campesinos, because the campesinos are not going to leave these lands... they are only going to remove them at the point of bayonets, of police, of military."

Still, the fate Honduras and its campesinos is unknown. Pepe Lobo, the President, is fast becoming desperate as international players have not been able to justify openly funding and doing business with this violent regime. Since my visit, French company EDF Trader cancelled its deal to buy Clean Development Mechanisms carbon credit (under UN mechanisms) from Miguel Facusse and European development finance institution DEG cancelled its corresponding loan

to Facusse, following an international campaign to have the UK government withdraw its endorsement of the deal based on reports of ongoing and grave human rights violations. At the same time talks are taking place towards having the Organisation of American States recognise and reintegrate Honduras, suspended since the coup, and one year has passed since a piecemeal agreement with the regime was signed with the farmers after five thousand security officials flooded Bajo Aguan and most points of agreements have been left hanging.

The organised farming families and communities, who consistently risk their lives occupying highways and land demanding land rights are not giving up. Their whole communities are in struggle; after I left, on the fifteenth of December, a children-only highway block was protesting the massacre at of the parents at El Tumbado.



An Easier Way

By Jack Jelbart



Here's a strange thing that happened to me the other day - not a word of it a lie - I was seeing my psychologist, which is something I do weekly-regularly, and she said to me: "You're full of shit." This struck me as highly unprofessional, because although I like an informal relationship, I also think that such a remark crosses a few boundaries and also is, like, hardly a legitimate diagnosis.

My thinking - and this is just a loose summary of my personal philosophy - my thinking is there's some reason behind every response. Every action compounds upon our catalogue of personal experience, which is reflected in every future response. If I am full of shit, and I by no means acknowledge I am, but if I were full of shit, then surely there'd be a reason I was full of shit; like I had unreasonable expectations for myself, or I were depressed, or bi-polar manic; and if this were the case, then surely it'd be the reason and not the manifestation she should have addressed. But she didn't because she's a bimbo quack with no more understanding of psychology than your average below-average child. This much is clear to me.

But imagine, if you will, sitting in someone's professionally styled office, sitting in a professional manner, and explaining to them, as is your established protocol, the innermost workings of your (metaphorical) soul. You've told them about the hardships of your parents' private life, and how this affects you at home; how these people just can't seem to work it out even though they're obviously accomplished by any applicable social or financial measure. You've told them about the trials of finding work after uni, which even with your mostly respectable grades and professionally formatted CV is difficult. You've told them about your problems with your girlfriend, and how vaguely unreasonable her expectations are. The root problem being, you suggest, that no one understands you properly, which you also explain is obviously a universal truism, I mean you're no dunce, but you have all this untapped potential, you're practically foaming at the mouth with it, and no one's perceptive enough to let you utilise it.

At work you make coffee for people who don't know the difference between a latte and a lobotomy, but could buy

you twenty times with change enough to spare for someone less intelligent; who go home at night to their tastelessly furnished McMansions, and collapse in front of their brain-numbing eighty centimetre televisions, were they'll eat, sleep and die without ever opening their eyes, and their sutured lives will be just pleasant enough to be acceptable enough for them to continue.

You'd said all this to your psychologist, said that maybe it would be more humane to kill them all, because that at least might solve the housing crisis; but no, you'd said, I am speaking in jest, you were merely wondering whether there might not be some cure for your sickness that made all of this unacceptable, because how you longed for the sweet oblivion of obliviousness, and she'd replied that there was no known cure for being full of shit, and recommended a good anaesthesiologist.

This is why I terminated our relationship.

Two Poems

By Raymond Baltas

Where Silence Is

Where silence is the
strongest
Word un-mustered

Absence, carving its
Promise into the air

Absence, so soundless
I am confused
Into absence

Into the abscess of
An unformed
Thought

Caught between
The impenetrable
Glimpse of something
More and the

Inevitable kiss
Of something less

The tunnel of a mirror

The devastating stillness
Of the kitchen
When in not being there,
You are there

My hands shaking but
Not from the cold

light

Draining at the neck
Of
A day

I wake to the patterns of muted
hooks, clipped sinews,
Choruses shriveled into lines on
dirt, on earth outside our step
Where we once sang beyond our
means, where seasons wove their
tongues
Into each slope,

Now,

No one crows or cries or even
reaches

yet

There is still a wing that flaps
tearing at the threshold, night the
hand that closes

Wake

like a bud, blood unfastened like
a wind like
Hair lacquered to a lawless dream

In sweat, wet and heavy with the
residue of laughter
Jugulars still burn from attempts at
being heard,

while

the trap sings with steel, colorless
but cloaked in stars
With gravity seething through the
teeth
Of open ribs



By Will Laren



Cats go CRAZY for Ketamine

(and so can you!)



**NEW: FRISKIES
KETAMINE SNAX**

How to be a Compleeete Bastard

By A Compleeete Wanker and enemies thereof

Taken from the Tharunka archives, 1988.

Everybody gets pissed-off with their flatmates. Occasionally, it's a normal, healthy and very enjoyable part of life. In fact, if you follow this guide properly, your flatmates will make getting pissed off with you a central pillar of their existence, an unshakable faith, a stable point which to anchor their otherwise torn and shattered (thanks to you) existence.

Call it flatmate-hate. Construct an altar on which they'll pay daily homage, dedicating all the money they earn from their ill-founded lifestyles to it. In future, whenever you'll awake to find all your underwear missing (even the dirty pairs), or that your record collection has turned to empty sleeves, or get to the library to find your card missing from your wallet, you'll know where to look.

In their bedroom

The most totally boring trick is to balance a bucket of water above your flatmate's partially open door, and a close second most boring is to "short sheet" his/her bed.

More elaborate tricks include the traditional "Tharunka-ing" of the room – a simple but effective technique: just grab a good hefty [pile of papers, screwing up the pages individually, and fill the victim's room with them. A more elaborate version, involves less Tharunkas, but more time. Simply wrap every single item of furniture, wardrobe, personal property, books, keys, wallet, purse and undies in Tharunka, butcher paper style, using sticky tape. A good one for the long weekend.

Another corker is to leave used condoms around during the early stages of a flatmate's love affair. Female (and unfortunate males) who are incapable of filling the condom themselves need not worry, just unravel the thing and fill it with



sweetened condensed milk, or Clag glue. (It's not as if the victim is going to go out of his/her way to check the authenticity of the thing.)

The old old Army trick that is really well known is putting your flatmate's hand in a glass of warm water while they're asleep, causing them to relax their bladder muscles and piss in their bed. Or you could pour warm lemon cordial over the appropriate region of their mattress.

In your bedroom

Set up your bed in such a way that it clunks very loudly indeed every time you practice coitus with your boyfriend/girlfriend/spouse equivalent. Find a partner who does Tarzan impressions upon sexual climax.

In the bathroom

Leave a ring of stubble around the sink, or failing that, get some of those really big, black curly pubes – we know you're hiding them somewhere down there – and stick them onto the communal soap – or, if you're feeling particularly nasty, feed them through the hairs of the toothbrush. Dribble saliva into the open end of the toothpaste tube.

If you're sick, expectorate huge steaming gobs of phlegm into the basin so big they won't go down the drainpipe. (Try eating peanut butter and lots of milk as catalysts.)

More uses for condoms – leave them in the loo, where it takes about 15 flushes to get rid of 'em.

Smear vegemite on the toilet seat. If the seat's white, use condensed milk. (Do not use hugely sticky adherents like superglue unless you want armies of paramedics barging into your private bog to prise away your flatmates bum.)

Alternatively, cover the loo with gladwrap. In the middle of the night the unsuspecting flatmates will come to do wee wees. Imagine the look of astonishment on their faces as the yellow fountain stream bounces back onto their body. Or, you can steal all the spare rolls of toilet paper, leaving a roll of toilet paper with only enough loo rag for the most insufficient and unsatisfying of wipes.

Dye your hair with natural Henna and leave little smudges of it all over the shower tiles so that they look just like little bits of pooh. Roll little balls of clay and drop them on the bathroom floor...

In the kitchen

If you have a communal living budget, eat all of the food for yourself. If you have separate, individual food budgets, eat all of the others good for yourself, whilst purchasing for yourself the most disgusting food items.

Shopping: eat a whole lot of Tim Tams, bought out of kitty money, on your way back from the supermarket, and leave the wrapper empty, but not looking it, on the dining room table.

Whenever there's a fresh bottle of milk, open it, so that within a week there are about ten half-filled bottles of milk in the fridge.

Speaking of the fridge doors, if every member of the household has failed uni exams except you, leave your result notice magnetised to the door, together with the \$500 cheque your godmother gives you whenever you get straight HD's.

If your flatmates have trouble opening milk cartons (and let's face it, who doesn't?), try punching a little hole between the spout and the level of milk,

such that when your flatmate pours the milk, he/she always seems to dribble some down their front. The same trick works down at the pub with tinnies of beer.

Put salt in the sugar dispenser and sugar in the salt. Smear bits of vegemite and peanut butter in the margarine, jam and other spreads.

Leave your cancer-ridden lab mouse swimming somewhere near the potato salad.

Always leave about five millimetres of coffee undrunk in your mug.

Purchase ten ashtrays, so that you don't have to wash them every night, you just have to replace them. Put the used ones in the vegetable rack in the fridge.

Good general jokes

After a really bad fight with your flatmates, ring up 1999 (this makes the phone ring when you hang up). Then, answer the phone and very audibly declare, "NO! HE/SHE DOESN'T LIVE HERE ANYMORE" and then hang up and stomp out of the room before he/she can do a thing.

Borrow their favourite clothes and a) put cigarette burns in them or, b) forget to return them on moving out.

Turn off the water inlet to the hot water service, mimicking the way that the hot water fades when it's running out. As your flatmate leaves the shower quivering and naked, dash up and have a long hot one yourself. In a gas service house, turning on and off the hot water tap in the kitchen may have the same sort of effect.

When you're a new partner in a share accommodation, falsify your birth date so that they'll be forced to host your twenty first birthday party and buy you

lots of gifts. Stay there for two months or so and then move onto a new house. The trick can work for up to three years running.

Drink a bottle of brandy and announce your plans to commit suicide. Leave the house and disappear from Earth for a month.

When your friends are getting ready for the Palm Sunday peace march, invite your mates from the local rifle club home for an all-day video marathon: First Blood, The Green Berets, The Wild Geese and Apocalypse Now...

If your flatmate's vegetarian, spend a fortnight's kitty on a totally carnivorous cuisine and invite all your friends around for a MEAT party...

Be disgustingly open and cutesy pie with your boyfriend/girlfriend just after your flatmate's partner has left to Argentina for two years.

The award winner

This was invented, patented and tested by James (D'Art) Adams. It's a test of patience and endurance for the protagonist as well as for the ultimate victim.

The goal of this stunt is to manufacture within the great factory we call the digestive system, the most horrible of human by-products – the MEGA S-BEND CHOKING TRIDENT SUBMERINE CHUNKY FIBROUS WON'T GO AWAY BASTARD BOG FLOATER.

Method: swallow a cup of foam balls from a bean bag and don't open your bowels for at least thirty six hours. Eat greasy good, tomato skins, sweet corn, peanuts, and if you're really tough, a couple of Lego blocks for decoration.

The result will be a truly buoyant and visually striking terd, which will take several days to flush away.

Reviews

Several Shades of Why

Reviewed by Tom Grant

Grey-haired elf overlord J Mascis has rediscovered intimacy after his debut solo studio album, *Several Shades Of Why*, reinvent his sometimes-laconic performances into an acoustic format.

Several Shades Of Why contains songs that are essentially acoustic extensions of themes from Mascis' work with Dinosaur Jr., particularly from their 2009 album, *Farm*. However, without the haze of the influential band's shoegazey tones, Mascis' croon has found a new life amongst this sparse musical landscape, his drawl turning into a whisper purely by the change in surroundings.

Mascis has always been known as one of the first true indie guitar heroes. In his Deep Wound days and through to Dinosaur Jr., Mascis' work has lofted him upon the mountain of great guitarists. However, within this album the extended face splitting solo (listen to Said The People, and you'll understand what I mean) has made way to subtle finger pickings and strums, allowing for Mascis' supreme song writing skills to be showcased. That's not to say that the trademark Mascis solo doesn't get an air, with Is It Done giving us a taste, although the short solo does not compare to the duelling acoustic guitars found at the end of the song.

Several Shades Of Why sees Mascis comfortable in alien territory. A fresh new album that will seem all too familiar to long-time followers, it's a subtly beautiful effort that sees Mascis respecting the themes that he's built up over the past 25-odd years whilst still being able to create new ones.

Several Shades of Why, an album by J Mascis, is out now on Sub Pop Records.

A Winter Tale

Reviewed by Jen Mclean

A Winter Tale, the debut album from British singer - songwriter - guitarist Bobby Long, is a smooth combination of country, folk and blues that

facilely seduces and soothes the soul. Reminiscent of the pre-electric Dylan days, Long demonstrates his agility over the guitar and poetic way with words in a carefully compiled album produced by Grammy-winner Liam Watson.

Honing his style on a US touring circuit from April 2009, Long's excitement and passion resonates through each song, his finger-licking acoustics and harrowing lyrics described by Seattle PI as "sin and silk, honey and grit". Indeed this is what the album delivers, with the Bobby's husky voice telling tales of small-town glories and lost love that withhold neither the deepest confessions nor the most honest pleasures of the artist himself.

Having grown up near Manchester in Northern England, Long's musical career began officially in 2004, when he moved to London at age 18 and studied sound and media. The youngin's catchy compositions set him apart on the open-Mic circuit and his song "Let Me Sign" was picked up by buddy Robert Pattison and featured in the 2008 cult-teen-flick *Twilight*. Don't let that throw you, though, because *A Winter Tale* is a far cry from cult-teen-music, with allusions to Johnny Cash and the laid-back feel of Canadian singer Harry Manx that would surely go over the heads of the Cullen-loving, teeny-bopping type.

Long's self-proclaimed influences include Bob Dylan, Neil Young and Leonard Cohen and indeed, many tracks reflect the long-ranger, country-blues style so typical of these one-men acts. At other times, however, it is the harmonious interplay of voices, resonant of modern troubadours such as Connor Oberst (particularly his work in Bright Eyes), and even Mumford and Sons, that greatest shines through.

In parts, such as the latter half of "Two Years Old", a combination of the familiar country-baseline and a heavy use of snare fringes on the toe tapping, spoon accompanied side of country

A Winter Tale, an album by Bobby Long, is out now on ATO Records.

Ama & Chan

Previewed by Camilla Palmer with Effie Nkrumah and Alan Lao

Ama and Chan are newly weds but with a twist. They are both second generation migrants, Ama's ancestry being Ghanaian and Chan's being Chinese. She likes Chinese food... a bit... and he doesn't mind the odd wig or a bit of Fufu. But there's something else. They think themselves celebrities of the social network kind. Their fusion of Ghanaian and Chinese recipes has gone viral and the traffic to their Facebook pages has more than once caused a 'crash'. Add to this the in-law bickering, the missing furniture, the pork neck and a strange guy in the spare room. To solve all their problems Ama and Chan decide they need to get richer and more famous and so buy themselves a camera, start creating crazy and ingenious fusion recipes and then lay all their faith in YouTube. And you, me, we are invited to the live filming of the soon-to-be popular Reality Cooking Show.

I went and spent the afternoon with Effie Nkrumah and Alan Lao as they rehearsed their new show *Ama and Chan* at the Bankstown Arts Centre. They are young, smart, funny and very talented. I had so much fun talking to these two about the show which can be described as a tour through the world of on-line celebrity, social networking, cooking shows and cultural fusion.

I talked to them about the play, about how they met each other, what food means to them and where they got those out-there accents from.

Camilla: So, can you both just tell me a little bit about yourselves?

Alan: Me first? Ok, alright. My name's Alan Lao. I'm from Cabramatta West. I went to university at UWS where I did the performance studies degree, that's where I met Effie and coincidentally that's where our characters met as well. The characters were formed before we went to uni, in some sort of form, for me anyway.

Camilla: In what way was it formed? You were performing him as a solo show or..?

Alan: The character Chan, it's loosely based on my father and I did that for my HSC piece, it's just this character that

kept developing, it's just fun and when I went to Uni and I met Ama and Effie and our characters collided.

Effie: My name is Effie Nkrumah and I am from Blacktown. I was looking to study acting, which culturally, was kind of strange because there's no money in the arts so Uni became an option and when I read the programme at UWS I just thought that is what I want to do and that's where I met Alan. Alan approached me in second year with the character of Chan and the idea of this married couple and I just kind of went along with it. Around this time and before, from about fourteen, my friends and I had begun to take an interest in our culture so it was quite timely because it was something I was willing to experiment with. And we just got encouragement through one of our lecturers to pursue it, first for television, and then we realised we were theatre so we took it back to theatre.

Camilla: I noticed in the rehearsal that both of you slip very fluidly between accents, between your Australian accents and then your Ghanaian or Chinese accents. How does that experience affect you in terms of your own identities?

Effie: It's interesting, I don't know about Alan, but like I was saying, when I was around fourteen a lot of young Ghanaians who were either born here or who migrated here at a really young age all of a sudden found that being in touch with our culture was cool and we started taking an interest in our traditional clothing and over time it has become a part of who we are. So in that respect it is easy, it is natural and every day. In another sense it is a way of handling how we have grown up. In another time we might have been embarrassed by how older people might have spoken but now we are just accepting of it, we would never talk like that naturally because we haven't grown up there but it's something that is part of our makeup, I guess, it's part of the identity.

Alan: For me, the accent has always been there. I never really noticed it until I was about seventeen, eighteen. The accent is quite easy to slip in to because I have always been around it. When you go to Cabramatta to buy some fruit, or a pork roll, and the person selling to me has a Chinese or Vietnamese accent, it was easier for me to slip into. And I notice with my relatives whose English is not so great, I unintentionally go into that to make up the difference, or just make it a bit more welcoming. But I guess some

people might find that really patronising. But I think it's about respect and stuff like that. It came from my father, that accent, and it just came from there. But also it's just a great ice-breaker, to dissolve the tension in the room, chuck in the Asian accent.

Camilla: So you do some actual cooking in this show. Can you tell me about your ideas about food as a cultural currency? And what food you cook in the show and the relevance it has? I noticed some Fufu in the back. (Effie and I then proceed to have a rather excited conversation about Fufu and how I have come to know about the wonders of Fufu.)

Effie: For us, what we realised is that during our time at university, with food brought from home, is that Asian cuisine and African cuisine have really similar basic elements. And a lot of Africans when they can't find something in Woolies or in the smaller supermarkets will end up going to the Chinese shops, like a particular cut of meat or a vegetable, so that must mean we have a similarity. But then the cuisines are so different. So we mucked around, and the idea of Ama and Chan, shopping together and using the ingredients but then cooking separately. So we'd both use the chilli but we'd pass it round and cook it differently.

Alan: And we contemporised it a lot because we watched a lot of TV cooking shows where they do fiddly presentation and we've kind of tried to do that with jollof rice and barbecue duck, play with the texture and the colour.

Camilla: You play a lot with stereotypes in the show. To what extent is there truth in a stereotype? And, this also brings up questions about authority and authenticity, about who can speak and who can't. Can you elaborate on that for me?

Alan: I reckon it's a stereotype for a reason, so it's based on some sort of truth. But not all Asians speak how I speak.

Effie: Yeah it's a general thing, and it might be true for a small number or group of people but then that becomes used to describe a whole race or sex or whatever. And that's why stereotypes are funny because we laugh at truth or things that we relate to. And with the authority question, who has authority to say what. If you have a background in or an understanding of something then you can talk about it. So I am Ghanaian so I have understanding of that culture and

that cultural identity to a degree, so I can say things about that which Alan can't. And vice versa.

Alan: I think you can only make fun of something when you truly understand it. Because if you make fun of something when you're not sure or when you have some sort of ignorance, that's when it can become offensive.

Effie: Yeah and maybe sometimes when people hear the things we say they might be a bit 'oh no you can't say that' but we can because we aren't coming from a position of ignorance, we are coming from a position of knowledge. We do muck around with that, we play a lot with the ignorance card and we generalise as much as possible because there are particular opinions about Africans and Asians and when people from outside these communities see us making fun of each other it forces them to question their own ideas and the times when they might say the same things and because it's comedy it must mean there is something wrong in saying that.

Camilla: Well thanks so much for talking to me.

Alan: Thanks for talking to us. Oh and we have a Facebook page for Ama and Chan and then we both have our own personal pages.

Camilla: Yeah I know, we're friends and I liked you already!



Ama and Chan opens May 4 and runs until May 14 at Bankstown Arts Centre Theatre. Tickets \$18, enquiries 9707 2111. Ama and Chan opens May 4 and runs until May 14 at Bankstown Arts Centre Theatre. Tickets \$18, enquiries 9707 2111.

Lissette the Agony Aunt

By Lissette Valdez

Dear Agony Aunt,

It's been three years since I've slept with a woman and I can't take it anymore! I just don't know what I'm doing wrong. Usually when I go up to women I just tell them how big my junk is and they totally dig it, but now even that doesn't work! I've even tried hitting up the local nude beach to speed things along, only to find myself surrounded by a massive amount of other naked desperate men. Now not only am I sexually frustrated, but I've also been accused of being a poof for hanging out with so many naked men! My self-esteem is at an all-time low and I really need to redeem myself. How can I regain my manhood and get a woman to do me?

Rick

Dear Rick,

Punch yourself in the face. Nothing makes you feel like less of a pussy than having the ability to kick your OWN ass. Now get out there and stop making rookie mistakes! Women aren't going to sleep with you just because you're naked on a beach. Get into a bar brawl and show women your heroic



side, not your underside. Consider Chuck Norris your new Jesus. Whenever you are faced with a decision, think to yourself: What would Chuck Norris do? Once you've proven that you can beat the crap out of other testosterone fuel pumping monsters show them that you also have a sentimental side by adopting a puppy or some shit. Women love puppies. They won't believe their eyes when they see a bad-ass motherfucker with a sensitive side and the sheer presence of this mind-blowing paradox will instantly make any woman's clothes drop to the ground. You're welcome.

Dear Agony Aunt,

SPARTACUS WOKE UP THIS MORNING TO FIND PROTEIN POWDER TUB EMPTY. SPARTACUS NOT LIKE THIS. SPARTACUS WANTS FLATMATE TO STOP STEALING HIS PROTEIN. WHAT SPARTACUS DO?

Spartacus

Dear Spartacus,

Have you met a guy named Rick? He hasn't been laid in a while and totally wants to fight you.

Dear Agony Aunt,

I recently made a huge career decision and quit my job as an accountant because I found that it was highly unfulfilling. Instead, I've decided to become a financial analyst. I know it's a long shot completely changing my plans after trying to build my resume in accounting for so long but I just had to follow my heart. Unfortunately, the employers that I have submitted my resume to are not as enthusiastic about hiring me as I am about changing careers. I have submitted my resume to heaps of companies and none are giving me a chance. I've tried everything from

polishing up my resume to re-learning proper interview etiquette but nothing seems to work! Did I make a mistake? Should I give up and beg for my old job back?

Linda

Dear Linda,

YES! Beg! What the hell are you doing quitting a well-paying stable job?? If for whatever reason you can't bring yourself to grovel for your old job back perhaps the following suggestions may help. Try highlighting the best qualities on your resume that would make you a great financial analyst and by "highlighting the best qualities" I mean lie on your resume. Say you have years of experience and have worked for a random Fortune 500 company before. Once they see all your amazing qualifications you'll definitely get hired!

If that doesn't work, try networking with people you know and by networking I mean rely on nepotism to get your hired. Find out if anyone in your family works in a company and just have them give you the job. A lot of people have launched careers they aren't qualified for by using this method. Take Willow Smith for example. Do you really think she would have been able to whip her hair back and forth if her dad had been an optometrist? Well yes probably in the literal sense, but she sure as hell would not have received a record deal from it!

Do you have serious personal or emotional problems but no funds to see a qualified psychiatrist? Why not write to our Agony Aunt for clear-headed advice? You can drop us an email at tharunka@arc.unsw.edu.au, or send us a letter at PO Box 173 Kingsford NSW 2032.



SRC President: Osman Faruqi

By the time this edition of *Tharunka* is published, we'll all be well past mid-semester and our first exams and assignments for the year. As fellow students, the members of the Student Representative Council understand the pressures of juggling life, work and study. That's why we provide a number of services across all our departments to help ease those pressures. If you're facing problems in your classes, whether it's large tutorial sizes, a lack of feedback on assessments or anything else, contact us and we'll do our best to help you out.

For the first half of this semester the SRC has been producing its submission to the federal government's review into the funding of higher education. It sounds pretty dry, but the review is incredibly important because it is expected to recommend an increase to student fees over the next couple of years. This will impact all current and prospective students. The SRC's submission called for an increase into the funding of higher education by the government, as opposed to by students, to redress the chronic underinvestment in education over the past decade. Thanks to Tim Kaliyanda, the SRC's Education Officer, for co-ordinating the SRC's submission.

The SRC will keep students updated about the outcome of the federal government's review and I look forward to working with you all to help create a sustainable and fair higher education system.

Welfare Officer: Sarah Frazier

I'm looking forward to another busy month in the Welfare Department. This month I'm going to begin compiling information for a guide for new students in Sydney. Not too long ago I found myself in the

position of being parachuted in Sydney with little knowledge about the area, the transport and the services. If you've got any ideas on things that would be great to include in the guide, be sure to email me.

I'm also keeping busy with our weekly free breakfasts, which happen every Monday at 9am outside the library. In the coming weeks I'll be having themed breakfasts, highlighting both health and welfare issues. If you've got any ideas or you'd just like to contact me, you can come along to one of our collective meetings at 1pm on Wednesdays in the blockhouse or you can email me at welfare@arc.unsw.edu.au.

The UNSW Queer Officers: Raymond, Tim & Squish

Hey everyone,

The UNSW Queer Officers would love to update you all about all the latest happenings that are "Queer and Here" @ UNSW.

Last week, I'm sure we were all really starting to feel the pressure of uni at full steam ahead, with mid-semester exams and assignments coming out of our ears - so one of the best ways the UNSW Queer Collective thought we could help our members cope with the stress, was one of the things that we do best - THROW A PARTY!

This semester's midsession party theme was Masquerade, and it was wonderful to see so many people make a fabulous effort and dress to impress!!!.....

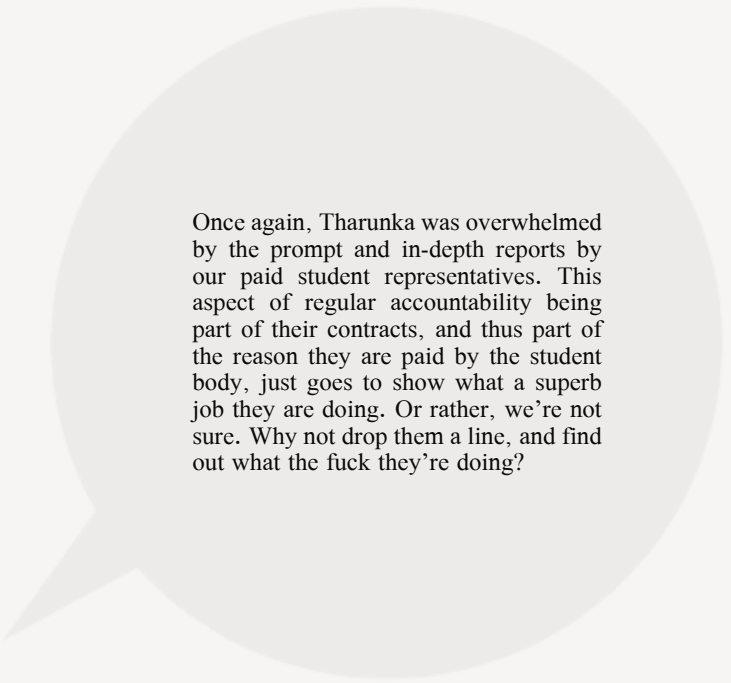
Who are we kidding, we were fools to think we could compete with the Roundhouse Toga Party on the same night, and so we had more people show up in Togas than masks haha. Adding to the drama

was the Campus Security guard trying to escort us out of the Queer Space for security reasons.... But the UNSW Queer collective students being the bubbly, strong-willed and vigilant bunch that we are - still were determined to party on, and so we successfully moved our party down to the Village Green - here we were able to finish our drinks in peace, whilst watching random drunk guys & gals in Togas being chased off the oval by Campus Security - definitely a night to remember!

Another Event we have coming up is the QC Conference in July - being held Perth this year. We've been brainstorming and scouring for fundraising opportunities so we can send as many people as we can to the event, we are also currently in the works of potentially striking up a sponsorship agreement with ACON - more on this in our next issue!

Your UNSW SRC Queer Officers for 2011,

Raymond, Tim & Squish.



Once again, Tharunka was overwhelmed by the prompt and in-depth reports by our paid student representatives. This aspect of regular accountability being part of their contracts, and thus part of the reason they are paid by the student body, just goes to show what a superb job they are doing. Or rather, we're not sure. Why not drop them a line, and find out what the fuck they're doing?

THARUNKA

2011 NON-FICTION WRITING COMPETITION

COMPETITION OPEN TO ALL STUDENTS ENROLLED
AT AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITIES

FIRST PRIZE \$800

UNSW STUDENT PRIZE \$200 UNSW BOOKSHOP

JUDGING COMMITTEE:

PROF. STEPHEN MUECKE

(SCHOOL OF ENGLISH, MEDIA & PERFORMING ARTS)

DR. MATTHEW THOMPSON

(JOURNALISM & MEDIA RESEARCH CENTRE)

ENTRY \$5

SUBMISSIONS CLOSE 6 JULY

POST SUBMISSIONS TO:

NON-FICTION WRITING COMPETITION,
PO BOX 173 KINGSFORD, NSW 2032

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