ATTENTION: Paper, Rock readers
SUBJECT: Take a chance

We’ve all been there. Your mind begins to race as you recite the proverbial ‘scissors, paper, rock’ before releasing your hand into uncertain terrain. You make a choice. You take a chance. Welcome to Paper, Rock magazine for 2010—where taking a chance is what we’re all about. We’ve coined it the ‘other’ issue because this year’s magazine ventures beyond what you’ve ever seen before in paper rock, it’s ‘other’ to its predecessors.

The news and features section promises to excite, engage and provoke you. We’ve introduced ‘News that rocked our world’ as we felt it is important to look back on the news and events that shook our world.

The lifestyle section puts a hold on the blasé clichés of food, travel and health. We give you the first glimpses of the meaty craze that has the tongues of Australia’s top food critics wagging in salivating desire. And, take you to the underground of the food world that the big chain stores don’t want you to know about. Before introducing you to the locals of Indonesia and taking you on an ostrich ride in Vietnam. Then test-drive Zumba and detox your diet-life or delve into our health feature, where we profile bipolar disorder.

ALEX: Your news and features editor, Alexandra Fisher, loves to pushed out of her comfort zone. Inspired by the Harry Potter books she discovered her love of writing at age 11. She loves TIME magazine, The Guardian, The World and Foreign Correspondent on ABC—anything else that provides her weekly dose of world news. Her background has fostered a love of different cultures and a desire to understand and report on issues that bring new insight to Australians. Her ambition is to become a foreign correspondent, and as a veteran journalist she’ll retreat to the hills of Scotlland to complete a fantasy novel that’s already in its fifth chapter!

SARAH: Your lifestyle editor, Sarah Hamilton, is a child of the eighties, just. She can’t remember a time she didn’t want to do something to do with writing or journalism. So this isn’t the first time Sarah has put together a magazine. When she was 13-years-old, she wrote an entire publication on a typewriter with newspaper clippings. We hope this issue is a little more advanced than that. She loves ‘to-do lists’ and reverts back to a child at Christmas. When she graduates her dream job would be getting paid to travel, eat and drink, and she eventually wants to be a lifestyle editor. Wait, didn’t she just do this?

KELLIE: Your arts editor, Kellie Hill,
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What is your pet hate?

Bronnie Coy, 22, Caringbah, Bachelor of Journalism

“Babies dressed as grown people and animals dressed as humans, it’s just wrong”

Rowan Coull, 20, Heathcote, Bachelor of Computer Science

“The Green bags from Woolies”

Emily Blanksby, 21, Helensburgh, Bachelor of Nursing

“People that don’t say thank you when you give way to them or let them in when you’re driving”

Jude Middlemiss, 21, Heathcote, Bachelor of Communications and Media studies

“Being asked questions... and not being able to get free parking”

Overheard at UOW

Valid Warning:
Girl 1: “You know I’m not an expert but I’m sure that it shouldn’t have been that colour, or quite that shape.”

Girl 2: “I think you’re right. Stay away from him.”

Treasure Chest:
Guy outside Subway: “Yea, I have really weird chest hair.”

Facebook friend:
Lecturer: “Studies show kids are staying up on Facebook all night and becoming sleep deprived and depressed. Why don’t you take up smoking and drinking? At least that’s fun.”

Sex-Ed:
Physiology lecturer: “If I was a sperm...”

INTO THE BIG BLUE

By Michaela Dropova
Photo By Mike Wells

Michaela Dropova takes a plunge into the world of freediving.

Freediving can be taken to extremes, same as any other sport, but who says that it should? I think of freediving as ‘advanced snorkelling.’ Since many fish and coral thrive in the sunlight near the surface, you can happily enjoy your time underwater in shallow waters, Australia: with its reefs and varying tropical or tempered coastal climates, is a perfect place for freediving.

Wollongong and its surroundings have so much to offer to those who are willing to open their hearts and minds to freediving. Sheltered waters around Bushrangers Bay at Shellharbour exhibit vast marine life. No wonder the area was recognised as a Marine Aquatic Reserve, home to sharks, tropical fish, sea urchins and eagle rays, just to name a few.

Safety in Freediving
Freediving should always be performed with caution, as divers avoid unnecessary risks.

There are some basic rules each diver should follow:
- Do a freediving course. You’ll get boundless knowledge and information.
- Freediving should always be done with a competent buddy for safety.
- Surface protocol – only after every dive, the freediver must perform a surface protocol, to communicate to their buddy that they’re okay.
- Plan your dive – check weather and ocean conditions before each dive.
- Use proper freediving equipment – this will make your trip underwater safer and more enjoyable.
- Always dive within your limits and never take unnecessary risks.

For more information go to:
Sydney Freedivers - http://www.sydneyyfreedivers.com
Learn to Freedive: http://www.learnitfreedive.com.au
NEWS THAT ROCKED OUR WORLD

From the leak of top-secret U.S documents, to the worst flood in 80 years, ALEXANDRA FISHER recaps on the year’s biggest news.

AFGHANISTAN
leaking trust

As the Australian military death toll in Afghanistan soars to 21, it doesn’t take much to hobble our confidence in the war. So when popular whistleblower WikiLeaks divulged top-secret U.S documents, it was no wonder questions were again raised over our involvement in the Afghan war. TIME magazine featured a young woman whose face had been mutilated by Taliban extremist, with the headline: ‘What Happens If We Leave Afghanistan’. TIME editor Richard Stengel, defended his decision to use the photo, saying “I would rather people know that reality as they make up their minds about what the US and its allies should do in Afghanistan” (first quoted in the Newstatesman). After nine long years, there’s talk the Taliban are prepared to talk peace.

CONGO
another year of violence

The Democratic Republic of Congo, was once more marred by murder, rape, violence and abuse on a horrific scale. The seemingly endless and faraway nature of the conflict in Congo makes it easy to ignore, and in Australia it has been largely underreported. But the unprecedented scale of women raped for a futile cause, places this issue up there with the year’s biggest news.

GULF OF MEXICO
BP spill

We saw one of the worst environment crisis pour onto shores when an explosion off the Gulf of Mexico sank the Deepwater Horizon rig; killing 11 people and causing the worst oil spill in U.S history. A team of investigators narrowed the disaster down to a “complex and interlinked series of mechanical failures, human judgments’ and engineering design” (first quoted in TIME magazine).

PAKISTAN
washed away

Pakistan was pushed to the brink as the worst floods in eighty years swept through the country. Millions have been left homeless and over 2000 people have died. While floodwaters have receded, Pakistanis continue the battle to rebuild their homes, lives, and country.

WASHINGTON
turning the page on iraq

The U.S closes the curtains on their seven-year-long combat mission in Iraq. Obama praised the military’s efforts and said “they had met their responsibility” (first quoted on Focus). Forty-nine thousand troops will remain in Iraq until their schedule departure by the end of 2011. Iraq remains unhinged by insurgent violence and political instability.

HAITI
quake-stricken

A devastating 7.0 magnitude earthquake rocks the Haitian capital Port-De-Prince. The quake killed more than 200,000 people, left 1.3 million people homeless and destroyed countless buildings, including hospitals, schools and government facilities.

AUSTRALIA
not the only one hung

On the morning of being dumped by his own party, Kevin Rudd told the Australian media he was “proud of the fact” - but didn’t mention the one about being ousted by Australia’s first female PM. The political coup was set to boost Labor’s popularity, but instead a strategic blunder. Former Bennelong MP Maxine McKew said the ALP’s election campaign lacked clarity. But, lucky for Labor, Tony Abbott’s campaign didn’t show anymore direction or spark. The end result? Our first hung parliament since WWII, the closest poll in Australian history, and three Independent nomads shooting to stardom as the future of Australian government rested in their tight little hands.

CHILE
a christmas they won’t forget

It will be a Christmas like no other when 33 miners trapped 700m below Chile’s Atacama Desert since Aug.5, are brought to the surface. Their time underground has exceeded the record of 25 days, logged by Chinese miners in 2009. A 31 tonne drill has bored into the rock separating the miners from civilization, and it’s expected that the miners will begin to surface over the next few weeks.

POLAND
plane crash kills president

The President of Poland, Lech Kaczynski, was among 80 passengers killed in a plane crash in Russia. The plane crash left no survivors after it hit trees approaching Smolensk airport in thick thog. Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk said the crash was the most tragic event of the country’s post-World War II history.
**THE BURQA TAKES CENTRE STAGE**

By WIDYAN AL UBUDY, 21-year-old journalism student from Saudi Arabia

The curtains have opened and the burqa has taken centre stage on the political agenda more than once this year. But, thanks to President Sarkozy- who labeled the burqa an unwelcome symbol that oppresses women- the curtains have been drawn in his country, where the controversial headscarf is now banned in public areas.

Western nations are up in arms about whether or not to ban the controversial Islamic garment in their own country. Closer to home, Liberal Senator Cory Bernardi jumped on the ban-the-burqa bandwagon after a man wore one as a disguise during an armed robbery in Sydney earlier this year. Instead of blogging about banning the burqa, why didn’t the Senator channel his time and effort into looking at the core issues behind why these crimes are committed?

It is sad to see that politicians are quick to jump on the ‘ban the burqa’ wagon, but when it comes to real issues that require their immediate attention, such as our public health system, old age pension and unemployment, they like to procrastinate.

Many feminists argue the burqa should be banned in the name of freedom. Really? What about the freedom of the women who choose to wear it? I myself am a young Muslim woman who wears the headscarf, and although I do not adopt the burqa, I am well aware of the constant scrutiny and racism that one encounters as either a burqa or headscarf wearer.

If you know a woman who wears a burqa, you would understand that it’s a choice and a freedom. If you don’t, then look behind the black screen and you may find a brave woman tolerating criticism in a country that is supposedly free of judgement and racial discrimination.

Using the ‘freedom’ excuse to ban the burqa is, in actual fact, taking away these women’s human rights. The greatest thing about being Australian is being able to express yourself freely and practise your religious and cultural beliefs without judgement. If a woman can freely express her sexuality and natural beauty by wearing a mini-skirt or going topless at a beach, why can’t another woman wear the burqa to express her culture? People who believe the burqa undermines Australian values need to snap out of their narrow-mindedness.

If Australia is such a ‘free country’, than why is the issue of whether or not to ban the burqa is simply not given the attention it deserves? The curtains have opened and the burqa has taken centre stage on the political agenda more than once this year.

**PLAIN PACKAGING: NOT A PLAIN GAME**

By RACHAEL MICALLEF, 20-year-old journalism and arts student

“Someone needs to tell French President Nicholas Sarkozy that just because his alluring wife is willing to ‘take it off’, does not mean that all women want to express themselves in such a way.”

Daniel Moore’s first team colours were blue and white. It hasn’t always been the same emblem, but he’s been hooked on the game since he first laid eyes on it: 25 players, all in the same uniform.

He picked up his first Dunhill Blue cigarette at age 13 from his sister, Hayley, when his parents were at dinner one night. It was far from an easy experience. He lit it up, breathed it in and felt the deep, rich taste ricochet in his throat, leaving him doubled over his patio, as a coughing, spluttering mess. Hayley laughed and told him to try again. He felt his head cloud over in a rush of adrenaline, propelling him into a hazy calm and an uneasy addiction. His lungs gave a peaceful wheeze and he never, ever looked back.

Today, 21-year-old Daniel sits in front of me, his iPhone on one side of him, a gleaming packet of cigarettes on the other. It’s no longer a box of Dunhill Blues but WinfieldGreys that grace the lining of his jacket pocket. “They’re lighter,” he tells me, “less milligrams. I’m trying to be good.” He might flick through cigarette brands faster than he flicks through TV channels, but this isn’t football; when it comes to tobacco, team allegiance doesn’t count for much. It’s a game which is a lot more complex than that.

It is this attitude that the government was not banking on when it proposed its new attack on cigarette legislation: an increased tax excise and a cigarette facelift. Think oblique grey packets and uniform font: font sizing, font colour, font placing. Even the graphic health warnings will be the same on all packets and they are set to be loud and obtrusive. It’s coming into place in 2012 and it’s all aimed to break the brand recognition between cigarettes and consumers... But to those in the firing line, young smokers themselves, the proposed changes are a hit and a miss.

“You don’t really keep a box of cigarettes for a long time- it’s one of those things you just throw away,” says 20-year-old social smoker, Samantha Raptis. “Smokers don’t care what a box of cigarettes looks like, they are still going to want to smoke. Watch spacing Even the tobacco industry is not concerned by the proposed changes are a hit and a miss.”
I first met Hellen Lanyom on the pages of Gogo Mama, a book by journalist Sally Sara. Gogo means grandmother and mama is mother. During her time as the ABC's African Correspondent, Sally travelled around the continent documenting the stories of twelve women; some gogos, others mamas. Hellen Lanyom Onguti from Gulu, in northern Uganda, was both, and her story began here.

Shortly after midnight, Hellen woke to the sound of gunfire as rebels of the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) attacked her village. The rebels beat the men to death and mutilated the women, one by one. The LRA is notorious for its use of child soldiers, and it was child soldiers who used a harvest knife to cut off Hellen’s lips. She lost consciousness during the ordeal. Coming to Hellen recalls; “I saw the dead bodies there and the other ladies who had been cut. I joined them, weeping. Then I realised there was cold wind blowing through my mouth. That’s when I knew my lips had been cut off. I also started crying. “What am I going to do? “I’m really going to die.”

Ensconced with Gogo Mama over my extra-hot latte at uni, the more I read the more I became overcome by the awfulness of it all. Had I known the effect it would have on me I’d have avoided a cafe buzzing with students. I turned the final page on Hellen’s journey— but opened the first on my own.

“I’m going to Africa,” I told my parents later that day.

“Okay and how will you afford that?”

“I will.”

“Okay.”

They weren’t being unsupportive, just realistic.

The engine roared to life and I began my eight-hour journey to Gulu. We drove past endless fields of maize and tea—broken only by the occasional town, where villagers would rush from roadside shacks to surround the car. Through our open window they’d brandish meat skewers, chapatti, and live chickens that swung by their feet in a zombie-like trance. At the halfway crossing over the Nile, we stopped by two soldiers resting their chins idly on the back of their AK-47s. Our driver told us that this crossing signified the transition into the once volatile and perilous territory of the LRA. We continued our journey north.

The clouds open on a dark grey sky that begins to drain the warm afternoon air. The road grows narrow as we get closer. We soon turn onto a small goat track that winds us through clusters of huts. From behind one, Hellen’s grandchildren emerge. Aloya, the youngest, rushes into view, followed by the eldest, Patrick, and trailing behind is the middle one, Scovia. Then I see her. Appearing flustered, Hellen disappears into her hut. She re-emerges with homemade wooden chairs that she positions by a tree where bundles of hay rest. She greets us warmly. As she shakes my hand I feel the dry creases of her palm. Hellen waits for Philip and I to sit before she settles herself on the ground in front of us, her legs stretched in front and her toes pointing up. Hellen’s tight, silvery braids distinguish her rich chocolate skin. She wears a red singlet which hangs loosely from her shoulders.
my mind for a year. Before I leave, Hellen turns her palms upwards and slides them under mine. Words are not needed; in her warm dry palms I can feel her thankfulness. “The gift you have given me no amount of money could buy,” I say. It was all I could articulate at that moment. Even if I’d delivered a world-class speech I don’t think she’d ever understand the extent to which she has imprinted herself on my life. In her eyes, she was just a simple farmer grappling with the responsibility of being a Gogo and a Mama. But to me, she was the most incredible person I had ever met.

Soon after Hellen had her lips cut, a boy delivered the news that LRA rebels had killed her husband. They beat him with clubs then used an axe to slaughter him. Less than a year after her husband was killed, the rebels raided a village where her daughter Christine was staying. When Christine refused to go with them they used a machete to slash her from her temples to her legs and bayonets to pierce her ribs.

Hellen’s story embodies both the pain caused by northern Uganda’s 23-year civil war and the strength of the Acholi people in rebuilding their lives.

“My life of sadness has been more than my life of happiness,” Hellen says. “I have been left to fend for myself. I thought it was the end of me, I would never be strong again. I had to pick from whatever courage I had. Now I have managed to live and keep even more children in my house. That is something which is great. I think it was just by the mercy of God, who gave me all the courage and the ability to carry on like that.”

It was never Hellen’s misfortune that compelled me to journey to Africa, but her willingness to go on. As I sat in that university café, I was struck by the absolute dichotomy between her world and mine. Hellen’s suffering had produced endurance beyond anything I could imagine. Her endurance had produced character; and her character had produced hope; which would never disappoint.

Some quotes taken from Gogo Mama.
GAY MEN GO GAGA OVER GRINDR

By TAMARRA GASSER

From its origin in California to the streets of Wollongong, this cutting-edge iPhone application has revolutionised the way gay singles meet.

TAMARA GASSER reports.

Aaron* returns home to his flat following a night of drinks with friends. Before turning in for bed he checks in with his iPhone. Minutes later his shoes are back on and he is out the door. The streets of Wollongong may have been empty but Grindr was full, and ‘Wanting Wood’ was only 700 metres away.

Grindr is the latest trend in social networking for gay and bisexual men. It is a GPS-based dating service made for the Apple iPhone that makes finding Mr Right- or Mr Tonight- just a button press away. Unlike previous networking sites, Grindr is portable. It uses global positioning technology to identify gay men in your area away. Unlike previous networking sites, Grindr is portable. It uses global positioning technology to identify gay men in your area.

Having grown up feeling isolated in a country town, Aaron has used the internet to meet men since he was 16 and isn’t surprised by Grindr’s success. Since its launch last year, more than 500,000 users worldwide have signed up to the free version alone, with thousands more joining each week.

“You know as soon as you turn it on that the person you’re talking to is a kilometre or two away, sometimes less,” he says. “You could potentially have sex with them right away.”

Aaron offers me a tour of Grindr. Within 10 minutes of scanning a grid of bare torsos and heavy innuendo he strikes up a conversation with ‘Adam&Adam’; 1400 metres away.

“Generally I think gay men have an obsession with being a part of the most up-to-date and cutting-edge trends. Grindr is the new Manhunt, the same way Gaga is the new Madonna.”

“You can see how social networking is an example of that more indirect communication.”

He sends a picture to his new friend and waits for one to be sent back.

“All I have to do now is send him a map of my location and we could meet up right away, if I wanted to.”

One of the features of Grindr is the ‘Favourites’ application.

“Basically you just put a star on the profiles of all the guys you’ve slept with, and then you can chat with them regardless of how far away you are.” Aaron counts 10 stars; give or take a few he’s deleted, but he reminds me he’s only used Grindr for a month.

It was a broken heart that led Aaron to Grindr.

“When you go through a break-up you get lonely and you try to fill that void, even if it is just for 30 minutes and you’re having sex with someone you don’t know. I continue to use Grindr because it’s a really great way to hook up.”

Daniel Chamberlain contributes to SX News, the highest-circulating publication in Sydney catering to a queer demographic. He says that Grindr’s success comes down to clever marketing through its appeal to target horny men with money and time on their hands.

Daniel admits that there are risks, but they are varied and differ according to the context of the situation.

“I don’t think there is any easy solution for this, I mean it’s not like they can slap a warning label on these programs saying ‘caution: may cause sex addiction, antisocial behaviour and paedophilia, can they?’

But there’s more. Recently a case surfaced in Canada where a man was charged with the sexual assault of a 13-year-old boy he’d met using Grindr. The GPS element of the application rings danger bells to anyone who has ever sat through a stalker movie. Daniel admits that there are risks, but they are varied and differ according to the context of the situation.

“Within metropolitan and urban gay cultures there is what is disparagingly referred to as a culture of promiscuity, so that’s that casual sexual connection, and the internet is something that enhances that and makes it easily available.”

Grindr is not without its dangers. Aaron acknowledges that the ease and convenience in discarding the connections you make is an attractive quality.

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“One thing is for sure, with Grindr you have to take the good with the bad and the ugly. Aaron’s case is evidence the networking software has the potential to alter the hook-up habits of a generation of gay men. Soon the heterosexual world will have its turn, with Grindr creator Joel Simkhai announcing a straight version is in the works, available on your iPhone sometime this year.

*Names changed

FEATURES FEATURES

MEG COLLINS

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“It’s little wonder Grindr has taken off like it has. Men are just surprising by Grindr’s success. Since its launch last year, more than 500,000 users worldwide have signed up to the free version alone, with thousands more joining each week.”

Aaron*, 22, says Grindr is essentially a hook-up site for gay men to find sexual partners. It is a modern take on the websites he grew up using, including Gaydar and Manhunt. Previously, a casual rendezvous had to be arranged in advance from behind a door. The streets of Wollongong may have been empty but Grindr was full, and ‘Wanting Wood’ was only 700 metres away.

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“You know as soon as you turn it on that the person you’re talking to is a kilometre or two away, sometimes less,” he says. “You could potentially have sex with them right away.”

Aaron offers me a tour of Grindr. Within 10 minutes of scanning a grid of bare torsos and heavy innuendo he strikes up a conversation with ‘Adam&Adam’; 1400 metres away.

“The five questions you always get asked are ‘how tall are you, what’s your weight, what’s your build, how big is your cock and are you top or bottom?’ so right from the start the undertone is very sexual.”

He sends a picture to his new friend and waits for one to be sent back.

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*Names changed
30 years on from its one child policy, China enjoys a robust economy, but what is the personal cost? CAITLIN LYNCH investigates.
Pi Zhuang is one of these millions. Speaking from the kitchen in her split-level terrace in Sydney’s western suburbs, Pi tells of how the one-child policy, rather than fostering a better existence for China’s people, actually inflicts more harm than good.

There is a proverb, Pi says, in rural China that goes, “The birth of a boy is welcomed with shouts of joy and firecrackers, but when a girl is born, the neighbours say nothing.” This is because Chinese society has long been modelled on the principles of Confucianism, whereby the preference for a son to carry on the family name is paramount.

“There is a mix of social and financial factors that necessitate the birth of males over females in China” says Fulbright Research Professor at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Oliver Williams. “Parents rely on sons to look after them in old age. They need them to keep the family afloat financially and, more importantly, they continue the family line.” So now that most Chinese families are only allowed to have one child, the pressure to produce a male heir is immense.

“It is a deeply flawed policy,” says Australian student Ian Shearer, “There is a mix of social and financial factors that necessitate the birth of males over females in China” says Fulbright Research Professor at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Oliver Williams. “Parents rely on sons to look after them in old age. They need them to keep the family afloat financially and, more importantly, they continue the family line.” So now that most Chinese families are only allowed to have one child, the pressure to produce a male heir is immense.

But this is just the tip of the iceberg. While researchers at Beijing’s People’s University admit that tens of thousands of female children go missing each year through infanticide and abandonment, at least one million more are killed before birth following prenatal sex selection.

“I only just found out what my mother went through before she left China,” admits Anne Zhuang, Pi’s eldest daughter. “I don’t blame her because I know how hard it is for women over there, but to think that it is still happening makes me very sad. Technology should be helping the people live better lives, not helping take them away.” And therein lies the paradox.

The one-child policy was introduced to try and pull the Chinese people out of poverty and tragedy. Yet, from what we are seeing 30 years on is that there continues to be suffering. Now however, it is more psychological than physical.

Pi counts her blessings that she was able to escape. She and her young family migrated to Australia in 1989 when her husband was offered work during the information technology boom. “I don’t know what would have happened if I had stayed,” she says. “We already had two children, which was against the law. I knew that, but I couldn’t give up my daughter… not another one.”

This heartrending relationship between mothers and daughters is the subject of a new book by prominent Chinese author, Xinran. Titled Message from an Unknown Chinese Mother, the book chronicles the pain experienced by hundreds of Chinese women whose children were snatched from them at birth, adopted overseas, who were forced to neglect and mistreat their daughters due to the policy, or even more tragically, murder them in infancy. “[The] single child policy has not made [society] better,” Xinran concede observes? “Tradition is there, nothing is changing. We are getting more riches but less family and less happiness.”

So after years of tradition, the one-child policy has helped mothers to see and feel that something is deeply wrong in their society. Why can’t the Chinese government? “It’s a slow process,” says Oliver Williams. “And while I don’t condone the atrocities that have happened in the past, I believe the country is making movements towards a brighter future.”

It seems, however, that the economic consequences of the policy, not the tragic loss of life, have become the real crisis point for the government.

“In the last 30 years, China’s economy has reaped the rewards of population controls,” explains Williams. “But, I think they now know that if they don’t change the policy, it will quickly become a liability.” Let us pray that it does end soon.
He’s a businessman and local judo coach, but as ANDREW RIDDLE reports, too often Mick Cutajar is defined by a $39,000 dollar mistake.

I thought I would see a thug when I first met Mick Cutajar, knowing his history, but twice he defied my expectations. As he floor-managed his packed-out night of cage fights, I saw a harried but self-assured businessman. When I catch up with him a few days later, I see a gruff, but fatherly judo coach. As we walk into the Snakepit basketball stadium, he spots a prepubescent boy sporting a ‘Cutta’s Submission Fighting’ t-shirt. “Hey! That’s my shirt!” he exclaims jovially, collaring the boy for boy sporting a ‘Cutta’s Submission Fighting’ t-shirt.

Some fighters make their very presence a threat...Mick ‘Cutta’ Cutajar would be quite capable of doing just that, but unexpectedly is more a soft-spoken coach than glowering warrior. Mick Cutajar is a former Australian mixed martial arts (MMA) heavyweight champion, and is now a judo coach, businessman, fight promoter, and film and television actor. But too often he is defined by his biggest mistake – his 1995 conviction for armed robbery, after he stole $39,000 from an armoured van. Everything he has done since has been shaped by his time inside, everything that has been written about him in the press is overshadowed by his time inside - the jailhouse bashings both given and received, the questions about his time as Ivan Milat’s cellmate and his difficulty readjusting to society.

Cutajar’s athletic career has been plagued with misfortunes and clouded with controversy. The bank robbery in 1994 was carried out to finance his bid to compete in the UFC (Ultimate Fighting Championships). In prison, he almost scored a professional rugby league contract, but lost it after his leg was severely broken and he was denied treatment. After his release, he became the Australian MMA heavyweight champion and won the chance to fight UFC champion Maurice Smith for the title in 1999, but was refused an entry visa to the U.S because of his conviction. On Sept 10, 2001, he again tried, only to see his chances evaporate a day later, as the World Trade Centre attacks caused all air traffic to shut down. In March 2004, his kneecap was broken in the Australian Xtreme Fighting Championship, and he lost his Australian title. But missing out on the 2008 Olympics was perhaps the fiercest blow.

After Cutajar lost selection to the much younger Matt Celotti, it came to light that Celotti had an assault charge pending which he had failed to disclose, leading to him being dropped from the Olympic team. “Matt Celotti beat me fair and square – good on him, he’s twenty years younger,” Cutajar says. “But if I was made to jump through hoops and be honest with my criminal record, then so should he.”

In the shade of Cutta the fighter is Mick Cutajar the businessman, who, in many ways, the fighter merely serves. Mick owns his own gym, ‘Cutta’s Submission Fighting’, and owns and runs South Coast MMA, the fight promoter behind the latest Wollongong MMA fights. Of course, organising and promoting cage fights in Australia, where the sport is still regarded with suspicion, is as much a fight as anything going on in the cage. When asked about the regulation of MMA, his mouth twists into a tired sneer. “They tried to shut ours down [the cage fights]. The Snakepit got a fax from some government body that told them I was running an illegal event, and, if I proceeded, hose involved would be prosecuted to the full extent of the law,” he says. “And here’s the thing: the same idiots who approved me are the same idiots who tried to shut it down.”

Cutajar also goes out of his way to give back to the community. He runs a Centrelink ‘work for the dole’ program, where the long-term unemployed complete Certificate II in Sports Coaching. “Mick is humble, motivated, well liked, energetic and well respected by those who know him personally and from his sport,” according to Dr. Robyn Morris, his biographer. “He is both a mentor and is mentored.”

So, Mick Cutajar is an athlete, a businessman, a mentor- an example of how a life can be mended after prison. What he has only been once, he says, is a criminal. “The only crime that I ever did was that armed robbery. I’ve never been charged with assault, I’ve never been charged with abduction, I’ve never had a restraining order put on me.” So, why do we always hear about Mick Cutajar the bank robber?
BITTEN BY THE BRAZILIAN BUG

By SARAH HAMILTON

Fancy a Brazilian? SARAH HAMILTON discovers the souring new trend in South American food.

The good old-fashioned Aussie bloke knows his barbecue. He knows about stubbies, footy and beer. Above all he knows his Aussie meat; which is perhaps why the new-style sausage sizzle that Caringbah’s Churrasco brings to the table just fair dinkum confuses things.

The Brazilian restaurant got its name from the South American technique of roasting long skewers of marinated meat over a bed of flaming coals. It’s an all-you-can-eat, carnivore’s dream. If Opah’s Greek Yum Cha and Hog’s Breath Cafe got together, Churrasco would be the love child.

And what a high achiever!

If you’re lucky enough to get into one of their two dinner sittings (6pm and 8pm) Monday to Sunday, you’ll find your food will definitely worth a visit: the iron intake is incredible!

Discount meat warehouses:
I had my family over for dinner not long ago and paid $7 for four scotch fillet steaks (and they were a good size too!). Only downside is the meat needs to be eaten the day you buy it or frozen in portion sizes (a decent-sized freezer is well worth the initial cost!).

For bookings, contact 02 95257717.

BARGAIN HUNTERS AND GATHERERS

By EMILIE LOVATT

For many, moving out of home and away from the parental unit means noodles every night and a cupboard full of food with the nutritional value of damp cardboard. But the common idea that eating healthy and decent food is too expensive for a student budget is rubbish. EMILIE LOVATT discovers how making a list and shopping in a few different places can save you hundreds of dollars a year. Now that’s a lot of goon.

Wholesale Fruit and Vegetable Markets:
Here you’ll find better quality goods at a lower cost. The shelves are stocked daily so you can guarantee it’s fresh. Always stick to what’s in season and check out the weekly specials (last week I paid $2.50 for an avocado in a major supermarket; they were on special for $0.99 at the fruit and veg market!).

Big supermarkets:
As much as I enjoy hunting down a good bargain, there are a few things that I won’t skimp on. A few guilty pleasures (like mango Weis bars) won’t affect your bill too much if you stick to one or two items. If you’re really strapped for time and HAVE to shop for everything here, go for the generic products – it’s often exactly the same thing packaged differently!

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ALDI:
By far the cheapest place to shop for “staple goods” (bread, milk, cheese, etc). If you have special dietary requirements or are looking for a particular gourmet item don’t even bother. Goods are sold from the crates and boxes they arrive in and it’s BYO for shopping bags (or pay 15c in store) but the reduced level of service and presentation means you get one hell of a bargain!

Quick Tips:
- Plan your weekly meals in advance. Write a list and stick to it.
- Split your groceries between three or four different places.
- Only buy fruit and veg that are in season.
- Bulk buy food that won’t go off quickly.
- Cook meals in bulk and freeze into small portions.
- Always stick to generic products.

PARTY COCKTAIL SPECIAL

By BIRGITTA ELFERINK

Summer is almost here so it’s time to mix it up with cocktails to tantalise the taste buds and refresh your friends. Birgitta Elferink introduces her original recipes for great party drinks.

STRAWBERRY COCKTAILS
- Vodka
- Strawberry liqueur
- Fresh strawberries
- Ice
- Sparkling wine

Wash, chop and de-stem fresh strawberries (one punnet makes about six drinks).
Put one part vodka, one part strawberry liqueur, strawberries and a generous helping of ice into the blender. Blend for approx. 15 seconds, or until ice is finely chopped.
Serve in a cocktail glass and top with sparkling wine.

PARTY PUNCH
- Half a bottle of cheap vodka
- 2 bottles of cheap sparkling wine
- 1 tin pineapple juice
- 1 bottle lemonade
- 1 large tins of fruit salad or fresh berries

Soak the fruit in vodka for 20 minutes then pour all ingredients into a large serving bowl and mix well. Scoop with a ladle. Double the ingredients for double the fun!
THE BULE’S GUIDE TO INDONESIA

Words and Photos BIRGITTA ELFERINK

Take a moment to think about Indonesia. You’re probably imagining horrific images of bombed hotels, the teary face of Schapelle Corby behind bars, or rip-off surf goods from the grungy streets of Kuta. In reality though, the world’s largest Muslim nation has an immense wealth of culture, natural beauty and sincere people. For the regular tourist who doesn’t get past the small, overcrowded tourist island of Bali, the concept of a peaceful Indonesia is almost unthinkable. But all you have to do is take a few steps off the beaten track and open your mind to something new.

That’s not to gloss over the reality of the situation – Indonesia is a developing nation with a long way to go before it reaches our standards of health care, hygiene or accountability. Corruption is rife and civilians have learnt to do things their own way; in this society there is no such phrase as “by the book”. Money equals power and a little cash goes a long way to getting what you want here.

For bule (the local term for white foreigners) this has its advantages and disadvantages. First, it means that on a small sum (say, for example, a youth allowance budget) you can live like a king and your travel options are limitless.

Second, it means that because you’re white, you’re automatically associated with money and are often treated like a walking ATM. In my first week on Java I had already paid two lots of “foreign taxes” to the local police, given out over 500,000 rupiah for products that didn’t work and been ripped off countless times by drivers who had an inkling that I hadn’t quite gotten my head around their currency. And third, you have to come to terms with your conscience and realise that you will, at times, see great suffering.

The average worker in Indonesia earns $6 a day, and poverty – while it can be shocking – is a fact of life and something you quickly become desensitised to. It is a country of glaring extremes, and despite the obvious exploitation by some westerners, the richest people in the country are actually Indonesians. Middle class does not exist, and people are either loaded or seriously lacking. The country’s capital, Jakarta, is a city bulging at the seams, pulsating with the buzz of too many people. In some areas, like Kemang and Menteng, mansions sprawl over grassy lawns, while in others entire families live in a tin shanty measuring less than a standard gaol cell in Australia.

But the real wealth of this country lies in its people. They are warm, generous and welcoming – within five minutes of introduction you are considered a family friend and enjoy the privileges of such – my one rule is never say no to the offer of a home-cooked meal!

If you’re looking for a relaxing holiday, then Indonesia is not for you. But if you’re looking for a mind-blowing experience that will leave you feeling like a local rather than a tourist, consider the world’s largest archipelago – and don’t even think about buying a Bintang singlet on the way home (that’s such a bule thing to do!).
My heart told me that an adventure was about to begin. Adrenaline pumped through my body, as it spoke to my imagination. It spoke of a place I had never been; a world set to spark my curiosity, mystify my senses, and challenge my stomach. Was I ready for this?

There was no going back; the wheels had made contact with the runway. I grabbed my luggage, passed through the glass exit, and hit the sun-drenched taxi rank. The smell consumed me; the heat was intense. The sound of cars beeping their horns crowded the airwaves.

I took in a rush of air before crawling into an overcrowded taxi. My travel companions directed the driver in Vietnamese, like a cryptic puzzle I could not understand. The world could talk many languages, I thought, as my ears made friends with the sounds that would dance in my mind for the next three weeks. I took in every moment with delight and an open mind, for this morning would be nothing but a memory by this afternoon.

Minute by minute, time flew by as I consumed the sights surrounding the airport of Ho-Chi Minh. Furrowing my brow in concentration, I observed the tips of the buildings that emerged from behind wired fences. These buildings would become so familiar to my eyes. Suddenly the repeated sounds of car horns grew louder, and chaos reigned. I tensed my muscles in a streak of panic.

Engulfed in a surge of traffic, our van weaved effortlessly through the sea of cars and motorbikes. It was like organised pandemonium. Vehicles were merging, crowding and cutting each other off, but nobody seemed to mind. Regulated by constant horn-beeping to let others know your car was there; everything was under control. If this were Australia there would surely have been an accident by now, or at least an exchange of expletives between motorists. But this was not the world I had known. I let go, relaxed my muscles and replaced my sudden anxiety with excitement.

It was this approach that led to one of the best holidays of my life. During the time ahead I would get up close with crocodiles, crawl through the Cu Chi tunnels and float on the stunning beaches of Nha Trang. The food was sweet, and the cultural gap even sweeter. I would sleep on the ricketiest boat that would ever set sail on the picturesque Ha Long Bay. I would surprise locals in the most remote villages, and make rice paper rolls in the living room of a friendly family.

Less than AUD$10 transformed me into a millionaire in Vietnam (one million dong that is). While $1500 was enough for me to live happily between Ho Chi Minh City, Hanoi and a few destinations in between for 21 days.

Like a fable whispering make-believe to its reader, I wondered if the people back home would believe my story; a story of thieving monkeys, stunning scenery, and spontaneous ostrich riding. I have been to many parts of the world, but ostrich riding in Ho Chi Minh City was never on the to-do list. Then again, for $1.50, who could resist?

In a hay-smelling barn, a man assisted me in climbing aboard a rather large and anxious bird. Just like an emu, I thought to myself. It felt so unnatural sitting on this creature, especially holding on to its wings to support myself. I expected the man to gently guide the bird out of the barn for what would be a calm and leisurely stroll. That is, until he shrieked loudly in Vietnamese, the doors opened, and the ostrich charged at full speed. Sprinting along a fenced paddock, my heart raced. Spectators cheered from the side. Had I somehow managed to become the main act in a strange circus show? My torso slipped away, my hands lost grip, and I plummeted to the ground. Dumped onto the barren soil, my body ached as I attempted to heave myself up.

Vietnam has taught me that the typical tourist trail is a bore. It has taught me to take a chance on an adventure; to close the Lonely Planet, and set my bearings beyond the realms of my comfort zone. But maybe next time I won’t agitate any birds; just to be on the safe side.

I didn’t break one bone on my fall—luckily. And I will look back on this event as one of the funniest memories of my holiday. But for now, I will take my revenge and order a plate of ostrich at the nearest restaurant in Ho Chi Minh City.
BIPOLAR

By LAUREN DEIGHTON
Photos By JENNIFER EDMONSON

Their day might start out exactly the same as yours. The weather is sunny, the birds are chirping and everything feels right. It’s frightening how abruptly that can change. A shift in mood can happen as quickly as the flick of a switch, with seemingly nothing to set it off. It affects everybody involved; family, friends, partners, teachers, students, and colleagues.

Bipolar disorder, formerly known as manic depression, is like a hurricane, which can leave a path of destruction in its tracks.

Those living with bipolar feel emotions at an extremely heightened level. They experience cycles or episodes of mania and depression. In times of mania they may have boundless energy and talk incessantly before hitting a low, where they can remain for several days—feeling angry, snappy and irritable or unable to get out of bed.

It is manageable, but for some it can take a long time to get the medication right. This can result in severe side effects in the meantime.

*Samantha’s house is a mess. She’s on her medication and doesn’t seem to have the energy to wipe the table. The lounge room floor is polluted with multicoloured litter; chip packets, lolly wrappers, used spoons and forks. Cigarette butts spill from the cracked ashtray onto the grimy coffee table.

It’s 8am and the kids are off to school again in dirty clothes with empty lunchboxes. Mum’s still in bed.

The scenario isn’t always the same. It’s only when Samantha is on certain medications that her energy levels drop to an unbearable low. If you asked her three children, aged 5-15, if it’s better than the alternative, they’d probably struggle to answer.

The highs are just as hard to deal with. If you’ve ever seen someone on speed, kick that image into overdrive: constant talking, constant moving, high sensitivity. In Samantha’s manic episodes, it’s her family that bears the brunt of the illness. But Samantha suffers too once her cycle ends; with severe guilt, remorse and shame.

“It makes me feel angry and annoyed at myself when I can’t control my feelings,” she says.

“I manage to attack anyone trying to make me feel better and I get frustrated that it affects the ones I love,”

It can take up to 10 years to diagnose someone with bipolar disorder, and a lifetime to perfect meds and dosages.

For university student *Andy, the situation is slightly different, sometimes unable to leave the house, stuck at home cleaning, arguing or trying to console her distraught mother.

Before treatment, Sally’s disorder was sometimes almost enough to push Andy over the edge.

“Sometimes I just needed to get out of there, I couldn’t stand the screaming, the erratic behaviour. I’d just climb out the bedroom window,” she sighs.

The stigma attached to mental illness has decreased greatly over the past 25 years, but many questions still remain unanswered.

Professor Nagesh Pai from The University of Wollongong’s Graduate School of Medicine says researchers are quite certain the neurotransmitter system is part of the cause of bipolar disorder, but further research is essential to determine its exact role.

Genetics are also thought to play a role in the disorder, but Professor Pai says it often takes a stressful life event to trigger the onset.

“Going to hospital can protect the person and their family from the damage that may result from the impaired judgement associated with the illness.”

Growing up, they appeared to be a happy little family, but behind closed doors the environment was often tense. Andy was sometimes unable to leave the house, stuck at home cleaning, arguing or trying to console her distraught mother.

Community and outpatient treatment can then be combined with medication and delivered over time by specialists who can monitor progress.

Professor Pai points out that early diagnosis is integral in preventing disruption to daily life, damage to relationships and most importantly, suicide.

If you think that you or someone you know may suffer from bipolar disorder, seek professional opinion or contact Beyond Blue on 1300 22 4636.

*Names changed for anonymity
FASHIONABLE FITNESS: roadtesting the zumba craze

By CAITLIN LYNCH
Photo By MEG COLLINS

Zumba. Dance fad or fitness revolution? As a self-confessed sucker for just about any new celebrity trend, Caitlin LYNCH decided to make it her mission to try the hot new dance workout that combines hip-hop, salsa, flamenco and merengue to spicy Latin beats.

You’ve probably heard a lot about Zumba over the past year, from late night TV advertisements, to gossip magazine endorsements. Even the old ladies at my local gym complain to the manager that it’s “so behind the times” not to offer a Zumba class in the aerobic line-up.

I agree with them. I’ve grown tired of the same old spinning, stepping, lunging and stretching. So, despite my gym manager’s grim warnings that Zumba is simply a “flash in the pan” fad that will die, I’m determined to hightail myself to the nearest Zumba class to find out just what this damned hype is about.

Fervent recommendations from fellow fad-followers lead me to a class instructed by Elena Bazan Garcia, a recent migrant from Mexico City. Wanting to bring “a little bit of Latin” to her new home; she credits herself with being the first instructor to offer Zumba to the Illawarra—introducing her classes back in May 2009.

I ask Garcia’s advice on what to expect from a typical Zumba workout.

“It is challenging,” she says. “The pace is fast...the more you move, the more calories you burn. Some people can burn up to 800 calories per hour in my class. I cringe.

Is that really the appeal? Judging from the sagging boobs, butts and blue rinses that make up at least half my midday class, that surely can’t be the case.

“No, no, no,” Elena laughs. “The Zumba workout is designed to be fun, not scary...in my classes you are encouraged to go at your own pace.” Phew.

Fellow class member and recent Zumba convert, Helen McGuire, 45, agrees. “I came for the first time last week because I was curious,” she says. “By the end of it I was having such a good time, I didn’t even notice whether I was doing the right steps or not.”I decide to stick around.

Before I know it, the sexy salsa beats start pumping and we hit the floor. Elena begins to bump and grind on the stage, her famous motto booming through the speakers – “free your mind and your ass will follow!” Profound.

The first routine consists of speedy sidestepping, fist pumping, ass wiggling and hip shaking. I feel like a regular Beyonce.

“Is this a kick-ass workout or what?” screams Elena. She is right. My ass is definitely getting kicked, not to mention punched, squeezed, spanked and shaken in rhythm.

After 55 minutes of pure, unadulterated danceercise, I’m beat. Looking around me I can see I’m not alone. The ladies are all red-faced and sweaty-browed. What’s more interesting, is that not a single one of them is without a smile on their face even 67-year-old first-timer, Sue Hudson.

“How did you find the class?” I ask her, expecting it may have been a bit too much for the old-timer.

“Well, I won’t say it was easy,” she giggles. “But if it means I could get a backside like that,” she says, motioning at Elena, “then I’ll definitely be coming back next week.”

I follow her eye to the front of the room, where our instructor stands chatting to a group of ladies, nary a sweat bead on her bronzed brow. Damn.

“If you have a point,” I puff and quickly scribble my name down for next week’s class.

There’s something about fad diets that makes us tick. We know they aren’t sustainable and that the only way to permanently achieve a rockin’ body is through good food choices and exercise. But does that stop us? EMILIE LOVATT busts the myths and speaks to the experts on fad dieting.

P an Metron Ariston,” my Grandma always used to say. It’s Greek for “Everything in moderation”. I definitely didn’t take her advice when I paid a hundred bucks for the lemon detox diet. Or when I put my body through agony during a week of the cabbage soup diet.

With bikini season fast approaching, people are flocking to health food and book stores in search of products containing ‘acai berry’ and books that promise you’ll look like Elle Macpherson in a matter of weeks.

But Fitness Centre Manager and Personal Trainer, Glen Sherriff, is adamant that there is no quick fix in achieving your ideal body.

“’It’s all about a good balance of regular exercise combined with the quality, quantity and timing of nutrition,” he said.

In other words, if it sounds too good to be true then it probably is. While fad diets may work well on a short-term basis there are little to no long-term benefits.

“You don’t receive the macronutrients your body requires for everyday function,” Sherriff said.

“’A yo-yo effect is created and you end up putting on more weight (once the diet is over) than you originally started with because all you’ve lost is muscle mass and water.”

Now I know this may shock you, but studies have shown that eating a well-balanced diet and exercising regularly does in fact lead to weight loss. It’s not a quick fix and it’s certainly not going to happen overnight. But it does work and it’s something you can sustain for longer than a week.

“Delusional Dieting”

By EMILIE LOVATT
Photo By BIRGITTA ELFERINK

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Elvis Di Fazio’s photography is a bit naughty, always shocking and definitely subversive. Growing up in the suburbs of Sydney, NSW, he hardly had access to a thriving, glamorous art scene. He escaped to the playground of his imagination: a place where mundane life was transformed into bold and humorous imagery. Fans of his work are no doubt thankful that Di Fazio is able to translate his fertile imagination into the form of photography.

Influenced by the cultural explosion of the 1960s, Di Fazio isn’t afraid of pushing the boundaries of what is deemed socially acceptable; drawing upon subjects that many would believe, are better left unexplored.

Di Fazio invites us to look at our own culture from an alternative perspective. He draws from an eclectic pool of themes: politics, religion, sexuality and freedom of choice; challenging stereotypes and placing incongruous elements together in the one frame, making it all the more salacious.

Now internationally acclaimed, Di Fazio regularly features in Oyster, Harper’s Bazaar, GRAZIA and Pop magazine. Despite the success of his photography, he is incredibly down to earth and humble.
How did you first take to a camera and forge a love of fashion?

I picked up a camera in about 2003. It all started as a way of creating original photo silk-screens to use for canvas works. I would cast friends as old-world movie characters: dress them, groom them and shoot them against a set designed especially for the shoot. A lot of the time it would be pretty basic; like an old ’50s bed sheet pinned to the wall to mimic wallpaper; or a lounge in the corner of the room with a few picture frames strategically placed. It was more about the subject.

The photos got so good that I didn’t feel the need to rework them as silk-screen on canvas, so I dropped that medium all together and focused on the computer re-touching instead. I never really had a love for fashion. I always loved characters and style; but we need fashion to create the desired look so it was a natural evolution.

What is your strongest memory growing up at home in Raby?

I can remember a dream that I had when I was two, that involved a dragon carrying a clown in a flying sleigh. Porcelain Comedy and Tragedy masks lay on a wall in the lounge room of my house, and my mother and auntie were putting together a puzzle in the room furthest down the hallway. It was so vivid; it was all set at night to make it even creepier. I can remember it like it was yesterday.

Can you revisit your first shoot?

Hmmm I can only guess what would have been my first shoot. I can remember the first time I picked up a camera and was allowed to use it. It was at a BBQ in the National Parks and I was taking a picture of a kookaburra. I’ve always had a big obsession with animals. Ha!

Your photography has almost paradoxical themes… hot babes clad in football gear… nuns smoking cigarettes. What response are you hoping to stir with such imagery?

Hmm, I’m a shit-stirrer by nature, but only because I think people should chill the f*** out. There are too many rules set to stop people from expressing themselves in the mainstream. We’re all so afraid of offending anyone or it costing our jobs and reputation. I just like people to see things in a different light. I only pick up my camera to walking through the revolving doors to drop off my bags and feeling like Julia Roberts in Pretty Woman, when she goes shopping on Rodeo Drive. Except I was wearing stubbies and a flannelette shirt. Totally unworthy. Ha!

Your work is unique, creative and you’re forever surprising us. Who would you say have been your major influences?

No people in particular but definitely all sorts of cultures and the clichés surrounding it. People, film characters, movements and music inspire me. My ideas work on cycles and trends. As soon as someone dismisses a particular theme, model genre I become attracted to it and try and find a way to re-invent it and present it. People are so fickle these days you have to be fucking Lady Gaga to make it. You’ve got to bring something new and different from the last thing, more shocking, more colourful… MORE MORE MORE!

The ’60s have been a massive influence. I used to be a little weirdo-gothic-head- banger in my teens and wondered why I suffered from really severe depression and anxiety. Ha! I had to do an overhaul and rid myself of the emo shit to stop myself from wanting to slash my wrists. Having an obsessive personality I had to attach myself to my other secret love - THE 1960s! I’ve obsessed over a handful of other themes since then but I keep revisiting the ’60s. It really resonates with me.

You’ve recently been signed to DLM Australia and have had the opportunity to shoot for such companies as Sportsgirl, Wheels and Doll Baby, and Zu Shoes. What would you say has been your most memorable moment shooting?

No one in particular but definitely all sorts of cultures and the clichés surrounding it. People, film characters, movements and music inspire me. My ideas work on cycles and trends. As soon as someone dismisses a particular theme, model genre I become attracted to it and try and find a way to re-invent it and present it. People are so fickle these days you have to be fucking Lady Gaga to make it. You’ve got to bring something new and different from the last thing, more shocking, more colourful… MORE MORE MORE!

Your photography has almost paradoxical themes… hot babes clad in football gear… nuns smoking cigarettes. What response are you hoping to stir with such imagery?

More More More! ^_^
Kellie Hill talks to Creative Arts student, Simon Macias.

Simon Macias counts himself as part of the artistic counter-culture. He’s particularly inspired by the likes of Mark Ryden, Alex Trochut and Yoko d’Holbachie; who are pioneers of their own style, and represent a new breed of lowbrow artists that are reimagining the way in which we interpret art.

Emerging in the late 1970s, the pop surrealist movement is controversial, since it alienates itself from the fine arts world, making its legitimacy as an arts movement questionable (to some). The term ‘lowbrow’ became a tongue-in-cheek expression used to describe art that didn’t fit within the context of highbrow art.

Macias vividly recalls the first time he took his art works to several galleries in Sydney. “One of the curators told me, ‘they’re good… but it’s the kind of work that artists hate.’” He knew what she meant, even if he didn’t understand why at the time. “I’ve since realised she was talking about an elitism that existed in the fine arts world that enforced a distinction between ‘high art’ and everything else; and out of this situation came the Pop Surrealists and lowbrow artists.” Macias believes that the contemporary form of illustration owes itself to this movement. Unlike its rival, lowbrow art has its origins in the sub-cultures of our generation.

“I think increasingly what’s popular now is coming from sub-cultural movements, like street art, and from average people in their bedrooms - now that everyone has a computer, and thus the tools to create or reproduce their art and exhibit it online. Computers and the Internet have really democratised access into the art world, which is brilliant. I see contemporary illustration as the folk art of our generation, and anyone can do it,” says Macias, who is now doing his Masters in Creative Arts. “I try to stretch across hoops of different styles, but I think people mainly like my illustrations; which are an eclectic mix of psychedelic, surreal, organic and expressive - but always controlled in some way,” he says. “They’re usually detailed and very stylised, and there’s often humour or absurdity there too.”

Macias may be inspired by an encounter, a dream or even a phrase. He describes a spiritual experience he had upon seeing an installation by Brodie Ellis at this year’s Biennale, in which video, light and sound attempt to convey a solar eclipse. “It was an intense sensory experience, one of those moments that you could feel but never properly describe. Touched by the sublime. I could have gone back, or told someone else to go, and it might never have been the same. So I did a painting about it called Umbra:Penumbra:Antumbra, which was the same name of Ellis’s installation.”

He uses arts as a means of expressing what he can’t articulate, and confides that it is the most successful form of catharsis. He’s terrified by failure and is excited by the unknown: the nature of the universe: where it ends, if it ends, the idea of nothingness.

“It’s pretty scary and fascinating and it’s good to feel that small. I’d describe myself as a sceptic, but there are some things that are currently unanswerable or just unknown - and that’s what’s exciting. It keeps peoples’ imaginations alive,” he says. “I’d like to believe that crop circles are real, and that all the mythological creatures exist somewhere. And that I can go to Middle Earth one day.”

Macias finds his niche in blurring the line between art and design. There are no restrictions to your approach, he explains, if you free yourself from definitions and merge different schools of thinking. “People hunger for this visual pleasure and design and illustration have no problem with the beauty of visual form. I think they embody the spirit of the age now more than art does,” he says. “I love experimental magazines - like Adbusters or Dumbo Feather Pass It On for example – where it’s not entirely clear what their purpose is at first. The same goes for typographic work that isn’t immediately readable. Instead of everything being neatly packaged for you into a commodity, it incites curiosity and encourages you to spend time with the words, or the magazine, or product.”

Macias (pseudonym Simanion) will exhibit his work at a Halloween group show in Surry Hills at the end of the month and will also feature in B-Sides and Rarities: an eclectic mix of works by several Creative Arts students at Verb Syndicate, which opens October 29. You may also find him selling copies of his own illustrations at markets across Sydney, for $15 a pop.

By Kellie Hill
Photo By James Cooper

Pop Surrealism: The Rise of the Underground Artists

Kellie Hill talks to Creative Arts student, Simon Macias.
In Australia, vinyl is experiencing a unique situation in the music industry. Generally, all talk of the music industry and the physical form of music is that of doom and gloom. Since 2003, the Australian Record Industry Association (ARIA) has recorded a steady decline of physical music sales.

"Sales of physical product continued to decline across last year," ARIA reported. "Although the decline in CD album sales was slight (less than 1%), it was more than offset by the increase in digital album sales."

Despite this, vinyl sales increased in 2009 by a massive 174%. It’s a figure that would make any businessman’s head spin.

Andy Cuddihy is the Managing Director of Australian arm of the UK company The Vinyl Factory: one of the world’s newest vinyl pressing plants, located in the Sydney suburb of Marrickville.

Fisher began collecting vinyl a few years ago, after stealing most of his dad’s coveted collection and getting a free turntable off a friend who mistakenly thought he wanted to be a DJ. When Fisher had devoured the records his dad had played to him for the past 22 years, he began looking to build his own collection.

"I always keep an eye out for records when at op shops, but it’s really inconsistent there. There seems to predominantly be classical music and Christmas carols, not to mention all the Kamahl records. I’m more interested in ’70s and ’80s music, so I really have to sift through the other genres," Fisher says.

"I’ve always loved the sleeve artwork, so it’s just natural that I wanted to get them in such a large format," he explains, setting off for his first garage sale for the weekend. It’s only 7:30am, but that’s when the vinyl boxes are at their fullest.

Fisher is spending his early Saturday morning the way he likes best: trawling back and forth along the suburban streets of north Wollongong. With each corner, his eyes strain in search of ‘GARAGE SALE’ signs, written on the back of cardboard boxes or posted on the sides of telegraph poles. It’s elusive signage that always evokes excitement.

Sitting by the doorway to the open garage is a couple in their late sixties, seemingly detached and nonchalant about their belongings being haggled over and going home with strangers. Fisher has garage sale etiquette mastered and he strides in confidently, throws a friendly hello to the couple and heads directly towards a red plastic crate.

"Got it; damn got that too," he murmurs. Apparently Prince’s Purple Rain isn’t a rare find, and Elvis isn’t either.

"By far, the worst record I have ever bought is Mrs Mill’s Non-Stop Honky-Tonk Party. I have no idea why I even bought it. I hope I was drunk!"

What are his best finds?

"If I find anything by Leonard Cohen, it makes my day. But often, the best ones I pick up are artists I’ve never heard of. Records at garage sales are normally around two dollars, so if something catches your eye, it’s worth the risk."

The garage sale proved fruitless, as did the next two. “That happens. I’ll still be hitting them up next week. I’ll check the newspaper for those advertising records at their sale.” Brad is definitely a committed vinyl convert.

For Fisher and Cuddihy, the rustic tangibility and collectable value of vinyl are the reasons why it just won’t die.

"There’s a real sense of pride and ownership with a record. You can pick it up, spin it in your hands, play it, and then you put it on your collection shelf with the other records for display," Fisher explains. "I don’t boast about my digital music library. It’s more like I’ve loaned that music off the real owner."

This love of vinyl’s gritty tangibility by collectors like Fisher keeps Cuddihy in the job he loves.

"I think there is so much more to the whole history of a record. It has its own, scratches, scuffs, fingerprints and dirt. Vinyl has a certain dilapidated charm."

"People who buy vinyl are collectors. Humans like to collect things because it’s enjoyable. It gives a sense context and of history."

“We can’t have a steady market for digital music sales. It’s a ritual. You can play a record and sit down and it’s more than putting a song on your MP3 player as a backing track for the train. Records are more than the soundtrack to your spin class."

While he insists that MP3 downloading will never match the authenticity of records, Cuddihy also believes that vinyl is inherently unique for its discovery of entirely different genres. "There’s a whole generation of music that has never been released on vinyl. At the same time, the older generations of music are often missing in downloads and MP3s, so vinyl creates a retrospective appreciation of music."

"For vinyl lovers, they have to seek out the music, and then they get really excited about finding it."

Although online is a steady source for buying vinyl, for some people, it’s about the persevering search for the Holy Grail. It’s a search that can take them right into people’s homes and garages. Brad Fisher, 22, found the untapped vinyl market of garage sales the best way to expand his offbeat collection.

"There’s just something I love about garage sales. I don’t know if it’s because you get to be a little intrusive or it’s because there are so many quirky, original and downright bizarre treasures to be uncovered and bought for two bucks.”
groove Armada have been producing dance floor bangers since 1996. After a stand out Parklife set, followed by a mammoth 13-hour session at Lady Lux, Andy Cato and Tom Findlay have called time on their illustrious performance career. We caught up with one half of the English dance duo just prior to their Parklife set to discuss their freshly reworked album Black Light and plans for the future.

So what’s the go with Black Light? Well the Armada had sailed into Japan (history jokes are cool) and whilst kicking it in the land of vending machines, they were struck by some inspiration.

“In Japan we decided to put it back together all over again. The lads for the last time. It seems that the intense recording of Black Light is part of the reason for the split. "Black Light was the hardest record to make out of all of them and it drove us quite close to the brink” confides Cato.

However, the band insists the decision is mutual, based on a switch of focus, not a personal problem. “There were a few times we weren’t going to see it through, but obviously we wouldn’t still be here if it wasn’t a close relationship” says Cato. "I’ve spent far more time with Tom then I have wives or girlfriends. It’s more than just a sick in a box. The rich, dark cinematography by Jeff Cronenweth, paired with the climactic music scored by Trent Reznor (Nine Inch Nails) and Atticus Ross, enable a palpable tension that is sustained throughout the film.

While with witty dialogue and subtle moments of laughter, The Social Network captures the zeitgeist of our generation. While the film has received acclaim in the States, many have also been quick to judge its inaccuracies in storytelling. However, this seems irrelevant: for the film doesn’t claim to be a documentary or a biopic, and you’d be naïve to think a film wouldn’t adopt some form of dramatic licence.

The question of what sort of picture is painted of Facebook’s creator is questionable. You may choose to think of Zuckerberg as a tragic hero or an amoral genius. As the film reminds us, “You don’t get to 500 million friends without making a few enemies.” The Social Network is released October 28.
Volunteers wanted

GSK in Sydney is recruiting healthy Japanese, Chinese, Korean, and Non-Asian male volunteers at the moment for a clinical trial.

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(Monday - Friday, 9:00am – 5:00pm)
Email: volunteer.4.trials@gsk.com

agree to sleep

Trudging through the abusive abyss
The ground entangles me
Entwined, interwoven my mind
Try to escape this cemented confrontation

Forced considerations of previous times
Lifestyle choices, decisions were mine
To take a look deep inside
Only to find the inner master riding behind

Inspecting my surrounds, disregard the ground
Look up; split in two, the sky’s confused
Only one path to choose
Which will it be, examine the possibilities

The left side: lit by the moon
Shaped like a pill I could digest soon
Dance on fluffy clouds experience the sound
Utopia: under a strobe lightning beam

The right side: a counterpart, opposite of dark
Clear as a crystal: productive tissue
Reeking of success, first place contest
The precise path but not cool enough

I can fly oh so high
Veering left for one more try
Once inside, the place is a disgrace
No gravity until I am misplaced

Once assumed friends morph into trends
Look to the moon’s disconcerting stare
Reassembling grandpa’s rocking chair
Stumbling, plunging, tumbling, crumbling

Peeling crusted eyes, feels like day one
Look out to the sky’s relentless sun
11 hours sleep wish I didn’t count sheep
However somehow enlightened, but also frightened

Chris Vernon
Creative Arts graduate, 2009.
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