

THE BIG ISSUE

\$5 | No 351
30 Mar – 12 Apr 2010

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CURIOUS *George*

HE ACTS
HE DIRECTS
HE PRODUCES
HE WRITES
HE CARES

MR CLOONEY
DOES IT ALL





SHANE SELLS THE BIG ISSUE AT WESTFIELD, GEELONG.

VENDOR PROFILE

“THERE ARE ABOUT four or five vendors in Geelong. We all try to do a couple of days at the main pitch, Westfield, then at Westpac or 7-Eleven. You get more volume of people coming out of Westfield and from Bay City, the two main shopping complexes in town, but I’m of the belief that if you’re positive enough and believe in what you’re doing enough, you can sell anywhere.

We’ve just had a new support worker, Damien, start up – he’s really good. If we need a bit of help we go through him, and we get our mags from the Body Shop.

It isn’t just the money – I think it brings out the best in me. I love the job, I love talking to people, meeting people. It’s like a window to the human race. From all walks of life. You get your regular customers. Also people come down from other places; just in Geelong for the day. They might live somewhere where the magazine is sold, but when they come down for the day they pick one up. I’m grateful for that.

I did Disability Studies in 1995–96 and got my certificate. I was the support worker for people – one chap was blind and I’d take him for his swim, things like that. I did disability work for about seven years, then three years at call-centres.

I’ve been married 11 years. My wife has a disability: cerebral palsy. She gets around in an electric scooter, but in the last two years the pain levels have got worse.

So I could be there for her, I was no longer able to work the hours Centrelink required. I had to go on the carer pension and it was helpful to be able to sell the magazine, because I could come and go as I wanted, pick my own hours and be there for her when she needed me. Now if I need to take a week off I can do it without worrying about losing a job.

I was diagnosed with a paranoid psychosis in about 2000 – that was pretty hard to deal with. Took me a while to even recognise I had a problem, to be honest. I went on medication. It was initially diagnosed as paranoid schizophrenia, and since then it has improved a lot, to more of a paranoia thing that I had to work through. In the last 12 months I’ve been a lot better, a lot more confident and I’ve come out of myself a lot more – been able to face fears, go in, take life by the scruff of the neck and be positive.

I do appreciate all the care the public do take to show an interest in the mag, because I couldn’t do it without their help. I’d certainly love to keep going and hopefully it stays strong in Geelong. I’d like to get more vendors to take it up, keep it nice and strong – it’s a really valuable thing to do, and for people in special circumstances it’s the perfect thing to do.

interview by **Peter Ascot** photograph by **James Braund**



MY WORD

Let ‘Em Eat Cake



BIRTHDAYS COME AND GO. BUT, FOR SAMANTHA ALLEMANN, THE WORKPLACE CELEBRATIONS THEY ENGENDER REMAIN THE SAME AWKWARD AFFAIRS: PAINFUL SLICES OF OFFICE LIFE.

IT’S THE CORPORATE version of that iconic *Ferris Bueller’s Day Off* scene, in which the intoxicatingly dull economics teacher drones “Bueller?... Bueller?... Bueller?” to no response.

Gathering to enjoy cake shouldn’t be this insufferable. But far from having a celebratory mood, the company’s monthly birthday morning teas are awkward enough to have even the most thick-skinned office worker’s spine tingling with embarrassment. Within a large company, get-togethers like these are planned to give off a friendly, caring vibe to prove that you’re not just a number; you are a real person. With a birthday.

As much as I still get giddy with excitement when my own birthday comes around (mostly due to the fact that I take the day off work), I feel no desire to have a bunch of (mostly) strangers applaud me for being born.

These gatherings are usually held at 11am on a Monday morning, when the lure of sugar is strong enough to evacuate entire floors at surprising speed; a lot faster than any of the frequent and meticulously rehearsed fire drills have ever managed to do. We shuffle out of the elevators and congregate around a set workstation, eager for our sugary fix to help us through the week ahead. We huddle around, tightly clasping cups of coffee as if they contained methadone, with chatter and laughter falling around us as people catch up on their weekends. Conversation slowly trickles out as the CEO clears his throat again and again. Hush descends as figures are stated,

reports named, goals declared and improvements avowed.

I start compiling my shopping list in my head and wonder if I returned that DVD last night. Must remember to call the video store later. Did I remember to pack my gym gear? I did, but I hope that I have forgotten something vital to the workout, like a shoe – that way I won’t feel guilty about heading straight home. Maybe I could go home and just whack on that yoga DVD instead, and...

A smattering of clapping brings me out of my thoughts. With a list now in hand, the CEO again clears his throat. “So now we have this month’s birthdays to celebrate!” he announces.

I know what is coming. A sense of dread shoots through my body, but my feet remain planted to the carpet, as if in a nightmare. I glance over at a colleague and she grins back at me as I give her my much-practised deer-in-the-headlights expression. I survey the room: do the other employees find this act as hard as I do? While most display bored expressions, some are actually smiling. Are they simply taking pleasure in this discomfort? Or are they genuinely unaware that this forced camaraderie is a bit creepy? Then again, maybe they’re just better than me at hiding their contempt. Or maybe there’s something wrong with me. Maybe this isn’t so bad after all... “Okay, so first up we have Tracey! Congratulations. Tracey? Uh... [checks sheet] Tracey?”

Light clapping dies off as heads swivel around, everyone scanning the

room. “Hmm...Trace? Okay, looks like Tracey is not here. So another Happy Birthday...to Vishnu!” A smattering of applause follows as eyes peer around. “Vishnu... Um...is Vishnu here?”

“He’s upstairs, on a call to a client,” a voice yells out.

“Right... So. Moving along to Peter. Good man, Pete! Is Pete around?”

Tired clapping follows; I, too, make the effort but my eyes are fixed on the floor. I want to fall through it and escape all this awkwardness. “So... We also have Katrina! Please tell me Katrina is here!”

She is, and some relieved laughter is heard. Not long to go, I coach myself. This *cannot* last forever, despite the fact it feels like it will.

The ruby-lipped smiling receptionist steps forward, wielding a glinting knife, and starts slicing into the cakes on the table. People politely inch forward; no one wants to be labelled a greedy cake grabber. An orderly queue is formed, winding slowly towards the dessert.

Despite my love of cake, my friend and I hightail it at the first opportunity, briskly pacing to the elevators and then back to the safety of our desks.

NB: I ended up leaving this job, two weeks before my birthday. The prospect of having my name called out was just too much to bear.

Samantha Allemann is a 26-year-old freelance writer who works 9–5 to make a living. Jessie Oleson is a freelance illustrator, artist and blogger on all things sweet. Visit her at cakespy.com.

HEARSAY



“IT’S COMPLETELY OVERWHELMING RIGHT NOW... THERE WAS NOTHING OUT THERE... AND THERE’S ABSOLUTELY EVERYTHING NOW!”

Jessica Watson, who has only just turned 17, after completing her solo trip around the world. (She sailed, cleverly avoiding any volcano-related airlines disruption.) The huge crowds that greeted her in Sydney must have given her some inkling of a/ the interest and enthusiasm she has generated and b/ how her life has now changed. PM Rudd, among the welcome party, described her as “a hero for young Australians”. As if to demonstrate how poorly *he* is travelling, Our Jessica promptly disagreed with him. “I don’t consider myself a hero,” she said. “I’m an ordinary girl who had a dream.” Let’s hear it for dreamers.

EAR2GROUND

“The boys bought me a baby doll yesterday, and a pram. Yeah, it was so sweet. They made me push it around school and everything.”
Big Issue-reader Jennie overheard this teenage girl at the Galleria mall in Perth. As Jennie says: “Be afraid. Be very afraid.”

Frequently overhear tantalising tidbits? Don’t waste them on your family or friends – share them with the world! ear2ground@aapt.net.au.

“At the end of the day, hospitals are for sick people, and I’m not sick. I’m going through one of the most natural processes women can go through, so why do it anywhere other than the most natural setting – my home.”

New York City resident Julie Jacobowitz-Kelly, in the *Guardian*. Since the closure of a sole sympathetic hospital, midwives in New York City are effectively banned from attending home births. The law in New York state requires midwives to have their licences underwritten by a hospital, none of which now seems willing to support home deliveries.

“[As a child] I had this film set in my imagination. I didn’t talk to invisible people or have a teddy bear; I had an invisible film crew who were following me everywhere I went, hanging on my every gesture in close-up.”

And so it came to pass, Sir Ben ‘Oscar-winning’ Kingsley.

“The rope is great for your face; you lose a lot on your face when you do the rope.”

Superdupermodel Naomi Campbell outlines a cure for the horrible affliction of face-weight on *Oprah*. By ‘the rope’, she means skipping. We think.

“It’s like going to Mars; that’s what happened to me. It’s like the *Wizard of Oz* analogy: I was in black and white and then a tornado came and sort of swept me off.”

Model Karen Elson on the journey from regional Lancashire in the UK, through shaving her eyebrows and achieving supermodeldom, and ending up making music with husband Jack White, of White Stripes fame. Via the *Guardian*.

“Work really hard and stay away from girls and be focused.”

Lady Gaga advises Greyson Chance, the 12-year-old boy who became a YouTube hit with his cover of Gaga’s ‘Paparazzi’.

“We want the UN to moderate it because we do not trust anyone else. There is no group in Thailand that is neutral enough. We have no other condition. We do not want any more losses.”

Nattawut Saikua, co-leader of Thailand’s National United Front of Democracy Against Dictatorship, also known as the Red Shirts. Saikua was one of the organisers of the protest that has disrupted Bangkok since 14 March: at least 50 people have been killed and 1500 wounded. The Red Shirts believe Thailand’s PM, Abhisit Vejjajiva, came to power undemocratically.

“We can’t allow a situation where people set up armed groups and overthrow the government because they don’t agree with it.”

Abhisit Vejjajiva, Thailand’s PM, responds to the Red Shirts’ protest.

“If you turn the photo upside down, reverse the pixelation and simultaneously listen to *Abbey Road* backwards, while reading Roland Barthes, you will indeed find a very subtle hidden message.”

A spokesperson for the *Wall Street Journal* responding to an accusation that a front-page picture of US Supreme Court nominee Elena Kagan playing softball was used to subtly suggest Kagan is a lesbian.

OINTMENT

Apply liberally after scrapes with reality.



WHAT’S COOKING

Because of the worldwide popularity of food-based reality TV shows, there have been suggestions that ALL ideas have now been taken. To allay such fears, we offer the following concepts, all ripe for development:

- **Fasterchef** Participants compete to serve the fastest fast food, while not sacrificing quality. Dogs must still be hot, not lukewarm.
- **My Kitchen Rules, OK?** Street gangs compete for culinary supremacy. Attractive savings on equipment, as contestants bring own knives.
- **My Kitchen’s Fools** A combination of cooking and quiz shows. After each course, contestants must correctly answer general-knowledge questions.
- **Smarterchef** To run in tandem with *MKF*, this show follows aspiring chefs as they attend intensive tutoring sessions to boost their general knowledge.
- **Smartestchef** Brings together the winners of the first three seasons of *MKF*. A cute combination of food and facts.
- **So You Think You Can Wear Chef’s Pants** Food and fashion: it can’t fail. Contestants chat about cuts and fabric while stir-frying.
- **Australia’s Got Tagliatelle** Faster pasta.



INBOX ONE

From: President of Iceland <iceicebaby@gmail.ice>
To: Europe et al. <europe@yahoo.com>
Subject: Oopsie!

Dear Europe, Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson, President of Iceland, here. How are you? I am finn. Look, I just wanted to let you know that we’ve had a bit of an accident up here in Reykjavík. You see, we had some friends visiting from Norway, and I thought we could have a barbecue – it was a lovely day...only minus 20! So I got the sausages cooking, and I put some onions on... Then the phone rang, and before I knew it...smoke everywhere! We ended up having to order in pizza. Anyways, if you smell smoke, that’s what it is. Sorry about that.

Perhaps bring the washing in.

Ólaf

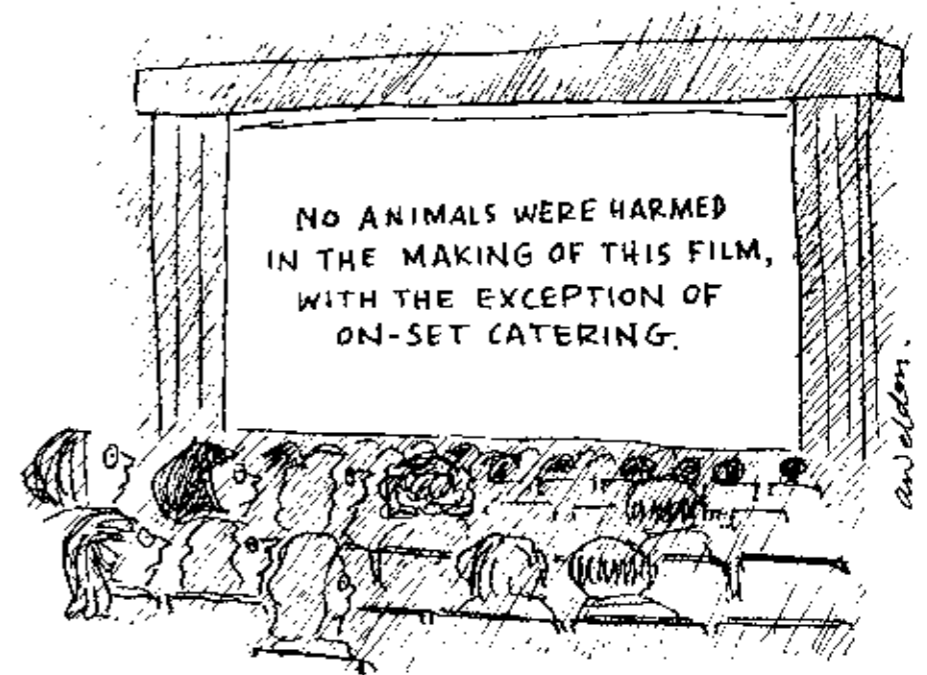


IN OTHER WORDS

Bromads

When just one man-date isn’t enough, some bromancers adopt a nomadic life to hang out with the bros full time. These ‘bromads’ take jobs as sea captains or Australian cricketers, for they love nothing more than giving each other blokey slaps, conversing loudly and putting each other in headlocks (in a way that says “I care”). The alpha bromad is George Clooney, a serial bachelor who loves taking a mancation whisky tasting with Brad Pitt or playing poker with Matt Damon. Sure, he’ll take a supermodel to the Oscars, but once formalities are over he’ll be out on the yacht with the Coen brothers. Clooney keeps his bromad story straight by never inviting Tom Cruise to cigar-smoking nights.

‘What’s Cooking’ by The *Big Ish* Ideas Dept; ‘Inbox One’ by Patrick Witton; ‘In Other Words’ by George Dunford; cartoon by Andrew Weldon.



BY GEORGE... HE'S got it



HE WAS A HEART-THROB, A HUNK... THEN *George Clooney* BECAME SOMETHING MUCH MORE INTERESTING: A MULTI-TALENTED MR EVERYTHING OF THE MOVIES WHO APPEALS TO BOTH WOMEN AND MEN.

THERE HAS BEEN a glut of George Clooney films recently. But perhaps the role closest to Clooney himself is one where he doesn't actually appear. He voices Mr Fox in Wes Anderson's charming stop-motion movie *Fantastic Mr Fox*. In one scene, asked why he employs a cool-dude mannerism, Mr Fox replies: "It's just something I do."

The line gets a laugh because it's easy to imagine Clooney himself essaying an irresistible combo of soft whistle, finger click and raised eyebrows. It also proved, once again, that Clooney doesn't mind sending himself up. This is the guy, after all, who left a heart-throb TV role in *ER* and promptly played a gay dog called Sparky on *South Park*. No dialogue; just dog noises.

After Mr Fox came combination punches demonstrating his range: as a retrencher-for-hire in *Up in the Air* and an ageing psychic soldier in *The Men Who Stare at Goats*, a film he also co-produced. *Air* earned him another Academy Award nomination – for best actor. It was his second nomination in the category: previously, he'd won a supporting actor gong (for *Syriana*, in 2006) and also been nominated for best director and best original screenplay (for *Good Night, and Good Luck*, also in 2006). This year, Clooney didn't win; as expected, Jeff Bridges won the Oscar for *Crazy Heart*. But it was hard to imagine him bitter and twisted about this: he had reportedly told Bridges, one of his co-stars in *Goats*, to deliver a kick-ass acceptance speech. Like a man not expecting to make a speech himself, other reports had him arriving for the ceremony in, shall we say, a very relaxed frame of mind.

Clooney gets away with this because he plays George with such style. It doesn't hurt that he had, on his arm, his equally gorgeous companion: Italian TV presenter Elisabetta Canalis. Better to be laid-back than storm out, like Eddie Murphy when *he* was snubbed by Oscar in 2007. And as compelling as he is in *Air*, Clooney is essentially playing himself. Some of his character's lines, he says, were things he has said himself. And you could almost lift Clooney out of some scenes in *Air*, put him in a tux and *voilà!* – there's Danny Ocean from the *Ocean's Eleven* (and *Twelve...and Thirteen*).



MAIN IMAGE: CLOONEY AT THE PREMIERE OF *UP IN THE AIR*, WESTWOOD, CALIFORNIA. PHOTOGRAPH BY KEVIN WINTER/GETTY IMAGES.

OPPOSITE PAGE: GEORGE CLOONEY AND GIRLFRIEND ELISABETTA CANALIS AT THE 2009 VENICE FILM FESTIVAL. PHOTOGRAPH BY DAMIEN MEYER/AFP/GETTY IMAGES.

This underlines something else about Clooney's mostly canny career choices: he takes on Danny Ocean roles so he can participate in less commercial projects like *Air* and *Goats*; films with something to say. *Goats* also gives him licence to send himself up, again. He has a daggy 1970s haircut and, in one hilarious scene, unleashes his repressed inner dancer.

Clooney, who will turn 49 in May, has pulled off a rare double: he is a film star who appeals to both women *and* men. Women like him because he's, well, Gorgeous George; men like him because he takes the piss out of himself. Some want to bed him; others fancy having a beer with him. Clooney makes you believe he'd be up for either. He is also in a very select group of actors who have made a successful transition from stardom in a TV series – Clooney was Dr Doug Ross in *ER* (1994–99) – to the life of a leading-man in the movies. Perhaps the closest comparison is with Denzel Washington, another TV medico (in *St Elsewhere* in the 1980s) turned Oscar winner. There's a much longer list of TV stars who haven't made it in movies – consider David Caruso (whose biggest career blue was walking away from the lead in *NYPD Blue*), and both the leads in *The X-Files*, David Duchovny and Gillian Anderson. Apart from Julianna Margulies (most recently a small-screen star in *The Good Wife*) none of his co-stars in *ER*'s first series has kicked on like Clooney.

“ SOME WANT TO BED HIM; OTHERS FANCY HAVING A BEER WITH HIM. CLOONEY MAKES YOU BELIEVE HE'D BE UP FOR EITHER. ”

But his worth isn't only measured in dollars – though he has plenty of those. With an estimated income of US\$22 million, he came in 29th on *Vanity Fair*'s list of top 40 moneymakers for 2009. Top, incidentally (with \$125m), was Michael Bay, director and producer of the *Transformers* series, while the hottest actor (\$41m) was Harry Potter himself, Daniel Radcliffe. But Clooney also has a heart. After the devastating earthquake in Haiti in January it was Clooney who used his star-pulling-power to organise a big-name fundraising telethon. Why? Because he could. And because, he said, “It demands our attention, our help and our compassion.” He has also involved himself personally with relief for the Darfur crisis. Such things, he has said, put petty Hollywood problems into perspective. He believes he has a responsibility to voice his opinions on issues that concern him. Sounds simple – but it is not a common trait among A-list actors. The best thing about being an actor, he has said, is the chance to learn about different societies and worlds.

He seems more grounded than most of his peers. One enterprising journalist, working on a Clooney profile, invited him to his own place for dinner. Not only did Clooney accept, then prove himself to be an amiable guest, but he also showed



SEND IN THE CLOWN – CLOONEY HAMS IT UP FOR THE CAMERAS. PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAMIEN MEYER, ALBERTO PIZZOLI, FILIPPO MONTEFORTE (AFP/GETTY IMAGES); AND PETER KRAMER (GETTY IMAGES).

off his handyman skills by tinkering with a broken fitting. It's hard to imagine Tom Cruise following suit.

There's another difference here: while success came relatively quickly for Cruise – his breakthrough role in *Risky Business* (1983) came in just his third year as a movie actor – Clooney's CV includes TV commercials, bit-parts in failed TV series and forgettable parts in stinker movies. Anyone for *Return to Horror High* (1985) or *Return of the Killer Tomatoes* (1987)? And few who saw him play a “lip-synching transvestite” in *The Harvest* (1988) would have picked Clooney as a future Oscar-winner; an actor with ideas and also the stamina to see projects through both as a producer and/or director. Yes, he played Batman (in *Batman and Robin*, 1997) but he is at the head of the pack of critics lampooning that film, his role and especially his form-fitting costume.

Although Rosemary Clooney, the singer and actor, was an aunt, Clooney grew up in the decidedly non-tinsel town of Lexington, Kentucky. His mother, Nina, was a beauty-pageant competitor; his father, Nick, was a broadcast journalist, which could explain an empathy with journalists, though he doesn't hide his contempt for the paparazzi. Growing up, he was passionate about ball games, and it was only when he accepted that he was not going to succeed as a professional baseballer that he got ready for his close-ups. Now he claims to be pleased that fame didn't find him too soon. Besides, after *Killer Tomatoes* it's probably hard to take the film business, or yourself, too seriously.

Clooney admired Paul Newman, another leading man who made consistently interesting career choices. From Newman he learned the importance of a screenplay: without a good script, a film will sink. Again like Newman, Clooney also seemed to recognise early on that good looks and a buffed body make flimsy foundations for a movie career. After *ER* and *One Fine Day* (with Michelle Pfeiffer, in 1996) and *A Perfect Storm* (2000) he could have become a romantic action man. Instead, he opted for diverse roles in *O Brother, Where Art Thou* (2000), *Syriana* (2005) and *Michael Clayton* (2007).

Then, of course, there's *Fantastic Mr Fox*, in which Mrs Fox (Meryl Streep, having a whale of a time) tells her husband: “You know, you really are...fantastic.” To which Mr Fox, aka George Clooney, replies: “I try.” **TM**

garrulous george *Mr Clooney talks about Oscar, goats and sexy men.*

AWARDS “Winning an Oscar (in 2006) as Best Supporting Actor in *Syriana*) was so far beyond any expectations I ever had for myself as an actor. Now, I can just do my work and if people want to give me something for it, that's fine by me.”

ROLES “I just love playing characters that are not as smooth or as smart as they think that they are. That could be said about the men in both...*Goats* and *Up in the Air*. [The latter] was the first time I had ever read a script that had lines I had actually said myself. That was such a revelation and I was excited by the idea of making a movie that really spoke to me. [It] explores the idea that what works when you are a young man [in your twenties and even thirties] doesn't play the same way once you hit 40. Try as you might, you can't pull off that smooth-talker routine anymore. It goes from cute to sad very quickly.”

GETTING OLDER “I am not going to be covering up this grey hair I worked so hard to get. Other actors may want to play the action hero forever, but I tried that twice [*The Peacemaker* and *Batman and Robin*; both in 1997] and we all know how those turned out.”

FAME “I was lucky it took that long. If all that had happened when I first got to Hollywood, I would have been in trouble. When you are younger, you are willing to believe all the people around you who want to tell you how great you are.

I used to enjoy [the attention] until I realised that it wasn't real and I didn't deserve it. You have to find a way to define yourself; to not worry about what people are saying about you.”

DIRECTING “When you direct a film, you have to be totally in charge; the general, if you will. You've got to make everyone believe in you. Grant (Heslov, director of *Goats*) was not afraid to make decisions on his own... He was the guy who lent me \$100 when I first got to LA so that I could get some headshots taken to send around to agents... I am lucky enough to get work with directors like Jason Reitman [*Up in the Air*] and Grant, who have real vision. If it got to the point where I didn't anymore, then maybe I would move behind the camera permanently.”

COMING UP “There are a couple of projects. One [*A Very Private Gentleman*] is set in Italy, but I don't want to say too much about it just yet. Another, *Farragut North*, is all about politics and Washington. When Obama won, that changed everything, plot-wise, but I think our new draft of the script is finally there... We seem to get the right man – Jefferson, Lincoln, FDR, JFK – when we need him most.”

POLITICS “I have been around politics my whole life. My mother was mayor of our town and my father ran for Congress in 2004. A couple of years back, I was involved with a TV series

[*K Street*] set in Washington and we used real politicians and consultants... The longer I was around those people, the more I realised the power I have to pick a subject, take a stand and not need to make compromises because I don't have a constituency to answer to.”

HIS OWN ACTIVISM “Because my father was a journalist I understand how important it is to have all the facts about a situation before you make your case. Unless you are well informed you won't be taken seriously... Travelling to other parts of the world where there is such great need helps me put everything in perspective. The arguments we have in Hollywood seem pretty small by comparison... Movies that put any kind of message ahead of the story never seem to work. They seem to sink under the weight of their own self-importance. As a filmmaker you have to figure out a way to put the story first, like Jason [Reitman] did, or you should just make a documentary.”

MATT DAMON'S CHANCES OF RECLAIMING PEOPLE'S 'SEXIEST MAN ALIVE' TITLE “Matt still has a lot of work to do if he wants to get back up there, but I'm going to work with him and he's going to run a strong campaign this year. He is very competitive with both Brad Pitt and myself. We have both taken this title twice.”

Interview by **Paul Sheehan/IFA**



ROVING EYE | SERIES BY CHRISTINA SIMONS

Hoping for HAITI

Aftershocks of memories
and uncertainty



The devastating earthquake in Haiti early in January has already faded from headlines. Another natural disaster, in Chile, has further stretched beleaguered relief agencies. But the situation remains dire: several million people were directly affected. Australian photographer *Christina Simons* has been touched personally by this tragedy. She was in Haiti in 2007 – her series on child slavery was featured in *Roving Eye*, Ed#271. Now she recalls the country she came to know, worries about friends she made, and ponders what will come next.

I WEEP UNCONTROLLABLY at my desk in Melbourne as I watch the TV footage of my friend Kathie in Haiti. Traffic is thick and the roads in most areas are demolished, so she runs through the streets of Port-au-Prince with a baby in her arms.

It's the quickest way for her to get to the nearest temporary medical tent. The two-month-old has been found in a pile of rubble three-and-a-half days after the earthquake. In a critical condition, the baby girl is flown to Florida, the first Haitian to be evacuated for treatment.

Kathie finally finds her ex-husband a couple days later, but the home they shared for 15 years is in ruins. As a reporter for US broadcaster ABC, she spends the first two weeks in a tent at the airport. Another friend, Abouja, is a Vodou (Haitian spelling) priest and a very mystical man, as well as a part-

time cameraman for ABC News. He has a booming voice, an intimidating build and a laugh that warms your heart. He emailed me to confirm that he and his family now live safely in the countryside. He signs off: "We are expecting you." When I respond that I'm trying desperately to come and help, he writes one line only: "We are expecting you." I wonder if he knows something I don't.

Three years ago, I spent a month in Haiti working on a photographic documentary series about child slavery. It was a heartbreaking experience, but one that forever connected my heart with the country. I made friends with the kids I met. I set up relationships with organisations and orphanages. I saw awful things and heard tragic stories.

Since the earthquake hit in January, all I can think about is going to help. I would settle for handing out water, holding a child's hand in hospital, and sitting with the injured while nurses rest: something, *anything*, to make even a small difference. Instead, I am here in my comfortable home with my privileged life and feel redundant while a place I care about endures such tragedy. I don't think I will ever find peace with the injustice of our polar circumstances, yet hopefully my work can provide a lens through which this issue may be examined.

The Haiti I knew was a very difficult place, filled with extreme poverty, crime and corruption. The Haiti that exists now is a disaster beyond my wildest imaginings.



PAGES 24–25: SCENES FROM CITE SOLEIL, HAITI'S MOST NOTORIOUS SLUM. FROM LEFT: A STREET BOY EATS A MANGO; THREE-MONTH-OLD MARIE SLEEPS NEXT TO A BOTTLE OF RUM – SHE SHARES THE BED WITH HER MOTHER AND HER FIVE SIBLINGS; A PREGNANT MOTHER APPEALS FOR MONEY. PAGES 26–27 CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: A WOMAN HAWKS CHICKENS IN THE STREET; EROLD, A 13-YEAR-OLD ORPHAN, IS TAKEN IN BY A NEIGHBOUR ON THE PROVISIO HE “DOES SOME WORK AROUND THE HOUSE” – SO BEGINS THE LIFE OF A RESTAVEK (CHILD SLAVE); A WOMAN STANDS WITH A BROOM OUTSIDE HER HOME IN GONAÏVES; A MAN CARRIES WATER ACROSS A RICKETY BRIDGE OUTSIDE GONAÏVES.

Yet Haitians maintain a profound spirit and passion in the face of daily adversity. That they greet each day anew in spite of everything is breathtakingly brave and harrowing to witness.

I have now resolved to wait until the media attention dies down and the country becomes more accessible. Haiti will need help for years to come and perhaps I can make a contribution when the world's focus has shifted. I have so many hopes for Haiti, not least that it can rebuild and flourish with a sense of optimism. I hope we don't forget the desperate situation that Haiti is in now and has been for far too long.

In Haiti I learned that one person couldn't hope to fix a country; however, changing one child's life has great impact. I kept asking myself: "What can I do?"

When I came back to Australia, I had an exhibition of my photographs. The proceeds went to an orphanage for children, known as *restaveks*, who previously lived as slaves. I am still waiting to hear whether the orphanage I support is still there, and if the children are okay. I wait. I hope.

See Christina Simons' photos of Haiti before the earthquake on her website (christinasimons.com/haiti_project.html). Major charities working in Haiti include Médecins Sans Frontières, Red Cross, Oxfam, Save the Children and CARE. All are accepting donations to assist with the relief effort.

The third degree on...

ONCE, MOVIES WERE SILENT. THEN CAME TALKIES. AND COLOUR. AND COMPUTER-GENERATED IMAGERY. NOW, AFTER SOME CRUDE EARLY PROTOTYPES, **3D IS BACK**... WITH A VENGEANCE.



WHEN ONE-HIT WONDERS Timbuk3 sang “The future’s so bright, I gotta wear shades” back in 1986, no one realised those shades would turn out to be 3D glasses. The massive success of director James Cameron’s 3D spectacular *Avatar* has turned 3D films – already a growing force, thanks to digital technology – into the only game in town.

Sight & Sound magazine stated that, in the UK in 2007, two films were widely released in digital 3D. In 2008, the number had swelled to six. Now, in 2010, there are at least 40 set for release or in production, including Tim Burton’s version of *Alice in Wonderland* and the final two Harry Potter films. There’s even an Australian 3D horror film, *Bait*, now being filmed.

While visiting Queensland at the end of last month to oversee production on *Sanctum*, a 3D film being shot on the Gold Coast, Cameron said about the future of 3D: “For the last five or six years there’s been more content than there has been screens. That’s now going through a fairly seismic adjustment, and over the next few months we’re going to see a real change in that, and the number of [3D] screens worldwide is probably going to double, I would say, in the next year.”

The present boom in 3D is all about digital technology. In contrast to the original 3D used in the 1950s (and revived briefly in the 1980s), contemporary 3D doesn’t involve a pair of cardboard glasses with one red lens and one green or blue one. That system (known as anaglyph) used two slightly different

images projected onto the screen, with each eye seeing only one image to give the illusion of depth. The polarisation system utilised in digital 3D uses greyish lenses and provides a much sharper and more reliable viewing image.

Speaking to *Variety* magazine in September last year, DreamWorks Animation chief (and champion of 3D), Jeffrey Katzenberg, said: “To me, most importantly [3D] is a tool for filmmakers, it’s a way to enhance their ability to tell their stories. I believe *Avatar* will be to 3D what *The Wizard of Oz* was to colour.”

The technology behind *Avatar* is impressive – as should be expected. While its production and development costs are secret, it’s most likely the most expensive film ever made. But its real breakthrough was integrating 3D into a dramatic story. Even a year ago, live-action 3D films were mostly simplistic thrill rides like *Journey to the Center of the Earth* or cheesy horror films such as *My Bloody Valentine 3D*. As it had been since the 1950s, 3D was an excuse for having things flying out of the screen at the audience: the only difference was whether things would be monsters or body parts.

Avatar, however, mostly uses 3D as a way to immerse the viewer in its alien world. Large sections of the movie are simply about characters exploring the landscapes of planet Pandora. The 3D effects go a long way towards enhancing the reality of the fantastic environment. It’s hardly surprising that

some *Avatar* fans have spoken about their desire to go live in the world of the film: unlike almost every other fantasy film to date, *Avatar* presents a world that viewers feel like they can actually enter.

In the real world, meanwhile, *Avatar* has had an even bigger impact. The biggest box-office smash (in dollar terms) of all time, it has transformed 3D from a gimmick into the must-have effect for any serious blockbuster. Which is exactly what Hollywood was hoping it would do.

3D has been coming for a long time, and the forces promoting it have more on their minds than just figuring out how to make a spear fly out of a screen. Ironically, the new wave of interest in digital 3D has assisted the film industry to solve a problem that had been deadlocked for close to a decade: how to convince cinemas to install projectors that can support digital film.

Distributors have been pushing for digital projection, which involves showing a film from a computer file rather than reels of film, ever since George Lucas’ *Star Wars* prequels a decade ago. While the advantages for viewers (digital files don’t get dirty and scratched) and studios (which don’t have to pay hefty costs to make and transport film copies of their movies) were obvious, cinema owners have resisted paying the significant costs involved in replacing, or at least upgrading, all their projection equipment.

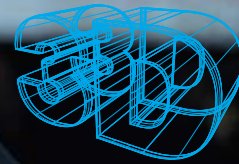
A TASTE OF THE FUTURE? *AVATAR* (TOP) AND *ALICE IN WONDERLAND* (BOTTOM LEFT) ARE SETTING THE TREND OF 3D BLOCKBUSTERS.





COMING SOON IN 3D: (LEFT) *TOY STORY 3*, *HARRY POTTER & THE DEATHLY HALLOWS* AND *SANCTUM*.

BELOW AND RIGHT: LONDON FOOTBALL FANS WATCH SKY'S 3D TELECAST OF THE ARSENAL - MANCHESTER UNITED PREMIER LEAGUE MATCH IN JANUARY.



Suddenly, digital 3D makes upgrading to digital not just a feasible idea, but also a commercial imperative. It doesn't hurt that cinemas are now also charging more for tickets to films shown in 3D. As the format becomes the norm, however, don't expect prices to drop back.

3D is also a great way for movie studios to fend off the dual threat of internet piracy and the increasing quality of home-entertainment systems. Pirating 3D movies is now all but impossible because, to put it simply, you can't put 3D glasses on a camera. You *can* furtively film the image off a screen, but all you'll get is a blurry mess.

The illicit copies of *Avatar* doing the rounds come from screenings of the 2D version, and anyone who's watched any made-for-3D film in 2D knows there are always moments that don't really make sense in 2D. They might not be enough to ruin the film, but they're certainly enough to remind you of what you're missing.

3D also gives cinemas something they haven't had in a long time: a reason for people to attend. Most viewers are more than happy to wait for a movie they're interested in to come out on DVD. But with a 3D production, the cinema is the only place where they can get the full sound-and-light experience. As cinemas are increasingly trying to sell themselves as places offering a whole experience, not just the movies being shown, that's a powerful marketing tool.

Katzenberg has gone on the record as saying: "The theatre experience must innovate or it will go away." He's not alone in that view. All of Hollywood, not just James Cameron and 20th Century Fox, wanted *Avatar* to be a hit – mainly in the hope that 3D would be the hook to lure audiences away from their home-entertainment systems and back into cinemas.

So the film's relatively clear run over the busy Christmas holiday period wasn't surprising. (*Sherlock Holmes* was the only other blockbuster released.)

No one is suggesting other studios deliberately moved their big films out of the way; blockbusters are almost never released directly against each other, as there's too much money at stake. But it's fair to say that *Avatar* had an easier run than most, and its success helps all of Hollywood a lot more than your average blockbuster.

It's not the first time the movie industry has reacted to an outside threat with a change to the format. Before the advent of television, films were made in 4:3 aspect ratio – roughly the same dimensions as a regular television screen. When TV came along, the movies shifted to widescreen in an attempt to give audiences a viewing experience they couldn't get at home. Now that television sets have also gone widescreen and are getting bigger all the time, 3D is the next logical step.

This advantage might be short-lived. It took television sets 50 years to catch up with cinema's shift to widescreen, but at

least three manufacturers (Samsung, Panasonic and Sony) will have television sets that will display 3D images available by the middle of this year.

They won't come cheap, with prices expected to be around the same as the pricier high-definition sets, and you'll still need to wear glasses to see images in 3D. Surprisingly, the 3D TV glasses are estimated to cost between \$200 and \$400 a pair. And with a lack of content (television isn't broadcast in 3D) and the hassle of having to put on and take off special glasses just to watch television, it seems likely that 3D TV will be a gimmick more than a necessity for a few years yet. (That said, once they start broadcasting sports in 3D, watch out. Football fans in London had a taste of the future last January, with a 3D screening of an Arsenal versus Manchester United Premier League game presented at specially equipped pubs.)

3D also means a new life for old works. Already, older 2D films are being reworked for 3D projection (including Cameron's *Titanic*). Disney has already re-released the first two *Toy Story* films in 3D ahead of a third (also in 3D) due later this year. While animated films are the easiest to shift to 3D, that doesn't mean we won't see live-action classics released in the 3D format. In India, Bollywood mogul Anil Ambani is already planning a \$45 million "dimensionalisation" outsourcing centre in Mumbai to get a foothold in what he predicts to be a booming business: turning 2D classics into 3D experiences. But will *Jaws*

be more terrifying if the shark can jump out the screen at you? Not if the original *Jaws 3D* is any guide.

Further ahead, 3D threatens to widen even further a divide between blockbusters and smaller-scale films. Even before the 3D boom, filmmaking has been increasingly split between big-budget spectacles and small-budget dramas, with little room for anything else in between. Making a film in 3D isn't cheap, so the films that *are* made in 3D are the ones that will seem the most likely to repay the investment – which means big-budget blockbusters with simplistic storylines (so they can be shown around the world) rather than films that rely on dialogue and performances. It could be that, in years to come, movies will either involve massive amounts of special effects and cost a fortune, or be effects-free and made for next to nothing. Either way, it doesn't bode well for actors, who will either be crowded off the screen by the effects, or be subject to pay cuts as all the money goes elsewhere – particularly technology. It's no accident that, for all the award nominations *Avatar* scored, *none* went to its actors.

Also on the horizon are 3D video games, and you don't need a crystal ball (or special glasses) to see that these will represent a massive challenge to television and cinema. But by then the movies will doubtless have come up with yet another new and unique selling point to bring people back into cinemas yet again. Here's hoping it won't be a revived Smell-O-Rama. **181**