

Captain's Log, 14th October 2004:

Sitting here in room 8 of the Peter Allen Motor Inn in glorious sunny Tenterfield I can hardly feel upset about my broken ankle or muscular thrombosis... Things got off well yesterday. We love our van which we have named THE MONEYSHOT for no valid reason. The Professor (David Ritchie) decided to drive his own car, LA PETITE POUTAINE NOIRE, mainly to see how much torque the cute lil' French whore had in her on the open road. So in The Moneyshot it was Captain Crutches, Satisfaction Jackson, Glenno and Spooky Luke. Satisfaction as usual rocked up fashionably late, being the Muso and all.

We stopped at Tamworth where Satisfaction's uncle owns the pub - but the bistro was closed and Satisfaction couldn't swing his influence, so we rocked off to see Tamworth's Golden Guitar.

After an average pizza in Tenterfield we went to BERGIN'S TELEGRAPH HOTEL for a cleansing ale, happy to be reunited with the Professor who made record time unburdened by the local stumpy. Then back briefly to Glenno's room for a nightcap. Captain Crutches added to his woes by clunking his head savagely on the television set, protruding from the wall at a truly idiotic height (that of the human head.) But good ol' Glenno provided some ice and everyone ended well enough.

Tonight our first show after the Penrith season: Tenterfield! The Theatre is next door to the Peter Allen so we shouldn't miss our call.

Captain Crutches, signing off 14th October 2004

Captain's Log: 15/10/04

The overwhelming thing that we have all commented on is that New South Wales is unbelievably beautiful. Long drives are not so painful when the scenery is this good. The drive today, from Tenterfield to Narrabri, was simply spectacular. Away from the coast, we encountered long, flat plains of stunning simplicity but full of subtle texture - farms and valleys punctuated alternately by lushness and nothingness. Also, and happily, everything was much greener than we expected. The drought is evident but not nearly to the devastating degree we had imagined.

The show at Tenterfield went very well. The one little thing was that the very modern theatre (incorporating a terrific

Henry Parkes Museum - see photos) had recently purchased some lovely seats that sat quite away from the stage, and the local dramatic aficionados preferred to sit in said seats - thus sitting quite far from us, the performers. You know how when a plane passes you hear its sound a little later? Such were the laughs from our distant but appreciative audience.

After the show we packed up ("bumped out" is a little too grandiose a term for our relatively easy-travellin' show) then wiled away an hour and a bit at the Commercial Hotel, where we were warmly welcomed on "Pool Comp" Night. The owner was from Sheffield or some such place and the locals were friendly. Discussion revolved around tenses of the German language. The Professor lead this discussion...

This morning was not so tough at all. We rose, stuck all our gear into The Moneyshot, and then had a gorgeous breakfast at a lovely café called THE WILLOW TREE. Around this point we realised that this was a very lucky way to make a living.

After a superb meal The Professor roared off in La Petite Putaine Noire while The Spook, Glenno, Captain Crutches and Satisfaction went to the Henry Parkes Museum, mainly because (a) we told the manager of the complex we would be there the night before and (b) our mutual friend Nick Garsden had recorded the voice of Henry Parkes and we wanted to check out his work. Boy was he good. Parkes sounded just like that...

The museum consumed quite a bit of time as we kept being introduced to more of the artistic movers and shakers of Tenterfield who had argued to bring our show there in the first place. They all loved the show and were happy with their "purchase." Captain Crutches was surprised however (having written what he thought was the most mainstream theatre piece possible) when he was told that they "liked that alternate theatre stuff"... Memo to self: if THIS is "alternate..."

Every single person in Tenterfield asked us where we were going next. When we told them "Narrabri" the response was always identical: "Ooooh, it'll be hot there..."

Then we hit the road. Spook pulled out ABBEY ROAD, we cranked it and the air conditioner up, and life was good. A generous discussion on Pete Best, Ringo Starr and Stu Sutcliffe followed. We picked up a SMH and were buoyed by the anti-Bush coverage. Captain Crutches took a shot at the cryptic. Anyone get 17 down?

We had lunch at a town between Inverell and Moree. Inverell and Moree are both sadly depressed towns and we ate in the town BETWEEN - an obviously none-too-vibey place whose name escapes me (starts with an M). But like everyone we've encountered so far the friendliness of the locals bordered on "are-they-aliens" suspicion. Goodness the people of NSW are friendly! And then try being on crutches!

Narrabri ain't no Tenterfield. Tenterfield seems like the Big Smoke - in Tenterfield you can get a meal on THURSDAY night until 8:30pm whereas here in the 'Bri you can only eat before 8pm and it's FRIDAY night. But we ate - at the Tourist Hotel. Murray sent his steak back because it was cooked like a Christmas Day Pommie and instead of creating an incident he got another one perfectly medium rare. In the public bar there were full-on dudes with akubra hats and leather arms and cow tattoos. Also lots of Aboriginal people. And once again, friendliness everywhere, albeit slurred with Friday night drunkenness. The Professor was asked to share his bottle of Shiraz in the toilet by one of Narrabri's well-oiled characters. Later he was asked to share his Shiraz by the guy who owned the shop that sold Satisfaction a bag of M&Ms. They love their Shiraz here in good ol' Narrabri. The Professor, Satisfaction, Captain Crutches and The Spook all bought tickets in the pub's meat raffle but we didn't win, which is just as well, although our motel does have a BBQ (and a pool! Damned crutches!) Meanwhile Glenno checked up on a girl he'd had a fling with seventeen years ago to make sure her daughter wasn't actually also HIS daughter... she wasn't.

Then we came back to our motel - the AARON, so named so it could be the first motel in the local Yellow Pages. No joke. The Professor and Captain Crutches and Glenno played Scrabble on the new travel set - but not yet for money (The Professor is pushing for 20 cents a point.) Just as well - the final score: The Professor on 198, Captain Crutches on 151 and Glenno on 141.

And that brings us to now. Tomorrow night we play this town in the most incredible 1,000 seat modern theatre - no joke - it looks like it was built yesterday. When we saw it we thought it must be a swimming complex, but no, it is for the ARTS. We doubt we'll fill it.... But, as we will continue to do for the next five and a half weeks, we will do our funny little Canine Phantasmagoria, and count our blessings for getting to bring it to these amazingly friendly people living in this most beautiful of States, in this most incredible country.

Signing off,

Captain Crutches, 15/10/04

Captain's (Cryptic) Log, 21st October 2004:

Everything has degenerated horribly.

As I look back over Logs One and Two I am stupefied that these are the same people who now want nothing more than to KILL each other - and violently and slowly at that...

It all began really when Satisfaction Jackson had a screaming fit in a roadside McCafé about the "injustice of my position." When pressed about said injustice he gabbled something about "the perils of his muse" before strolling out into the parking lot playing a truly scary version of "My Old Flame" on his Tenor. We looked at each other blankly, then The Professor went to order a skinny McLatté while The Spook weighed the variables of simply leaving Satisfaction behind or savagely glassing him. He decided on the former...

As The Moneyshot pulled out, we saw the crazed Satisfaction collapse into an hysterical weeping mass, there among the travellers, the reps and the hookers... "He's crying for his mama," said Glenno solemnly, but in fact he was laughing, laughing with evil glee, for he'd discovered a new sound, one capable of turning the hearts of men...

Actually everything is wonderful and you've never seen a bunch of five guys getting along better. What is the truth, however, is that - as I suppose any bunch of five hetero guys will do, the level of friendly banter is rarely above gutter level.

Not that the general conversation is. The presence of The Professor helps after-show discussion range over a truly diverse and large range of issues, many of them political. But for the NSW leg of the Tour, while The Professor rode La Petite Poutaine Noire solo, the banter in The Moneyshot dropped to shocking, and always extremely entertaining, depths.

One of the kickers was the game selection. We had two types of car games, which may be seen as equivalent to High Art and Low. At the Higher end we had Botticelli, which will be described soon. At the Low we had the great game, invented by Satisfaction Jackson, known as "Speedboat."

This is how you play Speedboat: Each player in turn has to contribute to an alphabetical list of Speedboat names, each name judged as acceptable or not by the other players. For example, The Moneyshot has Captain Crutches in the passenger seat, The Spook in the Driving position, then Glenno behind him and then Satisfaction to his left, and you play clockwise, starting with the letter "A". So Captain Crutches says "Aggravator", which everyone agrees is a most excellent name for a Speedboat, and play passes to the left. The Spook says "Ballbreaker", Glenno says "Cerebrus", Satisfaction says "Desintegrator" - and so it goes, until someone says something like "Sunflower" at which point they get loudly shouted out of the game and have to buy a round later.

As you may imagine, "Speedboat", albeit an excellent game, doesn't have masses of re-playability. So we adapted, and hence began playing "Heavy Metal Rock Band." Some of the highlights included "Ecstatic Cocks" and others much worse, much too terrible to mention... Then came "Porn Movie," again based on the same principle. "Ecstatic Cocks" was also a highlight of this noble competition.

"Bottcelli" is an altogether much more refined, and complicated, affair. This is how you play (are you ready?): It's like "20 Questions." Except that to get to ask a question of the person who knows the answer you first have to earn that right by asking ANOTHER question based on the first letter of the last name of the "answer person." I know, sounds confusing. But this example will make it easier:

CAPTAIN (THINKING OF JOHN WAYNE): I'm thinking of someone whose last name begins with W.

SATISFACTION: Are you the guy who starred in THE EQUALIZER?

CAPTAIN: No, I'm not Edward Woodward.

SATISFACTION: Damn!

CAPTAIN: So you don't get to ask a question.

SATISFACTION: Sure.

GLENNO: Are you a once-popular daytime TV host?

CAPTAIN: I don't know.

GLENNO: Ha-ha! You're not Mike Walsh.

(As Glenno has stumped the Captain with a "W" person, he can NOW ask a "Level Two" question - that is, a traditional "20 Questions", "Yes/No" question to try and figure out who in the world the Captain has in his mind.)

GLENNO: (CONT) Are you male?

CAPTAIN: (BECAUSE HE IS JOHN WAYNE, A MALE): Yes.

ALL: A-ha!

And so you continue - until someone figures out that the Captain is thinking of John Wayne. It sounds well-nigh impossible, I know, but it's not. Indeed, there are definite methods to use once you start earning "Level Two" questions: first you find out Gender ("Are you male?") then whether they're living ("Are you alive?") then area of fame ("Are you in the Arts?") then country of origin, when they died if they did etc. and you can usually get it in, say, an hour. So it's a fast-moving game which also eats up a lot of road time very efficiently... as long as you know about a lot of famous people throughout history. Luckily among the dogs we have a lot of areas of history covered... Playing with The Professor, as I did in a duo trip from Coffs Harbour to Sydney (later described in more detail), is a little different to playing with the other dogs. He favours the period 1200-1800 far more than 1900-2004 and tends towards Europe... Satisfaction, of course, tends towards Jazz, The Spook and the Captain like movies, and Glenno favours deep nasty porn.

Anyway, that's how we tend to amuse ourselves on the long drives...

We slayed 'em in Narrabri. We pulled the largest house they've had since the theatre was built in 2002 (unless they were flattering us): about 180 appreciative patrons, and they were a great audience, lots of laughter. It was a terrific and deeply satisfying show for all and the \$8million dollar theatre was awesome, totally state of the art. Included with this Log is a photo of The Professor and Captain Crutches with Kylie and Deano. Kylie is the Assistant Manager there and used to be in "Beef Marketing". One day four years ago she was driving by the as-yet-uncompleted complex with her mother and said, "I'd love to work there when it's built but I never will." Now she's second in charge and was the prime mover behind getting the place to take our show! Opportunities abound for the Arts Go-Getter in the 'Bri. Just ask Deano...

We went to bed happy with our night in the 'Bri, eschewing the local pubs, which we could tell might be a little heavy, for a couple of wind-downs at our motel. Deano had implored us to stay another day because "tomorrow were three dollar schooies at the Tourist Hotel" but we had to move on to Coffs Harbour - gorgeous, sunny Coffs Harbour, near Queensland, where they tell you it's beautiful one day and perfect the next...

About halfway to Coffs Harbour it started raining and three days later it hadn't stopped. We were in three cool little apartments and it just rained and rained and rained - the pool in the courtyard nearly overflowing. As I write this from an extremely temperate, balmy Victoria, the joke seems a little funnier than it did at the time...

Then the winds started picking up as well...

We had a day off. We worked, ate, slept... The Professor beat Captain Crutches in Scrabble 336-327, a very tight result. The Captain and Satisfaction saw OPEN WATER. Good flick. Shark attack vibe! Laundry was done. Rain poured. Wind blew. Coffs Harbour was falling apart - BLOWING apart, DROWNING. The water level in the pool continued to rise, to overflow... Streets deserted, cafés and restaurants closing...

By the time we got to the outrageously cute yet super-fitted (recently renovated) theatre, "The Jetty Memorial Theatre," down near the Jetty and the trendy section of Coffs, the weather was starting to seem extreme and of course having had about a day of rain in three years no-one was prepared for it. Captain's crutches didn't behave themselves on slippery pavement and progress was slow (the other dogs, as they have been the entire trip, were amazingly helpful.) Inside the theatre we got very excited - a performer's dream: intimate yet spacious (ie about 270 seats but each easily reachable without having to over-project), old-world fixtures combined with cutting-edge technology, huge amounts of charm and very friendly staff. Downstairs things got better: an amazing green room, beautiful dressing rooms and that rarest of joys: a monitor system (whereby when you're waiting in your dressing room or in the green room you can hear what's going on on stage) that used truly terrific speakers: you could hear the metaphorical pin drop had the stage, or auditorium, been empty.

And then we became concerned that "empty" might not be a metaphor.

Now if you weren't in Coffs Harbour for the Great Cyclone of 2004 you really won't appreciate how heavy that storm was and I can't quite use words to let you except to tell you it was HHHUUUUUUGGGGGGE. Keep-you-up-at-night loud. Trees-falling-over strong. And certainly "No-way-am-I-going-out-tonight" intense. If you lived in the Paradise that is the normal weather of Coffs Harbour, why in the world would you go out on the worst (weather) night in living memory?

So as we teched the show into the beautiful Theatre that afternoon, we began to resign ourselves to the fact that we may have a very, very, very, very, very (you get the picture) small house that night...

As we emerged from tech the weather was WORSE. Palm trees bent at 90 degrees, or simply snapped. Lashing, painful, soaking rain, the gutters overflowing, Captain's crutches a danger zone, wet wet wet wet wet. We were told by management that "People have been calling wondering if the show's still on."

The Professor went his own way, The Spook stayed to tidy up some cues, Glenno went back to the apartments to cook, and the Captain and Satisfaction went to a local Thai.

This place was classic. The relentless driving disaster that was the atmosphere made everything pretty depressing - and empty. A genial and very surprised older white gentleman welcomed us into his very homespun restaurant where obviously his Thai bride was the chief and only cook. Look, the chicken was very good and the lamb was very bad. It all paled beside the onslaught of wind and rain outside.

We ate and took a short nap at the apartments, then headed to the theatre. The weather was WORSE.

We got changed in our amazing, clean, new, luxurious dressing rooms and gathered in the massive underground Green Room, laughing and joking and swearing that we'd do our best even if there were only five people out there... By God, we'd give them the best show of their lives!

At 7:59pm The Professor and I sat, in costume, in the wings, Stage Right. And listened. We could see Satisfaction sitting on stage within his gazillion instruments, tuning, playing with his laptop, not giving anything away. He knew, the bastard. He knew if there was anyone out there at all...

Because to listen - there wasn't ANYBODY. We heard no sound at all.

Then Satisfaction rose. And walked towards us - he was coming off-stage, at 8pm! And I realised - we have NO AUDIENCE.

"What are you doing?" I said.

"Forgot the Four-X," said Satisfaction, referring to a prop beer he needs to keep with him for BLACKIE THE MONGREL.

"For God's sake, you bastard," I said, "Is there anyone out there?"

Captain's Log, signing out, 21st October 2004 -

No, only kidding.

There were people there. Enough. There were actually thirty-odd people there, which is a terribly sad showing, but in the circumstances, almost a miracle. This was a town shut down. These people came despite what must have seemed like overwhelming desires not to set foot outside their doors. We reckon we gave them our all and they were amazingly appreciative, laughing and applauding as though they were - well, say fifty? - and the House was also very happy. They - everyone - knew the evening was affected by the classic "Act of God" and they were actually surprised so many came out on a night so unbelievably ugly.

There was a young man who stayed afterwards - a drama student, probably eighteen - who couldn't believe what he'd seen, was dying to get a copy of the script, wanted to use a piece maybe for his drama school auditions... and another guy, who taught a drama class, wanting to get the script to use for his students... and even though the house was small and the weather was ghastly, we were not only satisfied, but had tangible results of having reached a couple of people and given them a little something, which, frankly, is what, at least, the Government funding this show has received is concerned with.

Obviously going out after the show was not an option. Pubs were shut due to lack of business, we didn't want to anyway, and we all had early starts. The Professor and I had to leave at 6am the next day - he had appointments in Sydney in the early afternoon and I had an appointment concerning my bloody Thrombosis at the Prince of Wales in Randwick at 3:30pm. We would hit Sydney, do our business, then get on a plane to Melbourne at noon the next day. After that, we wouldn't be returning to Sydney Town until Tour's end - November 22nd, 2004.

That night I barely slept. Unbelievably, the storm got WORSE STILL - like that was possible, but it was. At one point the storm's fury was so loud I thought, "Screw it, I'm not sleeping, I'll turn on the light and read" - only to find that the power was out. No reading here, matey, just listen to the battering storm, and think about how dangerous tomorrow's drive is going to be... Won't it be nice when your broken ankle drives up into your knee joints as you skid across two lanes into a skidding semi-trailer...

Thank goodness for my mobile's alarm because the power had not returned by 5:30am when I awoke. Thank goodness, too, that the storm's fury had abated - at least a little. It rained and pounded but not with the savage bravura that I had decided would make me recommend we didn't drive. I had a cold "cripple-wash" (the power outage had killed the hot water too) and greeted The Professor at my apartment's door at six on the dot. He agreed that if it had been worse we would be mad to venture it, but thought it was safe, and we should make a break. Besides, we had La Petite Putaine Noire - a new Renault, built for European conditions - speed and horrible weather. I agreed and we leapt greedily into that Black Little Whore, unfed, coffee-deprived, but ready to roll. Power was out everywhere - as we hit the roads the traffic lights weren't even working. Fallen branches littered the streets and rain pelted the windshield in deviant, awkward patterns. But it was lighter than it had been at its worst, and The Professor seemed confident, having at his experience Autobahns, ice and the crazy drive-stylings of Europeans... I managed to stay awake 'till we got out of town then crashed.

The mobile blurped at 8:30am and there was my girl Michelle - she'd heard Coffs Harbour was a flood zone and people couldn't get in or out. The Professor and I were out by now but the rest of the dogs might still be in - I called them quick. They were only leaving now. "Holy Jesus, get out of there!" I screamed. Satisfaction Jackson relayed the vibe to the denizens of The Mighty Moneyshot. Here we were - after three years of planning this tour, here we WERE in Coffs Harbour - and here we were in the absolute middle of the most dramatic thing that had happened in the place since! (Except for the unmentionable "other, "bull", dogs...")

The Professor hit the gass lest we get stranded and we made awesome time to Sydney, including a nice Scrambled Eggs and Coffee in Taree. We did the SMH Cryptic together:

PROFESSOR: What's one down?

CAPTAIN: "Answer about a second match required."

PROFESSOR: How many letters?

CAPTAIN: Six.

PROFESSOR: What was the clue again?

CAPTAIN: "Answer about a second match required."

PROFESSOR: "About " - that's signalling an anagram of 'answer' maybe... Christ, look at this countryside - it's incredible. What the hell - 'second match'? What's he mean by that? You need to pee yet?

We NAILED that crossword - the whole thing, in about an hour. EVERY CLUE. The SMH Cryptic. Killed it. Despite the rain, the wind... and my personal sense of satisfaction may have been out of proportion to the actual event, but the solving of that Cryptic in its entirety, bizarrely, made me feel better about the abnormal weather and the subsequent lost audience in Coffs. We knew what we were doing, and we were doing it to the best of our abilities. We just happened, literally, to be, at the most unfortunate moment, in the eye of the storm.

Back in Sydney, and back to the Prince of Wales Public Hospital, Parkes Building, for Captain Crutches (with the loving help of Michelle and the ridiculously informed advice of The Dude) to the Thrombosis ward. Pants off, machine that goes beeeeeeeep beeeeeeeeeeeep on - and the result that the Captain's blood clot has reduced from twenty to twelve centimetres, which is basically as good as could be hoped for in eleven days. Good to know, as tomorrow we fly...

Despite Satisfaction maintaining "Musos' Right" of being 15 minutes late we got all boarded including a gazillion bags on an overbooked (due to a cancelled earlier flight) plane to Melbourne at noon. QANTAS rocks! You get a Chicken and Caesar sandwich - on Turkish! - plus coffee or tea and a soft drink - and the flight's no longer than a tall building's elevator or an ultra-sound in the thrombosis ward.

In Melbourne we got our bags then headed to Hertz to pick up our cars, and at this point a unique and genuinely unexpected (though ultimately frustrating) event occurred. As The Spook dealt with the paperwork, The Professor had a cigarette out overlooking the Hertz Lot with a Hertz guy who recognised him from - bizarrely - HOME AND AWAY and also - to The Professor's chagrin - some Macdonald's commercials

in which he'd played a Pirate (Arrrrrrrggghh!) Anyway, the Professor got to talking to this guy about driving at high speeds on Open Roads and Autobahns in Europe and the guy said, well - come look at this. And showed the Professor the Ferrarri (see pictures.) This is a car they keep - the only one they keep in all of Victoria - in case someone wants to rent such a vehicle. And the Professor said, Well, I've driven a Ferrari in Europe, and the guy said, Really, and The Professor said, Sure, and the guy said, Hold on, and one thing led to another, and with no change in rate - that's how the Professor and I took the Ferrari down here to Sale from Melbourne (see attached photos.)

But unfortunately...

The other dogs were in the Terrago but the irony was this - once we got out of Melbourne there were fair amounts of traffic. The Professor and I were chomping at the bit to see this sweet little honey do her work. We got out of Metro Melbourne. The traffic started to thin. Buildings started to thin and open fields with cows started to take their place. The Professor looked in the rearview, then briefly at me.

"You ready?"

"Hell yes."

And as we were about to go -

"Hold on."

And there was a police car - and it followed us for the NEXT HOUR AND A HALF, obviously thinking a Silver Ferrari is going to speed speed speed... and we drove that hunk of power at lawful speed the whole way to Sale, killing its soul, and were beaten by the unmonitored Terrago by thirty minutes, God Damn it...

Capain Crutches, Signing Off 21/10/04

Captain's Log, Thursday, October 28, 2004

Ah, Ballarat - you can smell the gold in the air. Well, no, you can't actually - but the evidence of the Gold Rush is everywhere, in the solidity of the buildings, the gunshops, the many many pubs, the sense of event here...

But Ballarat is now. We must go back.

Sale, Victoria, where we left off, was a great experience. For a start, the town was absolutely delightful, a sort of

affluent oasis that smacked of not "SeaChange" but "RegionalChange." We arrived and put down our gear in the magnificently named Hacienda International Motor Inn, which was without doubt a popular spot - for once the car park was loaded (although the pool was, of water, empty. Fair enough - it may be deep Spring but it is chilly in Victoria.) The Professor headed off to the pub but Captain Crutches lingered in his room, wanting to catch up on some electronic correspondence. Da Boyz - Satisfaction Jackson, Spooky Luke and Glenno Glen Woolgar - had arrived earlier in the new van (now illustriously named Lube Service), choosing not to have lingered, as the Professor and the Captain did, in small towns along the way, mainly for coffee. They had already been to a pub and The Professor and Captain were informed by text that the Irish Pub was a goer.

Was it what! When we arrived the Professor reached a sort of Tour Nirvana, for there, in loving colour, was his nectar of choice - Stella Artois on tap. This was BY FAR the first time we had seen such a phenomenon. We immediately ordered a couple and sat down to read the local rag - and what was on the cover but some gorgeous lil' Kelpie pups herding ducks - DUCKS - as their training ground for herding sheep. This was too cute. Sale was hitting buttons, and all of them were right. We moved next door and both had the Roast of the Day (and trust me, on tour, more often than not, if it's available - if it exists - what you get is the Roast of the Day. Which is more often than not Lamb. Which is very very good.) It was good (it was Lamb, too) and there was mint sauce, which pleased the Professor almost as much as the Stella, and all was well, all was good.

Bed early that night. Ah, Sale - civilization.

But then, the Theatre. My God.

It was absolutely awesome. By far the best of the tour so far. Not even a year old, \$5.7 million dollars worth of State-Of-The-Art Theatreness. Perfect seating, perfect stage, perfect, and endless, backstage areas, dressing rooms, rehearsal rooms, showers - and even, for those of us on crutches, an "Assisted Shower Room." Much mirth was made over the Assistant and her relation to Captain Crutches... (Don't worry darling, there was no Assistant, except in Da Boyz' filthy imagineerings...)

But more than anything, the ACOUSTICS! That was the kicker. Pin-drop perfect. Daniel, the Theatre Manager, used to be a sound engineer and tried to explain to us in highly technical terms why the acoustics were so good but it all went over our heads. All we knew was, this was a theatre we

couldn't wait to speak in - a PERFECT theatre for our kind of Storytelling show.

The Regions have amazed me with all this State-of-the-Art theatre action! Obviously whatever Arts money out there has been serving the regions well. The Theatre in Narrabri was incredible and this one in Sale was even better. And both run - by Kylie and Daniel respectively - by young people, in charge of bringing shows like ours to their respective communities. Amazing. These theatres would cost twenty million bucks in Sydney, easy - and that's talking labour and materials, not property, obviously.

Needless to say we had a great show in Sale. A great house, a strong performance, and that theatre! We left Sale delighted...

The Spook and Satisfaction left early the next morning, in The Fluffer (our smaller vehicle). Spook had to go early to ready the next Theatre, in Warburton, and Satisfaction left because his girlfriend Fiona "The Scot" was flying in from Sydney to join him for the weekend. They took what they needed for their work and their personal gear.

The Professor, Captain Crutches and Glenno took The Fluffer, later, and we took our time... to Warburton.

While we were on the road - and let me just say, the road between Sale and Warburton is truly spectacular, a gorgeous, winding road that drifts through tiny and amazingly cute little towns - Satisfaction Jackson called me and said, "Warburton's amazing."

"How amazing?"

"I keep expecting to see Hobbits."

Our expectations were sated but we played it chill. Darn it, we were in Gippsland, famous for its wetness, its lush beauty - and its' Blue Cheese. So at a pit-stop in some ridiculously beautiful and tiny town called, I think, Nirrum South, I bought some "Gippsland Blue" - and it turned out this town was the Cheese's town of origin. This cheese was spectacular... not that I'd know it yet, for I craftily saved it...

We hit Warburton in the mid-afternoon and by God it was pretty. For those of you who live in Sydney, it's kind of like Leura, but smaller - a quaint, gorgeous town with Antique stores, cafés, misty mountains and a cool stream running behind the whole thing.

Little did we know the darkness behind the mask...

We pulled up into the parking area behind the Arts Centre that housed the Theatre. Everything was "quaint." The Theatre was a far cry from those we had become used to - no five million plus state of any arts here - this was a step up from a neighbourhood Playhouse. But it was DAMN cute and easy to project into, and it was actually refreshing to be in an older, quainter (damn it, what other word to use?) little community theatre. Dawn, the manager, was instantly cool - a city-Dyke relocated, full of attitudinal charm and surety. I liked her - she represented an urban sophistication beneath the Antique-Store Quaintness (sorry!).

Actually she represented much more. The whole town was, essentially, Gay, as we discovered over the next few hours. And mainly, almost pre-dominantly, Female Gay at that. Like Glebe, in the misty-mountains, but much more obvious. In other words, Lesbianville. With views. Not that this was the darkness, not at all...

Tech went fine and we hit the local esteemed restaurant, WILD THYME, for a slap-up meal, joined by the Wee Scot herself, Fiona Mathie, who had come to join Satisfaction Jackson for a couple of days. Fiona's presence helped us lift our conversation out of the realm of naughty fifteen year olds. Even Satisfaction Jackson raised his game...

Dinner was very very good. I had a smoked trout risotto that was pretty unbelievable. We had a local White Wine for twenty bucks that I thought was pretty phenomenal. Everything about this town was magic - or so we thought...

But, interestingly - and later, disturbingly - not everyone was so enamoured. The duck risotto, ordered by Satisfaction, Spook and Glenno, was a bit too sweet. But more preternaturally, Fiona the Scot felt the whole town was a bit creepy - she got a "strange vibe..."

The show was a full-on treat. A huge house and very very appreciative. One woman brought her dog into the show, which of course was a great vibe. They laughed and laughed and clapped and clapped blah blah blah. We were very satisfied. A friend of my family's came up from Melbourne and loved it. The Theatre reported that our sales - and the satisfaction of the audience - was way way up on the last batch of shows that had been through. We had done our best, and our best was good. We were doing everything right and life was not just good, it was sweet. Perfect. All fine here. The Scot

came backstage, we had a bottle of red, packed up, hit the road. Spook dropped us at a pub down the road - the Alpine - then took Lube Service back to our motel so that he could walk back and have a few drinks without fear of driving after drinking.

So far, so good...

The Alpine was glorious. Like a mini Hydro-Majestic. Obviously built in the thirties, a grand old hotel in a beautiful part of the world. There had been a wedding and the reception was in full swing. It was a muso's wedding and all the guys had full-on sideburns, the girls pretty in fifties-retro dresses. I actually saw a guy I vaguely knew from Sydney - Sleazy Bob (why he earns that name is not to be repeated here - but he earns it, trust me). I didn't say hi. The revellers were too fully revelled.

We had a few drinks in the pretty, pink ante-chamber to the Hotel and at midnight celebrated Satisfaction's 34th birthday with a bottle of champagne. Satisfaction was in fine form, digging the champagne, the tour, and most importantly, having his girl, the lovely Wee Scot, with him. Boy was he happy, boy was she happy, boy were we all happy...

And while we celebrated, or perhaps later, while we all slept, someone broke into Lube Service in our motel parking lot and stole Satisfaction's most important bag, containing his flute, his headphones, his mixer - and his laptop, containing all the sound cues from the show.

And, due to circumstances, we didn't even realise until two days later.

We got Warburton's only taxi back to the motel. We slept. We woke. Spook, The Professor, The Captain and Glenno left in Lube Service towards Melbourne, leaving Satisfaction and The Scot to enjoy his birthday at their leisure, having The Fluffer as their own vehicle. We wouldn't see them for a day and a half.

We hit Melbourne and, at our apartments in Alphington, disbanded. Captain Crutches was joined by his girl Michelle who'd flown down from Sydney for the weekend and we did the town up! I can't report on anyone else for the next day and a half but boy did we enjoy that great city to its best. Melbourne is best for eating and shopping and the Captain and his Lady did both to their utmost. The best thing being a French bistro called France-Oire that couldn't have been more fun... The Captain ordered brains for the first time in his life after being told by his perfect - and perfectly

French - waiter that "if he didn't like them, no problem, we just bring you something else!" The Captain loves Melbourne. This waiter rocked. And was funny. When Michelle explained re: the brains that The Captain was "trying new things tonight" the Captain was given an unambiguous look - maybe there's more monsieur wishes to try...

It is understood that Satisfaction and The Scot attended THE PRODUCERS and loved it; that Glenno attended EUREKA and a party afterwards and digged both; that The Spook met up with local friends; and that Glenno introduced The Professor to the joys of The Esplanade Hotel, which The Prof thought was fantastic, proclaiming, "You can see thirty years of use in the seats." The Prof, as you have learned by now, appreciates, more than most things, history.

On Monday morning Michelle and The Captain sat at a cute little café not far from our apartments, enjoying their last hour together for the next five weeks - and then the phone rang, and our perfect little tour took its second dive (the first being Captain Crutches' crutches.)

Satisfaction couldn't find his bag.

We assembled at the apartments and searched each of the three apartments and both vehicles millimetre by millimetre, our fear growing each moment.

And growing...

Now this is what that bag represented - and we'll start easy:

The Game: Travel Connect Four. A bummer but not an emergency.

The Sax Reeds: Three boxes, \$85 worth, uninsured, and needy of instant replacement for the show.

The Bag: A beautiful "December Quarter" Crumpler Bag - uninsured.

The Microphone: For the Saxophone, necessary for the show, insured but a hassle.

The Headphones: Replaceable, an expense - and not necessarily insured.

The Mixer: Vital to the show, an expense to Satisfaction - maybe insured.

The Flute: Important to the show, very important to Satisfaction, "irreplaceable" in a sense in that all instruments are unique, not insured.

The Laptop: Disaster. Contained all the electronic cues to the show. Sound effects, snatches of music, background effects, the "aural landscape" - everything, essentially, not played by Satisfaction live on drums or Saxophone (or, stolen, flute.) Countless hours of work. Software essential to the show. You get the picture. Now: Satisfaction's personal work. Financial records. Unfinished musical arrangements. All his personal computer shit, all his contacts, all that stuff one keeps on their computer. Insured - of course, and thank goodness. But no insurance can cover the work that lives inside a computer's memory.

I hope the sonofabitch that stole that bag rots in hell. Hard and fiery.

Satisfaction and The Captain leapt into the Fluffer and headed BACK to Warburton. The drive was a nightmare. The normally gabby Satisfaction and Captain were silent the whole trip. Fear gripped their throats like a cold noodle. The suspense was unbearable. If the bag was there everything was going to be all right, and the relief would be UNbelievable. But if it wasn't... oh Lordy, if it wasn't...

We got to Warburton. We got to the theatre. Closed. But a note on the door, with Dawn's previously unknown mobile number. Satisfaction grabbed his phone, fast. He punched in the numbers, hard. Spoke the deal.

She wouldn't be there for an hour and a half.

The two suspense-racked performers sat in the THREE SUGARS CAFÉ biting their nails and grinding their teeth. Now this town wasn't beautiful; it was a coven, a hellish, evil place, and the once-comforting mists now seemed to guard a terrible, dark secret. Who in this place could we trust? Were people looking at us and winking behind our backs? Had the loot been divvied up - was that guy over there looking forward to using his new laptop, that girl there to a game of travel Connect Four? Who were the innocent in this town of the shamed?

Satisfaction even reckoned he knew who took it, but that information shall remain with the author, as we're not in the business of accusation here, only recording the cold, hard facts. About this spooky town of thieves.

Finally Dawn arrived and Satisfaction searched the Theatre high and low - to no avail. That was the last, hopeful but hopeless, chance. We were dreaming. The bag and the gear were gone. Gone gone gone in the way only stolen things can be gone - they drift out into the large world and you gradually realise your hope of getting them back is that of a Bogon moth living a full, rich life.

So, gone. Move on.

Boy we did. Satisfaction took it in his stride - as much as one could - and by God if he didn't get that show together by the time we assumed the stage in Mooroopna last night. We gave a show at the Westside Performing Arts Centre that was - with the exception of no flute, and even that was played instead by Satisfaction on Saxophone - the exact show we were determined to deliver wherever we went.

It was an incredible show of workmanship and good-nature by Satisfaction, but he was helped as well, by both The Scot and Michelle in Sydney, who interrupted their working lives to go to their boyfriend's respective places of work and send materials, such as sound cues, out to us; by one Scott the Techie at the Westside, who spent his day aiding Satisfaction find sound effects over the net at his apartment in nearby Shepparton; by the constantly astounding Luke the Spook, who, as always, adapted, unperturbed, and provided the calm air that allowed us to breathe, and come through, in very tense circumstances; and by Glenno and The Professor, who never missed a beat in calmly accepting in every fashion the myriad and sudden challenges we so unexpectedly - and frankly unfairly - were burdened with.

But in the end Satisfaction Jackson's work ethic and ability to be cool in the face of adversity made the show happen as though there had never been a thief, an intervention, a disaster. More things are still to be done - flutes to be sent, cues to be tweaked, insurers to be satisfied - and - unfortunately this won't happen - dickhead thieves to be caught - but we put on our show last night, and the audience got what they paid for and never knew nor saw any evidence of any hassle whatsoever, any compromise whatsoever, and it made this Captain Crutches, for one, admire his colleagues more than ever.

Now on to Portland, Victoria. Bring it on.

Captain Crutches, Signing Off,
Thursday, October 28, 2004

Captain's Log, Monday, November 1st, 2004

When documentarians make fly-on-the-wall films - RATS IN THE RANKS, METALLICA: SOME KIND OF MONSTER and the like - they are hoping, of course, for some conflict, some disaster, some drama - otherwise they don't have a movie. Or if they do, it's a boring one. So too the Logger can only provide drama if there is trouble and strife.

Luckily, this Log will be drama-free. After the broken ankle and subsequent thrombosis, the Coffs Harbour Cyclone and the equipment theft, it is a pleasure to report that everything is smooth and good with the Tour. We are in Geraldton, Western Australia - an Oceanside village famed as one of the five greatest windsurfing regions in the world, mainly because it's regularly very windy here. It's a strange place, a mixture of surfers, backpackers and locals - and also reflects a far greater integration of Aboriginal people and whites than you ever see in Sydney outside of Redfern and Chippendale.

But going back... Portland, the final stop on our Victorian leg, was a delight. As was getting there - the drive was gorgeous. I have been completely taken by Victoria's natural beauty, very different to that of New South Wales. Often the landscape looks like rural England on a sunny day, and at one point the Professor pointed out a hillside where, he said, "The cows seem to have been artfully placed for our benefit."

Along the way we saw an amazing, huge cluster of windmills that I understand are famous among agrarians as a leading example of their kind. I tried to snap them from the window, and what I could get, I've attached.

We made two stops along the way - first in picture-perfect seaside town of Warranopool (I'm sure the spelling is wrong) and then in an amazing little town called Port Fairy, "home of the Port Fairy Music Festival." Then to Portland itself, another gorgeous seaside village, where we discovered that this weekend contained the inaugural Portland Festival, of which we were the only theatre attraction! The only bummer was that, having to perform, we couldn't really indulge in the main event of the Festival, a massive day-time wine tasting..

The theatre was cute and we played to a decent and appreciative house. Karl, the theatre manager, was very pleased with the show and told us he also booked for another town called Casterton, "Birthplace of the Kelpie," which

holds an annual Kelpie Festival! Perhaps if we tour again we can go there during the Fest and "Sparky the Kelpie," where Glen plays a very clever lil' sheep-herder, can become the climax of the show!

We all hit our beds early after the show because we had to get up at five the next morning to drive to Melbourne Airport to catch a Noon flight to Perth. Additionally, daylight savings' time struck at 2am on the Sunday morning, so we had one less hour to sleep! We were all a bit nervous about making the flight but as it turned out we made it to the airport with plenty of time. The flight was uneventful - the movie was ANCHORMAN, which most of us watched, the Captain for the second time.

In Perth we had four hours to kill at the airport so we buckled down with a couple of beers, our books, and, for the Professor and the Captain, a nice game of Scrabble. The game was annulled when we had to board our flight, however, and no score was recorded.

The flight from Perth to Geraldton, on a Fokker Friendship (see picture) was truly awesome. It was a perfect time to fly - late afternoon - the interior of the plane glowed with the slowly setting sun and the Professor got to watch the landscape the whole way from his window seat. Captain Crutches made friends with Carla Jenkins in the seat next to him, who had lost her husband two years ago, was retiring on Friday after thirty years teaching TAFE, and was studying to become a Marriage Celebrant. Being a dog owner to boot, Captain Crutches tossed a couple of free tickets her way. Carla was a Woman of Size and sort of spilled over into the Captain's seat but she was an entertaining body of local knowledge and was extremely excited about the tickets.

Now here we are in this pretty, slightly economically depressed and windy seaside town, enjoying a sunny day off before performing tomorrow night. The Captain is having Tour Caps embroidered by the local seamstress; it's half-price Pasta Night at the best Italian restaurant in town; and there's a screening of the remake of THE MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE at 8:10pm at the nearby cinema. Oh, and from five to seven it's Skimpy Barmaid hour at the Geraldton Hotel, so everything's okay.

Much less drama this time, but that's quite all right by all of us right now. Morale is high, laughter abounds, and the Tour continues here on the other side of Australia, where they don't subscribe to Daylight Savings, you can set your watch by the wind, and the Indian Ocean glimmers like Azure.

And Captain Crutches loses them in eight days!

Best to all - do write of Sydney.

Captain Crutches, signing off,
Monday, November 1st, 2004
Geraldton, Western Australia

Captain's Log, Thursday, November 4, 2004

Here I sit broken-hearted
Feeling logic got outsmarted
There is not too much to say
Except avoid the U.S.A.

Travelling all day, being in and out of small airports and motel rooms, made the United States Federal Election even weirder.

Geraldton turned out to be a winner of a show - bizarrely so. It didn't really occur to us until the day before that we were performing on the night of the Melbourne Cup. And let me tell you, Geraldton celebrates the Melbourne Cup. Satisfaction Jackson and I went to a New-Age Book Store and Coffee Shop called THE CUP OF LIFE where you could only get Skim Milk in your coffee, much to Satisfaction's disgust, while across the road at the Freemason's Hotel everyone was getting SMASHED in pretty dresses and hats. It was pretty much like a mini-Sydney - a really mini-Sydney. Because we were in Western Australia, the Race, run at three p.m. in Melbourne and Sydney and all points East, was run at NOON Western Australian Time, and by the time we had finished our late breakfast the town was a miasma of drunken well-dressed who-know-whats; this seemingly unwealthy town had suddenly spewed forth its dressed-for-the-best, and they had quickly degenerated into drunken wrecks. But they still looked relatively good - some of them - and were obviously having a whale of a time.

We, of course, couldn't join them in all this madness as we had to perform, so we did everything we could to stay sober in a town that was, essentially, drunk. We retired to our Motel Rooms for awhile (which were really nice, by the way - they opened out onto Palm-Tree lawns, and much reading in the windy sun got done by our little Troupe), and later, we ate a fair meal at The Freemasons Hotel, the majority of Melbourne Cup Drinkers fairly stashed away - or so we thought.

Then we hit the theatre. The theatre at Geraldton was simply massive. 600 seats. Sort of a half-way replica of the

Theatre Royal in Sydney. All the red carpets, all those cute little entrances from side-aisles letting you into your row.

And BRIAN! This guy was the best. Cockney - TRUE Cockney. "I've worked here twenty-three years. I love this theatre." Captain Crutches' biggest regret this entire tour may be that we forgot to get a photo of Brian - he was truly a Man who Loved That Theatre. His Suit shone, his Shoes shone - the Theatre was in very good shape, but by God, Brian was in GREAT shape. This was a man who would be at this theatre until his dying or retiring day, and you figured he had already decided the latter wasn't ever going to happen... We loved Brian, as briefly as we met him, and we thank him for taking the photo of us with our heads all blown up weirdly in the lobby (see Pic).

The next day we had a few hours to kill so we all checked out the local Museum - a pretty amazing place, because the BATAVIA horrendous events happened off the coast of Geraldton and Geraldton revels in it. I don't have the time here to tell you of the mutiny, murder, incest and rape that happened as a result of the BATAVIA'S wrecking - but after you look it up, you will shiver in fright - what a story! Those scary Dutch! What's fun about the Geraldton Museum is that you go watch a 52 minute film about the Batavia Massacre where you see these somewhat low-budget and quite graphic depictions of horrible sexual violation, hand-chopping, execution, mass-murder etc. all shot on video with your classic "not-quite-there" actors. The story would make a great \$25million hard-core nasty film.

Then we moved on - to Esperance. This was great, because all the names were just getting out of control: "Esperance" means "Hope" in French. Here was some Hope...

But the American election, unfortunately, killed our hope. A travelling posse of actors is not hoping for a Bush victory. As we were packing at Geraldton, we were hearing that all was, essentially, equal. By the time we hit Perth, we were hearing that Kerry could win. By the time we hit Esperance it was the opposite: Bush had won, at least in all likelihood. Mutterings had been made about disputing the tally until the last vote was counted in Ohio but we could tell that was an unlikely scenario.

Sadness among the Troops. Despair. As, we imagined, must be happening all over Australia. And the world. What were the French thinking? Sure not of too much esperance...

Look, none of us took it well. It was a sad night in Esperance, despite our truly terrific and brand new hotel.

The Professor, Satisfaction and the Captain ate at the Hotel's restaurant and it was good, as were the local wines, both red and white. But the talk was of politics, and sad politics at that. We retired to Satisfaction's room to watch the result clarify. It was about eleven p.m. our time and dawn was breaking in Boston. The Aussie reporter stood against an empty Boston Square, where Kerry's supporters should still have been cheering, but there was no-one except a lonely cleaning dude in the back-ground. Oh well, there you go.

The next night, in Esperance, we played a great show. People came, people loved it, people want a good night out. The world moves on, and so do we. America has four more years of Bush; we have six towns to go. Another day, another Fokker... On to Albany, via Perth, which is similar to taking a bus from Bondi to Central Station and then another from Central to Bronte, but that's how flights work in Western Australia: everything goes through Perth. Including us, all the time. We know Perth airport so well they don't even bother sending our bags through the X-Ray any more. "Here come the thespians!" they cry, "how was (insert town name here)?" "Excellent," we reply, "twas only the election killed our spirits - briefly."

And boy did our spirits rise once we hit Perth airport, "en route" to Albany!

One of the towns we were still to play was called Port Headland - a small mining town, very far north, about as far north as you can get in the huge state of Western Australia, and (in)famous for housing one of the refugee detention centres. We'd, singly and collectively, heard an awful lot about this town, and a lot awful about this town. That it was a bit redneck. That it was hard to raise an audience there. But mostly, that it was divided - Port Headland itself was inhabited by wealthy mining employees, and South Headland, fifteen minutes to the South, was inhabited by severely disenfranchised and generally unemployed Aboriginal Australians mainly, where shops pulled down heavy metal shutters at the close of the business day, where there existed a phenomenon known as "lock-down" - that is, no-one went out after dusk for fear of violence! And South Headland was where we were not only performing, but staying for two and a half days, without a car.

And the show got cancelled, due to ongoing and unreparable electrical problems within the theatre.

It was a collective sigh of relief for our troupe. A month previously we had requested of our travel agent that we stay

in Port Headland proper, rather than in South Headland - and pay the difference at our own expense - but we had had no confirmation of any bookings so of course were worried the place to stay was booked out. Personally, Captain Crutches had been assaulted on tour before - in Roanoke, Virginia, back in 1995 - and, although by then his crutches would be gone, there was no way his right ankle would support running by then - so not having to stay in a suburb regarded as one of the most dangerous in Australia was greeted with relief.

Moments after hearing this news we met a gorgeous Beagle bitch named Fern, who valiantly patrols Perth Airport, keeping Western Australia free of fruit and meat and other things you shouldn't bring in. Captain Crutches, being the Master of Dude and playing Sherlock The Beagle, Kiwi Customs Dog, couldn't resist getting a pic with this gorgeous bitch, and the photo is attached.

We had four hours to kill so rather than spend yet another chunk of time in Perth airport we decided to hightail it into town. Spooky Luke knew the lay of the land so we hopped a VanCab and went into the centre of the city, where we found a charming - and incredibly busy - British style pub that not only served immaculate beers, such as Stellar and Heinekin, on tap, but also served up a fabbo whole Cornish Hen with mashed potatoes! After sucking down a couple of those lil' chookers the Professor and the Captain played Scrabble (see attached photo; game unfinished but Professor so far in lead as to fairly claim victory.) The Professor did something during this game the Captain had always dreamed of but never achieved: he used the letter occupying the Triple Word Score Square to drop a long word down to the NEXT Triple Word Score Square, using ALL his seven letters in doing so, thereby not only scoring a long word on a Triple but also scooping the fifty point bonus for using all the letters in his rack! That score alone was enough to wipe the Captain out, and he was glad he had taken the Professor's partner's advice - DON'T play for money with the Professor...

Then back to Perth airport, then onto yet another Fokker, and then on to this town, Albany - a truly lovely place. We were sick of being carless so The Professor, Satisfaction and Captain Crutches rented a vehicle from Avis. Crutches had called ahead and confirmed their "smallest, cheapest" vehicle, but the kind lady at the airport (who'd heard of the show and was thinking of bringing some friends to it) upgraded us to a full-on dark green Camry which instantly became THE GREEN HORNET. It had grunt and plenty of room and we've used it to its utmost here in this pretty, charming town. This morning we went to visit the Brig Amity, a lovely

recreation of the original Brig (being the smallest of the two-masted, square rigged vessels peaking in use during the first quarter of the nineteenth century.) The Amity carried 23 convicts, 18 privates, one sergeant, one captain and one major, a storekeeper and surgeon, a Royal Navy Lieutenant, a midshipman, a quartermaster, a marine batman and then a regular Brig's crew, along with stores for six months' ashore, including livestock! She was originally built in Canada, launched in 1816, and registered at 142 tons. She was wrecked in Bass Strait on an uncharted sand bank in June 1845. The replica we attended (photos attached) was built in 1975-76. The Captain knows all this because he had plenty of time to gather information, since his disability prevented him from joining The Professor and Satisfaction below decks.

After The Amity we went off to the most remarkable of sites - the Albany Wind Farm. This comprises twelve huge propellers that generate sixty percent of the electricity used by Albany. They are simply amazing and we all became entranced (photos attached.) They look like some alien spacecraft that have incongruously planted themselves within the wind-blown scrub by the South Ocean - massive, tall, futuristic, imposing and amazingly quiet. They make a sound, sure, but, matched to their height and sheer impressiveness, the almost gentle (and very consistent) "shwoosh, shwoosh, shwoosh" they make seems almost impossibly modest. Satisfaction and The Professor did some very complicated mathematics and worked out that these babies spun at an amazing rate of kilometres per hour, but I've forgotten the figure at the moment...

We played at the Town Hall in Albany, a gorgeous theatre in an incredibly beautiful building (photos of interior and exterior attached.) We got a great house, once again, but this was a particularly wonderful performing experience, because the theatre was particularly suited to our show - it was intimate, the audience was well placed in relation to us, and the size of the booking matched the size of the house very well. We had a satisfying evening - not that, in terms of performance, we've yet had an unsatisfying one.

Now onto Perth. The Captain loses his crutches in two days and tonight was the last performance wearing them. In Perth we will re-rehearse and The Captain will take over some of the transitional moments he has been unable to do until this point. He'll also do some rehearsal so he knows what to do with his arms!

Losing these crutches and this "boot" (as my modern, cyborg-style cast is known) looms as Christmas must do to a five year old and the promise of "going all the way" must

do to a sixteen year old (insert your own age specs if necessary.) I've had these apparati for only seven weeks but I can't remember what it is like to walk around without them. I know that once I'm back on my own two feet the crutches and boot will fade from my memory, and care, rapidly, but I suppose I'll also eulogise them briefly... in a truly weird way, the way only someone who's had to use them would understand, the crutches themselves have become my constant companions, and so in a weird way, these cold, grey, but ever-present friends. They have helped me get around while my right ankle couldn't - and I owe them for that, my lil' Rightie and Leftie - almost like pets, like Guide-Dogs... I will be donating them, and my boot, to a hospital in Perth, and I won't be sad to leave them behind - but in a way I will; in a way I will very briefly miss them, or at least wish that we could get together, once a year or so, so I could buy them a drink and tell them how grateful I was that they were so well constructed and served me so well in my incapacity.

Captain Crutches, signing off,
Saturday, November 6th, 2004
Albany, Western Australia

Captain's Log, Tuesday, 16th November, 2004

In a startling move, Harvey Weinstein, of Miramax Pictures, has optioned THE CAPTAIN'S LOG as a Major Motion Picture. The cast is in place and it is a good one: Jack Black as The Captain, Ian McKellan as The Professor, John Cusack as The Spook, Macaulay Culkin as Glenno, and, in a curious but satisfying twist of Hollywood "savior-faire", Morgan Freeman as Satisfaction Jackson. Tarentino is slated to direct, provided Satisfaction can either kill someone or be killed; either should be fine.

Meanwhile we await the final leg of the tour: Karratha, Mandurah and Bunbury. Only a week to go and a shame, really; although we of course miss our lovers, friends, pets and houses, the tour has been wonderful, a deeply satisfying artistic experience as well as an amazing way of seeing deep and fascinating parts of Australia that we would otherwise not have seen.

There is not a great deal to report about Perth because, frankly, it was like a paid holiday: with the Port Hedland show cancelled, we only had a single show, in Thornlie, a suburb of Perth, over the course of an entire week: other than that, we... well, we relaxed. We sat by the pool, read,

ate barbecues... but no, we did a lot more, there was an awful lot of sightseeing. We hit Fremantle heaps (a fantastic, historical part of Perth, with a great museum devoted to the many shipwrecks that have happened off the West Australian Coast); we hit the WA Art Gallery; we saw films (HERO, OUTFOXED, INTIMATE STRANGERS, IN MY FATHER'S DEN were all viewed by one or more of the company); we visited Cottisloe Beach, Northbridge, other areas; mostly though, at least for the Captain, Professor and Satisfaction, Perth was about the Shipping Age and the shipwrecks. 150 Wrecks have been found off the coast of Western Australia out of a possible 1400! That's a lot of wrecks, many having to do with the Spice Trade, well before European Settlement of Australia. WA takes its Maritime History very seriously, and so, with time on our hands, have we.

Tomorrow, all the way North, to Karratha - a very isolated, small mining community up at the very top of Western Australia. Who knows what this place will be like - I don't. Probably extremely hot (yesterday it was 42 degrees!) It will be a fascinating place to go, somewhere none of us would have gone, just out of happenstance, otherwise - and we are all looking forward to it, one more adventure.

There weren't many adventures, just good relaxed times, in our stay in Perth, so hopefully you'll willingly accept few photos of some guys having a pretty nice time.

The theatre itself was cool, but its location was SO weird - it was literally in the car park of a shopping mall. But people came, and it was good, and The Captain got to perform without crutches or "boot" for the first time this tour, and that was thrilling beyond belief. He now walks, sans boot, with only one crutch, and only that when necessary. The ankle flares with anger by the end of each day, and in a way there's more pain than when he wore the boot, due to inflammation and swelling, but he's freer than he's been for seven weeks, and the feeling is joyous. Swimming is a dream...

Captain Crutchless, Signing Off
Perth, Western Australia
16/11/04

Captain's Log, Thursday, 18th November, 2004

Karratha is the most unique place I have visited on this tour, and in Australia. And one of the most singular, surreal and fascinating places I have visited in the world.

I re-read in the previous Log that Karratha could be "a very isolated, small mining community." Well, yes. But oh, something so unexpected as well.

It is without doubt unbelievably isolated, and yet not at the same time. It is at once extremely small (11,000 average residents) and yet not at the same time. Allow me to explain.

It's mining, and it's moneyed mining. People come here to work, and to make money. Everyone in Karratha is employed (unlike the town of Roeburn a few kilometres to the South, in which no-one is employed.)

As I've read about the Pilbara Region (of which Karratha and Port Hedland are the two major towns), they figured out there was enormous amounts of Iron Ore here quite awhile ago - like back in the thirties, but no-one had the resources to get at it. Then as Australia grew, people wanted to get their hands on it, particularly one Lang Hancock (late husband of the infamous Rose Hancock), but the Federal Government decided that to export the vast Iron Ore resources of the Pilbara could pose a national security threat as our "enemies" could use the material to build arms against us. Thus there was a Federal Ban on exporting Iron Ore from the region throughout the fifties, and thus no-one committed the enormous funds required to mine it. But there were men out there, such as Hancock, circling, waiting, knowing that the threat of war would dissipate eventually, and when it did, the cash-in would be astronomical.

In 1961 the ban was overturned, and the boys moved in. They started mining Iron Ore at a place called Dampier, just eighteen kilometres away, already being well aware that it contained, perhaps, the greatest concentration of the stuff in the entire world.

The first company was called Hamersley Iron Pty Limited, and they remain to this day, joined by BHP and two other major giants. Hamersley started bringing in hard men from all over the world to work its mines, and realized by the late '60s they needed to create a town to house its increasing bevy of workers. Hence, in 1969, they began constructing - literally creating - an entire town called Karratha, and by 1976 they had built pretty much an entire town - an airport, much housing, a shopping precinct, etc. - and all of this had been built and was inhabited by almost 100% single men.

During this time an amazing thing happened which relates to us. A dog named Tally-Ho, a Kelpie - Cattle Dog cross, escaped from its owners and began to live a nomadic, and amazingly intelligent life, among the Ore workers of Karratha, Dampier, and the mining town to the North-East, Port Hedland. This dog became a local legend, and you can see photos of us with the statue erected to his memory - the only real evidence of any sentimental history in this amazingly new, workmanlike region.

We flew in on a very new 737, which surprised us. What? Why weren't we flying on some old Fokker? Well, the reason is, obviously, these guys are used to being treated well. This is a hard, hard environment to work in. The temperatures (hot) are extreme to say the least. There is nothing to do here except work and drink. All the men here work in the mining industry and are paid very well for their labour and commitment - obviously why they work here in the first place. This is the Red Desert. There is nothing here. That said, it is remarkably beautiful - but in an isolated way - if you want some water, thank the mining companies for it being here, because otherwise you wouldn't get any. Dampier himself arrived here in the late 1600s from the Northern Hemisphere, and really, what would he have found, pre-mining? Nothing. A Dead land.

So the existence of this town of 11,000 miners in the middle of nowhere in an incredibly hot region is really weird. Obviously, everyone is here for the money, and the money for the employees is good, and that's what keeps the whole thing going. But there are all these weird off-shoots. For example, the Theatre was incredible. 490 seats, state-of-the-art, beautifully air-conditioned (well, everything - EVERYTHING - in Karratha is air-conditioned), well-designed, well-built, a joyous theatre! Why?

"Mate," said Suzanne, who ran the tiny Art Gallery Café adjoining our hotel, "All our infrastructure fucks on everywhere else. The (mining) companies pay the local government and they then build us all this great shit." Don, the Theatre Techie, agreed. "Once you get above the 26th Parallel, you get all this great shit," he said, echoing Suzanne. "The government's gotta give you shit, 'cause they want - well, you know..."

Yes, we know. The mining companies up here make so much money it's astronomical. 57% of Australia's natural resource mining - Iron Ore, Gas, Copper, Gold and Salt - come from the Pilbara Region. Here's the population: 55,000. The Pilbara is still the Wild West. It is a land of money-

makers, of tough men working hard, without women, to rack up the cash.

And I'm not kidding. Here's another statistic for you: In The Pilbara (and Karratha), the ratio of men to women, today, is 28-1. There are no women here!

Well, there are, some. They run the Art Gallery, the Theatre, the ABC (where the Professor and I gave an interview this afternoon.) Then there are beautiful women, in beautiful clothes, shopping at Coles, looking so out of place among the tough, sun-beaten Irish and Scottish forty-something men buying their cooked chooks - obviously wives of mining executives, living here in the 40 degree heat, waiting until their husbands decide they've got a couple of million dollars, now let's go. It is not a town to live in, it is a town to work in, hard, and get out. Pippa, the Theatre Manager, told us that a recent project had closed, and 1,000 people had moved out (that's 1/11th of the entire average residency), taking with them many of the wives who brought their husbands to the theatre - when they could bring their husbands, combating night shifts, 12-on 12-off shifts, and 4-days-on 3-days-off shifts.

It is a town where everybody knows everybody - Suzanne at the Art Gallery said going to Coles took two hours, because all you did was say "Hi," "Hi," "Hi," the whole time - and where people come and go. Where Air-Conditioning is not a luxury but the absolute first necessity. Where everyone is working for top dollar but there is barely any culture, only work and drinking. Where there are still such things as bored housewives, who congregate at Social and Country clubs. Perhaps like Hong Kong, or Fiji, minus, respectively, the bustle or the beauty.

This is hard land where people have come for the buck, and as such it reflects its roots. The Pilbara was originally a Gold-Rush region in the 1880s. It is still a Gold-Rush region, and I have never seen anything like it. It is without doubt the most singularly fascinating place we have been sent to on this tour, and although there's no real reason to spend more than two days here, it's a place I wish everyone could see. More than anything, it is unique.

Well, the sun is setting on Mandurah, and on this log. I hope you've enjoyed it; writing it has been fun, and I'll be glad for the record. We've covered a lot of ground in just over six weeks, and the motels, hotels, meals, planes, pubs, cars, pools and coffees do tend to merge. But what we all

can remember vividly are the theatres and the audiences. Every audience is different - from the Melbourne-cup revelers of Geraldton, who laughed at everything, including when Borys The Rottweiler said he could smell poison in his food and when Samson The Labrador said he thought it was a motorcycle that hit him; to the polite and appreciative few who made it out in the Coffs Harbour Cyclones; to the lovely, well-mannered Narribrians who ended up possibly being our most lively and appreciative house. It's hard to raise a huge audience in the regions for a one-night stand of a show with a pretty unique concept and no stars from the telly, and we never sold out a theatre. But the houses were certainly respectable, and in some cases, relative to average for the venue, very good; most importantly, the audiences were always appreciative and at times wildly enthusiastic.

Only two shows left, here in Mandurah and then in Bunbury; both are charming, seaside towns south of Perth, heading towards the beautiful Margaret River wine region. We have had a terrific and extremely artistically satisfying time; we have all gotten along incredibly well, with nary a disagreement, let alone a fight; and my respect - for The Professor, Glenno, Satisfaction and The Spook - is immense. I don't anticipate any major stories emanating out of these last few days, so I think I'll wind things up, as always,

Captain Crutchless, signing off,
Thursday, 18th November, 2004
Mandurah, Western Australia