

a true tale Friends in need

diplomat", Richards could "fall asleep in any position, anywhere and at any time", while "Mick Taylor's innocence regarding drugs changed very quickly as he soon got into the marching powder like everyone else".

Of those US dates, Cutler says: "The 1969 tour was a coke tour - not sponsored by the soft-drink company but by a bunch of serious-looking, heavily armed cops. Without a gun, I

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felt naked. I decided to get 'tooled up', just like the rest of America." From that point on, Cutler tucked a .32-calibre Derringer inside his boot.

A press backlash about ticket prices led to the idea of a free concert where the Stones could "give back". After various sites fell through, the highly inappropriate site of the Altamont Speedway in San Francisco became the venue. Overcrowded, with security arranged by Mafia associates and

flanked by Hell's Angels who were reputedly paid with \$500 worth of beer, the day degenerated into fires, fights, orgies and a murder. It was an event that gave Cutler "40 years of bullshit for my trouble".

After his time with the Stones, Cutler managed the Grateful Dead and was part of prime slices of rock history, such as the Dead's mayhem-inducing tour across Canada by train with Janis Joplin and the Full Tilt Boogie Band in tow. Altamont still dogged him, however.

Years later, Cutler discovered how narcotic agents distributed thousands of tainted acid trips to discredit the youth counterculture and identified the seriously unsavoury and dangerous folk who had latched onto the 1969 US Stones tour.

The book is littered with anecdotes such as the time an old lady showed Jagger a Polaroid of herself naked, then lunged at the star - Cutler freed Jagger by giving the woman a Chinese burn. Many road miles later, a low point in Cutler's story is reached. Another band calls the tour manager's integrity into question and a decision is made: Cutler's rock escapade is over.

Cutler may have realised his rock dream with no regrets but you can't help but feel sorrow for the man whose stomach-ulcer inducing perfection was never properly acknowledged. Disappointments aside, it's a riveting rock read.

The Truth About These Strange Times
Adam Foulds
(Phoenix, \$23)
Reviewed by Heidi Maier

IF YOU believe the hype, Adam Foulds, pictured below, is one of the great literary hopes of his generation and just another name to add to the list of those wunderkinds graduating from university creative writing departments and publishing the fruits of their academic labour: carefully constructed novels that abound in deliberately contrived strangeness and eccentricity.

In *The Truth About These Strange*

Times Foulds writes about an unusual kinship between two disparate, radically different characters. One is an adult, the other a child, and this offbeat novel is essentially about the friendship that blossoms between the two under exceptionally strange circumstances.

The adult in question is a stymied and socially awkward Scotsman named Howard who, on the run from a bleak Glaswegian childhood, moves to London, where he lives with the Dawson-Smith family. Saul Dawson-Smith is the son of Les and Barbara, an academically brilliant 10-year-old who is painfully quiet and withdrawn.

Foulds's beautifully realised portrait of Saul and Howard's utterly unconventional relationship - complete with an unexpected road trip and the inevitable clashes with Saul's parents - is the beating heart of this unique, affecting novel.

Foulds is clearly a writer for whom characterisation and the finer plot details are paramount. His novel abounds with minor characters whose traits and misadventures make them more than one-dimensional or momentarily memorable.

Yet, despite the author's obvious talent for left-of-centre humour that both riles and entertains, the gradual evolution of the

friendship between Saul and Howard continually draws the reader in, sustaining interest and anticipation alike.

In the past,

Foulds has shown himself as an expert chronicler of human misery and emotion.

His first published work was a volume of poetry, *The Broken Word*, most notable for its exquisite articulation of the post-traumatic stress disorder that rendered a young man inarticulate, virtually incapable of putting words to what he had seen and experienced.

The more subtle, though no less ruinous, human foibles and frailties that Foulds explores in *The Truth About These Strange Times* are smaller in scale but no less affecting or resonant. Some have unfairly labelled Foulds's work

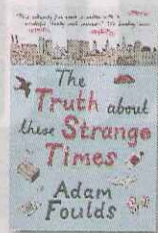
derivative but such simplistic and dismissive criticisms make no allowance for the many genuinely delightful and heartfelt oddities that give this novel its singular appeal.

As both Jonathan Safran Foer and Nicole Krauss before him have done, Foulds writes predominantly from the point of view of a child protagonist in possession of a strange talent. Saul is a shy mathematical prodigy whose life is made miserable by his over-protective father's desperate desire for his son to win one of the world's most prestigious and challenging competitions, the World Memory Championships.

It eventually transpires that Saul's special talent is his ability to memorise the sequence of a shuffled deck of cards in under a minute and he not-so-secretly resents his father and longs for the trappings of a more overtly normal childhood: toys, cartoons and a group of close friends with whom he can roughhouse and run, "scraping his knees on the concrete, dirtying his clothes, chasing insects and reading books with words instead of numbers".

With Howard, Saul scrapes his knees, dirties his clothes and experiences the sort of friendship that comes without limitations or expectations.

The connection between the two characters involves tangled affections and persistent love. It leads to the sorts of real and astonishing connections and realisations that make reading *The Truth About These Strange Times* such a pleasure.



out differently. It opened my eyes to the possibility of writing historical fiction that went beneath the dull surface of official history to connect instead with dreams, doubts and passions.

The Secret History Of The Lord Of Musashi

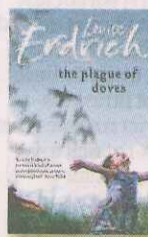
Junichiro Tanizaki

A friend gave me Tanizaki's intense, obsessive war novel while I was struggling with writer's block between my first and second novels. I love this book not only because of its tautness

and the way it focuses history through one man's dark passions, but because it couldn't have come into my life at a better moment. I realised an almost haiku-like "Japanese" feel was the way to tell the story I wanted to write about Custer's last stand in what was to become *The Lost Thoughts Of Soldiers*. It also ignited a passion for Tanizaki's other writing and for Japan.

Delia Falconer is the scholar in writing in creative practices at UTS. She is the author of two novels and recently edited *The Penguin Book Of The Road*, published by Viking, \$35.

FICTION

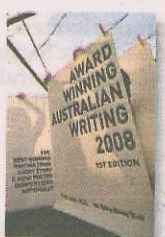


The Plague Of Doves
Louise Erdrich
(HarperCollins, \$24.99)

A PLAGUE of doves incites a young couple to run off together; a girl writes her beloved's name on her skin, unintentionally bringing herself to orgasm; a swarm of bees seeks revenge on the man destroying the house of his wife's lover; a fiddle cast adrift in 1888 finds a bereft boy in the next century. Erdrich's 11th novel is an intriguing mix of legend and everyday life in a community of Ojibwe Indians, whites and mixed-blood Metis in Pluto, North Dakota. Erdrich's cast of characters spans centuries and the plot lines are so complicated that it helps to take notes, but the pieces gradually fall into place.

EL

FICTION

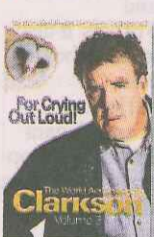


Award Winning Australian Writing 2008
Edited by David Tennenbaum
(Melbourne Books, \$34.95)

GIVEN the threadbare local lit-mag scene, the initiative behind this inaugural anthology of short story competition winners is to be applauded. Stephen McGrath's effort, which won *The Age's* prestigious annual contest, is superior fare; it breathes new life into middle-aged domestic discontent and the central metaphor is a belter. Marjorie Ward's moving true story of losing a loved one to cancer and Kit Fletcher's wryly amusing micro-fiction also stand out. Some of the stories included may be diplomatically described as modest but every aspiring writer or supporter of new literary talent needs to get behind this.

Daniel Herbhorn

NON-FICTION



For Crying Out Loud - The World According to Clarkson Vol. 3
Jeremy Clarkson
(Michael Joseph, \$32.95)

JEREMY CLARKSON is so up himself. In Australia we know him as the obnoxiously arrogant presenter of UK's *Top Gear*. And as a columnist for *The Sunday Times* in Britain he vents his spleen on everything he hates, which is, well, a lot of things! This book is a collection of those columns. It's a hoot of a read for anyone who enjoyed the *Grumpy Old Men* series on ABC1. He really does whinge a lot but it is very entertaining and, even if you don't necessarily agree with him, you can't help but laugh. He is appallingly rude about so many things but does it so amusingly. Well worth reading.

Verna McGeachin

WINE



The Juice 2009
Matt Skinner
(Mitchell Beasley, \$22.99)

MATT SKINNER is the lovable and very knowledgeable Melbourne sommelier who has parlayed working for Jamie Oliver into a very successful media career. This guide to 100 wines to drink in 2009 contains some good commonsense advice and is written in a non-nonsense style. That said, several of the wines reviewed are from earlier vintages (perhaps because Skinner works in London) and telling readers a wine is priced at \$\$\$\$ (which means between \$31 and \$100) is less than helpful. Many of the imported wines might also be in short supply. There are more useful guides for anyone with a serious interest.

WD

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