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A Playlab Indie Publication



# THE TRUTH ABOUT KOOKABURRAS

by Sven Swenson

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**PLAYLab**

*Presents a Playlab Indie Publication*

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1. *The Truth about Kookaburras*

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## Introduction

I wanted to write a play which was kaleidoscopic in its effect and that, to some extent, thumbed its nose at the ‘rules’ of writing for theatre. Certainly not just for the sake of nonconformity. To me, when they go beyond a guide to the craft and become a template, the ‘rules’ serve mostly to homogenise theatre — to tame it. The subject matter of *Kookaburras* seemed to lend itself to a flouting of the rules, but there were none I broke without interrogating each decision as to its rightness for the play.

There could have been no more perfect a mentor than Edward Albee, with whom I workshoped the play in 2010. Although Edward extolled the virtues of craft, he was very passionate about the individuality of any work and insisted I must “allow the play to be the way it wants to be.” Partly due to Edward’s influence this draft is a bolder one than that which premiered with Metro Arts Independents in 2009.

With that first production, I chose to write the play as we rehearsed it, with the cast not knowing what would come next. It was a great opportunity to work on a piece with numerous twists and turns where each ‘truth’ was given its full value before being turned on its head. I found it an enormously invigorating process and I thank that cast for their trust and patience.

The La Boite Indie 2012 cast formed the most remarkably close ensemble imaginable and I was greatly blessed to work with them. Thank-you to Metro Arts for taking a chance on a risky work, a huge thanks to La Boite Indie for giving us the chance to hone it towards a second production and to Phillip Parslow for inspiring me to write it in the first place.

**Sven Swenson**

# La Boite Indie & Pentimento Productions — Production Details

## SEASON

6–23 June 2012

Opening Night, 7 June 2012

Roundhouse Theatre, Kelvin Grove

## CAST

BONES	Nick Barclay
MICK	Cameron Sowden
TRUDI GRANVILLE	Chloe Tara
FONDA	Ryan Norris
MORAG	Michelle Zahner
TOASTER	Kieran Law
FIENDISH	Toby Martin
UNCTUOUS	Joshua Connolly
GOONEY	Zachary Boulton
SHOWBAG	Christos Mourtzakis
ROWDY	Michael deed
FRANGER	Stuart Alcock
TWO-SHOES	Jason McKell
MAGGOT	Jack Palmer
WOODY	Errin Rodger
MONDO	Darren White
NONI	Chiara Lagana
SNOWDOME	James Trigg
GROPER	Matthew Dickie
ZYGO	Byron Philp
ROOTRAT	Matt Gaffney
MOOTFOOT	Josh Martin
FALCON	James Mc Menamin
WETPATCH	Jackson O'Sullivan
SYLVIE	Donna Cameron
LEON	Brent Lammas
DELINDA	Julianne Clinch
TONIA	Lynn Fairlie
PETER THOMPSON	Sven Swenson
GRAEME DRUMMOND	Ray Swenson
UNDERSTUDY	Tim Gollan

WRITER & DIRECTOR

PRODUCERS

DESIGNER

LIGHTING DESIGNER

COMPOSER & SOUND DESIGNER

CHOREOGRAPHER

FIGHT DIRECTOR

Sven Swenson

Sven Swenson & Brendan Ross

Tim Wallace

Jason Glenwright

Phil Slade

Brian Lucas

Justin Palazzo-Orr



# Characters

BONES	Male, 20s — Player Well spoken, sensitive, non-violent.
MICK	Male, mid 30s — Player The alpha male, charismatic.
TRUDI GRANVILLE	Female, Late 20s — Police Constable Brash, confident.
FONDA	Male, mid 20s — Player Dry, blokey wit. Former boxer. Uncircumcised.
MORAG WHITTLEY	Female, 20s — Police constable Doubles as understudy.
TOASTER	Male, late 20s — Player Smart, fun, a natural redhead.
FIENDISH	Male, 20s — Player High-octane, unpredictable, frightening.
UNCTUOUS	Male, 20s — Player Observant, canny, a stirrer.
GOONEY	Male, late 20s — Player Larrikin, homophobic, circumcised.
SHOWBAG	Male, early 30s — Player Controlling, manipulative.
ROWDY	Male, early 20s — Player Physically beautiful, muscular, shy.
FRANGER	Male, mid 20s — Player Stupid, confident.
TWO-SHOES	Male, early 30s — Player Emotionally mature, physically strong.

MAGGOT	Male, late teens — Player Immature, inexperienced.
WOODY	Male, early 30s — Player Articulate, an outsider.
MONDO	Male, 20s — Player Flashy, arrogant.
NONI LINDQUIST	Female, age open — Forensic Examiner Efficient, affable. Doubles as Leanne Flemming, a grieving mother.
SNOWDOME	Male, late 20s — Player Bashful, loyal, damaged.
MOOTFOOT, ZYGO, ROOTRAT, GROPER, FALCON, WETPATCH	Male 20s — Players All double as understudies of larger roles.
SYLVIE HARBROW	Female, 40s — Detective Senior Sergeant, CIB Tough, warm, fit, attractive.
LEON GALES	Male, 40s — Detective Sergeant, CIB Droll, easy-going — for all his needling of Sylvie, he is never not on her side.
DELINDA MOSS	Female, 20s — Stripper Bright, assured, vivacious.
TONIA BRAY	Female, mature — Support Worker Protective, assertive.
PETER THOMPSON	Male, 60s — Mick's Father Uneducated, bitter, an outcast.
GRAEME DRUMMOND	Male, 50s — Father of the Deceased Gentle, articulate.

## Notes

- Songs ‘Underdog’ and ‘Cop This’ are original compositions and are no less part of the text than any other element. Recordings and/or sheet music available on request to the author or his agents. The songs may not be substituted or altered without written permission from the author’s agent.
- Slashes in sentences throughout the play denote interruptions, overlapping dialogue or sometimes a broken thought.
- Ellipsis means either a search for a word or phrase or something of a reluctance to say the words.
- News report voice-overs should form a kaleidoscope of voices, each morphing into the next.

# The Truth about Kookaburras

## Act One

*The smell of liniment hangs in the space. A section of 'Underdog' plays. Light reveals chairs, a table [on which a Sherrin football is poised] and a punching-bag, around which hang boxing gloves. Twenty-one sports bags sit beneath and on top of long backless benches downstage and chairs lining the upstage wall. Imagined mirrors stretch along the length of the fourth wall. BONES enters, dressed, contemplating the change-room. He has a set of keys looped through his fingers which he carries throughout the time we spend with him. MICK, also clothed, enters from the car park to take one last look around a footy change-room. At some point he takes up the football, at another he sets the punching bag swinging and watches it. Police Constable TRUDI GRANVILLE enters in uniform and makes notes on her observations of the crime scene. Each character separately visits the place where the imagined body lies, approaching it with differing attitudes. MORAG and TRUDI are uniformed officers.*

### *Underdog*

*[Slade/Swenson]*

Nobody keeps a broken toy  
Into the bin with them  
If I can't bring the fans and the scoreboard joy  
What will I do then?

Once there were accolades headlines and street-parades  
Fuck, look how quickly pride sinks to its knees  
Fate is a razorblade slashing through plans I made  
Luck is a prick-teaser winkin' at me

Ol' mate Sherrin keep faith  
Hold that old pact we made safe  
Still got my larrikin-grin  
And an underdog's hunger to win

VOICE-OVER In breaking news, homicide detectives are investigating a suspicious death in the change-rooms of troubled AFL team the Gold Coast Kookaburras, overnight. The name of the deceased has not been released but detectives at the scene have indicated ...

*MICK exits to the car park. The voice-over fades under a mess of male voices singing. BONES, standing where the body lies/has lain, shivers as though someone has walked over his grave. FONDA enters naked, heads for the punching-bag and lays into it. BONES 'feels' FONDA's presence like that of a ghost. None of the players are conscious of BONES yet.*

VOICES OFF We are the Kookaburras, triumphant kings are we  
We'll meet each battle laughing  
We'll leave each party barfing after ev'ry victory

*A roar goes up off-stage. Constable MORAG WHATLEY enters, seeing only TRUDI.*

BONES *[Direct address.]* It felt haunted, the place, the night. By old ghosts.

MORAG We've got a car park full of drunk dickheads. Wanna come and help your colleagues?

TRUDI I've dreamt about being in here, Morag. Didn't look like this.

TOASTER *[Enters unseen by the women and leaps on the table.]* I've conquered the world, now I'm gonna turn into a 'wild thang'.

FONDA *[Re TOASTER.]* Spooky.

MORAG I bet there wasn't a dead body sprawled on the floor.

TRUDI Nuh.

BONES And I'd had a premonition it might happen.

TRUDI Not a dead one.

MORAG Too much info. C'mon before the brass rolls up. *[Exits]*

MICK *[Off.]* Did we win?

ALL We shit it in!

TRUDI *[Calls in MORAG's wake.]* Bet when they kicked off yesterday none of them imagined they'd be murder suspects before dawn. *[Exits.]*

BONES It was a fleeting ... inkling. And it came to me twice.

GOONY *[Off.]* We are men among men!

*A distant band can be heard playing. TOASTER looks along the line of sports-bags and locates GOONY's. He walks to it, grins, picks it up and takes it to place near his own.*

MONDO *[Off.]* How much do we rock, my brethren?

*A wild response, off. BONES sits on the table, highlighted in a special.*

BONES *[Direct address.]* I'd had a weird dream, the night before, about a naked man on horseback.

FIENDISH *[Enters a couple of steps.]* Oi! Seen any good shows lately, Fonda? *[Laughs and retreats.]*

FONDA Toaster. If some chick said to you "hey, wanna come and see *Keating the Musical?*" ... would you click, for like a *second*, it wasn't gonna be about *Clark Keating?* There wasn't any AFL in the whole fuckin' thing.

TOASTER Think ya need to broaden your cultural landscape a tad Fonda.

*GOONY enters and makes for his bag, but sees an empty space. TOASTER holds GOONY's bag covering his crotch.*

GOONY *[To TOASTER.]* Eh! Whadja shift me fuckin' bag for? I had it where I wanted it, ya fuckin' bag-shiftin' poofter.

- TOASTER *[Whips the bag away.]* Red pubes at night, Goony's in fright!
- GOONY *[Taking the bag.]* Aw, shit, Toaster. Cover those flame-throwers will ya? They're fuckin' with my corneas.
- TOASTER Yeah, sorry dude.  
*Stretches the towel across his waist as though he will fix it there, then bends and flips it up around his head, making a turban.*
- GOONY Aw, no, sweet Jesus, put 'em away.  
*SHOWBAG enters drying his hair, his face obscured by the towel.*
- GOONY Nothin' terrorises me more than a fuckin' blood-nuttid Fanta-pants. Fuckin' nature gone wrong.  
*ROWDY, MOOTFOOT and ROOTRAT enter. ROWDY winces at the sound of the distant band, takes out an MP3 player and headphones, sets the player and puts the headphones on.*
- MOOTFOOT *[To all.]* Eh. After a win like that, they can completely fuck off with this underdog crap.
- FONDA No shit, Mootfoot. We're gonna fuckin' be in the finals. I can feel it in me forey. *[Foreskin, which he uses to lead himself away.]*
- SHOWBAG *[Reveals his face.]* Prob'ly a yeast infection, Fonda.  
*FONDA checks for any sign of thrush.*
- FRANGER *[Enters.]* Okay! Now we're clean, *let's get grubby!*
- UNCTUOUS *[Enters.]* Spoken like a true pommy-born filth-meister, Frang.
- FRANGER *[Defensive.]* Nothin' unclean about me, mate. I do everything twice. And the grizzly bits I go back for fuckin' thirds.
- TOASTER He's pullin' ya chain, Franger.

- FONDA                    Yeah, bud. We all know ya so clean, fuckin' Bree from Desperado Hausfraus could eat off ya. And I bet she's fuckin' pantin' to, bro.
- BONES                    In the dream I had, I think the man on the horse was dead, too.
- SHOWBAG                *[Calling for all to hear.]* To all you knob-chompers who said I had a fitness issue, I now reply: "kiss my coit!"
- GOONY                    Yeah-yeah, Showbag. In a fuckin' elite athlete, man-boobs rock, mate.
- Gives SHOWBAG a nipple-cripple.*
- SHOWBAG                Goony, you keep pressin' my buttons, you'll get the 'Showbag speciality'.
- FIENDISH                *[Enters.]* Go, Showbag. I'll sit on him; you do the turkey-slappin'.
- SHOWBAG                I fuckin' will, he keeps pickin' on my nungers.
- GOONY                    Only way that'd scare me, mate, is if I liked it. And ya got fuckin' Buckley's o' that. Nothin' makes me blush and stutter. I don't get embarrassed, never have.
- MICK                     *[Entering. To GOONY.]* Ya fuckin' should. D'you forget which end o' the paddock we were aimin' for in the third quarter, Goon?
- GOONY                    Yep. Got dumbstruck by the fact we were winnin', clean forgot.
- TWO-SHOES, MAGGOT, GROPER, ZYGO and FALCON enter around now.*
- FONDA                    Watch it, Goony ...
- BONES                    The horse's tail and its hooves were on fire.

- FONDA                      Few o' these blokes'll burn you alive for givin lip to Yaweh. [*MICK.*]
- FIENDISH                  Specially if ya less value on field than a man down, Goon.  
*Somehow assaults GOONY's arse, slapping, hair-pulling, whatever.*
- GOONY                      Fuck off, Fiendish!
- TWO-SHOES                Don't sweat it, Goony. I'd quite seriously put you in the top twenty-two players at this club, mate, no joke.
- GROPER                    And one o' those players who always plays *better* concussed.
- BONES                      The horse struggled along with its dead burden, even though its hooves were burning. And there was a kookaburra ...
- MICK                        Eh, Rowdy. Fuckin' good game, mate.
- BONES                      Laughing.
- GROPER                    *Good game? You kiddin'?*  
*FIENDISH uses MICK as a punching-bag.*
- MAGGOT                    Mate that game was so much better than sex!
- TWO-SHOES                Ya fuckin' the wrong women, Maggot.
- MICK                        Fuck off, Fiendish. There's a punching-bag over there, ya lunatic.
- FIENDISH                  Yeah, not the same as flesh and bone. [*Pummels again, walks away.*]
- FRANGER                  You right, Rowdy?
- ROWDY                      Listen to that. Hear it? The crappy band upstairs?
- UNCTUOUS                 Fuckin' good reason to keep a low profile.

- SHOWBAG We could end up with a bunch o' toffy knobs comin' down and crashin' our fuckin' buck's night.
- GOONY First uninvited cunt walks through that door, I'll be drainin' the lizard on his monkey-suit.
- MICK Gotta get ya name in the papers somehow, I s'pose, Goony.  
*ROWDY puts his headphones back on and beat-boxes.*
- TWO-SHOES Should we maybe cruise on up *briefly*, give 'em a quick squiz at us so they leave us alone?
- FONDA [*Naked.*] Aw, yeah, mate. I'll just duck up now. Hope it's a fuckin' 'come as ya are.'
- MICK You go Two-Shoes. Let us know what the horses' doovers are like.
- TWO-SHOES Now I think about it I'd rather watch *27 Dresses* 27 times. So, okay: Goony was a major fuck-up, but seriously, how good are we?
- UNCTUOUS You not gonna bite on that, Goon?
- GOONY Unctuous ... do I ever take any real notice o' somethin' that hasn't been said by me? Fuck, I could gobble the crotch out of a low flyin' duck. We goin' pizzas or fuckin' big mob o' curry?
- FIENDISH Curry, mate, hot as.
- FRANGER Nah, pizza or Macca's! Hate curry.
- SHOWBAG I'm with ya, Franger. My one rule in life; keep away from anything makes your arse sore next mornin'.
- FIENDISH Bullshit.
- MAGGOT I reckon somebody duck out and buy bulk ice cream. Coats ya stomach and away ya fuckin' go.

*The team laughs derisively, prompting GROPER, a hugger, to put an arm around MAGGOT.*

MAGGOT                      Piss off, Groper. Eh, Rowdy. Gissa pass.

*ROWDY hand-passes to MAGGOT and all players except BONES, freeze.*

BONES                        *[Direct address.]* Right up to the instant it happened, I'd been trying to make a decision. It seemed like a matter of life and death.

*All action resumes with ROWDY and MAGGOT hand-passing back and forth.*

ROWDY                        We could just have vegemite soldiers. *[Returns to beat-boxing.]*

FONDA                        *[Deadpan.]* Aw, that'd be fuckin' awesome.

TOASTER                     Humble fare in contrast to the conquering, kick-arse gods we are.

TWO-SHOES                 *[To TOASTER.]* Fuck you, ya cunt: that was a fuckin' freakish snap at goal 25 metres out on the boundary line.

MOOTFOOT                 No way you could see the gap between the sticks, mate.

FRANGER                     Yeah, you're a fuckin' legend, Toaster. *[Shouts.]* Welcome to my world!

BONES                        *[Direct address. Reminded by the shout he overheard then from elsewhere.]* Right now, I'm through there in the showers, listening as I dry myself. Hanging in my head is the decision I think I've got to make.

ZYGO                         Whadaya reckon, Mick? Food-wise.

MICK                         I don't give two fat fucks, Zygo, long as I'm fed.

TOASTER                     Anyway, Snowdome should pick what to eat.

GROPER                    Yeah. It's his night.

FALCON                    Screw gettin' take-away: take turns growlin' out the stripper.

MOOTFOOT                Fuck yeah. That's usin' ya head, Falcon.

FIENDISH                 I'll eat anything mate, even cum-twat.

GOONY                     Fuck orf, Fiendish. Jeez you got a putrid fuckin' mind.

SHOWBAG                 Look, will yas all shut ya mouths about the stripper?

BONES                     *[Direct address.]* I kept trying to ignore the feelings I'd had.

FRANGER                 Mate if he doesn't suss there's gonna be a stripper at a stag night, he's a fuckin' dim-witted poofter and we shouldn't waste our time throwin' him one.

BONES                     *[Direct address.]* They were just like ... quick-as-a-flash gut feelings. Once before the game ...

GOONY                     *[To FRANGER.]* You'd be payin' top dollar for any stripper'd let ya growl 'em out, ya wanker.

BONES                     And while we were singing the victory song.

MOOTFOOT                Imagine what ya could catch, mate.

FONDA                     Specially if ya went slops after the Goon. Crabs, rabies, fuckin mange.

FRANGER                 Nah, no chance. She could be Typhoid Mary. I'd be goin' the glad-wrap gobble.

TWO-SHOES               Reality check, Franger she'll be strictly 'perve but don't touch!

FRANGER                 Aw, root that for a joke. Seriously? We can only perve?

UNCTUOUS                She's a stripper. Not a pro.

MONDO                    *[Calling, off.]* Mootfoot! Bring us ya Canestin Cream, mate!