

How to Disappear Completely and Never be Found

by Doug Richmond; Loompanics Ltd; 107 pp; \$US29.95.

There comes a time in every mature person's life when they must take stock of themselves and decide whether they should continue on their present course or not. One of the most obvious alternatives open to us all is to completely change our identity and start a new life in a new place. Considering how common this is, it is a surprise that there are so few quality manuals on the dynamics

of changing your identity, and none available in Australia. In fact my copy of *How to Disappear Completely and Never Be Found* comes from the US. It's a surprise to see an intelligent and instructive book from America, but this is one. The author, like the rest of us, has a deep fascination with the mechanics of changing your life, and has done some admirable research to uncover people who have actually done it successfully. He looks at many of the important aspects of disappearance and neglects none of the essentials.

The first section for instance is called 'Who Disappears — and Why', with other sections on 'How', 'Creating a Bullet Proof Identity', and 'How to Cope on the Run'. This final part is by far the most useful. Most of our fantasies remain just that for years until we finally build up the courage to do what

we have planned for so long, only to make a foolish mistake and see all our good work ruined. The author thoughtfully deals with the mechanics of disguises, and gives solutions to the old chestnuts of how to change your gait, voice, facial features and even the shape

of the head (this one troubled me for years).

All the information in this handy little book is first class. The author is quite a psychologist, as is obvious from his in-depth examination of the reasons behind a disappearance.

Also his research is also superb. He provides more than enough detail on choosing and then gaining a false identity. Unfortunately this part of the book is far more applicable to the wider American readership than an Australian audience, but the same general principles apply.

This book should be required reading for anyone even slightly dissatisfied with their current life. It is an excellent primary source, and even contains a first rate bibliography, with a special section dealing with obtaining false ID in countries such as Canada, Australia and New Zealand. It is so refreshing to have a number of choices of location when choosing a new life. The old cliché of ducking off to South America now seems so unnecessary when I can do the very same thing in a Commonwealth country. ● GP



Aboriginal And Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner

• 2nd Report 1994 (Released 29 March 1995)

• Submission to the Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia on the Social Justice Package (April 1995)

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner is obliged to report annually to the Attorney-General on the exercise and enjoyment of human rights by Indigenous peoples. The 1994 Report focuses on Indigenous health. On the release of the Report, the Commissioner, Mr Michael Dodson, warned that Indigenous affairs are in danger of being swamped by bureaucracy:

The perpetual production of reports, committees, meetings and memos does nothing to improve the real life experience of Indigenous peoples. In preparing this report, I was concerned that I could be contributing to the problem. However, I trust that readers will be pleasantly surprised at the approach I have adopted.

The Commissioner consulted a cross-section of Indigenous communities across Australia in an effort to look at health from a grass-roots perspective. It became apparent from this consultation that the chief problem continues to be the absurd fragmentation of Indigenous health bureaucracy which is controlled by Canberra. The Report concludes that there needs to be a radical overhaul of the provision of health services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Most urgent are the need for a large increase in resources and the focusing of attention on expenditure at a local level. These concerns about health services have been picked up recently by prominent magistrate, Pat O'Shane, who has criticised the Federal Government for the chronic shortage of culturally appropriate mental health care.

The inadequacy of non-indigenous bureaucracy is further highlighted in the Report in a chapter reviewing the Commonwealth Government's response to the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. The

Victorian Criminal Procedure: State and Federal Law

by Richard G. Fox; 8th edition, 1995, Monash Law Book Co-operative Ltd, \$38.00.

A new edition of this utterly indispensable little book is to be greatly welcomed. Since the last edition in 1992 (reviewed in (1992) 17 *Alt.LJ* 199), there have been numerous changes to both State and Commonwealth law, including some highly significant reforms brought about by the *Crimes (Criminal Trials) Act 1993* (Vic.), the *Crimes (Amendment) Act 1993* (Vic.), and the *Crimes (Search Warrants and Powers of Arrest) Amendment Act 1994* (Cth). It's simple really: if you practise (or teach) criminal law in Victoria then you need this book. AP

Commissioner expresses concern that the impetus of the Royal Commission may be lost in meaningless paper pushing:

The broad bi-partisan support for pursuing the recommendations of the Royal Commission was a watershed in Indigenous affairs. There is a real danger of it all being lost.

The Report can be obtained for \$10 from the Publications Officer at the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission: tel (02) 284 9600.

The Social Justice Commissioner's Second Report is complemented by his recent Submission on the Social Justice Package, the final stage in the Government's response to the High Court's decision on native title. The Submission focuses on certain key areas of structural reform and emphasises the 'process' of social justice. It contains proposals for the facilitation of appropriate and inclusive processes that will lead to the most effective outcomes for Indigenous peoples. Constitutional reform, the negotiation of regional agree-

ments and changes in funding arrangements with Indigenous communities are all discussed in the Submission which also contains relevant reference material. Copies of the Submission can be obtained from the Commissioner's Office by phoning (02) 284 9754.

Despite the feel good rhetoric which has surrounded the *Mabo* decision and the Government's three stage response to the recognition of native title, Indigenous peoples are still dying in custody and of third world diseases. ● CD & FW

The X-Files

by Charles Grant; Harper Prism; 277 pp; \$9.95.

The X-Files

Channel 10

Most fiction, and all television, requires the suspension of disbelief; the wisdom being that a story, no matter how unlikely, is worth the telling because the medium supports the process. In other words, the significance is in the telling, rather than what is being told. However, with science fiction the reader is not only asked to suspend an extra level of disbelief, but to subjugate the desire for the lack of normal and indeed basic literary skills to the extremely unlikely plot.

Modern science fiction, I am warned, should be read as either pure fantasy, or as a prescription for the future as determined by our flawed present. However my only desire is that it should be at least readable.

The X-Files: Goblins should not have surprised me as much as it did for its lack of redeeming features. It is after all a cynical marketing ploy aimed at cashing in on the popular TV show. However, the TV show certainly deserves better. The book is poorly written, not constructed in any true sense, and is driven more by cliché than plot, character, or even expression for its own sake. It isn't often that television manages to soar above any other artistic medium, but in this case *The X-Files* as seen on TV is a far more enjoyable experience.

The *X-Files* seems to revel in the unexpected and improbable, and is successful because it never compromises this position for reality's sake. There are

no clever twists at the end to suggest that it was all the work of mad scientists or clever extortionists. The endings are more often than not bafflingly unresolved rather than neatly trimmed.

The other reason *The X-Files* is successful is because television, having become so generic and all pervasive, allows for easier and truncated characterisation. The baddies fall into a small number of groups (crazy but sincere; driven by megalomaniacal forces; corrupted by the pursuit of glory etc.) that we can easily recognise and define before the first ad break, relieving the writers and directors from having to fill the hour-long story with unnecessary characterisations. And since we've seen the show before, our heroes are already explained and need no further introduction.

This puts *The X-Files* in the same class as other enduring cult classics such as *Star Trek*, and even *The Prisoner*, where having seen one episode qualifies you to understand just how much reality to leave behind, and how much faith to put in the motives of the regular characters. Spock needs no re-defining each episode; neither do agents Mulder and Scully. In fact their greatest weapon against the critters they come up against is our knowledge that they will display their usual calm logic and foresight where the normal human would turn into a useless zombie, if you believe in that sort of thing. GP

Maya Angelou

If you want to get an insight into discrimination against Afro-American women, read Maya Angelou's luminous five volume biography: *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*; *Gather Together in My Name*; *Singin' and Swingin'* and *Gettin' Merry Like Christmas*; *The Heart of a Woman*; and *All God's Children Need Travelling Shoes*.

Each book charts a different phase of her extraordinary life. Angelou toured the United States and Europe in the initial production of *Porgy and Bess*, has been a prominent activist in the civil rights movement and spent several years in Ghana as editor of the *African Review*. It makes you wonder what you've been doing with your time.

Angelou seems to be enjoying minor cult status in current popular culture. The groomed-but-nerdy date in the film *Reality Bites* states at one point that he 'knows why the caged bird sings'. The same line recurs in a song on *Maxinquaye* the new album by Tricky (ex Massive Attack).

Angelou's latest publications, *Wouldn't Take Nothing For My Journey Now* (a collection of musings) and the *Complete Collected Poems* (which includes 'On the Pulse of Morning' written for the inauguration of President Clinton), are also a must. FW

BITS was compiled by Catherine Duff, Andrew Palmer, Gary Power and Frith Way. ■