

NAKED MAN IN PORT FAIRY

Port Fairy's ever-expanding Ex Libris Book Fair in September will bring some well-known names to the town. Among these is Robert Gott, author of children's books and crime fiction and creator of the newspaper cartoon *Adventures of the Naked Man*, which appears in *The Age* each Friday.

To celebrate Gott's attendance, a caption competition for a *Naked Man* cartoon will be judged by the author himself. The winner will be announced on Sunday 6 September at the conclusion of Ex Libris.

Gott's crime fiction recreates the tension and fear of wartime Australia with a mixture of slightly off-kilter humour and flashes of poignant tragedy. It features William Power, an actor of dubious



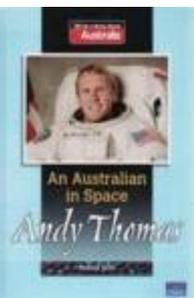
ability matched by lack of skill as an amateur detective. Power has been dubbed by Gott's fellow crime author Shane Maloney as Australia's first "dickhead hero".

The debut novel *Good Murder*, set in Gott's birthplace, Maryborough, Queensland, has a dead woman floating in the town water supply for over a week. Power is a suspect in the murder and his bumbling efforts to clear his name make things worse. In *A Thing of Blood* Power returns to his Melbourne home, war rationing and an odious sister-in-law Darlene who is kidnapped. To escape police scrutiny, he rents a room in Parkville where he encounters bohemians, black marketeers and scary henchmen. After a murder Will realises only he can



solve the mystery of Darlene's kidnapping and save the nation from a sectarian nightmare. *Amongst the Dead* has secret troops in tropical Australia under threat from inside as well as out - one of an elite corps is a murderer, preying on comrades. Military intelligence turns to the only man whose combination of abilities allow him to infiltrate and find the killer. Power, posing as a vaudeville actor entertaining the troops, enlists the help of his cross-dressing brother

Gott's alleged reason for having chosen World War II as his setting is as entertaining as the novels themselves. He cites sheer laziness - can't be bothered learning about police procedures, the law or forensics.



Gott's non-fiction writing for children includes *An Australian in Space: Andy Thomas*, how an Australian became an astronaut, and *Indian Australians* and *Italian Australians* which show how people from these countries have contributed to Australian society and how they follow their traditions as they live, work and go to school.

Times for author sessions with Robert Gott will be in the official Ex Libris programme due at the end of July.

