



TAKING *The* MICK

A LONE SURVIVOR SETS OUT TO CAPTURE EVERYONE'S FAVOURITE BLACK HUMOURED OUTBACK SERIAL KILLER, MICK TAYLOR, AS HE TERRORISES THE SMALL SCREEN IN **WOLF CREEK** – A TELEVISION SERIES BASED ON THE POPULAR FILMS FROM THE CRACK CREATIVE TEAM BEHIND *UNDERBELLY*...

WORDS JAMES JENNINGS

Back to the shack: John Jarratt's hunter Mick Taylor becomes the hunted in new TV series *Wolf Creek*.

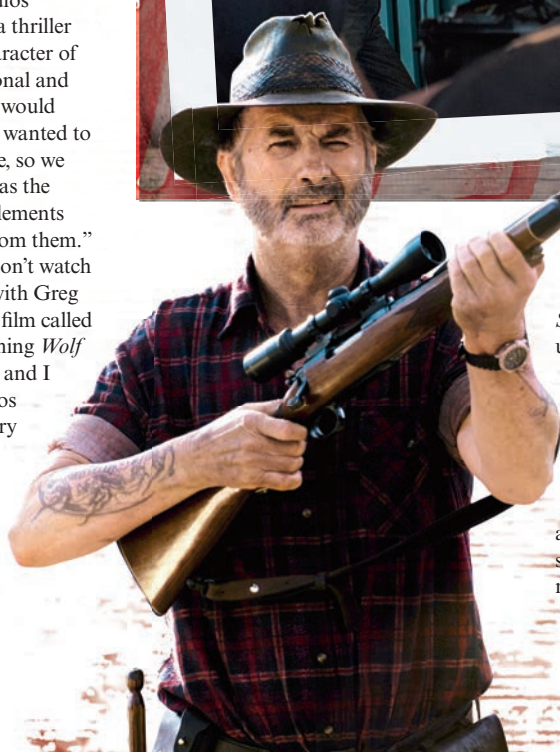
IN TERMS OF DREAD-

inducing items to have delivered to you by Australia Post, a gory severed head in a cardboard box beats wads of junk mail and unwanted bills by a fairly large margin. The disturbingly life-like noggin may be made chiefly from latex — and be delicately packed with bubble-wrap begging for a good popping — but it doesn't stop the sight from being any less gruesome. The fact that a dead bird in a jar and a queasily familiar, giant-sized Bowie knife are also within view do nothing to detract from the — how do we put this delicately? — utter *pants-shittingness* of what's in *EmpireTV's* line of sight.

Welcome, then, to the art department for *Wolf Creek*, a new television series from the makers of *Underbelly* (including director Tony Tilse and writers Peter Gawler and Felicity Packard), consisting of six one-hour episodes that delve further into the horrific tourist-dispensing hobby entertained by Outback serial killer Mick Taylor (as with the two *Wolf Creek* films, brought to chilling life here by John Jarratt). Although *Wolf Creek 1* and *2* writer-director Greg Mclean is on-board as executive producer (as well as having a hand in the story and directing the series' penultimate episode), there's a natural concern that by transferring to television, the property will lose its teeth: both in terms of cinematic scope and a toning down of tourist dicing violence. A watered down *Creek*, if you will.

"It can't be straight horror for six hours — it would become very wearying," says co-writer and producer Peter Gawler from the show's Adelaide Studios production offices. "It's more a thriller and we concentrate on the character of Eve [*Lucy Fry*] and her emotional and physical journey. We knew we would attract the horror fans, but we wanted to also attract a broader audience, so we knew it couldn't be as explicit as the movies. But there are horror elements — we're not shrinking away from them."

"I'm really sensitive so I don't watch a lot of horror, but I worked with Greg [*Mclean*] last year on a horror film called *The Darkness*, and I was watching *Wolf Creek* then, and it terrified me and I didn't want to get through it cos I'm such a wuss!" says Lucy Fry with a spirited laugh, fresh from showing us a burn mark on her leg she acquired from shooting an UZI the day prior ("Don't touch your skin with the end of an UZI



after you've been shooting it — I learned that the hard way!"). Fry, best known for roles in *Mako: Island Of Secrets*, *Vampire Academy* and the upcoming Stephen King mini-series *11.22.63* opposite James Franco — may be a self-confessed wuss, but confirms she did manage to finally get through the film. "When I got the part I thought I'd better watch it all. Then when I met John for the first time I almost weed my pants! [*laughs*] I think he saw the fear in my eyes because he's been really nice to me since then."

Above: John Jarratt and Deborah Mailman shooting scenes at the Face Of The Madonna Fuel Stop And Cafe. **Right:** Mick prepares to take aim.



Fry has the lion's share of the show's scenes in her role as Eve Thorogood, a 19-year-old American tourist. "Eve was training to be an Olympic athlete, and she got addicted to painkillers, which is why she and her family are in Australia — to re-bond and help her recover," says Fry. "Mick kills the family, and because of Eve's Olympic training, and competitive spirit, she has the strength and an edge to fight back." The role has proven to be psychologically taxing ("For the first few weeks of filming I had really bad nightmares... it really got into my psyche.") as well as physically gruelling for the 23-year-old Queensland. "It's very intense — it's definitely made me a lot stronger," says Fry. "In every situation, the stakes are so high."

Gawler is quick to sing Fry's praise when discussing the show's athletic leading lady. "Lucy is a revelation as Eve, she's just throwing herself into it, and it's a really physical performance," he enthuses. "You should see her with a gun in a hand!" "The first gun Eve gets is a little Colt pistol, and it's a lovely little ladies gun," laughs Fry later on in her hotel room. "At first it was really awkward — I didn't know where the magazine went or how to turn the safety on and off, and then it becomes second nature. I'm kind of grateful for it because it's probably a really good skill to learn for self-defence..."

A TOUR OF THE SET FOR MICK

Taylor's shed/living quarters is all the motivation one would need to bone-up on their self-defence skills. The spartan space has the basics — a bed, a fridge — and several 'extras' that would have any visiting Jehovah's Witnesses bolting: various knives and tools that appear to be used for grisly tasks they're not necessarily designed for, plus a wall lined with cameras, passports and other assorted ephemera taken from victims. There's also a huge cage equipped with restraints — not the kind of feature you'd find being endorsed on, say, John Jarratt's former TV show *Better Homes And Gardens*.

Other sets housed within the innards of Adelaide Studios include a huge collapsible barn and a full-sized rustic farmhouse that has been rigged to burn to a cinder (a job being overseen by flown in special effects experts). Outside are a fleet of assorted vehicles: an old caravan, a huge Winnebago decorated with mini US flags, a correctional facilities van and a burnt out jeep. In terms of scale and action sequences, it's apparent that *Wolf Creek* — the first locally commissioned Australian drama for SVOD service Stan — aims to be just as cinematic and spectacular as its film cousins.

"We made a real effort to tell the story visually — we don't have reams of exposition and really chatty dialogue,"

says Gawler. "It's like a John Ford Western, where he famously took the script and just ripped pages out — to some extent we have been doing that. And we've been blessed with a genius DOP, Geoffrey Hall [*Chopper*, *Red Dog*, *ANZAC Girls*], who really knows how to shoot the landscape." As with the films, the Australian Outback plays a major role in the series. "We wanted that cinematic style and for it to look and feel like six little movies end on end — that was the plan," continues Gawler. "The location has an impact on Eve, too, because it's a hostile environment and initially it's her enemy. But by the time her journey is complete she is one with the landscape — she's like Mick." "It is really intense but it's great because I can really use it," Fry adds later. "It's tiring, but I can use that for what Eve's going through so I kind of love it, being out in those harsh elements. I get up and think 'how am I going to get through this day?' ... and that's what she's doing too."

As he is during the events portrayed in the *Wolf Creek* television series, Mick Taylor has so far proven an elusive presence during our South Australian set visit. To track down the dark alter ego of John Jarratt, *EmpireTV* is going to have to go bush — 43km north-west of Adelaide, to be precise — to the locality of Port Gawler where a man and his imposing muttonchops await us... >

Mick Taylor holds court by the campfire with holidaying American, Eve Thorogood (Lucy Fry) and her family.



SITTING AS A WEATHERED

beacon of hope — at least for those looking for a bathroom and a cheap sandwich — amid the dust, heat and flies of Port Gawler is the Face Of The Madonna Fuel Stop And Café, so named in the *Wolf Creek* universe because the fictional outpost's original owner claimed to have once seen the face of the Virgin Mary in the women's bathroom. The owner's daughter — Bernadette, played in the show by Deborah Mailman — now runs the café, which acts as a central meeting point through which all of the main characters will pass. As Mailman paces outside and the film crew preps inside, we are approached by a police officer — or, to be more accurate, an actor dressed as a police officer.

"I'm used to the heat and the dust and the flies," says Dustin Clare, in uniform as Det. Sgt. Sullivan Hill, a Northern Territory cop who helps Eve track down Mick. "One of my first jobs out of drama school was *McLeod's Daughters*, which was shot just up the road from here." Clare even credits the extreme weather conditions for bringing the cast and crew closer together. "There's a real sense of teamwork — I don't think I've come across it so intensely before," he muses. "Everyone's working really hard because we believe we're making something quite good and

surprising, and I haven't felt like that working on Australian TV for a long time. Tony Tilse and Geoffrey Hall are trying to push the boundaries of what Australian TV is. From what I'm seeing back from the rushes, the show has a real Western feel, which you may not expect."

Soon we're whisked off to a trailer as a proud member of the art department shows off a fake gangrenous arm rigged to spurt blood once the hand is sawn off. Sitting at the far end of the trailer in a blue truckie singlet having his make-up done is John Jarratt, clearly in a playful mood: he yells "BOO!" at a make-up artist who is inches from his face, scaring her half to death. It's clear where Mick Taylor's larrikin humour comes from — the burly man who has been playing the character for the better part of 11 years.

"When Greg rang me he said 'we're gonna make a six-part TV series', and I thought 'this is getting a bit gratuitous, isn't it?'," admits Jarratt 15 minutes later, now dressed in Mick Taylor's signature work jeans and blood red flannel shirt. "Then I got the scripts and was surprisingly pleased — I think they're really good and I think people will love it." The series, Jarratt is quick to point out, is still a different beast to the films. "It's obviously more episodic, and it's a six-hour journey of this young woman that's out for revenge in a Charles Bronson kind of way."

Now 63, Jarratt admits that physically the role is beginning to take its toll. "Mate, I have to work out three times a week! Look at this [*shows off a bulging bicep*]. I had to work out this morning with this amazing guy who's got muscles on his breath! He trains the life out of me, almost kills me. How long can you keep that up? That's the problem." Although Mick's reign of terror may end soon, Jarratt reveals that audiences should still expect at least one more film. "We are gonna do *Wolf Creek 3* — probably at the end of this year. And I think that'll just about do it because Mick's not going to look good with a walking frame, y'know? I don't know how long I can keep up the smoke and mirrors!"

Jarratt believes the Mick's popularity stems from his humour and "fuck you" attitude. He's scarily likeable — you can't help liking the bastard." The actor says he hears Mick references from the public "every three feet": "Do the laugh!", "Hello Mick!". I call it the 'Norman Gunston Syndrome', Garry [*McDonald*] had to live through it and he became Norman for a long time, and I'm going to be Mick for a long time, I suspect. It's a double-edged sword. It puts producers off — if they put me in their movie they'll think it's Mick Taylor — so it's good and bad. If you do something well, the downside is that's all you're known for."

Above: Det. Sgt. Sullivan Hill (Dustin Clare) on the trail of Mick Taylor.

Top right: Eve, grab your gun.

Bottom right: Mick, eating out. Probably not a McRib.

Just as he begins to explain how easy it is to slip in and out of character, an actor inadvertently interrupts our conversation, giving Jarratt — a garrulous, funny and well-liked presence on set — the chance to flash a that famous Mick Taylor blend of humour and menace. “I’m doin’ an interview digger!” he says to peals of laughter from assembled crew. “I’ll take it a bit far and leap across the fucken table, I’ll be into you in a minute!” More laughter, before he turns his attention back to *EmpireTV*. “Now what was the question before he so rudely interrupted me? Oh yeah, getting into character, just like that [snaps fingers]. Like I nearly did with him.”

As he leaves to shoot a scene with Mailman, Jarratt posits that perhaps Mick — a character he clearly has a ball playing — may continue beyond a third film. “I suppose we could do *Wolf Creek 4* with Mick in one of those motorised buggies seniors use, put a rack and some spotlights on one of those. The opening could be Mick rattling along the footpath, and he turns left and goes into this place, and you tilt up and see a sign that says ‘Outback Old Peoples’ Home’, and he’s goin’ in there to take ‘em all out, because they’re the only ones he can catch...”

WOLF CREEK PREMIERES ON STAN MAY 12.



COMING SOON — JUNE



Garfunkel and Oates

CREATORS **RIKI LINDHOME, KATE MICUCCI** / CAST **RIKI LINDHOME, KATE MICUCCI** / CATCH-UP **SBS2, SBS ON DEMAND** / FROM **JUNE TBC**
Follows the misadventures of cult comedy-folk duo Garfunkel (Lindhome) and Oates (Micucci), described by *The Wall Street Journal* as “the female Flight Of the Conchords.”

Power: S3

CREATOR **COURTNEY KEMP AGBOH** / CAST **OMARI HARDWICK, NATURI NAUGHTON, CURTIS JACKSON** / CATCH-UP **STAN, ITUNES, GOOGLE PLAY** / FROM **JUNE TBC**

From Executive Producer Curtis ‘50 Cent’ Jackson (who also stars), this crime drama centres on James ‘Ghost’ St. Patrick, owner of glamorous New York nightclub Truth, a front for a lucrative drug network.

Roadies

CREATOR **CAMERON CROWE** / CAST **LUKE WILSON, CARLA GUGINO, IMOGEN POOTS** / CATCH-UP **STAN** / FROM **JUNE 26**
Cameron Crowe (*Almost Famous*) returns to the music world with this look at roadies and the rock bands they elevate. Characters and events are based on true

stories, including the time Freddie Mercury flipped out when he discovered fingerprints on his piano.

Turn: Washington's Spies: S3

CREATOR **CRAIG SILVERSTEIN** / CAST **JAMIE BELL, ANGUS MACFADYEN, DANIEL HENSHALL** / CATCH-UP **SHOWCASE, FOXTEL GO, FOXTEL PLAY, ITUNES, GOOGLE PLAY** / FROM **JUNE 16**
AMC’s revolutionary war espionage thriller ups the ante this season with events leading to a notorious flashpoint in American history — the defection to the

British of Benedict Arnold (Owain Yeoman).

UnREAL: S2

CREATORS **MARTI NOXON, SARAH GERTRUDE SHAPIRO** / CAST **SHIRI APPLEBY, CONSTANCE ZIMMER, CRAIG BIERKO** / CATCH-UP **STAN** / FROM **JUNE TBC**
One of the breakout hits of 2015, *UnREAL* was the fictional show that finally shanked reality TV in its cold, dead heart. This season will be even more subversive with the casting of a black suitor for the *Bachelor*-esque show *Everlasting*, pipping real reality TV to the post.