

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

24 HOURS THE ARTS DIARY

AWARD

The short film *It's a Treat*, directed by Brisbane's Luke Mayze and starring Guy Edmonds, won Best Comedy at the 2011 NYC Short Film Festival held recently in New York. The Tribeca festival aims to showcase provocative and entertaining short films from around the world. Mayze and Edmonds attended the festival after having the film showcased at the Burbank International Film Festival. The film was shot in one day on a budget of \$1000. It tells the story of a young girl, Monique, who is stalked by her ex-boyfriend who desperately tries to win her back by comparing her to a roast dinner as opposed to fast food.



CINEMA

You have heard the new album. Now see **Red Hot Chili Peppers** perform songs from *I'm With You*. A concert in Cologne, Germany, on August 30 was captured in high definition for screening in more than 900 cinemas worldwide. The gig has already been seen in the US, Canada, Europe and Latin America. Today and tomorrow it is Australia's turn on more than 80 screens around the country. Fans can hear the new album in sequence, followed up with a selection of the greatest hits from singer Anthony Kiedis, pictured, and the band.

► Today and tomorrow, selected cinemas. Tickets \$20 or \$39 from RHCLiveHD.com.

SCULPTURE

Perhaps best known for his Aussie and Kiwi *Diggers* on either side of the road at the north-west end of the Anzac Bridge and the *Bull* at World Square, sculptor **Alan Somerville** has a large and impressive body of work. In 1996, the Centennial Park Trust commissioned Somerville to make a statue of Sir Henry Parkes to replace one that had stood just inside the park's Paddington gates until 1971, when students blew it up. A retrospective at Salerno Gallery comprises a collection of Somerville's sculptures and a limited number of his rarely seen drawings of nudes and dancers.

► Today, Salerno Gallery, 70 Glebe Point Road, Glebe. On show until October 15. Gallery open Tuesday to Friday 10am to 5.30pm, Saturday 10am to 3pm.

PHOTOGRAPHY

It seems like only yesterday the **Head On Photo Festival** was showcasing the best of Australian portrait photography with more than 150 events at 94 venues. Among the more memorable images was **Alex Vaughan's** *Les and Eileen*, pictured, a moving portrait of an elderly couple who shared 65 years together and which won the people's choice award.

Expressions of interest are open for next year's festival, from May 4 to June 3. The festival wants to hear from photographers wanting to exhibit, those who have a photomedia event they would like to run in conjunction with the festival and those who can recommend a space for exhibition. There is no fee to apply and all applications will be reviewed by a selection committee. There is also a call for volunteers, either in the lead-up to the festival or during it.

► Information on submissions is at headon.com.au. Volunteers should email volunteer@headon.com.au.

CHILDREN

There is nothing like keeping a child amused to make the school holidays fly by. An interactive theatre experience requiring hands-on participation from its audience, on this week at CarriageWorks, could be just the thing. In the *City of Riddles*, children are surrounded by puzzles they must solve and instructions they must follow. On entry, the audience explores a mysterious landscape of little buildings, peering inside each one like giants in a miniature world. The landscape continually changes until the children are drawn into the story of a girl whose voice is stolen from her and buried deep under the City of Riddles.

► Today until October 8, 10.30am and 2pm, daily, The Tiny Top, CarriageWorks, Eveleigh. Suitable for children aged between 5 and 12. Tickets \$15 plus booking fee. For more information go to polyglottheatre.com/city_of_riddles.

OUT OF TOWN

Goosebumps, prepare yourselves. *Psycho*, *The Birds*, *Vertigo* and *Rear Window* are among the many films sure to have them standing in attention at a survey of work by that pioneering master of cinematic chills **Alfred Hitchcock**. All his films still in existence – put at 56 – will be screened, as well as 17 selected episodes made for TV, in *Alfred Hitchcock: A Retrospective*. The British director is pictured on the set of *Psycho*. A live score to some of his early silent films, such as *The Lodger*, will come courtesy of Brisbane ensemble the Quadratic Contingency. On Friday evenings, drinks and nibbles will be served to Hitchcock-inspired music. Keep an eye on the shadows.

Opens Friday, Queensland Art Gallery, Stanley Place, South Bank. Film tickets \$9, five-film pass \$36. Until November 27. Gallery open weekdays 10am-5pm, weekends 9am-5pm.



Photographs of the artist ease the pain of bitter pills

Self-portraits, long used to explore the concept of identity, take on new meaning when they focus on illness and disability, writes **Linda Morris**.

Forty tablets a day, 280 pills a week. Daily insulin injections into stomach muscles. Nasal washes and oxygen mask to clear lungs of their mucus sludge. Amy Mills is exhausted from being sick. As well as cystic fibrosis, Mills has diabetes, a consequence of taking anti-rejection pills since the age of 12 following a life-saving liver transplant.

"This is my life, for the rest of my life. The rest of my life... that's a strong statement and one I have always been afraid of," says the photography student who, in an attempt to accept the permanence of her condition, decided to turn the lens on herself.

For her photography class at the Canberra Institute of Technology, Mills photographed herself every day for 30 days, creating an essay of 300 photographs, images of routine medication beside more tender moments of the 23-year-old at home with family and friends.

Since the beginning of photography, artists have used the self-portrait to push the medium's technical and creative boundaries and explore the concept of identity. The British photographer Jo Spence documented her long battle with breast cancer and found photography useful in tackling the emotional crisis her cancer diagnosis had triggered. She photographed herself undergoing a mammogram and the aftermath of her mastectomy in a powerful body of work titled *Putting Myself in the Picture*.

"Ultimately, Spence's practice made explicit the idea that the personal is political by using photography as a tool of empowerment and allowing her to at least wrest control of her image even when her body was undergoing trauma," says Chris Stewart, the subject leader of photography at the National Art School. "Of course, there have been

others who, like Nan Goldin, have turned the camera on their own lives and community of friends, lovers as a form of indirect therapy that has made great art at a particular point in history."

Other photographers have followed Spence, placing their physical imperfections, mental fragility or sense of mortality on public exhibition, challenging taboos such as pain, blood and suffering while seeking to positively reflect on their disabilities. When healthcare activist Matuschka appeared on the cover of *The New York Times Magazine* in 1993 exposing her mastectomy scar, it shocked readers and triggered a debate about illness and the representation of the female body that presaged the pink ribbon campaign.

'Amy Mills doesn't have the option of walking away from her subject.'

Sean Davey, curator

The Australian artist Carol Jerrens unsentimentally documented her sudden decline as a result of Budd Chiari syndrome, remaining true to her mission to use the camera to bring people together and change a "sick" society.

With the photographer as author and subject, the self-portrait illuminates the very nature of disease and treatment from a patient's perspective. By critically engaging the audience in a private pain, self-portraiture can succeed in demystifying disease. This realisation has resulted in numerous cancer and mental health support groups announcing visual art competitions to provide new avenues of self expression.

A year ago British photographer Esther Sabetpour woke up in the intensive care ward of a Spanish



hospital with multiple fractures to her spine, shoulder, femur and hip, and third and fourth-degree burns to 32 per cent of her body.

Doctors harvested skin from her torso to treat the serious burns, leaving her with raised purplish welts from midriff to toe.

"In the hospital the doctor took my hands by force to the scarred areas in an attempt to get me to accept and start touching these damaged areas," she writes.

Across the arts there have been plenty of heroic depictions of death, from crucifixion to war, but it

is beauty that has invariably enthralled the artists. Before her accident, Sabetpour had begun work on images featuring her naked form as a way to explore the shortcomings of beauty. Now she had a new canvas. She stripped for her camera and made striking poses.

"When I viewed the images of my newly scarred body I thought the scars did not look as terrible as I felt they must be. Friends pointed out the marks looked almost like tribal tattoos or a type of body art. With this creative slant I began to start working with my image and experi-

menting. At each stage I became more confident about my appearance and saw therapeutic and artistic value in the images."

The wedding and art photographer must be involved with their subject to make it a compelling work but "Amy Mills doesn't have the option of walking away from her subject; she has chosen to do one of the hardest things a photographer can do, to turn the camera on herself".

Regardless of the conditions faced by people such as Mills, Davey thinks there is a danger the subject can overshadow, or outshine, the integral artistic work of the individual.

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Wrestling back control... Esther Sabetpour's *The Puzzle* examines her naked body after she suffered serious injuries. Amy Mills's series *30 Days*, left, moves between images of her medication routine to moments with friends and family.

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the cause but it can also put people in a grey area of not knowing whether the work has stand alone value, or whether it is simply riding on – harsh terminology – the back of the subject.

"With her talent, I would suggest that Amy would have made an engrossing study of any topic. The fact that it is so personal, though, is definitely part of the reason I am attracted to it and intrigued by it. I am a big fan of honesty. As Robert Frank said, 'less art, more truth'. More truth in turn makes great art."

Sabetpour recently photographed herself nude in the famous great hall of photographic works, the Parc Des Ateliers, during the Arles Photography Festival.

As she says: "Self-portraiture is an expression of our hidden or less interpreted unconscious and is often a very honest moment – alone with self. If you make the portrait for yourself – with self in mind – that is the therapeutic element – that inward communication made exterior by the photo."

See the photographs at esthersabetpour.com and redevamills.blogspot.com/2011/03/30-days.html

PERFORMANCE

Fine storytelling with a hint of music

AERIAL MAPS
Notes, Newtown, October 1
Reviewed by Bernard Zuel

AS A lyricist and deliverer of words (he does not sing but it is more musical than reciting), Adam Gibson knows that a "spoken word" gig is a hard sell. Even if you say, hey it's OK, I've got musicians.

But reluctance to attend an Aerial Maps show because of some lingering school-induced distaste for poetry or the inability to shake the image of Mike Myers reciting "Woman/woman-o-o-o-man" in *So I Married an Axe Murderer* would be a case of nose cutting/face spitting.

First, the music underneath his words, on this night featuring various arrangements of guitars, synthesizers, ukulele, xylophones and drums (including three members of the most recent version of the Hummingbirds) with a late burst of suitably hepatic saxophone from Gibson, is varied and flexible. You might get some film noir atmosphere or some low-key indie pop, some jagged little pills of noise or some landscape-evoking openness – all of it creative and contributing.

Second, this is not poetry anyway; this is storytelling. Actually, the best way to describe it is yarn-spinning as Gibson frames big-picture issues (sense of place, ambition, escape, emptiness) with the quotidian, the minutiae of Australian life, so true and so acutely observed that you



It's all in the delivery... Adam Gibson puts his rants of everyday observations on top of instrumental arrangements.

never feel like you are sitting through a performance but maybe listening to someone describing the vision from some handily positioned CCTV as Gibson frames big-picture issues (sense of place, ambition, escape, emptiness) with the quotidian, the minutiae of Australian life, so true and so acutely observed that you

could appreciate the guffaws he often induces in "the concrete slabs and the water tanks/and the rank rising mangroves/beneath the Tweed Heads sky". But there is a place for someone who can wryly update Gershwin ("you're as good as hot Milo on a July night") and still touch on the brutal truth of an

unexpected pregnancy ("her sister-in-law Kristy said to get a test/a proper one at that: 'those chemist kits are shithouse/go down to the clinic/if my bastard brother's got you pregnant/at least they're the ones to get rid of it'").

It is not just good, it is Australian-as.

Much free improvisation shuns emotional content as some sort of contamination, but this collective was not afraid to embrace it, and one part became a lament, with sparse piano and drums, and impossibly sad lines from trumpet and bass.

They were less inclined to play

DEBUT

Jazz-infected master of the bow takes improvisation to riveting point

BARRE PHILLIPS
The People's Republic of Australasia, October 2
Reviewed by John Shand

FOR nearly 50 years Barre Phillips has been at the forefront of expanding the double bass's possibilities, and was the first to record an album of solo improvisations on the instrument. His intimate, invitation-only

Australian debut had the glorious advantage of allowing him to play unamplified. While the France-based American does not generate an especially massive sound when playing pizzicato, his arco sound is astounding, and he spends more time using his bow than most jazz-inflected players.

For the first set he was one-fifth of the Large Bass Ensemble, with local bassists Dave Ellis, Sam

Pettigrew, Matthew Tucker and Tom Wade. The spirit was collegiate rather than reverential toward this influential figure, and there was some especially beautiful work from Ellis.

The evening's main set was performed by a quartet of Phillips, Phil Slater (trumpet), Alister Spence (piano) and James Waples (drums). Here Phillips' employment of arco harmonics was mesmerising,

especially in a section where Slater created a gentle wah-wah effect with his mute.

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JAZZ

Transporting work takes audience to another time and place

MUTINY MUSIC
Notes, September 29
Reviewed by John Shand

IF THE ultimate enemies of musical creativity are cliché and resorting to familiar templates, then Rick Robertson has forged a truly liberating context for the imaginations of the members of his band, Baecastuff.

Drawing on his heritage as a descendant of the Bounty mutineers, the world premiere of Robertson's *Mutiny Music* was a barrage of surprises. These began with him delivering the story's spoken-word elements in the patois of Norfolk Island, which immediately seemed to slice back through time and deposit us amid the utopia and hell that was Pitcairn Island after the 1789 mutiny. (Baecastuff is a Norfolk word for wild tobacco.)

A screen showing images of the protagonists, the mutiny, the islands of Pitcairn and Norfolk (to which the Pitcairn community moved in 1856 after an unlikely act of largesse from Queen Victoria) thickened the atmosphere without overly distracting from the music.

That music was also a time machine, drawing on 19th-century

Pitcairn hymns and 21st-century sampling, Polynesian drumming and free or groove-based jazz, all with equal ease. Robertson's triumph was that while the contrasting components may have been sources of surprise, they ultimately complemented each other and gelled into a musical narrative, albeit an oblique one.

The leader's saxophones were joined by Phil Slater's trumpet, Matt McMahon's electric piano, Alex Hewetson's bass, Simon Barker's drums and Aykko Akhrif's percussion. One of the piece's most powerful aspects was the dichotomy between the waves of fierce Polynesian drumming and the hymns' rather sombre mood: a snapshot of the cultural tug-of-war within the little community as they set about carving new lives on that tiny island.

The players are among the finest improvisers alive yet the piece as a whole was the star.

Extremely ambitious in its scope, the piece could have proved a jarring and dissipated experience, yet it not only held together, it allowed for potent collective and individual statements.

An astute festival director would snap this up.

Barre Phillips performs at Rushcutters Bay Drill Hall on Thursday, Seymour Centre on Friday and Cockatoo Island on Saturday.