

# Bringing the Warrior back to life

## Book

*Eyes of Fire*  
by David Robie  
Review by Britton Broun

"I have always maintained that colonialism and nuclearism in the Pacific are part of the same evil," says the late Prime Minister of Vanuatu Walter Lini in his preface to David Robie's *Eyes of Fire*.

Originally released in 1986, and now re-released in a memorial edition, *Eyes of Fire* chronicles the last voyage of Greenpeace's *Rainbow Warrior* through the Pacific.

The book covers the expedition from its beginning, the relocation of 320 Rongelap Islanders

from their radioactive homeland to its end when a peace flotilla reached Moruroa Atoll — minus the *Rainbow Warrior*.

But Robie's in-depth understanding of Pacific affairs makes this more than a story about a famous ship. His narrative explores the effects of French and American colonisation, and the environmental degradation through images of fallout from the 1954 Bravo nuclear test over Rongelap, toxic waste dumping in Kiribati, or the first "ghetto of the Pacific", near the US military base in Kwajalein Atoll.

But it's not all doom and gloom. The story is punctuated with humorous anecdotes from the voyage — paralysis after a kava-drinking ceremony, the

"breakfast club" aboard ship who scoffed meat at 4am before the vegetarian cook awoke or Bunny McDiarmid's saxophone practice that only photographer Fernando Pereira was privy to. This image is made more poignant knowing Pereira died in the later bombing.

As a freelance journalist, Robie spent 10 weeks aboard the *Rainbow Warrior* putting him in a unique position to capture events as they happened.

His journalistic style combines lyrical description with quotes, transcripts of news bulletins and extracts from the ship's log, lending a real time pace to the story that keeps you interested.

In Auckland, where Robie dis-

embarked just three days before the fateful bombing on July 10 1985, he pieces together events and documents the reactions of the crew and media, New Zealand and French.

Sometimes the host of characters, political and legal intrigues, and the minutiae of history get a little confusing, but the wealth of photographs and maps anchor the text.

The new book has an additional preface by Greenpeace activist and *Rainbow Warrior* crew member Bunny McDiarmid and a postscript by the author.

In the aftermath of the "gone by lunchtime" debacle, *Eyes of Fire* is a timely reminder of the dangers of nuclear militarism. For anyone interested in gaining



a wider understanding of Greenpeace, the *Rainbow Warrior* bombing, and the effects of the cold-war in the Pacific, it is a fascinating read.

# Comedy, religion and pornography

## Book

*Agent of Evolution*  
by Kevin Booth with Michael Bertin  
Review by Duncan Greive

Bill Hicks was a comic who spent most of his life in Houston before dying of pancreatic cancer at the age of 32. He didn't get the ultimate American accolade of a network situation comedy. He never made a movie and rarely played to crowds of more than 100 people. He died as a virtual unknown, while his peers were watched by millions.

Yet he is feted as one of the most savagely insightful comedians and social commentators of our age, precisely because he never gave in to the censored and soapy demands of the main-

stream. He never stopped barking out his message, as unpalatable as it might have been, to anyone who cared to listen.

Kevin Booth was a lifelong friend of Hicks, and lived his life in Hicks' shadow: collaborating with him; taking drugs with him; putting up with the myriad personality defects that rendered Hicks so sharp and infuriating. This biography, the second following Cynthia True's hollow, workmanlike *American Scream*, is principally related as an oral history, Hicks' remarkable, heart-rending life as experienced by those who shared his dry Texas air.

*Agent of Evolution* uses the memories of a plethora of friends, lovers and colleagues to describe the key episodes of Hicks' life, each coloured by

their own perspective or faded and distorted by time, until a clear image emerges. It is a fond remembrance, indeed even his decline and death seem inevitable rather than tragic, and the accumulated opinion seems to construct a man who felt too deeply for this world.

Ordinary incidents of governmental or individual hypocrisy, that would generate no more than a resigned shrug from most of us, left him sweat-soaked and apoplectic, heaving invective out at his often bemused audience.

He was raised an evangelical Christian, and while his intellectual curiosity and the succour of alternative spirituality would never allow him to be pinned down to one faith over another, he nonetheless retained that fervour, a touch of the pulpit in his

delivery. Hicks' sermons cut right to the rotten core of Reagan's America; he delighted in holding a slice aloft.

He seemed only ever truly appreciated overseas, as his headlining appearances in Montreal's comedy festival and Britain's unfettered adoration of him will testify, yet he never lost his love for America.

What the biography does best is cover Hicks' most profound dichotomy. The tug between the sacred and profane, between religion and pornography that dominated his life is expertly detailed. Its origins in his upbringing and development through his obsessions with UFO's, masturbation and eastern mysticism are shown as the natural progressions of an incessantly inquiring mind rather

than the ramblings of an addled pervert.

Booth and Bertin's work does Hicks a great service in avoiding the traditional biographical format. It shows the strange, sometimes ugly, but always hugely magnetic individual behind the ranting; shows the deep veins of compassion and love which ran through a man easy to caricature as deranged or inhuman.

The broad details of his life are well known, available to anyone with a well annotated copy of his albums or recently released DVD. It is the man behind them who truly needs the light shining upon him, and that is what *Agent of Evolution* provides. The self-described "Noam Chomsky with dick jokes" finally has a worthy epitaph.

## What's on

### exhibitions

**Auckland Art Fair**  
Britomart Events Pavillion  
Cnr Gore & Tyler Streets  
September 2-4

A showcase for some of New Zealand's finest contemporary art, the Auckland Art Fair is the first of what is to become a biennial event. Professional galleries from around New Zealand and Australia will be presenting works from leading artists.

**K Road Fringe Festival**  
Karangahape Rd  
August 29 - September 4  
Created to run alongside the Auckland Art Fair, the idea is to give both overseas and local visitors an opportunity to discover why K Rd is "The Essence of Auckland". Features films, theatre, music, art and photography. The festival launches at 6.30pm on August 29 at the Disrupt Gallery, 145 Karangahape Rd.

**Rock and Roll Rampage**  
202 Karangahape Rd  
Now until September 1  
Cross Street Orphanage art gallery, with support from Illicit Clothing, has brought together artists from across the country, and presents examples of Rock n Roll flyers, posters and prints as well as many original paintings and drawings inspired by the sounds of music past and present.



**Hei Tei Hiki**  
Auckland Art Gallery  
Cnr Lorne and Wellesley Sts  
Hei Tiki are treasured taonga and adornment items. Through time hei tiki have become an icon that is unique to Aotearoa, New Zealand. The artists in this exhibition have related stories about taonga, relationships between people, place, art, peace, war, consumerism and cultural politics. It aims to retell stories from oral and documented histories explaining how hei tiki were made and for whom.  
Until September 4.

**Swimming Pool**  
Aotea Gallery, Aotea Square  
September 3-23  
A visual record of public swimming pools in Auckland by photographer Vanessa Hughes. The photos capture the unique character of each community and allure of the public swimming pool as intriguing spaces in their own right.

### films

**Lords of Dogtown**  
In the 1970s, a group of teenage surfers from a tough neighbourhood known as "Dogtown" in Venice, California, pioneered a revolutionary new style of skateboarding. The Z-Boyz, known for their aggressive style and hard street attitude became overnight sensations and local legends.  
Starring, Heath Ledger  
In cinemas now.

**Crash**  
In this adrenalised panorama of looming apocalypse in Los Angeles, the daily dramas of Los Angelinos don't merely coincide; they collide. White cops, black and Hispanic detectives, Korean accident victims, black TV director, Middle Eastern store keepers, black car thieves, the white DA and his spoiled rotten wife: all are trying to keep their heads aloft in an environment toxic with racist paranoia.  
In cinemas now.

**Hotel Rwanda**  
Don Cheadle stars in this true story of one man's brave stance against savagery during the 1994 Rwandan conflict. Paul Ruseabagina, a hotel manager in the Rwandan capital Kigali, opened his hotel to over a thousand Tutsi refugees during their struggle against the Hutu militia. Showing at selected cinemas.

**The Wedding Crashers**  
This comedy stars Vince Vaughn and Owen Wilson as divorce mediators and lifelong friends who have never met a wedding they couldn't get themselves into. Guided by a set of rules, the pair find a different wedding and different bridesmaids every week. But when they crash the social event of the season, one falls for the engaged daughter (Rachel McAdams) of influential, and eccentric politician (Christopher Walken) and decides to break the rules in pursuit of her.  
In cinemas now.