

## *The Footy Show*

I have just watched three episodes of *The Footy Show* and I feel like Sammy Davis Jr at a Ku Klux Klan rally, like Dannii Minogue at a Mensa convention, like George Pell in 2007.

I'm not into plants but I like *Gardening Australia*, I'm not into quiz shows but I like *The Einstein Factor*, I'm not into cars but I like *Top Gear*, so not being into footy isn't the reason that I'm repelled by this destructive, small-minded, morally bankrupt orgy of chauvinism. *The Footy Show* is a celebration of the very worst that television, sport, Australia and human beings can cook up. It's offensive, toxic and corrosive. It encourages viewers to be stupid, shallow and sexist. Sit down, shut up and hang on. And ladies, bring a plate.

*The Footy Show* is nothing more than media-sanctioned misogyny. And so much less. Tune in and you'll feel you've woken up in 1952. A man in a full-body condom, men dressed as women, girls in bikinis, guys stuffing toilet paper down their jocks, dickheads, wankers and yobs. The few women that I did see were leered at, one called "a bitch" and another told to "get fucked" (both by Sam Newman). I heard the word "sheilas" and could sense that the words "poofsters," "wogs," "slopes" and "spastics" were just below the surface.

Is it the program, the network, the culture of Australian television or just Newman that is so offensive? It's all of them. But Newman really needs to be singled out for his extraordinary contribution to this tragic, puerile, adolescent show that degrades the culture of football, alienates women and teaches boys that females are slaves, trophies or bitches.

No wonder young footballers are taking drugs. How else can they reconcile this bizarre world with real life? And what's with the suits? Some pathetic attempt to bring respectability to this sad little show? Fat chance.

Newman is vain, ugly, a megalomaniac, a bully. I can't help feeling that deep inside he would be happy for women to have their brains removed and replaced with bar fridges. He's a dangerous bloke who's paid a lot of money to defile our culture and undermine our intelligence in the most putrid fashion. For any of you who have sat surrounded by people laughing at this maggot and found yourself thinking there is something wrong with you, there isn't. There's something wrong with him. And them.

*The Footy Show* catapults sexism into an extreme sport. Football shows don't have to be a cross between a buck's night and a lynching. And if you don't believe me, watch *Before the Game*. It's not as blokey, and that's not just because there is a woman on the panel but because the blokes are not as blokey. The jokes are not as blokey. And the content is intelligent. Think Roy and

H.G., *Live and Sweaty*, *Talking Footy* and *The Fat*. Australia has an impressive history and culture of intelligent, entertaining sports shows that put *The Footy Show* to shame.

## *Planetshakers*

The promise of awesome worship. That's what got me rocking up to a Planetshakers meeting. And I wasn't disappointed. They said 'awesome' twenty times.

Planetshakers is a megachurch, which is like a spiritual mega-meal-deal. Pizza, Coke, chocolate Bavarian. If we could masticate it for you and pump it into your stomach, we would. Because we love you. And so does Jesus.

Standing outside Planetshakers surrounded by chirpy, bogan-cool teenagers fizzing with excitement, one of the two gay atheist friends I was with described the crowd as 'very *Australian Idol*.' It was the first time I'd been excited about going to church. I spent every Sunday of my first eighteen years sitting on wooden pews listening to a bloke talking about his imaginary friend in the sky who did magic tricks. Women were virgins, saints or whores. Men were the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Outside Planetshakers it felt as if we were about to see a rock concert. And we were. As the band fired up and went off like a frog in a sock, I thought, 'I don't care what they're selling but I'm buying it.'

Christian pop, '80s power anthems, Metallica meets Cheap Trick. A mosh pit for Jesus was jumping with teenagers in rapture, and a balcony of Planetkids went off for Christ. Music blared from the stadium sound system while the screen seduced us with slick videos edited so fast the phrase 'subliminal message' kept popping into my head. Lyrics flashed up: 'Come like a flood and saturate me now.' I wondered what Freud would have made of the disproportionate use of such words as 'come,' 'touch' and 'feel,' and the phrases 'move within me' and 'be filled.' My favourite was 'King of Glory, enter in.'

Sexual psychoanalysis aside, the Planetshakers are clearly awesome, with lyrics such as: 'How can I explain the way u make me feel cos Jesus your love for me is so unreal.' Several references were made to not being ashamed of Jesus (despite no one having suggested they were). The room was buzzing with anticipation. I felt like a kid expecting Santa to arrive. It felt as if Jesus was going to turn up any minute.

Then out came the pastors. Middle-aged blokes peppering talk about Jesus with constant references to the footy, reality shows and McDonald's. Almost swearing, with 'flipping angry' and 'what the heck?' and plenty of 'awesomes' thrown in to convince everyone they were down with the youth.

A pastor banged on about sacrifice and said it wasn't important how much we sacrificed, just as long as we gave as much as we could. No matter how small it was. I didn't know what he was on about until the giving cards came round. And a little bucket for coins. No lid with a slot. A big open bucket, so you could be shamed by your paltry donation.

Then there were the plugs for the Mighty Men's Night and Beautiful Women Seminar. Male volunteers were encouraged to get involved with the ladies' seminar with the promise of 'being able to tell 3000 women what to do.' Note: beautiful women; mighty men. Not mighty women and beautiful men.

Then the headline pastor came on, all charisma and awesomeness. He spoke of worship, sheepgate, building in salvation, sheepgate, sacrifice and a bloke called Eliashib. And more sheepgate. As people yelled, 'Yeah!', 'Amen!' and 'Awesome!' I wanted to yell, 'I don't get it.' I love the way religion convinces people by making things deliberately incomprehensible. You feel too shy to say 'I don't understand,' lest you reveal your stupidity.

After 'sheepgate' the pastor asked us to close our eyes and bow our heads. He urged people who had left Jesus, had never had him in their heart or were confused to raise their hands so they could be prayed for. He sounded like a real-estate agent. 'One over there, thank you, sir. Anyone else? I'll wait a few moments. Yes, one down the back.' Dummy bidders, anyone? Then bewildered-looking new disciples were led out by the old hands.

The crowd left believing they had been moved by God and touched by Jesus. They hadn't. They had been seduced by slick video packages and had their emotional desire for love, community and certainty met by manipulation. It wasn't the Holy Spirit; it was just people.

Aren't we awesome enough?

P.S. For a few days after this article was published, friends kept alerting me that my Wikipedia entry was being hacked. At one point it read: 'Deveny is noted for her unattractive appearance, with many media commentators describing her looks as "repugnant." It has been posited that her seeming crusade against "the beautiful people" stems from the ridicule she suffered as a child because of her unfortunate physical defects.'

God bless those Christians!

### *Marriage*

I'm against gay marriage. I'm against straight marriage. I'm against marriage full-stop. Why are we hanging on to this relic of an anachronistic system (which still reeks of misogyny and bigotry), established so men could own women to ensure their estates and

titles were passed on to their kids – sorry, their sons? Maybe I've just never married because I haven't found the right owner. Or the right dress.

Why do we hang on to this old cultural carcass when we happily disregard others?

Feel those uptight white honkies squirm! Hear their sphincters tighten! I love the smell of Balwyn seething in the morning!

Marriage doesn't work. For evidence, see the divorce rate climbing closer to 50 per cent with every click on the rsvp.com.au website. The waving of the magic wedding wand is no guarantee of a successful marriage or a happy family. No amount of confetti, profiteroles and \$10,000 photo shoots will counteract the dismantling of religious oppression, social taboo and financial constraint that is making far more options acceptable, despite the beige majority's fixation on fairytale endings that don't exist and never have.

Weddings and marriage are spin-doctoring propaganda to maintain social order. Which is code for 'making sure the blokes are running the joint while women are oppressed and conned into doing the majority of the unpaid domestic and emotional heavy lifting' (and a hefty whack of the income earning as well). Married men live longer than single ones. Unmarried women live longer than wives. Girls, read the fine print and ask yourself: 'What's in it for me?'

I'm all for love, intimacy, sex, companionship and growing into wiser, more beautiful and compassionate human beings by sharing parts of your journey with others. And I quite like going to weddings. I just prefer funerals – the chat's more earthy, you hear more secrets, you don't have to buy a present and there's no group on the balcony muttering 'I give it three months, tops.' Funerals mark something that actually happened.

Celebrating twenty years of being together and not killing each other makes far more sense than a ceremony that celebrates something that hasn't even started. Love needs no public statement, no witnesses. The stage-managed perfection of a wedding is the antithesis of the hard yakka of surviving a long-term relationship. Weddings are an advertisement for something that only exists in the imaginations of seven-year-old girls.

Me? No. Never have, never will, never wanted to. Better dead than wed. Wouldn't I like to be a princess for a day? No thanks, I'm a princess every day.

I don't judge you if you have an ownership ceremony. I do laugh at you behind your back when you defend it with hilarious and irrational rhetoric. Decisions are made emotionally but backed up rationally. So I'll never know what the reason is and neither will you.

'I'm just doing it for the party.' Why don't you just have a party, then? 'Our parents want us to.' Hang on,

aren't you adults? Do you do everything they want you to? 'It's just so our families can meet.' Why don't you just have a barbecue? 'We all want to have the same name.' What? Why? OK, whatever your nonsensical excuse is (and by the way, let me guess, she's changing her name to yours and the kids will have your surname too? How totally enabling the patriarchy to issue the 'it's just easier' defence when clearly it's not), ever heard of deed poll? 'I'm just doing it for the presents.' It's cheaper just to buy the stuff.

Just once, I'd like someone to say, 'I'm getting married because I'm needy, insecure, deeply conservative and have abandonment issues.'

The 'we got married by an Elvis impersonator in Vegas,' 'our celebrant was a transvestite and our best man was a donkey' and 'we wore gimp masks and wrote our own vows' brigade make me laugh. Flaunting their superficial subversion in a tragic attempt to delude themselves they're not participating in something incredibly conservative, they don't fool me.

Why are forms always asking me if I'm married, divorced, de facto, single, separated, or never married? It's none of their business. Don't try and baffle me with bullshit about gathering statistics for better service. They don't need to know. A contact person, that's all they need.

Referring to a de facto relationship as 'common-law marriage' is offensive and discriminatory. It's not marriage, it's a relationship. If de factos wanted to get married, they would. They don't. Why don't they call marriage state-sanctioned or religion-sanctioned cohabitation?

As for 'it's just a piece of paper,' it's so much more than that. It's the reinforcement of unrealistic expectations, outdated gender stereotypes and proof we're still being sucked in to happily-ever-after endings. It's also a scathing indictment of our lack of cultural maturity and spiritual imagination. And proof that we're emotionally medieval. Marriage isn't a word – it's a sentence.

### *You Know You're from Melbourne If...*

**W**hen diarising anything in September you first consult the footy fixture.

You were shocked when you found out not all street directories are called *Melway*.

When everyone knows where a bar, café or restaurant is, you no longer want to go there.

You know Sunshine, Rosebud and the Caribbean Gardens are not as good as they sound.

You consider yourself a socialist yet you drive a European car and have a cleaner.

You'd rather sit next to Guy Rundle on a plane than Guy Pearce.

You've attended a children's party that had rice-paper rolls, couscous salad, croquembouche and a piñata.

You or someone you know has received a grant.

It's not Noosa, it's *Noysa*. And it's not the snow, it's *the snoy*. And it's Malvern now, not Chadstone, thanks to rezoning.

You refer to rococo furniture as 'very Franco Cozzo.'

You felt betrayed when you discovered Melbourne was not the only place in the world with trams.

If I say Jennifer Keyte and Johnny Diesel, you know exactly what I'm talking about.

You think the slogan on our number plates should be 'Melbourne: The Coffee Is Shit Anywhere Else,' 'Melbourne: Go to Sydney. We Hate Tourists' or 'Melbourne: What School Did You Go To?'

You know the word Moomba means 'Up your bum, white man.'

You're not happy Melbourne has been voted the world's most livable city. You'd prefer it was voted most enigmatic, tortured and slightly dangerous city.

You think the only person who looks good with a moustache is Ron Barassi.

You've looked out the window of Puffing Billy and waved like an idiot at the cars at the railway crossing. And you've watched Puffing Billy pass as you sat in a car at the railway crossing and waved like an idiot.

You think Beyondblue does great work but you hate the way it makes Jeff Kennett look good. Which is depressing.

Any music by Paul Kelly makes you suddenly think of the Nylex sign and something about making gravy.

When you meet someone from Kew, you always ask, 'Near Kew?'

Jon Faine shits you but you can't switch him off.

You've been to the Royal Melbourne Show and you know the scariest ride is the train home.

You don't get the jokes about the Yarra. Or Melbourne weather.

When you hear the word 'Bougainville' you think of Northland.

You don't judge people by their looks, wealth or status but by the bread they buy, the coffee they serve and the newspaper they read.

You know a kid with two mummies. Both called Roz. Who live in Northcote.

You pretend the Sydney–Melbourne rivalry doesn't exist. Which it doesn't. Because Sydney doesn't care. And that really shits you.

You brag that Melbourne is the creative capital of Australia, but your walls are full of signed football jumpers.

When someone says thanks you say, 'No Dromanas.'

When you hear the word 'Easter' the first thing you think of is the Royal Children's Hospital appeal and

Zig and Zag. And then you quickly think of something else.

If someone is referred to as a 'showbag,' you know it means they're cheap and full of shit.

Your kid's favourite foods are sushi, spanakopita and felafel. Which are also the names of the three kids they sit next to at school.

If a friend gets a new boyfriend or girlfriend, your first question is, 'Who do they barrack for?'

You think that if we all ignore Federation Square, Docklands and Robert Doyle they'll go away.

You can list all the ingredients in pesto. And you're three years old.

Cup Day. Gambling at 9 a.m. Drunk by noon. Broke at 3.20 p.m. Asleep by 4 p.m. Hungover at 5 p.m. All while at work.

You think Aberfeldie is a tartan, Coonan's Hill is a wine and South Wharf is in Sydney.

Chopper Read, Ned Kelly, Squizzly Taylor, the Morans and the Williamses. Sure, they're crims, but we all agree they've given the place colour.

You lose respect for friends if they move over the other side of the river.

When holding a dinner party, you know the point is to serve food no one has ever heard of, from a country people didn't know existed, bought from a little shop they'll never be able to find.

You were against the casino but, you have to admit, it does keep the bogans out of the city.

Pot, cantaloupe, potato cake and hook turn. Build a bridge and get over it.

### *You Know You're from Melbourne If... (Continued)*

**Y**ou've never been to Adelaide yet you make jokes about their tap water, serial killers and Rundle Mall.

You think the Queen Vic Market opening hours are normal.

You assume flavoured milk is called Big M everywhere.

You know what the words apropos, gentrification and barista mean.

You or someone you know has been to or plans to go to a concert of a washed-out Rock Legend at a winery in the Yarra Valley.

You feel sorry for Geelong.

You think nothing of calling your son Hugo, Elliot or Atticus. Or your daughter Scout, Joss or Maeve.

You've stepped on an emo walking into Flinders Street Station.

At some point you have enlisted the services of the Tint Professor, the Dashboard Doctor or the Swagman, you have been to Car City, Pick-a-Part or Doors Galore,

and you consider Whelan the Wrecker, Harry the Hirer and Peter the Possum Man members of the family.

You grow the hair under your arms but wax your growler.

You think a CBD street map laid out like tartan and lanes full of people eating breakfast while sitting on milk crates at 3 p.m. is normal.

The sight of drunk women staggering around the city wearing short strappy dresses and fascinators with their shoes slung over their shoulder at 5 p.m. means only one thing. It's Oaks Day.

You claim to have lived in one of the houses from Helen Garner's *Monkey Grip*, next to Frank Thring or across the road from the guy who made *Harvey Crumpet*.

You know blondes don't have more fun because Shane Warne dyes his hair.

You've lived in London, been to conferences in Paris, holidayed in Rome and know New York like the back of your hand but you've never seen the penguins at Phillip Island.

A suburb is defined as cool when it has junkies and Pilates. And the appearance of a juice bar means the real estate is out of your budget.

You love that Nick Cave, Barry Humphries and Rachel Griffiths are ours, but you don't like owning up to Kylie Minogue or Daryl Somers.

You think a massage with a happy ending means when you're finished they give you a café latte and a Readings voucher.

Unless you have cousins who live there, it's only because of the *Trading Post* that you know where Diggers Rest, Chirnside Park and Niddrie are.

You only have two colours in your wardrobe: black and the new black.

You hope the Eureka Tower loses its claim as the tallest building in the Southern Hemisphere and that the Southern-Star Wheel never gets fixed because we don't want Melbourne showing off like Sydney. And if it stays broken we can call it an installation.

You don't think there's anything strange about the fact that there's a South Morang but no Morang and a Moonee Ponds with no ponds, and that Bayswater has no bay and no water.

You take Japanese students to the Coburg drive-in for the cultural experience.

You don't mind graffiti as long as it's spelt correctly and uses appropriate grammar while sticking it to the man, and is written by a woman.

Bacchus Marsh Lion Safari, Kryal Castle, Sovereign Hill, Wobbies World, Gumbaya Park ... ah, school holidays in the '70s.

Your husband wears a sarong, is in a book group and you think nothing of buying him moisturiser. But you



call him your partner, not your husband. Either because you're not married or because you don't want people to think you are.

The South Melbourne Market means only one thing: giant chicken dim sims.

The only street you know in Richmond is Bendigo Street. And you know the postcode is 3121.

You hate it when they've shot a car chase in Melbourne and Sydney and the editing jumps between the two cities. Like we won't notice.

You've never solved the mystery of how WEG always correctly predicted who would win the grand final when he drew his grand-final souvenir poster.

You have a friend in a band. Or a friend who says they're in a band.

You know the difference between Carlton and North Carlton, Heidelberg and West Heidelberg and Malvern and East Malvern is about \$120,000.

You don't think it at all strange that you know where all your friends went to school and still refer to it, even though you're sixty.

Your favourite joke is Pakenham Upper.

You're proud that the Melbourne word 'bogan' has finally officially taken over as the national term for bevans, westies, jobbos and white trash.

You only buy the *Big Issue* if other people are watching.

You love that only Melbourne people will get this list.

### *Just Keep Going*

Every morning I sit on the front deck and drink my coffee, watching people propelling themselves through life. And I'm in awe of how people can keep going. What a wonder the human spirit is.

I watch office workers, jolted out of their slumber by the alarm clock, who have shovelled in their breakfast and thrown on their clothes and rush to catch the train to a job they hate. I say good morning to elderly neighbours who gingerly walk around the block, trying to get their creaky bones and foggy heads working after a night of constant pain and little sleep. I wave to the woman from down the road who has lost her mother after a long fight with cancer. She is shrouded in grief, yet she gets her kids up and dressed, the lunches made and has, against all odds, got the kids to school on time again. And I cheer my mate, overwhelmed by anxiety and depression, who runs every morning. He forces himself out of bed when what he wants is to pull the doona over his head and disappear. Where's his medal? Where are all of their medals?

No one will ever know the extent of the battles some people among us are fighting and how tough they are

finding life. How they find the courage, the bravery and the blind hope to push them through the day. When everything is such an effort, some people are only able to live in five-minute increments. Lurching from one coffee to the next. From one mood swing to the next. From one wave of pain to the next. These are people whose favourite part of the day is the moment before they fall asleep. Because they know they'll have a break from their pain. These people's boilers aren't working and all they are operating with is the pilot light. That's why these people are my heroes.

Winston Churchill said, "When you find yourself in hell, just keep going." While many of us have the luxury of spending our time discussing house prices, Mary-Kate and Ashley's lattes being spiked with full-fat milk or "Is it art? Is it porn?", so many around us are struggling. I saw a postcard last week that reminded me how tough some people are doing it: "Be kind – for everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle."

You don't read much about pain in the newspaper. But it's all around us. It's all politics, sport, terror, business, celebrities, the economy and recipes. For many, gloom and doom is a welcome distraction from the lac-erating pain of their broken hearts, the weight of their depression or the terrifying and overwhelming pull of addiction.

We only have one life. The idea is to make the most of it. Some people have more options than others. For those with options, sometimes that in itself can be the weight.

Could change lead you to a better life? And if so, what change? If only there were mortgage brokers for life who could run our stats through a computer program and furnish us all with the best life solution. "Option five provides you with the highest level of satisfaction and the lowest level of dissatisfaction. So lose weight, sell your house, stay with your wife, become a dentist, stop eating cheese and buy a new mattress."

Not everyone can keep going. Some people's pain is so profound that the only place they find peace is in death. Like many, I have been touched by suicide and, as difficult as it is to comprehend, deep in my heart I know my loved ones were just desperate to find peace.

Let's help others in pain to find some sweet relief. Let's start a cheer squad for people overwhelmed by emotional pain, physical pain, exhaustion and insomnia. For parents up with babies night after night, for people caring for the sick and disabled round the clock and for those whose lives have been ripped apart at the seams. Let's cheer them on from the sidelines: "You bloody legend! You're a hero! Just. Keep. Going."

There's a website called group hug for anonymous online confessions. Amid all the pain I found this contribution:

There are two things that I have found to always be true in life, no matter what:

1. Every day the sun will rise. It is a different day with endless possibilities. From the time you wake up in the morning to the time you sleep that night, your life may change profoundly.
2. *This too will pass.* These words, engraved on an ancient Sultan's ring, made him solemn in happy times and happy during sad times. Remember these always.

You are amazing. You're doing a great job. Just. Keep. Going.

### *Competitive Parenting*

Can anyone tell me when parenting became a competitive sport? 'I got pregnant straight away and my daughter's been sleeping through the night since she was four weeks old, her favourite foods are sushi, hummus and olives, she's been toilet trained since she was one and she taught herself how to read before she was three. My name's Fiona, nice to meet you.'

Let me guess. Malvern?

Here's what we're all thinking: 'Shut up. Or at least can we get back to the riveting issues you've been having with your builder / irritable bowel syndrome / uptight sister-in-law?' What do you expect me to say? 'Congratulations, you won, but I wasn't aware it was a competition so I don't have a trophy for you. Feel free to crack open an icy-cold can of get-over-yourself to celebrate.'

Our kids only watch the ABC. Well, our kids only watch documentaries. Well, we don't have a TV. Well, our kids only play musical instruments. Well, our kids only play instruments made from organic wood. Well, our kids only play traditional Indigenous music on bits of recycled bark. Who cares? A hundred bucks says they'll all change their names from Tarquin to Steve and end up working in the public service.

Just so you know, we all think you're a fabulously desperate, creatively barren try-hard when you bang on about the famous artists / musicians / actors / writers who are parents at your school. 'So what's your kid's school like?' 'Oh it's fabulous. Nick Cave sends his kids there.' WHAT? When you wear the cred of the parents who send their kids to the same school as your kids, it's time to – how do I put this – get a life. As soon as possible.

If you're thrilled and smug that your seven-year-old has 'at least four parties every weekend,' it tells you you have no friends, no social life, no chance of ever being cool and you are living out your social inadequacy through your children. Smell that? That's ego confusion. And what's with all the after-school and weekend activi-

ties? Interpretive dance, judo, squash, art appreciation ... 'Oh yes, I know the mum, our kids are in the same violin master class.' The kids are four years old. True story. Don't take your low self-esteem and disappointment about never having had origami lessons out on your kid. Wish you were an actor / dancer / diver? Take the lessons yourself and stop forcing them on your kids. The best gift a parent can give? Boredom.

I heard about this madwoman – let's file her under Every Mothers' Group Has One. When the babies were trying 'tummy time,' the madwoman's daughter used to go into a hysterical fit the minute she was put on the mat. On the second week of this happening, the madwoman said, 'Hubby and I are both high achievers, and we think she doesn't like it because she's not good at it.' The baby was nine weeks old.

And don't those 'I was a loser at school and am trying to correct it by hot-housing my kids' parents love the awards? No matter how trivial. I know a bloke who was convinced there was going to be an international incident if his son was not awarded the coveted 'You Can Do It' ribbon.

Sporting prowess is big too – the bragging always delivered via the hide-the-pill-in-the-dog method by telling you what a good sport Dan / Jack / Ben is. It's unseemly to brag about winning, so they have to be the best-natured as well (and they're not).

And isn't every kid gifted? 'We've had Felicity independently assessed and she's gifted.'

'Really? That's nice. My kids have nits.'

Here's a tip for you. If your kid's gifted, ram it. We don't care. Actually, we're happier for you if your kid is in the special-needs class. It's called schadenfreude. Makes us feel better about ourselves. 'So Tommy's got an IQ of room temperature, he can't dress himself, wears nappies to bed and he's eight. Ah, bless.' YES! My kids have just eaten their way up the food chain one notch.

And if someone tells me their kids have 'never had nits,' I think to myself, 'So that's how they look when they lie.' Then I say, 'That'd be because nits only go to clean hair.'

This mate of mine kept banging on about how gifted her two-year-old was. So for his third birthday, I gave him a 5000-piece jigsaw puzzle. That shut her up. Well, not 5000 pieces, 4997. I left out one corner ...

Here's another from the Ego Confusion Identification Index. 'Your kids are lovely.' 'Thank you.' What? 'Sorry – Fiona, was it? – I am not talking about you, I am talking about your children.' The correct response is 'I'll tell them,' or, if you're me, 'Really? I'm thinking of voting one of them off and cannibalising the other two to make one really good one.'