

# Chad Chad Taylor

When was the last time you read a New Zealand novel by someone under 30 WHO DOESN'T LIVE IN WELLINGTON! *Heaven* by **Chad Taylor** is such a novel. You can tell it's not written by a member of the literary establishment because we're not transported to a rural childhood in the 1950s and two of the characters are having noisy sex by page 32. But even though the story revolves around gambling in the back of K Road porn shops and *Heaven* is a transvestite, **Chad Taylor's** first novel is being taken seriously by all the right people. It received glowing notices in the *Listener*, *The Wellington Evening Post* and on the BBC World Service. Maurice Shadbolt himself, the biggest daddy of the NZ Lit. scene, appeared at the book launch party at Cause Celebre, at which the literary crowd were easily differentiated from Chad's friends (the thin, chic people in tight black and white) by their penchant for baggier gear in earth tones and dangly ethnic earrings.

I cornered **Chad** one week later in the Auckland City Art Gallery where he works nine to five in a cell-like office, doing something related to his Fine Arts degree. The walls are festooned with bits of paper — a Betty Boop cartoon, a xerox *Barbarella* poster, various magazine photographs of beautiful black haired women along

with pics of Keith Carradine and Tommy Lee Jones and other people whose names you probably wouldn't recognise. I know I didn't.

**Chad** is tall and thin, his dirty blond hair scraped back off his forehead and tucked behind his ears. He's picking at an impressive scab on his forearm (a technician sprayed him with a hot glue gun). Like his writing, his conversation is economical and splattered with crafty insights.

I'm surprised that *Heaven* isn't an exposé of Auckland's cafe society. Why, there isn't one trendy character in this inner-city novel. Seriously, **Chad**, you can't tell me that you attend the sort of white bread and sausages, men in shorts and jandals barbies your characters go to.

"Scary but true. That was pretty much the norm when I was growing up," replies the author.

Did you mingle with authentic K. Road low-life for research?

"Most of the places in there I've been anyway. I'm always wary of people who research novels. It's like *Frederick Forsythe* saying 'I spent six months researching the Berlin wall'. It doesn't make the book any better. If it feels real then it is real as far as the reader is concerned."



# Quote



Lemonheads' **Evan Dando**: "The more I get nannied, it turns me into a less responsible person. I don't like that. You start to turn into the monster they want you to be."

Former Chrysalis Records owner and Imago label founder **Terry Ellis**: "Bring me an act that says, 'Fuck MTV, I don't want to make a video. I just want to go on the road in a van and play rock music'."

**Shawn Colvin** on the *Grammy Awards*: "It's not whether you win, but what you wear."

**Madonna**: "It was empowering for me to take my clothes off and then put my clothing back on and go home and carry on with my day and not feel like I lost dignity or self-esteem. It made me think of my body as a work of art."

**River Pheonix**: "Sometimes I wish I wasn't as conscious as I am — it would be so much easier."

**Chad** says he doesn't feel disadvantaged as a writer being stuck in New Zealand. But, I say, even our slang is boring compared to Britain or America.

"I think it'd be terrifying working in America. How could you get up in the morning knowing that there are 500,000 people doing exactly what you do? The main disadvantage of working in New Zealand is that it's such a bossy little country. It's full of self-appointed authorities who moralise, criticise, censor and generally tell you off. Something about this place brings out the school prefect in everybody. And people here are probably ruder than they are in New York, although to less effect."

When did you know you were a writer?

"I'd always written stuff and when you get something published it confirms the suspicion that you are."

**Chad** has had short stories published in important periodicals like *Sport*, *Metro* and *Landfall*. And although it isn't mentioned on the dust jacket, he's even done time as a writer on this humble magazine. But as if working full-time and writing two novels in one year isn't enough (*Pack of Lies* is coming out later this year), he's also completed a couple of screenplays. *Funny Little Guy* is a twelve minute drama produced by Stratford Productions, and there's a feature length script in development. Surely all this writing requires great personal sacrifice?

"Sacrifice of sleep. I just naturally don't sleep. And also it's fun, it's something I like doing, it's not an ordeal."

**Chad's** admired writers include Americans Pete Dexter and Raymond Chandler but really, he's a book slut, he'll read anything.

A mention of the new biography of the Marquis de Sade prompts the information that Mr Taylor is also a fan of pornography.

"I'm nosy, I love that sort of stuff, it's funny. I think it's really interesting how pornography can never get tasteful. If it gets tasteful then it becomes something else. One of the defining qualities of pornography is its inattention to aesthetics, its gaudiness. That's a signal that it's pornography."

Does that mean movies featuring people doing rude things to each other like *Nine and A Half Weeks* and *Sliver* aren't pornography because the people are stylish and the apartments are beautiful?

"I missed *Sliver*. And all I remember about *Nine And A Half Weeks* was going home to an empty fridge." (*Heaven* is published by David Ling)

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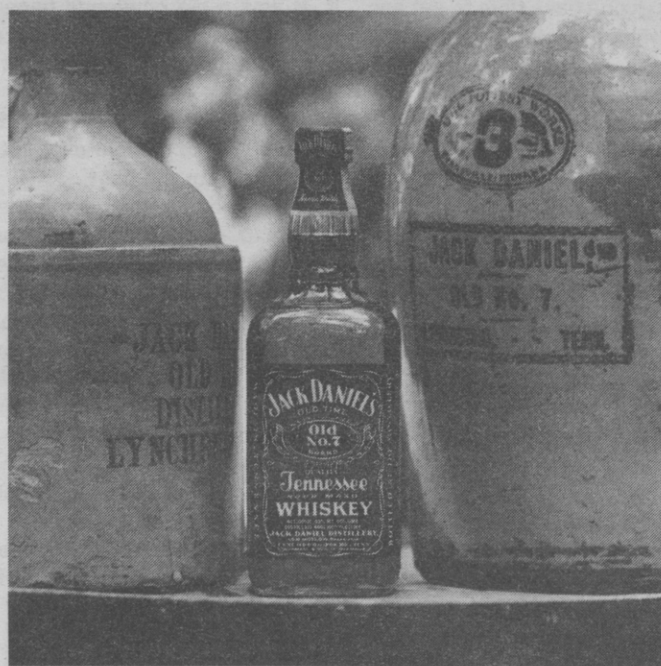
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