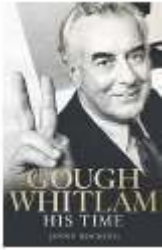




SHORT TAKES



GOUGH WHITLAM: HIS TIME

BY JENNY HOCKING,
MIEGUNYAH PRESS,
RRP \$49.95

The second volume in Gough Whitlam's biography traverses his arrival at the Lodge, the Dismissal and includes the death this year of Gough's "best appointment", his wife Margaret. It is a challenge for a biographer to wrestle with such a well-trodden legacy. But Hocking creates a rounded portrait of a complex and flawed idealist. There have been several bids to modify and debunk some of Hocking's extensive research, but her picture of Whitlam makes his government's wild ride seem entirely appropriate to the times and even more exciting in retrospect.

NR

Verdict: judicious



LOLA BENSKY

BY LILY BRETT,
HAMISH HAMILTON,
RRP \$30

Lola Bensky, 19, is a rock journalist sent to London by a Melbourne

paper in 1967. She lands in the heart of the counter-culture revolution. Another character might have been seduced by the drug-taking and partying, but not sweet Lola, who beguiles the likes of Mick Jagger and Jimi Hendrix with her earnestness. Lola is still exploring her identity and her interviews reveal as much about herself as they do about these rock gods. Her parents survived Auschwitz, and this shadows her questions. But this novel is funny, warm and insightful, whether Lola is talking to Janis Joplin about sex or asking Jimi Hendrix whether he is religious.

CK

Verdict: funny and moving



STANDING IN ANOTHER MAN'S GRAVE

BY IAN RANKIN,
ORION BOOKS,
RRP \$33

Rebus is back. But by the end, there will be one of two

reactions. Diehard fans will go back to re-read the earlier adventures of the grumpy, loner, almost alcoholic Edinburgh detective. Less enamoured fans will wonder why they bothered. The two difficulties with this book are the apparent shift in Rebus's outlook and the lack of a convincing bad guy. Happy to test the boundaries of legality previously, Ian Rankin has Rebus cross to the dark side to get the outcome in a case where several women have gone missing, which will leave the fans heading to the bookshelves to see if this character was there all along.

LH

Verdict: grave misgivings



DRINK SMOKE PASS OUT

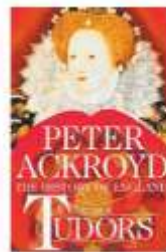
BY JUDITH LUCY,
VIKING, RRP \$30

Anyone who has seen Judith Lucy's stand-up act will know she is a dead-set cack.

But can she write? Heck, yeah. In a pun on the famous *Eat Pray Love* (book and movie), Lucy takes readers on her trip to self-discovery via Catholicism, alcoholism and a bunch of other isms. It's not all belly laughs and sniggers. There are tragic tales of friends lost to drugs and some uncomfortable moments of navel-gazing and self pity. I, for one, could have done with far less talk about yoga. But you can't deny the woman's honesty. She lets it all hang out. And some of it ain't pretty.

BB

Verdict: at least one laugh per page — that's about 245 laughs



TUDORS

BY PETER ACKROYD,
MACMILLAN,
RRP \$30

The ever-popular Tudors are the focus of volume II in Peter Ackroyd's massive undertaking — the history of England in seven volumes. It's hard to imagine there could be much more to say about the short dynasty that went from Henry VIII and his six unlucky wives and ended with his youngest daughter, Elizabeth I, the Virgin Queen. But Ackroyd manages to make it a ripping yarn all over again, finding a clear and compelling path through the tumult that was England under the Tudors — at the start a Catholic country that was part of Europe, at the end a Protestant one that stood apart.

CH

Verdict: bloody