

David Morgan Releases “Mangadoo”; New Fiction Set to Light Up Historical Adventure Genre

The story of Mangadoo introduces readers to George Nolan, transported as a convict to Western Australia at a young age. Serving out his sentence by working on a property near Pinjarra, inside of him grows a determination to one day find the truth behind his unjust conviction. Upon gaining his freedom, George sets off on an adventure that takes him to the Roebourne area. The whirlwind story creates a captivating panorama that takes readers from India, to England and on to the North West of Western Australia.

In George Nolan, author David Morgan has crafted a character with multi-dimensional qualities whose complex emotions help move the plot line forward. Beneath the action packed surface, lays a much richer narrative, full of history and capturing the beauty of Western Australia.

The inspiration for Mangadoo came from Davids involvement with the Nor West Jockey Club Roebourne where he was a commitee member. “From the time I joined the race club I had became infatuated with the history of the race club and I read every book I could get my hands on that mentioned horse racing and pioneering in the Roebourne area. As I had learnt volumes about the Roebourne region, the concept of Mangadoo was born,” says David Morgan.

The name Mangadoo, which surely may sound aboriginal to many Australians, is in fact inspired by a village called Mangotsfield in South Gloucestershire where the author is from. That also became the name of the horse in the novel that became the catalyst for the whole adventure. David has enjoyed a diverse and successful career that has seen him release award-nominated music, hold executive roles in marketing and operations, and even the launch of the widely successful racing magazine Racing West.

From Mangadoo: “As the Red Dragon once again sailed towards Guano Island, Eifion looked to the heavens and thanked the almighty for such a black sky. As in previous nights, Eifion ran the Red Dragon past the island and turned the lugger around in the entrance to the deep channel. This time as they turned Eifion thought he spotted a light moving amongst the mangroves on the mainland. Instinctively he steered the lugger back out to open sea and once at a safe distance turned to look again for the light but he could see nothing.

Safe with the knowledge that the tide was against either the Harp or the Harkan leaving the lagoon that night, he allowed the Red Dragon to drift in close to the rocky headland that faced the open ocean. Knowing they could not be seen from the mainland, two boats were lowered and into each climbed two militiamen. Eifion joined the first boat and Major Watters the other. On reaching the steep and rugged shoreline they struggled at first to find a suitable landing point and were forced around to a small cove on the eastern side. Once ashore, two men remained with the boats while the other two followed Eifion and the major up and over the rocks to the vantage point. The provisions left for Captain Adams were still there.

They briefly looked around then scurried back down the hill to the cove. The two boat guards had disappeared. They looked around the cove but could not find them. Eifion expressed his concern. “Major, they have just disappeared. Let’s walk around the island and find them.” “No, I will take one man and look for my men. You must return with the other to the Red Dragon. If we fail to return in thirty minutes you must return to Cossack without us. Understood?” “Yes sir,” Eifion reluctantly replied. As he climbed back aboard the Red Dragon a number of rifle shots rang out from the island and they continued sporadically for another fifteen minutes, then there was silence. Everyone aboard the Red Dragon stared into the dark night, scanning the island and the ocean for the major or the militiaman.

They did not come. An hour after the last shot Eifion decided that before leaving they would make one pass along the rocky shoreline. Once the crew had quietly raised the anchor Eifion steered the lugger as close as he dared to the shore. Within minutes a crewman standing in the bow pointed to a body in shallow water between rocks. Eifion skilfully steered the lugger up against the rocks, whilst the crewman jagged the body with a long pole. He pulled the body towards the boat and, assisted by another crewman, lifted a headless militiaman onto the deck. All aboard stood and stared at the body.

Then suddenly there was a burst of light from the cliff above the lugger. They all looked up to see a plume of black smoke swirl into the night sky as a scrub bush ignited into a red ball of flame. Then the theatrical display was completed when a chanting Kawak appeared holding his arms out straight. Each hand held a human head, and he paraded them in full view of those below. The militiaman raised his rifle, and as quickly as he had appeared Kawak disappeared back into the darkness. Everyone aboard the Red Dragon was stunned and it took a few minutes for Eifion to gather his senses and turn the lugger back towards Cossack.”

Tom Percy QC Mangadoo Summary – Launch Night

I must say that I approached this task with trepidation.

I have been asked to launch books before. But they are usually legal books, or those in the true crime genre.

I'd never met or heard of David Morgan.

But when Steve Mills first approached me to be part of this launch my first thought was “why not”, but my second thought was; “what if I don’t like it, I mean, genuinely don’t like it?”

Steve of course had the answer: “Mate, just pretend you like it. You’re a lawyer, you prostitute your integrity all the time, and get paid to do it!...”

Mercifully that problem didn’t arise.

This book is a good book at a number of levels. Amongst its attributes it is highly readable, it’s got highly original plot, and the backdrop of 1870’s Western Australia is a fascinating and colourful one.

In short, it has that elusive quality required of a novel: it works.

But having said that, it probably also has to be said that Mangadoo will in all probability never go down in the annals of great literature. It will probably never be on the curriculum of English Literature 10 at UWA. It probably won't win the Nobel Prize for literature.

David Morgan isn't James Joyce. And Mangadoo isn't Ulysses. But, then again, it doesn't pretend to be.

It's sometimes said that the test of good writing is defined by the ability of the writer to suspend the reader's disbelief, and David certainly has mastered this art.

Imagine a story about an English Derby winner who is stolen, then wins the Melbourne Cup under a false name, then races in Perth, and then for good measure goes to Roebourne to sire station ponies.

All of a sudden you are 100 pages into Mangadoo, all of the above has happened, and you haven't batted an eyelid with disbelief or suspicion.

Now that's what you call writing.

What I personally liked most about the book was David's ability to capture the essence of that nearly extinct creature, the bush race meeting, and what it meant to a town like Roebourne and it's people.

Sadly the feeling and communality of the annual bush race meeting is a dying thing these days. You need to go a long way to find it. Only at places like Marble Bar, Kojonup and Mingenew and Leonora does the ethos of the true bush Cup meeting lives on.

But it lives on in perpetuity in Mangadoo, at pp211-214

As I said, this isn't James Joyce, it isn't Solzhenitzen, it isn't Dickens.

Mangadoo is perhaps best described as Colleen McCullough meets Robert Louis Stevenson, meets Tim Winton.

It's a hybrid of DNA from The Thornbirds crossed with Treasure Island with an infusion of Cloudstreet.

It doesn't try to conform to any established literary genre; it defies categorization. And that's probably why it works.

I wish it every success.

TFP