

## Malice in Blundell-land

Simon Plant, in *STM Entertainment*  
February 07, 2009 10:00pm

**The Naked Truth: A Life in Parts by Graeme Blundell (Hachette Livre, \$35)**



LEARNING to be an actor, Graeme Blundell discovered the trick was “to make fiction as sharp as fact”. In his autobiography, Blundell the writer does the reverse and makes fact as sharp as fiction.

*The Naked Truth: A Life in Parts* is a bracingly honest recounting of his professional and personal life. And in relaying his roller-coaster ride through marriages, movies and stage shows, Blundell builds a compelling narrative.

He gets below the surface and casts light on human frailty – notably his own.

“I was passionate and naive,” he writes of his 20-something self, “a man all bright and quivering, ripe for disenchantment.”

Blundell, who grew up in Reservoir, Victoria, showed an early appetite for literature. He studied at Melbourne University and joined Melbourne Theatre Company under director John Sumner in 1966.

He evokes that MTC era brilliantly. Sumner, who was almost bald, would “rub a smooth hand over his crown, then tuck an imagined stray hair behind his ear”. Actor Frank Thring permitted young Blundell to “refresh his pewter goblet of moselle”.

Thring, Blundell adds, “belonged to that unique class of the entitled who deluded themselves into believing they had somehow achieved their status through hard work”. Ouch.

Blundell reserves his sharpest barbs for comrades at theatre companies La Mama and The Pram Factory.

Initially, he identified with the sprinting energy of these anti-Establishment firms. But in the early '70s, the “spiteful hiss” of Pram meetings and the “shallow fictions of companionship” disturbed him.

The atmosphere worsened in 1973 when Blundell starred in *Alvin Purple* – the sex-spoof hit movie that turned its leading man into an unlikely pin-up boy. “Being Alvin Purple,” he says, “was an unnerving, sometimes sad reality.”

Blundell now writes more often than he acts. *The Naked Truth* explains how this career change came about but, more importantly, it discloses the heart and mind of a creative Australian.

Few showbiz memoirs ever do that.

**Meet and hear Graeme Blundell at the following events for *The Sunday Times* Big Book Club:**

**Thursday, February 26**

2pm. Mandurah Library, Pinjarra Rd, Mandurah. Phone 9550 3650. Free.

7pm. Spearwood Library, 9 Coleville Cres, Spearwood. Phone 9411 3800. Free.

**Friday, February 27**

1.30pm. Arena Joondalup, Captain's Club, Kennedy Drive (just off Joondalup Drive). Phone 9400 4707. Free.

**Saturday, February 28 (Perth Writers Festival)**

9.30. Dolphin Theatre, University of WA. *Mining the Personal*. See [www.perthfestival.com.au](http://www.perthfestival.com.au) for details. Free.

**Sunday, March 1 (Perth Writers Festival)**

2pm. University Club, UWA. *Born for the Stage*. See [www.perthfestival.com.au](http://www.perthfestival.com.au) for details. Free.

For more details on *The Sunday Times* Big Book Club go to [www.thebigbookclub.com.au](http://www.thebigbookclub.com.au).