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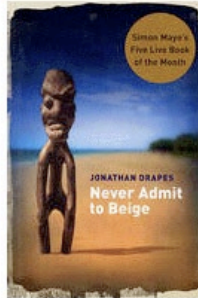
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Never Admit to Beige
by Jonathan Drapes

£7.99

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Synopsis

Trigg Harvey has lost his job, his flat, his friends and his trousers. Now, he wants his luck back. Trigg's search takes him to Australia's Gold Coast. In amongst the thirty miles of sun, concrete, money and neon lurks his luck, in the possession of one Terry Smith. Now, he just has to find him. His search becomes serious when it leads to the head of the Japanese Mafia on the coast. Hampered with delusions and heavy existential baggage, Trigg has to infiltrate the Gold Coast underworld to discover if one Mr Somatsu, aka Tetsuya Suzuki, aka Terry Smith, will help him get his old life back. And not even kidnapping, illegal casinos, murder or golf will dent his resolve in this hilarious story. Trigg's efforts are finally rewarded when he finds himself within feet of a solution. Unfortunately, five of Japan's most powerful men stand in his way. Trigg has to draw on everything he's learned about himself and life, not to mention the help of his new friends, to get him through. What he discovers is that perhaps having his luck taken from him was, in fact, the luckiest thing that could have happened.

Bookseller review

Evan Jones, WATERSTONE'S NOTTINGHAM BRIDLE

★★★★★

An amazingly hilarious story which never ceases to entertain. It's no wonder his first novel was voted Five Live's 'Book of the Month'

[Read all bookseller reviews](#)

NOVEL DEBUT

London-based **Jonathan Drapes** (BAppSc 1995) has found himself in a novel predicament: his debut book couldn't find an Australian publisher, but has now become a hit in the UK.

Never Admit to Beige tells the tale of hapless Englishman Trigger Harvey whose luck goes from bad to worse when he comes across a cursed Fijian figurine on the Gold Coast.

A smash in Britain where it's been published by Macmillan New Writing, *Never Admit to Beige* was recently named BBC Five Live's Book of the Month.

Far from having a dream run on to the bestsellers list though, Mr Drapes tells a familiar story about the difficulty of getting his first book noticed by editors.

An avid traveller, the sports science graduate worked his way from country to country holding down a number of odd jobs – among them model, bus counter, personal trainer and cartoonist – before getting his break.

Never Admit to Beige had its unofficial beginnings back in 1997 when Mr Drapes was named runner-up in the Queensland Young Writers Award.

"The success of the book has been a brilliant surprise," he said.

"And yes, surreal. Especially sitting in a BBC radio studio with some of the UK's top critics and Laila Tademy, an author from Oprah's Book Club."

Now creative director with top London advertising agency CDP as well as a cartoonist for *TNT Magazine*, Mr Drapes said *Never Admit to Beige* proved persistence pays.

"A few trees must have been pulped in the submission letter/rejection letter phase," he said.

"And there is a lot of luck involved; getting the manuscript in front of the right person, on the right day, when they're in the right mood, just after they've had a strong coffee...but then I guess you could substitute 'luck' with tenacity."

More information is available at www.neveradmittobeige.com/



NEVER ADMIT TO BEIGE

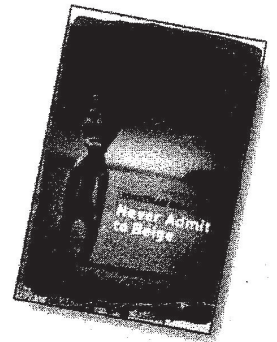
Jonathan Drapes

(Macmillan New Writing, £12.99)

Part time cartoonist and *Lonely Planet* guide book contributor, Jonathan Drapes' debut novel is set on the Australian Gold Coast. Englishman Trigger Harvey is a man on a mission to find his stolen luck – and nothing will stop him. He's lost everything his girlfriend, job, family and friends, but he's got a newfound resolve that isn't going to be deterred.

The murky underworld of Australia's infamous strip of sand plays host to a spider-web of a plot involving the Japanese mafia, a world champion surfer and a nine-inch Fijian figurine called Roger. It all sounds rather random but Drapes' lucid, simplistic style keeps this excellent novel flowing along nicely. Trigg has to draw on everything he has learnt about himself to solve his complex predicament but with the help of some rather unlikely new acquaintances, he gives himself a fighting chance.

The themes of luck and fate run throughout, as Trigg sets off on his exhaustive quest to change his fortunes. However, it soon becomes apparent that he is searching for a new life too: one that's a little less predictable than a nine to five job with after-work drinks and five-a-side football. Perhaps a life that's a little less beige?



Drapes is not afraid to take a risk as a 16-year-old schoolgirl puts Trigg through moral torment. It's certainly a risk worth taking as she contributes not only to the plot but also to the portrayal of Trigg's character. A few other characters are too stripped down and lack believability but it's a minor quibble in an otherwise flawless read.

Never Admit to Beige is not a laugh-out-loud comedy but a touching, witty novel that has the kind of 'can't put it down' addictiveness that every author searches for. With its entirely original plot, this debut work puts Jonathan Drapes firmly on the map as one of Australia's most talented new writers.

MATTHEW APLIN

Beige is not an option

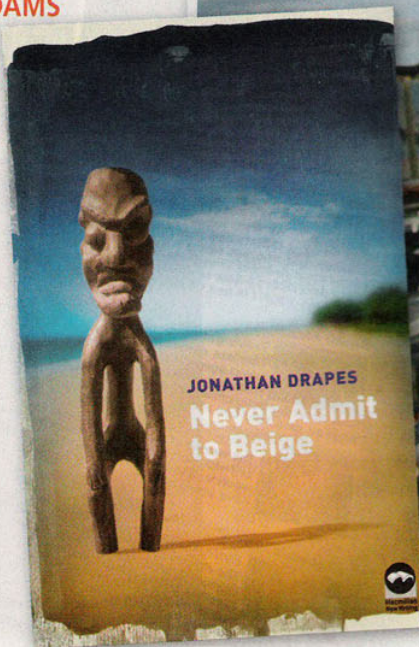
A POM LOST IN A SEA OF NEON ON THE GOLD COAST AND TRAILED BY THE JAPANESE MAFIA FORMS THE BASIS OF JONATHAN DRAPES' FIRST NOVEL, *NEVER ADMIT TO BEIGE*. THE MAN BEHIND *TNT*'S FORMER CARTOON ANDY PODEAN TALKS TO **AMY ADAMS**

It's gaudy, glitzy, rarely dull and ever welcoming: the Gold Coast is the perfect setting for a book thought Jonathan Drapes. All he needed was a plot, characters and the time to write it. Working as a creative at a Sydney-based ad agency, it took Drapes, the man behind former *TNT* cartoon strip Andy Podean, four years to write his first novel. Somehow, he kept up the momentum.

Never Admit To Beige is a madcap caper around the casinos, hotels, beaches and backstreets of Australia's holiday capital, following in the dishevelled wake of Englishman Trigger Harvey as he struggles to hunt down his stolen luck. "It's a treasure hunt without the physical treasure," explains Drapes, who used the combination of an angry girlfriend and a Fijian witchdoctor to send his hero scratching at the nooks and crannies of the Gold Coast.

The title, a throwaway comment in the book, refers to Trigg's refusal, at the author's insistence, to live life in the slow lane. "It's the backpacker in me," Drapes explains. "Don't subject yourself to a boring life. You can actually go out and have some fun." With the Japanese mafia on his back, and a pro-surfer and dangerously attractive schoolgirl by his side, beige ceases to be an option for Trigg.

It's a farfetched adventure, kept afloat by the affable realism of the narrator. Drapes was originally going to make Trigg an Aussie, but when he arrived in the UK he realised the character would work much better as a middleclass Englishman endlessly surprised by what the Gold Coast throws at him. "It made so much more sense to have someone more prone to getting sunburnt, who doesn't know the power of the waves," he says. "As an Australian living in London I think you're more aware of those



quintessential British traits, and I love them."

Drapes is less affectionate about his anti-heroes. Intrigued by rumours that the Gold Coast was overrun by an arm of the Japanese mafia known as the Yakuza in the '80s, Drapes began his research into a powerful sect renowned for their infighting and habit of chopping off their enemies' digits. "I'm a bit nervous about keeping my little finger," Drapes jokes. "I can't for the life of me remember if I changed their names or not. I'm praying to God I did, otherwise I might be in trouble."

In fact, when Drapes speaks to *TNT* he has more immediate concerns. He has a radio interview looming and is "quietly shitting" himself. The *Daily Mayo* show on Five Live have selected *Never Admit To Beige* as their book of the month, which means Drapes will follow in the footsteps of many a literary



Jonathan Drapes

heavyweight and discuss his novel live on air.

Hopefully he'll deal with the situation with slightly more panache than Trigger Harvey might, or indeed Andy Podean (who, after returning to Australia, can be found "boring people to death with stories of the UK and the Ashes"), though he might find himself in a tight spot if quizzed about Trigg's 16-year-old love interest. "It didn't seem so bad when I was 25," says Drapes, who after a few years of publishing difficulties is now 32.

"No, seriously, I didn't want it to be a normal, clichéd love interest. I wanted it to be something that took him out of his comfort zone and messed with his head a little bit.

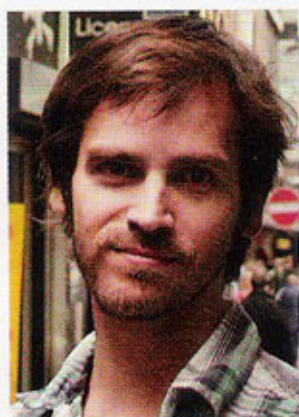
I had to hold back, though, because I thought my Mum might read it at some point." Living in fear of radio interviews, the Japanese mafia and, it seems, his Mum, at least Drapes is practising what his book title preaches. ■

■ *Never Admit To Beige* by Jonathan Drapes is published by Macmillan.

to spend time with her youngest sister, who

But not much.

Jonathan Drapes



Jonathan Drapes, the CDP creative director, had his first novel, *Never Admit to Beige*, published by Macmillan New Writing

at the end of 2006. It is, by common consent, a pretty hard book to pigeonhole.

Shoot-outs involving Japanese mafia and run-ins with a couple of coke-dealing pensioners form part of the story, a comic romp through Australia's Gold Coast where the book's hero, Trigger Harvey, is searching for the man who took his "luck".

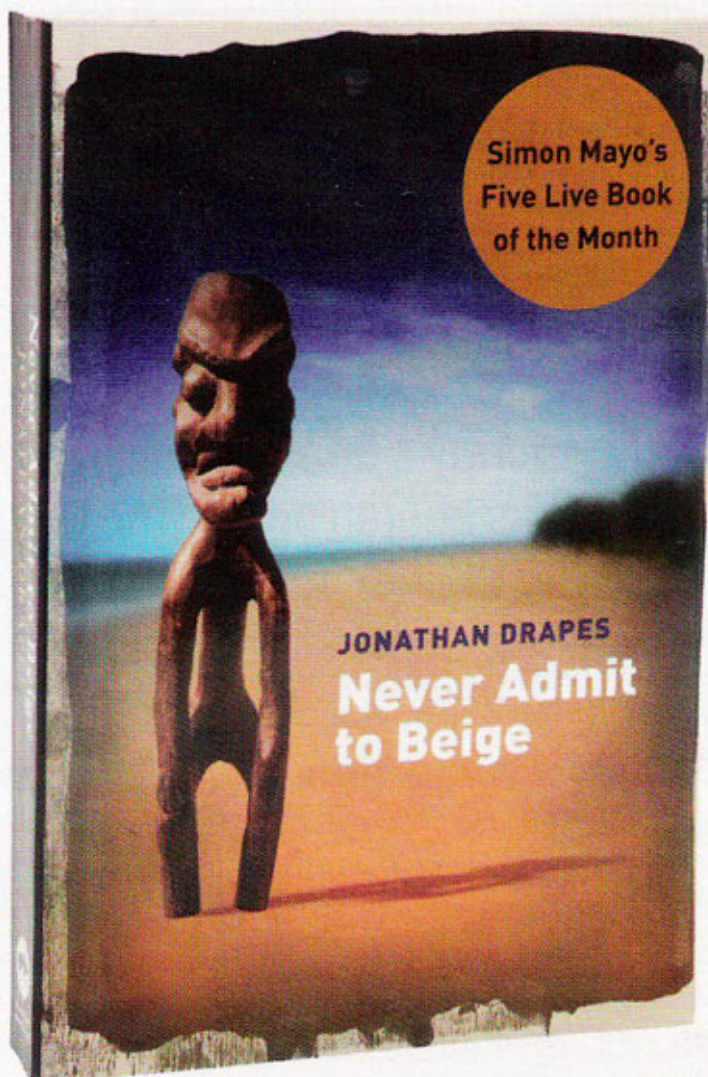
Described as James Bond meets Inspector Clouseau along with *Men Behaving Badly*, the novel is a wry commentary on how life never works out the way you expect.

That's almost certainly true of Drapes, 34, whose award-winning short-story-writing in his native Australia encouraged him to give copywriting a try.

He began working on his novel during stints at Sydney's Campaign Palace and JWT. He found an agent in Australia, but he thought the book's Australian setting might give it too narrow an appeal. It wasn't too long before the rejection letters were piling up.

More than four years after he began work on it, Drapes was wondering whether it was all in vain. "I probably should have given up on it." He says.

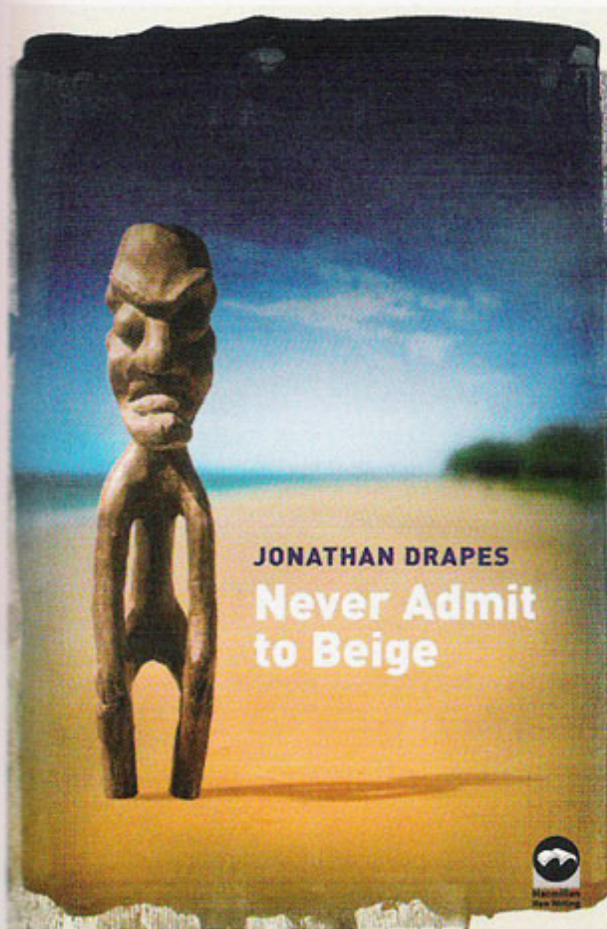
It was Macmillan's new-writers initiative that came to his rescue and offered to publish. It was subsequently one of Simon Mayo's books



of the month on his Radio 5 Live show and has sold around 7,000 copies to date – "enough to make me a few grand, but nowhere near enough to resign the day job".

Drapes, who has been working on his second novel for the past six months, reckons his copywriting has been a useful prerequisite. "It helps give you the discipline," he says, "especially when you have a block and you have to turn the words around when you don't want to."

What's more, he adds, clients seem to like the idea of dealing with a published author: "They don't question your grammar."



Never Admit to Beige

Never Admit to Beige is the brilliant debut novel published this month by young Antipodean writer Jonathan Drapes. It is the hilarious tale of Trigger Harvey, a man whose life has been thrown into turmoil when his luck is removed in an unfortunate brush with voodoo.

His sets off to change his fortunes on Australia's Gold Coast where he falls victim to a series of disastrous events and encounters a host of colourful characters along the way. However, he's determined to put things right and not even kidnapping, illegal casinos, murder or golf will dent his resolve. It's the kind of book you'll need to lock to your peepers over the winter to scare away the cardigan blues. Fast paced, funny and easy to read; a definite winner. All good bookshops - £12.99 or www.macmillannewwriting.com

www.InLondon.com