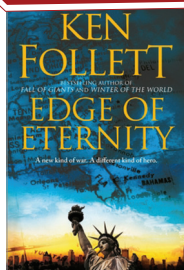


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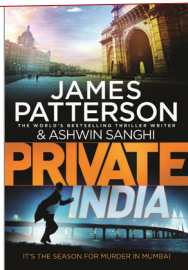
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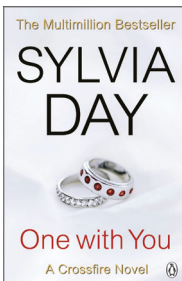
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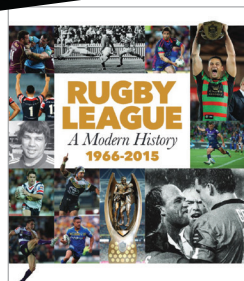
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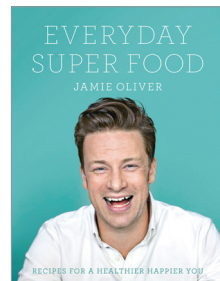
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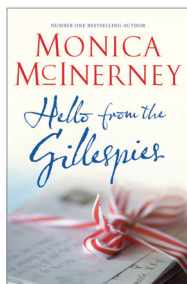
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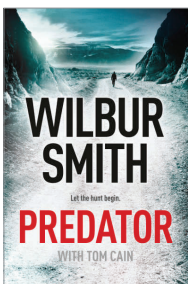
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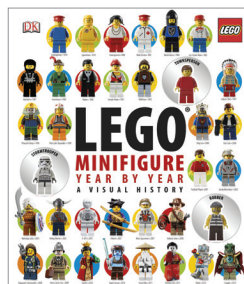
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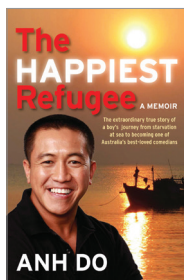
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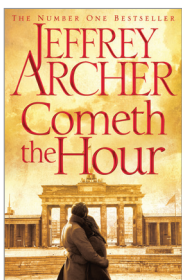
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TIDE OF JOY

Melbourne
musician Vance
Joy talks to Peter
Barrett about
fame, Taylor Swift
and the future »

A

t every home game, the Coburg Football team runs onto the ground to a popular song. It belongs to one of their own, a key defender who won

the club's Best First Year Player award in 2008.

James Keogh was on the club's list for two years but he is better known today as multi-ARIA-award-winning singer-songwriter, Vance Joy. The song, *Riptide*, was voted number one on Triple J's Hottest 100 list in 2013 and, after a staggering 107 consecutive weeks, broke the record for the longest ARIA-charting single in history.

Vance is back home in Melbourne after playing more than 70 sold-out shows supporting international pop superstar Taylor Swift on her 1989 *World Tour*. In a hotel in Southbank, the lanky, curly haired 28-year-old folds himself into an armchair and politely signs an autograph for a fan.

Does he sign his name often, now that he's famous? "I do it, but there's not many offers," he laughs, guessing on average he would sign between zero and five autographs a day.

Dubbed the nicest man in pop, James is the kind of star you'd have no trouble taking home to meet the parents. Not only is he thoughtful and modest, but with degrees in Arts and Law, your mum can relax knowing he'll always have "something to fall back on" if the whole music caper doesn't work out.

But right now things are more than just working out. At time of writing, James had the most-played song on Australian radio (*Fire and the Flood*), a five-year recording contract with Atlantic Records, a certified platinum album (*Dream Your Life Away*) and an ARIA award for Best Male Artist (last year).

And, while touring with Taylor Swift in the US, UK, Canada and Australia, he performed to more than one million people (his personal highlight: a sing-along with 70,000 fans at Sydney's ANZ Stadium). "I feel like I got better at performing and so did my band," he says. "I feel like we took a few steps up from where we were."

The first James heard that Taylor Swift was interested in him was when she covered *Riptide* for BBC's *Live Lounge*. Around the same time, her people contacted his people about the possibility of supporting her on the tour. "I was like, 'Woah, that's amazing!' This is one of the most left-field things ... you're like, 'Really?'"

A couple of months later, James happened to be in New York at the same time Taylor was due to appear on *The Late Show with David Letterman*. The pair met for

the first time in the show's green room. "I was nervous but I was also feeling a bit calm because she'd chosen me for the tour – I was welcomed – and immediately, she comes in and just gives you a hug; there's no real time for an awkward moment."

James and his band – drummer Edwin White, bass players Jono Colliver and Trent Bower, and Chris Mulhall on keyboards – had about six months to imagine what life on tour with Taylor Swift would be like. Then, reality struck. "It's the most professional tour I've ever seen and probably ever will see," he says of the huge crew of dancers and technicians he shared the road with.

"There's a good sense of camaraderie and, every now and then, there'll be a party, a big get-together. It might be on the lot when everyone's left; it might be, like, a little fire pit and barbecue and all the crew comes.

"I think those were the highlights because you just drink and have fun and just be chatting around; and you'd go back to your bus whenever you want, really.

“

James is the kind of star you'd have no trouble taking home to meet the parents



I don't know, it's just fun. It's like being on school camp or something."

In the downtimes, James indulged in his favourite hobby: carpark Frisbee with the band.

But it wasn't all fun and games. There were nerves, particularly before his first appearance kicking off the tour in Louisiana. "It was all good stuff to learn, but after that first show I was like, 'Woah, that was full-on!' I was expecting [the audience] to maybe be warmer."

Used to playing more intimate venues in Australia, James realised he had some work to do. "Usually support acts don't expect to be warmly received. But I guess the hope is that they do kind of get around you."

He recalibrated his expectations and resolved to find ways to better engage Tay-Tay's fans. "And that was a good learning curve. So, even though it wasn't really a lowlight it was more a necessary obstacle or rite of passage to getting better at it."

James' very first start in music wasn't particularly auspicious, either. Supportive parents, Gabrielle and Kevin, bought him a guitar when he was 11, but he lacked motivation. After weeks of absence, his Year 7 guitar teacher finally confronted him. "It was like a break-up – I just wasn't turning up."

When he was 14, his father tried again, buying him another guitar and sending him to Vince Hopkins, a "really great" guitar teacher. James put in the hours, learnt covers from internet tabs and developed his singing voice. He also began to write songs.

In 2009, halfway through his studies at Monash University, he penned *Winds of Change*. "That was a lot better than any other song that had come before it... it kind of opened up my brain and turned me onto this dream of doing music," he says.

After travelling for three months with friends around India and Southeast Asia, percolating song ideas in his head and recording them into his phone, he returned home, motivated even more to play music.

"For the next couple of years I was just writing songs – studying – but the main thing that gave me satisfaction, the main thing I put most of my mental energy into, was songwriting."

James says after graduating he "went through the motions," doing a two-week stint at a family law practice and applying to a few major law firms. But his heart was never really in it. "It was more of a way of telling myself that I'd tried."

Instead, he picked up a second-hand copy of Peter Carey's novel *Bliss*, flipped open the pages and stumbled on the name Vance Joy. Liking the sound



See it here

Vance Joy's *Fire and Flood* tour kicks off in Melbourne on 23 April with Sydney and Brisbane dates to follow. For ticket and venue information see frontiertouring.com

of it, he booked a few shows on Facebook and the rest, as they say, is history.

So, what's next for Vance Joy? Following his Australian tour this month, James says he's looking forward to some time off at home in Melbourne's Glen Iris and writing and recording an album (hopefully) even better than *Dream Your Life Away*.

"I had a meeting with my manager yesterday and we were talking about what we want to do. There's always this sense where I like to keep it vague enough so something awesome can happen, to be open to opportunity, seeing what happens. And that's a big part of it – I'm willing to try things." ✈